

MINNESOTA FRUIT & VEGETABLE GROWERS ASSOCIATION

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February, 2006 Volume 20, No. 1

A Note From The Board

Guest column by Terry Nennich
U of M Regional Extension Educator,
Commercial Vegetable and Fruit Production

Vacation is over – back to work. It seems like just yesterday that the fall season ended and we all breathed a sigh of relief.

Now that the holidays are past and we all celebrated our success in 2005, it's time to get really serious about the 2006 season. I believe that much of the profit for 2006 will be made before the planting season begins - in planning for production and marketing.

Start by identifying things that you feel went extremely well in the past – things you really would not want to change. I recommend you do this by crop or enterprise. Second, identify things that went just okay – maybe they should be changed, but if they aren't things are not extremely jeopardized.

The last step is to list things you feel must be changed for 2006 to increase profitability. Again, do it by crop. Things that may surface are variety selection, fertility management, planting/harvesting efficiency, labor management, fuel or energy conservation, irrigation scheduling and marketing. Small improvements in each area can substantially increase profits.

Don't overlook the basics such as soil testing, leaf analysis and a good cash flow. Look at both long and short-term planning.

Consider introducing new technology into your operation this year (at least one new thing). These may include things such as high tunnels, plastics, drip irrigation, row covers, irrigation scheduling with computer technology or electronic labor management. Consider setting out an area for your own test plots. They don't need to be extremely scientific, but they should be observational.

Take time to review your marketing. Ask yourself, "How can I get more of the consumer dollar?" This can be accomplished by really understanding your consumer needs and wants, along with the psychology of direct consumer marketing. Ask yourself, "What makes my farm or the products I produce unique?" If you don't have a good answer, you are probably producing "commodities". Commodities usually are not on the high profit list. It may be time to assess where you are at and where you are going.

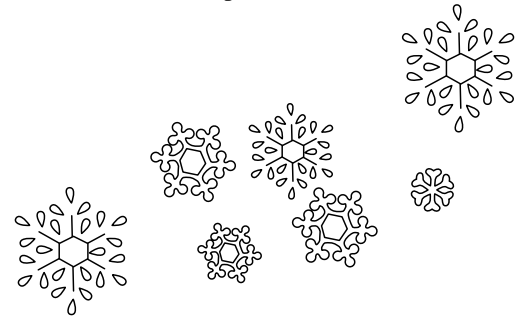
The Upper Midwest Regional Fruit and Vegetable Growers Conference, which will be held in St. Cloud on February 2 & 3, 2006, will help you answer many questions and give you a lot of ideas for the future. If you are just starting out in fruit and

vegetable production, seriously consider attending the Beginning Grower Workshop on January 31 and February 1.

I have heard comments from growers throughout the years that these shows and educational sessions cost money to attend. The cost that a producer pays is actually only a small fraction of the total cost of providing these educational sessions. Your annual operating budget should include a line item called education. Education is a cost of doing business and is the best return for the dollars invested. Because of state and federal budget cuts in recent years, considerably less Extension staff are available for one-on-one consulting and direct problem solving. That means that attendance at educational sessions like the Upper Midwest Regional Fruit and Vegetable Growers Conference is essential.

In closing, I would like you to consider the statement "If you think that the cost of education is high, you really don't want to know the cost of ignorance." You will either have a budget line on your cash flow for education, or one will be substituted for ignorance. (Which will be many, many times higher than the cost of education.)

See you in St. Cloud. Watch the MFVGA Newsletter for details on other educational events planned for 2006.



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Grower Profile – Anne Geyer, Westmoreland Berry Farm

Westmoreland Berry Farm and Orchard (WBF) is a seasonal retail farm site along the Rappahanock River adjoining the Voorhees Nature Preserve in Westmoreland County, Virginia.

The historic property was originally patented along the Rappahanock River in 1641. In 1803, the plantation was known as Leesville. During the Civil War, the plantation home above the English style terraces was bombed and burned by the Union gunboats. In 1983, Chuck and Anne Geyer began managing the transformation of the riverside into the Westmoreland Berry Farm for the Vorhees family.

Westmoreland Berry Farm is more than just berries. They have pick-your-own berries in season plus already picked berries and orchard crops in the farm market. They have famous fruit shortcakes and berry sundaes, fresh area grown fruits & vegetables, jams and other culinary delights, flowers, plants and garden items. They also sell their produce through farm markets and wholesale connections.

Did you know that WBF visitors have arrived by helicopter, horseback, mules, canoes, bicycle, motorcycle, boat, kayak, ATV, motorboat and car! And what else do the visitors find at WBF? Goats high in the sky (literally) – a barnyard out the box!

Anne Geyer will showcase the Westmoreland Berry Farm on Thursday afternoon, February 2, 2006 during the Berry Production & Marketing session at the Upper Midwest Regional Fruit & Vegetable Growers Conference in St. Cloud. It'll be a fascinating session you won't want to miss.



Grower Profile: Doug and Lois Hoffbauer

Doug Hoffbauer graduated from the University of Minnesota in Forestry in 1976, but got convinced to grow sweet corn and vegetables by relatives who are grain farmers in Renville County. Doug and Lois Hoffbauer have been members of the Duluth Farmers' Market since then and Lois is currently the market chair person.

The Hoffbauers have grown "hot house" tomatoes for 20 years and lately became interested in the "high tunnel" concept. They currently have two 26' x 96' Farm Tek houses, one in fall bearing raspberries and one in tomatoes. In addition, they have their old 22' x 48' JR Johnson house in grape tomatoes and "English cucumbers." They grow about eight acres of fruits and veggies with one acre in "Boyne" raspberries. All are marketed at the Duluth Farmers' Market. Their hope is that the fallbearing raspberries will piggyback the summer berries to extend the season. Last year was the establishment year in the tunnel and they hope that this year will meet their expectations.

In addition to their fruit & veggies, the Hoffbauers raise and sell 3,000 free-range chickens each year at the market. They also have 30 acres of Christmas trees and an active website for mail-order wreaths.

Doug and Lois Hoffbauer will talk about their high tunnel experiences during the Advanced High Tunnel session on Friday afternoon, Feb. 3.



The Past, the Present and the Future of Sweet Corn Weed Control

Sweet corn weed control should be easy, but it isn't. Many different genetic types and hybrids, with various levels of tolerance or susceptibility to herbicides make weed control programs complex and difficult. Carryover from some herbicides may injure succeeding crops. Herbicide resistant weeds are increasing. Several new herbicide registrations add to the weed control choices but also require careful use and expanded knowledge of plant genetics, herbicide chemistry and soil physics.

Featured speaker Dr. Bernie Zandstra from Michigan State University and Dr. Roger Becker from the University of Minnesota will join forces to bring you an excellent session on weed control in sweet corn.

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.

