Late Summer, Early Autumn

Slowing down for some, ramping up for Fall/Winter for others

Need to discuss? Got something you need looked at? URI Extension: andy_radin@uri.edu, hfaubert@uri.edu

From Old to New

An important news announcement… See page 2!

I spied this wonderful rig at The Berry Patch in South Kingstown (Partyka’s). I figure there’s at least a 100 year age difference.
THE NEWS is that I am leaving the University of Rhode Island at the end of September, 2021. That’s really… soon. Times change, Old begets New.

Dear hard-working and talented Farmers, Friends, and Appreciators of URI Cooperative Extension’s vegetable and fruit program:

It’s time to move on. I have been offered the great opportunity of teaching biological and earth sciences in the easternmost high school in the United States. This is a setting in which to exercise my other creative urges while (hopefully) making some differences in the lives of some young people.

I owe a huge thank you to all of those who I was able to engage with over these last 9 years. I respect you all very much and there’s nothing more I have wanted than for you to do the great work of farming while also living economically and energetically decent lives. The droughts seem relentless, and the rain (this year) is relentless, and there are so many crop ailments that I wish I could just make go-away.

I have developed relationships with so many determined, creative, and eclectic individuals. I’ve learned every day from seemingly countless experiences on your farms. I’m a much wealthier person for it.

I want to thank all of my URI colleagues, and I’ll miss all of you: Tim Sherman, Farm Manager; Gabrielle Torphy, Assistant Farm Manager and Plant Science lab technician; Fari Gheshtm, vegetable researcher and Saffron Wizard; Rebecca Brown, Professor of Plant Science and vegetable crops researcher; John Taylor, nearly-Associate Professor of Plant Science and Food Systems researcher; Lisa Tewksbury, Biocontrol Lab Director and ready-to-take-on-anything-entomological researcher; Nathaniel Mitkowski, ever-supportive department chair of Plant Sciences and Entomology; Steve Alm, the chief steward of Rhode Island’s bees; Jose Amador, Professor of Soil Science and wise-cracking wiseman; also, a shout out to the crew who do their important work in the Mallon Center: Sejal Lanterman, Vanessa and Kate Venturini, and Mamie Chen; a special thank you to Sharon Pavagnano of the URI Foundation, who is a huge ally of the URI’s food crops research work; and Lastly but mostly, Heather Faubert, who has been my everyday work mate and partner in all things that people in our profession do. Without her, I probably wouldn’t even have gotten this job back in 2012. I’m sorry I had to dump so many hard-to-diagnose plant diseases on her. She works tirelessly to come up with answers for all of you (and me) and she’s been doing it for DECADES. Without her, I would never have found a home at URI. Thank her today! Thank You, Heather!

IF YOU have benefitted from the position I have filled and believe it should be re-filled as soon as possible, I urge you to write to the office of the Dean of the College of Environment and Life Sciences (CELS) and express your wishes. I’m not saying to go after Dean John Kirby with pitchforks, but do let him know that you value URI’s role in Rhode Island Agriculture, and want it not only to continue, but to grow.

You can send emails to:
cels@uri.edu

Letters can be addressed to:
Office of the Dean
College of the Environment and Life Sciences
120 Flagg Road,
Kingston, RI 02881-2020
Pip-Pip, Cheerio, and All That ROT!

That’s one way of saying “farewell” to all of you, but also alludes to cucurbit fruit rots that are all the rage in fields with ripening squashes and pumpkins sitting on soil that seem to be permanently wet. Mostly we are seeing a lot of Black Rot, a much-too commonly used disease name that means several different things. In this case, it refers to *Phoma cucurbitacearum*. While it doesn’t appear black on butternut, it’s that really common disease that doesn’t immediately make the fruit turn to mush. On pumpkin, it most certainly is black. Just above is more than likely fusarium fruit rot on delicata squash.

On the upper right, this looks like phytophthora fruit rot, and this is the same organism, a water mold, that causes phytophthora crown rot on cucurbits and peppers. There was plenty of that around this year from all the standing water in low spots of fields that don’t normally stay that wet for that long.

The unlucky pumpkin on the next page probably has secondary fungal infections on top of small lesions made by bacterial spot, which starts as a foliar disease but then gets on the fruits. This farm had been rid of this disease for about 4 years since we instituted an important change. The grower had been essentially growing without tilling. Perhaps he had originally gotten the bacterial spot pathogen, *Xanthomonas cucurbitae*, from a bad seed lot, but it continued to survive on the crop residue, year after year, and spread everywhere. After he returned to plowing the residue under, the disease went away. [Take home message: reducing tillage is good for the soil, but sometimes it can create opportunities for pest and disease problems.]

