



# Maine Vegetable and Small Fruit Growers Association

**Winter 2020**

## **MVSFGA Briefs**

### MVSFGA Facebook Page & Website

The Maine Vegetable and Fruit Growers Association Facebook page and website are now being managed by Tomi Chipman. Tomi has done a great job of updating it and keeping our online information current. She recently posted on Facebook a video link to one of the MVSFGA members who was on the local news. Check it out, and remember to like our page. [www.MVSFGA.org](http://www.MVSFGA.org) is back and better than ever. You can find many of the talks from the Trade Show on the website.

### Bumper Stickers

The MVSFGA Directors are working to give the association more name recognition. Tom Ford is having bumper stickers made with the associations name on the sticker. Three different designs will be available for members to choose from and place on their trucks and cars or anywhere that the general public might see the name. These will be available sometime in the next couple of months. More information will be forthcoming when they are available.

### Legislature

The Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry Committee held a hearing regarding the use of Roundup (Glyphosate) around schools and areas that school may visit or use, which would include field trips to farms. (LD1888) Many thanks to alert MVSFGA member Bill Spiller, who had called his state representative ahead of time. Hearings start with the legislator who is presenting the proposed legislation, and they are followed by any other legislators who want to speak. Bill's representative was the second person to testify and spoke up for field trips to farms, using his kid's trips to Spiller Farm as an example. Lisa Turner testified similarly on behalf of MVSFGA. Farm Bureau also testified against the bill. A group representing schools testified neither for nor against, saying that it would be very difficult for schools to keep track of pesticide usage at places where field trips visit. Maine Board of Pesticide testified that the law was not well defined in a number of areas. Others testified in favor of the legislation. The committee went into a workshop after the hearing that afternoon.

MVSFGA also submitted testimony on LD 2083, which seeks to limit the use of neonicotinoids on landscape plantings, could be interpreted as bedding plants or nursery stock.

### Tradeshow 2021

The MVSFGA is required to have the agenda for the trade show available soon. If you have topics you would like to hear or learn more about, please contact one of the directors to let them know what that would be. A quick e-mail would be helpful to the directors. Plan on Tuesday and Wednesday again next year.

### Ag Day at the Legislature

March 24<sup>th</sup> is “Ag Day at the Legislature”. Every year the State Legislature holds an informational day for Agriculture at the State House. During the recess periods for that day, a number of agricultural groups are present to talk to legislators about agriculture and what the needs of that particular group may be in the future. MVSFGA will be serving strawberries and whipped cream thanks to the Stevenson Farm. If you would be interested in attending, representing and talking with legislators for MVSFGA, contact Tom Stevenson at Stevenson Farm.

### Twilight Meetings

Two twilight meetings are being planned for this summer. The directors are trying to plan the meetings in different areas of the state, as much as possible, so that as many as would like to may attend.

## **Maine Department of Agriculture Refreshing Marketing Program**

Since 2001, the Maine Department of Agriculture has promoted Maine Agricultural with the slogan of “Get Real, Get Maine,” On January 14<sup>th</sup> at the Agricultural Trade Show the Department introduced the new marketing slogan and logo “Real Maine,” The refreshed logo and slogan is intended to help market the various high quality agricultural products coming out of Maine.



Real Maine Logo



Real Maine Seal

## **New Rules for Gramoxone (paraquat) Use**

Certified applicators must successfully complete an EPA-approved training program before mixing, loading, and/or applying paraquat. Anyone using Gramoxone, Firestorm, Helmquat, Parazone, and other paraquat products must complete an EPA-mandated training before application. After November 14, 2019, the EPA requires companies to have newly labeled products on the market.

The following are items related to the new label for paraquat products:

- Only certified applicators, who successfully completed the paraquat-specific training, can mix, load or apply paraquat
- No longer allow application “under the direct supervision” of a certified applicator
- Restricting the use of all paraquat products to certified applicators only
- EPA required [video training link](#)
- Users must create an account with username and password
- Applicators must repeat training every three years

For additional information and FAQs about the paraquat training go to the EPA [Paraquat Dichloride Training for Certified Applicators](#) website.

Reprint from [Pennstate Extension News](#), October 2, 2019

## **Vegetable School 2020**

Cooperative Extension will be holding Vegetable School again this winter.

