



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, 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.

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University of Illinois Extension Staff in Fruit & Vegetable Production & Pest Management

Upcoming Programs

For commercial fruit and vegetable growers ...

- **Illinois/Iowa Fruit and Vegetable Symposium, November 18, 2011**, at the Scott County Extension Office, Bettendorf, IA. For information, contact Maurice Ogutu, ogutu@illinois.edu, 815-235-4125
- **High Tunnel and Greenhouse Open House and Workshop, November 22, 2011**, 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Dixon Springs Agricultural Center, Simpson, IL. See the program description and registration info later in this issue under the High Tunnels heading. For information, contact Mary Hosier, mhosier@illinois.edu, 217-333-7512.
- **MarketReady and MarketMaker workshop, November 29, 2011**, at the University of Illinois Franklin County Extension Office, Benton, IL. See the program description and registration info later in this issue under the MarketMaker and MarketReady heading. For information, contact Mary Hosier, mhosier@illinois.edu, 217-333-7512.
- **Great Lakes Fruit, Vegetable, and Farm Market Expo, December 6-8, 2011**, in Grand Rapids, MI. For more information, see the EXPO web site at <http://www.glexpo.com/>.
- **High Tunnel Open House and Workshop, December 9, 2011**, 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the University of Illinois St. Charles Horticulture Research Center, St. Charles, IL. See the program description and registration info later in this issue under the High Tunnels heading. For information, contact Mary Hosier, mhosier@illinois.edu, 217-333-7512.
- **MarketReady and MarketMaker workshop, December 13, 2011**, at the University of Illinois Knox County Extension Office, 180 S. Soangetaha Rd, Ste. 108, Galesburg, IL. See the program description and registration info later in this issue under the MarketMaker and MarketReady heading. For information, contact Mary Hosier, mhosier@illinois.edu, 217-333-7512.
- **Illinois Specialty Crops, Agritourism, and Organic Conference, January 11-13, 2012**, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Springfield, IL. Details to come.
- **Southern Illinois Commercial Tree Fruit School, February 7, 2012**, at the Mt. Vernon Holiday Inn, Mt. Vernon, IL. Details to come.
- **Southwestern Illinois Commercial Tree Fruit School, February 8, 2012**. Details to come.

- **Kankakee Area Vegetable School, February 15, 2012.** Details to come.
- **Southern Illinois Commercial Vegetable School, February 16, 2012,** at the Mt. Vernon Holiday Inn, Mt. Vernon, IL. Details to come.
- **Illinois Grape Growers and Vintners Association Annual Conference, February 23-25, 2012,** at the Crowne Plaza Hotel and Conference Center, Springfield, IL. Details to come.
- **Illinois Small Fruit and Strawberry Schools, March 6-7, 2012,** at the Mt. Vernon Holiday Inn, Mt. Vernon, IL.

Related programs of interest ...

- **Webinars from eOrganic:** October 25: Plan for Marketing Your Organic Products. November 1: Root and Fertility Management for Organic Transplants. November 8: Tracking Your Produce for Your Business and Health. November 15: Starting Up Small-Scale Organic Hops Production. For information and to register for these webinars, see <http://www.extension.org/pages/25242/webinars-by-eorganic>.
- **Small Farm Trade Show & Conference, November 3 – 5, 2011,** at the [Boone County Fairgrounds](#), 5212 N. Oakland Gravel Rd., Columbia, Missouri. Includes short courses, seminars, farmers forum talks, and a major indoor trade show. See the [schedule](#) for a listing of all events.
- **Sangamon Area Farm to School Summit, November 5, 2011** at the Trutter Center, Lincoln Land Community College, 5250 Shepherd Road, Springfield, IL. Farm to School connects schools (K-12) and local farms with the objectives of serving healthy meals in school cafeterias, improving student nutrition, providing agriculture, health and nutrition education opportunities, and supporting local and regional farmers. Topics will include sourcing locally produced food, starting school gardens; incorporating food and nutrition into curricula, and implement a farm-to-school program. Organized by the Springfield Area Local Food Task Force. Contact Deborah Cavanaugh-Grant at cvnghgrn@illinois.edu or (217) 782-4617 for [more information](#).
- **Organic Gardening Day, November 5, 2011,** at the Holiday Inn Hotel and Conference Center, Urbana, IL, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Advance registration of \$60 includes an organic lunch and must be received by October 28. On-site registration on Nov. 5 begins at 8:00 a.m. and will continue as long as space allows. On-site registration does not include lunch. For more information and to register, contact Linda Harvey at 217-244-1693 lh Harvey@illinois.edu.
- **5th Annual Holiday Market, November 19, 2011** at the Artisan's Building, Illinois State Fairgrounds, Springfield. 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Illinois producers showcase their products at the indoor Holiday Farmers Market. Lunch will be available for purchase.
- **Conservation Covers: Effective Cover Cropping in the Midwest, December 7 – 8, 2011** at the Decatur Conference Center and Hotel in Decatur, IL. A forum for farmers to exchange information, discuss opportunities for collaboration, and learn about new and successful practices related to cover crops. For more information and to register, see <http://www.swcs.org/index.cfm?nodeID=34470&audienceID=1>.