**Upper Midwest Regional Fruit &
Vegetable Growers Conference
February 2 & 3, 2006
St. Cloud Civic Center
St. Cloud, MN**

Sponsored by the
Minnesota Fruit & Vegetable Growers Association
in cooperation with the
University of Minnesota Extension Service
Minnesota Department of Agriculture
USDA-Risk Management Agency

Thursday morning, February 2, 2006

7:00 a.m. Registration begins
8:45 – 10:00 GENERAL SESSION
 8:45 – 9:00 Welcome / Announcements
 9:00 – 9:30 Why use technology in your farm business? "Cultivating Peace of Mind" – Win Cowgill, County Agricultural Agent and Regional Fruit Agent – Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
 9:30 – 10:00 AGR-Lite – What it is and the potential benefits to Minnesota specialty crop producers – Gary Hachfeld – U of M Extension Service
10:00 – 10:30 BREAK TO THE TRADE SHOW
10:30 – noon SESSION I: BERRY PRODUCTION
 10:30 – 11:30 Year in review – Grower participation
 11:30 – noon Mulch makeover and weed control in strawberries – Steve Poppe, U of M, WCROC
10:30 – 12:10 SESSSION II: ASPARAGUS
 10:30 – 10:50 Getting it right from the start – Terry Nennich, U of M Extension Service
 10:50 – 11:20 Grower Profile: Russ and Trese Willenbring – Produce Acres, Cold Spring, MN
 11:20 – 11:40 Return on investment – Dr. Karl Foord, U of M Extension Service
 11:40 – 12:10 Maximizing asparagus yields through good weed control practices – Dr. Bernie Zandstra, Michigan State University
10:30 – noon SESSION III: FARMERS' MARKETS
 10:30 – 11:30 Displays and merchandising – Grower panel
 11:30 – noon What's selling at the market – Jack Gerten, St. Paul Farmers' Market and Dan Whitcomb, Princeton Farmers' Market
10:30 – noon SESSION IV: SWEET CORN
 10:30 – 11:20 The past, the present and the future of sweet corn weed control - Callisto introduction, Atrazine replacement strategies, & herbicidal weed management – Dr. Roger Becker, U of M – Dept. of Agronomy & Plant Genetics & Dr. Bernie Zandstra, Michigan State University
 11:20 – 11:40 Fungicide trial – Dr. Vince Fritz, U of M
 11:40 – noon Earworms & silk clipping – Dr. Bill Hutchison, U of M – Dept. of Entomology & Terry Nennich, U of M Extension Service

noon – 1:15 PM LUNCH

Thursday afternoon, February 2, 2006

1:15 – 4:45 SESSION I: BERRY PRODUCTION & MARKETING
 1:15 – 2:00 Grower profile – Anne Geyer – Westmoreland Berry Farm, Oak Grove, Virginia
 2:00 – 2:30 Strawberry anthracnose: Managing the risk – Dr. Mark Gleason, Iowa State Univ.
 2:30 – 3:00 **BREAK TO THE TRADE SHOW**
 3:00 – 3:45 Annual strawberry production system for Minnesota – Steve Poppe, U of M, WCROC
 3:45 – 4:15 WeedCast: An easy-to-use web-based model for predicting weed emergence on your farm – Frank Forcella, Research Agronomist, USDA-ARS Soils Lab, Morris
 4:15 – 4:45 Small fruit variety trial – Dr. Jim Luby – U of M, Dept. of Horticultural Science

1:15 – 4:45 SESSION II: HIGH TUNNELS FOR BEGINNERS
 1:15 – 2:00 Understanding the basics of high tunnel production – Terry Nennich, U of M Extension Service
 2:00 – 2:30 Drip irrigation & water needs in high tunnels – Jerry Wright, U of M Extension Service
 2:30 – 3:00 The economics of high tunnels – Dr. Karl Foord, U of M Extension Service
 3:00 – 3:45 **BREAK TO THE TRADE SHOW**
 3:45 – 4:15 Basic soil management – Dr. Carl Rosen, U of M – Dept. of Soil, Water & Climate
 4:15 – 4:45 Grower experiences – Dallas Flynn, Ron Branch, Doug Hoffbauer

1:15 – 4:30 SESSION III: ORGANIC SESSION
 1:15 – 1:45 Overview – Gary Brever, Ploughshare Farm
 1:45 – 2:15 Cover crops, practical application – Greg Reynolds, Riverbend Farms
 2:15 – 3:00 **BREAK TO THE TRADE SHOW**
 3:00 – 3:30 Compost – Tom Halbach, U of M – Dept. of Soil, Water & Climate
 3:30 – 4:30 Weed biology & you: The secrets weeds don't want you to know – Dr. Roger Becker, U of M – Dept. of Agronomy & Plant Genetics

1:15 – 4:30 SESSION IV: TECHNOLOGY
 1:15 – 1:45 Capture of payroll and yield data made easy with technology – Win Cowgill, County Agricultural Agent and Regional Fruit Agent – Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey; and Karl Foord, U of M Extension Service
 1:45 – 2:15 Basic tools for using GPS & personal handheld devices in your farm business – Win Cowgill and Karl Foord
 2:15 – 3:00 **BREAK TO THE TRADE SHOW**
 3:00 – 3:45 Web marketing & sales – Duane Hayes, Paradise Valley Buffalo Ranch – Bagley, MN
 3:45 – 4:30 Managing customer databases

4:45 MFVGA Annual Business Meeting

5:15 Social hour

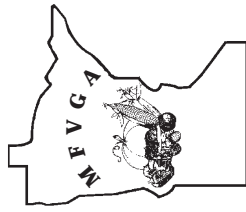
6:30 Minnesota Grown Banquet
 Speaker: Gary Berg – "Simple Truths"

Upper Midwest Regional Fruit & Vegetable Growers Conference & Trade Show

February 2 & 3, 2006 – St. Cloud, MN

All educational sessions will be held at the St. Cloud Civic Center.

Sponsored by: *Minnesota Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association, University of Minnesota Extension Service, Minnesota Department of Agriculture, USDA-Risk Management Agency*



Attendee's Name (Please print)

Attendee's Name (Please print)	Full Registration Conference & Trade Show (Thursday & Friday) February 2 & 3			Thursday Night Banquet	One-day Registration Circle One Thursday Friday			Trade Show Only	Total
	First member* from farm/company	Each additional mbr. from farm/comp.	Non-member (Per person)		First member* from farm/company	Each additional mbr. from farm/comp.	Non-member (Per person)		
	\$85.00	\$20.00	\$160.00	Per person	\$25.00	\$65.00	\$20.00	\$90.00	\$10.00

*Member registration rates are available to members of the MFVGA. Pre-registration is encouraged. There will be an additional \$10.00 per person charge for those registering at the door. Registration forms must be received in the MFVGA office by Friday, January 27th to be considered pre-registered.

Individual or Farm Name _____

Address _____

City _____ County _____ State _____ Zip _____

(_____) _____ Phone _____

What is your primary crop? Vegetables Berries Apples Other _____

Thursday and Friday registration includes admittance to all educational programs, trade show and a copy of the *Proceedings* book. It does not include the Thursday banquet. Trade show only registrations do not include admittance to the educational sessions or a copy of the *Proceedings* book.

TOTAL ENCLOSED _____

Please indicate method of payment:

Check (payable to MFVGA) VISA® MASTERCARD®

Number _____ Exp. Date _____

Signature _____

Return this form with payment to:

MFVGA
15125 W. Vermillion Cir., NE, Ham Lake, MN 55304

MFVGA MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

October 1, 2005 - September 30, 2006

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 \$ _____

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.

