Green and Growing
Agricultural News and Issues for Somerset County

So, You’re Interested in Farming?

We have received many calls from residents needing to meet the Farmland Assessment tax code requirements for large lots greater than 5 acres, while others are interested in bidding on land preserved as farmland. The New Jersey Department of Agriculture and The New Jersey State Agriculture Development Committee have websites and publications to assist the new farmer, the experienced farmer, and those just considering farming. Here’s just a few to start you on your road to a greener Somerset County.

Growing New Farmers (http://www.growingnewfarmers.org/) is a comprehensive website with frequently-asked-questions about what starting a farm may involve and with links to the programs, services, publications, and other resources that can help new farmers succeed.

Exploring the Small Farm Dream (http://www.smallfarm.org/explorer/) is a short course and a decision making workbook that can help you decide if starting an agricultural business is right for you. The course/workbook can help you identify and assess your values, goals, and general ideas for your prospective farm business.

Evaluating a Rural Enterprise is a short guide highlighting important considerations and questions to ask when starting a new farm business, or expanding an existing one, including evaluating resources, assessing finances, considering your experience, and marketing trends and strategies. The guide is available in either html or PDF formats by first visiting http://www2.attra.ncat.org/index.php/evalrural.html and then selecting the home state of your farm or the state you’re considering. The guide is published by the National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service (http://attra.ncat.org/), an organization that provides information and technical assistance to those involved in sustainable agriculture in the United States.

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NJDA Plastics Recycling Programs for 2007

(Trenton) – As New Jersey celebrates the 20th anniversary of mandatory recycling this year, Secretary of Agriculture Charles M. Kuperus is calling on growers to continue to recycle their agricultural plastics and pesticide containers.

“Recycling of agricultural plastics keeps these materials out of landfills and saves growers money in disposal costs,” said Secretary Kuperus. “Recycling plastics reduces the need for new plastics that are made from petrochemicals. By recycling film, New Jersey growers help reduce our country’s dependence on foreign oil.”

The state has been recycling greenhouse film since 1997 and expanded the program to include nursery pots, trays, cell paks, drip irrigation tape and plastic pesticide containers. Since implementing the nursery and greenhouse film recycling program, growers have recycled more than 4.6 million pounds of film.

“While recycling is important to protect our environment, it also is a wonderful opportunity for growers to turn what is normally an operating expense into a revenue generator,” said Kuperus. “We encourage more growers to get involved in recycling.”

There are two regional year-round collection sites for nursery and greenhouse film: the Cumberland County Solid Waste Complex in Deerfield and the Burlington County Occupational Training Center in Mount Holly. Out-of-state growers may take their used film to the Mount Holly site; the Cumberland site only accepts New Jersey growers’ film.

The Department of Agriculture, in partnership with the Cumberland County Improvement Authority, also sponsors a seasonal plastic pesticide container recycling program on specific collection dates. The collection program is held at the Cumberland County Solid Waste Complex in the Township of Deerfield. This is a free program and participants who hold a NJDEP pesticide license are issued one core credit each time they participate in the program.

Vehicles used to transport the agricultural plastics for recycling are not required to be licensed by the NJDEP as long as the used film is transported directly to an approved recycling collection site.

Detailed information on all of the Department’s agricultural plastics recycling programs is available at www.nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/md/prog/recycling.html, or for more information, please call Karen Kritz, Recycling Program Manager at the New Jersey Department of Agriculture at (609) 292-5536 or by e-mail at karen.kritz@ag.state.nj.us.

Information for NJDA Pesticide Container Recycling Programs

The New Jersey Department of Agriculture, in partnership with the Cumberland County Improvement Authority, will continue to offer free recycling of empty plastic pesticide containers on specific collection dates in 2007. The collection program will be held at the Cumberland County Solid Waste Complex in the Township of Deerfield.

Non-refillable, high-density polyethylene # 2 (HDPE #2) containers used by agricultural, professional and commercial pesticide applicators will be accepted at the collection sites. Containers must be no larger than 55 gallons and properly rinsed.

