Cornell University
Cooperative Extension

# Eastern NY Commercial Horticulture Program

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# Berry News

## Regional Updates:

***North Country– Clinton, Essex, northern Warren and Washington counties***

Berry phenology: Blueberry —dormant

Pest focus— Insect stem gall, Botrytis blossom and twig blight, Fusicoccum Canker, Phomopsis Canker, Scale Insects

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***Capital District—Albany, Fulton, Montgomery, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady, Schoharie, southern Warren and Washington counties***

Berry phenology—dormant

Pest focus— Insect stem gall, Botrytis blossom and twig blight, Fusicoccum Canker, Phomopsis Canker, Scale Insects

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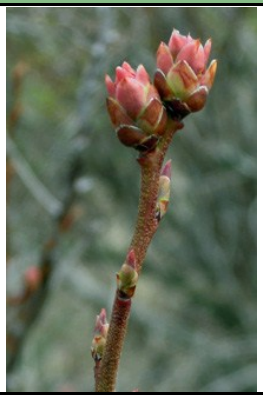
***Mid-Hudson Valley—Columbia, Dutchess, Greene, Orange, Sullivan and Ulster counties***

Berry phenology: Blueberry—dormant in most locations, extreme south some bud swell

Pest focus— Insect stem gall, Botrytis blossom and twig blight, Fusicoccum Canker, Phomopsis Canker, Scale Insects

**Blueberry Growth Stages Table** - courtesy Michigan State University
http://blueberries.msu.edu/growing_blueberries/growth_stages_table

| Dormant or tight bud | Bud swell | Early green tip |
|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |
| **Plant part:** Flower bud.<br>**Description:** No visible swelling of the fruit buds. Bud scales tightly closed. No visible signs of growth. | **Plant part:** Flower bud.<br>**Description:** First sign of growth as plant growth begins in the spring. Visible swelling of the flower buds; outer bud scales begin to separate at the tip revealing paler interior bud scales. This bud stage can usually tolerate cold temperatures of 10 to15°F (-12 to -9°C). | **Plant part:** Leaf bud.<br>**Description:** Bud scales are separating at leaf bud tips. Green leaf tissue is emerging from the leaf bud tips. From 1/16 to 3/16 inch (2 to 5 mm) of green tissue is exposed. Leaves are tightly rolled. |

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# Early Season Blueberry Care

The most important pest control practice for blueberry bushes during the dormant season is selective pruning of old, damaged and diseased wood. Removing potential inoculum and overwintering pests is the first pest control strategy of the season. Selective pruning to balance crop load and improve overall yield will lengthen the productive life of the planting. Keep in mind that pruning should be done prior to budbreak. Pruning cuts should be made at the base of the plant, as close to the ground as possible. Remove two of the largest and oldest canes each year, and thin out all but 3-4 of last years' canes. Small canes with diameters less than that of a pencil should be removed. The goal of pruning should be a plant that has 16-20 canes with a good variety of age – ideally 2-3 canes per year for 8 years should be represented in the plant.

While pruning, examine plants for signs of disease or insect pests. Prune out and burn wood with **insect stem galls**. These galls are usually located at the terminal ends of the stems and are most problematic in young plantings. Infestations are usually localized, but 50-70 galls per plant is not uncommon.

Scale Insect *Courtesy of University of Delaware*

**Fusiccocum and Phomopsis Cankers** cause wilting and cane dieback during the growing season. You may be able to see tip dieback now, but be careful not to confuse this with cold injury. Fusicoccum canker may exhibit reddish scars around leaf scars close to the ground. As the canker enlarges it may form a bulls eye pattern. Fusicoccum canker is more of a problem in northern regions.

Phomopsis canker on the other hand, is a problem throughout the state. This disease is harder to distinguish in the dormant season, but if you know you have it, now is the time to spray. Copper sulfate at blossom bud swell and then again 14 days prior to bloom, lime sulfur just as buds begin to break are two commonly used strategies – both of which are organically approved. Other fungicides recommended include Quash and Pristine.

Bulls-eye of Phomopsis canker on dormant branch *Courtesy of Cornell University*

Many species of **scale** can be detected while pruning. Look for the hard covered female scales on small branches. Apply Brigade when crawlers are likely to be out – usually on the first warm day above 50 degrees. A 2.4% oil spray applied just as buds begin to swell at 300-400 psi is another strategy. Use 250-300 gallons of water to insure coverage. Molt-X or AzoSol are azadirachtin products that also are labeled for scale control.

Lastly, if you know that you have **Botrytis** pressure in the planting, now is the time to control that. Organically approved materials include Serenade Max, Oxidate and Actinovate AG. Conventional products include Captan, CaptEvate, Quash and Ziram. ~ LGM

# Berry Grower Volunteers Needed for Farm Business Summary Project

Is your berry business maximizing its return on investment? Is it thriving, or merely surviving? Are berries an asset on your ledger or a liability?

