



Happy Holidays



Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Monmouth County



Rutgers Master Gardeners Graduate 17th Class

This past November, the 17th class of Rutgers Master Gardeners graduated with a festive ceremony at Jumping Brook Country Club. The evening started out with encouraging words for the graduates, award recipients, and guests by **Freeholder Lillian Burry**, who congratulated the **30 graduates** for growing, harvesting, and donating **2700 pounds of vegetables** from their 'Plant a Row for the Hungry' Garden, located behind the Agriculture Building. She also thanked the Master Gardeners for the **24,000 hours** that they volunteered in 2016. Monmouth County Park System **superintendent Tom Fobes** then spoke about the impact that the Master Gardeners have had on the Park System, fol-

lowed by **Ron Kudile**, retired **Biology professor** at Brookdale Community College, who shared the history of the program in Monmouth County. **Agricultural Agent William Sciarappa** then thanked the Master Gardeners for their assistance in his research on the Rutgers tomato, lettuce, and strawberry varieties this year. **Special guests** of the evening included retired **Ag Agent Rich Obal**, **Scott and Lisa Applegate**, of **Battleview Orchards**, and college **student Andrew Valdes**. Scott and Andrew received an '**Honorary Master Gardener**' award for their support of the Rutgers Master Gardener program in Monmouth County. After introducing the speakers and



Tom Zapcic Photography

(Continued on page 3)

This festive \$6.9M Jersey crop is hitting peak season

By Bill Gallo Jr. | For NJ.com



Carmen & Charlene La Rosa, owners of La Rosa Greenhouses. Tim Hawk | For NJ.com

New Jersey is famous for its tomatoes and sweet corn, but there is another crop that is now in season and taking center stage - **the poinsettia**. Unlike other Jersey crops, the poinsettia season is much shorter. Most of the plants will be shipped and sold during the four weeks between Thanksgiving and Christmas. "It's a plant most people totally associated with Christmas," said New Jersey Agriculture Secretary Douglas Fisher. "It's like candy canes - something we expect to see and bring into our home at Christmas-time." While not ranking up there with other Garden State fruits and vegetables in terms of sales, the poinsettia has become an important crop in New Jersey's **\$1 billion a year agriculture industry**. **New Jersey's 50 some poinsettia growers in 2015 produced about 1.3 million pots of the plants valued at \$6.9 million**, according to the most recent statistics available.

Agriculture officials want to get the word out, like they do with other better-known New Jersey crops, that it's important to buy from a local, in-state grower. "Rather than buying a plant that's shipped in, you are supporting your local grower - your

friends and neighbors," said New Jersey Agriculture Secretary Douglas Fisher. **La Rosa Greenhouses in South Jersey** is one of the largest growers in the Garden State. A few of their poinsettias had already been shipped before Thanksgiving, but now the real rush begins. "There is nothing nicer in terms of beauty than a poinsettia," said Carmen La Rosa as he stood surrounded by the carpet of color produced by **20,000 plants** in one of his **Salem County** greenhouses last week. Most of his plants will be **sold wholesale** to garden centers, churches, restaurants and to fund-raising groups.

At Kube-Pak in Allentown, Monmouth County, the outgoing shipments of the **95,000 poinsettias** grown for the 2016 season have also already begun, according to **Rob Swanekamp Sr.**, one of the owners of the family-run greenhouses. Like La Rosa, Swanekamp said his family, which established their business in 1963, **also used to grow more poinsettias - up to 250,000** at one time. All of Swanekamp's family's poinsettias are sold wholesale. Kube-Pak has no retail outlets like La Rosa. About a **quarter of KubePak's Jersey-grown poinsettias are destined for customers in New York City**, Swanekamp said. Swanekamp believes the demand for poinsettias has lessened for a couple of reasons. He says younger generations are not sticking to the traditions practiced by their parents and grandparents and buying poinsettias for their homes at Christmas. Like with other crops, New Jersey's growers continue to meet the challenge with successfully raising the finicky poinsettia. **"It's a challenge for a grower to get a good-looking plant to grow and we pride ourselves that we can repeat that year after year," Swanekamp said.**

6 Fascinating Facts About Poinsettias

U.S. ambassador to Mexico Joel Roberts Poinsett introduced the plant to the USA in the early 1800s by sending cuttings he found growing in the wild back home, according to most accounts.

