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I. NOTES OF INTEREST

A. Vegetable Crops Calendar.


B. Publications


SVREC 97-03. Robert C. Hochmuth, Lei Lani Leon, and George J. Hochmuth. Evaluation of several greenhouse cluster and beefsteak tomato cultivars in Florida.


SVREC 97-06. Robert Hochmuth and Tim Crocker. Producing strawberries in northern Florida using an outdoor hydroponic system.


SVREC 97-08. George Hochmuth. Response of mulched tomato to meister controlled-release fertilizer.


SVREC 97-10. George Hochmuth. Response of tomato and pepper to monopotassium phosphate-based starter solutions.


SVREC 97-12. Robert C. Hochmuth, Jennifer L. Hornsby, and George J. Hochmuth. The evaluation of three pickling cucumber cultivars on plastic mulch and bare ground culture in north Florida.


Selected websites related to postharvest technology are available from Steven Sargent (sasa@gnv.ifas.ufl.edu).

II. COMMERCIAL VEGETABLES

A. SP-170 Vegetable Production Guide for Florida is on the WEB.

Our last edition, the green book, of SP-170 has made it to the EDIS database. On the FAIRS Web site, you can get to SP-170 through the Commercial Vegetable Production menu and in the "New Documents" section. SP-170 is currently undergoing indexing for the search engine. Please check out SP-170 if you have a moment. Since it is new to the Web, we might have a few errors we need to know about.

(Hochmuth, Vegetarian 97-10)

B. New Marketing Strategies for Florida Fresh Produce.

This session was part of the educational program at the 1997 Florida Agricultural Conference and Trade Show which was held on 30 September and 1 October in Lakeland. There were five featured speakers who presented several strategies for improving the competitiveness of Florida-grown fruits and vegetables.

Dr. Ron Schmidt, Extension Safety Specialist, Food Science & Human Nutrition Dept., U.F., started off the session by providing an overview of the need for adequate sanitization during food handling. He described an outbreak of food poisoning caused by cross-contamination of citrus juice and the steps which were taken to reduce the potential for reoccurrence. He also mentioned that the Food & Drug Administration has recently decided not to require the implementation of rigid HACCP (Hazard Analysis/Critical Control Point) procedures for packers of whole produce. Similarly, fruit juices are not required to be pasteurized prior to distribution. Vegetable growers and packers should evaluate their handling operations to minimize the potential of introducing human pathogens to their produce. In order to reduce the importation of contaminated produce, "Country-of-Origin" labeling is being discussed at the national level (this is already required for produce sold in Florida) and the implementation of user fees to permit more thorough inspection of produce for potential contaminants at ports of entry.

The second speaker was Mr. Frank Piason, Director of the Horticultural and Tropical Products Division, Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS), Washington DC. Mr. Piason presented a number of statistics related to exports of U.S.-grown produce. Since 1986 produce exports have increased almost 300%, anticipating over $11 billion in 1998. The largest markets in descending order are: Canada, Europe, Japan and Hong Kong and there is strong growth in South Korea, Taiwan and the Dominican Republic. Trends include significant increases in organically grown and fresh-cut produce. Florida exports are up by 20% since 1994, with Miami and Tampa being the largest ports handling fresh produce. FAS promotes the export of U.S. horticultural crops via the Market Access Program of which the Southern U.S. Trade
Association (SUSTA) promotes grapefruit and vegetable exports for our region. Information on produce prices from major markets in the world can be obtained from the FAS website: www.fas.usda.gov.

Dr. Tom Mueller, Product Manager for Rogers Seed, Naples, addressed several factors which can make Florida crops more competitive against imports from other production areas, particularly Mexico. First, grower/shippers should strive for "premium quality" vegetables, with attention paid to quality such as flavor, nutrition, uniqueness (exotic crops) and point-of-purchase packaging. Second, shippers must maintain control of product quality after it leaves the packinghouse by developing specialized marketing and distribution networks. Third, premium quality means consistency, in terms of quality and availability. And, fourth, profitability depends on stable pricing (e.g., contracts), costs of production/marketing/distribution and having an outlet for non-premium product. Growers and shippers should also consider limiting production volume to keep prices higher, seeking out upscale markets, brand labeling and promotion/merchandising.

