

A REPORT FROM THE  
EXECUTIVE DEAN  
OF AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Report to the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture  
August 2021



Tom Orton

Extension specialist in horticulture **Tom Orton** retired as of August 1. Orton received his Ph.D. in Botany and Genetics in 1979 from Michigan State University. In 1995, after a long and varied career in industry and academia, he joined Rutgers, where he served in leadership roles that include department chair and assistant director of NJAES Rutgers Cooperative Extension. From 2002-2004, Orton served as interim agricultural agent in Passaic and Essex counties. In 2005, he became professor of plant biology and extension specialist in horticulture and relocated to the Rutgers Agricultural Research and Extension Center in Bridgeton, NJ. His research, teaching, and extension programs have focused on fresh market and processing tomato genetics and breeding, new ethnic pepper breeding, seedless table grape breeding and genetics, flavor and health-related phytochemistry, and season extension in asparagus. Orton has taught or co-taught undergraduate plant breeding and graduate advanced plant breeding courses annually since 2003. He's presented his research results at scientific venues worldwide, served on national policy boards, and garnered a combined \$3.5 million to support his research programs at UC-Davis and Rutgers. Orton has authored and co-authored numerous research and other publications, and was the coordinating editor for 10 annual editions of the multi-state Mid-Atlantic Vegetable Production Guide. He has released new varieties and germplasm for celery and tomato, and was awarded several patents and plant variety protection certificates. In addition to the releases of hot peppers as part of the [Exotic Pepper Project](#), Orton focused on developing flavorful tomato varieties and released the [Rutgers 250](#) tomato and [Scarlet Sunrise](#) grape tomato.

On Sept. 1, the role of director of the Rutgers Specialty Crop Research and Extension Center at Cream Ridge (formerly the Rutgers Fruit and Ornamental Research and Extension Center), currently held by Professor **Joe Goffreda**, will transition to Professor **Dean Polk**, agriculture and natural resources agent and fruit IPM coordinator. Polk will serve as interim director through June 30, 2022. Read more here: [Announcement: Leadership Transition at Rutgers Specialty Crop Research and Extension Center at Cream Ridge](#)

**Of Interest:**

The following new and revised documents are now available on [NJAES Publications](#):

[E370: Important Links for Beginner Farmers - RU Ready 2 Farm Toolshed](#). **Hlubik, W.**; **Erickson, W.**; **Pearsall, B.**; **Muehlbauer, M.**; **Melendez, M.**; **Polanin, N.**; **Nitzsche, P.**; **Bignell, H.**; and **Erickson, L.**

[FS099: Problems with Over-Mulching Trees and Shrubs](#). **Crawford, B.** and **Cabrera, R.**

[FS1334: New Labels for Bioengineered Foods: What the Public Needs to Know](#). **Cuite, C.** and **Hallman, W.**



Based on 2017 data, food waste is the second largest component (15.2%), after paper, of municipal solid waste in the U.S. In the past, there has been a handful of food waste composting facilities in New Jersey, but those have closed due to operational problems such as odor nuisances and leachate issues. The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's (NJDEP) Site Remediation and Waste Management Program charged its Science Advisory Board to provide scientifically based information to be used to inform the implementation of regulatory changes needed to facilitate outdoor food waste composting in New Jersey. An Outdoor Food Waste Composting report was prepared for NJDEP by an Ad Hoc Work Group, whose members include extension specialist in solid waste management **Uta Krogmann**, and professor emeritus **Peter Strom**, Department of Environmental Sciences. The report considers outdoor composting, which might be the least expensive and therefore most economically viable approach. It addresses the following questions: What are the potential impacts to groundwater and air from outdoor food waste composting? What is the best recipe for composting of food waste? What buffer do you need around these facilities? The report is available at: [SAB Food Composting Report \(nj.gov\)](https://www.nj.gov/dep/sab/food-composting-report/).

While the popular tomato tastings were suspended for a second year in a row due to COVID-19, the Rutgers Snyder Research and Extension Farm in Pittstown, NJ, opened its gates to visitors for a wagon tour of its research activities on August 24. Faculty and staff were on hand to address research and gardening questions, including farm director and Morris County agricultural agent **Pete Nitzsche**.



*Kasumigaseki County Club, venue of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics golf tournament. Photo by Koji Aoki/AFLO.*

Rutgers-bred 007 creeping bentgrass—one of the most popular varieties for seeding greens, fairways, and tees in cool season climates—was used on the greens at the [Kasumigaseki Country Club](https://www.rutgers.edu/news/007-bentgrass-top-seed-at-tokyo-olympics-golf-tournament) for the golf tournament at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics. The well-manicured greens drew comments from both players and commentators, and included superlatives like, “perfect,” “immaculate,” and “nothing better,” to how well the host venue performed. Among those watching and listening intently was **Richard Hurley**, who as associate faculty, now retired, with Rutgers Center for Turfgrass Science, helped to shepherd to market the Rutgers-bred 007 creeping bentgrass. Read more at: [Rutgers-bred 007 Bentgrass is Top Seed at Tokyo Olympics Golf Tournament](https://www.rutgers.edu/news/007-bentgrass-top-seed-at-tokyo-olympics-golf-tournament).

#### Events:

The next seminar in Rutgers Cooperative Extension's [Marine Extension Program Seminar Series](https://www.rutgers.edu/news/marine-extension-program-seminar-series) will be held on August 30 from 6:30 – 8 p.m. The featured speaker will be postdoctoral associate **Jennifer S. Walker**, Department of Marine and Coastal Sciences. Walker will deliver a presentation titled, "Rising Seas on New Jersey's Coasts." This will be a free Zoom webinar open to all who are interested. Register by August 27 at <http://go.rutgers.edu/eatjnrfn>.