One family in Southern California - the Eckes - once controlled the entire U.S. poinsettia market. But once their secret was revealed about how they were able to successfully grow the finicky plants, competitors blossomed everywhere. In 2008, the Eckes still had 70% of the poinsettia market in the U.S. and 50% of the world market.

An act of Congress established **Dec. 12** - the day that Poinsett died - as **National Poinsettia Day**.

The **colored leaves** near the tops of the plants are **not a flower, but bracts**, or specialized leaves that often attract pollinators. The actual flowers, or cyathia, are the tiny, bud-like often yellow growth at the top of the branches.

Red remains the No. 1 color consumers want, both La Rosa and Swanekamp agree. Next were White & pink & a wide range of other color variations.

Only **mildly toxic** if eaten by people, according to Poison Control.

FFA 2016 CAREER DEVELOPMENT EVENT - Vivian Quinn & Amelia Valente

The 2016 FFA Career Development Events were held at the Cook Campus Center on Nov. 17th. Erin E. Noble, State FFA Specialist, reported that more than 280 students from Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources Education Programs in NJ participated. The Fruit & Vegetable CDE's consisted of 107 students from 27 chapters.

Vivian Quinn along with several RCE Monmouth County employees have coordinated the Fruit and Vegetable ID and Judging event for 16 years. This year, Amelia Valente, 4-H Program Assistant, and Darin Carovillano, Ag Assistant, joined the team, and Amelia will be the lead coordinator in the future. Amelia said, "Having been my first FFA event that I attended as a 4-H staff member, I found the competition to be an important feature of a young adults learning experience. It was delightful to witness FFA members come together from all parts of the state for this occasion.



School	Fruit Veg.	Dairy	Turf	Land	Home-site
Allentown	3 rd	6 th	-	-	-
N. Burlington HS	5 th	7 th	2 nd	7 th	2 nd
Mon. County Voc.	8 th	-	1 st	-	-
Freehold Twp HS	-	5 th	6 th	2 nd	6 th
N. Burlington Middle	14 th	13 th	-	-	-

I enjoyed hearing how enthusiastic the students were to take on this challenge, and how appreciative they were for the value of their education. Programs such as these guide young adults into their careers by developing skills within the agricultural fields. I am grateful to be a part of these programs."

Delicious Orchards graciously donated the produce necessary for the competition. Their generosity year after year is commendable and much appreciated. Results from the event can be found at www.judgingcard.com. Click on "Online Results", click "New Jersey Fall CDEs" Nov 17, 2016, then click on your event.



(Continued from page 1)

guests, Diane Larson, MG coordinator and horticulturist, spoke about the graduates, quoting from an email recently sent by one of the MG's marking the end of their time in the garden, 'As I write this last email about activity in the PAR garden, I have such a mix of feelings – pride in what we all accomplished, gratitude for what we learned and the friendships we made, relief that it's done, and sadness that it's over.....heartfelt thanks to all for sharing your wisdom and experience, time and cooperation and effort. It's been very satisfying getting to know each other, learning together, and working alongside one another'. Diane commented that it's these experiences, forged relationships, and learning opportunities that make the MG program in Monmouth County so successful.

Diane pointed out that this was the first year she tallied the amount of food that was grown and donated by Rutgers Master Gardeners in all community and donation gardens in Monmouth County, and was happy to report that this number tallied over 13,000 pounds, which went to 15 different pantries in the county. She then noted that

the contents of the beautiful centerpieces which were created by the Master Gardeners and consisted of apples, pears, oranges and various types of edible winter squash, were donated by

Battleview Orchards, Delicious Orchards, and the gleaning efforts of one of the volunteers. After the ceremony, these centerpieces were then donated to 10 different food pantries in Monmouth County.

After recognizing the graduates, Diane gave out awards to Master Gardeners who have volunteered 100, 250, 500, 1000, 1500, 2000, 3000, and 9000 hours since they started the program. Additionally, she also gave milestone awards to those that have volunteered for 10 years, and two Award of Excellence awards.



Diane Larson

Why the drought will make for amazing wine in New Jersey



The word "**drought**" usually conjures up images of withered crops, brown lawns and water restrictions.

In the wine business, though, drought can mean good news.

"When people say drought, right away it's a negative connotation, but

that's not so with wine grapes," said **Dr. Gary Pavlis**, Rutgers University professor and **agricultural agent specializing in blueberry and grape/wine production**. "We love a dry year. When we get one, that's often a great vintage." What does this year's rainfall mean for 2016 wines from New Jersey? "We're looking at a **very good vintage**," Pavlis said. The harvest has wrapped up and wine production is in full swing across the Garden State. New Jersey's wineries produce 1.5 million gallons a year, making it the seventh largest wine-producing state in the nation.