Local Foods and Small Farms Issues

Listeria and Cantaloupes

As of October 11, 2011, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) confirmed that the number of people infected with *Listeria (Listeria monocytogenes)* from tainted cantaloupes produced by Jensen Farms in Colorado under the Rocky Ford brand label that were shipped from July 29 through September 10, had reached 116 with 23 fatalities. Only two people in Illinois were reported sick, and no fatalities had been reported in the state. This outbreak is the second largest *Listeria* outbreak in US history, with the largest outbreak reported in 1985 when 142 people became infected after consuming a Mexican-style cheese contaminated with unpasteurized milk. Nearly all the people infected in this cantaloupe outbreak have been hospitalized. Most illnesses are in people over 60 years old, with ages ranging from 35 to 96 years.

The economic impact of the outbreak has been hard felt by growers in California and Texas. Fortunately for Illinois and other Midwestern producers, the outbreak happened after the cantaloupe season had tapered off.

What had happened and could it happen again? I have not been to Jensen's Farm, but I am reasonably sure that they have a Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) plan in place, and it is very likely that they believe they have a system in place to

prevent this from happening. Is it then a general failure of GAP to prevent the outbreak or is it their farm safety plan that failed? GAP, by its name, is a general set of good practices that need to be designed and implemented in order to prevent a catastrophe like this from happening. In other words, GAP is not a set of rigid practices but an amorphous and encompassing set of good practices that are subject to modification, change, and addition. GAP is a summation of all good practices, known and unknown, that need to be identified and implemented to prevent an outbreak. It is why everyone in any given operation has to be directly trained and directly involved in understanding essence of GAP and its implementation. It is similar to a chain, if one link is broken, then the whole system will crash. That is likely the reason why the Jensen Farms' GAP plan failed.

What is Listeria and are there other diseases that can affect cantaloupes? *Listeria monocytogenes* is a ubiquitous bacterial pathogen which has been implicated within the past decade as the causative organism in several outbreaks of foodborne diseases. There are 13 types (serovars) of *Listeria monocytogenes*, but only three or four that have been responsible for the outbreaks. The disease was first described in 1926 by Murray and his colleagues in the *Journal of Pathology and Bacteriology* as a disease of rabbits. Listeriosis, the disease caused by Listeria infection, is serious in people less than one year old, over 60 years old, and those with compromised immune systems. Listeriosis has been reported to result in a mortality rate of about 24% of infected patients. Among the symptoms of listeriosis are respiratory distress, vomiting, cramping, rash, and pneumonia, with most of neonatal deaths are due to respiratory failure and pneumonia. Early diagnosis and antibiotic treatment can reduce the risk of death in infected individuals.

Cantaloupes are one of the most vulnerable vegetables for microbial contamination because they have relatively rough surfaces that harbor infectious microbes. In addition to Listeria, several Salmonella outbreaks have been link to cantaloupes. The most recent one occurred in March, 2011, where 13 people on the West Coast and in Maryland got sick from eating cantaloupes imported from Del Monte Fresh's Asuncion Mita farm in Guatemala.

Can a Listeria or other disease outbreaks happen at your farm? In general, chances are small, but it could happen. What can you do to minimize the chances of an outbreak happening at your farm? You have to go back to the basic concept of GAP. Make everyone at your operation an integral part of your food safety system plan. They have to be properly trained, frequently reminded, and adequately monitored. You and your staff have to be constantly revising your GAP plan to accommodate changes in your operation. GAP is not a one-size-fits-all, and it is not a list of factors that you and your staff follow in a form of rituals. As I mentioned above, GAP is highly changeable to deal with risks as they occur. The areas of risk to produce are numerous and cannot all be listed in a book or on a sheet of paper that you can paste on the walls of your business. The responsibility of everyone at your business is to constantly evaluate risks and make any needed change to handling practices so that risks don't become contamination issues.

So here's a true story that happened to me last Wednesday, October 12. On my lunch break, I came across a man pushing a lawn mower chopping leaves, with dust flying everywhere around him. I thought the man was very smart because he was wearing a face mask to protect his lungs from the dust. Well, all of a sudden the man stopped the mower, pulled the mask over his forehead, took a pack of cigarettes out of his pocket, lit one, and continued pushing the mower with dust flying all around him. I told the story to my student who managed to carve a pumpkin in his honor. Can you trust this guy to follow GAP? Or is addiction more powerful?



