



Friday, January 22, 2021 Vol 28:1

Maine Irrigation Survey

It is important to get tree fruit growers' perspectives for this survey. The response will be used to direct irrigation educational and other support resources. The survey closes around January 28

You are being invited to participate in the Maine Drought and Agriculture Survey, a research project led by Dr. Rachel Schattman. A group representing the UMaine School of Food and Agriculture, UMaine Cooperative Extension, the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, and the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association is working together to assess, through this survey, the direct and indirect effects that drought has had on agricultural production in Maine and your farming operation in over the past five years.

Variable weather intensified by a changing climate continues to be an issue for Maine agricultural producers. This has made growing conditions challenging, and leads to a lot of uncertainty regarding yields, quality, and ultimately marketability. It is important that we understand how these conditions are impacting Maine producers.

You must be a farmer in Maine who is at least 18 years of age or older to participate in the survey. The survey is confidential and anonymous.

The survey begins with general questions and then requests that you identify your primary crop (plant or animal) which will connect you to more specific questions related to your crop. The survey should be completed by January 28, 2021. A final report will be made publicly available in Spring 2021. Individual responses will remain confidential.

The results of our work will identify opportunities for investment in water resources in Maine, such as reviving programs that assist with pond construction or irrigation infrastructure. The information gained through this survey will be used to inform future outreach and education around these specific issues. We hope you will take the time to share your thoughts and experiences with us. The survey will take about 30 minutes to complete.

Thank you in advance for your time,
Rachel Schattman. Questions? Contact rachel.schattman@maine.edu; 207-581-2913

Please use this link to fill out the survey

https://umaine.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_2l6xn5MnFy7WJtr

Please download a PDF version of the Research Consent Information form for your records: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1s55MZx_h2CTJ9ukH8mFZ7LsLbQ0umqg1/view

Online Presentations

1) New England – NY Winter Fruit Meetings

With the absence of traditional in-person winter meetings, the Extension tree fruit workers in New England and NY are collaborating on a series of free winter webinars. The webinars qualify for pesticide applicator recertification credits. You must register ahead of time and prove participation by responding to a couple of questions during the webinar.

For more information see:

<https://ag.umass.edu/fruit/news-events/new-england-winter-fruit-seminar-series>

There will NOT be an in-person Maine Tree Fruit IPM meeting this March due to COVID-19. There are three webinars in the list above on March 3, 10, and 17 to replace the in-person meeting. Each of those webinars qualifies for 1 pesticide applicator recertification credit.

2) 2021 Cornell NYS Tree Fruit Conference, February 2 - 4

The bad news is that these presentations are not free, and three days of Zoom is not the most appealing concept. The good news is that Cornell research and Extension staff have put together a very rich agenda of current information useful to tree fruit growers presented by world-class experts.

Live meetings will be hosted over the Zoom webinar platform and will consist of 12 sessions over the course of three days: two morning sessions and two afternoon sessions each day. In addition to the live webinars, attendees will receive access to a conference webpage, which will contain vendor content, and additional educational materials relevant to each session.

Early registration price (available through January 26th) is \$85 for farms enrolled in the Lake Ontario or Eastern NY fruit programs., and \$95 for unenrolled farms.

Prices will increase by \$10 following the 26th. Please note that each attendee must sign up with their own email address in order to access the conference page, attend the live webinars, and receive DEC recertification credits.

The agenda and links to registration are available at:

<http://blogs.cornell.edu/nystreefruitconference/agenda/>

Participant requirements for joining the Cornell Tree Fruit Conference:

- A computer (preferred) or tablet with high-speed internet access
- A computer (preferred) or tablet with video conferencing capabilities to view presentations
- Download Zoom onto your computer or tablet
- Don't have zoom? Sign up for free at <https://www.zoom.us> and click on "Sign Up, It's Free"
- A quiet space to listen to presentations

NY pesticide applicator recertification credits are offered for the first three sessions on February 2nd. I just applied for credits from Maine Board of Pesticides Control and hope to hear back by Monday.

3) Managing Stone Fruit Bacterial Disease Problems

Recording of this 2 hour session is available online for free at https://media.unh.edu/media/1_dn9pr3o8

4) Maine Board of Pesticides Control Credit Calendar

A full list of recertification trainings is online at https://www.maine.gov/dacf/php/pesticides/credit_calendar.shtml

6:00 PM **Welcoming remarks**

6:10 PM **Peach Crop Insurance** – Tom Smiarowski, UMass Extension, Agricultural Risk Management Consultant, Amherst, MA

6:30 PM **Orchardists Panel – Stone Fruit Disease Problems?**

Moderator – Jeremy Delisle, UNHCE, Extension Field Specialist, Food and Agriculture
Orchardists: Giff Burnap, Butternut Farm, Farmington; Carl Hills, Kimble Fruit Farm, Hollis/Pepperell; Kitt Plummer, Hazelton Orchard, Chester

7:00 PM **Dealing with Stone Fruit Bacterial Disease Problems** – Dr. Kari Peter, PSU, Assistant Research Professor, Tree Fruit Pathology

8:00 PM **Questions and Answers**

Airblast 101 book

Airblast 101- Your Guide to Effective and Efficient Spraying, 2nd Edition, a 306 page guide is available as a free download, or you can order a printed copy at www.sprayers101.com/airblast101/

This book is the best reference I know of for setting up and operating orchard sprayers. And it's free. The Sprayers 101 website is also an excellent resource with many article and videos. <https://sprayers101.com/articles/basics/>

One of the authors, Dr. Jason Deveau will be featured on the March 23 New England Extension webinar (one the sessions listed in item #1 in of previous section). The topic of that webinar is *Tree Row Volume: What it is, why it matters, and how to use it*.

