

EXECUTIVE DEAN
OF AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Report to the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture
October 2010

Assessing New Jersey Farm Winery Needs

On September 23, **Robert M. Goodman** (executive dean of agriculture and natural resources) and **Rutgers Cooperative Extension** (RCE) leadership were hosted by Gene and Anthony Ventimiglia during a site visit to [Ventimiglia Vineyard](#), located in Wantage Twp., Sussex County, NJ. The visit offered the opportunity to discuss New Jersey's emerging, high quality wine growing



industry and Rutgers research and extension education supporting the industry. The state's expanding wine industry currently has 192 farms growing 1,043 acres of grapes, which supply about 35 wineries. These produce over 40 different wines—from dry and semi-dry to sparkling, fruit, and dessert wines.

Established New Jersey winegrower Matty Matarazzo of [Four Sisters Winery at Matarazzo Farms](#) in Belvidere, Warren County, NJ, was also a part of the discussion. According to **Jack Rabin** (associate director of farm programs, NJAES),

one of the top priorities for New Jersey farm wineries like Four Sisters and others that conduct agritourism, is completion of Agricultural Management Practices (AMP) guidelines which are acceptable to farmers and can be adopted by the state.



Late summer foraging by yellow jackets injures grapes. Shown above, Ventimiglia Vineyard uses non-chemical soda bottle wasp traps baited with vinegar, sugar, and attractants instead of sprays. In addition, the farm protects ripe vertical trellised grapes with poly bird netting and programmable bird distress calls

A 2006 study by the NJAES found that agritourism generated \$57.5 million in revenues in New Jersey. "Everyone recognizes agritourism is a wonderful, natural complement to local farming and communities. Farm wineries see agritourism events as a harmonious match with profitable farm viability," said Rabin. "New Jersey residents who patronize farm winery events increase their understanding and connection with local farming, while enjoying memorable recreational experiences. It is not an exaggeration to state that for most people, their understanding of farming, agriculture, and food is gained through agritourism and farmers' market experiences," added Rabin.

According to Rabin, conducting more robust farm winery agritourism hinges on provisions in the Right-to-Farm Act and

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resolving issues related to nuisance complaints or local municipal codes, which may inadvertently act as deterrents to expanding the increasingly important agritourism business for viticulturists. “Winegrowers and the state need policy clarity, through AMPs,” said Rabin. Rutgers NJAES is renewing its efforts, in collaboration with the farm community, the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC), the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, and the New Jersey Farm Bureau, to develop AMPs for agritourism that would address current challenges and impediments. In 2006, the NJAES collaborated with others in the farm community to craft site-specific Agricultural Management Practices guidelines but they were not adopted.

The September 23 meeting enabled Ventimiglia Vineyard to identify several viticultural problems for which Rutgers can provide solutions. Specific needs that were identified included conducting wine quality assessment workshops; testing wine quality outcome from alternative varieties; hospitality training for winery employees; making available base 50 degree-day data through a web portal; providing annual pest management recommendations to viticulturists by February or March each year; and sharing additional strategies to reduce wildlife damage in vineyards.

“It’s a tall order,” said Rabin, “but Rutgers NJAES is committed to addressing each problem to support growers.” Among many experiment station and grower cooperative efforts, Rabin pointed to the wine growing symposium, [Bordeaux – An Old World Terroir with Lessons for New Jersey](#), which was held on March 27 in collaboration with the New Jersey Outer Coastal Plain Vineyard Association.



Gene Ventimiglia discusses one of his signature wines during the Rutgers visit

Rutgers Cooperative Extension specialists, including **Dan Ward** (extension specialist in pomology), who leads Rutgers viticulture efforts, along with agricultural agents **Jerome Frecon** (Gloucester County), **Gary Pavlis** (Atlantic County), and **Dean Polk**, (fruit IPM coordinator), are among the scientists providing a wide range of outreach to New Jersey farm wineries.

Photos by Jack Rabin.

Spotlight on Research Efforts to Enhance the Fall Harvest

The bounty of summer peaches and tomatoes are replaced by the orange, and sometimes green, tan, and yellow orbs of pumpkin and squash. What used to be an almost exclusive supply



of round, orange pumpkins has now diverged into an array of colors, sizes, shapes, and textures, with growers providing an ever widening selection of pumpkins and squashes. According to **Michelle Infante-Casella** (agricultural agent, Gloucester County), we can sometimes confuse exotic pumpkins with ethnic winter squashes. For cooking, Infante-Casella favors the sweeter, denser-fleshed large-neck squash, Turk's turban, and blue hubbard squash over the traditional ornamental pumpkins, which tend to be stringy. The tan colored cheese pumpkin, which is actually a squash, is favored for making pies.

