



Coös County Ag Update

May 2017

The North Country Ag Update from Coös County is a periodic email to let you know about upcoming events, interesting stories, disease and pest alerts, etc. that are relevant to agricultural producers in the area.

Do you have comments, questions, suggestions for future content?

Send us an email -

steven.turaj@unh.edu or
carolyn.mcquiston@unh.edu



Workshops & Events



Coös County Conservation District Woodash Spreader Demonstration Thursday, May 11

Contact: Sarah Brady for more information
call 788-4651 or email: da.cccd@gmail.com



Plan to Join Us For an Early Season Blueberry Meeting

Friday, May 26

3:00pm-5:00pm

Haynes Homestead, Colebrook

Topics to include: pruning, soil fertility, vole management, and witches broom.

Questions, please contact Heather.Bryant@unh.edu
or call the Grafton Extension office 787-6944

More Information
&
How to Join this Event



Food Safety for Poultry & Rabbit Producers

Friday, June 9

9:30am - 3:15pm

Moultonborough, NH

(directions provided when you register)

The workshop helps producers meet the educational requirement specified in the NH rules for selling their product directly to NH restaurants without USDA inspection.

More Information
&
How to Join this Event

In The News



Crop Progress & Condition - 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 FSA/USDA. 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.

+On a similar topic, 2017 is the collection year of the 5 Year Census of Agriculture, I'm certain you will be hearing from their teams of census-takers. The data collected is important to many of us in agriculture.

More Information Can Be Found Here

Newest Field Specialist UNH Extension's Dairy, Livestock, Forage Crop Team

Elaina Enzien will particularly focus on livestock.



Elaina graduated from UNH in 2015 with a bachelor's degree in sustainable agriculture and food systems. While at UNH, she served as president of Cooperative Real Education in Agricultural Management (CREAM), volunteered in Panama with UNH Environmental Global Brigades, and studied in New Zealand as part of UNH's EcoQuest Program.

She has worked as an assistant manager of Gelinas Farm of Pembroke, interned at Northeast Organic Farming Association, and did field work and sales for The Vegetable Ranch of Warner for two summers. Before joining Cooperative Extension, Enzien had a part-time internship with Sanborn Mills Farm of Loudon, where she was involved with seed saving, vegetable and grain production, raising chickens, and field cultivation with draft horses and oxen.

Contact: Elaina.Enzien@unh.edu

Soil Test, Plant Disease, Insect ID

Reminder - this is the time of year you will want to have this information handy.



[Link to Soil Test Webpage](#)



[Link to Plant Diseases
How & Where to Submit Samples](#)



[Link to Insect Identification](#)



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Skunk Cabbage, Pussy Willows, and Peepers



That seems about the right chronological order. You can probably add a couple of your own harbingers of Spring to that list. Skunk Cabbage will always figure prominently in mine.

Growing up in those early TV, pre-computer device days, “The Stream” -Outside- was the focus of a lot of our spare-time activities. We picked it up on the outskirts of town, just beyond that spooky, old abandoned cemetery. From here it meandered through boundless acres of swamp and woodlands on its way to the Housatonic River. It’s where we first discovered and investigated such treasures as frog eggs, owl-pellets, salamanders and the occasional, rare porcupine quill.

When trooping down its path in early Spring it was essential you were somewhere near the head of the column. Skunk cabbages, an abundant part of the local flora, received plenty of attention from the many “Keds” sneakers preceding you...I still recall its pungent fragrance today.

Interesting plant, Skunk Cabbage. It’s known by a host of colorful names ‘Tabac Du Diable’, ‘Chou Puant’ (Stinking Cabbage), Pole-Cat Weed. Even its scientific name of *Symplocarpus foetidus* is rather descriptive. I’m stretching my Latin here, but believe that means something like: ‘the fruit is altogether foul and evil-smelling’ Emerging from its bed of moist, boggy soil in late Winter skunk cabbage’s flower is seen enclosed in a sheath-like spathe (leaf), that looks somewhat like a Calla Lily. However, its mottled purple-red shell or horn shape appearance lends it a somewhat more ...primordial, elemental aspect.

By drawing from deep, fibrous root reserves skunk cabbage’s high respiration rate generates enough bio-heat to modify its immediate environment. Snow-melting temperatures as high as 60 to 70 degrees F have been recorded. That and a distinctive odor which has been likened to both carrion and garlic is probably what attracts so many insects and young naturalists. Despite the “beneficial to native pollinator aspect”, we have no plans to include it in our Conservation District Nursery...

Pussy Willows are, by comparison I think, for more refined tastes. Our earliest flowering plants, their strongly scented flowers (nectar) and protein rich pollen provide a much appreciated early season food for honeybees and other insects. A light-amber honey described as mild, pleasant, aromatic tasting is the reward.