The 2007 collection will take place at the Cumberland County Solid Waste Complex, 169 Jesse Bridge Road, (located off Route 55, Exit 29), in Deerfield, NJ, from 9 a.m. to 12 Noon on Fridays, May 25, June 29, July 27, August 31, September 28, October 26, and November 16.

Any agricultural, professional and commercial applicator of crop protection and other pesticide products who generate very large quantities of agricultural crop protection containers can contact USAg Recycling at 1- 800-654-3145 or (www.usagrecycling.com) for direct service. USAg is an approved vendor of the Ag Container Recycling Council.
**Tent Caterpillars Threaten More than Just Trees**

Mare Reproductive Loss Syndrome (MRLS) was first recognized in 2001 as an outbreak in horses of fetal deaths, foals born weak, and late-term abortions in Kentucky. MRLS was confirmed in Florida during March and April of 2006 and northern New Jersey in June of 2006.

While research has shown that eastern tent caterpillar is responsible for MRLS, debate remains over the mechanism of action that leads to abortion. Factors implicated include plants eaten by the caterpillar, biochemical interactions produced by the caterpillar, or its hairs that embed in the lining of the gastrointestinal tract.

As the caterpillars aggregate in tents on the main trunk branches of trees, they become more easily controlled or destroyed.

It’s best to prevent exposure of pregnant mares to the caterpillars, including dead caterpillars and their excreta / feces to minimize any chance of MRLS. Also, contact your veterinarian if your horses exhibit any unusual signs of infertility, abortion or weak foal births.

For information about tent caterpillar control, contact the Rutgers Cooperative Extension agricultural agent in the county in which you are located. Contact information is available in the blue pages of your phone book under “County Government” and online at [http://njaes.rutgers.edu/county/](http://njaes.rutgers.edu/county/).

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**NEW JERSEY LABELS OF DISTINCTION**

If it is *Jersey Grown* nursery stock, you know the trees, shrubs, plants and flowers are checked for quality, disease and pest free, and accustomed to the Garden State's climate and soil conditions. Jersey Grown, as green as green gets! [http://www.jerseygrown.nj.gov/](http://www.jerseygrown.nj.gov/)

If it is *Jersey Fresh* nursery stock, you know the trees, shrubs, plants and flowers are checked for quality, disease and pest free, and accustomed to the Garden State's climate and soil conditions. Jersey Fresh, as green as green gets! [http://www.jerseygrown.nj.gov/](http://www.jerseygrown.nj.gov/)

Please visit [http://www.nj.gov/jerseyfresh/](http://www.nj.gov/jerseyfresh/) to get a taste of “Jersey Fresh - as Fresh as Fresh Gets.” This is the new slogan for the 22-year-old Jersey Fresh branding and promotion program. It promises consumers that the product is the freshest it can be. The campaign will highlight different produce: **blueberries**: *Born to Jam*; **tomatoes**: *Born to be Saucy*; **asparagus**: *Born to be Tender*. Fifteen-second television ads will begin running in April and continue through October. It is designed to pump some life into Jersey Fresh, as well as new brands Jersey Grown and Jersey Seafood. It will convey that each brand is truly grown and harvested in New Jersey. The campaign also will educate the public about the benefits of New Jersey products and strengthen the link between farmers and consumers.
**ALL AMERICA 2007 SELECTION: HYBRID PEPPER ‘HOLY MOLÉ’**

Capsicum annuum ‘Holy Molé’ is a memorable name and the plant will provide a memorable harvest of peppers. It is the first hybrid pasilla-type pepper, which is used to make the famous molé sauce. ‘Holy Molé’ showed improved vigor, earliness and considerably higher yield than the comparisons in side-by-side trials. A reason for the higher yield is the virus resistances bred into the variety. ‘Holy Molé’ is resistant to two common viruses that stunt plants and reduce pepper production. The immature green peppers are 7 to 9 inches long and can be harvested in about 85 days from transplanting. If fruit is left on the plant, they will mature to a dark chocolate color. The pepper flavor is nutty and tangy. Mature plants are 3 feet tall; a perfect size for patio containers. ‘Holy Molé’ is easily grown in a sunny location and thrives on summer heat.

