Weather Report

Temperatures are on the rise! In the eastern part of the state conditions will be partly cloudy to mostly sunny in the coming week. High temperatures will range in the mid-70’s, with low’s in the mid-40’s and climbing. On the Plateau, temperatures will be slightly cooler with highs in the low 70’s and lows in the low 40’s, but rising. From Nashville to Jackson, the daytime highs will be near 80, with lows in the 50’s.

What’s new?

2007 Census of Agriculture Deadline Extended

With planting season upon us, U.S. farmers and ranchers still have a chance to sow a seed for their future by standing up and being counted in the 2007 Census of Agriculture.

“We’ve already received nearly 1.7 million completed Census forms, and we sincerely appreciate the dedication and effort of the many farmers and ranchers who have responded,” said Carol House, deputy administrator of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS).

“But for those whom we have not yet heard from, there is good news – there is still time to be counted. So before you jump back on that tractor, take a moment to complete and return your Census.”

The Census of Agriculture, conducted every five years, is the only source of consistent and comprehensive agricultural data for every state and county in the nation. That information is used by town planners, policy makers, agri-businesses and others to make important growth-generating decisions. Not to mention that many allocations of Federal dollars are based on the number of farms counted by the Census. So, if you would like to see funding for Extension, NRCS and other agricultural service providers remain strong, be sure to fill out your Census.

“So really, by responding to the Census, the nation’s agricultural producers are sowing seeds that will reap benefits far into the future,” House said. “That’s why we are committed to ensuring that every farm and ranch operation in the United States is counted.”

NASS recently mailed a second copy of the Census to those who have not yet responded. “We’ll be following up with additional mailings and phone calls in order to ensure that no one is left out,” House added.

“The Census really is every producer’s opportunity to be a voice for their own business, their community and their industry,” she added.

DEADLINE: JUNE 1, 2008

Producers can return their Census forms by mail or online. For more information, or for assistance with completing the 2007 Census of Agriculture, call toll-free 888.424.7828 or visit: www.agcensus.usda.gov.

This information was taken from a USDA Press Release by the National Agricultural Statistics Service.

Chateau Herbicide Approved for Asparagus and Garlic

Valent Biosciences Corporation is pleased to announce that the EPA has approved labels for the use of Chateau on asparagus and garlic.

Labels for celery, fruiting vegetables (row middles only), cantaloupe (row middles only), and dry bean desiccation will be coming out in the next several weeks.

For more information on Chateau, visit the Valent website at: http://www.valent.com/.

Sustainable Agriculture: From Farmer to Entrepreneur Seminar

Montgomery County Extension will be hosting a sustainable agriculture seminar at their office on April 29, 2008 from 8:30 AM–4:00 PM (CST). This workshop will focus on sustainable agriculture concepts, marketing, value-added ideas and other issues to enhance economic development for the region and provide education to entrepreneurs. The cost is $15/person to cover lunch and take-home materials.

Pre-registration recommended by April 21.

For more information, see page 4 under ‘Upcoming Events’.
Big and Small—Pumpkins for Them All

While the weather for the next few days may feel like fall—or even winter, I realize with those dogwoods and tulips blooming outside that it is actually spring. Though it is April and pumpkins may be far from your mind, it is never too early to think about what varieties you might want to plant this year. There are many unique varieties on the market these days, in addition to improved, traditional jack o’ lantern types.

In 2007, we conducted a variety trial, in collaboration with NCSU and UGA, evaluating 26 cultivars for yield, maturity at harvest, shape, color, suturing, vine type, handle characteristics, and pumpkin measurements. I will highlight some of the unique varieties here, as well as some of the promising jack o’ lantern types.

We looked at pumpkins in 6 size classes and for the giant pumpkins (>50 lbs), Prizewinner lived up to its name. This variety had the heavy-weight in the trial, weighing in at over 142 lbs. It averaged almost 67 lbs/pumpkin. This variety is an Atlantic Giant-type but smaller in size and with brighter orange color.

In the extra large size class, we looked at two white varieties and the winner was New Moon. It averaged just over 40 lbs/pumpkin and has a nice, smooth skin, with yields over 3,000 fruit/acre.