North Jersey's drought didn't worry Robert J. "**Matty**" **Matarazzo**, owner of **Four Sisters Winery** in Warren County. "My experience has always been that drier is better," he said. Dry weather promotes a concentration of flavors within the grapes, Pavlis said. It also means fewer plant diseases. "You end up with really exceptional wine," he said. Four Sisters grows **French-American hybrids and native wine grapes**, which are those native to America. "Those are the ones that have made us successful," Matarazzo said. He was pleased with this year's harvest. "I would say it was a really good harvest." While going a month without rain in an area with sandy soils could be devastating, North Jersey's sandy loam and gravel base holds moisture longer, Matarazzo said. The third-generation farmer recalls his days of growing vegetables when a drought meant 24/7 crop irrigation. In his 32 years of growing grapes, irrigation has never been necessary. The key to surviving drought is deep roots. Plants like corn and soybeans don't "scavenge" water the way grapes do, Pavlis explained. Grape roots can run 20 to 30 feet deep to find water.

For **Dave Davis**, **vineyard manager at Auburn Road Vineyard & Winery** in Salem County, it's all about the number of sunny days that determines a successful growing year. Rain came in bunches this year at the South Jersey vineyard, with plenty of sunny stretches in between, he said. "**You can't really look at total rainfall** when you're talking about wine grapes," Davis explained. "**It really has more to do with sunlight.**" For example, a day of heavy downpours that delivers several inches of rain is preferable to a long stretch of cloudy

days and drizzle because the sun returns quickly and the crops dry out.

Too much rain can mean trouble. Grapes behave much like tomatoes, in that both suck up water and can split if they take in too much. "The biggest problem we have in the East here is too much water," Pavlis observed. "It puffs up the grapes with water and it causes diseases." What really stood out about this year was the heat, Davis observed.

"It was **one of the hottest summers on record** in the Mid-Atlantic," he said. That meant managing heat stress. The crop made it through with no problems, though, and Davis calls this a "very high-quality" year, marking the fourth standout year in a row since 2013. "This has been an outstanding run in terms of consistency and quality," he said. **Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Chardonnay** are the all-stars at Auburn Road. When Davis is asked early in the season what kind of year he expects, he can't answer. "What really matters the most is what the weather is like in August, September and October," he said, as the grapes are ripening. "**It's not how you start, it's how you finish.** To illustrate that truth, he points to 2011 and 2012, two mediocre years thanks to Tropical Storm Lee in September 2011 and Sandy the following year in October.

In South Jersey this year, a wet spring followed by a dry summer means the harvest of grapes used to make **white wines — including Chardonnay and Pino Grigio — was "one of the best ever" at Cape May Winery and Vineyard**, winemaker Darren Hesington said. Hot, dry weather brings out very intense flavors and varietal characteristics, he said. The harvest for whites, which were picked from the vine in early September, was above average, and it was a "really good" year for the reds, he said. Dry weather gave way to heavy rains in Cape May toward the end of September. Thankfully, those September rains were followed by drier weather as harvest approached. The harvest of reds wrapped up last week. Cape May vineyards enjoy an extended growing season because of warmer fall temperatures and the harvest stretches into early November.

The decision of when to harvest can be difficult and comes down to a combination of weather watching, daily monitoring of the plants and experience.

"We sort of become meteorologists ourselves, I guess, trying to predict when the rain is coming," Hesington said.

"**It's tough to predict.**"

By [Matt Gray | For NJ.com](#)



Soil microbes flourish with reduced tillage

Today, about one-third of U.S. farmers are no longer tilling their fields

URBANA, Ill. — For the past several decades, farmers have been abandoning their plows in favor of a practice known as no-till agriculture. Today, about one-third of U.S. farmers are no longer tilling their fields, and still more are practicing **conservation tillage**—using equipment that only disturbs the soil to a minimal degree. **No-till** and, to a lesser degree, conservation tillage maintains or improves soil quality by preserving soil structure and moisture, increasing soil organic matter, and providing habitat for soil microbes.



accounted for the nitrogen fertilization rate, mean temperature and precipitation, the presence or absence of cover crops, and other variables.