Mosbah Kushad (217-244-5691; Kushad@illinois.edu)

MarketMaker and MarketReady

The [October issue of the MarketMaker newsletter](#) is available on line. Contents include Alabama becoming the 17th state in the MarketMaker network, notes on GAPs, a business spotlight, and reminders on using the Buy and Sell Forum. Illinois MarketMaker is located on the web at <http://www.marketmaker.uiuc.edu/>.

Lori Dalfonso (309-792-2500; dalfonso@illinois.edu)

Two MarketReady / MarketMaker workshops are scheduled for November 29 and December 13, 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. The November 29 program will be held at the University of Illinois Franklin County Extension Office, Benton, IL. The December 13 program will be held at the University of Illinois Knox County Extension Office, 180 S. Soangetaha Rd, Ste. 108, Galesburg, IL. There is no charge for these programs, but pre-registration is required, and attendance at each program will be capped at 50. To register, contact Mary Hosier, mhosier@illinois.edu, 217-333-7512.

MarketReady is a program designed to help small and mid-sized producers understand the evolving commercial market opportunities for locally produced foods. While grocery store chains, distributors, institutions, schools and restaurants have traditionally sourced produce, meats, eggs, cheese and other value-added items from large farms and processors located in regions of concentrated production (California, Florida and beyond), increasing transportation costs as well as increasing consumer demand for locally produced food products is creating new opportunities for local producers. These new and expanding sales opportunities also involve new expectations and requirements to sell into these markets that are not always well understood by the local producer. The purpose of MarketReady is to educate potential local suppliers about the variety of expectations, certifications and other requirements that must be met to satisfy the needs of the commercial buyer. The curriculum was developed as a result of an extensive survey of commercial buyers across Illinois, Kentucky and Ohio and introduces a variety of important issues that producers should be aware of as they evaluate the potential opportunities. Informative checklists and suggested Best Marketing Practices are included in the training to help producers be better prepared to meet the needs of potential commercial buyer/customers. Topics addressed in the MarketReady program include:

- Communication and Relationship Building
- Packaging
- Labeling
- Pricing
- Supply
- Delivery
- Invoicing
- Insurance
- Quality Assurance, Certification, and Audits
- Marketing

MarketMaker was originally developed as an online marketing resource to give Illinois farmers greater access to regional markets by linking them with processors, retailers, consumers and other food supply chain participants. Since its inception, it has expanded tremendously and is currently one of the most extensive collections of searchable food industry related data in the country, containing nearly 500,000 profiles of farmers and other food related enterprises in Arkansas, Colorado, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Nebraska, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina. The MarketMaker portion of these workshops will teach how to join and use MarketMaker to enhance your business's success.

While the primary objective of the MarketReady/MarketMaker workshops is to address issues more specific to commercial marketing opportunities, the majority of this information could also be useful to expanding operations selling at on-farm markets or multiple farmers markets.

John Pike (618-687-1727; jpike@illinois.edu)

High Tunnels

Two high tunnel workshops are scheduled for November 22 and December 9, 2011. The November 22 program will be held at the University of Illinois Dixon Springs Agricultural Center near Simpson in far southern Illinois. This program, led by Jeff Kindhart, will include information on winter salad greens production, brambles, vertical stacking systems, hydroponics, and greenhouse production of vegetable transplants. The December 9 program will be held at the University of Illinois Horticulture Research Center at St. Charles, Illinois. Bill Shoemaker will talk about high tunnel construction and winter vegetable crops in high tunnels.

There is no charge for these programs, but pre-registration is required, and attendance at each program will be capped at 40. To register, contact Mary Hosier, mhosier@illinois.edu, 217-333-7512.

USDA Specialty Crop Block Grants

USDA has funded 55 specialty crop block grants that will support 740 initiatives across the United States and its territories. See www.ams.usda.gov/scbgp to read fiscal year 2011 project summaries. Block grant funds to be administered by the Illinois Department of Agriculture will support 14 projects that will allow the Department to ...

... partner with the University of Illinois Extension to offer training in Good Agricultural Practices and Good Handling Practices, provide technical assistance in writing food safety plans, and subsidize third-party audit costs for specialty crop producers.

...partner with the Carbondale Convention & Tourism Bureau (CCTB) to improve the sale of locally grown specialty crops by increasing consumer knowledge and use of produce through a series of educational workshops. Matching funds will be used to offset the costs of the inclusion of any non-specialty crops.

... partner with the 61st Street Farmers' Market to develop marketing materials to draw South Side Federal Nutrition Benefit (SNAP) residents to the Market to purchase specialty crops, provide education on specialty crops to youth and school children, and provide specialty crop-focused cooking classes in the community.