Still another fruit problem, that isn’t necessarily a “rot”, is Plectosporium blight. You may have seen the elongated lesions on stems, petioles, and then leaves,
but when it gets on fruits, it creates a frosty sheen. The picture below shows elongated stem lesions, as well as some scratchy scarring on the fruit surface. The next picture shows the frosted-over appearance. What to do about all of these winter squash and pumpkin fruit problems?

First of all, in a wet year, these diseases will have their way to some extent, no matter what. That is why we are seeing them in spades. And of course, soils that don’t drain well are more prone to these disorders. At a larger scale, a biodegradable mulch wouldn’t be cost effective, but on a smaller scale, this can really help. Planting too early could result in ripe fruits lying around in the field for longer periods of time, exposing them to sunscald, soaking rain, mechanical injury, insect attack, deer, and rodents. Make note of this year’s planting dates and make an assessment on your timing.

Since it is the interior of winter squashes that is consumed for food, these and pumpkins can be sprayed with protectant fungicides even as fruits are ripening. For organic, this would mean copper, and for those using synthetics, copper is not a bad idea either for protection from bacterial rots. Also available is chlorothalonil and mancozeb. These are not systemic, they only interfere in the spore germination process on the fruit surfaces. But remember that spraying the pumpkin or squash patch with a backpack can be complicated because of big, vigorous vines, so plan for it in your planting scheme.
That’s SPOTTED LANTERN FLY. You’ve seen it in the news, and the critter is getting ever closer to us in RI. The general directive is: Destroy these if you see them. But why? Here it is, direct from USDA-APHIS:

The Spotted Lanternfly (Lycorma delicatula) is native to China and was first detected in Pennsylvania in September 2014. Spotted lanternfly feeds on a wide range of fruit, ornamental and woody trees, with tree-of-heaven being one of the preferred hosts. Spotted lanternflies are invasive and can be spread long distances by people who move infested material or items containing egg masses. If allowed to spread in the United States, this pest could seriously impact the country’s grape, orchard, and logging industries.

Here’s what just came in on the wire in Southern New England: “Just wanted to alert you that we are getting reports of live SLF on pumpkins and mums again in CT. It might be worthwhile to alert farmstands/nurseries of the pathway for them to keep an eye out on incoming stock. Plenty of time for live SLF to establish in new areas this fall.

MA also confirmed fresh egg masses in their positive area. Be on the lookout for old hatched egg masses, fresh egg masses, and adults.”

So Friends, if you are bringing items from out of state, keep an eye out for these critters and DESTROY THEM!

There are some other recommendations, one of which is to remove Ailanthus (a.k.a. Tree of Heaven), which is a primary host. But one has to wonder if that makes sense. If you remove the primary host plant, then all that will be left are all of the plants of economic and food-cultural importance (we do love our apples.)

And have they been seen in Rhode Island? Yes—three isolated sightings in West Greenwich, Ashaway, and Warwick. If you see one, please whip out your phone and get a picture or two and send pictures and the location to Lisa Tewksbury (lisat@uri.edu) who directs the URI Biocontrol Laboratory.

Take a look at this excellent fact sheet from Penn State University on identifying and destroying Spotted Lantern Fly Egg Masses: https://extension.psu.edu/what-should-you-do-with-spotted-lanternfly-egg-masses
YOUR Partners in Rhode Island Agriculture

Consisting of six primary program areas, the Rhode Island Division of Agriculture works to sustain, promote and enhance Rhode Island's agricultural viability today and for generations to come.

Farm Service Agency (FSA) is an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) that serves all farmers, ranchers and agricultural partners through the delivery of effective, efficient agricultural programs for all Americans. There are 48 programs that they administer, including microlending, direct farm ownership loans, farm storage facility loans, non-insured crop disaster assistance, and much more.

A complete list of programs can be found at this link. They are located at: 60 Quaker Ln, Suite 62, Warwick, RI (401) 828-3120 Option 1

NRCS, a federal agency, helps landowners develop conservation plans, create and restore wetlands, restore and manage other natural ecosystems as well as advise on storm water remediation, nutrient and animal waste management and watershed planning.

United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

NRCS is located at 60 Quaker Lane, Suite 40, Warwick, RI 02886
Phone: 401-828-1300, Option 1 fax: 855-924-4748 https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/ri/contact/state/

The RISBDC employs a dedicated, experienced and knowledgeable staff of business counselors and administrators who can assist you in growing your business.

The Rhode Island Agricultural Energy Program is a competitive grant program for the implementation of agricultural projects that improve energy efficiency and facilitate renewable energy. It is a collaborative project of RI RC&D, the RIDEM, Division of Agriculture, and Office of Air Resources and the Office of Energy Resources.

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Contact: Jo-Anne Pacheco, Program Coordinator, RI Farm Energy Program, Rhode Island
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