**ALL AMERICA CLASSIC SELECTION: HYBRID TOMATO ‘BIG BEEF’**

In 1994 gardeners wanted a large, beefsteak-type tomato, but early and loaded with disease resistances so that any gardener could rely on harvesting big, red, tasty tomatoes. Their dreams came true with ‘Big Beef’.

For over twelve years, ‘Big Beef’ has remained one of the most popular red tomatoes in North America. Almost foolproof, 8 to 12 ounce fruit can be harvested beginning about 73 days from transplanting into warm garden soil. Easy to grow from seed or plants is an understatement. The hybrid vigor is obvious from seedling size to vining plant. ‘Big Beef’ began a trend toward multiple disease resistances packed into plant genes using old fashioned breeding techniques. ‘Big Beef’ is resistant to Verticillium, Fusarium (1 & 2), Stemphylium, Tobacco Mosaic Virus, Nematode, and Alternaria Stem Canker.

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**A Practical Approach to Navigating the Stormwater Rules**

The Raritan Basin Watershed Alliance is pleased to announce their 2007 conference “A Practical Approach to Navigating the Municipal Stormwater Rules” scheduled for May 31st, 1 pm - 8 pm at the Somerset Ramada, Weston Canal Road. Speakers from NJDEP and local consulting firms will share their expertise and experiences.

Featured presentations include:
- Components of an Effective Mitigation Plan
- Components of an Effective Education Program
- Non-structural Point System:
  - What is it and how to utilize it in site plan review
- Case studies: Site Plan Review

The Raritan Basin Watershed Alliance is a coalition for the protection and restoration of our water and environmental resources within the Raritan Basin. Located in northern central New Jersey, the 1,100 square mile Raritan Basin consists of a majority of Middlesex and Somerset and portions of Hunterdon, Mercer, Monmouth, Morris, and Union Counties, and is home to 1.2 million people.

Please contact Connie Deetz at 908-735-0733 x 101 or at cdeetz@northjerseyrcd.org. Details and a brochure in Adobe PDF format are available at www.raritanbasin.org.
Somerset County Offers Composting Workshops

The Somerset County Division of Solid Waste Management and Rutgers Cooperative Extension are co-sponsoring two backyard-composting workshops this year.

The first workshop will be held Tuesday, May 22, from 6:30 to 8 p.m. at the Somerset County 4-H Center, located at 310 Milltown Road. The $35 registration fee includes the workshop, a compost bin and literature. The registration deadline is Wednesday, May 16.

Participants will learn how to compost kitchen and yard debris into a “black gold” organic material for use in the yard and garden and for houseplants. Composting reduces the amount of discarded garbage, acts as a natural fertilizer by returning nutrients to the soil, improves soil aeration and reduces soil diseases. It also helps to conserve the earth’s resources.

The program also will include a brief presentation, titled “Cut It & Leave It,” and other environmentally friendly lawn care strategies.

The second workshop will be held Tuesday, Sept. 18, from 6:30 to 8 p.m. at the county Administration Building, located at 20 Grove St. in Somerville.

For more information or to register, contact Joe Gyurian, Horticulturalist, at 908-526-6293, Gyurian@co.somerset.nj.us or Stacy Grillo, recycling coordinator, at (908) 231-7109, grillo@co.somerset.nj.us.

June 1, 2007 Funding Application Deadline

Land managers applying for 2008 funding through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) and Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) should submit applications to their local Natural Resources Conversation Service (NRCS) office by June 1, 2007. USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) technical experts help land managers assess natural resource needs on their land and develop conservation plans to address water, soil, and other natural resources. They can also identify federal and state programs that can be used to help fund the implementation of the plan. For details about conservation programs and to contact your local NRCS Service Center, please visit the NRCS website www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/.

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVES PROGRAM (EQIP) provides assistance to farmers who face threats to soil, water, air and related natural resources on their land. EQIP provides assistance to install permanent measures or adopt new management strategies that address resource concerns on farms.

