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College of Agricultural, Consumer, and Environmental Sciences

Illinois Fruit and Vegetable News

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A newsletter for commercial growers of fruit and vegetable crops

"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit." Aristotle

Address any questions or comments regarding this newsletter to the individual authors listed after each article or to its editor, Rick Weinzierl, 217-244-2126, weinzierl@illinois.edu. The *Illinois Fruit and Vegetable News* is available on the web at: <http://www.ipm.illinois.edu/ifvn/index.html>. To receive email notification of new postings of this newsletter, call or write Rick Weinzierl at the number or email address above.

This "special issue" is devoted to information about the upcoming Illinois Specialty Crops and Agritourism Conference, January 7-10, 2009, in Springfield, IL ...

(For those familiar with past programs, please be sure to note a few new things in the 2009 program ... (1) the Wednesday evening, January 7, sessions on crop insurance and legal and labor issues; (2) the presence during association meetings Thursday afternoon of Bill Bodine from the Illinois Farm Bureau on developing local produce supplies for major retailers; and (3) the social hour before the banquet on Thursday evening, January 8, will include brief memorials for Illinois growers who died in 2008; to submit a memorial (6-10 PowerPoint slides to play on-screen for 3 to 5 minutes), contact Rick Weinzierl at 217-244-2126 or weinzierl@illinois.edu by no later than January 2, 2009.

The Illinois Specialty Crops and Agritourism Conference will be held January 7-10, 2009, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Springfield, IL. The program features three "pre-conference" workshops on Wednesday, January 7, two days of programming with four concurrent sessions on fruits, vegetables, herbs, and agritourism and marketing on January 8 and 9, and "Buy Local – Eat Healthy" aimed largely at consumers on Saturday, January 10. Registration for the Wednesday and Saturdays programs is independent from the January 8-9 conference.

I encourage all Illinois fruit and vegetable producers to attend this program. **This is the statewide program for commercial growers of fruits, vegetables, and herbs in Illinois.** It features expert speakers, a strong trade show, and a chance for networking and marketing opportunities that are not available at our regional Extension programs. It's a joint effort of the Illinois Specialty Growers Association, University of Illinois Extension, the Agriculture and Tourism Partners of Illinois, and the Illinois Department of Agriculture. The Illinois Specialty Growers Association is the only organization in the state that represents fruit, vegetable, and herb growers on legislative matters, and it has been active in crop insurance, labor, and marketing issues for specialty crop growers. Joining and participating in the Illinois Specialty Growers Association support your industry and your future.

The 2009 Illinois Specialty Crops and Agritourism Conference program and registration information are available on-line at <http://www.specialtygrowers.org/confagenda.htm> or from Diane Handley at Diane Handley at 309-557-2107. Here are a few highlights ...

Three pre-conference workshops (concurrent) will be offered on Wednesday, January 7. They begin at 10:00 a.m. and feature Pumpkin Production, Pest Management, and Marketing; Biocontrol in High Tunnels and Greenhouses; and Federal Grant-writing Basics. Illinois is a leading state in pumpkin production, and the topics to be presented in this workshop – including varieties, production practices, insect, weed, and disease management, and marketing – feature expert speakers with knowledge of local conditions. Those who register for the pumpkin workshop will receive a free copy of a DVD of the day-long 2007 Great Lakes EXPO Cucurbit Pest Management Workshop program. Insect and disease management are key concerns in greenhouses and high tunnels, and speakers Raymond Cloyd, Janna Beckerman, Daniel Warnock, and University of Illinois greenhouse managers Heather Lash and Kelly Allsup will share

valuable expertise on biological control methods and their effectiveness. Those who register for the greenhouse and high tunnel biocontrol workshop will receive free copies of a new North Central regional publication on biological control and a high-tunnel pest management publication from Penn State University. Grant writing is no longer a university-only enterprise, and Diane Handley of the Specialty Growers has arranged for a workshop speaker who will help growers develop proposals for federal funding, especially in the area of market development.

Wednesday evening, January 7, features two seminars for those registered for Wednesday's workshops or the January 8-9 program. These seminars cover AGR-Lite Crop Insurance and Labor and Legal Issues and will be led by Griffin Schnitzler and Rich Schell, respectively. Both of these speakers have lots of valuable information for fruit and vegetable growers and marketers.

