The Farmstand: Direct Marketing Tips

2000 SUMMER ORCHARD TOUR JULY 18-19

This year we will be having a summer orchard tour in the south central area of the state in cooperation with the State Horticultural Association of Pennsylvania.

The dates are July 18-19. The tour will start at 10 a.m. at Strite's Orchard just outside of Harrisburg. After that we will be traveling, by personal vehicle, down to Adams county for stops at orchards and markets in that area.

Stops in Adams county on the 18th will include Weiser's Orchard and Farm Market and Adams County Nursery Orchards. Tuesday evening we will have a picnic supper at a local park.

On Wednesday, July 19, we will visit Hollabaugh Brothers Orchards, Market and Storage, Bear Mountain Orchards and Packing House, Knouse Foods' Cooperative at Peach Glen, Rice Fruit Company Packing House, and R&L Orchards.

The Days Inn in Gettysburg has set aside a block of rooms for Tuesday night. We have also reserved three buses for Wednesday.

On Tuesday travel will be by your personal vehicle. On Wednesday we will have air conditioned motor coaches to transport the group. Registration for the tour will include dinner on Tuesday night, bus transportation on Wednesday and lunch on Wednesday.

For more information contact either Rob Crassweller, 814-863-6163 or Maureen Irvin, 717-677-4184.

—Rob Crassweller, Penn State

Time To Check For Strawberry Problems

Spring is the best time of year to check your strawberry plants for a number of problems. If you have patches that are doing poorly, dig up some plants from these areas and slice through the main roots lengthwise.

One diagnostic symptom of red stele (Phytophthora root rot) shows up when the soil is cool, and becomes less obvious as the soil warms. If the plants have this disease, there will be a reddish discoloration in the center (the stele) of the root.

Also, check for root weevil larvae (small white grubs) in the top inches of soil. Slice through the crown of the plant, too. You may find tunnels made by grubs or the grubs themselves.

The crown should be creamy white throughout. If you notice a brown or reddish discoloration, the plants may have been cold-injured, though some diseases also cause discolorations of the crown.

Starting before bloom, check weekly for tarnished plant bugs (they cause button-berry) and clipper. Sample in a V-shape across the field. For tarnished plant bugs, tap at least 30 flower clusters over a white plate.

More than 0.25 nymphs per cluster before 10 percent bloom or more than 0.5 nymphs per cluster during mid to late bloom are the thresholds for a spray application. Insecticide sprays during bloom are to be avoided if at all possible because of risk to pollinators. If no tarnished plant bug nymphs are found until mid-bloom, delay spray application until after bloom to protect pollinators.

For clipper, check 5 to 10 - 2-foot sections of row. An average of 1 clipped bud per foot of row is the threshold for control. If your planting borders woods, check some additional sections in the border rows near the woods. Sprays of these border rows may be sufficient.

Sources of information: Comerical Berry Production and Pest Management Guide, Integrated Pest Management for Strawberries in the Northeastern United States, and NRAES Strawberry Production Guide.

—Kathy Demchak and Greg Krawczyk, Penn State

Options For Deer Control In Vegetable, Strawberry Crops

Steve Bogash,
Commercial Horticulture Agent
Blair County

There is little doubt that in order to profitably grow high value crops such as strawberries and vegetables that some pre-planning for deer control is a must. The ever-increasing number of deer in the commonwealth poses a severe threat to the profitability of any produce operation.

First a few deer facts:

Deer will eat anything if they are hungry enough. There was a time when the author believed that garlic was completely out of the question, but hungry deer will even take an occasional bite of garlic.

A little deer math: start with a hypothetical herd of 24 deer eight are bucks and 16 are does). Now use some method of effective hunting: six bucks and eight does are harvested during hunting season. This leaves two bucks and eight does for this coming breeding season. Each doe has 1.7 fawns on average in good habitat. We now go into next season with 23 deer and this is after killing more than half of the herd.

No amount of deer control is effective long term without intensive herd population management as ever increasing numbers of deer will overwhelm any barriers we create.

Repellents don't work, at least for very long. There are numerous repellents on the market. Most will work for a short period, but seldom for more than 2-3 weeks and most need to be reapplied regularly. Hungry animals have been shown to pay little attention to repellents.

Some methods of deer control worth consideration:

•Radio-collared dogs. Cornell evaluated in one research project a greatly beefed-up dog radio collar system called off-limits. This system has been shown effective on areas as large as 30-50 acres per enclosure depending on terrain, dog's abilities, and desired control levels. Since dogs are highly territorial, they essentially stake out the area as their own and will chase any varmints or deer from inside the antennae area. Selection and training of the dogs as well as the placement of shelter, food and water sources is imperative for this to work well. Dogs that are not used to people may be a problem in "pick your own" operations. Some dogs tire of the chase without ever catching the deer and quit chasing them. Cost: approximately $4,000 for 30-50 acres.

•Full-height barrier fences. Nothing beats a full height (8-10 foot) fence for deer control. If you can afford to surround a planting with a barrier that deer cannot get over, under or through you've got good deer control. The big problem with this method is short and long-term cost. Initial installation is expensive as even inexpensive plastic mesh materials can run $1 per foot, 10-12 foot posts are not cheap and annual maintenance can be time consuming.

•Slant fence. Slant fence systems using high-tensile wire and an electric charger are quite effective, as deer do not readily jump over a barrier with depth. This five foot tall fence is up to eight feet deep. Drawbacks to this system are the initial cost of installation and the need to maintain a weed and grass free strip under the fence.

•Low-cost two-wire electric fence. Baited, low-cost, polywire fencing can provide highly effective deer control with minimal capital outlay. A typical polywire fence of this type has two wires on fiberglass posts set at 20-30 foot spacing. The top wire is 30-36 inches off the ground and the low wire is 18-20 inches off the ground. Pieces of aluminum flashing that resemble pup tents are crimped along the top wire at 10-15 foot intervals. Peanut butter is then smeared under these tents. The wires are charged and when the deer come to investigate the

(Turn to Page 13)