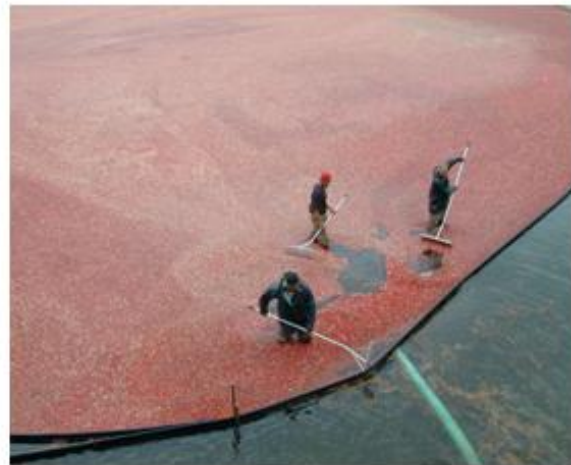




# BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES FOR MASSACHUSETTS CRANBERRY PRODUCTION



## Introduction to the Revised Guide

Cranberries are grown on approximately 14,000 acres in Massachusetts and are an important horticultural commodity in the Southeastern region of the state. In addition, more than 60,000 acres of open space are associated with cranberry operations. This open space provides habitat to many plant and animal species as well as providing an aesthetic value. Open space associated with cranberry farms serves to protect and recharge watersheds. Cranberry farming also contributes to the economy and quality of life in Southeastern Massachusetts.

To preserve the positive benefits of cranberry farming in Massachusetts, it is necessary that cranberry growers be equipped to produce cranberries profitably and sustainably. In such a system, the quality of life of the farmer and the community, the profitability of farming, and the preservation of the quality of natural resources and the environment are all taken into consideration. Such a system requires that farming with expert knowledge in some part replaces the indiscriminate use of agrochemical and non-renewable resources.

The University of Massachusetts Cranberry Station has the mission of providing research and education programs to add to the expert knowledge base for cranberry growers. In 1996, a basic guide for growing cranberries within modern environmental and social constraints was produced by the Cranberry Station. Concurrently, the Cape Cod Cranberry Growers Association (CCCGA), working with the Conservation Districts and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, began working on standards for cranberry farming that could be used in the formulation of Farm Plans. In addition, Ocean Spray Cranberries, Inc. was beginning the process of providing Best Management Practices Guidelines to its growers. These groups combined their efforts to produce a unified project that was funded by the Massachusetts Department of Food and Agriculture (DFA) Agro-Environmental Technology Program. The first edition of the Best Management Practices (BMP) Guide for Massachusetts Cranberry Production, containing 10 practices, was the result of this process.

In 1999, these same stakeholders came together to revise and expand the BMP Guide, again with financial support from the MA DFA Agro-Environmental Technology Program and the CCCGA. Key features of the revised and expanded BMP Guide include expanded information regarding water use and protection and the handling and use of pesticides. This information will be critical to help growers and officials comply with requirements of State and Federal laws and regulations, especially the requirements of the Clean Water Act. The expanded guide totaled 24 practices.

In 2010, Massachusetts Farm Bureau and the MA Department of Food and Agricultural Resources (formerly DFA) engaged UMass Extension and the Cranberry Station to revise and expand the BMP Guide. This guide is different as it will be primarily available as an on-line resource. This will greatly facilitate the periodic revision of individual practices as necessary and allows for the addition of more practices over time. The intent is to provide information that will help growers to farm profitably and in harmony with their neighbors and the surrounding environment. Interested parties may also wish to reference Cranberry Chart Book - Management Guide for Massachusetts, published by the UMass Cranberry Station (<http://scholarworks.umass.edu/cranchart/>).

The current Guide has contains 29 practices. Each section of the Guide begins with a description of the part of cranberry production addressed in that BMP. This information is for the benefit of newer growers and to serve as a point of introduction for others (Conservation Commissions, regulators, environmental groups) who might reference these materials. Following the introductory section is a series of Recommended Practices designed to maximize productivity while preserving the environment. Of course, not all growers will be able to implement every Recommended Practice due

to financial and site constraints, but having such a list in-hand should prove valuable as cranberry farmers strive to maintain profitable and environmentally compatible operations.

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### **Disclaimers**

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The contributors emphasize the importance of consulting experienced and qualified consultants, advisors, and other business professionals to ensure the best results for producing cranberries.

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