Final Eastern NY Commercial Berry Newsletter for the 2013 Season

As the season winds down, we would like to thank you for your allowing us to tramp through your farms on a weekly basis, checking SWD traps and other berry related activities. Also, we’d like to express our gratitude to all of those growers that have participated in research projects, both completed, ongoing and as of yet, unfunded! We look forward to working with you for the remainder of 2013 and in 2014.

We hope that many of you will take advantage of the numerous educational opportunities that are available during this winter’s meeting season. We won’t be present at all of them, but we do expect to attend many of the meetings as presenters or assistants. Of particular interest is the NARBA (North American Raspberry and Blackberry Association) meeting that is being held in conjunction with the Mid-Atlantic EXPO in Hershey PA this year. This national meeting is a great opportunity to get research information from all over the continent – and the trade show at Hershey is also excellent.

Thanks again for your contributions to our efforts. We hope that the expanded Eastern NY program has served you well in this first year. - Laura and Jim

SWD Continue to Plague Growers

Despite earlier cool fall temperatures than we saw last year, Spotted Wing Drosophila are still present in numbers high enough to be a real problem for many growers – particular U-Pick operations. Many U-Pick farms across the region have been forced to close already due to infestation levels higher than they are comfortable with. Home gardeners have been calling with questions and reports, so we know that SWD has been active and populations are heavy. Traps in southern Rensselaer county are still revealing very high levels of adults, despite cool weather. This also resulted in early September raspberry harvest being heavily infested – sometimes despite weekly pesticide applications – although growers that have been picking very clean AND spraying have seen a significantly lower incidence of infestation. It seems likely that when adult populations were very high and the weather conditions were perfect (ie slightly cooler in the 70’s with increased humidity from rainfall) conditions were ideal for egg laying in the berries. Day neutral strawberry growers are seeing low levels of infestation and clean picking and fruit removal may be helping with that result.

September 10th meeting focused on SWD research in eastern NY. Here the group is discussing an exclusion netting trial at HayBerry Farm in Hoosick Falls, NY. The work was funded by a NE SARE Farmer grant. Note bird net and landscape cloth mulch in planting.
SWD Continue to Plague Growers, continued from page 1

Still – I think growers region wide can say that this year saw significantly better control than last year – primarily due to a much more aggressive approach to management. Kudos to you! This is an extremely difficult pest and some of you have already decided it doesn’t pay to grow certain berry crops. For those of you that remain in the game – the extra effort and money involved with managing just SWD puts a real burden on growing premium berries. That translates to improving overall yield and thus better attention to fertility, weed management and other pest problems. Job security folks – it doesn’t get any better than this!


Value Added Food Product Survey – We Need Your Input!!

Cornell Cooperative Extension Capital Area Agricultural and Horticultural Program has prepared an online survey to gauge the interest of farmers and others in producing a value added food product. Senior Resource Educator, Steve Hadcock, has worked with others in New York State to gauge the interest and needs of individuals for making value added food products.

The survey can be completed at https://cornell.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_eMRXDYQR38nczr. Hadcock shared that the survey should only take five to ten minutes to complete and will be of great value to existing and potential value added centers in the state. Please complete by October 15th. For more information: Steve Hadcock seh11@cornell.edu.

Use of Glyphosate (Roundup) to Control Field Bindweed in Blackberries

By Mark Bolda, Steve Fennimore and Patrick Kingston, University of California at Davis Berry Extension Program, posted on September 11, 2013 on the California Caneberry and Strawberry Research blog

Editors Note: Although much about NE berry cultural systems differ from California production, the problems associated with noxious perennial weeds like bindweed are the same. Misery loves company, but insights into control might also prevent misery! And fall is the BEST time to control these persistent weed pests. Please also remember that raspberry sensitivity to glyphosate is much greater than blackberries, and thus should be treated with much more care during application.

Field bindweed, *Convolvulus arvensis*, also known locally as morning glory, is a persistent weed pest in blackberries grown on the Central Coast of the California. Much of this stems from the long period of time between plant establishment and final removal of the crop some five to six years later.

While cultivation of the aisles between the hedgerows is successful in keeping the field clear of most weeds, field bindweed is another matter. Not only does field bindweed establish very deep root systems which frustrate control by cultivation, but the lengthy vines of this plant grow into the hedgerow and even up onto the plants themselves (Photo 1). Spray applications of translocated herbicides like Roundup are risky due to sensitivity of blackberry to spray drift. For this reason we have selected ropewick application methods to reduce the possibility of spray drift and crop injury.

The study described here is an experiment of two methods of wick applications of glyphosate (Roundup). One method, pictured below, is of a ropewick applicator (Photo 2) which applies a 33% volume per volume (v/v) dilution of formulated

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Straws from wheat or other grains are applied as mulch when soil temperature has consistently dropped below 40°F. This usually happens in late November, although southern locations might not see these temperatures until early-mid-December. This winter cover prevents winter heaving and crown desiccation.