In the large category we looked at 5 traditional jack o’ lantern types. The top yielders by weight were Harvest Time and Gold Medal, while Aladdin and Gold Medal had the highest number of pumpkin/acre. Aladdin and Gold Medal averaged just over 25 lbs/pumpkin and Harvest Time just over 30 lbs/pumpkin. All three of these were round in shape and had nice light orange color. Dependable was the unique in this class with an oval shape and averaging 35 lbs/pumpkin.

We evaluated 11 medium-sized pumpkin varieties. Pro Gold S10 and Magician both yielded over 5,000 fruit per acre. Magician was the smallest in this class at just over 15 lbs/pumpkin, while Pro Gold S10 averaged just under 25 lbs/pumpkin. However, Pro Gold S10 received a powdery mildew rating of moderate to severe, though this did not seem to affect its yield, as also by weight, Pro Gold S10 and Warlock were the top yielders.

Warlock has a semi-hard shell, which aids in its field holding capacity and ship-ability. It also has a taller shape, rough skin and deep orange color—a unique one to have in the mix.

For small pumpkins (between 5-10 lbs/pumpkin), we looked at 3 varieties. Lumina is a flat, white pumpkin that averaged 7.5 lbs/pumpkin and yielded nearly 5,000 pumpkins/acre. Hobbit is a small, orange pumpkin and was the most variable of all the varieties in size. Pumpkins of this variety ranged in size from just under 2 lbs to just under 20 lbs. If you only want to grow one variety, but want a range of sizes, this might be the one for you.

Mini-pumpkins were classified as those weighing in at under 2 lbs/pumpkin. Gooligan is a white mini, averaging just over ½ lb/pumpkin and 10,000 pumpkins/acre. Bumpkin is its orange colored counterpart, averaging 1 lb/pumpkin and 30,000 pumpkins/acre. It took the prize for the highest number of fruit per acre.

A couple other varieties deserve mention, but were planted only for observation this last year. Jarrahdale comes from Australia and is an eye-catcher. It is a flat pumpkin with bluish-gray skin and is also edible—often called a gourmet pumpkin. In our plot it averaged just over 10 lbs/pumpkin. Finally, we have to mention Lil’ Pumpkemon, which could be renamed the Volunteer Mini. This little fellow is cream colored with orange stripes down its sutures. It averages about 1 lb/pumpkin, with nearly 20,000 pumpkins/acre and would be sure to sell out at a home game!
**Question of the Week**

**Q:** I planted asparagus crowns last year and my first crop is just starting to come in—how do I know when to stop harvesting my asparagus?

**A:** The key to longevity for your asparagus bed is allowing the ferns to develop a strong root system, with plenty of food storage reserves to produce a bountiful crop the following year and for many years to come. Therefore, a narrow harvest window is recommended the second year after planting (one-year old) crowns.

You should plan on harvesting your asparagus for only 2-4 weeks this year. Four weeks is the absolute maximum harvest season; even better-split the difference—and harvest for three weeks this year.

Another rule of thumb is eight spears per plant during the first harvestable year.

Next year, you can increase your harvest window by two weeks (4-6 weeks), then add another two weeks the year after that (6-8 weeks).

The plants will give you a signal when it is time to stop harvesting, as they will begin to push up thin, scrawny shoots. Spears should be harvested when they are 6-8 inches tall and the tips are still tight.

Asparagus is prone to quality losses shortly after harvest, so make sure to pick it, keep it hydrated and get it in the cooler as soon as possible.

Remember, a prudent harvest this year will pay off with bigger yields next year and a long, healthy life for your asparagus bed.

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**Crop Report**

Many folks took advantage of the nice weather we had last week to get their potatoes cut & in the ground, cabbage and broccoli transplanted and sweet corn planted.

Yes, even sweet corn—direct seeded under black plastic and trickle irrigated. And if all goes well, this will produce an early corn crop, thanks to the soil warming properties of the black plastic.

In the greenhouse, warm season crops continue to be seeded. My tomato plants for the 2008 variety trial are looking well and it won’t be too long until they are planted out in the field.

We are trialing most of the same varieties we did last year, along with some observational plots of unique varieties, like ‘Conestoga’ from Harris Moran (available from Seedway). This is a hybrid with the look of an heirloom, developed from the traditional Marmande tomato. Also, we have ‘Garden Peach’, a fuzzy yellow tomato that gets a pink blush on the outside when ripe. You will have to come on out to the PREC in Crossville in August for the Steak and Potatoes Field Day to see what else we have planted!

