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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.

In this issue ... This is our usual early winter issue that lists all our major winter educational events and describes in detail the program for the upcoming [Illinois Specialty Crops, Agritourism, and Organic Conference](#), January 11-13, 2012. We hope to see many of our readers from Illinois and nearby states at this conference and our other regional programs. *Please note the corrected date for the Illinois Grape Growers and Vintners Association annual conference February 2-4, 2012.*

Our listing of extension educators and specialists in fruit and vegetable production and pest management (at the end of each issue) includes some new names. Laurie George, Christopher Konieczka, and Sonja Lallemand are new educators who have joined our field staff. We'll provide more information on these educators and others in the Local Food Systems and Small Farms team and the Horticulture team in upcoming issues.

Upcoming Programs

For commercial fruit and vegetable growers ...

- **The Basics of High Tunnels, December 5, 2011** ... see the note below regarding the series of "Basics" teleconferences.
- **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.
- **The Basics of Commercial Pumpkin Production, December 12, 2011** ... see the note below regarding the series of "Basics" teleconferences.
- **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.
- **Illiana Vegetable Growers School, January 5, 2012**, at Teibel's Restaurant, 1175 US 41, US 30 & US 41, Schererville, Indiana. For schedule and registration form, click [here](#) or contact Liz Maynard at emaynard@purdue.edu or 219-531-4200, ext. 4206.
- **The Basics of Commercial Vegetable Production, December 19, 2011** ... see the note below regarding the series of "Basics" teleconferences.
- **Illinois Specialty Crops, Agritourism, and Organic Conference, January 11-13, 2012**, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Springfield, IL. For more information, see the discussion of this conference below. To register, visit <http://www.specialtygrowers.org/iscaoc-conference.html> or contact Charlene Blary at 309-557-2107 or Cblary@ilfb.org.

- **Illinois Grape Growers and Vintners Association Annual Conference, February 2-4, 2012**, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel and Conference Center, Springfield, IL. See <http://www.illinoiswine.com/conference.html>, or contact Megan Presnall at 217-726-8518 or megan@illinoiswine.com.
- **Southern Illinois Commercial Tree Fruit School, February 7, 2012**, at the Mt. Vernon Holiday Inn, Mt. Vernon, IL. For more information, contact Elizabeth Wahle, wahle@iilinois.edu, 618-650-7050.
- **Southwestern Illinois Commercial Tree Fruit School, February 8, 2012**, at the Knights of Columbus Hall, 3 miles south of Hardin on the Illinois River Road. For more information, contact Elizabeth Wahle, wahle@iilinois.edu, 618-650-7050, or Rhonda Ferree, ferreer@illinois.edu, (309) 543-3308.
- **Western Illinois Vegetable Growers School, February 13, 2012**, at the Adams County University of Illinois Extension Office, Quincy, IL. For more information, contact Mike Roegge, roeggem@illinois.edu, 217-223-8380.
- **Kankakee Area Vegetable School, February 15, 2012**, at the Kankakee County University of Illinois Extension Office, Kankakee, IL. For more information, contact James Theuri, jtheu50@illinois.edu, 815-993-8337.
- **Southern Illinois Commercial Vegetable School, February 16, 2012**, at the Mt. Vernon Holiday Inn, Mt. Vernon, IL. For more information, contact Elizabeth Wahle, wahle@iilinois.edu, 618-650-7050.
- **Illinois-Wisconsin Fruit and Vegetable Growers Conference, February 20, 2012**. Details to come. For advance information, contact Maurice Ogutu at Ogutu@illinois.edu, 815-235-4125.
- **Illinois Small Fruit and Strawberry Schools, March 6-7, 2012**, at the Mt. Vernon Holiday Inn, Mt. Vernon, IL. Details to come.

Related programs of interest ...

- **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>.
- **Using Low Tunnels to Grow Winter Crops**, December 12, 2011, 1:00-3:30 p.m. at Oak Tree Organics, 2585 Literberry-Prentice Road, Ashland (Cass County), IL. Registration is \$15.00 for those who are not members of the Central Illinois sustainable Farming Network. Register online at <http://web.extension.illinois.edu/lms> or contact Deborah Cavanaugh-Grant at 217-782-4617 or cvnghgrn@illinois.edu for additional information.

Illinois Specialty Crops, Agritourism, and Organic Conference, January 11-13, 2012.

The 2012 Illinois Specialty Crops, Agritourism, and Organic Conference at the Crowne Plaza Hotel and Conference Center in Springfield is our annual statewide program for fruit and vegetable growers, herb growers, ag tourism entrepreneurs, and organic growers. The conference begins with four separate full-day workshops on Wednesday, January 11, and continues on January 12-13 with multiple concurrent sessions that focus on fruits, vegetables, herbs, agritourism, organic production, and emerging issues and opportunities. The program is available online at <http://www.specialtygrowers.org/iscaoc-conference.html> (click the link for conference and registration); registration can be completed online or by contacting Charlene Blary at 309-557-2107 or Cblary@ilfb.org. Highlights and news about the 2012 conference include:

- **Conference attendees registered at the Crowne Plaza will have free in-room internet access this year!** (I know, it may seem like a small thing, but this has been an issue, and it's finally resolved.)
- Wednesday's workshops include (1) Getting Started: Guidelines and Resources for New Growers; (2) Scaling Up Local Food Systems; (3) Expanding Farmers' Market Opportunities; and (4) Legal Issues for Specialty Crop Producers (including labor and food safety/traceability sessions). These all run from 10:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., with lunch included in the registration fee.
- Wednesday's late afternoon and evening schedule includes a "Meet the Buyers" session to allow growers to interact with potential buyers (retailers, food services, and chefs).
- Thursday morning's opening session features Chef Michael McGreal talking about and preparing local foods; Michael has been a hit at our conference in previous years, and I expect everyone to enjoy his comments and his food again this year.

