

# MINNESOTA FRUIT & VEGETABLE GROWERS ASSOCIATION

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October, 2004 Volume 18, No. 4

## A Note From The Board

By Mark Gilbertson, Gilbertson Farms – Scandia, MN

Hope this greeting finds harvesting going well for everyone. I am Mark Gilbertson, your newest Board member. I am pleased to be on the MFVGA Board and look forward to working with all of you.

Just a little about my family and myself. Our family farms in Scandia. My Dad, Gary, and I do the field work and markets. My Mom, Annette, is our jack of all trades. My two sisters, Melisa, a graduate of Southwest State University and a Lieutenant in the Army National Guard, and Carol, a sophomore at St. Olaf College, help wherever we need them. I am a graduate of the University of Minnesota, with a degree in AIM (Agriculture Industries and Marketing).

We are also members of the St. Paul Farmers' Market, Minneapolis Farmers' Market, the Food Alliance Midwest, Minnesota Grown, and the Ohio Florist Assn. I was a board member for the St. Paul Farmers' Market for two years and I am currently a member of the rules committee. While at the U of M, I was the business manager for the FarmHouse Fraternity and a member of the U of M Marching Band. I also work part-time for the U of M Soils Department, doing field work with farmers from around the state.

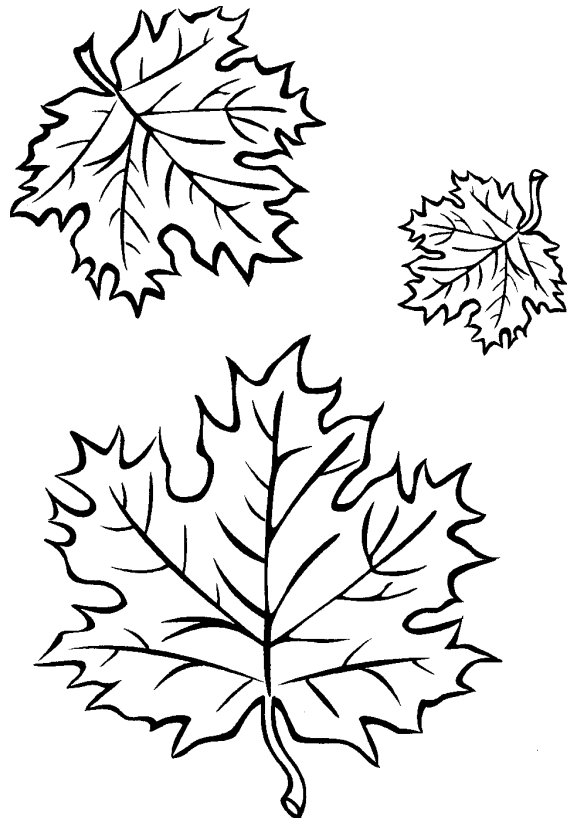
We have grown sweet corn in Scandia for over 20 years. I started selling at the St. Paul Farmers' Market 12 years ago. Since that first day our business has grown. We have built five greenhouses and grow our own vegetable transplants and bedding plants. Along with the sweet corn we grow peppers, tomatoes, potatoes, onions, squash and pumpkins. This is our third season with our corn roasting business. Roasted Sweet Corn has become a big part of the St. Paul Sunday Farmers' Market. You can find the Corn Roaster at the St. Paul market in Burnsville on Thursday and Saturday. I did not know so many people like sweet corn for breakfast! Our farm in Scandia is open to the public from May 1 to November 1. We fixed up the old granary for our bedding plant and produce sales. We do farm tours, helping to blend our farming with the growth and movement of Scandia becoming more of a suburban rather than a farming community.

This year Mother Nature has dealt some challenges with the cool weather. Frost hit our farm in August. Our pumpkin and squash crop will be limited, as I am sure it will be for many of you. On the lighter side, we will all get a little more sleep this fall. Maybe Mother Nature thinks we all need to slow down a little and enjoy some of the fruits of our labor.

This winter will bring some down time and we plan to take in both the Michigan Trade Show and Conference in December and the Upper Midwest Regional Fruit & Vegetable Growers Conference and Trade Show in St. Cloud, MN in February. The MFVGA Board has been working hard getting the 2005 educational conference set up and it is going to be very exciting with good classes, an excellent trade show and an opportunity to visit with your fellow growers. My Dad and I have found that these conferences have been invaluable to having successful growing seasons. Mom even enjoys going. She says you're never to old to continue learning new things and meeting new people. Hope to see you all at the show.