### **Dates**

April 8<sup>th</sup> at Keely's Catering 178 Warren Ave, Portland, Maine

April 9<sup>th</sup> at Bangor Motor Inn & Conference Center 701 Hogan Road, Bangor, Maine

**Please contact Pamela Doherty with any registration inquiries at 207.832.0343 or [pamela.doherty@maine.edu](mailto:pamela.doherty@maine.edu).**

**Registration and information is also online.**

### **Conference Agenda**

- 8:30 AM *REGISTRATION*
- 9:00 AM *Legislative Update*  
— Julie Ann Smith, Executive Director Maine Farm Bureau
- 9:30 AM *Deep Mulching Compost for Crop Nutrition and Weed Management*  
— Dr. Mark Hutton
- 10:00 AM *Irrigation Strategies to Maximize Effectiveness and Efficiency*  
— Dr. Rachael Schattman
- 10:30 AM *BREAK*
- 10:45 AM *A View from the Plant Disease Lab Common and Uncommon Problems*  
— Dr. Alicyn Smart
- 11:15 AM *Rasp Production in High Tunnels: Scaling Up in Quebec*  
— Dr. David Handley
- 11:45 AM *LUNCH*
- 12:30 PM *Swede Midge and Leek Moth in Maine: New Threats to Crucifers and Alliums*  
— David Fuller
- 1:00 PM *Growing Healthy Transplants: Best Greenhouse Practices*  
— Dr. Matt Wallhead
- 1:30 PM *Transitioning the Farm: Getting Started*  
— Dr. Leslie Forstadt
- 2:15 PM *BREAK*
- 2:30 PM *Ticks and Brown Tail Moths: Health Implications for Farmers*  
— Griffin Dill
- 3:00 PM *Update on Risk Management Options for Fruit & Vegetable Growers*  
— Erin Roche
- 3:30 PM *Emery Farm: Bringing Local Produce to Maine Schools*  
— Trent Emery

*Editor's Note: Plant pollination is critical to most plants. Studies from the University of Michigan have shown that bees need to visit a blueberry blossom six times in order to achieve the best yield possible. We have all seen the cucumber or squash that poorly develops due to lack of proper pollination. Apple growers know in the springtime how dependent apple yield is to good pollination. Below are a couple of articles that hopefully will help you improving your pollination on the farm. At our own farm we use pollinator plantings and find them of great value to overall operation, so hopefully this will be helpful to you. Since we moved to our farm 40 years ago we have seen many field that once contained an abundance of wild flowers grow up into woodlot and many other fields be developed into housing lots. This has greatly reduced the amount of feed for these various hard working pollinators.*

## How Farmers Can Help Pollinators

Native bees are valuable crop pollinators. There are over 3,500 species of native bees (often called pollen bees) to help increase crop yields and may serve as important insurance when cultivated European honey bees are hard to come by.

There are simple, inexpensive ways you can increase the number of native bees living on your land. Any work you do on behalf of pollinators will support other beneficial insects and wildlife. Improvements to pollinator habitat may be eligible for financial support from government programs.

### Principles of Farming for Crop Pollinators

Know the habitat on your farm. Using an illustration as a guide, look for areas on and around your land that can support native bees. Most native bees are solitary or live in small colonies. Bumble, digger, and sweat bees make up the bulk of pollen bees in most parts of the country.

Protect flowering plants and nest sites. Once you know where bees are living and foraging, do what you can to protect these resources from disturbance and pesticides.

Enhance habitat with flowering plants and additional nest sites. Most bees love sun and prefer to nest in dry places. Nests are created underground, in twigs and debris, and in dead trees or branches. You can add flowers, leave some ground untilled, and provide bee blocks (tunnels drilled into wood) to increase the number of native bees on your farm.



### Critical Requirements of Native Bees

**Food.** Bees eat only pollen and nectar. In the process of gathering these resources, they move pollen from one flower to another, and thus pollinate your crops. Bees rely on an abundance and variety of flowers and need blooming plants throughout the growing season. Native plant species are particularly valuable.

**Shelter.** Native bees don't build the wax or paper structures we associate with honey bees or wasps, but they do need places to nest, which vary depending on the species.

