

MINNESOTA FRUIT & VEGETABLE GROWERS ASSOCIATION

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February, 2003 Volume 17, No. 1

A Note From The Board

By Foster Mooney – Jewel Lane Farm, Chisago City, MN

Looking out over the fields makes one appreciate the calmness of winter in contrast to the fast pace of the planting, growing and harvest season of 2002. Fresh tomatoes, sweet corn and cucumbers are gone. The last pumpkin and squash left the shed three months ago. Seed catalogs have arrived.

As growers, we are now planning the 2003 season. We should be comparing and evaluating the varieties that worked well, identifying which varieties did not work, and considering what we'd like to try that is new. The Upper Midwest Regional Fruit and Vegetable Growers Conference is a good place to meet old acquaintances, make new friends and exchange ideas and experiences. Bring your questions and your shopping list to the Upper Midwest Regional Fruit and Vegetable Growers Conference and Trade Show to be held in St. Cloud, MN on February 6 – 8, 2003.

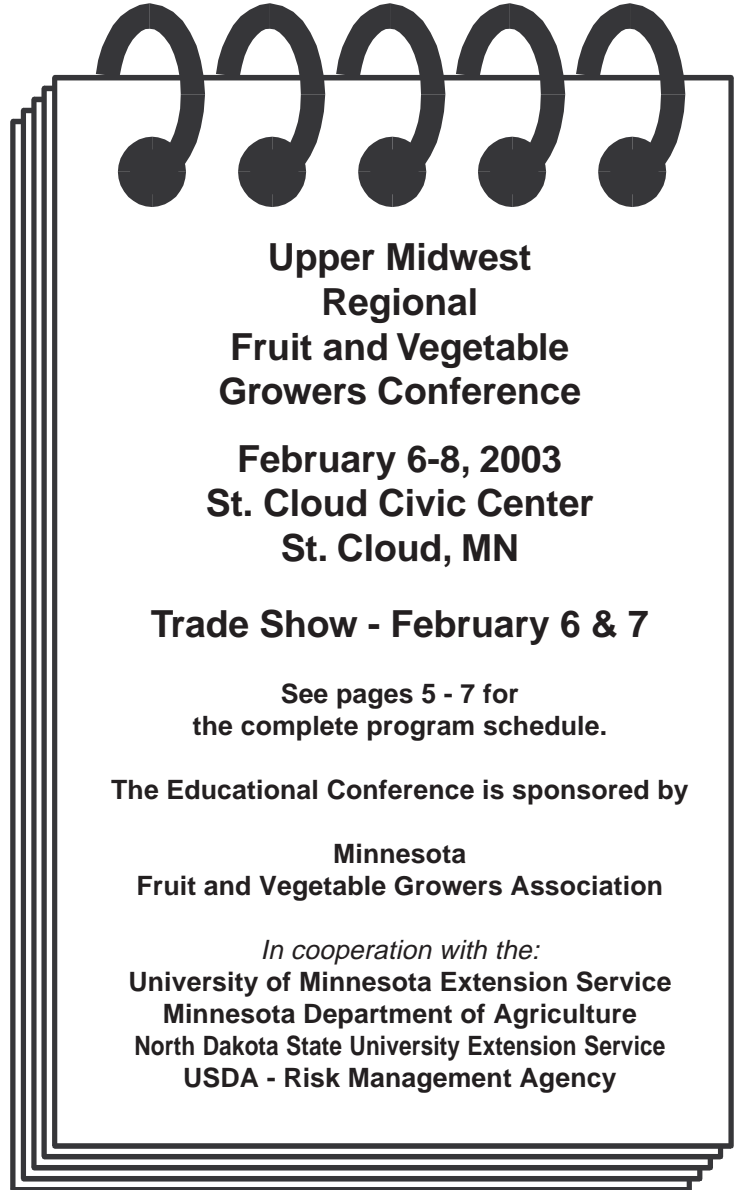
Come to the Conference for answers to your questions!



LOOK FOR SESSION HIGHLIGHTS throughout this issue of the newsletter

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Upper Midwest Regional Fruit and Vegetable Growers Conference

February 6-8, 2003
St. Cloud Civic Center
St. Cloud, MN

Trade Show - February 6 & 7

See pages 5 - 7 for the complete program schedule.

The Educational Conference is sponsored by

Minnesota Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association

In cooperation with the:
University of Minnesota Extension Service
Minnesota Department of Agriculture
North Dakota State University Extension Service
USDA - Risk Management Agency

Attention Area Berry Growers: Order Plants Early!!

MFVGA is again coordinating a group order of strawberry and raspberry plants from reputable nurseries in Massachusetts and Nova Scotia. Last year, some of the growers who waited to order had trouble getting the varieties they wanted. Please note the ordering deadlines and send in your order as soon as possible.

Berry growers, watch your mailbox for an order form. If you do not receive a berry order form and would like one, please call the MFVGA office at 763-434-0400.

2002 Census of Agriculture Begins

The USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) will mail the 2002 Census of Agriculture to every farmer and rancher in the Nation. It marks the 26th national measurement of agriculture since the first agriculture census was taken in 1840. Only America's farmers and ranchers can supply the answers to produce a useful, accurate picture of this vital industry.

Farmers and ranchers are being asked to report on their operations during 2002 and return their completed forms by February 3, 2003. Everyone who receives a census form is required by law to return it, (Title 7, U.S. Code) even those who did not operate a farm or ranch in 2002.

NASS has provided a convenient toll-free number, 1-888-4AG-STAT, for producers who need help completing their form.

The same law requiring response also ensures that information provided by individual farm operators is held strictly confidential. No data will be disclosed on any individual operation. In fact, even copies retained by farmers and ranchers are immune from legal process. Results are provided only in statistical totals summarized to the county, State, or national level.

To make it easier to report, the census report forms ask basic questions about land use and ownership, crop acreage, and quantities harvested, livestock and poultry inventories, value of crops and livestock sold, and farm operators characteristics.

New questions will ask about multiple operators per farm, certified organic acreage, production contracts, computer and internet use, grain storage capacity, more detailed farm-related income, and new specialized commodities such as bison, deer, elk, llamas, emus and ostriches.

The census of agriculture tracks an industry which has changed dramatically throughout history. The 2002 Census of Agriculture will show changes since the last census, taken in 1997. Data from the census are used by many in the public and private sectors to help chart the future of agriculture. County-level census results are used by:

- **Farmers and ranchers** to make decisions about potential new opportunities, efficiencies and whether to make changes in their enterprises.
- **Farm organizations** to evaluate and propose agriculture policies and programs.
- **Agribusinesses** to help meet farmers needs for items such as fertilizer, seed and equipment.
- **State departments of agriculture** for response operations during drought and emergency outbreaks of diseases or infestations of pests.
- **Land-grant universities** to allocate funding, by county, for cooperative extension programs and services.

- **Congressional staff** to propose changes in the farm bill and other farm-related legislation.
- **Colleges and universities** to develop new and improved methods to increase agriculture production.
- **Federal government officials** to draft legislation to help resolve agricultural problems and strengthen the industry.

Census results will be released February 3, 2004, at www.usda.gov/nass/. For more information, call the Agricultural Statistics Hotline at 1-800-727-9540 or call 1-800-453-7502 in St. Paul. To find agricultural statistics for your county, State, and the Nation, click on Quick Stats at www.usda.gov/nass/.