Have a great fall harvest.

Mark Gilbertson



## MEMBERS IN THE NEWS:

### Farm Family Recognition at 2004 Farmfest

Fifty-five families representing the counties they live in were named the 2004 "Farm Families of the Year" by the University of Minnesota. Many of the families participated in a recognition event at Farmfest on August 4th. The families were recognized for their contributions to the agricultural industry, their communities and the state. Farm families receiving honors have demonstrated a commitment to enhancing and supporting agriculture and agricultural production.

Along with Farmfest, the University of Minnesota units sponsoring the event include the College of Agricultural, Food and Environmental Sciences; Extension Service; Minnesota Agricultural Experiment Station, and the College of Veterinary Medicine.

MFVGA members Darwin & Judy Pless from Redwood Falls, MN were among the families recognized. Congratulations, Darwin & Judy.

## THANKS from the Fair

We extend a very special "THANK YOU" to the producers who donated items for the display at this year's Minnesota Grown booth at the Minnesota State Fair. The booth wouldn't be possible without the help, support and cooperation of the many people who donate items for the display and time to staff the booth.

This year, after a cool spring, slow start and the August frost, the donations meant more than usual because the growers had less to give. Produce for the display was donated by Boorsma Farm (Victoria, MN), Cal's Market & Garden Center (Savage, MN), Dehn's Garden, Inc. (Andover, MN), Green Barn Garden Center (Isanti, MN), Hydrosun USA (Grasston, MN), Jewel Lane Farm (Chisago City, MN), Marshall's Farm Market (Eden Prairie, MN), Pahl Farms, Inc. (Apple Valley, MN) and Pine Tree Orchards, Inc. (White Bear Lake, MN).

Thanks also go to the volunteers who staffed the booth. A list of volunteers is included in the Minnesota Grown Notes on page 3.

Much of the satisfying work of life begins as an experiment;  
no experiment is ever quite a failure.

*Alice Walker*

## Beginning Grower Workshop Planned

A two-day Beginning Grower Workshop is planned for February 1 & 2, 2005 at the St. Cloud Civic Center. This two-day workshop will include discussions on developing your future plans and identifying the opportunities for your farm based on farm size and location, soil type, micro climate and area population. We are also planning educational sessions on soils, season extension, weed control, insect control, water management, disease identification, post harvest handling and more.

This workshop will address the needs of beginning growers. More experienced growers who attend the workshop will have the opportunity to review basic, and very important, concepts.

Further information on the workshop and a registration form will be included in the December 2004 issue of the MFVGA Newsletter. The Beginning Grower Workshop is sponsored by MFVGA, the University of Minnesota Extension Service and the USDA – Risk Management Agency. These organizations are equal opportunity providers.

## Strawberry & Raspberry Orders Provide Research Dollars

Over 287,000 high quality strawberry and raspberry plants were ordered through the MFVGA this spring and delivered to area growers.

Proceeds from the plant sales help fund several on-going small fruit breeding and management studies, including cultivar and selection trials in strawberries and blueberries, nitrogen nutrition of Mesabi strawberry, strawberry angular leaf spot and other studies led by Dr. David Wildung at the North Central Research and Outreach Center in Grand Rapids, MN. This funding also supports the strawberry and blueberry breeding and evaluation projects directed by Dr. Jim Luby at the Horticulture Research Center in Victoria, Pine Tree Apple Orchard, and the Sand Plains Station in Becker.

As you make plans for 2005, consider ordering your strawberry and raspberry plants through MFVGA. You get quality plants at affordable prices and the proceeds help fund small fruit research at the University of Minnesota, which benefits you and berry growers throughout the region. Berry order forms will be mailed out later this winter.

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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 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: March 1st for the April 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.

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## 2004 Directory Distribution

As this article was written, nearly 160,000 copies of the 2004 *Directory* have already been distributed and the on-line version has received much use. A total of 170,000 copies were printed.

## Dine Fresh – Dine Local

The Minnesota Grown Program is a proud partner in a new event to promote locally grown foods and the restaurants that serve them. Dine Fresh Dine Local is a special event scheduled for October 5th at 12-15 restaurants. Participating restaurants will have table tents that explain the benefits of local, sustainably grown foods. They will also be contributing 5% of their revenues for the evening to be split between the Minnesota Grown Promotion Group, Land Stewardship Project and the Food Alliance Midwest. Look for a summary of the event in the next newsletter.