- Wood-nesting bees are solitary, often making individual nests in beetle tunnels in standing dead trees.
- Ground-nesting bees include solitary species that construct nest tunnels under the ground.
- Cavity-nesting social species—bumble bees—make use of small spaces, such as abandoned rodent burrows, wherever they can find them.

## How You Help Pollinators

Protection from pesticides. Most insecticides are deadly to bees, and unnecessary herbicide use can remove many of the flowers that they need for food.

### Getting Started

Here are two things that you can do to begin improving habitat for native bees on your land:

1. Minimize tillage. Many of our best crop pollinators live underground for most of the year, sometimes at the base of the very plants they pollinate. To protect them, turn over soil only where you need to.
2. Allow crops to bolt. If possible, allow leafy crops like lettuce to flower if they don't need to be tilled right away. This gives bees additional food sources.

If you want to do more to increase the number of native bees pollinating your crops, you can plant hedgerows or windbreaks with a variety of flowering plants and shrubs, reduce or eliminate your use of pesticides, or work with your neighbors to protect natural areas around your farm.

**Exercising Care with Insecticides** If you use insecticides, choose ingredients targeted to specific species (for example, Btk for pests such as leaf rollers) and the least harmful formulations (i.e., granules or solutions). Spray on calm, dry evenings, soon after dark when bees are not active. Keep in mind that even when crops are not in bloom, some of your best pollinators are visiting nearby flowers, where they may be killed by drifting chemicals.

### More Information

USDA Forest Service Pollinator Page

National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service

North American Pollinator Protection site

USDA National Agroforestry Center pollinator articles

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Pollinator Protection site

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Pollinators site

U.S. Forest Service Pollinators site

The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation

NRCS Wildlife Habitat Management Institute Native Pollinators brochure (PDF, 4.7 MB) Using 2014 Farm Bill Programs for Pollinator Conservation (PDF, 870 KB)

This article is published from Natural Resources Council and more information can be found at;<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/plantsanimals/pollinate/farmers/>

## How To: Providing Habitat for Pollinators



You have probably already heard about all the benefits of providing habitat for pollinators, but if you are thinking about trying this on your farm, the logistics might seem a little daunting. When and how should you plant pollinator habitat? How much maintenance of these habitats is required? And how much will it cost? You can think of pollinator habitat establishment as including three general tasks: choosing species, managing weeds, and establishing plants.

**Task 1: Choosing species** Your goals are to ensure that (1) something is blooming throughout the entire season (from early spring to late fall), and (2) diverse habitat structure is available (including grasses, plants of varied shapes and sizes, and some debris from previous years' growth). Often native wildflowers are recommended, but you don't need to stick with only native plants. Just be sure you avoid invasive species. When selecting species, consult regionally-appropriate plant lists, or search for a plant list by zip code. Don't forget that woody ornamentals can also provide habitat for pollinators. If you want to narrow your search by specific plant characteristics, try a searchable database. You can also let someone else do the species selection for you, and purchase pre-mixed native wildflower seeds that match your geographic region and setting.

**Task 2: Managing weeds** While planting native wildflowers gives you the advantage of species that are adapted to your climate (often including at least some tolerance to deer browsing), the nature of weeds is that they are excellent at outcompeting other plants. So you need to make a plan for managing weeds around your pollinator plants. In fact, spending a whole growing season working on weed control (whether you use cover crops, repeated tillage, herbicides, or some combination) is highly recommended. This is especially true if you want to direct seed a larger area. After pollinator habitat seeds are planted, strategic mowing (during the first year, to a height of about 8 inches, every time the foliage gets to be 12-18 inches tall) will prevent weeds from flowering, while not harming your perennial wildflowers. You can read more about weed management here. While less mowing is required in the second and subsequent years after planting, pollinator habitat is definitely not zero maintenance!

**Task 3: Establishing plants** Direct seeding and transplanting pollinator habitat are your main options. Obviously, there will be major differences in plant costs (seeds versus plugs) and labor costs (direct seeding versus transplanting). These methods also differ in how long it will take for the plants to establish. If you plant seeds, expect growth (and flowers) to be minimal for at least the first two growing seasons. Growth from plugs will be faster.