C. Willi Myles To Entertain at Thursday Night Banquet

Join us for the "Minnesota Grown" banquet on Thursday night, February 6, 2003, and laugh as C. Willi Myles takes us to Mobile, Alabama with stories of his large family and small house. When you hear Willi tell about his family, you are right there with him for the whole ride – to church, family reunions, weddings and funerals – without ever leaving the room.

Then, winter events and practices that are common and routine to a native Minnesotan take on a new and hilarious dimension when seen through the eyes of C. Willi Myles, a boy from Alabama who receives a scholarship to play football at St. Cloud State University.

Willi got the comedy bug while coaching and traveling around the country scouting talent and meeting interesting people. A group of friends thought he was naturally funny and mentioned that he should host the shows of a new comedy club. Since then he has performed and toured with such notables as: The Ojays, Temptations, Earth, Wind & Fire, The Beach Boys, Pat Benitar, Tony Keith, Bonny Rait, Bill Cosby, Sinbad and Dennis Miller.

Tickets are required for the banquet. The menu will include Minnesota Grown chicken, potatoes and more, with cheesecake topped with a mix of Minnesota berries for dessert. Join us for good food and fun with friends. The registration form can be found on this web site.

MFVGA Policy on Conference Registration Cancellations and Refunds:

MFVGA will refund registration fees for the 2003 Upper Midwest Regional Fruit and Vegetable Growers Conference in full if the MFVGA office is notified before Friday, January 31, 2003. If the MFVGA office is notified after January 31st, but before February 3rd, 75% of the registration amount will be refunded. No refund will be issued if registrations are cancelled after Monday, February 3, 2003.

The MFVGA Newsletter is published five times a year (February, April, July, October and December) in cooperation with the University of Minnesota Extension Service and funded in part by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. Editorial office: MFVGA, c/o Marilyn Nysetvold Johnson, Exec. Coordinator, 15125 W. Vermillion Cir. NE, Ham Lake, MN 55304. Phone: 763-434-0400 Fax: 763-413-9585. Please address all correspondence, advertising and membership inquiries to MFVGA at the above address. Deadlines for future issues: The first day of the month preceding publication (For example: Jan. 1st for the February issue).

The information in this MFVGA Newsletter is for educational purposes only. Reference to commercial products or trade names is made with the understanding that no discrimination is intended and no endorsement by the Minnesota Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association is implied.

Session Highlights

What Can You Do to Improve Pollination and Fruit Set in Vine Crops?

When your vine crops are in bloom, do you observe bees gathering nectar and pollen from the blossoms? Vine crops, such as melons, cucumbers, squash and pumpkins, require insect pollination to set fruit. Multiple pollinator visits increase the size of the fruit, the number of seeds, and the consistency in the shape of the fruit.

Gary Reuter, a scientist from the University of Minnesota, Dept. of Entomology, will discuss the need for pollination of vine crops by honey bees during the "Honey Bee Pollination of Vine Crops" session on Thursday afternoon, February 6, 2003. This discussion will be part of the Pumpkins and Cucurbits session. Gary will also cover the information needed to get the most pollination for your money and effort, whether renting bees or raising your own. For the complete Pumpkins and Cucurbits schedule, see page 5.

Come to the conference for updates on the Specialty Crops Grant, research projects and see the new Minnesota Grown produce bag.

Mike Ellis from Ohio State to Share Disease Management Tips for Strawberries, Raspberries and Apples

Dr. Michael Ellis from the Department of Plant Pathology at Ohio State University/OARDC will discuss the most common fruit rots on strawberries in Ohio, namely *Botrytis* fruit rot (gray mold), caused by *Botrytis cinerea*; anthracnose fruit rot, caused by *Colletotrichum acutatum*; and leather rot caused by *Phytophthora cactorum*. Especially in wet growing seasons, successful strawberry production may depend on the simultaneous control of all of these diseases.

If you have experienced these fruit rots in your fields, you will want to hear Dr. Ellis' remarks and find out if the practices that work for Ohio growers will also work in Minnesota. Information on when these diseases are most likely to occur and what action can be taken to try to control them may mean the difference between a bad year and a profitable growing season.

Dr. Ellis will also be sharing information on how to control diseases in brambles and tree fruit during the Upper Midwest Regional Fruit and Vegetable Growers Conference. The complete program schedule can be found on pages 5 through 7.

Conference Scholarships Available

The Minnesota Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association recently received grant dollars from the USDA - Risk Management Agency to establish a scholarship fund for the 2003 Upper Midwest Regional Fruit and Vegetable Growers Conference. A limited number of scholarships to help defray registration fees will be available to commercial growers and students attending the Thursday and Friday educational sessions. Scholarships are not available for the Saturday marketing sessions.

Scholarship dollars will be used to pay a portion of the registration fee. Scholarships will be available to commercial fruit and vegetable growers who have not attended the conference in the last five years. A limited number of scholarships are also available to high school and college students currently studying horticulture.

Completed scholarship applications must be received in the MFVGA office and approved before January 24, 2003. Scholarship applications will not be accepted with at-the-door registrations. Scholarships will be awarded to qualified applicants on a first-come, first-served basis.

For additional information and an application form, contact the MFVGA office at 763-434-0400 or e-mail your request to mfvga@worldnet.att.net.

Food Safety IS an Issue

Compared with the period between 1973 and 1988, there were more than twice as many outbreaks of foodborne illness associated with fresh produce between 1988 and 1998. 5,000 Americans die each year due to foodborne illness.

Why? Is it because Americans are "too clean?" Is it because public health officials keep better records or because people are eating more fresh produce? Is it because the germs are out to get us?

What are the pathogens causing foodborne illness? Which ones are of concern to growers of fruits and vegetables in the Upper Midwest?

What can growers do to protect their customers and their businesses, and prevent regulation of food safety practices on their farms?

Come and find out about food safety, both the big picture and the specifics of producing safe fruits and vegetables on your farm. The Food Safety session will be on Thursday afternoon, February 6, 2003. See page 5 for program details.



U of M GLEANINGS

Dr. Cindy Tong
Dept. of Horticultural Science
University of Minnesota

In October 2002, the U.S. Department of Agriculture ruled that the produce industry can use irradiation to treat pests in imported fruit. This won't affect Minnesota growers much, as we can't grow mangoes, litchee, longan, rambutan, or carambola here. However, it might affect wholesalers, and irradiation is used for killing human pathogens in hamburger and poultry, which will be or is currently being sold in local grocery stores. Irradiation is also used to sterilize medical and some laboratory supplies and to kill anthrax on mail.

During the process of irradiation, gamma- or x-rays are beamed onto the product. The sources of gamma rays are radioisotopes, like cobalt 60, while x-rays are generated from electron beams. There were some early concerns that if gamma rays were used to treat produce, people operating the equipment might be exposed to harmful levels of irradiation and that production of radioactive waste would create disposal problems. The use of electron beam equipment allays some of these worries.

Hawaii Pride, a company located on the Big Island of Hawaii, currently uses electron beam equipment to irradiate papayas, killing or sterilizing fruit flies on the surface and a little ways into the fruit. The equipment is contained in a special room with 15-foot thick walls. Personnel operating the equipment wear special badges to record the amount of irradiation they are exposed to (much like those dental hygienists wear when they take x-rays of teeth), and must record the times they enter and exit the room. Papayas are packed into waxed boxes of known dimensions and thicknesses, and then the boxes are loaded into special carriers that convey the boxes into the room with the electron beam apparatus. The speed the carrier moves in front of the electron beam apparatus is varied based on the size and thickness of the boxes. Electrons are beamed onto a special metal plate, generating x-rays that are focused onto the boxes of papayas. The equipment used at Hawaii Pride is made by the SureBeam Corporation, which is the only firm in the U.S. currently involved in irradiation of plant material for sanitation (phytosanitary) purposes.

