



# UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS EXTENSION

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, [weinzier@illinois.edu](mailto:weinzier@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.

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### ***Upcoming Programs***

Numerous educational programs for fruit and vegetable growers are slated for the 2009-2010 winter season. A partial list is presented below, and more details will be provided as the dates approach. Be sure to mark your calendar for the 2010 Illinois Specialty Crops, Agritourism, and Organic Conference January 6-9, 2010, in Springfield, IL.

- **Illiana Vegetable Growers' School. January 5, 2010.** Teibel's Family Restaurant, Schererville, IN. See <http://www.ces.purdue.edu/anr/documents/2009/IVGSBrochure20101117.pdf> for a program or call 219-755-3240 for details. Registration begins at 8:00 a.m. Central Standard Time, and the program begins at 8:30 a.m.
- **Illinois Specialty Crops, Organic, and Agritourism Conference, January 6-8, 2010.** Crowne Plaza Hotel and Convention Center, Springfield, Illinois. Check <http://www.specialtygrowers.org/confagenda.htm> for the 3-day program agenda and registration form or call Diane Handley of the Illinois Specialty Growers Association at 309-557-2107 for details. See a partial description of conference highlights below.
- **Horseradish Growers School. January 28, 2010.** Gateway Convention Center, Collinsville, IL. For details contact Elizabeth Wahle, [wahle@illinois.edu](mailto:wahle@illinois.edu), 618-692-9434.
- **Southern Illinois Commercial Tree Fruit School. February 2, 2010.** Mt Vernon Holiday Inn, Mt. Vernon, IL. For details contact Elizabeth Wahle, [wahle@illinois.edu](mailto:wahle@illinois.edu), 618-692-9434.
- **Southwestern Illinois Commercial Tree Fruit School. February 3, 2010.** First Presbyterian Church, Hardin, IL. For details contact Elizabeth Wahle, [wahle@illinois.edu](mailto:wahle@illinois.edu), 618-692-9434.
- **Southern Illinois Commercial Vegetable School. February 10, 2010.** Mt Vernon Holiday Inn, Mt. Vernon, IL. For details contact Elizabeth Wahle, [wahle@illinois.edu](mailto:wahle@illinois.edu), 618-692-9434.
- **Illinois/Wisconsin (Stateline) Fruit and Vegetable Conference. February 15, 2010.** Harvard, IL. (More details in future issues of this newsletter.)
- **Kankakee Vegetable Growers School, February 24, 2010.** Kankakee County Extension Office, Bourbonnais, IL. For details contact James Theuri, [jtheu50@illinois.edu](mailto:jtheu50@illinois.edu), 815-987-7379
- **Illinois Grape Growers and Vintners Association Annual Conference, February 25-27, 2010.** Springfield, IL. See <http://www.illinoiswine.org/>.

- **Organic Farming Conference, February 25-27, 2010.** La Crosse, WI. See <http://www.mosesorganic.org/conference.html>.
- **Illinois Small Fruit and Strawberry Schools, March 2-3, 2010.** Mt Vernon Holiday Inn, Mt Vernon, IL. For details contact Jeff Kindhart, [jkindhar@illinois.edu](mailto:jkindhar@illinois.edu) 618-695-2444.
- **International Herb Association Annual Meeting, July 11-15, 2010.** Collinsville, IL. (More details in future issues of this newsletter.)

### ***2010 Illinois Specialty Crops, Agritourism, and Organic Conference, January 6-8, 2010.***

Our upcoming conference at the Crowne Plaza in Springfield includes our traditional tracks of programming for fruit, vegetable, and herb growers, along with an agritourism track organized by the Agricultural Tourism Partners of Illinois and two tracks of organic sessions. As a result, the name for conference has changed again. A couple of years ago we added Agritourism to the conference title, and the 2010 event is the Illinois Specialty Crops, Agritourism, and Organic Conference. We look forward to attendance by growers who use a range of production practices with a common goal in mind – the profitable production and marketing of high-quality foods and herbs for local and regional markets.