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**Weather Report**

What a difference a week makes… or even a day for that matter! Yesterday the Knoxville high was near 70 degrees and today we’ve dropped 20 degrees. Though this is slightly reminiscent of last year, the lows won’t get nearly as low, or for nearly as long, as they did last year.

Through Tuesday morning, the National Weather Service is calling for a rain-snow mix for much of East Tennessee and snow above 3,000 feet accumulating to 3-5 inches.

Much of both Middle and East Tennessee are under a freeze warning for Monday and Tuesday mornings. These cold temperatures could mean trouble for strawberries or any warm season vegetables that have been planted to get a jump on the early market. Take necessary precautions to protect these crops from freeze damage.

Much of West Tennessee is under a flood warning as the Tennessee, Obion and Forked Deer Rivers continue to flood.

It looks like most of the state will see a reprieve by mid-week as the temperatures rise into the 70’s and the sun comes back out.
Upcoming Events

Sustainable Agriculture: From Farmer to Entrepreneur Seminar, 8:30 AM– 4:00 PM, April 29, 2008, Montgomery County Extension Office, 1030-A Cumberland Heights Rd., Clarksville, TN
This workshop will focus on sustainable agriculture concepts, marketing, value-added ideas and other issues to enhance economic development for the region and provide education to entrepreneurs. The cost is $15/person to cover lunch and take-home materials. Pre-registration recommended by April 21. For more information, contact Karla Kean (kkean@utk.edu) or Jerri Lynn Sims (jsims4@utk.edu) at 931.648.5725.

Developing & Implementing HACCP for the Fresh-cut Industry, May 20-22, 2008, Extension Food Science Teaching Facility, University of Georgia Campus, Athens, GA
This program has been specifically designed for the fresh-cut industry. The goal of this program is to provide you with the skills and knowledge to design, implement, document and maintain HACCP in your fresh-cut business. For more information and to pre-register, visit: http://www2.unitedfresh.org/forms/MeetingCalendar/.

Domestic Kitchen Tennessee Food Safety Certification Course, 8:30 AM-3:30 PM CST, May 29, 2008, Central Region Extension Office, 5201 Marchant Dr., Nashville, TN
This course meets the requirements for the Rules of the Tennessee Department of Agriculture Regulatory Services Division, Regulations for Establishments Utilizing Domestic Kitchen Facilities for Bakery and Other Non-Potentially Hazardous Foods Intended for Sale. The fee for the course is $100 and includes instruction materials, lunch and certificates earned. Pre-registration is mandatory. For further information, please contact Nancy Austin at 865.974.7717 or naustin@utk.edu or register on-line at www.wcmorris.com.

United Fresh Produce Associations’ Produce Inspection Training Program, June 2-6, 2008, Fredericksburg, VA.
This program is designed to provide hands-on instruction from USDA experts to anyone involved in the produce supply chain - grower to retailer. Become more knowledgeable about quality control standards, inspection grading, USDA produce procedures and requirements, and much more! For details, contact Beth Berman at 202.303.3405 or visit www.unitedfresh.org.

2008 University of Tennessee Research and Education Center Field Days:
(For more information on any of these events, visit http://taes.tennessee.edu/dynamic/events.asp.)

Beef and Forage Field Day, June 12, 2008, East Tennessee Research and Education Center, Knoxville, TN
Fruits of the Backyard Field Day, June 17, 2008, Middle Tennessee Research and Education Center, Spring Hill, TN
Tobacco, Beef and More Field Day, June 26, 2008, Highland Rim Research and Education Center, Springfield, TN
Blooms Days, June 28-29, 2008, University of Tennessee Gardens, Knoxville, TN
Summer Celebration, July 10, 2008, West Tennessee Research and Education Center, Jackson, TN
Tobacco and Forage Production Field Day, July 17, 2008, Research and Education Center at Greeneville, Greeneville, TN
25th Milan No-Till Field Day, July 24, 2008, Research and Education Center at Milan, Milan, TN
Steak and Potatoes Field Day, August 5, 2008, Plateau Research and Education Center, Crossville, TN

SPROUTS: Supporting Producers through Research and Outreach at UT
Programs in agriculture and natural resources, 4-H youth development, family and consumer sciences and resource development. University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture, United States Department of Agriculture and county governments cooperating. UT Extension provides equal opportunities in programs and employment.