Levels of irradiation are measured in units called grays (Gy). It takes 250 Gy to kill or sterilize fruit flies on papayas. In comparison, hamburgers are irradiated with 2.5 kilograys of radiation to kill E.coli. Hence, the amount of radiation that Hawaii Pride uses is not enough to kill human or plant pathogens, or to extend the shelflife of the papayas. Use of higher dosages of irradiation would hurt the quality of the papayas. The Food and Drug Administration allows the use of up to 1 kilogray of irradiation, and all of the uses approved so far by the USDA use no more than ¼ of the approved safe dose limit.

Some concerns sent to the USDA about irradiation concern the effects on produce boxes and the nutritional value of produce. According to the USDA, waxed boxes hold up under treatment, and there can be some vitamin loss with irradiation, but it's not significant. Comments and details about the USDA ruling can be found at www.aphis.usda.gov/ppd/rad/webrepor.html. Look for docket 98-030-4.

As might be expected, few people have heard about food irradiation, and consumers have mixed feelings about the technology. According to a survey done by the International Food Information Council Foundation in Washington, D.C., out of 751 adults, 38% had heard nothing about irradiation, 36% had heard a little, 19% had heard some, and 7% had heard a lot. Sixty-three percent of them said that they'd be somewhat or very likely to purchase irradiated foods, 25% said they wouldn't buy any, and 12% weren't sure what they'd do. More than half of them said they preferred the term "cold pasteurization" to "treated with radiation" to describe the process. So if you want to check if your local grocery store has irradiated food, look for "cold pasteurized" hamburger, poultry, or tropical fruits in the near future.

Wednesday Night "Bull Session"

You are invited to join other growers for an informal "Bull Session" beginning at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday night, February 5, 2003. This is a chance to visit with other growers, meet new people and renew old acquaintances.

Two videos, "New Tools for Mechanical Weed Control in Vegetables," produced by Cornell University and "Farmers and Their Diversified Horticulture Marketing Strategies," produced in Vermont, will also be shown.

Bring samples of jellies, jams, salsa, etc. to share – crackers and chips will be provided.

The "Bull Session" will be held at the Best Western-Kelly Inn. If you have questions, please call the MFVGA office at 763-434-0400.

Can You Solve This?

Growers are challenged to solve puzzles and come up with solutions. Can you find the thirteen vegetable varieties included in the following paragraph? (Varieties are taken from the [Johnny's Seeds 2003 Commercial Catalog](#).)
Compiled by Karen and Foster Mooney, Jewel Lane Farm.

The weather person from Mars may predict a northeaster at the time of the Upper Midwest Regional Fruit and Vegetable Growers Conference in St. Cloud, MN on February 6, 7 & 8, 2003. Put on a big smile and invite your knight or baby Pam, and with some wampum in your pocket, board the rocket and ride the blue cloud to the conference. No passport is needed. Not one alibi will be accepted for being a no-show at the meetings. Go under the big top for sessions that are e-z pick. You will be the prizewinner.

UPPER MIDWEST REGIONAL FRUIT & VEGETABLE GROWERS CONFERENCE

February 6, 7 & 8, 2003

St. Cloud Civic Center, St. Cloud, MN

Sponsored by the
Minnesota Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association

in cooperation with the
University of Minnesota Extension Service
Minnesota Department of Agriculture
North Dakota State University Extension Service
USDA – Risk Management Agency

THURSDAY AFTERNOON, FEBRUARY 6, 2003

1:15 – 4:30 p.m.
1:15 – 2:00 **SESSION I: BERRY PRODUCTION**
Strawberry Diseases – *Dr. Mike Ellis*, Ohio State University
2:00 – 2:30 Irrigation Water Management Tools – *Jerry Wright*, Extension Engineer, Morris, MN
2:30 – 3:00 Marketing Session – *Susan Butler*, Butler Orchards
3:00 – 3:30 Break to the Trade Show
3:30 – 4:15 Variety Update (Strawberries & Blueberries) – *Dr. David Wildung*, North Central Research and Outreach Center, Grand Rapids, MN
4:15 – 4:30 Which Strawberry Varieties are Being Planted in Minnesota? – *Thaddeus McCamant*, Northland Community Technical College

THURSDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 6, 2003

7:00 a.m. Registration begins

8:15 – 9:45 a.m. **INTRODUCTORY SESSION**

8:15 – 8:30 Welcome / Announcements
8:30 – 9:00 Current Status of Crop Production and Pest Management Needs for Minnesota Vegetables, Apples and Strawberries: Results of a Fresh-Market Grower Survey – *Jeanne Ciborowski*, MDA IPM Coordinator
9:00 – 9:45 Grower Showcase – *Tom Halat*, Tom's Farm Market & Greenhouses, Inc., Huntley, IL

10:15 – 12:00 noon **SESSION I: BERRY PRODUCTION**

10:15 – 11:00 Year in Review – Grower participation
11:00 – 11:45 Grower Profile – *Susan Butler* – Butler Orchards, Germantown, MD
11:45 – 12:00 Update on Tarnished Plan Bug Research – *Suzanne Wold*, Univ. of Minn.

10:15 – 12:00 noon **SESSION II: SOIL HEALTH AND COMPOSTING**

10:15 – 10:50 Soil: What You Can't See Might Help You – *Jodi DeJong-Hughes*, West Central Research & Outreach Center, Morris, MN
10:50 – 11:25 Soil is for Growing Healthy Roots – *Peter Bierman*, Univ. of Minn., Dept. of Soil, Water & Climate
11:25 – 12:00 Making Your Own Compost to Build Healthy Soil – *Dr. Tom Halbach*, Univ. of Minn., Dept. of Soil, Water and Climate

10:15 – 12:00 noon **SESSION III: INFORMATION FOR BEGINNING GROWERS**
Panel led by *Jerry Wright* and *Larry Zilliox*
Topics include marketing, crop selection, general transportation and variety selection

10:15 – 12:00 noon **SESSION IV: WEED MANAGEMENT ROUNDTABLE**
Led by *Dr. Bernard Zandstra*, Michigan State University

1:15 – 4:30 p.m.
1:15 – 2:15 **SESSION II: PUMPKINS & CUCURBITS**
Weed Management – *Dr. Bernard Zandstra*, Michigan State University
2:15 – 3:00 Break to the Trade Show
3:00 – 3:30 Varieties – *Terry Nennich*, Extension Educator, Clearwater County
3:30 – 4:00 Honey Bee Pollination of Vine Crops – *Gary Reuter*, Univ. of Minn.
4:00 – 4:30 Black Rot

1:15 – 2:15 p.m. **SESSION III: FOOD SAFETY**
1:15 – 1:45 Outbreaks of foodborne illness in produce – what are the pathogens, who are the affected populations, how the media deals with food poisonings and what can happen to sales if even one grower is suspected of selling contaminated produce. – *Jill MacKenzie*, Univ. of Minn.
1:45 – 2:15 Practices growers should implement to reduce the risk of contamination of their crops – main topics are irrigation water and toilet use/handwashing. – *Jill MacKenzie*, Univ. of Minn.