A number of successful direct marketing alternatives from the Northeast were described by Mr. R. Alden Miller, a Direct Marketing Specialist from the University of Massachusetts. The state of Massachusetts has assisted growers by promoting locally grown produce through the Massachusetts Grown & Fresher Program, consisting of promotional materials and labels to identify the product as being from the state. Farm stands have been the most consistently profitable direct-marketing operations, followed by U-Pick and farmers markets. Tomatoes are now a key promotional item at these markets. The keys to success include location, "down-home" look, a variety of produce and other features such as country themes and attractions for families.

Mr. David Solger, Washington County Extension Director, Chipley, gave an enthusiastic example of a successful direct marketing operation in his area. Growers have set up a cooperative and sell directly to Wal-Mart for distribution to their "Super Stores" across the panhandle. The main crop has been cantaloupe, followed by several other crops which include snap bean and squash. Sales have increased five-fold since 1994, showing the popularity of these crops which are sold as "locally grown" produce. The crops are, for the most part, field-packed and must be delivered to Wal-Mart within 24 hours of harvest.

The panel discussion lasted for almost 30 minutes, with the majority of questions from the audience addressing direct marketing. In summary, it appears that greater attention must be given to diversification of our produce, considering how to consistently supply high quality vegetables to both traditional and non-traditional markets which, in many cases, are willing to pay more to make this type of product available to their customers.

(Sargent, Vegetarian 97-10)

III. PESTICIDE UPDATE

A. Matrix (rimsulfuron) labeled for use on potatoes in Florida.

Matrix (rimsulfuron) has received clearance for application to potatoes in Florida.
for weed control. Matrix may be applied as a preemergence application, a postemergence application or a pre plus a postemergence application to potatoes.

**Preemergence Applications:** Matrix may be applied at a rate of .25 oz/A ai (1 oz product) to .38 oz/A ai (1 ½ oz product) immediately after hilling or, drag off to a clean, newly prepared seedbed. Matrix must be activated in the soil by sprinkler irrigation or rainfall within 5 days after application. If rainfall or sprinkler irrigation cannot be managed, waiting for weeds to emerge and applying Matrix postemergence would result in better weed control. Preemergence tank mixtures of Matrix with Lexone DF, Eptam, Prowl, Lorox DF, or Dual are labeled.

**Postemergence Applications:** Matrix may be applied at 1 to 1 ½ oz product (.25 oz to .38 oz ai) per acre to young, actively growing weeds after crop emergence. Small weeds (less than 1" in height or diameter) that are actively growing at application are most easily controlled. Use a non-ionic surfactant at .125 to .25% v/v. Rainfall or irrigation should not occur within 4 hours.

Temporary chlorosis may occur if applied to a crop under stress. Symptoms usually disappear within 2 weeks.

Postemergence applications of tank mixtures of Matrix plus Lexone DF or Eptam are labeled to increase weed control of certain weed species.

Do not apply Matrix within 60 days of harvest. Do not exceed 2.0 oz (product) Matrix per acre during the same growing season.

Consult the label for weeds controlled pre and postemergence.

(Stall, Vegetarian 97-10)

**IV. VEGETABLE GARDENING**

**Community Vegetable Gardening in Florida (1997).**

Due to a mild climate and a burgeoning population, vegetable gardening is a booming avocation throughout the state of Florida. Gallup Poll surveys in recent years provided us with the basis to estimate that over one million vegetable gardens (averaging 300 sq ft) are tilled annually in Florida. Based on a $1.00/square foot produce retail profit calculation, the monetary value of all Florida gardens is $300,000,000. Of course, the main benefits from such gardens may not be financial, but relate more to social, nutrition, and therapeutic aspects.