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO MFVGA

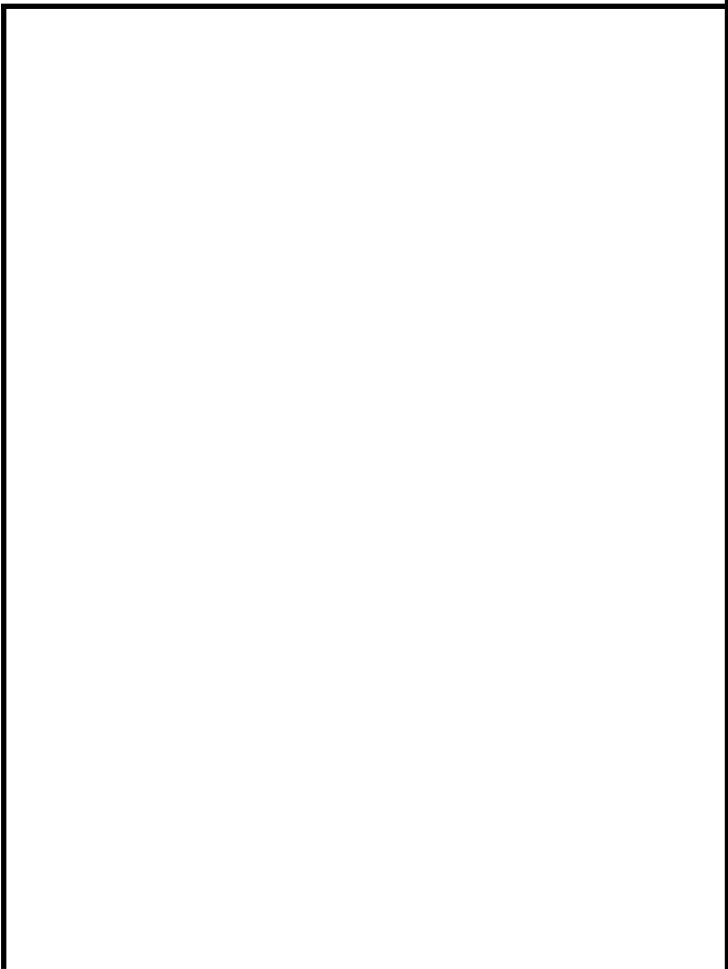
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**Be sure to tell our advertisers
 "I saw your ad in the MFVGA Newsletter"**

Upper Midwest Regional Fruit & Vegetable Growers Conference & Trade Show

St. Cloud Civic Center, St. Cloud, MN
February 2 & 3, 2006

Beginning Grower Workshop

Radisson Suites Hotel, St. Cloud, MN
January 31 & February 1, 2006

Farm Transition & Estate Planning: Build Your Exit Strategy

Radisson Suites Hotel, St. Cloud, MN
February 1, 2006

Accommodations are available at:

Best Western – Kelly Inn 320-253-0606

Room block will be released 1/1/06
Single Rate - \$74 Double Rate - \$80

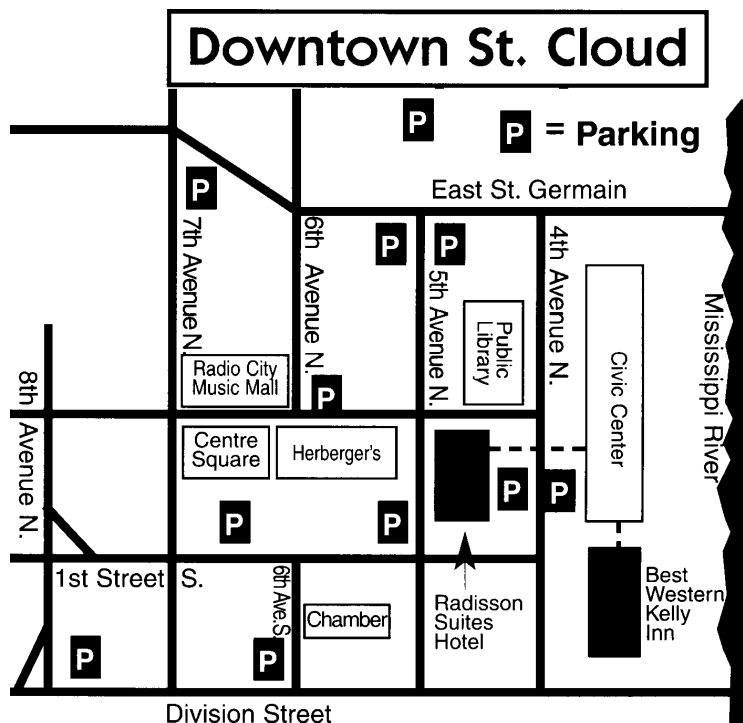
There is direct access to the Civic Center from the Best Western-Kelly Inn.

Mention MFVGA or "Fruit & Vegetable Growers" to receive conference room rates.

The Radisson Suites Hotel 320-654-1661

Room block will be released 1/1/06
Rate for 1 or 2 people - \$ 94

The Radisson Suites Hotel is connected by a skywalk to the St. Cloud Civic Center.



Conference Scholarships Available

A limited number of scholarships are available for the Upper Midwest Regional Fruit and Vegetable Growers Conference to help defray registration fees for commercial growers and students attending the Thursday and Friday educational sessions. Scholarships may also be requested for the Beginning Grower Workshop on January 31 & February 1, 2006. The MFVGA scholarship fund was established with dollars from the USDA-Risk Management Agency and our Specialty Crops Grant. Scholarships cannot be applied to trade show admittance.

Scholarships 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 horticultural science.

Completed scholarship applications for the 2006 conference must be received in the MFVGA office and approved before January 20, 2006. 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@msn.com.

★ ★ ★ SESSION SPOTLIGHT ★ ★ ★ ORGANIC SESSION

Thursday afternoon, Feb. 2

Did you ever want to get paid upfront for the produce you grow? If you are a farmers' market grower, did you ever think that your Saturdays could be better spent on the farm or with your family? Gary Brevier of Ploughshare CSA in Alexandria will be giving an overview of his farm and the CSA movement in general, a movement which he thinks has virtually limitless potential in providing sustainable farmers with a strong, healthy livelihood. During his presentation, Gary will also be touching on the field planning and marketing aspects that are unique to an organic vegetable CSA.

Upper Midwest Regional Fruit and Vegetable Growers Conference

2006 Speaker Directory

The following individuals are scheduled to speak at the Upper Midwest Regional Fruit and Vegetable Growers Conference in St. Cloud, MN on February 2 & 3, 2006. We anticipate the educational program will be presented as scheduled, see pages 3 and 4, but unexpected changes are sometimes necessary.

Pat Altrichter and her husband own 220 acres three miles west of Randall in Central Minnesota. They run about 80 head of beef brood cows and background the calves to about 700-800 pounds. As a way to diversify their current operation and increase their income with less labor input and chemical use, they are developing a pick-your-own berry patch mainly featuring Saskatoons, an old berry gaining lots of new attention. Pat and her sister, Judy Heiling, are working together on the Saskatoon project.

Dr. Neil Anderson is a floriculture breeder/geneticist who directs the herbaceous perennial breeding program at the University of Minnesota. He has recent experience in the commercial flower seed industry as a flower breeder, potted plant production manager and new crop specialist. His research program focuses on winter hardiness, re-flowering (day neutrality), and invasiveness of herbaceous perennials. Dr. Anderson coordinates the annual bedding plant trials for the St. Paul campus. He also conducts winter hardiness testing of new herbaceous perennials at five trial sites in Minnesota.

Bill Bauer and his wife, Nancy, own and operate Bauer Berry Farm in Champlin.

Dr. Roger Becker studies weed management in processing sweet corn and peas, wild rice, purple loosestrife in wetlands and environmental impacts of herbicide and non-herbicide weed management systems.

