

A REPORT FROM THE  
EXECUTIVE DEAN  
OF AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Report to the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture  
January 2019

In the News:



Nick Vorsa in Marucci  
Center cranberry breeding  
greenhouse.

The January 3 issue of *Growing Produce* reported that **Nicholi Vorsa**, director, Philip E. Marucci Center for Blueberry and Cranberry Research and Extension, is co-director on a joint project titled, "Vaccinium CAP: Leveraging genetic and genomic resources to enable development of improved blueberry and cranberry cultivars to growers and consumers." The project is a collaboration with North Carolina State University and the fruit variety development program of the ARS-USDA at Oregon State University, and is under consideration for a USDA Specialty Crops Research Initiative (SCRI) grant. The overall objective of the project is to develop DNA-based tools to select and efficiently deliver cultivars with improved fruit texture, appearance, and metabolite composition, and improve machine harvest efficiency and extend shelf life. Vorsa, who has trials across the country and

Canada, says the research has identified five excellent cranberry candidates with resistance to fruit rot. This is a complicated disease complex that is caused by at least 15 fungi, each of which can be more difficult depending on the year. Thus far, the five cultivars showing resistance do not have other desired horticultural traits, so Vorsa hopes that as part of the project he can do more crosses with DNA markers, thereby accelerating the process.

In the December 17 issue of *Growing Produce*, breeders share their top picks for a variety of less common crops, from asparagus to tomatillos, in the article, "11 Less Common Specialty Crops You'll Want to Check Out." Among the crops featured is 'Obsession DMR,' a downy mildew-resistant (DMR) sweet basil developed by the breeding program of Department of Plant Biology distinguished professor **Jim Simon** and extension specialist in plant pathology **Andy Wyenandt**. The program's four new DMR sweet basil varieties are available from VDF Specialty Seeds at [www.vdfspecialtyseeds.com](http://www.vdfspecialtyseeds.com).

In late March 2016, unseasonably warm temperatures that pushed up peach bloom in parts of New Jersey were followed by a cold snap and frost in early April that damaged half or more of the peach blossoms. With frost events becoming more frequent and causing damage to fruit blossoms, the November 28, 2018 issue of *Good Fruit Grower* interviewed **Hemant Gohil**, Gloucester County agent, about the methods that work best to keep crops safe. Gohil has scoured the trade literature to find ways to help growers make better decisions about frost protection and has also conducted a panel discussion at the 2018 Mid-Atlantic Fruit and Vegetable Convention with growers and others with expertise on different frost-protection techniques. The costs, effectiveness, and requirements of the strategies vary, according to Gohil, who reported stationary heaters or smudge pots as the least effective of the methods he reviewed. Other methods include wind machines, tractor-pulled portable heating machines, and overhead irrigation.

---

**RUTGERS**  
THE STATE UNIVERSITY  
OF NEW JERSEY

School of Environmental and Biological Sciences and New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station  
SEBS.RUTGERS.EDU • EXECDEANAGRICULTURE.RUTGERS.EDU • NJAES.RUTGERS.EDU

### Events:

Highlights of the 2019 NJ State Agricultural Convention & Trade Show – Feb 5, 6, 7, Harrah's Resort & Waterfront Conference Center – Atlantic City. In addition to the wide range of topics covered in the educational sessions by Rutgers NJAES agents and specialists, below are some additional outreach efforts that will take place at the convention: [www.njveggies.org/2019\\_VGA\\_program\\_near\\_final.pdf](http://www.njveggies.org/2019_VGA_program_near_final.pdf)

A USDA Local Foods Promotion Program (LFPP) grant was awarded to Elijah's Promise, a New Brunswick-based non-profit, with a portion of the funding allotted to Rutgers as a sub-contract. **Ethan Schoolman**, assistant professor in the Department of Human Ecology, is the Rutgers lead on the LFPP 18-month project, whose goal is to increase sales of agricultural products by local farmers. Rutgers project team members in partnership with Elijah's Promise Culinary School will be at the 2019 New Jersey Agricultural Convention at the NJAES trade show exhibit to interview farmers about their interest in potential business models regarding value-added products. The project team includes **Lauren Errickson**, senior program coordinator, New Brunswick Community Farmers Market; **Virginia Quick**, director of the didactic program in dietetics, Department of Nutritional Sciences; and Elijah's Promise staff.

**Fire Inspections on Farms:** These inspections extend beyond labor housing to include all buildings like greenhouses and overwintering structures (high tunnels, hoopouses, etc.) on the farm, except the personal residence. There will be an opportunity to hear directly from the state fire marshal office at the Agricultural Convention and Trade Show and the New Jersey Vegetable Growers Meeting. The fire marshal will be making a presentation from 1:30-2:30 p.m. on February 6 in the Harrah's Resort Hotel Convention Center. Growers can ask questions and get answers about the status of fire inspections on farms. Cumberland County agricultural agent **Wes Kline** reported that, in addition, local fire marshals are holding informational meetings in some municipalities to give growers an idea of how the inspections will be handled. These meetings are an opportunity to find out about the process, frequency, and contents of these inspections.

Rutgers Cooperative Extension is hosting the **RU Ready to Farm Beginner Farmer Workshop** during the New Jersey Agricultural Convention & Trade Show on Thursday, February 7, 2019 from 8:30 am – 4 pm. Anyone interested in starting a farm, those new to farming, or established farmers looking for new opportunities are welcome to attend. The event is free but registration is required. For the program agenda and to register for this workshop: [www.eventbrite.com/e/ru-ready-to-farm-beginner-farmer-workshop-nj-agriculture-convention-registration-53164344987](http://www.eventbrite.com/e/ru-ready-to-farm-beginner-farmer-workshop-nj-agriculture-convention-registration-53164344987)

**2019 Horse Management Seminar – Feeding and Care of Mare/Foal, Stallion and Growing Horse**  
February 10, 2019, Cook Student Center, New Brunswick, NJ, Contact: **Kyle Hartmann**, Equine Science Center, [kylehart@njaes.rutgers.edu](mailto:kylehart@njaes.rutgers.edu).

**Central Jersey Vegetable Grower Meeting**, February 22, 2019, New Location: Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Mercer County, 1440 Parkside Avenue, Ewing, NJ, Contact: **Meredith Melendez**, [melendez@njaes.rutgers.edu](mailto:melendez@njaes.rutgers.edu).