When the data from all 62 studies were analyzed together, it turned out that **microbial biomass and enzymatic activity were greater in no-till than in tilled systems**. In tilled systems,

It's the microbes that matter most. “Soil microbes are the workhorses of the soil. They break down crop residues and **release nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium**, and other nutrients back to the soil so they're plant-available. We want a healthy, diverse microbial community so that those processes can happen and improve our soils,” says University of Illinois doctoral student Stacy Zuber.

Until now, most studies **linking tillage intensity and microbial activity** have been done at the scale of individual farms. Most studies do find more soil microbes with no-till management, but the magnitude of that result varies a lot from farm to farm. That's because each farm is influenced by different environmental factors, agronomic practices, and soil type. Where no-till is compared with tillage, the type of equipment and tillage depth also differs.

Zuber wanted to cut through the confusion to detect a **true “signal” of the effect of tillage on soil microbes**. To do that, she compiled and analyzed data from 62 studies from all across the globe. “When you're doing individual field experiments—even if you have several in one area—you're still focused on the one region,” Zuber notes. “Sometimes it's hard to see the big picture because there's so much variability. The meta-analysis allowed us to look at different field studies from around the globe to determine the overall effect. This process lets us see that big picture.” **Zuber compared measures of microbial biomass and metabolic activity in no-till and tilled systems**. For tilled systems, she included categories that accounted for the type of tillage equipment and tillage depth. She also

the type of tillage equipment mattered. In contrast to other tillage equipment, such as moldboard plows or disc plows, the **use of chisel plows was associated with greater microbial biomass**. Chisel plows, which theoretically result in minimal soil disturbance, are commonly used as part of a conservation tillage system.

But experimental use of a **chisel plow**, as represented in the studies Zuber analyzed, may be different from how they are used in the real world. “**Tillage seems simple: you break up the soil or you don't. Things get complicated when you start looking at tillage implements**, because there is no clear definition and common use for them. You can have two implements called chisel plows, but they can work the soil completely differently. For example, if they go across the field in one pass, that's not much disturbance. But if they make two or three passes, it's a lot more disruptive,” Zuber explains.

The study suggests that since **soil microbial biomass and enzymatic activity can stand in as proxies for soil quality**, farmers should consider moving toward no-till or conservation tillage systems. Zuber says, “Helping the soil function better helps your crops grow better, and can also **maintain high quality soil for sustainability** purposes. In Illinois, we have such great soil; it's our biggest resource. **Farmers can help protect it by making sure the microbial community is healthy.**”

The work was part of a regional collaborative project entitled “**Cropping Systems Coordinated Agricultural Project (CSCAP)**” and was supported by **USDA-NIFA – University of Illinois** College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences via [EurekaAlert!](#)

AGENCY UPDATES

NJFB CONVENTION: There was a good showing of delegates (65 of 77 appointed) from the counties when **NJFB Pres. Ryck Suydam** called the **98th annual meeting** to order on Monday morning. Ryck succinctly highlighted the year of 2016 in his annual address, also calling out Farm Bureau's many partners and expressing appreciation to the membership for its support.

Ryck then turned to **Fish and Wildlife Director Dave Chanda**, who said the first archery hunt/black bear hunting season was a success and mentioned the down (2015) then **up (2016) numbers in the deer population**. He thanked Farm Bureau for its help in the legislature pushing back against anti-hunting zealotry.

The largest stretch of **reviewing resolutions**, led by officers **Allen Carter and Steve Jany**, took place Monday morning (see Top 10 list; additions/revisions being consolidated now by Farm Bureau staff).

NJDA Secretary Doug Fisher ended the afternoon session with comments entitled **"We're All in This Together"**.

Monday's banquet was enjoyed by all, made special by **keynote remarks from AFBF President Zippy Duvall**. The first year national president reflected on his responsibilities, what farmers might expect from

NJDA celebrates another great season for the state and its growers

New Jersey is a formidable force in the fresh produce industry. Growers in the state produce supply the eastern U.S., and especially the Northeast, with the highest possible quality fresh fruits and vegetables during times of the year when the only alternative is to bring product in from long distances. **New Jersey's prime marketing area** has traditionally been the New Jersey, New York and Philadelphia region. New Jersey growers, along with distributors and wholesalers, have strong support of the state. **The New Jersey Department of Agriculture** has developed and promotes strongly a model locally grown initiative called **Jersey Fresh**, with the tagline **"As Fresh As Fresh Gets."**

