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Washington County Ag Report May 17, 2005

Contributors are Sandy Buxton, Aaron Gabriel, Laura McDermott, and Paula Schafer. Thanks to Connie Havens for compilation and formatting. **Special thanks to our dedicated weather watchers: Will Randles (Argyle), Don Skellie (Jackson), and Mike Radcliff (Lock 12, Whitehall).**

“People are capable of doing an awful lot when they have no choice and I had no choice. Courage is when you have choices.” -- Terry Anderson

Calendar of Events:

Monday, May 23rd, 6:00 p.m. – Apple Petal Fall and Thinning Meeting, Bowman’s Orchard South, 141 Sugar Hill Road, Rexford, NY. Northeast Regional Fruit Program sponsored meeting for commercial fruit growers. For more information, call Kevin Lungerman at 885-8995.

Tuesday, June 21 - Cornell Turf and Landscape Management Field Day, Ithaca, NY. Includes information for all types of ornamental issues incl., Golf Courses, Lawn and Landscapes, Sports Turf, Ornamentals Research, Plantations Tour and Campus Tour. Contact: Joann Gruttadaurio jg17@cornell.edu or 607-255-1792

Friday, June 24-25 - Landscape Architects and Landscape Professionals Short Course Focus on: Plant Selection, Establishment and Design for Complex Landscapes. Featured Speaker: Michael Van Valkenburg. Also featured: Zucker Shrub Selection at the Plantations. Dinner and tour of the Bassuk/Trowbridge Gardens Cornell Campus, Ithaca, NY Contact: Joann Gruttadaurio jg17@cornell.edu or 607-255-1792.

Sun – Weds., June 26-29, Seeley Conference, 20th Anniversary Conference theme: "Stayin' Alive: Can We Captivate the Elusive Consumer?" Cornell Campus, Ithaca, NY. For more information check <http://www.hort.cornell.edu/seeleyconference/>.

Tuesday, June 28th – IPM Walk; Diagnosing Problems of Landscape Plants and Turfgrass. 6:30 – 8:00 p.m. Contact Chuck Schmidt 518-765-3500 or email [cgs34@cornell.edu](mailto:cds34@cornell.edu) for the location in the Capital District.

Sun – Tues, July 17-19 – New York State Maple Tour, Batavia. For more information go to <http://maple.dnr.cornell.edu/> or give us a call and we can send you the registration information. Registration is due by June 24th.

Tues – Weds, August 16-17, Landscape Management Short Course and Floriculture Field Day. Cornell Campus, Ithaca. Focus will be on: Plant Materials at Cornell Plantations, trees, shrubs, perennials, ground covers Pest Management-diagnosing insect, diseases and weed pests. Soils and lawn workshops. Contact: Joann Gruttadaurio jg17@cornell.edu or 607-255-1792

Thursday, September 8th – Coach Bus Trip to Wave Hill Gardens and Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture. Sponsored by Master Gardeners of Washington County, but opened

to the general public. Cost is \$50/person for guided tours and transportation. Please call 746-2560 for more information on this trip, or check out our website at <http://www.cce.cornell.edu/washington/washington.html>. Registration is due by August 25th, but trip should fill quickly.

Weather Data – 2005 and average of 1999 - 2004

	Argyle		Easton		Whitehall		Jackson	
	2005	Average '99 – '04	2005	Average '99 – '04	2005	Average '99 – '04	2005	Average '03 – '04
Rain Past Week	0.38	1.25	0.75	1.24	0.56	1.36	0.92	1.31
So far this month	0.39	2.15	0.75	1.94	1.10	1.97	0.94	2.03
Total since April 1 st	4.87	3.94	4.67	4.17	5.47	4.90	5.16	3.30
GDD Base 41 Growing Degree Days = [hi temp + low temp]/2 – 41								
Past Week	109	102	125	111	149	126	111	137
Since April 1 st	354	413	418	471	576	528	388	451
GDD 86/50 [hi temp + low temp]/2 - 50 High's >86°F are set to 86°F, low's <50°F are set to 50°F								
Past Week	69	70	87	76	98	80	76	94
Since April 1 st	260	292	326	348	366	356	323	341

SOIL TEMPERATURE – 59^oF at 9 am, 5/16 in a silty clay soil was (after a low air temperature the night before of 48^oF). At 7 p.m., 5/16 in the same field, soil temps were also 59^oF (after a daytime air temp high of 72^oF). I was unable to get a mid-afternoon temperature.