## Thank You State Fair Volunteers!

A huge thank you goes out to all of the volunteers who helped staff the Minnesota Grown booth at the Minnesota State Fair. Literally tens of thousands of Minnesota consumers pass by the booth each year and see the display of produce and other Minnesota products. Nearly 10,000 *Directories* were distributed from the booth. While the display of beautiful products definitely impresses fairgoers, it's the interaction with our great volunteers that really influences consumers and their purchasing habits. Thank you to this year's volunteers who did such a great job encouraging people to buy locally.

Bob & Marie Petry

Sheryl and Davy Jones

Maria Stewart

Denny Havlicek

Lynn and DeAnna Brakke

Lorraine Englund

Tom Bilek

JoAnne Berkenkamp

Tammy and Ray Lensing

Ross Nelson

Roger Anderson

Dottie McKinley

Marilynn and David Boorsma

Sharon and Tom Pogreba

Sheryl and Lew Williams

Connie and Laura Mobry-Bathke

Linda Jensen

Karen and Willard Buchite

John Luhman

Elise and Bruce Jensen

Tim Mack

Jean, Steve and Chris Froehlich

Shelly Gifford

Bill and Nancy Bauer

Debbie Hegedus

Carol Morris

Bob and Judy Michaelis

Ginny Smith

Jodi Iliff

Bernie Shapiro

Scott and Susan Wagner

Sam Kedem

In addition to these volunteers, thank you to Tom and Marilyn for lining up and delivering the produce for the display!

## New TV Ads Promote Specialty Crops

A series of three new ads promoting Minnesota Grown products begins this fall on WCCO-TV. The first ad runs in late September and features apples, pumpkins and wineries. The second ad airs in mid-November and highlights Minnesota apples available in grocery stores. The last ad of the year features real Christmas trees.

The *Minnesota Grown Directory* has been featured on the wcco.com home page since May. These ads have already connected nearly 2,000 consumers to the on-line *Minnesota Grown Directory*. The Minnesota Grown program will have a link on the wcco.com home page through the end of December.

## New Price Cards are Popular

The newest Minnesota Grown promotional item is a thick, laminated 7" x 11" price card that can be re-used by writing with washable markers. These new price cards replaced the "blackboard" price cards. Over 2,000 cards have already been distributed and many marketers have commented that the new cards are easier to use and re-use than the previous cards.

Apple growers are reminded that the Minnesota Grown Program has a line of full-color apple price cards (Haralson, Regent, Fireside, Honeycrisp, McIntosh, Cortland, and a generic card without a variety name). Also available are large full-color posters with each of the six varieties listed above. PLU stickers and Quik Lok tags are available for purchase from UAP-LaCrescent at 1-800-551-5708.

## Record Number of Marketers Use the Minnesota Grown Logo

Participation in the Minnesota Grown Program continues to increase each year. In addition to setting a new record with 567 listings in the 2004 *Directory*, there are already 825 licenses to use the logo issued this year. The previous high total was 758 in 2003. Growers who are not yet licensed should contact Paul or Brian with the Minnesota Grown Program for details, or visit [www.minnesotagrown.com](http://www.minnesotagrown.com) for a downloadable application.

*Minnesota Grown information is supplied to MFVGA by Paul Hugunin (651-297-5510) and Brian Erickson (651-296-4939) from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, Ag Marketing Services Division. If you have any questions about Minnesota Grown, contact them at the numbers listed above.*

# Being Prepared to Manage Risk

By Dr. Laurence M. Crane, NCIS  
(National Crop Insurance Services)

“Be Prepared!” That’s good advice for Boy Scouts and farmers. In fact, one of the most difficult tasks farmers face is being prepared for unknown events. Being prepared means not only avoiding and / or minimizing negative events, but also being able to take advantage of positive events. This is the essence of risk management; being prepared to successfully respond to unforeseen negative and positive events.

There has been a lot written about the new risk environment farmers face as a result of the changes in the government farm program. The end result is that farmers now have both the freedom to succeed and the freedom to fail. With the responsibility to manage risk placed squarely back on each individual farmer, the need for successful planning is critical. A major crop loss without insurance would not only be a crop disaster, but the likely end of the farm because the federal government is no longer in the business of handing out disaster payments. A favorable swing in crop price without a marketing plan to take advantage of this swing, will be more than a missed opportunity, it will be a major reduction in farm business profit because profit margins will be narrower. Those who master the necessary business management skills will likely succeed, and those who don’t will likely fail. Management is the key.

