

A REPORT FROM THE
EXECUTIVE DEAN
OF AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Report to the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture
December 2015



Scarlet Fire™ dogwood

The first sales of the new Rutgers *Cornus kousa* ‘Rutpink’ Scarlet Fire™ dogwood will begin in January 2016. This is Rutgers’ first kousa dogwood, and the first cultivar being released from Rutgers breeder and assistant professor in the Department of Plant Biology and Pathology **Tom Molnar**, who has continued the breeding efforts of renowned ornamental breeder **Elwin Orton**, professor emeritus of plant biology and pathology. Scarlet Fire™ dogwood stands out for its very dark pink, almost fuchsia-colored bracts, which bloom in late May to early June in New Jersey, with a bright pink glow visible from a distance. The bright, showy blooms stand out more than existing “pink” kousa or hybrid dogwoods, which tend to be light or pale pink in New Jersey due to high spring-time temperatures. Being a kousa dogwood, the tree is a moderately

vigorous grower, stress-tolerant, and free from most disease and insect pests. It has attractive and abundant round, bright red fruit in late summer and early fall, and pretty purple and red fall color. The tree also stands out for its ability to set bloom buds at an early age, which makes for a great small flowering tree in the landscape and an attractive product for nurseries. **Molnar** was able to develop this exquisite tree based on the more than 40 years of cumulative breeding efforts by **Orton**, where he concentrated genes for color and great form into excellent breeding parents over many generations. A commitment by NJAES to continue the ornamental breeding program after **Orton’s** retirement allowed **Molnar** to further develop the project in terms of breeding generations, yielding a significant break-through in color. Commercial nurseries in New Jersey will be able to order bareroot plants of Scarlet Fire™ dogwood from licensed propagators this winter for spring delivery (agproducts.rutgers.edu).

Extension Specialist in Entomology **Anne Nielsen**, Department of Entomology, received \$300,000 in funding from the USDA Crop Protection and Pest Management program to conduct research on managing brown marmorated stink bug (BMSB) and other key orchard pests, and to look at the impacts of these management tactics on beneficial insects, including bees. **Nielsen** also submitted a manuscript to *Frontiers in Physiology* that models BMSB life-stage specific population growth, which will allow better prediction of pest status as BMSB invades new areas. In November, Rutgers was well-represented at the Entomological Society of America Annual Meeting in Minneapolis with 25 presentations from Department of Entomology faculty, graduate students, and post-docs. Rutgers speakers included Department faculty members **Nielsen**, **George Hamilton**, **Albrecht Koppenhofer**, **Cesar Rodriguez-Saona**, and **Changlu Wang**.

Hunterdon County Agricultural Agent **Win Cowgill** received the Delaware Valley University (DVU) “Alumni Achievement Award in Plant Science” in October at DVU in Doylestown, PA. The Alumni Awards Committee chose individuals who have made a significant contribution to their field, demonstrate community involvement, and supported ‘DelVal’ since graduation. **Cowgill** has conducted over 200 research trials and maintains 14 acres of research orchard at Rutgers. His extensive outreach programs have had a tremendous impact on tree fruit production and farmers, particularly in the adoption of high-density planting systems that utilize dwarfing rootstocks throughout the northeast. In 2012 he worked with DelVal’s farm manager to plant a new orchard on the Delaware Valley University campus, which teaches students different management techniques for contemporary fruit production.

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Rutgers NJAES in the News:

In the November issue of *American Vegetable Grower*, Atlantic County Agricultural Agent **Rick VanVranken** in his Marketing Matters column, wrote “Building a Business Takes More than Buzzwords”. **VanVranken** advises, when growing for niche markets, that it is important to understand the nuances of each market rather than brandishing buzzwords like, organic, sustainable, artisanal, etc.

In the November issue of *Perishable Pundit*, Warren County Agricultural Agent **Kenessa Reynolds-Allie** was interviewed about the study she did while at University of Alabama, on the barriers that prevent restaurants from purchasing from small local farmers. The study was done to determine if restaurants were interested in purchasing locally, to identify the barriers preventing them from doing so, and to understand restaurant/chefs’ preferences for purchasing local food. **Reynolds-Allie** said because of the number of small farmers in New Jersey seeking additional intermediate markets (restaurants, grocery stores, etc.), the study will be replicated here. Initial secondary data to be collected will include the number of independently owned restaurants in the state, an approximate number of these restaurants that are currently purchasing local, and the number of small to medium farms that could benefit from this marketing outlet.

Of Interest:



As Rutgers celebrates its 250th anniversary under the theme, “Revolutionary for 250 Years,” NJAES will highlight its own revolutionary contributions through the work of its breeding programs. Continuing through November 2016, each month will feature a breeding release from NJAES, commemorating the contributions to New Jersey agriculture and beyond. The agricultural product highlighted for December 2015 is hollies.



Ilex opaca at Rutgers Gardens

Rutgers NJAES has released many varieties of American Holly (*Ilex opaca*) over the years. The newest variety is the *Ilex opaca* 'Portia Orton' American Holly, perfected by decades of research and plant breeding. **Elwin Orton** is the well-respected NJAES plant breeder who created this holly tree. He named this beautiful variety after his wife, Portia Orton. This special holly variety took over 48 years to perfect and is now available for distribution. See <http://breeding.rutgers.edu> for more information. Although he is now retired, throughout his career, **Orton** established the groundwork for the holly tree breeding program and dedicated decades of work to NJAES and the Holly Society of America. Much of **Orton's** work is now being conducted by **Tom Molnar**, who is carrying on **Orton's** legacy and breeding both holly and dogwood.

Events:

In addition to other on-farm food safety training workshops, Cumberland County Agricultural Agent **Wes Kline** and Mercer County Agricultural Agent **Meredith Melendez** are offering three Food Safety Modernization Act Training for Grower Certification workshops in North, Central, and South Jersey. This 7-hour core training will cover everything from sowing to selling, and certification will be provided through the Association of Food and Drug Officials. For more information call 856-451-2800, ext. 1 or visit <http://plant-pest-advisory.rutgers.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/2015-2016-Food-Safety-Workshops-Flier.pdf>.