2:45 – 4:15 p.m. **SESSION IV: UPDATE ON HIGH TUNNELS**
Panel discussion – question / answer session.

1:15 – 4:15 p.m. **SESSION V: CROP INSURANCE / NEW FARM BILL**
1:15 – 1:45 Gov't Sponsored Crop Ins. Programs – Small Fruit
1:45 – 2:15 Gov't Sponsored Crop Ins. Programs – Vegetables
2:15 – 2:45 Private Crop Insurance Programs
2:45 – 3:30 Break to the Trade Show
3:30 – 4:15 The Conservation Security Program: A New Farm Program Opportunity for Fruit and Vegetable Growers – *Michael McGrath*, The Minnesota Project

10:15 – 4:15 **SCOUT SCHOOL - Learn to identify insects and weeds**

4:45 p.m. **MFVGA Annual Business Meeting**

5:15 p.m. **Social Hour in the Trade Show Area**

6:30 p.m. **"Minnesota Grown" Banquet Entertainment - C. Willi Myles**

FRIDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 7, 2003

8:00 – 12:00 noon **SESSION I: BERRY PRODUCTION & MARKETING**

8:00 – 8:30 Strawberry Plasticulture Trial – *Thaddeus McCamant*, Northland Community Technical College

8:30 – 9:15 Bramble Diseases – *Dr. Mike Ellis*, Ohio State University

9:15 – 9:30 Minnesota Grown Promotions for Berry Growers – *Paul Hugunin*, MDA

9:30 – 9:45 Canola & Wool Mulch Research Update – *Steve Poppe*, WCROC, Morris, MN

9:45 – 10:30 Break to the Trade Show

10:30 – 11:15 New Minnesota Strawberry IPM Standards – *Kevin Edberg* and *Bill Jacobson*

11:15 – 11:45 Blueberry Organic Research – *Dr. David Wildung*, North Central Research & Outreach Center, Grand Rapids, MN

11:45 – 12:00 Small Fruit Cultivar Performance Raspberries and Strawberries – *Dr. Brian Smith*, Univ. of Wisconsin-River Falls

8:00 – 12:05 **SESSION II: TREE FRUIT – APPLES, PLUMS & TART CHERRIES**

8:00 – 8:30 Critter Control – *Nick Reindl*, Minnesota DNR

8:30 – 9:00 Weed Control – Grower Panel

9:00 – 9:30 Pruning & Rejuvenating Old Trees – *David Bedford*, Horticulture Research Center

9:30 – 10:15 Break to the Trade Show

10:15 – 10:45 Apple Diseases – *Dr. Mike Ellis*, Ohio State University

10:45 – 11:25 Plum Hybridization and Cultivar Development at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls – *Dr. Brian Smith*, Univ. of Wisconsin-River Falls

11:25 – 12:05 Expand Your Fruit Sales with Summer Apple Varieties and Other Miscellaneous Tree Fruit – *Harry Hoch*, Hoch Orchard and Gardens, LaCrescent, MN

8:00 – 12:00 noon **SESSION III: CALIBRATING APPLICATION EQUIPMENT WORKSHOP**

8:00 – 8:30 Why It's Important to Calibrate Equipment Properly – *Dr. Bernard Zandstra*, Michigan State University

8:30 – 9:00 Calibrating Boom Sprayers – *Steve Poppe*, West Central Research and Outreach Center, Morris, MN

9:00 – 9:30 Calibrating Backpack Sprayers – *Krishona Martinson*, Regional Extension Educator, Buffalo, MN

9:30 – 10:00 Calibrating Equipment for Granular Products – *Dan Martens*, Regional Extension Educator, Foley, MN

10:00 – 11:00 Break to the Trade Show

11:00 – 12:00 Irrigation and Chemigation Calibration – *Jerry Wright*, Extension Engineer, Morris, MN

FRIDAY AFTERNOON, FEBRUARY 7, 2003

1:15 – 4:30 p.m. **SESSION I: DIRECT MARKETING**

1:15 – 1:30 Minnesota Grown Opportunities for Direct Marketers – *Paul Hugunin*

1:30 – 3:30 Selling More, Spending Less, Having More Fun – *Bill McCurry*, McCurry Companies

3:30 – 3:45 Break

3:45 – 4:30 Merchandising – *Tim Peterson*, H. Brooks & Company

1:15 – 2:45 p.m. **SESSION II: SWEET CORN**

1:15 – 2:00 Sweet Corn Ideas from the Northeast US: Video & discussion led by *Dr. Roger Becker*

2:00 – 2:45 Weed Management – *Dr. Roger Becker*, Univ. of Minn.

(Note: We are currently trying to expand the corn session to also include presentations on Indian corn and corn mazes. Look for updated information on our web site, www.mfvga.org or call the MFVGA office at 763-434-0400.

1:15 – 3:15 p.m. **SESSION III: SPECIALTY CROPS**

1:15 – 1:45 Peas – *Dr. Vince Fritz*, Southern Research & Outreach Center, Waseca, MN

1:45 – 2:15 Green Beans – *Terry Nennich*, Extension Educator, Clearwater County

2:15 – 2:45 Specialty Potato Production – *Dr. Carl Rosen*, Univ. of Minn.

2:45 – 3:15 Garlic Growing Basics for Small Farms – *Dr. Carl Rosen*, Univ. of Minn.

1:15 – 4:30 p.m. **SESSION IV: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT**

1:30 – 2:15 Value-Added Processing / Evaluating the Feasibility of Your Idea – *Michael Sparby*, AURI

2:15 – 2:30 Break

2:30 – 3:30 The Importance of Good Records / Financing Options – *David Stougaard*, AgStar Financial Services

3:30 – 3:45 Break

3:45 – 4:30 Accepting Credit Cards at Your Stand or Market – *Approval Payment Solutions*

Note: As far as we know, this educational program will be presented as printed. However, there may be some changes. If you have any questions, call the MFVGA office at 763-434-0400. Program updates can also be found on the MFVGA website at www.mfvga.org.

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TRADE SHOW HOURS:

Thursday 8:00 a.m. - 6:30 p.m.
Friday 8:00 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

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SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2003

Advance registration for the marketing conference is available for \$30 per person and includes lunch. Individuals who register for the Thursday and Friday sessions of the Upper Midwest Regional Fruit and Vegetable Growers Conference or the Minnesota Christmas Tree Association meeting can attend the Saturday session for just \$25 per person. Registration at the door is \$40 (lunch is not guaranteed with on-site registrations). Contact Marilyn Johnson at 763-434-0400 or Paul Hugunin at 651-297-5510 for details.

Registration is from 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.

