

A REPORT FROM THE
EXECUTIVE DEAN
OF AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Report to the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture
November 2013

NJAES breeders **Ximing Guo**, professor of molluscan genetics and aquaculture, and **Nicholi Vorsa**, research professor in plant biology and pathology, are recipients of 2013 "Inventor of the Year" awards from the New Jersey Inventors Hall of Fame for their breeding research for the shellfish and cranberry industry respectively. The awards were presented on October 17.

Meredith Melendez, senior program coordinator in agriculture for Mercer County, is evaluating the sustainability of copper-based fungicide use throughout the state. Soil samples were taken at 15 farms and are being assessed for nutrients, organic matter, microbial activity, total copper levels and soluble copper levels relating to historical use of copper at each location. These soils will also be used to grow greenhouse lettuce, which will be evaluated for copper uptake. This work is funded by the Phillip Alampi Fund and supported by FMC and Stokes Seed.

Win Cowgill, agricultural agent for Hunterdon County was an invited speaker to the 119th Idaho State Horticultural Society meeting in Boise, Idaho, on "Tree Fruit Industry in New Jersey with Focus on Stone Fruit Production and Marketing Trends" and participated in the panel, "How Can We Minimize Biennial Bearing and Initiate Regular Cropping in Apples?"

The Open Space Pace and Festival of Horses is a new county fair sponsored by Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Monmouth County, Monmouth County Board of Agriculture and the Rutgers Equine Science Center to focus on the struggling equine farm industry and preserving open space. The event, which took place September 21, drew a record raceway crowd of 4,500. Beginning with an equine parade featuring various horse clubs, freeholders, legislators, Secretary of Agriculture Doug Fisher and other dignitaries were on hand to provide \$1,000 donations after each race to 501c3 groups like 4-H Youth Development, equine clubs and scouting organizations.

Bill Sciarappa, agricultural agent for Monmouth County, was selected to receive the National Award from the National Association of County Agricultural Agents for his extension program in Precision Agriculture and Remote Sensing. Sciarappa summarized the work, "Agri-Environmental Assessment of Equine Pasture in the Colts Neck Watershed," at the National Galaxy meeting. This GPS-GIS project identified environmental and economic benefits from agricultural land-use and determined the amount and financial value of surface and ground water recharge. Sciarappa was also the keynote speaker in the Virginia Blueberry and Bramble Conference held October 21-23 in the Shenandoah Valley. His presentation focused on sustainable ag practices, soil fertility and pest management.

The Organic Management Systems (OMS) community of scientists within the American Society of Agronomy conducts research in support of organic agriculture in the context of USDA-certified organic standards. OMS furthers the science of organic/ecological agricultural systems by fostering information exchange at symposia, workshops and annual meetings. **Joe Heckman**, specialist in soil fertility, will chair the Organic Programs and Activities at the 2013 annual ASA Meeting, in Tampa, Florida, in November. Heckman will also be a featured speaker at the Wise Traditions 2013 Fourteenth International Conference sponsored by the Weston Price Foundation in November, discussing practical steps to soil fertility in organic farming and also how aesthetically pleasing landscapes by farmers and gardeners can have a positive influence on the viewing public.



The New Jersey Fertilizer Law that was implemented in 2011 was conceived to protect surface and ground water from impairment by minimizing nitrogen and phosphorus-loading from fertilizer use. Effective January 2012, the Act required that New Jersey professional fertilizer applicators become certified and a certification program for professional fertilizer applicators was established by NJAES. The next phase is being implemented. To comply with the NJ ProFACT law (Professional Fertilizer Applicator Certification and Training), Certified Fertilizer Applicators must maintain certification by meeting the requirements of recertification. Online courses for recertification credit are currently being developed by NJAES and will be offered via the internet, as well as through County Cooperative Extension Offices, professional associations and approved private companies.

The Landscape Conference hosted by New Jersey Nursery and Landscape Association was held October 30. Presenters from NJAES were **Michelle Bakacs**, environmental and resource management agent for Middlesex County, presented "Organic Landscape: Basic Approach and Rutgers Certification Program," and **Cristi Palmer**, Rutgers I-R4 Project, discussed "Impatiens Downy Mildew, Boxwood Blight and Rose Rosette Disease".

A national survey conducted by **William Hallman**, professor of human ecology, and colleagues examined consumer views of genetically modified (GM) foods. The results showed many consumers do not follow the debate over GM foods, despite extensive media coverage of the issue. However, when asked directly whether GM foods should be required to be labeled, 73 percent said yes. The survey asked respondents to rate the importance of various kinds of information on food labels. Fifty-nine percent said that it was very or extremely important to have information about whether the product contains GM ingredients on a label. This is about the same number who indicated that it was similarly important to have information about whether the product was grown using hormones (63 percent), pesticides (62 percent), or antibiotics (61 percent), whether it was grown or raised in the United States (60 percent), and whether the product contains allergens (59 percent).

Events:

A disease identification workshop will be held for organic growers and small farm producers at the Rutgers Cooperative Extension office in Mercer County on November 15th from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Speakers and topics include "Disease Suppression with Cover Crops" by **Jack Rabin**, director of farm programs; "Nutrient Deficiencies vs. Disease ID" by **Meredith Melendez**; "Rutgers Pepper Disease and Disorder Research" by **Wes Kline**, agricultural agent for Cumberland County; "Management of Diseases in Organic Systems" by **Andy Wyenandt**, specialist in vegetable pathology; and "Pesticide Safety for Small Farms" by **Wes Kline**. For information call: 609 989 6830.

Seven food safety workshops will be held this winter focusing on wholesale vegetable production and passing the USDA Harmonized Third Party Audit, and on retail vegetable production and the creation of a farm food safety plan based on GAPs. The first workshop, "Introduction to Food Safety & Third Party Audits for Beginners", will be held December 12 at Cumberland County Cooperative Extension, 291 Morton Ave., Rosenhayn, NJ, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Cost: \$40, includes lunch. To register, call 856-451-2800, ext. 1.

The 13th Annual Women in Agriculture Regional Conference will be on February 20, 2014, in Dover, DE.

Visit our Rutgers NJAES online resources: Vegetable Crops Online Resource Center: <http://njveg.rutgers.edu>, Jersey Vegetable Crops Ag Updates: <http://jerseyvegscropsagupdates.blogspot.com>, Fruit Ag Updates: <http://jerseyfruitagupdates.blogspot.com>, Field & Forage Crops Nutrient Management Ag Updates: <http://fieldforagecropsnutrientmanagement.blogspot.com>