Midwest Commodity Prices - from the Wall Street Journal

Corn per bushel	\$1.89/bu	Cotton Seed Meal per ton	\$107/ton
Soybean per bushel	6.12/bu	Corn Gluten Feed	52/ton
Hominy Feed per ton	40/ton	Wheat, soft white	3.88/bu
48% Soybean meal per ton	196/ton	Tallow per pound	.21/lb

These prices are provided only to show where the general market trends are moving and to help you determine appropriate ration ingredients. Local prices will vary due to shipping, processing, and discounts.

FYI

Project Manager Sought: The Agricultural Stewardship Association (ASA), a small land trust in Greenwich, NY, is seeking a project manager to work with land owners on farmland conservation projects in the Washington County area. Minimum requirements include a Bachelors degree in agriculture, conservation, land use planning or related field. Experience in land protection projects and the land trust sector is very beneficial. See the attached job description. For more information about ASA, visit: www.agstewardship.org. To apply, send a resume and cover letter via email to teri@agstewardship.org. Application deadline is Tuesday, May 31, 2005.

Organic Certification for Maple Products? For a great article that outlines the advantages and the process to becoming Certified Organic, please check out our website at <http://www.cce.cornell.edu/washington/washington.html>. Steve Childs, the NYS Maple Specialist explains why the process of organic certification could be worth the effort, even if most of your local customers already perceive maple as being pure.

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Trading Post

Wanted to Rent/Lease/Share, Rent-to-Own, eventually Buy: 100+/- acre farm, with a mixture of tillable field, pasturage, wooded lot, and some buildings. Farm itself could be much larger; if the money were right, I would still rent all of it. Living arrangements are a must, but I don't need anything fancy. Am willing to do chores on a working farm in partial exchange for the land, but have little experience with modern farming techniques. I need mostly field for pastured meat production, but some tillable land also required for winter feed.

Would like the farm to be located as close to the southern end of the county as possible, in order to keep my part-time job in Waterford. But, I'm flexible. Contact Bill at 233-0717.

AG ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: Farm Viability Grants Program Now Accepting Applications. This NYSDAM grant program provides funding for applicants who wish to develop or implement a business plan or a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP). All proposals must address how the Farmland Viability plan will increase the overall profitability and contribute to the sound environmental management of farm operations. Projects may include value-added processing of agricultural products, transitioning to an alternative product, construction of new facilities, or the protection of natural resources.

The Farmland Viability Grant Program will provide up to \$15,000 to eligible projects. Individuals, partnerships, associations, cooperatives, corporations, and county agricultural and farmland protection boards are all eligible to apply. Proposals for funding are due Tuesday, June 28, 2005.

For more information contact the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets at 518-457-7076 or visit the Departments website <http://www.agmkt.state.ny.us/RFPS.html>.

DAIRY: We all know that feed costs, both purchased and grown, are a major expense on dairy farms. They can account for 40-50+% of the farm's operating costs. With the variation in milk price and feed expense it is important that farmers work to maximize income over feed costs. How well a ration performs is not just a function of how it appears on paper but how well it can be managed as it is fed and consumed.

Ration formulation is often not the issue in poor herd performance. A feeding management system with flaws will often contribute to herd health problems. Incorrect amounts going into the mixer, particle size reduction, and inconsistent TMR can all contribute to the mess. This is

especially true when combined with the stress of transition cows, heat or lowered intakes. Make sure that you are paying close attention to your cow feeding system, it will save a lot of headaches later. (Resource: Stokes, S. et al, "Selecting and Managing TMR Mixers for Dairy Operations", Texas A & M Univ.)

FARM BUSINESS MANAGEMENT: At the goat milk cooperative informational meeting on 5/14/05, several producers came to listen to information and ask questions of the steering group. Developed as an outgrowth of a producer meeting in December, this group of interested producers are "scanning the environment" to determine the need and feasibility of launching a new marketing opportunity for goat milk. One of the challenges is despite the high number of backyard producers, most of them are not in a position to ship Grade A or B milk. However, for some people, this is a definite opportunity worth pursuing. If you would like to investigate some numbers, please give Sandy a call at the office.

CROPS

Soil Health: I have been trying to come up with reasonable corn/hay rotations, tillage and manure spreading practices for those farmers with wet heavy soils, that typically can not do *any* field work until June. One option may be ridge-tillage for corn. Jeff Bird (my predecessor) did some educational programming on ridge-tillage. If you participated in any of those programs or read Jeff's articles, I am interested in your opinion of this tillage system. Please give me a call.
AG

Cover Crops: Rye is headed out and a close mowing should eliminate any additional seed heads from emerging. Winter rye, if left after being mowed will stay almost dormant for the rest of the summer. Winter wheat seed heads are only halfway up inside the stems or less.