Getting Started in Berry Production

9:00 – 9:45	So, You Want to Start a Berry Farm... – Dell Christianson
9:45 – 10:25	Location, Location, Location (soil, water, drainage, etc.) – Rod Elmstrand
10:25 – 10:45	Assessing and Accessing Your Market (Market research, consumer audience, competition) – Thaddeus McCamant
10:45 – 11:00	Break
11:00 – 11:30	Being a Business (Accounting, licenses, permits, tax numbers, etc.) – Dell Christianson
11:30 – 12:15	Berry Marketing – Kevin Edberg
12:15 – 1:30	Lunch
1:30 – 2:15	Getting Ready for Planting (Pre-plant preparation, variety selection, planting tips, setting up a field) – David Wildung
2:15 – 3:00	Strawberry Production Basics – Rod Elmstrand
3:00 – 3:15	Break
3:15 – 3:45	Raspberry Production Basics – Thaddeus McCamant
3:45 – 4:15	Blueberry Production Basics – David Wildung
4:15 – 4:30	Questions and Answers

Morning Marketing Session

9:00 – 12:10	Getting Us All on the Same Team – Bill McCurry
12:15	Lunch

Afternoon Marketing Sessions:

Direct Marketing Session

1:15 – 4:00	Garden Center Marketing in Tough Times – Bill McCurry
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Web Site Development Session

1:15 – 4:15	“Cost-effective Marketing on the World Wide Web” – Cordell Seagren, Captain Jack Communications
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Farmers’ Market Session

1:15 – 2:00	Minnesota Farmers’ Market Association – Business Meeting
2:00 – 2:15	Break
2:15 – 3:00	Legislative Updates for Selling Processed Foods at Markets – Dan Whitcomb
3:00 – 3:15	Break
3:15 – 4:15	Break-out Sessions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Attracting Vendors B. Marketing Your Market / Special Events C. Pricing Your Product D. Merchandising and Displays
4:15 – 4:30	Wrap-up Session

Upper Midwest Regional Fruit and Vegetable Growers Conference February 6-8, 2003

EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCE TRADE SHOW AND MFVGA ANNUAL MEETING

ACCOMMODATIONS ARE AVAILABLE AT

Best Western-Kelly Inn 320-253-0606

Room block will be released 1/5/03
Single Rate – \$69.00 Double Rate – \$75.00

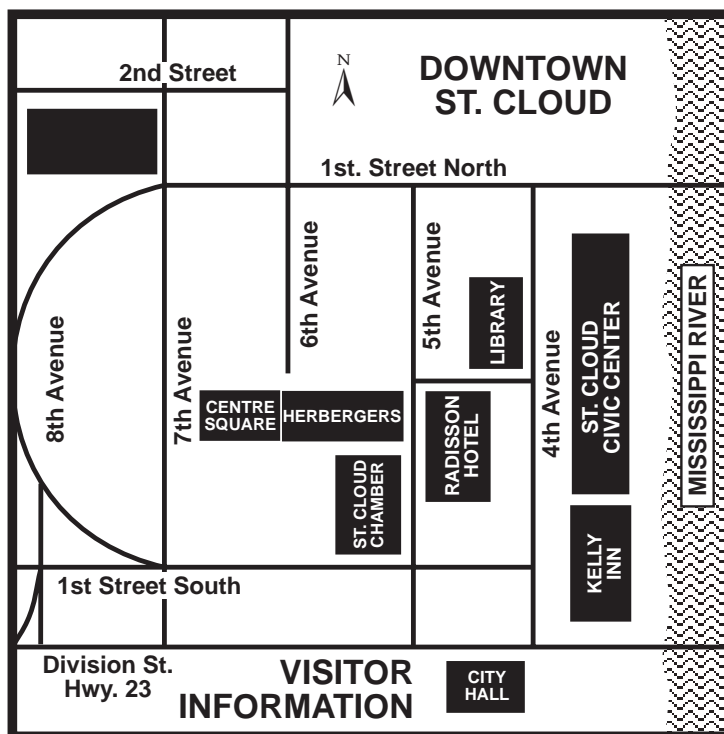
Radisson Suite Hotel 320-654-1661

Room block will be released 1/5/03
Rate for 1 or 2 people – \$100.00 per night.

Be sure to mention the MFVGA to receive special conference room rates.

There is direct access to the Civic Center from the Best Western-Kelly Inn.
The Radisson Suite Hotel is connected by a skywalk to the St. Cloud Civic Center.

Thursday, Friday and Saturday educational sessions will be held at the St. Cloud Civic Center.



“Adding Value to Minnesota Agriculture” and “Evaluating the Feasibility of Your Idea” Friday afternoon, Feb. 7

Michael Sparby, Project Development Director for the Agricultural Utilization Research Institute (AURI), will discuss how AURI can help producers and entrepreneurs add value to their crops through AURI's programs, labs and staff. Also - can a great idea become a great success story? What steps do you need to take when developing your project/business/product? This session will explore what is involved in contracting or performing a feasibility study. See the complete Friday afternoon schedule on page 6.

Dr. Bernard Zandstra Offers Tips to Take Control of Weeds in Vegetable Crops

Dr. Bernard Zandstra from Michigan State University will lead a Weed Management Roundtable discussion on Thursday morning, February 6th, during the Upper Midwest Regional Fruit and Vegetable Growers Conference. Bring your questions, share your problems and pick up some tips for handling weed problems in vegetable crops. Dr. Zandstra will specifically address weed management in pumpkins and cucurbits on Thursday afternoon, February 6th, during the Pumpkins and Cucurbits session.

Dr. Zandstra's research in Michigan relates to vegetable production and weed control. He annually publishes the North Central Weed Control Guide for Vegetable Crops, which is used in several North Central States. He has experience with all major vegetable crops grown in Michigan. Dr. Zandstra is currently doing field weed control research to reduce herbicide rates through use of adjuvants and to maximize weed control through a combination of chemical and cultural practices.

The complete educational program for the 2003 conference can be found on pages 5 through 7.

"Cross-Over" Registration to MCTA Sessions

The Minnesota Christmas Tree Association (MCTA) will be holding their winter meeting at the St. Cloud Civic Center in St. Cloud, MN on Thursday and Friday, February 6 & 7, 2003. Persons registered for the Upper Midwest Regional Fruit and Vegetable Growers Conference may also attend the Minnesota Christmas Tree Association educational sessions for an additional fee of \$15 per person.

For information on the Minnesota Christmas Tree Association's educational program, please contact Pat Olive at 651-462-3126.

The Conservation Security Program: A New Farm Program Opportunity for Fruit and Vegetable Growers

The Conservation Security Program is the largest new program in the 2002 farm bill. Open to all producers, regardless of the type of crops produced, the Conservation Security Program provides cost share and incentive payments to farmers and ranchers who implement conservation practices on their working lands to protect resources of concern.

This innovative new conservation program is voluntary and flexible, and allows producers to develop conservation plans and enter the program at different tier levels. Conservation Security plans must identify the land and resources to be conserved, and the practices that will be implemented and maintained. All agricultural land – cropland, grassland, prairie land, improved pastureland, rangeland and forestland that is an incidental part of the agricultural operation – is eligible for enrollment.

The program will be administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and is expected to be open for enrollment in 2003.

This session will present an overview of the Conservation Security Program, giving producers a broad understanding of how the program will work, and how it can work for them. Draft rules for the program (if they have been released) will also be reviewed. Michael McGrath from The Minnesota Project, will share this information on Thursday afternoon, February 6, 2003 from 3:30 to 4:15 p.m. during the Crop Insurance / New Farm Bill Session. The complete Thursday schedule can be found on page 5.

The Importance of Proper Application Equipment Calibration

Accurate calibration of spraying equipment is important to obtain acceptable results from pesticide applications in the field. Without careful calibration, applicators may over or under apply pesticides, resulting in poor weed and other pest control, unacceptable soil carryover residues, and illegal crop residues. Improper calibration also may be expensive, resulting in wasted chemicals, reduced crop yields and poor quality.

