



UMass
Extension

Vegetable Notes

For Vegetable Farmers in Massachusetts since 1975



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Planting season is underway. Transplants like these are going out to harden off before being planted across the state. Photo: G. Higgins



Oviposition marks from allium leafminer on an onion leaf. Photo: E. Grundberg

CROP CONDITIONS

Cold, wind, and even snow this week! Despite the recent unspring-like weather, folks are busy prepping and planting for a busy season. We have been keeping busy too, writing new factsheets, planning for the season, and this week launched our weekly mini-Twilight Meeting series with a discussion of early season pest scouting—thanks to those who joined us! Next week we will have Tom Smiarowski from UMass Extension Risk Management Program talking about COVID-19-related business relief programs. We hope it will be a place for much discussion between growers and service providers from MDAR and FSA and we'd love to hear from people about how things are going, so come prepared with your questions and experiences! See the event listing in this issue to learn how to join.

PEST ALERT: ALLIUM LEAFMINER

Allium leafminer flight has begun this week in the Hudson Valley in New York, just to our west. This pest affects all allium crops, including garlic and onions that may be out in the field now. The first signs are the white spots on leaf tissue, pictured on this page. If you see this in your crop, please take a photo and share it with us via umass-veg@umass.edu so we can confirm and track this new invasive pest.

GREENHOUSE GROWERS: *Ralstonia solanacearum* Race 3 Pathovar 2 Detected in Geranium Plants in Michigan Greenhouse

From USDA APHIS: “The United States Department of Agriculture’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has confirmed the detection of *Ralstonia solanacearum* race 3 biovar 2 (RSr3b2) in a single variety of geranium plants located in a Michigan greenhouse. This particular type of *Ralstonia* can cause a wilt disease in several important agricultural crops such as potatoes, tomatoes, peppers and eggplant. This is the first confirmed case of RSr3b2 in a U.S. greenhouse since 2004.

APHIS has taken immediate action to contain and eradicate the disease from the Michigan facility. We confirmed that the infected plants came from a greenhouse in Guatemala. The importer immediately stopped shipments of geranium plants to the United States upon confirmation of the detection and has voluntarily agreed to destroy all shipments that were pending export or in route to the United States. They also provided a list of 288 greenhouses in 39

States that received geranium cuttings from the Guatemala facility.

Federal and State agriculture officials are currently visiting the 288 greenhouse locations. They will inspect, isolate and destroy all Fantasia ‘Pink Flare’ geranium plants and co-mingled and exposed host and non-host plants. They will also isolate, sample, and destroy other geranium varieties and comingled and exposed host and non-host plants, if the other geraniums test positive for RSr3b2. After the plants are destroyed, the greenhouses will be cleaned according to our sanitation protocol to clear the facility of the pathogen.”

From the UMass Extension Greenhouse Crops & Floriculture Program:

Symptoms of RSr3b2 on geranium are very similar to those caused by *Xanthomonas pelargonii*. The main difference is that *Ralstonia* will cause wilting along with leaf yellowing and necrosis, whereas *Xanthomonas* can cause small round leaf spots as well as wilt. *Ralstonia* is spread primarily within diseased cuttings, and can be transmitted from root system to root system by water movement such as recirculating subirrigation systems. *Ralstonia* is soil-borne and is not expected to be spread by overhead irrigation unless there was puddling around pot bases. The time between infection and symptom development is temperature dependent; for example, at 81°F days and 68°F nights it takes 13 days for symptoms to appear, while at 75°F days and 64°F nights it takes 23 days.

Monitor geraniums and solanaceous vegetable starts carefully for symptoms. If you are concerned that you have symptomatic plants in your greenhouse, do not move them, as movement facilitates the spread of the bacterium to uninfected plants. If you are in Massachusetts or Connecticut, contact the office of the State Plant Health Director at 203-741-5644. Growers in other states should contact their respective State Plant Health Regulatory Official (SPRO).

For more information on RSr3b2, refer to the [UMass Extension Greenhouse Program’s fact sheet](#).

Tips for preventing spread of bacterial diseases

- Isolate new shipments of geraniums from the rest of your crops.
- Keep batches from different propagators separate from each other.
- Keep cultivars separate from each other.
- Keep seedlings, perennial geraniums and zonals separate from each other.
- Do not grow ivy baskets over seed or zonal geraniums.
- If possible, do not keep vegetable transplants in the same greenhouse s ornamentals.
- Work in blocks to prevent spread.
- Wash hands or change gloves often.

--Written by A. Madeiras, UMass Extension

EVENTS

MINI-TWILIGHT MEETINGS FOR COMMERCIAL VEGETABLE GROWERS

Join us each Wednesday at 3pm for a virtual mini-Twilight Meeting! Each week we will have a topic lined up for demonstration and discussion, with a presentation of new information on crop, pest, and farm management topics followed by plenty of time for Q&A about the topic at hand, and farmer-to-farmer discussion of the issues of the week. Farmers can join by phone or by computer—those who join by computer will be able to see some shared photos and presentations. This is a new program that we hope will allow us to connect with growers while we are not able to physically visit farms for routine scouting and assistance. It is intended for our commercial farmers and will cover topics relevant to small and large scale farm businesses and conventional and organic production systems.