The January 6 program is devoted to three workshops – Grow Your Market, Getting Started in Local Food Production and Marketing, and Expanding Seasons and Markets with High Tunnels. Each workshop begins at 10:00 a.m. and ends at 5:00 p.m. Registration for these workshops is separate from registration for the January 7-8 program, but those who register for any one of the January 6 workshops are free to move among the three programs.

The January 7 program begins with a 9:00 a.m. general session, then concurrent sessions on fruits, vegetables, herbs, agritourism, organics, and business management are offered throughout Thursday and Friday, January 7 and 8. A great slate of outside speakers is scheduled for all the sessions, and University of Illinois Extension specialists, faculty from SUI and WIU, and Illinois growers will contribute lots of practical updates on a range of topics as well.

Over 50 vendors will have booths in the trade show that accompanies the conference, and additional events include the annual cider and hard cider contests, the third annual Market Display Contest, and the first annual Photography Contest. The annual banquet and awards ceremony is scheduled for Thursday evening, January 7. Throughout the program, there are abundant opportunities to interact with other growers and suppliers from all over the state of Illinois and from nearby states. This is THE statewide program for Illinois specialty crops producers and organic growers and is an educational and networking opportunity that should not be missed.

The program is available online at <http://www.specialtygrowers.org/confagenda.htm>. For additional information or to register, call Diane Handley of the Illinois Specialty Growers Association at 309-557-2107. Preregistration at a reduced fee is available through December 28.

*Rick Weinzierl (217-244-2126; [weinzier@illinois.edu](mailto:weinzier@illinois.edu))*

### ***Regional Updates***

**In southern and southwestern IL** ... just like the rest of the state, early December brought a cold front that resulted in the first hard freeze, and this week has been much colder yet. Winter has arrived.

*Time to mulch strawberries:* Mulching strawberry plants in the late fall is necessary in order to prevent winter injury to the crowns and root system. Although snow cover is the best protection (6-8 inches), it is not dependable throughout the winter months, particularly in southern Illinois, so mulches are used to keep winter injury to a minimum. The best mulching materials include weed-free straw from cereal grains (wheat, rye, or barley) or pine needles. Hays should be avoided because they contain the seed heads and other weed seeds that, once germinated, could become a serious weed problem the following spring. Oat straw, lawn clippings, and leaves are also not recommended because they more readily compact and have a tendency to smother the strawberry plants.

Timing of the mulch application is critical. Strawberry leaves are still active well into late autumn, and applying mulch too early in the fall can reduce the plant's ability to produce and store reserves needed for winter survival. If the mulch is applied too soon, before plants are dormant, the mulch can cause rotting of the leaves and crowns. If mulch is delayed too late, low temperatures could damage crowns. The best time to apply mulch is after the strawberry plants have experienced several light frosts, but before temperatures drop to 20° F, at which point injury can occur. After

several light frosts, the leaves attached to the crown should begin to flatten out, signaling the time to mulch. The mulch should be applied three to four inches deep over the plant rows. One bale of straw pulled apart should cover about 100 square feet.

*A grape grafting workshop is scheduled for Saturday, January 16, 2010, starting at 10:00 a.m. at the Pittsfield Community Center. This workshop, sponsored by the Western Illinois Grape Producers Association, South Central Illinois Grape Growers and Vintners Association, University of Illinois Extension, and the Illinois Department of Agriculture, focuses on grafting techniques for grape propagation. This workshop will be hands-on and led by Mosbah Kushad, University of Illinois Extension Specialist. Grape root stocks will be furnished, but each participant is asked to bring 10 pencil diameter-sized cuttings for grafting practice. Registration fees will be taken at the door starting at 9:30 a.m. and will be \$10.00 per person. A break will be included for lunch (on your own) and the program will conclude at 3:00 p.m. Pre-registration is requested by contacting Gene Meyer at 217-285-4141 or [gkmeyer1@verizon.net](mailto:gkmeyer1@verizon.net) or Sharla Nickell at 217-248-9307 or [nickel@adams.net](mailto:nickel@adams.net). Pittsfield Community Center is located at 224 West Washington Street. From Springfield, take I-72 west to Exit 35. Take US-54/IL-107 south towards Pittsfield. Follow US-54 as it joins IL-106 and becomes Washington Street.*