Calibration is simple measurement and calculation. However, understanding what you are doing is essential to being accurate. A “Calibrating Application Equipment Workshop” will be held on Friday morning, February 7, 2003. Topics covered will include the importance of calibrating equipment properly as well as the specifics of calibrating boom sprayers, backpack sprayers, and equipment for granular products. Jerry Wright, Extension Engineer, will also cover aspects of chemigation and irrigation equipment. The complete Friday morning schedule can be found on page 6.

Session Highlights

Would you like to sell more, spend less and have more fun?

Do you want to increase your sales and decrease your frustration? Do you wonder why some vendors have a line of customers waiting while others have no one to talk to? Bill McCurry will talk about how you can increase your sales without investing everything you have in a marketing plan that may or may not work. Hear about how other growers have found ways to easily increase effectiveness and profits. Discover trends and techniques that will put more money in your pocket and more fun in your sales day.

Bill McCurry, a nationally known marketing guru, will speak during the Direct Marketing Session on Friday afternoon, February 7th. The full Friday schedule can be found on page 6. See page 10 for more information on Bill McCurry's Saturday marketing sessions.

Grower Profile – Tom Halat Tom's Farm Market & Greenhouses

Tom Halat operates a 240-acre fresh market vegetable farm in northeast Illinois, about 60 miles northwest of Chicago. The farm operation is diversified with a greenhouse bedding plant operation, strawberries, vegetables, fall festival and a bake shop. Tom's Farm Market & Greenhouses has been in business for over 35 years. Tom Halat is a past president of the Illinois Vegetable Growers Association and the North American Strawberry Growers Association.

Learn about Tom's operation on Thursday morning, February 6, 2003 during the Introductory Session at the Upper Midwest Regional Fruit and Vegetable Growers Conference.

Grower Profile – Harry Hoch Hoch Orchards

Harry Hoch from Hoch Orchards in LaCrescent, MN will share his experiences with growing and marketing early season tree fruit during the Tree Fruit Session on Friday morning, February 7th. He will focus on summer apples, cherries and plums – what sells at farmers' markets, fruit sales for July and August, reliable summer fruit for Minnesota and more.

Harry Hoch has been growing apples since 1984 and has been the owner / manager of Hoch Orchard and Gardens since 1997. He was also the research plot coordinator at the Horticulture Research Center for seven years and is a contributing author of the Minnesota Apple IPM Manual, to be published and released in 2003.

Microbes: What you can't see might help you

is a look into the microscopic world within our soils. We will explore what microbes already exist in our soil, what they can do for our crops and how to build their populations. You'd be surprised how bacteria and fungi can increase soil productivity. Take a closer look at your soil with Jodi DeJong-Hughes during the Soil Health and Composting Session on Thursday morning, February 6th. The complete Thursday program can be found on page 5.



2003 Minnesota Grown Directory

Development of the 2003 Directory is in full swing. Renewals were mailed to past participants just after Thanksgiving. First time participants or those with questions should contact Brian Erickson at 651-296-4939 with any questions or to request a listing form. The form can also be downloaded from the web site at www.mda.state.mn.us/mnngrown. Applications will be accepted through the Upper Midwest Regional Fruit and Vegetable Growers Conference and the Minnesota Grown Marketing Conference in St. Cloud.

The cost of advertising in the 2003 Directory is just \$40. Over 160,000 printed copies are distributed and all advertisers are included in the on-line edition complete with maps to your location and a link to your own web page. You can check out the on-line edition at www.minnesotagrown.com.

Download the Logo and Order Form Off the Web

The quickest way to get the point-of-sale material order form or the Minnesota Grown logo is to download from the licensed producer only web page. This page is just for marketers that are licensed to use the Minnesota Grown logo and is not linked to the rest of the Minnesota Grown web pages. If you are licensed to use the logo and have misplaced the web address, just send an e-mail to Brian or Paul and we'll send the link to you. Along with the point-of-sale material order form you'll be able to download the Minnesota Grown logo in several different formats.

We'll see you in St. Cloud!

Please stop by the Minnesota Grown booth during the annual conference in St. Cloud. We'll have samples of our point-of-sale materials, publications and advertisements for you to see. We'd love to talk about your ideas, feedback and questions about our program. What can the Minnesota Grown Program do differently that will help you grow your business?

Minnesota Grown information is supplied to MFVGA by Paul Hugunin (651-297-5510) from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, Ag Marketing Services Division. If you have any questions about Minnesota Grown, contact him at the number listed above.

Nationally Acclaimed Speakers Headline Marketing Conference

Join us for the 2003 Minnesota Grown Marketing Conference on Saturday, February 8th, in St. Cloud, MN. Attendees will be treated to a pair of dynamic marketing presentations that are sure to make an impression. The cost of the conference is just \$30 per person for advance registrations (received by January 31). Advance Saturday registrations include lunch. The cost of registering after January 31 is \$40 per person, but lunch is not guaranteed. A registration form is included with this newsletter. Conference details are also available on-line at www.minnesotagrown.com. Contact Paul Hugunin at 651-297-5510 with questions.

The conference is held at the St. Cloud Civic Center. Lodging is available at the Best Western Kelly Inn (320-253-0606) or the Radisson Suite Hotel (320-654-1661). Mention MFVGA to receive the conference rate.

Saturday Morning Presentation "Getting Us All on the Same Team"

Bill McCurry



McCurry will reveal techniques used by successful Minnesota businesses to ensure accurate communication with team members and customers. This lively discussion will help with face to face as well as telephone communication. Have you ever delivered the wrong product to the wrong place or at the wrong time? What does miscommunication cost you? – if you knew you'd probably cry.

This is not a warm, fuzzy "feel good" session – you will learn how to reduce cost and increase profits through more effective communication techniques. You must come to this session if you've ever found yourself thinking "How stupid are you that you didn't understand me?".

This nationally known marketing guru visited Minnesota this fall to visit several garden centers, apple orchards, pumpkin patches and farmers' markets. The purpose of this visit was to conduct background research for his presentation to make sure that he would be presenting ideas that make sense for Minnesota marketers. This is a presentation you can't afford to miss!

Here are a few comments from some of the people who have heard Bill McCurry speak:

"I've heard McCurry many times - every time I've used his stuff to make money. He helps us excite our customers and our staff to grow profitably."

- Van Cooley, Malmborg's, Inc. Greenhouse and Garden Center - Brooklyn Center, MN

"McCurry is honest, straightforward and has ideas that work in the real world. I learned a lot and then earned a lot from him and his ideas."

- Steve DeMarzo, Grawtown Greenhouse – Jackson, NJ

". . . Thank you for your dynamic presentation and thoughtful comments. I enjoyed your humorous yet informative presentation style. You were a terrific speaker - everyone laughed at your jokes and enjoyed your ties! I took away many useful ideas I can apply to my way of doing business right away."

- Karen Wiffler, Charles Schwab

"Bill McCurry helps you see where you are. The best thing McCurry does is give you directions you can go in to take your organization to the next level. His concepts are practical, down to earth and on the money. My time with him was a good investment. You will find the same thing. Don't miss the opportunity."

- Dick Herberg, Bachman's, Minneapolis, MN

Saturday Afternoon Presentation "Cost-effective Marketing on the World Wide Web" Cordell Seagren



Cordell Seagren is the sales manager of Captain Jack Communications, a full-service Internet company featuring web site design and hosting that specializes in search-engine

visibility. Prior to working with Captain Jack's, Cordell operated an Internet and web site business for four years. Cordell was raised on a north central Iowa farm and farmed with his father for 17 years.