George Hamilton (UNH) has a set of short videos on backpack and other sprayer topics at <https://extension.unh.edu/resource/quick-tips-and-more-guidance-using-your-sprayer-videos>

Maine AgrAbility Program

Maine AgrAbility works to enable a lifestyle of high quality for farmers, ranchers, and other agricultural workers with disabilities, so that they, their families, and their communities continue to succeed in rural America. For this target audience, “success” may be defined by many parameters, including: gainful employment in production agriculture or a related occupation; access to appropriate assistive technology needed for work and daily living activities; evidence-based information related to the treatment and rehabilitation of disabling conditions; and targeted support for family caregivers of AgrAbility customers.

AgrAbility addresses a wide variety of disabling conditions in agriculture, including, but not limited to:

- Arthritis
- Spinal cord injuries/paralysis
- Back impairments
- Amputations
- Brain injury
- Visual impairments
- Hearing impairments
- Disabling diseases
- Cerebral palsy
- Respiratory impairments
- Head injury

More information is available at <https://extension.umaine.edu/agrability/about/>

Invasive Stiltgrass Found in Maine

This press release came out last fall. January is not the best time to look for Stiltgrass. But this is a good time to learn what to look for and report it if found in the coming growing season.

“Considered one of the most damaging invasive plant species in the United States, Stiltgrass threatens Maine's native plants and natural habitats

The Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry's (DACF) Maine Natural Areas Program (MNAP) urges nursery professionals, landowners, and land managers to carefully search their properties for the invasive stiltgrass (*Microstegium vimineum*), also known as Japanese Stiltgrass. DACF staff recently confirmed the first known Maine location of this severely invasive plant at a nursery in York County. Previously, the closest known locations for stiltgrass were at nurseries in New Hampshire.

"We knew it was likely that this invasive plant would make its way to Maine eventually," said Gary Fish, State Horticulturist. "It is a severely invasive plant with small seeds that can hitchhike on plant root balls, potted plants, soil, gravel, or equipment."

Stiltgrass forms dense colonies in sun or shade, invading the forest and forming a thick thatch layer over time. The thatch layer makes it difficult for native trees, shrubs, and wildflower seeds to establish and grow. Thatch buildup also raises fire risk. Stiltgrass is an annual plant, and each stem can produce hundreds to thousands of seeds before dying in the fall. Seeds survive for at least five years in the soil.

Nancy Olmstead, an Invasive Plant Biologist with MNAP, urges landowners to search recently disturbed areas for new infestations of stiltgrass. "It's imperative to be on the lookout for this plant. We have to work together to locate any additional sites and keep stiltgrass from invading Maine's priceless forests and natural areas."

Landowners, land managers, and nursery professionals should be on the lookout for any dense patches of unfamiliar grass that could be stiltgrass. Several features of stiltgrass can help distinguish it from other grasses:

* Leaves of stiltgrass alternate along the stem, 2-4" long and ½" wide, and have a stripe of reflective hairs along the leaf midrib on the leaf's top surface. Individual hairs may be too small to see with the naked eye, but the pale stripe along the leaf midrib is distinctive. The midrib may be slightly off-center.

* The leaf edges and surfaces feel smooth to the touch, unlike some native grasses with stiff hairs along the leaf edge.

* The common name "stiltgrass" comes from the plant's growth habit: it trails along the ground, branching from nodes where it produces "stilts" (roots) to support the new branches. It is shallow-rooted and easy to pull up.

* Plants flower and set seed very late in the season (September-October), most other grasses seed much earlier in the year. Each plant can have one to three seed spikes that resemble crabgrass.

* Stems can develop a reddish tint late in the season.

If you think you have stiltgrass on your property, please review the above list of characters to confirm, and check your plants against photos of stiltgrass at https://www.maine.gov/dacf/mnap/features/invasive_plants/microstegium.html

If you believe you have found stiltgrass, please either map the location with images in the online mapping tool at <https://www.imapinvasives.org/>, or send an email with photos and location description to invasives.mnap@maine.gov .

New detections of stiltgrass should be controlled to keep this damaging grass from invading Maine's forests and natural areas. DACF staff can offer guidance to affected landowners. For general information on managing stiltgrass and other invasive plants, please visit the Maine Natural Areas Program website.

https://www.maine.gov/dacf/mnap/features/invasive_plants/invasives_gallery.htm



All photos courtesy of DACF.

Stiltgrass leaves are alternate along the stem and have a distinctive stripe of reflective hairs along the midrib.

Large patches of stiltgrass can invade open and forested areas, choking out native plants.



DACF staff hand-pulling stiltgrass at a nursery in York County. Stiltgrass should be controlled to prevent its spread.



Stiltgrass seed heads occur at the tops of the plants, and each plant can have 1-3 seed heads in the spike. Seeds have small hairs at the tips. End of mechanical pencil shown for scale.

Weather Outlook newsletter

The 'Weather Outlook' will be resuming as a separate newsletter. It provides a summary of the past week temperature, precipitation, and soil moisture; the next week(i.e. 1-7 day) forecast, the 8-14 day forecast, the 3-4 week forecast, and the 3-month seasonal forecast. If you would like to receive the 'Weather Outlook' newsletter, please send an email message to glen.koehler@maine.edu.

Closing Words

"We didn't know we couldn't do it, so we did it."

~ Paul McCartney about the Beatles' lack of musical training.

"I cannot do all the good that the world needs.

But the world needs all the good that I can do."

~ Anonymous

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