

Volume 32, Number 5

IN THIS ISSUE:

Crop Conditions

Pest Alerts

COVID-19-Related Resources

Updated FDA & CDC Mask Recommendations

RMA Offering Remote Assistance and Authorizing Additional Flexibility for Producers

Damping Off Diseases

News

Events

Sponsors



MDAR has updated their <u>How and Where to Buy Local site</u> that includes an <u>interactive map</u> of local farms that are open for business and new ways they might be marketing their crops at this time. Make sure your farm is represented on the map so that customers will be able to find you!

April 9, 2020

CROP CONDITIONS

While there is still much uncertainty out there, it seems clear that consumer demand for local produce is unwavering. We are seeing higher than usual enrollment in CSAs, online sales are soaring, and support for farmstands and markets is high. Wholesale growers are seeing steady sales too-people are still buying groceries, though on a less predictable schedule. With the initial fear that the market would fall out lessened, the big remaining questions are regarding labor shortages and delays in processing of H-2A workers. Pick-your-own operations are also wondering what COVID-19 distancing measures will mean for their businesses. Guidance from the state department of agriculture is forthcoming, and in the meantime, we recommend that growers start thinking about how to maintain consumer safety in their pick-your-own operations and/or finding alternative sales strategies. Meanwhile, the growing season is off to a decent start, though a fair bit ahead of schedule!

Asparagus growers have begun prepping their fields, destroying the dead ferns by burning or mowing. Soils seemed to have warmed up earlier than normal this spring, pushing crop and weed emergence a few weeks ahead of schedule. Growers are on track for harvest beginning in about two weeks, ahead of the more normal first harvest date of May 1st.

With the warm winter and early spring we are beginning to get reports of pests starting to show up, see below for the first "Pest Alerts" of the year.

The UMass Extension Vegetable Program is hiring! We are planning on conducting our normal research and scouting activities, albeit with some adjustments. If you are interested in vegetable production, applied agricultural research, and vegetable pest management, we encourage you to apply! See the News item at the end of this issue for the full job descriptions and information on how to apply.

Pest Alerts

Aphids are being reported on lettuce and spinach in high tunnels. These aphids will stick around all season as cucumbers or tomatoes replace greens in these houses so consider starting a biocontrol program now, planning ahead will mean better results—see this factsheet from the UMass Extension Greenhouse Program: https://ag.umass.edu/greenhouse-floriculture/fact-sheets/aphids-on-greenhouse-crops

Spinach leafminer eggs are being reported on beets in a high tunnel in Rhode Island. This is several weeks early for this

pest, so be on the lookout. Scout spinach and beet leaves by turning over the leaf and looking for bright white eggs lined up in a cluster of 3-10 (see photo on next page). If you see eggs please send us a photo to confirm and help spread the word to other growers across MA and the region at <u>umassyeg@umass.edu</u>,

Similarly, New Jersey is reporting activity of seedcorn maggot and allium leafminer about three weeks earlier than usual.

<u>Seedcorn maggot</u> is the first of the maggot flies to become active, the other two being the cabbage root maggot and the onion maggot. Flies lay eggs on the soil surface near sprouting seeds, organic plant residue, or organic soil amendments. The resulting maggots feed on seeds, killing them and resulting in poor stand.

Allium leafminer has only been seen once in MA, in Berkshire B County in 2018. That being said, this fly pest is well-established in NY and PA and we should be on the lookout for signs of this spring generation any day now. Female flies leave oviposition marks in neat lines on the leaves of susceptible allium crops, including onions, scallions, and garlic—see photo at right. In past years, we haven't begun looking for allium leafminer until the end of April, but growers should keep their eyes peeled now, with the pest active in nearby states and this year's earlier spring. If you see suspected allium leafminer oviposition scars in your crop, please send us a photo to confirm and help spread the word to other growers across the region.

Covid-19- Related resources

COVID-19 resources applicable to vegetable producers will be compiled on our new <u>COVID-19 Resources site</u>, with new resources highlighted in *Veg Notes* when they become available.

UPDATED MDAR HOW AND WHERE TO BUY LOCAL MAP

MDAR has created a new webpage that focuses information to the public: <u>COVID-19: How & Where to Buy Local</u>. It features up-todate regional links throughout Massachusetts that assists the public to many local delivery and pick-up options.