Ralstonia solanacearum causing wilt and dieback on geranium. Photo: R.L. Wick

How to join: [Click here to register and receive the sign-in information.](#)

Upcoming Topics:

- **April 29: COVID-19 business relief programs and assistance**
Learn about the different programs and how to apply and participate in discussion of the impact of COVID-19 on farm business. Featuring guest speakers Ashley Randle and Michael Botelho from MDAR and Ed Davidian from USDA Farm Service Agency.
- **May 6: Organic insect pest management**
With a few key, perennial pests and just a few OMRI-approved insecticides to choose from, we will present a simple season-long primer and welcome questions and discussion from participants.

Check the [Vegetable Program Event page](#) and keep an eye out in *Veg Notes* for new upcoming topics

MOFGA WEBINAR: THE ON-RAMP TO ONLINE SALES—GETTING READY TO OPEN YOUR ONLINE STORE.

Join Linzy Witherspoon of Farmhand Automation, the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry, and MOFGA for a session on The On-Ramp to Online Sales. In the midst of the coronavirus outbreak, many of Maine’s farmers are looking to shift ordering online. In this session we’ll share what pieces you’ll need to get an online ordering platform up and running quickly, and we’ll talk about some of the different options available. Maine DACF staff will share where you can find 1-on-1 technical assistance to help get you set up online, including Linzy’s team of pro bono tech volunteers. MOFGA staff will share the online sales platform comparison they’ve prepared. Please bring your questions and share your experiences making online stores work for you.

When: Thursday, April 23, 2020, 6:30pm

How to join: Join Zoom Meeting: <https://mofga.zoom.us/j/93500127756>

Meeting ID: 935 0012 7756

One tap mobile: +16468769923,,93500127756# US (New York)

GARDENING Q&A WITH MOFGA

Starting a new garden this year? An experienced gardener with some questions? Either way, join us for a series of Q&A ZOOM calls with Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Assoc.’s Organic Crop Specialist, Caleb Goossen. Bring your questions as we kick off the growing season!

Tuesday, April 28 at 3pm: [Click here to register for this session.](#)

Thursday, May 7 at 7pm: [Click here to register for this session.](#)

CONTACT US:

Contact the UMass Extension Vegetable Program with your farm-related questions, any time of the year. We always do our best to respond to all inquiries.

Office phone: (413) 577-3976 *We are currently working remotely but checking these messages daily, so please leave us a message!*

Email: umassveg@umass.edu

Home Gardeners: Please contact the UMass GreenInfo Help Line with home gardening and homesteading questions, at greeninfo@umext.umass.edu.

UMass Extension services update:

As you are probably aware, operations at the University of Massachusetts Amherst have been significantly reduced in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Currently, MA and University policy have the effect of temporarily suspending most of the on-campus services that we provide until further notice, including:

- Soil & Plant Nutrient Testing
- Plant Disease Diagnostics
- Hot Water Seed Treatment
- Nematode Analysis
- Weed, Insect, Turfgrass, and Invasive Plant Identification
- Public access to all farm properties

Until further notice, please do not send or deliver samples to campus, as we cannot process them.

In addition, all in-person UMass Extension events scheduled at least through May 15 have been canceled or postponed.

UNH EXTENSION WEBINAR: What farms and small businesses need to know to comply with the Family First Coronavirus Response Act

The **Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA)** requires private businesses with fewer than 500 employees to provide employees with paid sick leave or expanded family and medical leave for specified reasons related to COVID-19. The requirements including notifying employees, are in effect: April 1, 2020 - December 31, 2020.

- Many farms and small businesses think they are exempt or this does not apply, likely this is NOT true!
- Farms and natural resource businesses are among those that need to comply.
- The FFCRA also contains provisions which enable businesses to recover sick leave related costs through tax credits.

To help you understand FFCRA provisions, we are bringing in **Steven McKinney**, the Community Outreach and Resource Planning Specialist for the Northern New England District Office of the **United States Department of Labor**.

This webinar will cover:

- The details of the Act
- How to meet requirements and recover expenses
- Explain what conditions may exempt a business from complying to one aspect of this new law

When: Wednesday, April 29, 7-8pm

Registration: [Click here to register for this webinar](#). After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

WEEKLY MDAR AND MA FARM BUREAU COVID-19 RESPONSE BRIEFING CONFERENCE CALL

On Monday March 23, the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources and Farm Bureau held a joint conference call for farmers on COVID-19. The purpose of the call was to review various policies related to the COVID-19 response, to answer questions, and to take suggestions.

For the immediate future, we have decided to make this call a weekly event. The call will tentatively occur each Monday at 1 pm.

The call is open to all farmers. Call in information is as follows:

Mondays, 1 pm - Note that circumstances may dictate that the day or time may need to be rescheduled. If a change of day or time is necessary, Farm Bureau will send out notice via email to Regular Members.

Call In Number: 605-475-3235

Participant Code: 572085#

Please be sure your phone is muted during the call, except when speaking.

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Vegetable Notes. Genevieve Higgins, Lisa McKeag, Susan Scheufele, co-editors.

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