He is a graduate of Iowa Central Community College in marketing and mechanics. He has spoken to many businesses, trade associations and other groups about web sites, including the Midwest Christmas Tree Growers Association annual meeting in the summer of 2002.

It can be very challenging to find a speaker who is knowledgeable about the internet and other high tech marketing tools who is also familiar with the unique needs and restrictions facing farmers and other small entrepreneurs. Cordell is just such a person. He works for a company that has a national directory of Christmas tree farms and works with numerous small farms around the country.

Upper Midwest Regional Fruit and Vegetable Growers Conference 2003 Speaker Directory

Dr. Roger Becker studies weed management strategies in annual and perennial systems in disturbed and undisturbed habitats. Current projects include purple loosestrife in wetlands, commercial processing vegetables – sweet corn and peas, cultivated wild rice, biological control of weeds, and the environmental impacts of herbicide and non-herbicide weed management systems. He received his Ph.D. from Iowa State University in 1982.

David Bedford has been an apple breeder and research scientist in fruit crops at the University of Minnesota for more than 20 years. He was responsible for the development and release of Honeycrisp and Zestar apples and he has conducted numerous research projects on apples involving cultural and physiological problems.

Peter Bierman received his M.S. degrees in Horticulture and Soil Science from the University of Minnesota. He is currently a research fellow at the University of Minnesota, Department of Soil, Water and Climate. He has research and extension experience in soil management, soil fertility and water quality. His research has involved both agronomic and horticultural crop production along with effects of agricultural practices on environmental quality.

Susan Butler owns and operates Butler Orchard, a family farm, in Germantown, Maryland. Butler Orchard is located close to the Washington, D.C. metro area and has become a fun destination for many people. They grow apples, blueberries, strawberries, raspberries and pumpkins and market their produce at their on-site market. Susan is a past-president of the North American Strawberry Growers Association (NASGA) and her father was one of NASGA's founding members.

Jeanne Ciborowski is the Integrated Pest Management Program Coordinator at the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA). Jeanne has worked for MDA for the last fourteen years. Her past responsibilities at MDA include working as the coordinator of the Biological Control Program and the Exotic Insect Trapping Program. Jeanne is also one of the Co-editors of the Vegetable IPM Newsletter.

Dell Christianson received his B.S. degree in Plant & Soil Science and his M.S. degree in Ag Economics from the University of Minnesota. He taught Specialty Crops Management and Farm Management for 28 years for the Minnesota Technical College System. In recent years the primary emphasis of the program has been on strawberries and other small fruit production and marketing.

Jodi DeJong-Hughes has been a University of Minnesota Regional Extension Educator in Agricultural Production Systems – Crops, for the past six years. She is the educational coordinator for northwest and west central Minnesota in matters concerning soil quality (erosion, compaction and tillage) and on-farm nutrient/manure application.

Kevin Edberg is the Executive Director of Cooperative Development Services and has been the managing partner of The Berry Patch near Forest Lake, MN for many years. The Berry Patch produces strawberries, raspberries and blueberries. Before joining Cooperative Development Services, Kevin was the Assistant Director of the Ag Marketing Services Division of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture.

Dr. Michael Ellis received his Ph.D. in Plant Pathology from the University of Illinois in 1976. Dr. Ellis believes that plant pathology is the study of plant health or plant "medicine." After teaching for three years in Puerto Rico, he accepted his current position at Ohio State University where he currently

conducts research on the epidemiology and control of fruit crop diseases. He also works very closely with fruit growers and other people in the fruit industry to deliver up-to-date information on disease management for fruit crops.

Rod Elmstrand received his bachelors and masters degrees in Agricultural Education from the University of Minnesota. For the last 20 years Rod has enjoyed his educational roles with the U of M Extension Service, working in several counties including Mille Lacs, Chisago, and more recently in Isanti County. Rod and his family have owned and operated a small fruit farm for 22 years where they grow and market strawberries, blueberries and pumpkins.

Dr. Vince Fritz has been an Extension Specialist in horticulture at the University of Minnesota, Southern Research and Outreach Center in Waseca since 1985. Working in a field-oriented research program, he investigates the physiological effects of vegetable crops on both mineral and organic soils. Recent emphasis has focused on improving stand establishment in vegetable crops grown for the fresh market.

Tom Halat operates a diversified 240-acre fresh market vegetable farm in northeast Illinois about 60 miles northwest of Chicago. Mr. Halat is a past-president of the Illinois Vegetable Growers Association and the North American Strawberry Growers Association.

Dr. Thomas Halbach is a Professor and Extension Educator – Waste Management Director, at the Rosemount Sewage Sludge Research Project. His current research includes the study of applied and fundamental aspects of waste management including beneficial use of waste materials in agricultural, horticultural, and forestry production. Specific materials studied include sewage sludge, ash, cement kiln dust, yard wastes, fish waste, food waste, municipal solid waste and various forms of industrial and demolition wastes. Some of the methods of managing wastes that he has worked on include composting, direct soil incorporation, co-application, specific tailored mixes, recycling and waste reduction. He is also currently studying bioremediation of contaminated sites and soils.

Harry Hoch has been the owner and manager of Hoch Orchards and Gardens since 1997. He was an apple grower for five years before becoming the research plot coordinator at the University of Minnesota Horticulture Research Center for seven years. He was also the editor/coordinator of the MDA Apple IPM Report from 1997 to 2001. He is a board member and past president of the Applecrisp Cooperative. He is also a contributing author of the Minnesota Apple IPM Manual to be published and released in 2003.

Paul Hugunin works in the Agricultural Marketing Services Division of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. Much of his time is spent developing and expanding the Minnesota Grown Program.

Bill Jacobson along with his parents, brother and sisters, owns and operates Pine Tree Orchards, Inc. in White Bear Lake, MN. Bill is a current MFVGA Board member and a past-president of MFVGA and NASGA and has been involved in a number of research projects with specialists from the University of Minnesota and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture.

Jill MacKenzie received her M.S. in Horticultural Science from the University of Minnesota in 1998. She has been the State Extension Specialist in Commercial Fruit Production since 2000 and was the Horticulture Extension Educator in Wright and Stearns Counties from 1998 to 2000. She is currently working with a multi-state effort coordinated by Cornell University to increase grower awareness of food safety issues.

Dan Martens is a regional extension educator in ag crop systems with the Benton County Extension Office in Foley, MN.

Krishona Martinson is a regional extension educator with the Wright County Extension Office in Buffalo, MN.

Thaddeus McCamant received his Ph.D. and Master's degrees from Washington State University. He is currently the Specialty Crops Management Instructor for the Northland Technical and Community College in Detroit Lakes, MN, working with direct market farmers throughout Minnesota. He has worked as a college professor, a fieldman working with cherries and apples for a packing shed on the Oregon-Washington border; a Peace Corps volunteer working with bananas in West Africa and an apple picker.

William J. "Bill" McCurry is chairman of McCurry Companies headquartered in Princeton, New Jersey. He started in the family business as a teenager and became its CEO in 1982. Through the firm's long history it has been involved in many industries including all aspects of photographic processing, retailing and wholesaling of photographic equipment and supplies, business machines, audio visual technologies, janitorial supplies, social expression retailing and business advisory services. Mr. McCurry has a broad background in business administration, finance and marketing and has been a favorite speaker at various events and meetings for many years.

