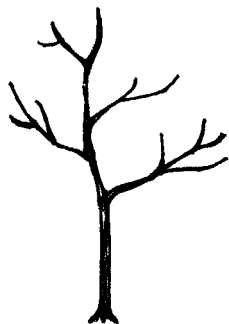


NEW HAMPSHIRE VEGETABLE, BERRY & TREE FRUIT NEWSLETTER

Volume 4.1

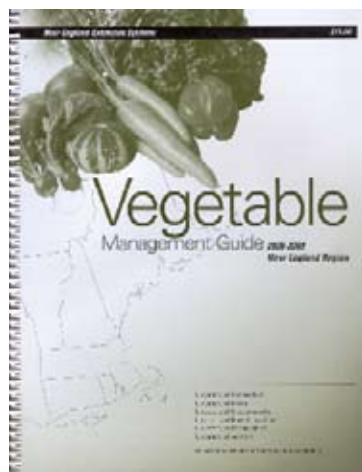
January 2008

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08-09 EDITION OF THE NEW ENGLAND VEGETABLE MANAGEMENT GUIDE IS HERE!

The latest edition of the New England Vegetable Management Guide is here, with an entirely new look! In the 06-07 edition, we identified OMRI-listed pesticides that organic growers can use, and added new crop sections on garlic, basil and mesclun. In this new edition for 08-09, we have updated each crop section, and the guide also includes an entire section of high-quality color photos that help identify common pests and diseases of vegetables and strawberries. It has also been redesigned with a new format that is much easier to read and scan.



Of course, label changes for herbicides, insecticides and fungicides are taking place all the time. You can find all of the updated changes on the Vegetable Guide website, <http://www.nevegetable.org>. Select “General Information” for cultural practices, nutrients, cover crops, general background on insect, weed, and disease management, IPM and biorational

pesticides. Select ‘Crops’ to find details on production methods and weed, insect and disease management for each crop. The online version of the Guide is freely available to all. This website was made possible by grants from the Environmental Protection Agency to the New England Vegetable and Berry Growers Association, UMass Extension, and all the Vegetable Extension programs of New England.

Some of you may have picked up your new copy at the New England Vegetable and Fruit Conference in Manchester, NH back in December. Those of you that haven’t gotten your copy yet have a few options. Members of the New Hampshire Vegetable and Berry Growers’ Association get a free copy as a benefit of membership. If you are a member, copies will be available at the NHVBGA Annual Meeting, which is scheduled for Saturday, March 8 in Boscawen, or you can contact Chip Hardy at 603-465-2241 to find out how you can get your copy. Copies are also available from most UNH Cooperative Extension County Offices, or from Becky Grube on campus in Durham. The cost is \$15 (a \$10 discount off the \$25 value).

WINTER CHORES IN THE ORCHARD - BY BILL LORD, UNHCE TREE FRUIT SPECIALIST EMERITUS

Pruning

At this point in January, it is normally fine to start pruning. Many commercial growers are well into the swing of it already. However, something to keep in mind: Spells of warm temperature de-harden trees so that cold snaps following warm spells pose a higher risk of injury – and pruning wounds increase the chances of damage further. The riskiest times in terms of winter injury are times just after a warm spell or cold snap (especially if the temperature drops 40F or more within a day or two). For growers that need to prune during those times, it’s a good idea to prune least desirable trees first, just in case.

Voles and Deer

Deer are venturing into orchards now, feeding heavily on shoot tips and spurs. Growers should check fences to make sure the earlier heavy snows or ice have not given deer easy entry over compromised fences. Deep snow like we had earlier this winter makes for ideal vole habitat. Deep snow gives them access to trunks above vole guards while under the protective cover of snow (out of site of predators). If a grower has a limited number of trees, knocking the snow level down to the guards will help. Usually, just walking around the trunk with snowshoes does the trick.

Peaches

It reached between 9 and 10 F a couple of weeks ago at my place, right at the edge for many peach/nectarine cultivars. This is an important reminder that these fruits are best suited to exceptional sites in Rockingham, Hillsboro, Merrimack, and Strafford Counties. The use of a max/min thermometer now (coupled with record keeping and comparison to local benchmark site) will provide growers a good gauge for success with these tender fruits.

Do not prune peaches and nectarines now. Pruning is generally delayed until at least bud swell for a couple of reasons. It gives us a good chance to determine the amount of bud survival and adjust pruning accordingly and it promotes more rapid healing of pruning wounds, reducing the risk of pathogen invasion.

Early Fuji

For those thinking about new plantings, I have mentioned before that an early maturing Fuji strain known as Jubilee (Jubilee) has promise. Well, in many catalogs it has a different name now, September Wonder - it is the same strain and one worth trying in south and central NH where a Fuji is needed to meet consumer demands. It is about 3 weeks earlier than regular Fuji and if thinned, sizes well.



PLAN AHEAD FOR A SMALL FRUIT PLANTING

As we sort through seed catalogs and plan for the next growing season, now is the time that many people start to think about what a good idea it would be to put in a new planting of blueberries or brambles (raspberries or blackberries). The demand for berries is at an all-time high, and with attention to marketing, they can be a profitable addition to a diversified operation.

