

Northeast Mississippi Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association

July/August 2014 Newsletter



Dr. Jeff Wilson – Regional Horticulture Specialist

It has finally turned into summer as the temps and the humidity have reached the levels we expect in August in MS. I have had the chance to visit with many of you over the last few months and appreciate your willingness to share your farms with me. We have been busy here at the NMREC with horticulture research projects and trial gardens. I have worked with Casey & Thomas on a Tomato fertilizer study, a pumpkin variety trial, a pumpkin disease study, and a pepper demo trial. We look forward to sharing the results with you at the Fall Flower and Vegetable Tour (see below) and also the Conference in February. Also, I have updated all the financial records for the association. If any of you are interested in seeing these numbers, please contact me to set up a time to stop by and do so. As always, contact me if I can help you in any way.

As we move into the late summer/fall and many crop harvests have come and gone, it is easy to forget about the proper maintenance level on our plants. I have looked at blueberries and blackberries lately that were suffering from too little water. Just because they have been harvested doesn't mean they can be neglected. Keep irrigation levels up until fall rains become more consistent. Also, it is very close to being too late to fertilize perennial crops, so do that soon if your plants need it.

UPCOMING EVENTS

****Fall Flower & Vegetable Tour****

September 20, NMREC, Verona, MS. Come and see all the horticulture research being conducted here in Verona. There will be lectures, garden tours, vendors, and more. This event is primarily for home gardeners, but is a great chance to get caught up on some of the research going on here at our facility. We hope to see you here!!!

Muscadine Field Day

August 23, MSU McNeill Experiment Station, Carriere, MS. 9:00 – 11:00 a.m.
Topics include: cultivars, insects & diseases, best pollination practices and more. For more information contact Dr. Eric Stafne at 601-403-8939.

Microfarming – Growing for Farmers' Markets Conference

August 27-28, 2014, Eagle Ridge Conference Center, 1500 Raymond Lake Road, Raymond, MS. If you have ever thought about selling your produce at one of Mississippi's farmers' markets, this conference will give you the information you need to succeed. Learn everything from the best crops to grow and best way to market your produce to how to set up your booth at a farmers' market.

Experts from the MSU Extension Service, MS Department of Ag and Commerce, South Mississippi Farmers Market Association, and Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries will help small-scale farmers understand the benefits and facts of selling at farmers' markets. Topics include fruit and vegetable variety selection, food safety, marketing and sales approaches, online presence and marketing strategies, starting a successful farmers' market, urban farming for the local market, benefits of selling at

farmers' markets, and MDAC programs and opportunities. The short course is free, but advance registration is required. Attendees must mail, email, or fax [reservations](#) to confirm attendance at the workshop. For more information or to register, contact Dr. Rick Snyder at Rick.Snyder@msstate.edu or 601-892-3731. Complete information is on the website: <http://farmersmarkets.msstate.edu/conference>

Small Farm & Home Garden Field Day

The Alabama Cooperative Extension System will host this event. It will be held at Jack-O-Lantern Farms in Muscle Shoals, AL. They have a great line-up of speakers for the day. I attended last year and enjoyed it very much. For more info, call Chris Becker at 256-766-6223.

GAP/GHP Cost-Share Program Available

The Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce is currently offering a cost-share program to provide financial assistance to Mississippi fruit and vegetable farmers receiving Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Good Handling Practices (GHP) Certification. Eligible farmers will receive reimbursement for 75% of the certification costs up to a maximum of \$500. To receive reimbursement, farmers must submit a completed application with proper documentation of costs incurred. Only audits completed by an approved USDA certifier will be eligible for reimbursement. A list of auditor contacts is available at www.ams.usda.gov/gapghp. Funds are available on a first-come, first-serve basis until the funds are depleted. Funding for this program is provided through the USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. For more information about this program or to obtain an application, visit www.mdac.ms.gov, call Michael Lasseter at (601) 359-1120 or email michaelL@mdac.ms.gov.

Growing Lunch-A School Garden Grant Program

Growing Lunch is a school garden grant program administered through the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce with the USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. Eligible schools can receive a grant up to \$500 to purchase supplies needed to plant a school garden. Growing Lunch seeks to enhance the Farm to School program across the state. Farm to School provides locally-grown produce to our state's schools and also seeks to educate students on agriculture. This program will act as an educational tool to enhance the knowledge of school-aged children on agriculture, healthy eating, and how food arrives on their plate three times a day. As society becomes increasingly further away from agricultural practices and the farm, it remains pertinent to educate students on the origin of their food; MDAC has designated a website for those interested in the Farm to School Program and educational resources and materials for Farm to School Week, www.farmtoschoolweek.org.

All schools, K-12, in the State of Mississippi are eligible to apply, although this program is ideally geared towards younger school-aged children. For more information, please see the attached application

New Pilot Program Offers Coverage for Fruits/Vegetables, Organic and Diversified Farms

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced a new risk management option that will be available for fruit & vegetable growers and producers with diversified farms. The policy, called Whole-Farm Revenue Protection, will provide flexible coverage options for specialty crop, organic and diversified crop producers. The program will be implemented in counties across the country and will expand in availability over the next several years.

Whole-Farm insurance allows farmers to insure all crops on their farm at once, rather than insuring commodity by commodity. This allows farmers greater flexibility to make planting decisions on their land. More flexibility also empowers farmers and ranchers to make a broader range of decisions with their land, helping them succeed and strengthening our agriculture economy."

This policy is also part of USDA's [commitment to small and mid-sized producers](#) managing diversified operations. It offers coverage levels from 50 to 85 percent; recognizes farm diversification through qualification for the highest coverage levels along with premium rate discounts for multiple crop diversification. The Market Readiness Feature, as outlined in the Farm Bill, simplifies insurance coverage for producers under the Whole-Farm Revenue Protection pilot policy by allowing the costs such as washing, trimming, and packaging to be left in the insured revenue instead of having to adjust those amounts out of the insured amount.

As part of the pilot, Whole-Farm Revenue Protection will be available where AGR and AGR-Lite are currently offered, and will expand to other counties as data are available for underwriting and actuarial ratemaking. RMA will release information on the policy later this summer when it becomes available. This information will be announced on the RMA website at www.rma.usda.gov.

MSU-ES Contact info:

Below are the contact names and numbers that are directly related to the association and your production issues. Please start with your local county Extension agent to help find answers to your questions. They are capable of handling your request and have access to all of our resources

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