Gary Brever is the owner and operator of Ploughshare Farm located north of Alexandria, Minnesota. Started in 2002, this farm is now growing vegetables on more than 14 acres and provides food to over 150 members through a CSA membership. Gary also founded "The Food for Folk Project" – a non-profit organization that gets sustainable food to low income organizations throughout Minnesota.

Win Cowgill joined the faculty of Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, as a county agricultural agent in 1978. He completed his undergraduate degree in Horticulture at Delaware Valley College (74) in Doylestown, Pennsylvania and a Masters Degree in Pomology at Rutgers. He has been employed as a county agricultural agent with Rutgers Cooperative Extension where he started at the rank of Instructor and was promoted to Professor I in 1993. Win Cowgill is an area fruit agent who conducts numerous applied research projects in tree fruit and vegetable crops at the Rutgers Snyder Research & Extension Farm. Cowgill is also the co-owner and co-webmaster of the Virtual Orchard with Jon Clements.

Dallas Flynn grew up in Lowry, MN and graduated from High School in Glenwood, MN. After serving in the Army, he went back to school and received degrees in Industrial Arts (BS) and Special Education (MS) with additional advanced studies in Engineering. He has owned several manufacturing facilities in Detroit Lakes as well as a manufacturing plant in Santa Domingo, Dominican Republic. He also built, staffed and trained 500 workers at a plant in The Peoples Republic of China. Dallas is currently retired and living a life-long dream as a Naturally Certified Farmer. He owns a 164-acre farm south of Frazee, MN and grows general produce along with his main crop of Shiitake mushrooms. He has a high tunnel as well as outside gardens for vegetables and fruits. He sells his produce at the Detroit Lakes Farmers' Market.

Karl Foord is a Regional Extension Educator in Horticulture with the University of Minnesota Extension Service. Karl received his Master's degree in Horticulture from Rutgers University and his Ph.D. in Genetics from the University of California at Davis. He worked for a biotech company in the San Francisco bay area for eight years where half of his assignments were international. While working in the research department, his curiosity was piqued about the way that business decisions were made. He moved to Minnesota, joined Extension, married a Minnesota woman, and earned a Master's in Business Administration (MBA) in finance and entrepreneurship. His area of emphasis is customer awareness and customer retention. Karl is based at the Regional Extension Center in Farmington.

Frank Forcella is a research agronomist with the USDA – Agricultural Research Service. He works out of the North Central Soil Conservation Research Lab in Morris, Minnesota.

Bill Foss has been gardening for 50 years and is a retired Master Gardener for Wright County. He has been growing giant pumpkins off and on for twenty years and has grown them seriously for the last two years. His giant pumpkins have earned him several awards and he plans to add to the list.

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.

Jack Gerten is the market manager at the St. Paul Farmers' Market.

Mark Gilbertson and his parents, Gary and Annette, operate Gilbertson Farms near Scandia, MN. They produce a variety of bedding plants and vegetables which they sell from their home farm store, their favorite road stand spot or one of 14 area farmers' markets.

Dr. Mark Gleason is a Professor and Extension Plant Pathologist at Iowa State University in Ames, Iowa.

Dan Guenther, along with his wife Margaret Pennings and their children own and operate Common Harvest Farm, a CSA near Osceola, Wisconsin. For the past 16 years, Guenther and Pennings have been leaders in the Community Supported Agriculture movement in the Upper Midwest.

Gary Hachfeld is a Regional Extension Educator in Agricultural Business with the University of Minnesota Extension Service. He is based at the Regional Extension Center in Mankato.

Thomas Halbach is an Extension Educator/Professor in the Department of Soil, Water and Climate at the University of Minnesota. Tom's expertise in waste management and water quality puts him in demand worldwide. He studies many types of wastes, from ash and cement to food and refuse. Halbach's field requires more than merely "getting rid" of wastes. He looks for beneficial uses for wastes, such as creating compost that can improve soil quality.

Duane Hayes has been raising bison for more than 20 years and owns and operates Paradise Valley Buffalo Ranch near Bagley, MN. As a way to increase exposure for his product and expand his marketing efforts, Duane turned to the World Wide Web. The Minnesota Grown banquet will feature bison from Paradise Valley Buffalo Ranch.

Judy Heiling grows about four acres of nursery stock including fruit trees and berries which she sells at home and at the local farmers'

Speaker Directory continued from page 8

markets. Although the operation has been very successful, she is working with her sister, Pat Altrichter, to further diversify and develop a pick-your-own berry patch featuring Saskatoons.

Doug & Lois Hoffbauer have been a mainstay of the Duluth Farmers' Market for more than 20 years and have recently erected two high-tunnel greenhouses to supplement their eight acres of commercial gardens. In one of the tunnels they are raising six varieties of raspberries in raised beds.

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.

Dr. Bill Hutchison is a Professor and Extension Entomologist with the University of Minnesota. He conducts IPM research that supports the productivity needs of vegetable and forage growers in the Upper Midwest. Both basic and applied research is done to implement integrated pest management (IPM) and resistance management programs for a variety of crops including sweet corn, cabbage, cucumber, carrot and alfalfa. He developed the VegEdge website for timely pest updates and fact sheets on vegetable insect pests and is a co-editor of the "Minnesota Fruit & Vegetable IPM News." He received his Ph.D. in Entomology from the University of Wisconsin.

Ray Kirsch is the Certification Coordinator for Food Alliance Midwest. He oversees the development of Food Alliance certification standards, manages the inspection and certification process and educates growers about Food Alliance certification.

Dr. Jim Luby teaches plant genetics at the University of Minnesota, Department of Horticultural Science. His research interests include utilization of wild germplasm in fruit crop improvement, genetic variation for health properties of fruit crops, development of efficient techniques to screen breeding material for resistance to cold temperature injury, and the relationship of plant growth and development to avoidance of winter injury. Active breeding programs are conducted in apples, grapes, strawberries and blueberries.

Dr. 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 Community and Technical 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.

Meg Moynihan is an Agricultural Diversification Specialist with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Resources Management Development Division. She works with MDA's Sustainable Agriculture Program which provides farmers and consumers with information on organic production practices and certification.

Terry Nennich is a Regional Extension Educator in Commercial Horticulture and Marketing with the University of Minnesota Extension Service. 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 can be reached at the Crookston Regional Extension Center.

Steve Poppe is the Horticulture Coordinator at the West Central Research & Outreach Center in Morris, MN.

Greg Reynolds is a certified organic farmer from Delano, MN. Riverbend Farm has been certified organic since 1994. Greg and his wife, Mary, cultivate 30 acres in a four-year crop rotation and they provide produce to around 20 area restaurants and co-ops.

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. He is also on the graduate faculty in soil science.

Dr. Cindy Tong is an Extension Postharvest Specialist for the University of Minnesota Extension Service. She has been with the University of Minnesota for 14 and a half years.

Fred Wescott is the president of Wescott Agri-Products, a privately held company that custom packs, distributes and imports wholesale tree fruits and other products. They have been servicing the Upper Midwest including Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, North Dakota and South Dakota for over twenty years and through business affiliations and partnerships, Wescott Agri Products has become a leading packer and distributor of the regional apple crop.

Daniel Whitcomb owns and operates JQ Fruit Farm in Princeton, Minnesota. He is also the market manager at the Princeton Farmers' Market.

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.

