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Extension

Coös County Updates

May 2018

North Country Updates - Agriculture, Conservation, Forestry

This newsletter comes to you from
UNH Cooperative Extension,
Coös County Conservation District &
USDA/Natural Resources Conservation
Services, Lancaster, NH

Contact:

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or

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Events



Weeks State Park Songbird Walk

May 10, Thursday

Weeks State Park, Lancaster NH has posted their 2018 event schedule! Their 1st event is May 10. Find the complete schedule their website.

[Weeks State Park Association](#)



Veterans in Agriculture Workshop

May 15, Tuesday

9:00-3:00

Makris Lobster & Steak House

Route 106

Concord, NH

This conference will look at innovative resources designed to help Veterans considering a new career in agriculture. A panel of Veterans to Farmers will also talk about their own personal experiences in making that transition.

Contact: Michal.Lunak@unh.edu
or Steven.Turaj@unh.edu

[More information and to Sign Up](#)



Youth Conservation Field Day for 5th Grade

May 16, Wednesday

Natural Resources Field Day for 5th Grades space is limited, we do have some space left, Teachers should contact us today! (if you haven't already).

topics: garden, farm animals, wildlife, water critters, soils, forest & trees, farm safety.

Contact: carolyn.mcquiston@nh.nacdn.net

[More information on this event](#)



Open House & Workshop

May 24, Thursday

Join us at the
Coös County Conservation District's
Native Plant Nursery
1679 US Route 3 Columbia NH

Vernal Pool & Wetlands Wildlife & Soils Workshop

10:00am - Noon

What is a Vernal Pool?

Join Matt Tarr, Brendan Prusik & Joe Homer to learn about wetlands wildlife and soils.

Vernal pools are unique wetlands that provide critical breeding habitat for several amphibian species of conservation concern in New Hampshire. Learn to recognize these often inconspicuous pools, understand their habitat values, and discover what you can do to conserve these wetlands.

Sponsors - UNH Cooperative Extension & Coös County Conservation District

Nursery Open House

Noon - 2:00pm

Immediately following the workshop learn more about the nursery. The conservation plan for the nursery is to grow native plant species locally to sell to local, state and private agencies working on conservation, erosion control, streambank repair, projects.

Registration is not required, however if you believe you will attend and have time to send



an email, please do, it will help with logistics, parking, etc.

Contact: Carolyn.McQuiston@nh.nacdnet.net



[More about the Nursery](#)



Food Safety for Poultry & Rabbit Producers

May 30, Wednesday
9:00am-3:30pm

Just south of Colebrook

Contact: Ann.Hamilton@unh.edu

[More information on this event](#)



Erosion Control Field Day

June 26, Tuesday
Save the Day

Training for professionals working in soils, erosion control, water quality, public works, engineering, roads, planning and consulting.

Continuing Education Credits will be available.

This event will be offered in 4 locations, on 4 different dates across NH.
June 27, Rochester Fairgrounds
September - 2 additional locations To-Be-Announced

More details to come.

Location: Lancaster

Contact: carolyn.mcquiston@nh.nacdnet.net

In The News - Agriculture

On-Farm Construction

Most farms will eventually have a construction project to add new facilities or improve existing ones. Depending upon the skill of the owner and scope of the project, these may be done on the farm with or without the help of a contractor.



On-Farm Construction



Potatoes & Small Science

Checking my basement store of taters in early Spring is when I decide which I'll "chit".

Here's where variety makes the difference. Both stored under the same growing conditions, the red ones on the right are flabby and over-sprouted. The yellow fleshed variety on left are firm and still dormant. It is very productive, unnamed potato - given to me and others by a NH farmer many years ago. Have dubbed it "New Gold", it's both good tasting and somewhat locally famous.

Too encourage new, better North Country varieties I have for many years attempted to introduce ones with special attributes. Rhubarb, garlic, raspberries, corn, are just some that come to mind. Many of the choices are via USDA SeedBank sources. That's the case with the In-vitro test-tubes mixed in (purely for photographic purposes) with my chitting potatoes. About 14 different types are going to experienced growers. They've volunteered to take these micro-propagated plantlets from this protected environment to field conditions. A tricky task. But one which can be termed "Small Science research" where a minimally costly project can yield good results".

Chitting for Early Potatoes

Steve Turaj

Mark Twain's observation about changeable New England weather has been getting a lot of mention lately. The ground is wet and cold but the thermometer says temperatures are high, as is the desire to 'get planting' after a long winter. Chitting your seed potatoes can give you a good head-start by taking advantage of abundant Spring sunlight while waiting for your soil to warm up.