Willows have many uses. Several years back we established a number of different willow cultivars at three different cornfield locations along the Upper Connecticut River. Meant for experimental conservation purposes - nutrient, runoff, erosion reduction- these willows were also selected for other attributes. Since we were asking farmers to take land out of row crop production, we wanted to offer an alternative cash-crop in its place...pussy willows.

We had to look hard for cornfields that fit our criteria, finding few where flood water runoff seemed a potential problem. Many fields seemed over the years, to have already developed natural riparian buffers of grasses, brush, and trees. Shrubs in particular, like willow and red osier dogwood have always looked to me the best choice along our northerly stretch of the river. That's because, like the proverbial palm tree that bends with the wind without breaking, these shrubs weather the melt waters filled with churning ice chunks and debris so typical of Spring-time in northern New Hampshire. I've seen too many large trees, with ice-battered trunks, which eventually fall into the water, the currents eddying about their roots taking large amounts of soil with them to our south.

Back to the pussy willows. We planted three different cultivars : Giant, Black and French types. The Giant yielded a quite large silver catkin and seemed to do the best farther north, the Black a smaller deep black catkin, the later emerging French a silvery catkin with a pinkish blush. Along with the willows we also tried various colored-bark dogwoods (yellow, orange, and red) for the winter floral market. Under harsh field conditions where a lot was expected of them only the giant willow and red osier dogwood proved reliable. Under better care at our (more southerly) Horticultural Farm in Durham, floral-use results (# of stems, length, and quality) were much better.

The growing technique we adapted uses a time-tested practice, one believed to date back to Neolithic, early farming times. It's called coppicing. Periodically each Spring multiple-stemmed trees or shrubs are cut down close to ground level. The previous seasons' growth is the harvested crop. They can be used for a variety of purposes; purely decorative or imaginatively functional...basket withes, artist charcoal, plant arbors, even bio-mass energy. In England perennially coppiced woodlands dating back to medieval times are still being cropped. This is big business in some locations. I yet have a cd of pictures some friends brought back to me of extensive fields they visited (in England) devoted to willow production. They include a factory/storage facility where cuttings were de-barked, stored, eventually turned into those products mentioned (and more) for retail.

Pussy-willows? What's the NH potential? I liken them to Christmas Trees -which take considerably longer to establish - with similar management- yet yield but one crop. After four years we amateurs were cutting dozens of marketable stems from each shrub. With the potential to do so year, after year, after...

Something about pussy willows just says Spring and they seem always welcome. The cuttings we gave away at an introductory workshop certainly disappeared rather quickly. I'll be donating some cuttings in May "from my personal stock", free to those purchasing plants at the Coos Conservation Districts plant sale. Let me know how they do.

Oh, those Spring Peepers? I've been listening....

NH Farm Bureau

 THE VOICE OF Agriculture
NEW HAMPSHIRE FARM BUREAU FEDERATION

NH Farm Bureau's new **Veterans in Agriculture Committee** is looking for feedback from our members.

Are YOU a veteran? Would you like to learn more about opportunities for veterans in agriculture? Would you like to be a part of this new committee? Do you know a veteran in agriculture or who is interested in agriculture?

Contact the NHFB Office at (603) 224-1934 or e-mail Josh editor@nhfarmbureau.org with your name, county, contact info, and how you would like to be involved.

Veteran / Farmer Update

Two items of interest on this effort to help guide Veterans who are considering a career in agriculture:

1. First organizational meeting of NH Farm Bureau's new Veterans in Agriculture Committee in March. Very well attended by motivated Vets, Farmers, and other Ag Folks, of all ages and abilities. Mission is to recruit, educate, support, and promote Veterans and Veteran families in Agriculture. Right now we are compiling a list of resources and individuals who can help. Know someone? Email Diane at dianec@nhfarmbureau.org.

2. We, on UNH's Ag-Extension Dairy/Forage Crop/Livestock Team have signed on to receive a grant through the National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT) Armed to Farm. All agricultural commodities will be considered, we are just taking the lead on this.

Its intent is to build farmer training programs, provide net-working opportunities for Military Veterans in the Northeast. This will give us funds for training materials, specialty speakers, facility use that would be needed. We are still planning a series of pilot workshops this summer. A lot is possible.



NH Farm Bureau

Questions, The Education Center Can Help



For answers to Homeowner questions, please check our Education Center website

Coös Ag Newsletter Archives



If you missed a newsletter, they can be reviewed in our archive section.

You can also subscribe here to other UNHCE news letters that may be of interest to you.

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Coös County Agriculture Webpage

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The UNH Cooperative Extension office in Coös County is located in the

[North Country Resource Center](#)
[629A Main Street](#)
[Lancaster, NH 03584](#)



For more information on Coös County UNH Cooperative Extension [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. University of New Hampshire, US Department of Agriculture, and NH Counties cooperating.

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