Russ & Trese Willenbring own & operate Produce Acres north of Cold Spring, MN. They have been growing asparagus since 1983. At that time they planted six acres and another four acres the following year. That field will soon be replaced with four acres planted in 2003. In 1990 they started using sustainable farming practices and went chemical free in 1999. Last spring they started making and using compost.

Jason Williamson is a sales representative for Rupp Seeds, Inc.

Jerry Wright is an Associate Professor and Extension Engineer in the Department of Biosystems and Agricultural Engineering with the University of Minnesota Extension Service. His interests are in irrigation and drainage water management practices for agronomic and horticulture crops and associated natural resource issues. 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. He does research on weed control in fruit, ornamental and vegetable crops. He authors the Michigan Weed Control Guide for Vegetable Crops bulletin and the weed control section of the Michigan Fruit Management Guide. He is also the Field Research Director of the IR-4 Center (National Program for Minor Use Registrations) at Michigan State University. Dr. Zandstra does weed control research on most vegetable crops and some fruit crops.



Simple Truths

Gary Berg speaks about “simple truths” in the work place and in life, reminding us that there are certain realities we need to pay attention to if we want to be our best and help those around us be their best. He has been described as a “human reminder” of what really counts in the workplace and in life.

What are some of these simple truths? Fair and equal are not the same thing – you need to know the difference. The customer is not always right – a few are

just bad customers. It is important to laugh often and laugh loud.

Gary Berg created his own company, G.L. Berg Entertainment, over 15 years ago because he believed in the positive power of laughter and sharing time together with friends and co-workers and families.

Gary’s philosophy for successfully running and growing an organization or business of any kind is based on common sense, honesty, working hard, caring about people, and not forgetting to laugh once in a while.

Join us for the “Minnesota Grown” banquet on Thursday, February 2nd. Gary promises to motivate, challenge, inspire – and make you laugh. The banquet menu will feature bison from Paradise Valley Buffalo Ranch.

★ ★ ★ SESSION SPOTLIGHT ★ ★ ★

Saskatoons -

An old berry gaining lots of attention

Saskatoons (also known as Juneberries, Serviceberries or Shadberries) have been a treasured wild fruit for years. Until recently they could only be picked in the wild and were a main food source for the native peoples and early settlers. A number of wild bushes have been selected for their superior fruit size, taste, yield, flowering time and overall productivity. The berries have a unique flavor, are naturally sweet, are very healthy (high in antioxidants and vitamins) and can be used a lot like blueberries. They are gaining in popularity and the demand is far exceeding the supply.

Pat Altrichter and Judy Heiling will talk about their efforts to diversify their current operations and increase their income with less labor input and chemical use through a pick-your-own berry patch featuring Saskatoons during the Friday morning Berry Production session on Feb. 3.

Peddling Your Pickles Safely?

Learn about the requirements of the Minnesota “Pickle Bill” legislation related to the sale of home processed / canned foods:

- pH meters & testing
- Labeling
- Recommended recipes
- Equipment
- Sanitation



March 28, 2006 – Staples, MN

March 30, 2006 – Waseca, MN

9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Instructors are University of Minnesota Extension Educators in Food Science.

More information will be included in the February issue of the MFVGA Newsletter or check www.mfyga.org for updates.



These institutions are equal opportunity providers.

BEGINNING GROWER WORKSHOP

January 31 & February 1, 2006

Radisson Suites Hotel, St. Cloud, MN

Sponsored by the

Minnesota Fruit & Vegetable Growers Association

U of M Extension Service

USDA – Risk Management Agency

Who should attend?

This workshop is for people thinking about starting a commercial fruit or vegetable operation and people already in commercial fruit & vegetable production. It is for people with no experience in farming, people transitioning from a "large garden" to commercial production, people who are transitioning from other types of agricultural production as well as commercial fruit & vegetable producers who are looking for a good review of the basics.

This workshop will help growers learn to identify a variety of potential problems and learn options and methods to control those problems and help minimize the potential for economic loss.

What's included?

Registration includes two full days of educational sessions, meals (supper on Tuesday and lunch on Wednesday) and a copy of the newly revised and expanded Minnesota Fruit & Vegetable Growers Manual for the Beginning Grower. (One manual per farm.)

Class is limited to 40 participants.

Scholarships are available.

Contact the MFVGA Office at 763-434-0400 or mfvga@worldnet.att.net for more information.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The Upper Midwest Regional Fruit & Vegetable Growers Conference & Trade Show will be held on Thursday and Friday, February 2 & 3, 2006. We encourage you to review the schedule included in this newsletter and attend both the Beginning Grower Workshop and the Upper Midwest Regional Fruit and Vegetable Growers Conference. Special registration is offered for those attending both the Beginning Grower Workshop and the Upper Midwest Regional Fruit and Vegetable Growers Conference.

Workshop Schedule

Tuesday, January 31, 2006

- 12:30 – 1:00 Registration
- 1:00 – 1:45 Why Are You Here? Introductions and Discussion – Terry Nennich
- 1:45 – 2:30 Developing Your Future Plans – Terry Nennich
- 2:30 – 2:45 Break
- 2:45 – 3:30 The Basics of Marketing – Karl Foord
- 3:30 – 4:15 Your Farm and It's Opportunities – Larry Zilliox
- 4:15 – 5:00 Location Farm Size
Soil Type Micro Climate
How the Area Population Impacts Your Business
- 5:30 – 6:30 Developing a Cash Flow Strategy for Your Operation – Karl Foord
- 6:30 Supper (Included with registration)
Grower Panel – How I Got Started and Where I Went Wrong

Wednesday, February 1, 2006

- 8:15 – 9:00 Season Extension Options – Terry Nennich
- 9:00 – 10:00 Soils 101 – Carl Rosen
- 10:00 – 10:15 Break
- 10:15 – 11:00 Handling the Crop from Harvest to Sale – Cindy Tong
- 11:00 – 11:45 Weed Control Strategies – Roger Becker
- 11:45 – 12:30 Lunch (Included with Registration)
- 12:30 – 1:15 Insect Control – Bill Hutchinson
- 1:15 – 2:00 Irrigation Water Management – Jerry Wright
- 2:00 – 2:45 Disease Identification 101 – Rick Abrahamson
- 2:45 – 3:00 Break
- 3:00 – 3:45 Risk Management Strategies – Record Keeping and Crop Insurance
Glenn Schafer, FSA and Cindy Crucea, USDA-RMA
- 3:45 – 4:15 Educational Resources for Beginning and Advanced Producers – Larry Zilliox
- 4:15 Evaluation and Wrap Up

Registration Fee:

- Tuesday Only Registration: \$100 per person
- Wednesday Only Registration: \$100 per person
- Tuesday and Wednesday Registration: \$150 per person
- Add the Thursday and Friday Conference sessions and Trade Show for a full four-day package: \$250 per person
- (Includes one year of MFVGA membership for new members.)

Beginning Grower Workshop Registration Form:

Name _____

Farm Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

One-Day Registration

Tuesday only _____ @ \$100 = _____

Wednesday only _____ @ \$100 = _____

Two-Day Registration

Tues. & Wed. _____ @ \$150 = _____

Four-Day Package

Tuesday – Friday _____ @ \$250 = _____

Total Enclosed:

Please indicate method of payment:

- Check (payable to MFVGA)
- VISA MASTERCARD

Number _____

Exp. Date _____

Signature _____

Return this form with payment to:

MFVGA

15125 W. Vermillion Cir. NE
Ham Lake, MN 55304

Are you struggling with how to transfer your farm business to the next generation?