Beet leafminer eggs on the underside of a beet leaf. Photo: UMass Vegetable Program



Allium leafminer oviposition marks on an onion leaf. Photo: E. Grundberg

The <u>MassGrown Map</u> continues to serve the public with locations of Massachusetts retail farms, farmers markets, and more! When you open the MassGrown Map on a mobile device, and you "allow" it to use your location, it defaults to locations nearest you.

Retail Farms: We need your help to best serve you and your customers and keep the MassGrown Map current.

- 1. Search the map for all the categories that might represent your business.
- 2. Be sure you are listed with all the crops and products you grow/produce.
- 3. Is your farm phone and description accurate?
- 4. Does it includes your website (or Facebook link)?
- 5. CSA Farms: Have you added drop off locations/or offer deliveries?

If your farm is not listed, MDAR offers a <u>marketing survey(.doc)</u> that you can complete to help us promote your business. If you are listed and have edits, please send them to <u>Richard.LeBlanc@mass.gov</u>.

<u>New: MA Dept. of Public Health issues guidance for</u> <u>retail greenhouses</u>

If your nursery, greenhouse, garden center, or agriculture supply store sells plants that produce food for human production, you can remain open for business as long as you implement strategies to reduce customer exposure to COVID-19, as outlined in the guidance document. Nurseries, greenhouses, garden centers, and ag supply stores that sell solely plants that do not produce food for human consumption shall remain closed.

Click here to view the full guidance document.

HOW TO CONTACT FSA AND NRCS DURING COVID-19

While all local FSA and NRCS Offices are being staffed each day, they are only available by telephone to assist producers with any program issues and questions. At the present time, no one is allowed to visit the officers in person. Individuals with program questions should contact the local FSA or NRCS Office that serves their farming operation.

Click here for a directory of local FSA and NRCS offices.

Additionally, if anyone has **questions concerning FSA Farm Loan Programs**, please contact the following number depending on the location of your farming operation:

- Berkshire, Franklin, Hampshire, Hampden, Worcester, Middlesex, and Essex Counties: (413) 585-1000 x2
- All other counties: (508) 295-5151 x2

Updated FDA & CDC MASK RECOMMENDAtions

--Information compiled by Chris Callahan, UVM Extension

The FDA and CDC are <u>now recommending</u> the use of simple cloth face masks as a voluntary public health measure in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain. These are not meant to be N95 masks, and they are not meant to protect the wearer. They are meant to limit the transmission of COV-ID-19 from the wearer who may be asymptomatic. Consider making one of <u>several homemade cloth masks</u> and distributing to employees who may need them. <u>More info available from Penn State</u>.

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: <u>umassveg@umass.edu</u>

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

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.

RMA OFFERING REMOTE ASSISTANCE AND AU-THORIZING ADDITIONAL FLEXIBILITY FOR PRODUCERS

USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) is authorizing additional flexibilities due to coronavirus while continuing to support producers, working through Approved Insurance Providers (AIPs) to deliver services, including processing policies, claims and agreements. These flexibilities include: enabling producers to send notifications and reports electronically, extending the date for production reports and providing additional time and deferring interest on premium and other payments.

Producers may send notifications and reports electronically for written agreement issues, acreage and production reporting. Notice of the policyholder's election may be provided over the phone with appropriate documentation of the call or using electronic methods followed by their confirmation of such election in writing (a signed, or e-signed, form) no later than July 15, 2020.

For the 2020 crop year, AIPs may accept production reports through the earlier of the acreage reporting date (ARD) or 30 days after the production reporting date (PRD) for crops insured under the Common Crop Insurance Policy Basic Provisions with a PRD of March 15, 2020, or later. Generally, the PRD for crops insured under the Common Crop Insurance Policy Basic Provisions is the earlier of the ARD or 45 days after the cancellation date.

AIPs are authorized to provide additional time for policyholders to make payment of premium and administrative fees. Interest accrual on premium payments and administrative fees will be waived to the earliest of an additional 60 days from the scheduled payment due date or the termination date on policies with premium billing dates between March 1, 2020, and April 30, 2020. AIPs are also authorized to provide additional time for policyholders to make payment for Written Payment Agreements due between March 1, 2020, and April 30, 2020. Payments may be extended up to 60 days from the scheduled payment due date and considered a timely payment.