Growing Healthier Crops with Higher Yields

But before the bounty of the fall harvest comes the planting!! Rutgers NJAES researchers assist farmers by conducting pumpkin variety trials to help them select pumpkin varieties that have the highest disease resistance, yield, and fruit quality, grown under New Jersey conditions. One pumpkin trial compared small varieties that are favored for pumpkin-picking field trips for schools. Of the many varieties tested, Infante-Casella indicated that some of the top variety performers were 'Fall Splendor,' "Orange Smoothie," and "Field Trip." Trial recommendations are relayed to farmers via the annual New Jersey Vegetable Growers Recommendations manual.



Pumpkin growing in leaf mulch during trial

Rutgers researchers also look at practices that improve growing conditions for pumpkins. **Joseph Heckman** (extension specialist in soil fertility) compared pumpkin plantings on soil mulched with leaves vs. bare soil. Farmers who grow pumpkins using a municipal waste product—leaves from shade trees, can reap the benefit of improved soil quality, less weed growth, and cleaner pumpkins. Heckman also conducted a soil fertility trial that helped suppress the powdery mildew disease in pumpkins. By liming with calcium silicate as opposed to the more common calcium carbonate, the nutrient silicon, a natural disease suppressant, is added to the

soil. When the pumpkin fields are then rotated to another crop such as wheat, the wheat crop also shows signs of disease suppression. Such research efforts ensure that New Jersey farmers get a more bountiful harvest and allow them during the fall to focus on extending their growing season, which increasingly includes autumn festivals and pick-your-own pumpkin events, all part of fall agritourism in the Garden State. Click here for more on [What's in Season from the Garden State](#).

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Spotlight on Cranberry Discovery Tour

The immensely popular “Discovery Tour Amazing Cranberries!” on October 12 attracted a capacity attendance of 43, including two home-schooled families, the Friendly Seniors of New Gretna, many alumni, and friends of the university. The first stop on the tour was the Integrity



Stephen Lee, IV, at left, explains the harvesting process at Lee Bros. Cranberry Farm

Propagation facility, a joint project with Abbott Lee, founder, and **Nicholi Vorsa** (director, [Rutgers Philip E. Marucci Center for Blueberry and Cranberry Research and Extension](#)), who described the proprietary breeding process for cranberries.

The Lee Brothers Cranberry Farm in Chatsworth, NJ, served as an interesting, hands-on experience for the tour goers, who headed out to the bogs to experience a “wet” cranberry harvest under the guidance of proprietors Stephen Lee, III and Stephen Lee, IV.



Stephen Lee, IV, demonstrates how cranberries grow in the bog

During lunch, **Amy Howell** (associate research scientist at the Marucci center) presented valuable information about the health properties of cranberries during a stop at the center, located in Chatsworth, NJ. The last stop on the tour was the Ocean Spray Receiving Plant in Chatsworth, NJ. Tour participants were able to see first-hand how the just harvested cranberries are unloaded, washed, and boxed for shipment to Ocean Spray distribution plants.

Spotlight on Rutgers-themed Corn Maze at Von Thun Farms

On October 4, **Bradley Hillman** (senior associate director, NJAES, and director of Rutgers Cooperative Research) joined Douglas Fisher (New Jersey Secretary of Agriculture), Kevin MacConnell (Rutgers' deputy director of athletics) at [Von Thun Farms](#) in Monmouth Junction, NJ, for the official kickoff of the fall agritourism season in the state. Known for over a decade for its



L-R: Grace Hanlon (acting executive director, NJ Division of Travel and Tourism), Douglas Fisher, Bob Von Thun, and **Bradley Hillman** at the unveiling ceremony

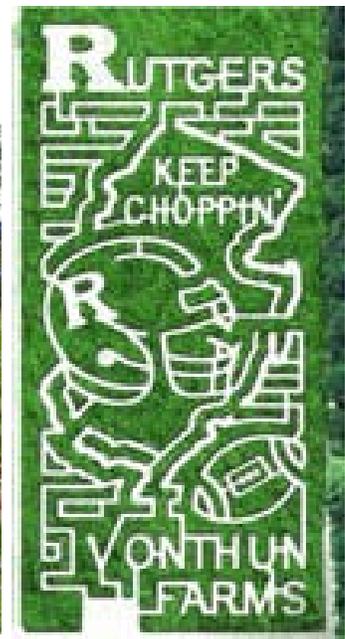
themed corn mazes, Von Thun Farms unveiled its latest creation that features a miniature football field, a Rutgers helmet, and the football team's motto "Keep Choppin" cut into the cornfield. "This 5-acre corn maze honoring the Scarlet Knights football program is another example of the resourcefulness of our New Jersey farmers, who increasingly respond to the need to expand their operations through innovative marketing and agritourism," said Hillman. "I am pleased to see the linkages made between the deep agricultural roots of New Jersey and the flagship institution of higher education in the state," he added.

