



Cranberry Station Newsletter

APRIL 2003

UMASS CRANBERRY STATION
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<http://www.umass.edu/cranberry>

NEW URL:!!!!

PRELIMINARY KEEPING QUALITY FORECAST

As of April 1, there are 2 points out of a possible 10 that favor keeping quality in the 2003 Massachusetts cranberry crop. The two points were awarded for March sunshine hours. Points in this range normally predict a POOR TO FAIR keeping quality. However, the points missed (4) for low sunshine in the previous year are somewhat suspect as described below. The sunshine points relate to the effect of sunshine in the previous year on the size of that crop. Low sunshine equals low crop and low crop relates to better quality the next year. So even though we didn't get the low sunshine points, the low crops in 2002 should be a favorable indicator for keeping quality in 2003. In addition, we narrowly missed getting one point for precipitation in March (had it not rained more than three inches the final weekend) and two points for temperature in March (missed by 0.7 degrees). Taking all of these factors, and my experience into account, I am setting the preliminary keeping quality forecast at **FAIR TO GOOD**.

The parameter I struggle with each year is the sunshine hours from the previous growing season. These records were formerly maintained at Logan Airport and are now maintained at Blue Hill Observatory where conditions are drastically different. The threshold figure used for nearly 50 years was the one from Logan (2558 hours — 30 year average) and the average figure at Blue Hill is only 2270 hours. In addition, the sunshine at Blue Hill is less variable from year to year, making it problematic for calculating a predictor which is based on deviation from the average. I have indicated how badly the parameters involved in this forecast need to be evaluated, and with a two-year grant from the USDA-CSREES Pest Management Alternatives Program, we will be doing just that this summer.

The final keeping quality forecast will be issued in early June, using data from April and May. It is possible that the forecast may be elevated above good, should things work in our favor (cool and dry). This should be a normal growing season, with three fungicide applications at middle rates adequate for fruit rot control in most situations. Should you have a bed that had excessive rot or a very large crop in 2002, suffered severe drought stress in the past two years, or has leaf drop this spring, you should not reduce your fungicide sprays.

FRANK L. CARUSO
PLANT PATHOLOGY

SPRING REMINDERS AND NOTES

The bonus of a more 'normal' winter has been a nice slow start to the spring. For the first time in several years, we did not have to worry about frost protecting by late March! Here's a list of reminders and comments as we go into the season.

Spring frost - Unless we get a heat wave in the next few days, expect to start thinking about frost and protecting for 18°F by around April 20 — maybe a little sooner if we get that heat wave.

Late water - Late water floods will likely be applied starting April 15-20 this year since dormancy has been slow to break. The flood should be in place before the buds lose their dormant color. This may be a caution year for late water given the long period of ice and sand cover this winter and last season's drought stress. Examine the bog carefully for signs of off colors or leaf drop prior to flooding.

Water tables - Water levels in most USGS monitoring wells are normal or above. However, there remain a few locations in Southeastern MA and the Cape with water tables below normal. Surface bodies in the region are reported to be full.

Soil temperature - This week the soil temperature on State Bog was 41°F. Research indicates that mineral nutrients are not taken up by the cranberry plants unless the soil temperature is at least 50°F.

Pruning - Spring pruning should be happening now while the plants are still somewhat dormant - no movement in the buds.

Planting - If you plant early, remember that the new growth may get nailed by frost. This will set the plants back but would not prevent them from initiating more growth later.

Herbicides - Casoron and devrinol may be used on bogs that were sanded. Casoron should not be used under sand, over is OK. Do NOT use evital if the bog was sanded this winter.

Pesticide labels - Several materials have had label changes for this season. Remember, the label is the law. Follow instructions on the label that comes with the package you are using. Several Section 18 labels have been requested. Do not use materials normally registered on Section 18s until you have the 2003 supplemental label in hand. We will send out alerts as these become available.

CAROLYN DEMORANVILLE

INSIDE:

2003 PRELIMINARY KEEPING QUALITY FORECAST

NEWSFLASH:

SECTION 18 FOR KERB HAS BEEN GRANTED

(Check web site for more details)

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