RMA is working with AIPs and other customers by phone, mail and electronically to continue supporting crop insurance coverage for producers. Farmers with **crop insurance questions** or **needs** should continue to **contact their insurance agents** about conducting business remotely (by telephone or email).

Note: The information above pertains only to crops covered by a Federal Crop Insurance policy. If you have coverage under the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) administered by the USDA - Farm Service Agency (FSA), you should contact the local FSA Office that serves your farming operation for more details.

For the most current updates on available services, visit farmers.gov/coronavirus.

UMass Extension works in partnership with the USDA Risk Management Agency (RMA) to educate Massachusetts producers about Federal Crop Insurance and Risk Management Programs. For more information, please visit <u>www.rma.usda.</u> <u>gov</u> or contact UMass Risk Management Specialists Paul Russell at <u>pmrussell@umass.edu</u> or Tom Smiarowski at <u>tsmiar-</u> <u>owski@umass.edu</u>.

"This Institution is an Equal Opportunity Provider"

DAMPING OFF DISEASES

Damping off is a disease caused by several soil-dwelling pathogens that attack seeds or seedlings and cause them to grow poorly, wilt, or die. Sometimes the seedling is killed before it emerges from below the soil, known as pre-emergence damping off. In cases of post-emergence damping off, the seedling survives for a while, but may be slow to emerge, stunted and unthrifty before it finally wilts and dies. Roots of diseased plants usually have brown tissue and the outer layer may be partially rotten. Other potential causes of seedling collapse include excessive fertilization, high levels of soluble salts, excessive heat or cold, excessive or insufficient soil moisture, bleach residue on trays, and severe infestation of fungal gnat larvae or other insects, but roots of these plants will appear healthy and white. Vigorous plants can usually outgrow damping off, but if the seed is old, the soil is too cold, or moisture is too high then the plants will succumb to the disease. Plants with wounded roots are also more susceptible, so damping off may be more prevalent if root-feeding insects such as fungus gnat larvae or wireworms are present. Damping off pathogens survive in soil in the field or adhering to flats, trays, and pots in the greenhouse, so sanitation of tools and equipment is extremely important.

See <u>Cleaning and Disinfecting the Greenhouse</u> for information on how to clean and sanitize flats, pots, and greenhouse surfaces.

Identifying Damping Off Pathogens

Damping off is caused by a number of soil-dwelling microbes *that are* ubiquitous in soil, including Pythium spp., Phytophthora spp., and Rhizoctonia solani. The roots of seedlings *infected with Pythium* or Phytophthora often rot, and the outer root layer will slough off. The outer layer of roots infected with Rhizoctonia solani do not usually slough off. If you *ha*ve the option of managing damping off using fungicides, it is important to identify the pathogen causing the disease, because Pythium and *Phytophthora* are oomycetes, not true fungi, and are therefore controlled by different products than those that control *Rhizoctonia*, a true fungus.

As the name would suggest, damping off is a disease that often occurs where soil moisture is too high, causing seeds or seedling to rot. That said, *Rhizoctonia solani* can cause damping off symptoms under dry soil conditions.



Post-emergence damping off in spinach (left) and cucumber (right). Photos: S. Scheufele

In greenhouse transplant production, damping off is directly related to water. Take care not to overwater, paying special attention to smaller, slower-growing plants like onions, leeks, and peppers. For these crops that require less water, a light media and/or a misting wand may be beneficial. A lighter media with a lower percentage of peat or compost will also help reduce growth of algae on the soil surface and will support fewer fungus gnats—as they are attracted to moist soil

where fungi thrive—whose larvae can cause wounding of roots and lead to damping off. One could also use the same soilless mix but add in some extra perlite or coarse sand to lighten it up. Also, choose the right size cell for the crop—if the crop is slow growing, a very small cell may be best so that there is not too much extra soil in the cell retaining excess moisture. When watering, anticipate that trays may dry out slowly when the weather is overcast and reduce watering. Water in the morning and if a second watering is needed, make sure it is made early enough in the day that the soil has a chance to dry out before morning. Avoid overcrowding plants and use fans to improve airflow and dry out soil more quickly.