The opportunities for professionals who have direct contact with farm producers should be obvious. Crop insurance agents who understand basic farm management principles can help farmers be prepared for the future by demonstrating the numerous ways crop insurance meets their risk management needs. Any service a crop insurance agent can provide to a farmer that enables the farmer to be a better manager and make correct decisions, by definition, is going to succeed.

There are four general steps for a farmer to follow in determining risk management preparedness. These steps can be stated as questions. Obviously, the answers will vary from farm to farm but the questions need to be answered and understood. In fact, an understanding of the answers to these questions will enable a farmer to respond correctly to changes as they occur.

## 1) What is the risk bearing capacity of my farm?

To adequately answer this question it is necessary to define what risk is, where it comes from, and what the impacts are. Also critical to answering this question is a complete understanding of the farm business in all aspects. Farmers who maintain current and complete records covering all aspects of the production, financing and marketing functions of their farm business have an advantage in answering this question. For those who don’t maintain adequate records, extension educators can provide regional budgets that can be used as crude proxies for actual farm production records. Detailed historic farm records are fundamental to documenting risk bearing capacity.


One approach to answering this question is to do so for each of the functional areas of the farm. Most farm management textbooks, at a minimum, identify (1) production, (2) marketing, (3) financing, and (4) policy as four functional areas to consider for assessing risk bearing capacity.

## 2) How much risk is my farm currently bearing?

This question is easy to answer once the first question is answered. In fact it is not possible to answer this question without having the same information needed before, namely, comprehensive production, marketing, and financial records at the enterprise level. Determining the degree of risk exposure is critical to preparing a risk management plan. Understanding the sources and degree of risks enables a farmer to tailor a plan to accomplish necessary goals. The answer to this question will go a long way to determining what specific insurance coverages are needed.

One of the most difficult management decisions for a farmer to make is how to respond to an event that is not clearly negative. Choosing between two events that both appear positive is not easy or simple. Understanding and being able to document what the risk capacity and current risk exposures are make it more likely that correct decisions will be made. Though feelings and emotion can be an important part of the decision process, they are subjective. There is no substitute for being able to make a critical analysis based on historical data and objective facts.

**Manage Risk** continued on page 5



**NOTICE TO  
NON-MEMBERS**

**In return for receiving the MFVGA newsletter, we ask a \$10 donation per year to cover printing and mailing costs.  
Thank You!**

**PLEASE NOTE:**  
If you no longer wish to receive our newsletter, please let us know.

## Farmers' Market One-Day Conferences Planned

The Minnesota Farmers’ Market Association (MFMA) is planning to hold two regional one-day conferences this fall. These educational sessions will be for people in direct sales such as farmers’ markets. The northern session will be held in November at the Ag Center in Staples, MN. The southern location and date are yet to be determined. When the details have been finalized, conference information will be posted on the MFMA website ([www.mfma.org](http://www.mfma.org)). Information will also be mailed to market managers.

Co-sponsors of the one-day conferences are the Minnesota Fruit & Vegetable Growers Association, the University of Minnesota Extension Service, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and the USDA - Risk Management Agency. These organizations are equal opportunity providers.

### 3) *How much risk do I want to bear?*

This question is subjective and consequently more difficult than the first two for some farmers to answer. Frequently, the answer is not the same for all of the owners/managers of the farm. It is not uncommon for husband and wife to differ greatly on what level of risk they want to bear. The more partners involved in the farm, the more possible conflicts. Because this is a subjective question there are no right or wrong answers. There are some definite danger zones, however; like when desire to bear risk exceeds the risk bearing capacity of the farm.

The economic reason individuals desire to bear risk is because of the risk-return tradeoff. Recall, the opportunity for risk is also the opportunity for profit (or loss). Problematically, more often than not the opportunity for loss is greater than the opportunity for profit. Often the consequences of a significant loss are fatal to poorly capitalized or inefficient farm businesses. Moreover, it is often the case that these farm managers are also willing to accept more risk than their fragile operations can safely bear. Having the ability and knowledge to be able to answer question (1) makes it possible to better answer this critical question.

### 4) *What risk management changes do I need to make?*

This is the most important question. In fact, it can't be answered without first answering the other questions. Conversely, when the other questions are adequately answered, the answer to this question appears rather straightforward.

Management is the secret to being prepared because preparing for the future is not a one-time event, it is a continuous process, just as record-keeping is a process and not just an event. One goal of answering these questions is for farmers to thoroughly understand the risk aspect of their business so that they, at any time, can determine how a current decision will impact the long-term health and success of their farm as a business.