WILDLIFE HABITAT INCENTIVES PROGRAM (WHIP) provides both technical assistance and cost sharing to help establish and enhance habitat. Landowners work with the USDA-NRCS to prepare and implement a wildlife habitat development plan. Priorities include Early Successional Habitat (with a provision for planting “Wild Flower Meadows for Pollinators), Riparian Habitat, Bog Turtle Habitat and Invasive Exotic Vegetation Control. www.njconservation.org

WETLANDS RESERVE PROGRAM (WRP) offers landowners a chance to receive payments for restoring and protecting wetlands on their property. WRP-funded restored wetlands help reduce flooding, filter pollutants from water, provide critical wildlife habitat, protect open space, and help keep our ecosystem healthy.

For further information, please see the New Jersey NRCS Conservation Programs website pages http://www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/.

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP): www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/whip/

811 - National Three-Digit "Call Before You Dig" Telephone Number Launched

Planting a tree this spring? Putting in a new sidewalk or retaining wall for your landscape? Grinding down a tree stump? If you plan on breaking ground anywhere on your property, the following details the first step in ensuring you avoid any hidden underground “surprises.”

Earlier this month, The Common Ground Alliance (CGA), the U.S. Secretary of Transportation Mary Peters, the Federal Communications Commission, and representatives from the Associated General Contractors of America, John Deere, The Travelers Companies Inc., and Cox Communications ceremonially connect 811, the new national “Call Before You Dig” number. “Now that there is a single number to call, any time, there's no excuse for putting lives at risk by striking a utility line,” said U.S. Secretary of Transportation Mary E. Peters. “If 911 is the number you call to report emergencies, 811 is the number to call to prevent them.”

“Knowing the approximate locations of where utility lines are buried before each digging project helps protect America's pipelines, industry and people,” said CGA President Bob Kipp. “We believe the new 811 number will encourage more people to have their lines marked to protect themselves, their neighbors and their community.” Even simple digging jobs can damage utility lines and disrupt vital services to an entire neighborhood, harm those who dig, and result in expensive fines and repair costs.

Digging accidents can help be prevented with a call to the local One Call Center, a service that contacts appropriate utility companies who then visibly mark the approximate locations of their lines with paint or flags before a caller begins a digging project. Unfortunately, the current statistics on One Call Centers show that the majority of Americans are not using this service. According to a recent CGA study, while 46 percent of Americans are active diggers who have done or plan to do a digging project at home, only 33 percent of do-it-yourselfers plan on calling before they dig, which means they are taking a huge risk each time their shovel disturbs the dirt.

Created to eliminate the confusion of multiple numbers across the country and to be an easy-to-remember resource, 811 will make it easier to call before attempting any digging project, whether it’s something small like planting a tree or installing a mailbox or a larger project like building an addition or deck. This quick one-call service notifies the appropriate local utilities, which then send locators or technicians to the requested site to mark the approximate location of underground lines.

Additional information for NJ, including color code definitions, is available online at http://www.nj1-call.org/faq.php.

Tire Drop-off Available to Somerset County Farmers & Residents

The Somerset County Division of Solid Waste Management is partnering with the Somerset County Road Department to collect old scrap tires, with or without rims. County farmers and residents will be able to drop off used tires at the Peapack Garage, located at 5 Holland Ave. Tires, with or without rims, will be accepted between 8 a.m. and 3 p.m. on Monday, May 21, through Friday, May 25. There is no charge, although there is a limit of eight tires per household.

“By taking advantage of this free service, residents and farmers will be removing unwanted items from their property that have the potential to collect standing water and attract mosquitoes, which may carry the West Nile virus,” said Freeholder Rick Fontana, solid waste management liaison.

Tires also may be dropped off at the county Recycling Center, located at 40 Polhemus Lane in Bridgewater, as part of the First Saturday of the Month drop-off program, from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.

For more information, contact county Recycling Coordinator Stacy Grillo at (908) 231-7109, solidwaste@co.somerset.nj.us.
English as a Second Language for Agricultural Workers

The Rutgers Office of Continuing Professional Education and the New Jersey Farm Productivity Enhancement Training Program announces another course offering for New Jersey's agricultural community.