Even though it is tempting to order plants now and plant them into that piece of sod or old pasture that you plow up early in the spring, taking the time to prepare your site will pay off in the long run.

pH. The single most important factor in growing healthy blueberry bushes is pH. Their optimal pH is 4.5-4.8, which is typical of New Hampshire woodlands. This is not typical for old pastures, corn fields, or vegetable gardens! Blueberry bushes are not able to take up nutrients if the pH is too high, regardless of whether the nutrients are present in the soil. Planting in high pH soil delays fruit production, stunts bushes, and causes micronutrient deficiencies. To lower the pH, finely ground sulfur is added to the soil. This takes time to work – 6 months or longer, depending on the initial pH. Transplanting itself is a stress for bushes; adding pH shock on top of it can delay their growth by over a year. It is worth taking the extra year to test the pH and prepare the soil before putting the bushes in! Unlike with vegetable crops, for perennial fruits, your one chance to incorporate amendments deeply into the soil is at planting time. While brambles (raspberries & blackberries) require a more typical garden pH (5.6-6.2), they also suffer setbacks when planted into soils that have not already been adjusted.

Weeds. Weeds around the base of brambles and blueberries compete for water and nutrients, create habitats for voles and mice, decrease airflow (which increases fungal diseases), and make picking more difficult. Without the use of herbicides, any perennial weeds that aren't killed prior to planting will remain a battle throughout the life of the planting. Plowing up sod will not kill perennial grasses – a good reason to wait one growing season before planting your field. If you start a year in advance, you can turn under the sod in the spring and plant competitive summer cover crops (sudan grass is ideal, followed by late August planting of oats) to suppress weeds and add organic matter at the same time. If you wait until the fall before you plant, you could kill the sod by using a broad-spectrum herbicide like glyphosate, or by using a black plastic or weed barrier cloth for smaller areas.

Eliminate wild relatives. It also pays to remove wild relatives of your crop to help manage diseases. For brambles, it is best to remove all wild raspberries and blackberries within 600 feet of your planting. For blueberries, true firs in

the vicinity (*Abies* spp.) also pose a threat, since firs are the alternate host for witches' broom. You may not be able to remove all of these wild hosts of diseases, but any reduction in inoculum helps.

Site selection. Whether you plan to plant right away or wait a year or two, this is an ideal time to determine whether the site you have chosen is a good one. Winterkill is more common in windy and exposed sites – if the snow is consistently blown clear of the area you are looking at, more tender varieties will likely have a hard time in those sites. Low-lying areas are often places where frost can settle. Placing a high-low thermometer in the site is a good way to find out if you have accidentally chosen a cold pocket. Another reason to avoid low-lying areas is that these sites are more likely to have problems with root rots including Phytophthora.

Choose varieties. Long-term success depends on having varieties that are adapted to your site. Pay attention to disease resistance and cold hardiness that is appropriate for your location. Here again, it pays to plan ahead. Popular varieties tend to sell out fast at com-



mercial nurseries – winter is often too late to place an order for the upcoming spring.



If you are considering putting in a blueberry or bramble planting, here is a tentative timeline that maximizes chances of success:

SPRING BEFORE PLANTING:

- Soil test to determine pH, phosphorus and potassium levels.

EARLY SUMMER - JUNE:

- Turn under sod. Incorporate lime or sulfur as needed, as well as phosphorus and potassium according to the soil test and nitrogen to feed a competitive cover crop.
- Plant a cover crop. If you have suitable equipment to till in a large crop, sorghum/sudan grass is a good choice. With smaller scale equipment, buckwheat may be better.
- Starting selecting varieties. Visit farms and compare varieties that you are considering.

LATE SUMMER – AUGUST:

- Turn under summer cover crop.
- Seed oats, which will winter kill.
- Select and order plants.

EARLY SPRING – PLANTING YEAR:

- Re-test pH to make sure it is in the correct range. Amend if necessary.
- Plant canes or bushes.
- Seed a non-competitive grass between rows.
- Follow up with maintenance – water, fertilize, and mulch or hand-weed to keep the area around the plants weed-free for the first year.

Some resources you may find helpful:

NRAES Publication 55 – Highbush Blueberry Production Guide, Available online at <http://www.nraes.org/>.

Limited quantities are also available by contacting your local county extension educator or Becky Grube.

NRAES Publication 35 – Bramble Production Guide, Available online at <http://www.nraes.org/>. Limited quantities are also available by contacting your local county extension educator or Becky Grube. A new edition of this excellent resource is scheduled for publication in spring 2008.

The New England Small Fruit Pest Management Guide is issued every other year. The 08-09 version is scheduled to be available sometime this winter. An older version can be found at: <http://www.umass.edu/fruitadvisor/nesfpmg/>. To purchase a copy of the 06-07 guide, contact Sonia Schloemann at 413-545-4347 or email sgs@umext.umass.edu.