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This issue of the MFVGA Newsletter is sponsored, in part, by the USDA – Risk Management Agency.

For more information on the Risk Management Agency visit their website at [www.rma.usda.gov](http://www.rma.usda.gov).

Information on the Farm Service Agency can be found at [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov).

## We Need Your Input on the AGR-Lite Crop Insurance Program

The July 2004 issue of the MFVGA Newsletter included information from a USDA-RMA Fact Sheet on the Adjusted Gross Revenue-Lite (AGR-Lite) crop insurance program. MFVGA is working with the University of Minnesota and the RMA to measure grower interest in the AGR-Lite program to determine whether to submit an application to make the AGR-Lite program available in Minnesota.

AGR-Lite is a revenue policy, rather than one based on acres and yield, as are most of the other crop policies. AGR-Lite is currently in 12 Northeast states and will be in five more states starting in 2005. The policy covers a wide variety of crops and livestock enterprises currently not covered by conventional policies in Minnesota, including fresh market sweet corn and strawberries.

AGR-Lite is a streamlined whole-farm revenue protection package. The plan provides protection against low revenue due to unavoidable natural disasters and market fluctuations that affect income during the insurance year. Most farm-raised crops, animals and animal products are eligible for protection. The program is based on the 5-year farm average revenue reported on IRS Form 1040, Schedule F or other IRS form. Therefore, minimal additional recordkeeping is required.

AGR-Lite can stand alone or be used in conjunction with other Federal crop insurance plans – such as Multi-Peril Crop Insurance, Crop Revenue Coverage and Income Protection, except AGR – by coordinating the insurance protection and benefits with other plans. When producers purchase both AGR-Lite and other crop insurance plans, the AGR-Lite premium will be reduced.

If you are interested in having AGR-Lite available in Minnesota, we need to hear from you. Call the MFVGA office at 763-434-0400, send a FAX to 763-413-9585, send an e-mail to [mfvga@worldnet.att.net](mailto:mfvga@worldnet.att.net) or simply return the yellow slip sent with your membership renewal form.

## Don't Forget NAP Sign Up Dates

The Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) sign up dates for 2005 are approaching. The United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) NAP program provides financial assistance to eligible producers affected by natural disasters. This federally funded program covers noninsurable crop losses and planting prevented by disasters. An eligible producer is a landowner, tenant, or sharecropper who shares in the risk of producing an eligible crop.

For more information and sign up dates for your crops, contact your local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office or go to FSA's website at [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov).

# U of M GLEANINGS

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

In July 1992, just a little over 12 years ago, the results of a survey that Bill Hutchison, Extension Entomologist, and I did soon after I arrived in Minnesota were published in this newsletter. I wanted to see what the postharvest needs of Minnesota's commercial fruit and vegetable growers were and get an idea of the general concerns of growers. After being in Minnesota for 13 years, I know a lot more of you growers. Most Minnesota fruit and vegetable farms are family enterprises, from 2 to 100+ acres, with a diversity of crops on each farm. A few farms wholesale product to supermarkets, food co-ops, and restaurants, but most of you sell retail, at Farmers Markets, roadside stands, or through community supported subscriptions. Most of you have more than one marketing outlet, so as not to put all your eggs in one basket. Most of you are content with the size of your operations, and like to keep it small enough for one family to handle. In 1992, about a third of the farms who completed the survey stated that they used organic production methods. Some farmers have retired since 1992, but other people are new to farming, as well as new to the United States.

In 1992, the top insect pests were cucumber beetles, Colorado potato beetle, European corn borer, corn earworm, cabbageworm, and cabbage looper. They are still major problems in Minnesota, but with the advent of Admire, Colorado potato beetles aren't as much of a problem as they used to be. Of course, other insect pests come in when there is a gap, like the green peach aphid that vectors potato viruses. Last year, the Asian ladybird beetle was a major pest. This year, the ladybeetle might not be so prevalent in the state. Also this year, the cool, wet, early spring was a problem, as were low temperatures throughout the summer. Growing tomatoes under high tunnels or plastic hoop houses was definitely a good idea this year! Twelve years ago, although high tunnels were used in other parts of the United States, they weren't common in Minnesota. They are now more prevalent here, especially in northern Minnesota, where Terry Nennich and Dave Wildung have been studying their use.

In 1992, marketing and promotion of product and other business matters were major concerns. I don't think this has changed. Although business at Farmers' Markets may be booming, growers are always looking for ways to sell more product. Also, this year's August freeze means that crop insurance for fruits and vegetables would have been welcome. Perhaps Minnesotans will get to apply for Adjusted Gross Revenue-Lite insurance soon.