Alfalfa: The alfalfa weevil (AW) is out there, but I really had to search to find a few. Adults, tiny and small larvae are present in small numbers. I think that they will be most prevalent in alfalfa growing in gravel soils. Alfalfa is almost 24 inches tall in some fields, which is 33% neutral detergent fiber. We want to average 40% NDF for optimum forage quality. Be sure to adjust the **particle size** while chopping. For haylage (using a Penn State separator) you want 15 – 25% remaining on the top screen for a bunker, or 10 – 15% for a top unloading silo; 30-40% remaining on the middle screen; and 40-50% remaining on the bottom screen.

Bunk density should be at least 15 lbs. dry matter per cubic foot. Brian Holms and colleagues (U of Wisc.) have some excellent spreadsheets and articles to help you manage bunk density. One spreadsheet estimates the bunk density based on the packing practices and machinery that you are using. Another calculates how long the packing floor should be to attain the desired thickness of silage (6 inches) when it is initially spread out by the trucks delivering to the bunker. These spreadsheets and more can be found at

<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/crops/uwforage/storage.htm>

Lastly, although Cornell does recommend the use of inoculant, we do not suggest any particular products.

Field Corn: Black Cutworm Management-Field Corn (from Ken Wise, NYS IPM) There have been signs of migrating cutworm moths to the south in Pennsylvania. Since they ride storms that bring the adult moths from the south to the Northeast we should watch our corn for signs of feeding. Weedy grasses, winter annual broadleaves, and chickweed are favorite targets. If cutworm moths lay eggs in the field and the field is treated with a herbicide, hatching cutworm larvae bail off the dying weeds and look for greener food sources such as emerging corn

seedlings. Cutworms can be an annual problem in some fields; particularly those with a history of poor weed control or have low wet areas in the field. Field margins, especially those next to ditch banks, grassy lanes, and hay fields are potential sites for infestation. Doing an early season plant population count is a good way to check cornfields for cutworm damage and other corn emergence problems.



Symptoms of damage are leaf feeding, irregular holes in stems, notched and cut or missing plants. No-till fields and those with a lot of grass weeds are at particular risk to black cutworm. Monitor fields to find cutworm larvae when they are less than 1/2 inch long. If there are sufficient numbers and damage present, an insecticide could be justified. Treat only the affected area and a 20 to 40-foot border around the infestation. Rarely does a whole field need to be treated for cutworm. Larger cutworm larvae, greater than 1/2 inch long, are much more difficult to

control. If the majority of cutworm larvae are 1/2 inch long or larger their damage is already done. These large larvae are also more tolerant of insecticides, reducing the effectiveness and economic viability of this option. Check out our on-line publication, [Black Cutworm Management in Field Corn](http://www.nysipm.cornell.edu/publications/blackcw.pdf) at <http://www.nysipm.cornell.edu/publications/blackcw.pdf>.

Grasses: I saw a couple of fields that were mowed. This week is probably optimum for grass quality (50 – 55% NDF). The more I think about all the technical, precise, pin-point accuracy with which we try to predict the best time to harvest grasses, I come back to two points of reality: grasses are prime quality in mid-May and we do not want lots of seed heads shooting up in second cutting. So, as soon after mid-May when you can mow grasses below most of the emerging seed heads (once they have risen above 3 inches in the stem), then go for it. Orchardgrass is heading out now. Reed and Bromegrass have heads about midway up the stems. It is a bit too early to mow timothy and harvest seed heads with first cutting. (Although, one drought year I baled hay around May 18, and the horse hay customers loved all the timothy heads in 2nd cutting.)

Pasture: Often meadow foxtail (which heifers do not eat well in my pasture) is confused with timothy. The seed head looks like timothy, but it is more tapered at both ends and is soft to the touch. It heads out in early May and has poor regrowth in our area (too warm and dry). A good Word doc on it is at: http://forages.oregonstate.edu/css310/notes/Chapter2-Grasses/Meadow_foxtail/Meadow_foxtail.doc

Now is the time to plan for grazing **Brown Mid-Rib Sorghum Sudan**. This summer annual is a very high-quality forage for livestock. Dairy farmers often report 3-5 lbs. more milk per day per cow while grazing BMR SS. If you have interest please call me for a fact sheet on how to grow it and some comments from Paul Cerosaletti (CCE Delaware Co.) about grazing it.