Potato growing on the Channel Islands between England and France is where I first read about 'Chitting' (Middle English for small or short note) or 'Pipping' (Old French for seed) seed potatoes. 'Green-Sprouting' is probably a more accurately descriptive word for our purpose.

These Islands, with names like Jersey and Guernsey, are known for potato growing as well as dairy production. They are a nice crop rotation fit for their cows. A mild climate, south-

facing coastal slopes, granite soils and a unique fertilizer they call Vraic (seaweed) has earned them a reputation for premier-earliest to market potatoes. A particular variety "Jersey Royal" harvested "small and sweet" has, since the late 1800s been considered a regional harbinger of Spring. So esteemed is this little spud, it has been awarded a special protected status by the European Union comparable to "Scotch Whiskey". I will admit being tempted by a local favorite recipe of new potatoes baked with mint in a salt crust, and plenty of butter I'm sure.

So, Chitting makes these very early potatoes possible, how do you go about it? Right now is a good time, roughly 3 to 4 weeks before you would normally plant. You will want a frost-free indoor location with a lot of sunlight. There you'll spread out your seed potatoes in a single layer, an egg carton works well for this endeavor. Turn them every few days to ensure all sprouts from the eye get enough sunlight. What you are trying to achieve is the growth of 2 or 3 Chits or Pips per seed piece (rub off any extra). These tight, sturdy green-purple sprouts should be an inch or so long at planting.

Planted then, they'll give you quicker stem emergence from the soil and gain you a 10 day to 2 week advantage over freshly cut potato seed pieces. Other benefits are also derived from this method. Since you are paying more attention to the seed, those with blind eyes or possibly diseased tubers are readily culled out. An example is potatoes with "the dirt that doesn't rub off". That "dirt" is actually fungal disease survival structures called sclerotia. If planted, they will lead to stem cankers caused by a disease called Rhizoctonia, not a good thing production-wise.

Generally, chitted potatoes will be out of the ground and growing a lot earlier, making them less subject to many insects and diseases that are encouraged by wet soil conditions. With more uniform emergence you will also have less skips in the row, therefore easier to care for and greater overall production. A faster plant canopy cover means less weed pressure as well. Harvestable earlier in the year can help spread that busy end-of-season crunch time while reducing the possibility of Late Blight, which often shows up about then. So popular is this technique that specialty businesses have developed around it. In the Netherlands large scale chitting services are offered to commercial potato growers. In one approach, numerous mesh bags of seed potatoes (200 lbs +) are arrayed on moveable racks. These are driven in and out of well lite barns designed to achieve the best possible green sprouts.

You will find an occasional article on-line about chitting, some better than others. We'd be happy to send you one I liked from an English newspaper's gardening column. It is also mentioned briefly in our Extension fact-sheet "Growing Potatoes", likewise available on-line or request.

A Forgotten Feed for Livestock Too?

Cull potatoes rejected for various reasons (size, shape, bruises) have a long history of use as a re-cycled feed for many kinds of livestock, particularly cattle. A high moisture energy supplier, their high starch content makes them comparable to feed grain on a dry matter basis. Why not try growing some for your livestock as a do-it-yourself feed supplement that is do-able, even on a small scale? By chitting the seed you'll provide your animals with an energy supplying feed available prior to local corn harvest. We have more information on this which you should read about first, just call, Steve, 788-4961.



Growing New Farmers, Foresters, and the like?

Every Spring, for well over 30 now, the Coos Conservation District has held a Conservation Field Day at a local farm. Roughly 100 (often more, sometimes less) schoolchildren walk thru a round-robin exercise designed to acquaint them with the NorthCountry's farming, forestry, wildlife, soils; heritage and biology.

In recent years I've focused on various crop families, important both here and nation-wide. Grasses and Legumes specifically. To encourage them to look more closely we give them a packet of seeds to plant and observe at home. I use what's been termed an Iroquois, or **Three Sisters Garden** to illustrate complimentary plant interactions:

Beans or peas: For an ability to provide nitrogen “fertilizer” by hosting beneficial, symbiotic, nitrogen-fixing bacteria.

Corn: A user of that nitrogen while giving climbing support to those legumes (beans and peas) to grow higher and better photosynthesize.

Squash or cucumbers: Also needing that nitrogen. In return shading the ground to reduce weed competition and limit soil water loss. Perhaps a slight deterrent to pesky corn loving raccoons and skunks as well.

I tend to vary the cultivars selected each year, but always look at ease of growing, disease resistances, adaption to short-seasons and of course taste.

If you haven't placed your own seed order this year here are the ones for 2018:

Bush Beans: Two varieties in the mix, Velour and Royal Burgundy both improved types of purple-pods that turn green when cooked.

Sweet Corn: Sugar Buns, which is an early one that holds its eating quality. I also like its tolerance to Northern Corn Leaf Blight a fungal disease that was the bane of field corn growers a few years back.