In 1992, we thought that we would compile a computerized production

guide based on something developed by Bill Mansour of Oregon State University. Although the Minnesota Extension Service put up fact sheets on carrots, garlic, onions, and sweet corn, we never did get more fact sheets up on the web. Partly, this was due to the loss of an Extension Plant Pathologist working on vegetables, and the temporary loss of other Extension specialists to administrative work over the years. Instead of putting crop specific information on the web, we are slowly gathering insect, disease, and fertility deficiency pictures to upload. For example, Janna Beckerman has put up many pictures of fruit and vegetable diseases on the web at <http://www.extension.umn.edu/projects/yardandgarden/diagnostics>. Many of these pictures, as well as that of insects, weeds, and fertility problems, will be part of the beginning growers manual we are updating through a partnership agreement with MFVGA and the USDA Risk Management Agency Community Outreach and Assistance Partnership Program.

Finally, in 1992, growers wanted us to work on specific problems, such as developing a better red potato. We're still looking for ways to keep red potatoes red. The problems we've run across so far are that really red potatoes seem to have poor skin set, and the chemicals we've tried so far don't seem very effective, especially if the potatoes sit in sandy soil for weeks after vine-kill. Sitting in soil sets the skin, but robs the color. Controlling aster yellows, nematodes, and silver scurf were also high priorities in 1992. Aster yellows seems to be less of a problem recently, as is silver scurf, with the advent of Maxim and TOPS-MZ.

Now, twelve years after that first survey, we are in a time of budget cuts. We need to be smarter about how we use the resources we do have. We are continuing to work with new varieties of potatoes and apples, but may have to discontinue work on other minor crop species in the future. If we can no longer afford to mail information to you in the future, will you be able to access information we upload to the World Wide Web? What kinds of information do you need? What kinds of information are you willing to pay for? Because we no longer have a travel budget to visit your farms, how can we best learn what your problems are or help you diagnose those problems? We at the University of Minnesota would like to continue to help make your enterprises successful and sustainable, but we need to know what you think, what your needs and concerns will be into the next decade and no one can predict what the weather will be next summer or what new insect pests will fly into the state, but based on the experiences you've had farming, you can recall what kinds of problems you have faced, and what kind of help would have made farming easier or more economical. Please think about this, and if we ask you to fill out a survey, please respond.

## Sneak Preview of the 2005 Conference

We are currently finalizing the details and speakers for the 2005 Upper Midwest Regional Fruit & Vegetable Growers Conference. The annual conference will be held February 3 & 4, 2005 at the St. Cloud Civic Center in St. Cloud, MN.

We are planning an exciting conference for 2005 – take a sneak peek and plan now to attend. Here’s what we plan to offer:

- Organics Workshop – including discussions of cover crops, crop rotations, fertility, soil biology and manure management.
- Grower Showcases – Berry, Business Management & Marketing
- Pumpkins & Pumpkin Redux – some of the material will be presented twice so you won’t miss anything.
- Melon Production
- Berry Production & Marketing – full details in the December newsletter.
- Business Management – including return on investment and estate planning topics.
- Tomatoes – disease & variety trial, plasticulture & rowcovers, ripening & post-harvest handling.
- Sweet Corn – corn earworm, weed management, types of sweet corn, soil fertility and more.

- Apples & Other Tree Fruit – including a “Year in Review”, discussion of tree supports, and Dr. Brian Smith’s presentation on his work with plums.
- Direct Marketing
- High Tunnels & Plasticulture – including high tunnel raspberry production, information on colored mulches, drip irrigation and more.
- Specialty Crops – potatoes, cut flowers and more.
- Information on how to set up on-farm trials for berry and vegetable growers and resources available to growers.
- Updates on on-going research projects.

The December 2004 and February 2005 issues of the MFVGA Newsletter will carry the full program schedule plus information on our guest speakers, session highlights and much more.

We are also planning a separate two-day “Beginning Grower Workshop” to be held on February 1 & 2, 2005, also in St. Cloud. Watch for more details on our upcoming educational opportunities in the December 2004 issue of the MFVGA Newsletter.

The 2005 Upper Midwest Regional Fruit & Vegetable Growers Conference is sponsored by MFVGA, the University of Minnesota Extension Service, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and the USDA – Risk Management Agency. These organizations are equal opportunity providers.