On Thursday and Friday, January 8-9, the conference kicks off with chefs and culinary educators Michael and Brigitta McGreal as the keynote speakers followed by the traditional concurrent breakout sessions on fruits, vegetables, herbs, and agritourism and marketing. The keynote session with the chefs promises to be absolutely outstanding ... they led last year's "Buy Local – Eat Healthy" program, and they were great. They'll offer fantastic recipes and new ideas on showing customers what to do with the wonderful produce grown in Illinois and throughout the Midwest, and they'll provide great tastes of their work. The banquet speaker on Thursday evening will be Matt Lohr, farmer, speaker, and Virginia State Legislator. And of course the banquet program includes presentations of the cider and hard cider contest winners, as well as other association awards. As noted above, during the social hour that precedes the banquet, we'll use the screen in the banquet hall and show brief memorials for Illinois growers who died in 2008; to submit a memorial (6-10 PowerPoint slides to play on-screen for 3 to 5 minutes), contact Rick Weinzierl at 217-244-2126 or weinzierl@illinois.edu by no later than January 2, 2009.

Peaches and apples are the focus fruit breakout sessions on January 8 and 9, with talks on disease management, pruning, insecticides, and weed management. Wesley Autio, University of Massachusetts, will discuss "Simple Rules for Pruning Apple and Peach Trees" and "Controlling Growth in the Tops of Apple Trees." Disease management in peaches and apples will be the focus of two presentations by Patty McManus, University of Wisconsin. Grower panels on orchard establishment and management and on environmental monitoring are also scheduled.

Topics in the vegetable sessions will span disease and insect management, irrigation, production practices, and marketing. Galen Dively, University of Maryland, will discuss "Organic Insecticides for Vegetable Insect Control" and "Options, Effectiveness, and Management of Bt sweet corn." The Bt sweet corn presentation will be part of a half-day session on sweet corn disease and insect management and sweet corn cultivars; those who attend this session and complete a survey of sweet corn IPM practices will receive a copy of the DVD of the day-long 2008 Great Lakes EXPO Sweet Corn Pest Management Workshop program and a copy of a new North Central IPM Center pocket guide to sweet corn production and pest management. The vegetable session also includes a panel comprised of Jeff Kindhart, Bill Shoemaker, and experienced growers who will present "Irrigation Do's and Don'ts for the Too-Busy Grower."

The agritourism/marketing track features sessions on how to capitalize on consumer trends, how to increase on-farm sales, and how to work with the media. Other topics will include "Creating a Successful Tourism Partnership," "Safety Considerations for Agritourism Operations," and "Virginia Agritourism." Bruce Curry (Country Corner Farm Market, Alpha, IL) and Randy Graham of Curtis Orchard in Champaign are among the growers participating in panel discussions.

Herb concurrent sessions will include subjects such as designing with herbs, keys to succeeding in the herb business, and making herbs work for you, to name a few. Susanna Reppert from The Rosemary House in Pennsylvania will focus on "Help Wanted - Using Interns and Apprentices" and "What Does the Future Hold for the Herb Industry?"

Bill Bodine, Director of External Relations for the Illinois Farm Bureau, is involved in developing local produce supplies for major retailers, including such big names as Wal-Mart, Whole Foods, Panera, and McCain Foods. Bill will be present on January 8 and visit the member association meetings scheduled for 4:45 on Thursday afternoon.

The 20th Annual Cider Contest and the 7th Annual Hard Cider Contest will again be held in conjunction with the conference. For more information, contact Dr. Elizabeth Wahle, U of I Extension, at 618/692-9434 or wahle@uiuc.edu. Or refer to the ISGA web site: <http://www.specialtygrowers.org/confagenda.htm>. And this will be the second year for the Market Display Challenge coordinated by Jeff Kindhart. Jeff provides an 8-foot table and a

selection of produce, and you create an appealing and inviting display. You may bring your own display hardware and information pieces (recipes, literature, etc.). The Market Display Challenge is free and open to the first 10 people who register with Diane Handley at handley@ilfb.org or 309-557-2107.

The 2009 trade features approximately 50 exhibitors. Plenty of time is allowed between sessions to visit with exhibitors. A few spaces are still available for those wishing to exhibit their specialty crop products or services.

A “post-conference” program entitled “Buy Local – Eat Healthy” on Saturday, January 10, 2009, again features Chef Michael McGreal, Joliet Junior College, who will demonstrate the preparation of delicious and exciting dishes with fresh produce. Other sessions include selection of Illinois apples, cooking with edible flowers, and pairing wines with food. This program targets consumers and provides a great opportunity for growers to promote their farm operations with a tabletop display and to meet potential new customers.

To receive registration materials or to obtain exhibitor information, please contact Diane Handley at 309/557-2107 or handley@ilfb.org. A detailed conference agenda can be viewed at www.specialtygrowers.org. The Crowne Plaza Hotel is reserving a block of rooms for \$81 per night plus tax. Please call the hotel directly at 217/529-7777 to make your reservations and ask for the Illinois Specialty Crops Conference rate.

We hope to see you in Springfield January 7-10.

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