Level plantings with no raised beds, require 2.5 to 3 tons of straw per acre – about 150 40 lb. small square bales. This will result in a 2-3” layer across the planting. Raised beds could require twice as much mulch because of the tendency for the straw to drift into the alleys. If you have small acreage, then applying mulch by hand is the way to go – just shake it out evenly over the plants. If you have large acreage, you will want to use a bale chopper. Keep an eye on the most windswept areas of your field and replace the mulch if it has blown off.

Mulch should be removed in the spring when new green tissue just begins to show. Rake the mulch into the rows.

Prepare to Mulch Strawberries

If you want to move your production back, you can do this by delaying mulch removal, but your yield may be compromised – although this year those that kept the mulch on – regardless of hot temperatures actually avoided blossom freeze damage.

After straw mulch is removed many growers use floating row covers as spring frost protection strategy. These spun-bonded materials allow light and water to pass through but provide several degrees of temperature buffer – depending upon their weight. Heavy weight row covers (1.25 oz/yd² or 42 g/m²) can also be useful for winter protection of strawberry plantings. Anchor the row cover with rocks or other weights. Many growers are using a combination of straw and floating row covers, particularly those that are trying to winter a day neutral strawberry planting. You will want plenty of help and a still day to apply this mulch effectively. -LGM
Despite a confirmed interest in locally grown food, consumers still purchase produce at grocery stores even though our region boasts an abundance of Farmers’ Markets and farm stands. Let’s face it – people go to the grocery store because it’s easy. So how to make purchasing locally grown produce easier?

Many of our readers may have heard of the project that CCE was involved in during 2012. With the help of a Cornell Small Farms grant, CCE and Adirondack Harvest worked together to investigate the potential in a new food distribution model – that of delivering Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) “shares” directly to local worksites. The project sought to inform employers mindful of wellness initiatives, about the feasibility of sponsoring a CSA. Ongoing health promotion efforts set the stage for increasing consumption of locally grown produce while also helping farmers develop non-traditional markets. In case you weren’t aware of the link between increased consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables, please take a moment to read about a brand new health initiative in NYC http://news92fm.com/370085/hospitals-prescribing-fruits-veggies-for-wellness/.

Suffice to say that the project was very successful, and now there are several farms offering Worksite CSA distribution in the Capital district, lower Hudson Valley and northern NY. Many of these farms have had to alter their traditional CSA protocol – for instance one farmer is offering ‘free choice’ shares and even customizable shares using Farmigo (www.farmigo.com) software to help them meet the individual needs of the consumer.

“There are a lot of businesses out there, and there are a lot of farmers. It’s a perfect match up,” said Adam Hainer, co-owner of Juniper Hill Farm in Westport, NY who was involved in the initial project and has since expanded his Worksite CSA market avenue almost three fold. “We wanted to increase the CSA component of our market, but because of our location we weren’t seeing much growth,” said Hainer. “We had to make it more convenient. We needed to make a decision to get more food to more people.” Adam decided that for the first few years he would allow companies that had a minimum of 10 subscribers to be a drop-off location IF there were other businesses contributing to at least 50 total subscribers for a single day delivery. The other requirement is that each business had to have an on-site coordinator to act as the liaison between the farmer and the consumer or the employer. This position proved to be critical – especially during the first season. “There were some problems” said Hainer, “like what to do with a share if an employee was sick – or forgot that they were going on vacation. The coordinator really helped iron out those wrinkles.”

The initial project surveyed subscribers and found that a majority of customers understood that the products delivered exceeded grocery store products in both value and quality. 100% of the respondents said that their consumption of fresh vegetables increased as a result of being a CSA member and 77.8% indicated that they would definitely join a CSA in the future. Some of the comments included, “Very convenient, drop off at work. I loved the variety and being able to choose from veggies that I wouldn’t ordinarily purchase in the store” and “I was surprised at the high quality of the product and the abundance”.

Find the brochure above at http://smallfarms.cornell.edu/files/2012/03/draftBrochures-CSAWorkplace-1q8ceed.pdf

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Organic Cover Crop Workshop and Tour
Thursday Oct. 17, 10am - 4pm
USDA-NRCS Big Flats Plant Materials Center, 3266 Route 352, Big Flats, NY 14814

This workshop will feature speakers from Cornell University presenting in depth information on cover cropping and reduced tillage for vegetable growers with an emphasis on organic systems and will also include nitrogen cycling and a soil ecology overview. There will be a tour of the time of seeding cover crop demonstration with single and multiple species of cover crops, reduced tillage tools and a row crop interseeder. Lunch available for $12.00 and CCA credits available.

For a detailed schedule, speakers, topics and tour sites go to http://www.nofany.org/events/field-days/organic-cover-crop-workshop-and-tour or contact Paul Salon, USDA-NRCS, 607-562-8404, paul.salon@ny.usda.gov.

Register online at http://events.constantcontact.com/register/event?llr=7ex5qzeab&oeidk=a07e7j0eqy23d4363df
Weekly and Seasonal Weather Information

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