In the Field: Damping off can also occur in the field where it may cause reduced stand or stunted growth in direct-seeded crops. This is especially true where soils are still cool and plant germination and growth is slow. Though it is tempting to try to push things and plant early, it is best to wait until the soil is adequately warm for the crop you are planting. Planting seeds too densely can also result in increased damping off and patchy or poor stands.

Once plants are established in the field they are not usually susceptible to damping off, though one of the damping off pathogens, *Rhizoctonia solani*, can cause disease throughout a plants life. These diseases include wirestem in brassicas—where the hypocotyl becomes skinny and turns brown, sometimes causing the plant to die—and bottom rot in cabbage and head lettuce—where the lower leaves that are in contact with the soil turn brown and rot away.

Management

- Sanitize greenhouse surfaces, trays, and tools.
- Wait to plant until the appropriate soil temperature has been reached. Don't plant into cool soil.
- Ovoid overwatering.
- Use vigorous seed.
- Do not seed or plant too densely.
- Allow for airflow around plants to keep foliage and soil dry.



Algae and fungus growing in a transplant tray due to large cells that remain wet for too long. Photo: S. Scheufele



Bottom rot on lettuce, caused by Rhizoctonia solani. Photo: S. Scheufele

Chemical Control

- Use seeds treated with a fungicide, whether synthetic or biological.
- Several OMRI-approved biopesticides, e.g. Rootshield Plus or Mycostop Mix, can be mixed into soilless media before seeding. These biopesticides are living bacteria or fungi that colonize roots and protect roots from infection by damping off pathogens.
- Several fungicides both synthetic and biological are labeled for use in the greenhouse. Fungicides are not considered effective in a field setting, where the focus should be on planting vigorous seed into warm soil at the proper spacing. Consult the <u>New England Vegetable Management Guide Vegetable Transplants section</u> for materials and more information.

--Written by Susan B. Scheufele, UMass Extension

News

THE UMASS EXTENSION VEGETABLE PROGRAM IS HIRING!

We are hiring seasonal program assistants to assist with applied research studies and to scout for insect and disease pest of vegetables on farms across MA. For more details on the position, <u>please see the full job listing</u>. *Note: Current UMass students are not eligible for this position*.

APPLICATION DEADLINES EXTENDED FOR MDAR GRANT PROGRAMS

Matching Enterprise Grants for Agriculture (MEGA) Program: Applicants that have not yet filed 2019 taxes for their farm business may provide 2019 income and expense estimates with the application, and then submit a copy of relevant tax form to the Department by July 29, 2020. The MEGA application deadline has been extended to 4:00 pm on April 20, 2020. For a copy of the amended Request for Response with application, please visit the MEGA website at: www.mass.gov/service-details/matching-enterprise-grants-for-agriculture-mega

Agricultural Produce Safety Improvement Program (APSIP): The APSIP application deadline has been extended from Friday, May 8, 2020 to Friday, June 19, 2020. Applications must be received by the Department no later than 4:00 pm on Friday, June 19, 2020. Please visit the APSIP for more information and a copy of the application.

MDAR's New Climate Smart Agriculture Program (CSAP): The CSAP application deadline has been extended from Friday, May 8, 2020 to Friday, June 19, 2020. Applications must be received by the Department no later than 4:00 pm on Friday, June 19, 2020. <u>Please visit the CSAP website for more information and a copy of the application</u>.

MDAR GRANTS ANNOUNCED

<u>MDAR's Urban Agriculture Program</u> is seeking to award grants statewide to promote strategies addressing food insecurity, to expand and create new economic opportunities and to increase access to fresh, local produce in urban neighborhoods.

- Application deadline is 4:00 PM on May 28, 2020
- For questions regarding the RFR, applicants can email <u>Rose.Arruda@state.ma.us</u> .
- Applicants are responsible to refer to the COMMBUYS link for any changes or updates to the RFR.

<u>MDAR's Food Ventures Program</u> seeks proposals for funding projects that will increase access to fresh, local produce in urban and rural communities and provide economic opportunities that promote job creation enterprises or new businesses. MDAR is seeking to award grants statewide, primarily in communities of low or moderate income, to individuals or entities with experience developing and supporting food businesses. • Application deadline is 4:00 PM on May 28, 2020

Additional MDAR grants that are currently open for applications can be found in the <u>Financial Resources and Funding</u> <u>Opportunities</u> section of the the <u>MDAR COVID-19 Resources for Agriculture</u> site.