Two new fact sheets, **Raspberry & Blackberry Varieties for New Hampshire Growers** and **Blueberry Varieties for New Hampshire Growers** are now available online at <http://extension.unh.edu/Agric/AGFVC.htm>. You can also get them by emailing becky.grube@unh.edu or by calling Suzanne Hebert at 603-862-3200.

At A Glance

UNH Cooperative Extension Vegetable & Fruit Resources

Soil Testing Call 862- 3200 or visit:

<http://extension.unh.edu/Agric/AGPDTS/SoilTest.htm>

Plant Diagnostic Lab Call 862-3841 or visit:

<http://extension.unh.edu/Agric/AGPDTS/PlantH.htm>

Arthropod Identification Call 862-3200 or visit:

<http://extension.unh.edu/Agric/AGPDTS/ArthroID.htm>

Fruit Pest Phone Update (seasonal): 603-862-3763

UPCOMING MEETINGS AND EVENTS

Sat. Feb 2. New England Vegetable and Berry Growers' Association Winter Meeting. Waltham, MA. For more info contact John Howell, 413-665-3501 or howell@umext.umass.edu. **V, PAT.**

Sat. Feb 9. Soil Fertility and Nutrient Management for Organic Growers, Farm and Forest Expo, Center of NH Radisson Hotel, Manchester, NH. 9am-4:15pm. The meeting will focus on soil testing, record keeping for organic certification, organic fertilizer and amendment options, cover cropping and nutrient management for organic growers. Cost: \$5. Please register by Feb 1 at: http://www.events.unh.edu/register.shtml?event_id=3978. For more info contact Becky Grube, becky.grube@unh.edu or 603-862-3203. **V, O, PAT.**

Tues. Feb 12 (snow date Tues Feb 19). Greenhouse Bedding Plant Production Workshop. Massabesic Audubon Center, Auburn NH. 8:30am-3:30PM. Advance registration required, space is limited. Cost: \$30, includes lunch and educational materials. For info, contact Gail Ramsey, 603-679-5616. **V, F, PAT.**

Tues-Thurs. Feb 12-14. Empire State Fruit and Vegetable Expo – “Growing for the health of New York”. On Center Convention Center, Syracuse NY. For info, see <http://www.nysaus.cornell.edu/hort/expo/> or contact Jeff and Lindy Kebecka at 315-687-5734. **V, O, SF, PAT.**

Sat-Sun. Feb 16-17. NOFA-VT Annual Winter Conference. Vermont Technical College, Randolph VT. For info, see <http://www.nofavt.org> or contact NOFA-VT at 802-434-4122. **AC, O.**

Mon. Feb 25. Vermont Vegetable and Berry Growers Association. Capital Plaza Hotel and Conference Center, Montpelier VT. Cost: \$25-35. Register by Feb 22. For info, contact Vern Grubinger at vernon.grubinger@uvm.edu or 802-257-7967 ext 13. **AC, O, PAT.**

Thurs. Feb 28. Tri-Counties Flower and Vegetable Meeting. Alton, NH. 9am-3pm. For info, contact Geoffrey Njue at geoffrey.njue@unh.edu OR 603-749-4445. **F, V, O, PAT.**

Sat. Mar 1. NOFA – NH Annual Winter Conference. Winnisquam Regional High School, Tilton, NH. 8:30am-5:30pm. Presenters from NH and VT will offer their experience and expertise in topics ranging from beginning and advanced organic farming and gardening, organic land care, sustainability, raising livestock, alternative energy, and producing and selling locally. Cost: \$45. For info, contact Anne Nason, anason@tds.net, or 603-746-3018 or see <http://www.nofanh.org>. **AC, O, PAT.**

Sat. Mar 8. New Hampshire Vegetable and Berry Growers' Annual Meeting. Alan's Restaurant, Boscawen, NH. 9am-4pm. For info, contact Becky Grube at becky.grube@unh.edu or 603-862-3203. **V, SF, PAT.**

Tues. Mar 18. Maine Vegetable School. Keeley's Banquet Center, Portland ME. 9am-4:30pm. For info, contact Mark Hutchinson at markh@umext.maine.edu or 207-832-0343. Cost: \$25, includes lunch. **V, TF, SF, PAT, CCA.**

Wed. Mar 19. Maine Vegetable School. Hutchinson Center, Belfast ME.. 9am-4:30pm. For info, contact Mark Hutchinson at markh@umext.maine.edu or 207-832-0343. Cost: \$25, includes lunch. **V, TF, SF, PAT, CCA.**

Fri. Mar 21. New Hampshire Fruit Growers' Annual Meeting. Alan's Restaurant, Boscawen, NH. 9am-4pm. For info, contact George Hamilton at george.hamilton@unh.edu or 603-641-6060. **TF, PAT.**

Meeting topics: F = flower, O = certified organic, SF = small fruit, TF = tree fruit, V = vegetable, AC = all crops. PAT = pesticide applicator recertification credits available, CCA = certified crop advisor credits available.

Subscriptions – This newsletter is free online at <http://ceinfo.unh.edu/Agric/AGFVC.htm>. Email becky.grube@unh.edu if you would like to receive email notification when a new issue is available. You can subscribe using the form available at the website above if you would prefer to receive a paper copy via U.S. mail.

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