We're pleased to invite you to attend "Farm Transition & Estate Planning: Build Your Exit Strategy", a practical and in-depth workshop.

Presented by the University of Minnesota Extension Service, this full-day workshop covers topics including:

- Farm business transfer strategies
- Tax issues related to the farm transfer
- Wills, trusts, life insurance, power-of-attorney, and long-term care issues
- Developing a written transfer plan
- Treatment of heirs in the transfer process



"Farm Transition & Estate Planning: Build Your Exit Strategy" will be held:

Date: *Wednesday, February 1, 2006*
Time: *9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.*
Location: *Radisson Suites Hotel*
404 W. St. Germain, St. Cloud, MN
Registration Contact: *Marilyn Johnson – MFVGA (763-434-0400)*
Registration Fee: *\$75.00 per farm - includes registration for 1 or 2 people*
Additional persons from the farm – add \$35 per person
(Lunch is included in the registration fee)

Space is limited, register today to attend this valuable workshop!

Registration Form:

Name: _____
Farm name: _____
Address: _____
City, State, Zip _____
Phone: _____
E-mail: _____

Registration fee – per farm (1 or 2 people) \$ 75.00
Additional person(s) _____ @ \$35.00 each _____
Total enclosed \$ _____

Please indicate method of payment:

Check (payable to MFVGA) VISA MASTERCARD

Number _____ Exp. Date _____

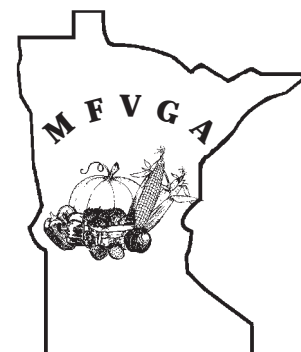
Signature _____

Return this form with payment to:

MFVGA

15125 W. Vermillion Cir. NE, Ham Lake, MN 55304

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
Extension
SERVICE



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MFVGA Policy on Conference Registration Cancellations and Refunds:

MFVGA will refund registration fees for the 2006 Upper Midwest Regional Fruit and Vegetable Growers Conference in full if the MFVGA office is notified before Friday, January 27, 2006. If the MFVGA office is notified after January 27, 2006 but before January 30, 2006, 75% of the registration amount will be refunded. No refund will be issued if registrations are cancelled after Monday, January 30, 2006.

Join us for the “Bull Session”

If you are coming to the Educational Conference and plan to be in St. Cloud on Wednesday, February 1, 2006, you are invited to join other growers and educators for an informal “Bull Session” beginning at 7:00 p.m. This is an excellent chance to visit with other growers, meet new people and renew old acquaintances.

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



**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.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs). Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (Voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410, or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



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.

Information on the Farm Service Agency can be found at www.fsa.usda.gov.

★ ★ ★ SESSION SPOTLIGHT ★ ★ ★ BERRY PRODUCTION

AURI Annual Strawberry Production System For Minnesota

By Steven R. Poppe, University of Minnesota
West Central Research and Outreach Center,
Morris, Minnesota

Strawberries produced with innovative cultural practices have the potential to reduce pesticide use in strawberries through innovative cultural practices. This project demonstrated how, with the use of biological mulch for weed management, costs can be reduced, soil compaction can be alleviated, and disease control will be minimal. This project will examine whether strawberries can be produced using an annual bed strawberry production system. Planting this system in the late summer directs vegetative growth into branch crowns, which produce flowers for next year, instead of runners. Late summer planting also avoids the heat, drought, and weed and disease pressure of early and mid-summer.

Commercial strawberry growers have limited availability of herbicides to control weeds in traditional production systems. Several of the major herbicides used in strawberry production have been banned or soon will be banned. Diminishing availability and increasing costs of herbicides used for weed control in strawberries is causing growers to seek non-chemical methods.

This is especially important now because growers prefer not to use synthetic chemicals in their production systems. Non-chemical replacements will not only substitute for herbicides, but also will curtail ill-advised use of off-label chemicals, and, ultimately, will provide an even safer product for human consumption. There is strong demand for domestically produced specialty crops that are pesticide free.

Steve Poppe will share the data results on plant growth, vigor, yield per acre and plant density for the 2004 – 2005 growing season during the Berry Production & Marketing session on Thursday afternoon, Feb. 2. He will also address the issues of cost-effectiveness of this annual production system as compared to a traditional matted row system. They kept track of all supply and plant related expenses as well as labor hours spent on this project. The rationale for this is to examine the economic feasibility of using this annual bed strawberry production system as compared to the traditional system.

See pages 3 and 4 for the complete schedule for the 2006 Upper Midwest Regional Fruit & Vegetable Growers Conference.

U of M GLEANINGS

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

It's near the end of the semester at the University of Minnesota as I write this column. This past semester, I've been teaching a freshman honors seminar class. The class has two goals. One goal is to teach the freshmen how to be successful college students - to not wait until the night before an assignment is due to start the assignment, to really pay attention to the syllabus they get from an instructor (it tells students how they will be graded, among other things), and to use library resources. The other goal is to teach them about all the factors involved in getting food from the farm to their mouths, using the tomato as an example. Teaching this class has made me more alert to the need to make Americans more aware about how their food gets to their table.

Over half of the students in my class are currently interested in veterinary medicine as careers, so tomatoes do not interest many of them per se. Many of them don't like to eat raw tomatoes, but they'll happily eat pizzas and salsa on chips. They don't seem to care where their food comes from or how it was grown as long as it tastes good and is cheap. Hopefully, my class has made the students more conscious food consumers.

The students have learned that there are lots and lots of varieties and types of tomatoes, and that they taste different from each other. Growers can teach customers this by listing the names of the tomatoes, potatoes, and pumpkins being sold. Apple growers do this; why not growers of other fruits and vegetables? This could enhance consumer awareness of varieties and create demand for certain varieties at farm stands.

The class visited Bushel Boy Farm in Owatonna and learned about energy and labor costs in raising tomatoes. The students enjoyed walking through the greenhouses. It wasn't what some of them expected, and they found the whole complex awesome. Some community-supported farms invite subscribers to volunteer at the farms or have open houses where subscribers are invited to tour the farms. Apple growers typically have hayrides through their orchards in the fall. The University of Minnesota holds an open house for the public one weekend a year in which the public is invited to hear talks on the St. Paul campus. If you farm in an urban or suburban area, and have the time, holding an open house for the

public could help your neighbors understand what's going on at your farm and bring in some new customers (check your insurance policy to determine if this is feasible).

The students heard from a speaker from the Minnesota Department of Health about produce-borne human diseases. It is thought that some human pathogens are seed-borne, especially in the case of sprouts and maybe even tomatoes. If this is true, then there is no way to get rid of the pathogens except by cooking the produce because the bacteria are inside the plants. Growers should be aware of this possibility, examine the source of water they use for irrigation and cleaning, be careful to exclude animals from packing sheds, and make sure that anyone handling produce washes their hands after using the toilet to avoid contaminating produce with human pathogens.