The New York Produce Show serves as more of an end-of-season celebration of one more great season for the state and its growers. "At the show, the New Jersey Dept. of Agriculture will continue to promote the finest Jersey Fresh fruits and vegetables grown by our over **9,000 family farms in the Garden State**," said Atchison. People



agree that New York in December provides a wonderful opportunity for people to enjoy many holiday activities. **New York is known as the City That Never Sleeps.** "The show seems to be held at a good time of year," said Atchison. "It's after harvest season for local growers, but before the rush of the holidays hit." Atchison explained that for the past several years, **the**

NJDA has partnered with Rutgers Cooperative Extension to provide food-safety training to over 4,000 New Jersey farmers.

"We believe our State's growers are well prepared in the implementation of good agricultural practices and food-safety issues," said Atchison. **"Rutgers is at the forefront of food safety and traceability,** and it continues to provide training to our growers." On March 29, 2016 **the NJDA and New Jersey producers celebrated its 100 year founding.** There's little doubt but that 100 years from now they'll be celebrating

Christina DiMartino



Photo : Jim Reilly

L-R: FFA Director Pete Furey and award winners, Debbie Costello and RCE—NJAES Associate Farm Director Jack Rabin—soon retiring- Best Wishes to you Jack from all your friends and colleagues.

President-elect Donald Trump. The banquet audience then heard heartfelt remarks from **award winners Glen Van Olden of Essex County (Distinguished Service to Farm Bureau), Jack Rabin, RCE (service to NJ Ag)** and retired employees Helen Heinrich and Debbie Costello.

CALENDAR

Jan. 2017

3,4,5—Northeastern Plant, Pest & Soil Conf. Philadelphia Sheraton , 1 Dock St www.Newss.org/annualmeeting.php

10—Monmouth County Ag Development Board 7:30 Ag Building Freehold

23, 24, 30, 31—Organic Land Care Certificate Course - Rutgers Cooperative Ext. Monmouth Cty. 732-398-5274 <http://njaes.rutgers.edu/organiclandcare>

28-29 NOFA NJ Winter Conference Rutgers Douglass Student Center, New Brunswick

31— Ultra Niche Crops : High Tunnel Winter Lettuce RCE Cape May County 5:30-8:00 p.m.; \$20 Jenny 609-465-5115

Feb. 2017

7, 8, 9 New Jersey Agricultural Convention & Trade Show. Harrah's, Atlantic City. <http://njveggies.org/convention.htm>

9-Food Safety Modernization Act— Produce Rule Training. 2017 NJ Ag Convention 9 am-4pm. register—856-451-2800x1

24-Central Jersey Vegetable Grower's Meeting. Ag Building, 4000 Kozloski Rd., Freehold, NJ. Joanne 732-431-7260.

March 2017 2 -BOA Dinner 6:00

RU 250 Celebration Salad NJ lettuce, asparagus, hazelnuts & strawberry



[MONMOUTH COUNTY BOA](https://co.monmouth.nj.us/page.aspx?ID=3065)

<https://co.monmouth.nj.us/page.aspx?ID=3065>

11/15, 12/20, 1/17, 2/21, 3/21, 4/18, 5/16-

BASIC PESTICIDE TRAINING

CORE 9 am-1pm—1/10,2/7,3/8,3/28,4/25,5/10,6/13

3A 9am-3pm—3/21,4/18

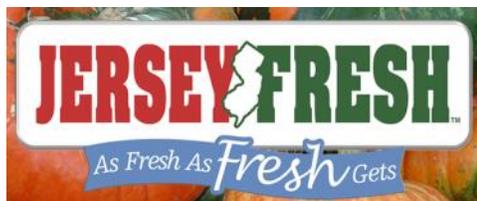
3B 9am-3pm - 2/9,2/14,3/14,5/9,6/7

7A 9am-3pm—1/26,2/21,3/23,5/23

7B 9am-3pm—2/8,3/16,3/17,5/18,5/19

8B...9am-3pm—2/2,5/3

Held at Rutgers Cooperative Extension - Ag Bldg.
4000 Kozloski Rd. Freehold, NJ 732-431-7260



Jersey Fresh Availability & Forecast Report <http://www.jerseyfresh.nj.gov/>

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Past Issues on the web <http://www.visitmonmouth.com/page.aspx?Id=3078>

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**Bill Sciarappa, County Agricultural Agent
Extension Department Head**

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