Most of these gardens are grown in the immediate vicinity of Florida residents, as singular enterprises. However, quite a few exist as plots in community gardening projects.

Recognizing that the benefits of vegetable gardening are most needed by families who do not have a back-yard plot to cultivate, the Florida Cooperative Extension Service in at least six counties gave leadership to the promotion, establishment, and educational advisement for community gardening projects in several towns and cities. Counties reporting community gardening projects in connection with Extension programs in 1997 were: Broward, Dade, Duval, Hillsborough, Pinellas, and Sarasota.
This article summarizes those projects, as reported by the Extension Agents in charge. It does not include the many school gardens and independent community gardens, such as the Organic Gardens and the Ag Council gardens at the University of Florida.

Broward County
Jay Vedaece reports Broward Extension targets low income and multi-family residential units, including schools. He employs the help of Master Gardeners. In 1997 they had 7 community gardens associated with schools and 4 adult gardens at Davie, Cooper City, Hallendale, and Hollywood. Even at the school gardens, the adults are involved in the growing and care of crops.

Their prize garden is at the Silver Ridge Elementary School. The parents grew and prepared vegetables for students. Then they gave the surplus to the needy and homeless of the community. Donated materials such as seeds, plants, topsoil, water hoses, and supplies were obtained from companies like Home Depot and Lesco.

Dade County
Mary Schneider reports that Dade Extension has six very good adult community gardens. Garden No. 1 is helped by a private donation of $1000.00, seeds supplied by a local farmer, and tools/equipment by the Miami Police Dept.

Gardens 2 and 3 are supported by a $30,000 grant from the Merck family foundation to benefit East Little Havana. A Haitian gardener who speaks Spanish heads up those two gardens just underway.

Garden #4 is in North Miami at the Enchanted Forest location of the Master Gardeners. That garden receives funding support from the City of North Miami.

Garden #5 is a 4H project at Amelia Earhart Park. Five Dade Co. Master Gardeners reorganized it and got planting started in September.

Garden #6 is the prized, model garden on 62nd Street. This garden receives many raves and accolades due to the splendid social impact it has had on the community. Many lives have been changed by its presence in a trouble ridden neighborhood. Criminal activity has been abated by the social interaction created by garden.

Duval County
The Duval County Extension Service, directed by Harold Jones has received an annual Federal government grant since 1978 for conducting community gardening educational projects around the city of Jacksonville. Barbara Daniels is hired half time to assist with this Urban Gardening program dubbed "Gardening Lots." The Duval Co. Master Gardeners help out with their community gardening activities. In 1997, they have 19 active community garden sites that include 190 plots, totaling 300,000 sq ft in area and producing an estimated value of $178,500 in produce. The program also includes several school gardens.

Hillsborough County
In Tampa, Extension Agent Sydney Park-Brown has a "Weed and Seed" grant that employs Linda Bell as a community gardening coordinator. In 1996 Linda started a wonderful garden in the so-called "Suit-Case City" area of Tampa. The ½ acre garden is located in an economically depressed area of Tampa, and serves 50 low-income families on
about 70 plots. They call it their “Garden of Eden” and “Feed the Hungry.” It has received much news coverage for its social impacts. For example, juvenile offenders work off time by helping weed the garden and doing other chores. In 1997 these youth put in 166 hours of effort there. Twenty Master Gardeners also help out there from time to time.

Summary Table 1 outlines the major participation in community gardening going on in Florida. I suspect there may be other similar projects going on in Florida but which were not reported.

Table 1. Community gardens supported by Florida Extension Service in 1996-97.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Agents</th>
<th>Gardens</th>
<th>Plots</th>
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<tr>
<td>Dade</td>
<td>Schneider</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Duval</td>
<td>Jones/Daniels</td>
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<td>Cordell</td>
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<td>Melton</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The topic of community gardening will be discussed as a training item during the Environmental Horticulture Agents Conference scheduled for Oct. 28-30, 1997, in St. Augustine. Agents responsible for the various community gardening projects will be present to share details.

(Stephens, Vegetarian 97-10)

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