Winter Squash: BonBon, the name speaks to its excellent flavor, which is probably why it won distinction as an All American Selection some time ago

This year I've also added a separate packet of Sunflower seeds for those who may not have the space for a larger garden. Being a Native American crop it seems to fit. The variety is: Sonja, a tangerine colored type that makes for an excellent cut-flower. Have also added a few other, truly native types received from a USDA seed bank source: Hopi Dye and Mandan Sunflower.



Three Sisters Garden as interpreted at *Kings Garden At Fort Ticonderoga, NY*



Crop Progress & Conditions

Reporting Season Starts In April

I begin these, every Monday morning, reports to the USDA's Agricultural Statistics Service. It's a synopsis of weather, crop, soil conditions, ag activities (ie corn planting, haying, etc) taking place in Coös County, NH.

I appreciate hearing from farmers; what they are seeing, noteworthy activities, and especially anything eventful: untimely frosts, pests, flooding, and the like.

Although I do try to check what I call “bell-weather field locations” routinely when conditions seem right...ie for NCLBlight, Armyworm invasions, you are my eyes, seeing it on a daily basis. Besides giving all of us a “heads-up” so we might be able to respond effectively, these reports constitute a historical record for other agencies like USDA/FSA. Potential for crop protection, emergency programs. Email or phone calls from you should be received by 9:00am to add it to that week's report.

Steven.Turaj@unh.edu

In The News - Conservation



USDA/NRCS in NH - Learn More
Natural Resource Conservation Service
in your area

In The News - Forestry



Damaging Insects and Diseases
information posted here -
NHBugs.org

Coos County Conservation District



Native Plant Nursery - as we are preparing stock for our native plant nursery, we are looking for input from local farmers, foresters, designers, installers - what plants work best for you that you would like to be able to purchase locally when doing restoration, streambank, erosion control, floodplain, riparian buffers, etc. email suggestions to - da.cccd@gmail.com

The **Native Plant Nursery** is made possible with support from **NH State Conservation Committee, Moose Plate Grant** funds.

We also want to thank Andy Hicks, **Storage Sheds Etc**, Colebrook NH for his support in helping us purchase a storage shed for the nursery.

More information on the
Native Plant Nursery



Wood Ash Spreader - Reminder, the spreader is available for rent. This is made possible with a **Neil & Louise Tillotson** grant received through the NH Charitable Fund.

Send us an email to get put on the signup list.

More information about the spreader and rental terms



Hi-Tunnel Tool Loan Program

Coming soon - With support from **Garneau's Garage** of Twin Mountain NH we were able to purchase a trailer to store our Tool Loan Program at the District office as well as we will be able to take the tools to special local events.

List of Tools, and Loan Process



Coos County Conservation District

4 Mayberry Lane
 Lancaster NH 03584
 603-788-4651 ext 102
 on the web - cooscountyconservation.org
 email - da.cccd@gmail.com

Our office is located in the USDA Service Center, Route 3, Lancaster, NH

Coos County Conservation District website

Home or Garden Question?



Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. highly trained master gardeners are available to answer your questions about gardening, lawns, pests, fruits and vegetables, food safety and more. For research-based information you can trust, pick up the phone, send an email or stop by today!

Education Center & Info Line

Soil Testing Services

Insect Identification Services

The **Education Center** at UNH Cooperative Extension offers a number of services including:

- Answers to gardening questions from Cooperative Extension Master Gardener residents via email and the Hotline 877-398-4769 or walk-in assistance.
- Master Gardener Volunteer Training Educational Programs for the general public.
- Public presentations by Master Gardener Volunteers on topics such as seed starting, composting, container gardening, and seed saving.

For more information on a variety of horticulture topics visit the UNH Cooperative Extension [website](#).

Additional Links

Subscribe to this and other UNH Extension newsletters

Archives of this newsletter

UNH Extension Agriculture

UNH Extension Natural Resources

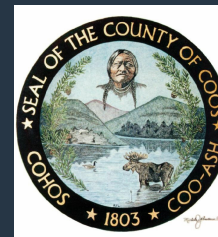
Coös County Conservation District

USDA / NRCS in NH

Coös County UNH Cooperative Extension
629 Main Street
Lancaster, NH 03584

Monday - Friday, 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

For more information
[visit our website](#), [email us](#), or call 603-788-4961



About UNH Cooperative Extension

Extension is at work in every New Hampshire county, making the state's key industries stronger, developing vibrant communities and municipal leaders, fostering healthy families and an informed and engaged citizenry, and keeping the state's natural resources healthy and productive.

The University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension is an equal opportunity educator and employer. UNH, USDA, and NH Counties cooperating.

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