The students also learned about marketing produce from Dr. Jean Kinsey of the University's Food Industry Center. They were amazed to learn how many people handled food sold at supermarkets, fast food outlets, institutions like the university, restaurants, convenience stores, and vending machines, before it got to their mouths. Foodservice has 46% of all food dollars, with the majority of it going to restaurants and bars. This is increasing at an overall growth rate of 4% a year. Sales of produce are going down overall at traditional grocery stores, and up in nontraditional outlets like wholesale clubs and supercenters. On average, four meals per person per week are eaten away from home. Of Americans who cook, fewer buy from traditional supermarkets than from SuperTarget and Wal-Mart. A little less than half of Americans surveyed stated that they cook "from scratch" at home three times a week, but in cooking from scratch, 41% of the cooks use shortcuts like bagged salads, 45% used boxed or frozen meals, and 38% used heat and eat foods. As my students demonstrated, Americans are first concerned about taste, then convenience, and finally price or health. Despite the slow food movement, 91% of Americans watch TV while eating meals at home, 35% eat lunch at their desk, 26% often eat while driving, and 3% eat most of the time while driving. These data may be of interest to you if you are thinking about developing new, value-added products or trying to attract more customers. For example, maybe in 2006 you could test market baby potatoes that are easy to microwave and compare their sales to traditional sized tubers, or really work on developing Grandma Anna's salsa.

Although my students were a captive audience, they are an indication that we who work in agriculture can and should teach consumers about what it takes to get food from farm to fork. Maybe most of your customers will just be faces that quickly come and go, but some of them might like interacting and learning new things from you and your farm!



MINNESOTA GROWN

Fresh From Your Neighbor

Visit us in St. Cloud

Be sure to stop by the Minnesota Grown booth at the MFVGA Conference. You can sign up to use the Minnesota Grown logo, place your 2006 Minnesota Grown Directory ad, register for the Marketing Conference, and of course check out all the Minnesota Grown shirts, hats and aprons. It's also a great time to share your suggestions and comments about the Minnesota Grown Program.

Minnesota Olympian to Address Marketing Conference

Carrie Tollefson, member of the 2004 USA Olympic Team and native of Dawson, Minnesota will be speaking at the Minnesota Grown Marketing Conference! Tollefson is a big supporter of locally grown products and will be sharing a motivational message with the group. She'll be back in Minnesota after competing in the world championships in Germany that weekend. Make sure you've reserved Tuesday, March 14 on your calendars for this don't miss session! The conference is at the Continuing Education and Conference Center (formerly known as the Earl Brown Center) on the University of Minnesota's St. Paul Campus. Each room will be set-up classroom style to provide attendees with table surface for note taking. In addition to Tollefson, Barry Moltz and Lee Kaldor are both confirmed presenters for the day.

****Marketing Technology 101 by Lee Kaldor***

Rapid changes in technology have resulted in amazing marketing opportunities (and amazing headaches!) that weren't possible several years ago. This afternoon session will include an overview of the technology, current practices and best uses of the internet for e-commerce. Lee will involve attendees in some exercises involving search engines, design issues, security, and marketing. And at the end of the day Lee will pull out his crystal ball to deliver a forecast for the future to answer the question: What's coming next in the field of e-commerce as it relates to agri-marketers.

Lee has been teaching for four years at Mayville State University. He is also the CEO and President of ComMark, Inc., a web development and application design company. They have been in business since 1995 and have been providing e-commerce services since 1999. They built the ND Agriculture Department's Shopnd.com site in 1999 and still provide hosting and support for that site. They also work with St. Paul based Avenet LLC providing technical support for their clients all over the country and Canada. As always, the conference will feature a full day of presentations, including afternoon breakout sessions.

****You Need to Be a Little Crazy by Barry Moltz***

Barry Moltz is an entrepreneurship author and presenter from Chicago. Barry has been running small businesses with a great deal of success and failure for 15 years. His first book, "You Need to Be A Little Crazy: The Truth about Starting and Growing Your Business" describes the crazy ups and downs and emotional trials of running a business.

Barry is a nationally recognized speaker at 100 business events a year. He has received numerous awards such as Angel of the Year, and was inducted into the Entrepreneurship Hall of Fame. In 2001 and 2002 he was chosen as one of the Top 100 people in Chicago's Hi Tech community. He was appointed by the Illinois Governor in 2005 to serve on the board of the Institute for Entrepreneurship Education (IIEE). He also teaches entrepreneurship at the Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT).

Moltz has written articles for many national publications. He writes a column, "The Business Bunker" on small business for E-Prairie (www.eprairie.com) and for a local Chicagoland newspaper, "The Business Ledger". Moltz recently completed the foreword for Penguin Books' new "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Business Plans" to be published in October 2005.

Act Now to Participate in 2006 Directory

Listings for the 2006 Minnesota Grown Directory are pouring in and staff is busy entering listings and updating information. For just \$40, your listing will appear in the 170,000 printed copies and the internet version which receives over 20,000 visitors each year. If you weren't in the Directory last year, contact Brian Erickson at brian.j.erickson@state.mn.us or 651-201-6539 for details.

2006 Twin Cities Food & Wine Experience

A small amount of booth space is still available within the Minnesota Pavilion at the Twin Cities Food and Wine Experience. The show is held February 24-26 at the Minneapolis Convention Center. The show is attended by over 10,000 upscale consumers who will be sampling wine and gourmet food products. Contact Paul Hugunin at 651-201-6510 for details.

We've Moved

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture has relocated to a new building near the Capitol complex. The new building houses the Minnesota Department of Health as well as the MDA. The new address is 625 Robert Street North, St. Paul, MN 55155-2538. E-mail addresses stay the same but all phone numbers have changed. Here are the new numbers:

- Paul Hugunin: 651-201-6510
- Brian Erickson: 651-201-6539
- Ruth White: 651-201-6494
- Fax: 651-201-6114

Minnesota Grown information is supplied to MFVGA by Paul Hugunin (651-201-6510) and Brian Erickson (651-201-6539) 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.

Mulch makeover

AURI is helping sheep producers rework wool landscaping mats

By E. M. Morrison

Morris, Minn. — Minnesota lamb producers are not sheepish about taking a good idea back to the drawing board.

Several years ago, AURI helped the Minnesota Lamb and Wool Producers Association test a new landscaping mulch made from low-quality wool. The fabric was effective in strawberry trials at the University of Minnesota. But it had to be manufactured out of state, pricing it out of the market.

Still, wool landscaping fabric had so many advantages that the association decided to give it another try. Now AURI is helping sheep producers test a cheaper mulch made in Minnesota from low-value "clip wool", a byproduct of textile manufacturing. The revised wool mulch could offer fruit growers an economical alternative to herbicides. And farmers could see "new opportunities for a value-added product," says Al Doering, AURI technical services specialist in Waseca.

Effective, but expensive

The original wool mulch, tested from 1999 to 2001 at the West Central Research and Outreach Center in Morris, was made from low-quality wool worth 5 to 10 cents per pound. The wool was washed and processed into a soft, felt-like fabric, using a method known as needle punching.

During three seasons of strawberry trials, the single-ply wool mulch "nearly eliminated weeds from rows, promoted daughter-plant rooting and allowed maximum fruit yields," the research report stated. Weed control was as good or better than with conventional herbicides, and wool mulch kept the soil around plants cool and moist, leading to more robust growth, says horticulturalist Steve Poppe, who managed the research trials.

The disadvantage? Price.

The cost of collecting, washing and trucking wool to the nearest needle-punch plants in Ohio and Texas pushed the mulch price to about \$2,000 an acre. "That's too high for commercial strawberry growers".

Making it cheaper

Still, Minnesota sheep producers were not ready to give up on the idea, says Michael Sparby, AURI project director. "The benefits were so good, we asked, 'How can we get the cost down?'"