If you'd like help answering these questions, volunteer as a grower participant in a new project, **"Building a Better Bottom Line for NYS Berry Growers,"** funded by New York Farm Viability Institute's Ag Innovation Center.

The project is led by Dr. Marvin Pritts, professor and chair of the Cornell University's Department of Horticulture. Other team members include horticultural marketing expert Dr. Bradley Rickard and two graduate students from the Cornell's Charles H. Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management and nine Cornell Cooperative Extension educators from around the state.

**About the project:** During Stage 1, the project team will enlist 24 commercial berry growers statewide to participate in berry farm business summaries. Participating farm operations need to have been in business the past three years, had sales in 2012, and preferably produce at least two berry crops.

Extension educators will work with growers to collect economic information for the summaries. In addition, they will collect crop production data to develop crop budgets. Crops in the initial study will include strawberries, blueberries and raspberries.

Information collected will remain anonymous. The budgets generated will not be attributed to specific farms. Instead, they will provide benchmarks (statewide averages calculated from collected data) that will help participants evaluate their business performance. In return for their participation, growers will receive a one-on-one review of their berry farm business summary with their educator as well as crop budgets and other resources related to the project.

**Why a berry farm business summary?** Berry project team members are building on the Cornell-developed Fruit Farm Business Summary (FFBS), which has helped tree fruit growers improve their return on investment (ROI) for more than a decade. According to a study by Dyson School professor emeritus Gerald White, the FFBS "identifies the business and financial information they (growers) need and provides a framework for use in identifying and evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the farm business."

Experience with tree fruit growers using FFBS shows they quickly identify practices that are more costly than state benchmarks and address why their individual costs are higher. Early in the process, growers often make changes that immediately improve their bottom line.

Participating growers also learn which components of their operation should be expanded or contracted to improve return on investment (ROI). Participating berry growers should reap the same rewards as their tree-fruit colleagues. During Stage 2 of the project educators will hold half-day regional berry crop economics workshops using the information and resources generated from Stage 1 to assist additional berry growers in evaluating their ROI.

**How do I get involved?** You may be contacted in the future by an educator in your region and asked to consider being a participant. To volunteer now or to receive more information please contact the project team member closest to you.

| Educator | Region | Contact |
|---|---|---|
| Sandy Buxton | Capital District | sab22@cornell.edu 518-746-2560 |
| Laura McDermott | Central and Northern NY | lgm4@cornell.edu 518-791-5038 |
| Jim O'Connell | Hudson Valley | jmo98@cornell.edu 845-691-7117 |

## 2013 Organic Certification Cost Share Program

If you farm in Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Jersey, New Hampshire, **New York**, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Utah, Vermont, West Virginia, Wyoming, you are eligible to receive a 2013 organic certification cost share reimbursement.

Organic crop and livestock producers in the states listed above can be reimbursed as much as 75 percent of their certification costs from October 1, 2012 through September 30, 2013, up to a maximum of $750. This program is not competitive; $1.425 million is available for farmers and ranchers in the participating states.

To get reimbursed, contact the NYS Dept. of Ag and Markets for an application. Assemble proof of USDA organic certification, itemized invoice showing expenses paid for certification, W-9 tax form, and anything else required by your State. The NYSDAM confirmed the program will be available for the 2013 season in New York. Program funding for the above listed states is through a federal program that is outside the Farm Bill. Funding for other states, such as North Carolina, for example, is tied to Farm Bill passage. Information and forms for the 2013 program will be updated on their web site shortly: http://www.agriculture.ny.gov/AP/Organic/reimbursement.html.

## New Releases from Cornell Breeding Program

Dr. Courtney Weber, the berry breeder at Cornell University NYSAES in Geneva, released *'Double Gold'* and '*Crimson Night'*, last season. Both varieties are primocane fruiting, highly flavored, and ideal for fresh market. *Double Gold* bears a decent summer crop as well. Both varieties have been licensed to North American Plants, LLC, a propagator that sells to nurseries and growers across the United States. To pre-order large orders from North American Plants, visit http://www.naplants.com/. For small home plantings, Burpee http://www.burpee.com/ is the only other source at this time.

Double Gold

Crimson Night

## New York Strawberry Production Decreases

2013 Strawberry production in New York was down 11 percent from 2011 to 3.20 million pounds, according to King Whetstone, Director of USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service, New York Field Office.

The value of utilized production is estimated at $6.88 million, down 19 percent from the $8.46 million in 2011. New York ranks eighth in strawberry production. Nationally, the strawberry crop for 2012 was placed at 3.01 billion pounds, up 4 percent from 2011.

Production of blueberries for the Empire State was at 2.00 million pounds, up 5 percent from 2011. The 2012 crop is valued at $3.89 million, down 2 percent from the $3.96 million last year. The U.S. estimate for blueberries is 473 million pounds, up 7 percent from 2011.