The maze comprises two courses, with a shorter track for school-age kids. The [maze](#), which will be open through the end of October, provides ample clues to guide participants from start to finish. [Read more.](#)

The maze comprises two courses, with a



Ground-level view of the entrance to the Rutgers football-themed corn maze



Aerial view of the corn maze

Faculty and Staff Activities and Accomplishments

Madeline Flahive DiNardo (agricultural and resource management agent, Union County) collaborated with the "[Come Grow With Us!](#)" program, which is sponsored by the United Way of Union County, [Groundwork Elizabeth](#), and the office of New Jersey Assemblywoman Annette Quijano, to install three new community vegetable gardens and replant a garden at the YMCA in Union, NJ. The new gardens are located at the Elizabeth Housing Authority office, the Plainfield Home First office, and the Roselle Day Care Center. *Come Grow With Us!* is a unique public/private partnership that was originated by Assemblywoman Quijano and is designed to bring food producing gardens to not-for-profit organizations and schools in Union County.

In September, the Rutgers [Equine Science Center](#) launched an interactive educational game called [Fun on the Farm](#) to teach children about the science of a horse farm and environmental stewardship. The new game is a collaborative project with the New Jersey Department of Agriculture and is accessible through [Equine Science 4 Kids](#), the youth component of the center's website. According to the ESC, the game is a graphic representation of the [Ryders Lane Environmental Best Management Practices Demonstration Horse Farm](#), which is located in New Brunswick, NJ. The game teaches children about storm water management, best practices for healthy pastures, animal waste management, and several other environmental challenges related to maintaining an eco-friendly horse farm. [Read more.](#)

Rutgers Instructor and World Champion Arborist

Twenty one years after entering the world of tree climbing competitions, **Mark Chisholm** claims a record of 18 consecutive state championships, including the latest [2010 event](#).



In addition to being a champion arborist, Chisholm is an instructor with Rutgers [Office of Continuing Professional Education](#) (OCPE). He joined OCPE's instructional team in 1999 when the office revived a class that had been taught in the 1980's by Mark's father, Steve Chisholm, Sr. The current two-day course, called [Large Tree Climbing and Rigging](#), is offered every December by OCPE and helps tree professionals reduce risks and improve efficiency when pruning, treating, or removing large trees. "In two days we explore a lot of different techniques: some of the stuff I use to win world championships and all the techniques I learned through my experiences at Aspen," says Chisholm. Mark and his brother Steve both serve as instructors for OCPE and help to manage the family business, Aspen Tree Expert Company, located in Monmouth and Ocean counties. Mark Chisholm is the reigning world record holder in the men's [secured footlock](#) event and he just secured his third world championship at the [International Society of Arboriculture's \(ISA\) Tree Climbing Competition](#) in Chicago this summer.

Read more on Mark Chisholm's remarkable accomplishments [here](#).

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Mark Your Calendars!

Introduction to Plant Identification

WHEN: November 4–5, 2010, 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

WHAT: A two-day course, sponsored by Rutgers Office of Continuing Professional Education, on the basics of plant classification and biology to better understand how plants and trees are grouped and identified.

MORE INFO: Contact Dan Serpico, serpico@njaes.rutgers.edu, 732-932-9271, ext. 648.
<http://www.cpe.rutgers.edu/courses/current/al0249ca.html>.

New Jersey Farm Bureau Annual Convention

WHEN: November 15–16, 2010, 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.

WHERE: Westin at Forrestal Village, Princeton, NJ.

WHAT: Two-day meeting of the New Jersey Farm Bureau. A draft agenda is available [here](#).

MORE INFO: Contact Lisa Cuomo, 609-393-7163.

HACCP Plan Development for Food Processors

WHEN: November 17–19, 2010, 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

WHAT: A workshop on Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) training, which was implemented by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to ensure the safety of manufactured food.

MORE INFO: Contact Dalynn Knigge, 732-932-9271, ext. 622, knigge@aesop.rutgers.edu.
<http://www.cpe.rutgers.edu/courses/current/lf0403ca.html>.

Report on Biomass Energy for New Jersey Farms

WHEN: November 18, 2010, 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

WHERE: Rutgers EcoComplex, 1200 Florence-Columbus Road, Bordentown, NJ.

WHAT: The program, sponsored by the New Jersey Farm Bureau and Rutgers Cooperative Extension, will feature farmer practitioners, university experts, state, and federal government representatives, who will give an overview of some recent developments in biomass applications on farms.

MORE INFO: Contact Zane Helsel, helsel@njaes.rutgers.edu, 732-932-9711, ext. 153.

South Jersey Growers and Landscape Conference

WHEN: November 30, 2010, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

WHERE: Masso's Crystal Manor, Delsea Drive, Clayton, NJ.

WHAT: Day-long conference sponsored by the New Jersey Nursery and Landscape Association and the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station.

MORE INFO: Contact Jerome Frecon, gloucester@njaes.rutgers.edu, 856-307-6450, ext. 1.

This report is produced by the Office of Communications and is available online at <http://execdeanagriculture.rutgers.edu/boa/>.

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