Sparby and Doering had worked with a Floodwood, Minn., company that makes roadside erosion-control mats out of waste agricultural fibers, such as wood and coconut. They wondered if Mat, Inc.'s fiber-mat manufacturing process could be modified for wool fibers.

The company was willing to try.

The first attempt failed. "The wool fibers were too long," Sparby says. "We needed a fiber of three-quarters of an inch or less. We were brainstorming all kinds of things — chopping the wool, pelletizing it." It was Bob Padula of Montevideo, a sheep farmer and president of the Minnesota Lamb and Wool Producers

Association, who suggested using the short fibers trimmed from wool blankets made at Faribault Woolen Mills.

"The fibers are about half an inch long," Sparby says. There is a market for them, but "they are an extremely low-value product." Landscaping mulch would be a new use for the fibers, Doering adds.

After several tries, Mat, Inc. came up with a wool mulch similar to the original needle-punch mat, but lighter weight and less dense. It was also much less expensive — about one-fifth the cost of the needle-punch mulch, Sparby says.

Comparing wool and herbicides

In May, the reformulated wool mulch was installed in transplanted strawberry plots at the Morris experiment station. The two-year trials are comparing wool with conventional herbicides and hand weeding. As in the previous wool mulch experiments, the research will look at weed growth, strawberry plant vigor, number of rooted daughter plants, and fruit yield.

Weed control through the end of July 2004 was good, even though the new wool mulch is thinner than the original version. More care was needed during installation to avoid tearing the mulch, he says, although it was easier to cut through for planting.

So far, the new wool mulch "is doing what it's supposed to be doing, and it's not breaking down yet. But we'll know more after next year when we see the yields."

Featured Speaker: Dr. Bernard Zandstra

Dr. Bernie Zandstra is a professor at Michigan State University. He does research on weed control in fruit, ornamental and vegetable crops. Current projects include weed control alternatives for methyl bromide in herbaceous ornamental production, weed control in seedling Christmas trees, controlled flaming for weed control between rows of vegetables, reduced rates of herbicides in vegetable crops, and new herbicides for residual control in fruit crops.

Dr. Zandstra authors the Michigan Weed Control Guide for Vegetable Crops bulletin and the weed control section of the Michigan Fruit Management Guide. He also is Field Research Director of the IR-4 Center (National Program for Minor Use Registrations) at Michigan State University. Dr. Zandstra does weed control research on most vegetable crops, including asparagus, snapbean, carrot, celery, sweet corn, cruciferous crops, cucumber, herbs, lettuce, mint, onion, pepper, strawberry and tomato; also apple, blueberry cherry, peach and raspberry.

Maximizing Asparagus Yields Through Good Weed Control Practices

Several new herbicides have been registered for asparagus recently. The new and previously registered herbicides give growers many options for pre- and post-emergence weed control. Choosing the best herbicide combinations and applying them at optimum timing will help growers obtain maximum yields for many years. Incorrect herbicide use can reduce yields and shorten the life of a field.



Plan Now to Order Your Minnesota Grown Produce Bags

We are currently planning our fourth annual group order of the “Minnesota Grown” produce bags. Over 730,000 of these popular bags have been distributed to a variety of producers licensed to use the Minnesota Grown logo. These bags are designed to hold a dozen ears of sweet corn without tearing, but they’re not just for fruits and veggies. A wide variety of Minnesota Grown producers have been very happy with the quality of the bags.

The bags are a heavy 1 mil white plastic bag printed with a dark green “Minnesota Grown” logo that includes the “Fresh From Your Neighbor” tag line. The bags are 23” x 7” x 12”. Bags must be ordered in increments of 1,000. The bags can be customized to include your farm name, market name, etc. The minimum for customized orders is 5,000 bags. You have the option of having the bags drop-shipped directly to you for an additional charge, or you can pick them up at a location in the Twin Cities area.

If you have ordered bags in the past or have expressed an interest in the bags, you will receive an order form. The order information will include ordering deadlines. Please note, in order to ensure timely delivery, your order must be received by the order deadline.

Samples of the bags and order forms will be available at the Upper Midwest Regional Fruit and Vegetable Growers Conference and Trade Show at the St. Cloud Civic Center in St. Cloud, MN on February 2 & 3, 2006. Samples can also be requested from the MFVGA office. You must be licensed to use the Minnesota Grown logo to order the bags.

If you are interested in the bags and want more information, please contact the MFVGA office at 763-434-0400 or mfvga@msn.com and you will receive information when the details are available. If you contact the office via e-mail, please reference the produce bags in the subject line.

Plan To Order Your Strawberry & Raspberry Plants Through MFVGA

MFVGA is planning to coordinate a group order of strawberry and raspberry plants for the 2006 growing season. If you are on the mailing list for berry plants, you will automatically receive additional information and an order form for the coming year. We are currently working on the pricing and forms will be sent out as soon as details are finalized. Please note the deadlines and place your orders early to guarantee that you will be able to get the plants you request. Certain raspberry varieties have been selling out very early.

If you would like to be added to the berry order mailing list, call the MFVGA office at 763-434-0400 or send an e-mail to mfvga@msn.com.

Are you "Peddling Your Pickles Safely?"

The "Peddling Your Pickles Safely" workshops are for people interested in processing and selling their home-canned foods at local farmers' markets. The "Pickle Bill," as passed by the Minnesota Legislature in 2004, has very specific requirements for products that can be sold.

These workshops will address the following "Pickle Bill" questions:

- What food safety issues are critical from harvest to processing?
- What is the Pickle Bill legislation?
- What types of home canned foods meet the requirements?
- Can your kitchen pass inspection on sanitation?
- What is acceptable home food processing and equipment?
- How do I select and document recipes?
- How do I label my product?
- What are the acid levels of vegetables, fruits and pickled products?
- How do I use a pH meter for testing? What types of meters are there?
- How do I calibrate a pH meter? How do I test my product?

These are important questions and each person who is selling home processed products must have current and accurate information on these topics. Conducting the workshops will be Deb Botzek-Linn and Jean Pitt, University of Minnesota Regional Extension Educators in Food Science. Terry Nennich, Regional Extension Educator in Horticulture, will also talk about the importance of harvesting and food safety.

Plan now to attend the workshop closest to you and get the information you need to "Peddle Your Pickles Safely." Workshops will be held at the Central Lakes College Agriculture Center on March 28, 2006 and at the Waseca County Extension Office Meeting Room in Waseca on March 30, 2006. A brochure with complete information will be mailed in February. Information will also be posted on the MFVGA website at www.mfvga.org. If you have any questions, please contact Marilyn Johnson at 763-434-0400.

The workshops are sponsored by the Minnesota Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association, the University of Minnesota Extension Service and the USDA-Risk Management Agency. These institutions are equal opportunity providers.

See you in St. Cloud



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Check it out – the Minnesota Small Horticultural Farm Insect and Disease Diagnostic Key is available on-line at <http://smfarm.coafes.umn.edu/diagnostic.htm> or access it through the "Useful Links" at www.mfvga.org.

**Send your registration form in today for the
Upper Midwest Regional
Fruit and Vegetable Growers Conference.**

***Registrations received before
January 6, 2006
qualify for the "Early Bird" Drawing –
a gift certificate for
a night at the Kelly Inn.***

MINNESOTA FRUIT & VEGETABLE GROWERS ASSOCIATION

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