This grant-funded class will present the basics of spoken "American" English to Spanish-speaking agricultural workers. The course is comprised of six (6) four-hour sessions (8:30 am - 12:30 pm) and will be held at the Cumberland County office of Rutgers Cooperative Extension in Millville, N.J. Course dates are June 5, 12, 19, 26, and July 3 and 10, 2007.

Program topics are tailored for workers in agricultural and farm-related industries. The vocabulary and phrases introduced are agricultural and will include interpersonal, day-to-day job-related communication in English. The course assumes that attendees have little or no knowledge of English and will introduce basic expressions, pronunciation and sentence structure.

Registration is $35 for the entire six days of training (24 hours total), course materials and breakfast at each session. To receive a Rutgers University certificate of completion you must attend all six sessions.

For further information please contact Keith Wilson (732) 932-9271 (ext. 617) or via e-mail at kwilson@cook.rutgers.edu.

National Agricultural Library Publishes Spanish Language Agricultural Thesaurus and Glossary

The USDA National Agricultural Library (NAL) has published Spanish language versions of its NAL Agricultural Thesaurus (NALT) and Glossary of Agricultural Terms. The NALT and Glossary in Spanish support increased Spanish language access to agricultural information throughout the United States and the world, accommodating the complexity of the Spanish language from a Western Hemisphere perspective.

This first Spanish language edition of the NALT comprises more than 15,700 translated concepts. Included are definitions for more than 2,400 of the concepts, in both English and Spanish, which are published in a separate interface as the Glossary of Agricultural Terms. Both publications can be downloaded and used through the NAL Services web page at http://nal.usda.gov/services/.

The NALT is used at NAL and at other organizations as a key component for organizing and describing agricultural information. Publishing a Spanish language edition of the NALT makes it a valuable bilingual reference tool which benefits both Spanish and English speakers. Organizations using the NALT terms can easily add a Spanish language capability to their agricultural information applications.

Of the estimated 480 million Spanish-speaking people in the world, about 87 percent live in the Western Hemisphere. Spanish is the second most widely spoken language in the United States, and is the most rapidly growing language used in U.S. agriculture. Future Spanish-language editions of the NALT will change in response to recommendations from the Spanish-speaking agricultural community and NAL cooperators.

Translation of the NALT into Spanish was accomplished by NAL with the American Distance Education Consortium (ADEC). ADEC (http://www.aDEC.edu) is a nonprofit international distance education consortium of approximately 65 state universities and land-grant colleges that promotes the creation and provision of high-quality, economical distance education programs and services to diverse audiences.

The USDA National Agricultural Library, in Beltsville, Md., is the world's foremost agricultural library and part of the Agricultural Research Service, USDA's chief scientific research agency.
The Snyder Research and Extension Farm and The Melda C. Snyder Teaching Garden present the 17th Annual

Great Tomato Tasting

August 29, 2007
3:00 pm – Dusk

Join us in this unique opportunity to taste over 80 tomato varieties (including heirlooms and hybrids), farm grown produce, stroll through our demonstration garden, and take a wagon tour highlighting today’s NJAES farm research.

Rutgers Cooperative Extension faculty, staff, and Master Gardeners will be on hand to answer your gardening questions. Door prize drawings throughout the event!

Registration – $4.00 per person, free for children under 10

Please RSVP (908) 713-8980
www.snyderfarm.rutgers.edu/

Located near Pittstown (Hunterdon County), this research and extension facility is Rutgers’ center for sustainable agriculture. Snyder Farm initiates and disseminates research applicable to the production of a variety of food and fiber products, including grain crops, tree and small fruits, turfgrass, and ornamentals. The farm’s 390 acres provide a valuable capacity to research soil and climate conditions and crops of northern New Jersey.

Driving Directions:

From the North:
Take I 78 to Exit 15, go left at the bottom of the ramp onto Rt. 513 south to Pittstown. Do not follow Route 513 in Pittstown, go straight through the town for 1.5 miles to Locust Grove Road. Turn left to the farm.

From the South (Trenton area):
Take Route 202 & 31 north to the Flemington traffic circle. From the circle get on Route 12 West. Go 8 miles to Pittstown Road (airport sign at the intersection) turn right, go 3.5 miles to Locust Grove Road. Turn right to the farm.