**2004 Summer Field Day at Pine Tree Orchard in White Bear Lake, MN.**

Part of the group tours the apple orchard (left). Bill and John Jacobson in the pumpkin patch (right).

Thanks to the Jacobsons for opening their operation to other growers. It was a great day!!

# MFVGA MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

## October 1, 2004 - September 30, 2005

Farm/Company Name \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Crop  Apples  Berries  Vegetables

Crops \_\_\_\_\_

**Names of direct members:**

(grower, spouse, employees, partners)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**MEMBERS:**

Gross Sales	Dues	
Up to \$25,000	\$ 75.00	
\$25,000 - \$75,000	125.00	
\$75,000 - \$225,000	225.00	
Over \$225,000	325.00	\$ _____

Direct Membership includes a subscription to one of the following periodicals. Please indicate which publication you would like to receive. Choose one.

- \_\_\_\_ American Fruit Grower
- \_\_\_\_ The Fruit Growers News
- \_\_\_\_ American Vegetable Grower
- \_\_\_\_ The Vegetable Growers News
- \_\_\_\_ Northland Berry News

(An additional \$10.00 fee is required to receive the Northland Berry News.) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Be sure to tell our advertisers  
"I saw your ad in the MFVGA Newsletter"**

**ASSOCIATE MEMBERS:**

(Dues are \$25.00 per year.)

Associate members are related agri-business firms, educators, and suppliers. \$ \_\_\_\_\_

*Contributions or gifts to MFVGA are not tax deductible as charitable contributions; however, they may be tax deductible as ordinary and necessary business expenses.*

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Number \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

## ATTENTION TRADE SHOW EXHIBITORS

**The 2005 Upper Midwest Regional  
Fruit and Vegetable Growers  
Conference and Trade Show  
will be held February 3 & 4, 2005  
at the  
St. Cloud Civic Center  
in St. Cloud, MN.**

**Have we received your application?**

**Return it as soon as possible to  
reserve the booth(s) you want.**

**If you need an application or more info,  
contact the MFVGA office at  
763-434-0400.**

## Certification Cost Share Funds Available for Organic Growers and Handlers in Minnesota

St. Paul, MN – The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) is now accepting applications from certified organic Minnesota growers and handlers for organic certification cost share payments. MDA Diversification Specialist Meg Moynihan says the cost share funds are welcome to this fast-growing organic industry.

“Certified organic operations bear their own burden of proof and must pay a third party to verify their organic status,” said Moynihan. “This program exists to defray those costs, which can range from several hundred to several thousand dollars each year.”

Both certified organic farmers and certified organic handlers (processors, distributors and retailers) may participate. Applicants are eligible for reimbursement of 75 percent of their certification costs, with a maximum of \$500 per farm or company. Organic farmers also holding a processing certificate are eligible for two payments, but must submit two separate applications.

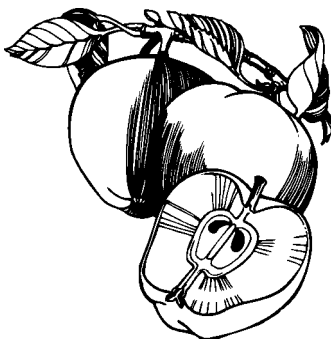
The MDA is administering this year’s program with funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture made available by the 2002 Farm Bill. Last year, 206 certified organic farmers and 44 certified organic processors participated in the Minnesota program, which distributed almost \$100,000.

To qualify, applicants must provide copies of a valid organic certificate and itemized costs incurred for certification between October 1, 2003 and September 30, 2004. Eligible expenses include membership, application, and inspection fees, as well as user fees. Applications must be postmarked by November 15, 2004.

Application forms and other materials are available on the MDA organic web site at [www.mda.state.mn.us/esap/organic](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/esap/organic). Interested growers and handlers may also call Meg Moynihan at 651-297-8916 to request an application or ask questions about the program.

Laughter is sunshine in a house.

*William Makepeace Thackeray*



## Unique Hotline Offers Practical Information to Beginning Organic Farmers

### Hotline Connects Minnesota's Beginners with Seasoned Organic Producers

St. Paul, MN – The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) and the University of Minnesota Southwest Research and Outreach Center (UM-SWROC) are pleased to announce a resource hotline for beginning organic farmers in Minnesota.