- The fruit program includes peach and apple updates from University of Illinois Extension staff and presentations on managing alternate-year bearing and using stop-drop materials in apples by Steve McCartney of North Carolina State University.
- The vegetable track features Russell Groves of the University of Wisconsin discussing irrigation delivery of insecticides and what to expect from a variety of new groups of insecticides, along with Steve Weller of Purdue University on herbicide choices and weed control in pumpkins. U of I Extension will cover several production and pest management topics as well.
- In the herbs program, speakers include Deborah Niemann-Boehle, Caroline and Don Schertz, Steven Lee, Maggie Oster, and, of course, Chuck Voigt. There's also a panel of experts slated to answer a range of questions about herbs on Thursday morning right after the opening session.
- Successful agritourism entrepreneurs, including Kurt and Jane Range, Sherry Chase (Mills' Apple Farm), and Justine Boggio, are featured in the agritourism track, along with presentations on MarketMaker, Farm to School, food service operations, marketing, and issues surrounding food safety, farm safety, and liability.
- Jim Riddle of the National Organics Standards Board will kick off the organics program, and subsequent sessions address pesticide drift, soil and fertility, equipment for small farms, cover crops, fruit production and pest management, and organic production of livestock.
- Topics in the "Emerging Issues and Opportunities" track include Farm to School, selling to institutional buyers, food hubs, and using social networks. We have also set aside time for listening to your questions and concerns about local food systems.
- Last on my list, but certainly not least, is Thursday evening's banquet and awards ceremony and the banquet speaker, Jerry Mills of Mills Apple Farm. Jerry's presentation is titled "A Lifetime of Resource Conservation on Farm and Home – Doing it the Easy Way." It's guaranteed to be full of interesting and humorous stories told in a way that only Jerry can do.

Overall, the Illinois Specialty Crops, Agritourism, and Organics Conference offers a unique opportunity interact with other growers, University of Illinois Extension faculty and staff, and experts from other states. The associated trade show, open from Wednesday evening through mid-day Friday, provides access to many suppliers and information providers. This conference is a must for Illinois growers ... the networking and educational opportunities are unmatched in any other program in the state.

Rick Weinzierl (217-244-2126; weinzier@illinois.edu)

The "Basics" Series of Small Farm/Commercial Production Teleconferences

This four-week series of teleconferences began before this issue of the newsletter went to press, but three remaining teleconferences are upcoming. These seminars are directed at individuals considering the options of commercial production for the first time or expanding a current operation with an additional product. The teleconferences will be held from 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. There is no fee for the programs. The conferences will be offered in multiple locations, please check the location that you will be attending and contact the person listed for each location.

November 28, "The Basics of Commercial Berry Production"

Mike Roegge will review the basics of producing strawberries, blueberries and raspberries.

December 5, "The Basics of High Tunnels"

Jeff Kindhart will review the basics of using high tunnels in a commercial operation.

December 12, "The Basics of Commercial Pumpkin Production"

Mike Roegge will review the basics of producing pumpkins and gourds.

December 19, "The Basics of Commercial Vegetable Production"

Instructor, Bill Shoemaker, will review the basics of commercial vegetable production.

Locations:

Champaign/Ford/Iroquois/Vermilion Unit, 801 North Country Fair Drive Suite D, Champaign, IL 61821. Phone: 217-333-7672. For more information, contact Steve Ayers, Extension Educator, Local Food Systems and Small Farms, srayers@illinois.edu.

Dewitt/Macon/Piatt Unit (Main Office), 3351 N. President Howard Brown Blvd., Decatur, IL 62521. Phone: 217-877-6042. For more information, contact Paul Mariman, Extension Educator, Local Food Systems and Small Farms, pmariman@illinois.edu.

Fulton, Mason, Peoria, Tazewell Unit, 1505 Valle Vista, Pekin, IL 61554. Phone: 309-347-6614. For more information, contact Matt Montgomery, Extension Educator, Local Food Systems and Small Farms, mpmontgo@illinois.edu

Logan/Menard/Sangamon Unit, 700 S. Airport Drive, Springfield, IL 62707. Phone: 217-782-4617. For more information, contact Deborah Cavanaugh-Grant, Extension Educator, Local Food Systems and Small Farms, cvnghgrn@illinois.edu.

Coles/Cumberland/Douglas/Moultrie/Shelby Unit, Lake Land College West Classroom Building Room 136, 5001 Lake Land Blvd., Mattoon, IL 61938. Phone: 217-543-3755. For more information, contact David Shiley, Extension Educator, Local Food Systems and Small Farms, dshiley@illinois.edu.

MarketMaker and MarketReady

A MarketReady / MarketMaker workshop is scheduled for December 13, 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the University of Illinois Knox County Extension Office, 180 S. Soangetaha Rd, Ste. 108, Galesburg, IL. There is no charge for this program, but pre-registration is required, and attendance 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; jpik@illinois.edu)

High Tunnels

A high tunnel workshop is scheduled for December 9, 2011, from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. 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. Participants will also tour a nearby facility. There is no charge for this program, but pre-registration is required, and attendance will be capped at 40. To register, contact Mary Hosier, mhosier@illinois.edu, 217-333-7512.

University of Illinois Extension Educators and Specialists in Fruit and Vegetable Production and Pest Management

Extension Educators – Local Food Systems and Small Farms		
STEPHEN AYERS , Champaign, Ford, Iroquois, & Vermilion counties	217-333-7672	srayers@illinois.edu
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CHUCK VOIGT , Vegetable Production (& herbs)	217-333-1969	cevoigt@illinois.edu
RICK WEINZIERL , Entomology	217-244-2126	weinzierl@illinois.edu

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