Michael McGrath is a writer, farmer and community activist who serves as an independent Agriculture Policy Specialist for the Minnesota Project. For the past two years, Mike's work with the Minnesota Project has focused on the development and passage of the Conservation Security Program in the 2002 federal farm bill. He is now actively engaged in policy education, communications, and farmer outreach during the implementation of the Conservation Security Program.

Terry Nennich is a regional extension educator with the University of Minnesota Extension Service and is based in Clearwater County. He has been working with vegetable and small fruit development in the northwest corner of Minnesota for many years with an emphasis on pumpkins, asparagus, carrots, onions, cole crops, wild rice and strawberries. Prior to coming to Minnesota, Terry worked with the fruit and vegetable industry in southern Michigan. Terry's specialization is Commercial Horticulture and Marketing.

Tim Peterson is a produce merchandiser for H. Brooks & Company in New Brighton, MN. Tim has over 25 years of experience in the produce business. Before joining H. Brooks & Company, he worked as a produce merchandiser for Cub Foods. He is also a member of the Minnesota Grown Promotion Group Advisory Committee.

Steve Poppe is the Horticulture Coordinator at the West Central Research and Outreach Center in Morris, MN. Current research projects include wool mulching systems for specialty crops, bio-based weed control in strawberry using sheep wool mulch and canola mulch, cultivar trials of bedding plants, USDA field evaluation of woody plant materials and evaluation of apple cultivars and selections, evaluation of strawberry cultivars and selections as well as projects related to flowers and ornamental grasses.

Nick Reindl is a Wildlife Damage Extension Specialist with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Division of Wildlife. He is based in Brainerd, MN and provides technical assistance and emergency deterrent materials assistance to reduce or eliminate damage by wildlife.

Gary Reuter has been a beekeeper for 17 years and has worked at the University of Minnesota in the Apiary program for 11 years. He teaches the Honey Bee Queen Rearing and Beekeeping short courses every year with Dr. Marla Spivak at the University of Minnesota. Gary has spoken to beekeepers, farmers and school children across the country and is a past president of the Minnesota Hobby Beekeepers Association.

Dr. Carl Rosen specializes in mineral nutrition of horticultural crops. His research concerns environmental assessment of nitrogen use in agricultural soils as well as nitrogen acquisition by various vegetable and fruit crops. An additional research focus is the beneficial use and recycling of various municipal wastes for horticultural and agronomic purposes. Dr. Rosen holds a joint appointment in the Department of Soil, Water and Climate and the

Department of Horticultural Science. He has extension responsibilities in soil fertility aspects of horticultural crops. Dr. Rosen is also serving as the interim head of the Department of Horticultural Science at the University of Minnesota.

Cordell Seagren is the sales manager of Captain Jack Communications, a full-service Internet company featuring web site design and hosting that specializes in search-engine visibility.

Dr. Brian Smith is an Extension Fruit Specialist at the University of Wisconsin – River Falls.

Michael Sparby is the Project Development Director for Value-Added Crop Based Products for the Agricultural Utilization Research Institute (AURI). Working with crop-based commodity groups in Minnesota, Michael identifies and coordinates the promoting of value-added opportunities. Michael Sparby holds a degree in Mass Communications from Moorhead State University. Prior to joining AURI, Sparby worked for the Minnesota Attorney General's office and with the World Trade Center.

AURI is a nonprofit corporation created to strengthen rural Minnesota's economy by responding to market opportunities with new and value-added uses for agricultural goods. The institute builds working partnerships with business innovators, agricultural groups and researchers and provides technical support to clients conducting new product research and development.

Dr. David Wildung is a Professor and Center Horticulturist at the North Central Research and Outreach Center in Grand Rapids, MN. Dr. Wildung is involved in small fruit cultural management research, small fruit breeding and cultivar evaluation, vegetable cultural management research, woody ornamental evaluation (All American Trials), flower cultural and cultivar evaluation, vegetable cultivar evaluation and tree fruit cultivar evaluation.

Suzanne Wold is a graduate student at the University of Minnesota in the Entomology Department. Her research primarily focuses on tarnished plant bug feeding on June-bearing strawberries in Minnesota. Through field studies she hopes to determine the most susceptible strawberry growth stage to tarnished plant bug feeding damage. Preliminary results suggest that the early bud stage sustains the most damage from the tarnished plant bug.

Jerry Wright is an Associate Professor and Extension Engineer in the Department of Biosystems and Agricultural Engineering and the University of Minnesota Extension Service. His current research projects include nitrogen and irrigation timing and white mold development in dry edible beans, blueberry response to micro-irrigation systems, white mold control in irrigated dry edible beans, evaluation of daily crop water use "ET" models and the evaluation of trickle irrigation on blueberry production. Jerry is based at the West Central Research and Outreach Center in Morris, MN.

Dr. Bernard Zandstra is a Professor in the Horticulture Department at Michigan State University. He received his Ph.D. in Horticulture from the University of Hawaii in 1976. His research relates to vegetable production and weed control. He is responsible for weed control extension in all vegetable crops, and annually publishes the North Central Weed Control Guide for Vegetable Crops, which is used in several North Central States.

Larry Zilliox recently retired after serving as Extension Educator in Douglas County for more than twenty years. He also worked with Sibley County growers for five years. He specialized in consumer horticulture programs in West Central Minnesota and has a Masters of Education degree in Agricultural Education. In addition to his extension duties, Larry marketed sweet corn at a roadside stand for more than ten years. He also sold wholesale cantaloupe, squash and sweet corn. Larry also helped to reestablish the Alexandria Farmers' Market.

USDA Awards \$18.5 Million in Grants and Agreements to Develop Risk Management Tools and Education

Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman announced in December 2002 the awarding of \$18.5 million dollars in grants to help provide new ways for producers to manage risks to their businesses and for outreach and educational opportunities to women, limited-resource and other traditionally underserved farmers and ranchers.

“USDA is committed to providing farmers and ranchers risk management tools to build and maintain their businesses,” Veneman said. “These projects will help create opportunities for underserved, small and limited-resource producers so that they can become better risk managers.”

Of the \$18.5 million, \$9.8 million was awarded to qualified public and private organizations for research and development of new risk management tools for underserved producers. Specialty crop producers and farmers in underserved states will benefit from \$5.5 million in partnership agreements. Of this amount, \$3.7 million will be spent on 72 projects to help educate farmers of commodities that are not yet covered by federal crop insurance and specialty crops producers. Farmers and ranchers in 15 states that have been traditionally underserved by federal crop insurance will benefit from \$1.8 million in education agreements, which will be spent on 13 crop insurance programs and information agreements.

Forty-five competitively awarded partnerships with community-based, educational and nonprofit organizations will use \$3.2 million dollars to educate women, limited resource and other traditionally underserved farmers and ranchers. Under this category, an agreement with the Regents of the University of Minnesota will help Hmong farmers in the state improve production and management practices.

The projects were funded and awarded by the Risk Management Agency (RMA). The agency’s extensive network of public and private sector partnerships annually generates new market-driven insurance products, educational initiatives and the sales and servicing of nearly 1.3 million policies covering over 215 million acres and providing farmers over \$37 billion in coverage (current as of Nov. 25, 2002).

In 2000, changes to the program made premiums more affordable and most farmers increased their coverage levels. Participation at higher levels of coverage means that RMA and private crop insurance companies automatically provide more assistance to farmers when disaster strikes. In 2002, an estimated 80 percent of the acreage growing the principal U.S. crops are insured. USDA estimates that the program will pay thousands of hard-hit farmers about \$4.1 billion in claims for lost production – a record high.



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