Minnesota Organic Farmers’ Information Exchange (MOFIE) is a group of 21 seasoned, certified organic Minnesota growers who answer beginners’ questions via telephone or e-mail. These volunteer advisors have experience in a wide variety of organic production systems including cash grains, livestock and dairy, fruits and vegetables, and even maple syrup. They can answer questions about topics such as proper planting dates, variety selection, fertility, weed and disease control, conservation, marketing and certification. To keep the volume of calls manageable for these volunteers, they are only able to accept questions from Minnesota growers.

Mentor farmers Mark and Wendy Lange grow a variety of organic grains and run a certified organic on-farm flour mill near Milan, in western Minnesota. “We decided to become mentors because of the great support we received three years ago when we began organic farming and needed help with our own operation,” said Wendy Lange. “The support we received was a very big part of us getting a jump-start in our efforts and now we can help someone else with their questions.”

This project is co-sponsored by the MDA and UM-SWROC, with financial support from the United States Department of Agriculture Risk Management Agency Community Outreach and Assistance Program (USDA-RMA). These organizations are equal opportunity providers.

The service is intended to promote discussion and information sharing about organic agriculture among Minnesota farmers. Mentors have been included based on recommendations by their peers. MDA, U of M SWROC and RMA do not endorse, approve, certify or control the information that mentors provide, nor do they guarantee its accuracy, completeness, or efficacy. When contemplating changes to farming practices, it’s a good idea to consult multiple sources of information.

Minnesotans can get copies of the mentor list free of charge at <http://mofie.coafes.umn.edu> or by calling the Southwest Research and Outreach Center at 507-752-7372.

## The Value of Membership

It is time to renew your membership in the Minnesota Fruit & Vegetable Growers Association. But what does it mean to be a member of MFVGA? What is the value of membership?

Although the membership dues have not increased for several years, the value of your MFVGA membership continues to increase. Membership in MFVGA makes you a partner in on-going projects and connects you with other growers and resources. It provides a means to facilitate research and present research results. It puts valuable resources directly into your hands.

MFVGA needs the support of the growers it serves and you need MFVGA. Budget cuts impacting the University of Minnesota and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture mean that we all need to look at alternative ways to finance research and educational programs. MFVGA has been instrumental in obtaining federal dollars through the USDA – Risk Management Agency and the RMA Community Outreach & Assistance Partnership Program that have continued needed programs and made valuable resources directly available to MFVGA members. Watch for project updates in upcoming issues of the MFVGA Newsletter.

MFVGA is an active and growing organization dedicated to working with growers like you to improve the fruit and vegetable industry in Minnesota for both producers and consumers. Your membership dollars support MFVGA's membership in the Minnesota Grown program. With increased awareness of the quality and quantity of the produce grown in Minnesota, consumers are seeking fruits and vegetables from local growers. Your membership dollars help connect producers and consumers.

Because of MFVGA, berry growers can participate in group orders of strawberry and raspberry plants with the proceeds supporting small fruit research. MFVGA was involved in getting a Section 24 (c) Special Local Needs Registration for the use of Stinger on Minnesota strawberries to control thistle and other labeled weeds. The process for a Special Local Needs Registration must be initialized by a grower organization.

If you are a vegetable or apple grower, you may be using the "Minnesota Grown" produce bag, developed by MFVGA with funds from a Specialty Crop Grant. Over 500,000 high quality, heavy-duty produce bags have been ordered and distributed to area producers and farmers' markets in the last two years.

Your membership in MFVGA means we can publish this newsletter five times each year. It means we can work with growers to offer summer tours. Your membership in MFVGA means we can offer the annual educational conference and trade show to give you the chance to interact with other growers and experts in many fields.

MFVGA is, and continues to be, a vital resource for area growers, but only if you are willing to support and use that resource. Your involvement is the key to success – both for you as a grower and for the association as a whole. If you are involved with Minnesota's small fruit or vegetable production you should belong to this association because of what this association is doing on your behalf. MFVGA supports you. Support MFVGA.

MFVGA is a strong association and it gets its strength from growers like you. Send your dues today. A membership application can be found on page 8.

## MARK YOUR CALENDARS

**The 2005  
Upper Midwest Regional  
Fruit & Vegetable  
Growers  
Conference & Trade Show  
will be held  
February 3 & 4, 2005  
at the  
St. Cloud Civic Center  
in  
St. Cloud, MN.**

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**Beginning Grower  
Workshop  
February 1 & 2, 2005**

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**Plan now to attend.  
An exciting program  
is being planned.**

**Look for program details  
and a registration form  
in the December issue  
of the  
MFVGA Newsletter**

### MINNESOTA FRUIT & VEGETABLE GROWERS ASSOCIATION

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