Seeds can be broadcast (by hand or mechanically) or drilled. If you are broadcasting, an excellent seed bed will be critical. A no-till drill can also be used, but you need to make sure that you use one that is appropriate for a mix of different species (and all the accompanying variety in seed shape and size). Many different tools can be useful when establishing habitat for pollinators from seed. Choose the combination that fits your farm. Some local Soil and Water Conservation Districts also have equipment available to rent.

Timing is another important aspect of establishing pollinator habitat, and spring may not be it. In fact, in the Northeast U.S., it's probably not the best time (see p. 7). Some wildflower seeds must experience cold temperatures in order to germinate. In fact, "frost-seeding" (broadcasting seed towards the end of winter, but while the ground is still frozen and covered with snow) may be a perfect option. This is especially true if you've spent the previous growing season managing weeds and you go into the winter with a well-prepared seed bed. If you are transplanting, sufficient moisture will be critical, and there is often more moisture in the fall (at least in the Northeast U.S.).

Clearly, there are a lot of decisions to be made! What's best for your farm? NYS IPM's Betsy Lamb, Brian Eshenaur, and Amara Dunn are helping you answer this question. This year, they are establishing small (5- by 23-foot) plots of pollinator habitat around a new Christmas tree planting at a research farm in Geneva, NY (at Cornell AgriTech at the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station). Each plot will either be direct seeded or planted with plugs of 16 different native wildflowers. Plants or seeds will go in the ground either in June or in the Fall, and six different weed control strategies will be implemented during the 2018 growing season, and beyond. Over the next several years, data will be collected on the time and money required for each habitat establishment strategy. Good habitat for pollinators is also good habitat for beneficial insects that eat pests, so beneficial insects (and pests) will be counted in both the habitat planting and the Christmas trees. Stay tuned for future opportunities to read about the results, visit these demonstration plots, and see what might work best for you!

Written by Amara Dunn Biocontrol Specialist, NYS IPM Program  
Reprint from NEW YORK BERRY NEWS VOL. 17 No. 1

### **Many Thanks to our Business Members:**

<b>Brookdale Farm</b>	<a href="http://www.brookdalefruitfarm.com/">http://www.brookdalefruitfarm.com/</a>
<b>Deerbusters Deer Fence</b>	<a href="https://www.deerbusters.com/">https://www.deerbusters.com/</a>
<b>Harris Seeds</b>	<a href="https://www.harriseseeds.com/">https://www.harriseseeds.com/</a>
<b>Nourse Farms</b>	<a href="https://www.noursefarms.com/">https://www.noursefarms.com/</a>
<b>Nutrien Ag Solutions</b>	brain.mccleary@nutrien.com
<b>Vermont Compost</b>	<a href="https://www.vermontcompost.com/">https://www.vermontcompost.com/</a>
<b>Paris Farmer Union</b>	<a href="mailto:timdonovan.pfu@gmail.com">timdonovan.pfu@gmail.com</a>
<b>Steve Goodwin Ag Consultant</b>	<a href="mailto:goodberry@roadrunner.com">goodberry@roadrunner.com</a>
<b>Northeast Ag Sales</b>	<a href="mailto:pumpkinpaul1@aol.com">pumpkinpaul1@aol.com</a>
<b>Seedway</b>	<a href="mailto:lauchlin54@gmail.com">lauchlin54@gmail.com</a>

### **MVSFGA**

MVSFGA is an association of vegetable and small fruit growers dedicated to the promotion and advocacy of the vegetable and small fruit industry in Maine. MVSFGA supports research education, and promotion and political advocacy. The association has provided important testimony at legislative hearings on such issues as pesticide regulation, labor, IPM, farmland preservation and technology transfer.

MVSFGA members receive the annual New England Vegetable Production Guide, and the New England Small Fruit Production Guide. Members also receive the association newsletter. To become a member of the MVSFGA please write to; William Jordan Jr. Treasurer, 21 Wells Road, Cape Elizabeth, Maine 04107, email: [whjir30@aol.com](mailto:whjir30@aol.com)

MVSFGA Directors are: Lisa Turner (President), Bill Bamford (vice-president), William Jordan (Treasurer), Tomi Chipman (secretary), Tom Stevenson, Justin Gray, Paul Peters, Mathew Matson, Pete Karonis, and Harold Grams.