VEGETABLES: Some damage from sensitive plants both in hoophouses and in the field. Unirrigated strawberries were hit hard, showing the dreaded “blackeye disease”. Once the center of the strawberry blossom turns black, you can be certain that you will not have fruit. Across the state agents remarked that “**purple**” plants were widely seen. This purple coloring is often attributed to nutrient, especially P deficiency, but in the case this spring, this is the way chilling injury shows off. Sustained warm weather with decent night temperatures will help these plants

turn around. High winds along with the continued dry weather and cold temperatures are making transplanting difficult. Most growers are proceeding slowly.

What can be used for peppers under clear plastic? Prefar (5 to 6 qts) PPI or PRE. Devrinol--incorporate 2 in before laying the plastic or leave on soil surface in front of the plastic layer IF SOIL IS MOIST AT THE TIME. If the soil is dry the herbicide must be incorporated or irrigated in before laying the plastic. I do not have a label for this here at Freeville. I suggest that you go to the website for ag. pesticides (www.cdms.net) Access US AG/CROP and type in Devrinol. There's a two-page label for peppers and tomatoes.

There's nothing on the Third Party Label that prohibits the use of Dual Magnum under plastic. The growers who have seen stunting with Dual and peppers on plastic have seen it when it is washed (i.e. concentrated) into the transplant hole around the plants. As with other crops on that label the PRE applications always tend to cause slightly more injury than when put on POST transplant. However, there have seldom been any yield reductions associated with the early stunting. Source: Robin Bellinder, Weed Scientist at Cornell University.

For those of you that are trying to hold the plants back so it will finally warm up outside, there are no registered **growth retardants** for vegetable transplants in the greenhouse. Start hardening off in cool house, but be careful about low temperatures. Several folks in the county had significant loss from freeze that was just long and severe enough to kill tender annuals.

Guthion status: Most all vegetables have been removed from the Guthion label while many other crops will be removed by the end of August. EPA may extend registration for a very limited number of crops, primarily tree fruit and nut crops pending a review. Check the EPA numbers on your current inventory of Guthion or Azinphos. If you have questions, you can call us or check the website at <http://pmep.cce.cornell.edu/pims/current/>.

Greenhouse: Several calls this last week with folks concerned about stunting and poor color. Although I think much of this is due to cold temperatures, nutritional problems need to be ruled out. Chris Logue of the CCE Capital District Horticultural Team wrote the following article outlining how important water and soil testing is to understanding your nutrient situation.

Greenhouse Crop Nutrition: I have been talking about this subject with growers for a long time so I'll keep it brief. First, test your water. It does not hurt to do this several times during the growing season. Second, test your media, before you have planted a crop in it. This will give you a base line nutrient level and give a sense of the chemical characteristics of the media. Third, know what fertilizers you are applying and what the rate is. Fourth check the calibration of the injector. Don't assume that the injector came from the factory set to the injection ratio that you use. Also keep in mind that injectors are mechanical devices. Just like an automobile or tractor engine they can wear out. When an automobile engine wears out we get a decrease in power and compression. When a fertilizer injector wears out we get fertilizer concentrate metered into the irrigation water in an incorrect concentration.

Keep a close eye on these things throughout the growing season. Weather, crops, the greenhouse environment and human management can all interact in unpredictable ways to create problems that are very hard to diagnose. This is especially true if we don't have any baseline data.

Landscape: Despite the small amount of rain over the weekend, overall soil is very dry. As leaves on trees expand, the soil moisture situation will become a more critical concern. Some trees were severely damaged from the frost last week and we expect some more cold temperatures this week. Most of the trees should rebound from this situation, but it should be

noted that I have already seen and had several calls about **Forest Tent caterpillars**. Frost damage followed by defoliation by these insects would not do a tree a lot of good, so care should be taken to repel caterpillars with Bt as soon as they are noticed. For a nice fact sheet that compares the different tent caterpillars, check out:

<http://www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dlf/privland/forprot/health/nyfo/ftc.pdf>.

Fruit trees were injured from frost, the extent of the damage is difficult to see now, but will show during set.

I saw some samples of **pine bark borers**, which are causing mature Eastern White Pine to decline rapidly. These insects do not normally invade healthy, vigorous trees, so when you see them it usually means the tree is in the final stage of decline.

Sincerely,

Aaron D. Gabriel
Extension Resource Educator
Crops and Soils