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### ***Notes from Chris Doll***

St. Louis climatologists are saying that this winter will be more adverse than most. For that prediction, they have a 33 percent chance of being correct (alternatives are average or less than average). The mild November was somewhat worrisome, with absence of hard freezes to harden off the fruit plants plus the continuation of heavy rains that have kept the soils saturated. The last rainy period a couple of weeks ago dropped 4.1 inches of water, and if that would have been snow, we would still be trying to dig out.

Most fruit plants have defoliated at a nearly normal rate and will continue to harden off slowly. An Alberta Clipper cold front with single digit temperatures is worrisome, but the near-term forecast is not too bad, so optimism prevails. Buds are dormant because of internal physiological blocks that prevent growth even under conditions of ideal external conditions for growth. Once chilling hours have been accumulated to break the dormancy or rest period, that is the time to worry about more warm weather.

There is not much to do with most fruit crops other than strawberries, which should have a mulch cover of straw or row covers before the plants are exposed to temperatures around 20 degrees. Apple growers with larger acreage are doing some pruning in order to get it all done. The effect of pruning at this time could make the trees more susceptible to cold temperatures, especially younger trees, so prune the more aged trees first.

The Illinois Specialty Growers Association and the Illinois State Horticultural Society's annual meeting is less than a month away (January 7-8, with full-day workshops on January 6 as well), and that should be a great time for reminiscing and visiting, play a few card games, and become updated on some production and marketing aspects of the business. Guest speakers for the fruit growers include Dr. Jim Schupp of Penn State and Dr. Eric Hansen of Michigan State, both excellent speakers with lots of good information. I hope to see many of you there.

*Chris Doll*

### ***Private Pesticide Applicator Licensing***

Many of you have recently or should be receiving a letter from Illinois Department of Agriculture if your private pesticide applicators license is due to expires at year's end. The Private Pesticide Safety Education Program Clinic Schedule for the 2009/2010 season is available at <http://web.extension.uiuc.edu/psep/training/private/index.cfm>. If you do not currently hold a private applicators license and wish to obtain one, contact your local University of Illinois Extension office to register for the next available class and to obtain the training material. For those who have already been through a training session three years ago, you should have or will be receiving a letter in the near future from your local UI Extension office with details for the next training session. There will be a \$30 fee associated with the training session. Some counties are offering "testing-only" sessions that will be free of charge.

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*Less seriously ...*

A burglar broke into a house one night. He shined his flashlight around, looking for valuables when a voice in the dark said,

*'Jesus knows you're here.'*

He nearly jumped out of his skin, clicked his flashlight off, and froze. When he heard nothing more, after a bit, he shook his head and continued. Just as he pulled the stereo out so he could disconnect the wires, clear as a bell he heard

*'Jesus is watching you.'*

Freaked out, he shined his light around frantically, looking for the source of the voice. Finally, in the corner of the room, his flashlight beam came to rest on a parrot.



*'Did you say that?'* he hissed at the parrot.

*'Yep'*, the parrot confessed, then squawked, *'I'm just trying to warn you that he is watching you..'*

The burglar relaxed. *'Warn me, huh? Who in the world are you?'*

*'Moses,'* replied the bird.

*'Moses?'* the burglar laughed. *'What kind of people would name a bird Moses?'*

*'The kind of people that would name a Rottweiler Jesus.'*



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