

A REPORT FROM THE  
EXECUTIVE DEAN  
OF AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Report to the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture  
March 2015

The Department of Agricultural and Resource Management Agents announced the availability of a tenure-track faculty position of County Agricultural and Resource Management Agent for Mercer County. This position will provide leadership to develop, implement, and evaluate educational programming and applied and evaluative research appropriate to the needs of commercial agricultural and horticultural clientele, including new and beginning farmers, in production, management and marketing; alternative and sustainable production methods; and on-farm food safety.

On March 13, Senior Program Coordinator **Meredith Melendez** hosted an Organic Grower Advisory at Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Mercer County. Participating Rutgers faculty and staff were Extension Specialists **Andy Wyendant, Joseph Heckman, and Anne Nielson**; Agricultural Agents **Jack Rabin, Michelle Infante-Casella, and Kenesha Reynolds-Allie**; and **Kris Holmstrom**, research project coordinator for the Vegetable IPM Program. The roundtable enabled growers to identify needs for the upcoming production season. Growers confirmed that they relied on posts from the Plant and Pest Advisory for timely information. Weeds were identified as one of the most important management issues they faced and they look to Extension for expertise on long- and short-term management options. Growers expressed that they would like to see Extension continue to include organic system options in pest management guidance as well as business management tools.



*BMSB on sorghum*

Results are in from year one of a USDA-sponsored multi-state trial investigating organic management options for brown marmorated stink bug (BMSB). Specialist in Entomology **Anne Nielsen** led researchers in eight states, including New Jersey, into looking at the development of sorghum and sunflower as trap crops. Behavioral studies documented that the trap crop successfully retained BMSB and were more attractive than the cash crop. Results are encouraging thus far, and at low and medium stink bug pressure, the trap crops delayed dispersal of BMSB into cash crops by about three weeks, leading to less injury. The trap crop is also expected to enhance natural enemy biodiversity within the agroecosystem.



*Win Cowgill applying growth regulators. Applications were made to the growing point of nursery trees repeatedly throughout the growing season.*

Hunterdon County Agricultural Agent **Win Cowgill** has completed three years of applied apple tree nursery work to develop better branched (feathered) trees for the commercial nursery industry. Most of the research was done in collaboration with Adams County Nursery, Rutgers NJAES business partner for commercial tree fruit variety development. **Cowgill** and colleagues now have a methodology in place for nurserymen to produce higher quality apple trees with plant growth regulators for New Jersey commercial orchardists. This work was supported in part by the International Fruit Tree Association.

In addition to thanking the State Board for bestowing their Distinguished Service award on him in February, Agricultural Agent **Rick VanVranken** was recognized by the Landisville Produce Cooperative "in appreciation for outstanding service and dedication to the cooperative" at its annual

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scholarship fundraiser on March 13. Also in March, **VanVranken** and Specialist in Vegetable Pathology **Andy Wyenandt** gave an invited presentation at the Stokes Seed Co. Annual Grower Meeting in East Vineland, NJ, summarizing the Basil Conference they hosted with Professor of New-Use Agriculture **Jim Simon** in Atlantic City at the New Jersey Agricultural Convention and Trade Show. The conference included two days of presentations on the USDA grant-funded multidisciplinary and multistate research to understand and combat Downy Mildew, which has threatened all production of Sweet Basil. **Wyenandt** summarized work done from Florida to Long Island and UMass on disease control and prediction studies, as well as the extensive breeding program underway in **Simon's** lab to develop resistant cultivars.

#### Of Interest:

The spring 2015 issue of *Edible Jersey* magazine included a profile on Bob Muth, Muth Family Farm in Williamstown, NJ. To manage pests and disease, Muth relies heavily on integrated pest management (IPM). He has been in the Rutgers IPM program for 20 years and credits the program with giving him the resources and knowledge needed to stay ahead of problems in the fields. Muth is also known for his commitment to raising the organic matter in his soils by incorporating municipal leaves into his fields. His early leaf application trial results were supported by findings from Rutgers Soil Testing Lab and Soil Fertility Specialist **Joseph Heckman**, showing that instead of pushing the soil pH down, “the pH levels were actually going the other way. They were climbing.” Muth also found that leaves raise the organic matter in his soils and are sustained for three to five years.

The IR-4 Project’s Ornamental Horticulture Program helps provide safe and effective pest management solutions for greenhouse, nursery, landscape, Christmas tree, and forestry producers by working with growers, researchers, registrants, and regulatory agencies to facilitate new product registrations. It also works to place new diseases, insects, and weeds as well as new crops on already registered ornamental horticulture product labels. Every other year, the program prioritizes the next two-year research plan at its Ornamental Horticulture Workshop. To help focus research prioritization, growers are invited to answer a few survey questions about the diseases, insects, and weeds that impact their business. The survey can be found at:

<http://ir4.rutgers.edu/Ornamental/Survey/index.cfm>

#### Events:

The NJ Center for Wine Research and Education will be hosting a “Wine Grape IPM School” on March 31 at Rutgers Agricultural Research and Extension Center, 121 Northville Road, Bridgeton, NJ 08302. Experts from Michigan, Virginia, and Ohio will join Rutgers faculty to share their knowledge about key insect pests, diseases, and weed identification. This workshop is aimed at growers of all experience levels. For more information, view <http://plant-pest-advisory.rutgers.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Grape-IPM-School-Flier1.pdf> or to register, contact Susan Bradbury at 856-455-3100 x4101 or by email at [bradbury@aesop.rutgers.edu](mailto:bradbury@aesop.rutgers.edu).

#### Visit our Rutgers NJAES online resources:

Vegetable Crops Online Resource Center: <http://njveg.rutgers.edu>

Plant & Pest Advisory: <http://plant-pest-advisory.rutgers.edu>

Commercial Ag Updates: <http://plant-pest-advisory.rutgers.edu/?cat=139>

Sustaining Farming on the Urban Fringe and blog: <http://sustainable-farming.rutgers.edu>