... partner with WBBM TV, a subsidiary of CBS Inc., to launch an integrated, multi media campaign, "Illinois, Where Fresh Is!" designed to bring specialty crops to the forefront of consumers' minds and promote healthier eating habits – ultimately boosting industry sales and keeping Illinois dollars in the state. Only eligible specialty crops will be included in the promotions.

... partner with Southern Illinois University's Department of Plant, Soil and Agricultural Systems to study the impact of variety selection, harvest timing and storage duration on nutritional/antioxidant content of fruits and vegetables and to provide grower outreach through pre-educational project surveys, field production and sample collection, fruit and vegetable tissue assays, development of specialty crop factsheets and post-educational outreach surveys.

... partner with the Illinois Stewardship Alliance to increase specialty crop sales to restaurants and develop new resources to connect farms to restaurants by educating restaurants and farmers, promoting local foods through the "Buy Fresh Buy Local" campaign, providing technical training to chefs and facilitating a farm-to-restaurant series. Matching funds will be used to cover the costs of any non-specialty crops.

... partner with the Illinois Specialty Growers Association to organize the Illinois Specialty Crops, Agritourism, and Organic Conference, designed to assist 500 specialty crop producers in managing their production and price risk; educate specialty crop producers in developing "Good Agricultural Practices," "Good Manufacturing Practices," and "Good Handling Practices"; increase consumer knowledge of the nutritional advantages of consuming specialty crops; assist specialty crop producers in incorporating agritourism as a value-added opportunity; promote food safety practices to growers throughout the production and marketing chain; encourage consumers to buy local and fresh produce; provide educational programming on disease and pest management control in the production of fruits and vegetables; provide a track of workshops on organic production and marketing; and assist organic growers become compliant with the National Organic Standards. Matching funds will be utilized to cover expenditures for non-specialty crop commodities.

... partner with the Illinois Farm Bureau's Illinois Agriculture in the Classroom program to develop and print a new Apples Ag Mag to increase awareness of the specialty crop grown in Illinois and to introduce more students and consumers to the ideas of locally grown foods, and the farmers that grow them.

... partner with the Southern Illinois University and the Illinois Grape Growers and Vintners Association to develop management guidelines for crop level, nitrogen fertilization rate and canopy and vineyard floor management strategies that will significantly improve the marketability of Illinois grapes and wine.

... partner with the University of Illinois to study *Xanthomonas cucurbitae* as the cause of bacterial spot in pumpkins, providing data necessary for the development of effective methods of managing the disease including survival factors of *Xanthomonas cucurbitae* in the field, pathogenic variation among isolates of *Xanthomonas cucurbitae*, and the host-range of *Xanthomonas cucurbitae*.

... partner with the University of Illinois to conduct research and deliver educational programs on the use of a portable steam generator to sterilize soils in high tunnels to prevent tomato and pepper losses to soil-borne diseases where high tunnels are used repeatedly to produce these crops.

... partner with the Illinois Grape Growers and Vintners Association to educate Illinois grape growers on the best practices for vineyard management to ultimately increase their yield and the quality of Illinois-grown grapes by offering educational workshops that address pest management and disease control in Illinois vineyards.

... partner with the University of Illinois Department of Crop Sciences, Illinois Specialty Crop Growers Association; and Illinois Grape Growers and Vintners Association to support an outreach and research program designed to define the risk of damaging pesticide drift to specialty crops producers, and assist specialty crop growers in managing such risk by providing them with a series of outreach presentations, special tools and guidelines for properly addressing a drift incident, and access to existing resources, including the Driftwatch program.

... perform pre-award and post-award activities to administrate the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program funding and ensure that the Illinois Department of Agriculture and sub-awardees abide by Federal and State requirements and regulations.

US EPA Resources for Urban Agriculture

The US EPA has developed new resources on urban agriculture. [*Brownfields and Urban Agriculture: Interim Guidelines for Safe Gardening Practices*](#) is a 24-page publication on the range of issues which need to be addressed in order to grow food safely on former brownfield sites. Additional resources, including an Urban Farm Business Plan Handbook, are available at <http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/urbanag/resources.htm>.

Less seriously ...a few Will Rogers quotes and similar pearls of wisdom ...

Never slap a man who's chewing tobacco.

There are two theories about arguing with a woman. Neither works.

Never miss a good chance to shut up.

The quickest way to double your money is to fold it and put it back in your pocket.

If you're riding ahead of the herd, take a look back every now and then to make sure it's still there.

When you're dissatisfied and would like to back to your youth, think about algebra.

I don't know how I got over the hill without getting to the top.

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