SARE PARTNERSHIP GRANT PROPOSALS DUE APRIL 14

- Northeast SARE is continuing to accept proposals for its Partnership Grant Program while staff assess ways to best serve stakeholders during the current COVID-19 situation. Applicants who encounter delays or closures that hinder their ability to obtain necessary authorized signatures required on the application may proceed and submit proposals without those signatures, following procedures outlined in the grant submission system.
- The Partnership Grant program funds projects conducted by agricultural service providers working in partnership with farmers to encourage the understanding and widespread use of sustainable techniques, add to our collective understanding of sustainable agriculture, and strengthen working partnerships between farmers and farm service providers. Partnership Grant proposals are due on April 14.
- Information about the grant programs may be found on the Northeast SARE website at <u>www.northeastsare.org</u>. Grant applicants and current recipients are encouraged to reach out with any questions by emailing <u>northeastsare@uvm.edu</u>.

If you are a farmer with a grant idea and are looking for assistance finding a partner please reach out to the UMass Extension Vegetable Program at <u>umassveg@umass.edu</u>.

SARE COVER CROP SURVEY

After decades of research, cover crops have been widely shown to be beneficial to crop yields, soil health, and farmers' bottom lines. However, many obstacles to cover crop adoption still remain, including start-up costs and the amount of time before benefits are seen. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) <u>Sustainable Agriculture Research</u> and Education (SARE) program – one of the most significant drivers of research on conservation practices like cover crops – is now circulating their sixth national cover crop survey to better understand why and how farmers use cover crops, and why some don't. SARE is conducting the 2020 Cover Crop Survey in partnership with the <u>Conservation</u> <u>Technology Information Center</u> (CTIC) and the <u>American Seed Trade Association</u> (ASTA). Farmers have until April **12, 2020 to participate in the survey, which can be completed online here:** <u>https://bit.ly/CCSurvey2020</u>. The survey only takes about 10-15 minutes to complete and participants who fill out the survey can enter a drawing for Visa gift cards worth \$100 and \$200.

Events

MA PESTICIDE EXAMS CANCELED

MDAR has made the difficult decision to cancel all pesticide exams scheduled for April 2020. The following exams are cancelled:

- April 3rd: Lantana
- April 10th: Lantana
- April 14th: Springfield Technical Community College
- April 17th: Lantana
- April 22nd: Cape Cod Technical High School
- April 24th: Lantana

Updates and more bulletins posted here: COVID-19 Resources for Agriculture

SPRAYER CALIBRATION WEBINAR FROM UNH EXTENSION

Please join UNH and UVM Extension Agronomists for a free webinar. George Hamilton, UNH Fruit and Veggie

Specialist, will be leading the presentation and is an expert in calibration of boom, backpack, and air blast sprayers for commercial operators. He will instruct on how to calibrate a boom type sprayer, covering principals of rate, speed, and pressure in calibration; nozzle selection and maintenance; and risk to pest management, crop health, and the environment that exists with improperly functioning or calibrated equipment.

1.5 Pesticide Applicator Credits are available for MA, VT, and NH attendees.

Register for your preferred date and time below:

- Monday April 13, 2020, 1:00-2:30pm: https://extension.unh.edu/events/webinar-boom-sprayer-calibration
- Tuesday April 14, 2020, 10:30-12:00pm: https://extension.unh.edu/events/webinar-boom-sprayer-calibration-0

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. We expect a high volume of callers and this will be necessary for this to work.

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS!













MANUFACTURING // SUPPLIES // CONSTRUCTION

Become a sponsor!

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

Where trade names or commercial products are used, no company or product endorsement is implied or intended. Always read the label before using any pesticide. The label is the legal document for product use. Disregard any information in this newsletter if it is in conflict with the label.

The University of Massachusetts Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer, United States Department of Agriculture cooperating. Contact your local Extension office for information on disability accommodations. Contact the State Center Directors Office if you have concerns related to discrimination, 413-545-4800.