# New Water Resources Law May Affect You!

*By Teresa Rusinek, edited and adapted by Mike Fargione, ENYCH Program*

A NYS law signed on 2/15/2012 (final regulations effective on 4/1/2013) requires **a permit and annual reporting for agricultural water withdrawal systems that have the capacity to remove 100,000 gallons per day [gpd] of surface or groundwater, and registration for water withdrawals averaging more than 100,000 gpd during any 30-day period. If you have the *capacity* to withdraw 100,000 gallons of water per day, this law affects you.**

- Regulations cover withdrawals from sources including wells and surface water sources such as ponds and creeks. Farms with multiple locations are considered a single unit, i.e., one agricultural facility, as long as parcels are within 40 miles.
- The DEC defines an agricultural facility as "farming for crops, plants, vines and trees, and the keeping, grazing, or feeding of livestock for sale of livestock or livestock products, and the on-farm processing of crops, livestock and livestock products."
- Agricultural facilities with the ***capacity*** to withdraw water $\geq$ an average of 100,000 gallons per day in any 30-day consecutive period (3 million gallons during a 30-day period) must file an annual report with NYSDEC. **This report is due by March 31st of each year**.
- Registration is required if water use in any 30-day period exceeds 3 million gallons. This is equal to 110.5 acre-inches per 30 days or a daily average water use of 100,000 gallons (3.7 acre-inches in 24 hours). A 30-day running total record of the days that irrigation took place and the amount of water applied per acre will help determine the need for registration. Any agricultural facility with a water source over the threshold volume **that** did not register or report usage to NYSDEC prior to February 15, 2012 must file for a water withdrawal permit.

**More about Registering, Reporting, & Permitting**

Interpreting the new regulations can be tricky. Key points include:

- Registration is basically filling in your name and location on the Ag Withdrawal Reporting Form, but not necessarily filling in the numbers on how much water you estimate you used. Why would you do this? Some operators may have no idea how much water they use. Sending in a registration with or without the water use reporting lets DEC know you're out there, and they'll work with you to determine if water withdrawal reports and/or a future permit is needed.
- If you registered/reported by February 15 in 2012, you are now exempt from having to get a permit if you withdraw at or over threshold. **Whether or not you reach threshold, you have to report annually by March 31, if you have the capacity to withdraw 100,000 gpd**.
- At this time the DEC is encouraging farm operations to use this reporting system as a tool to learn about their water usage. If you are over the pumping threshold and have not registered or reported, the DEC suggests that you do as soon as possible so they can evaluate your situation and help you comply without taking regulatory actions.
- Farmers with questions may contact Richard Kruzansky, NYSDEC Division of Water at 518-402-8182.
- More information and reporting forms are available at the NYSDEC Water Withdrawals for Agricultural Facilities website at http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/86747.html.

# Trac Software Workshops

Trac software is a pesticide spray record-keeping program built in Excel which will automatically generate your reports.

Learn more about it at www.nysipm.cornell.edu/trac

The workshops will be taught by Juliet Carroll, Trac Software Developer, and will be held in several locations, with time for questions and discussion.

- CCE Clinton County, Plattsburgh 3/25/13 1-4 pm
- Hudson Valley Lab, Highland 3/26/13 9am-12pm
- CCE Rensselaer County, Troy 3/27/13 9am-12pm

Workshops will demonstrate how to set up your farm's information, applicators, blocks, pesticide inventory; how to enter your records and generate reports, including the EPA WPS Central Posting Form; how Trac can generate spray material costs and keep fertilizer and harvest records.

*Advanced registration only! Deadline is March 20.*
*DEC recertification credits available.*

For details and registration form go to http://www.nysipm.cornell.edu/news/TracWorkshopPromo2013.pdf or contact Marcie Vohnoutka 518-272-4210, mmp74@cornell.edu.

# Berry Pruning Workshops

Proper berry pruning is one part of an effective SWD management program and will encourage long lived, productive plants. Join us for a hands-on demonstration of blueberry and bramble pruning directed at the commercial grower, including how to properly prune blueberries for insect and disease management.*

Depending on the location, the demonstration on bramble pruning will include floricane and primocane raspberries and blackberries. An emphasis on SWD management will be part of the course, and there will be time for questions and discussion.

All workshops are held 10:00 am - 12:00 pm.

+Mead's Orchard Tivoli NY Wed. March 20
*Jim O'Connell: 845-943-9814*

Och's Orchard, Warwick, NY Thurs. March 21
*Jim O'Connell: 845-943-9814*

+Rulf's Orchard, Peru, NY Tues. March 26
*Amy Ivy: 518-561-7450*

+Indian Ladder Farms, Altamont, NY Thurs. March 28
*Laura McDermott: 518-791-5038*

*+Cashin's Farm, Fultonville, NY Fri. March 29
*Laura McDermott: 518-791-5038*

*** This location does not have blueberries.**
**+These locations have High Tunnel berry production**.

**Please let us know you are coming!**
Call the contact listed at each location - it helps us plan ahead and cancel in case of foul weather.