

February 2011 Regional Fruit Grower Newsletter
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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

2011

- 2/15** **MACMA GAP Meeting**
NWMHRS
- 2/15** **Deadline for Low-Interest Loans for Hoophouses**
- 2/17** **27th Annual Buckley Farm Show**
Hannah's St. Mary's
- 2/21-4/25** **The Business of Farming Series**
Michigan Works
- 2/24** **Recent Advances in Vineyard Technology & Pest Control**
SW Michigan Research and Extension Center
- 2/24** **Logger Education Program**
Mackinaw City
- 3/2-5/18** **Master Gardener Volunteer Spring Training Program**
NWMHRS
- 3/4** **Deadline Conservation Funding to Organic Producers**
- 3/9** **Farm Safety Program**
NWMHRS
- 3/14-4/14** **Conservation Reserve Program Sign-up**
- 3/16** **Labor Management Session**
NWMHRS
- 3/23** **Finding Local Food Resources: An Open House**
Grow Benzie, 5885 M-115 (Frankfort Hwy), Benzonia
- 3/29** **Logger Education Program**
Cadillac
- 4/1** **Specialty Crop Grant Deadline**
- 4/14** **Logger Education Program**
West Branch

GAP MEETING TO BE HELD AT NWMRHS

MSUE and MACMA will host a Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) meeting on **15 February** from **9-12**. This meeting will be a review of the USDA GAP manual and the verification process. Fortunately, there have been few changes from the 2010 manual, but experts will be on hand to answer questions about the specifics of USDA GAP. To register, please call MACMA at 800-292-2653.

LOW-INTEREST LOANS AVAILABLE TO FARMS AND NON-PROFITS TO INSTALL AGRICULTURAL PASSIVE SOLAR SYSTEMS (HOOPHOUSES)

Katharine V. Czarnecki, Community Programs Manager
Michigan Economic Development Corporation

The State of Michigan is offering low-interest loans between \$5,000-\$15,000 for family farms or non-profit 501(c)(3) organizations to install passive solar systems, also known as hoophouses. A passive solar system is a structure which can extend the growing season to 10 to 12 months without additional supplemental heat or light. A recent on-farm research project by 12 private farms and Michigan State University has shown that passive solar systems can generate gross and net sales at a rate which would make a loan repayable in one to four years. "These loans are a great opportunity for farmers or non-profits to extend Michigan's growing season allowing them to grow more produce and more varieties," said DELEG Acting Director Andrew S. Levin. "It is not only a great way to feed Michigan families, but it also benefits our environment by reducing the use of fossil fuels in agricultural operations."

The loans can only be used to cover materials, supplies and equipment costs. Interest on approved loans is fixed at 4 percent for a maximum of 6 years. Systems already installed are ineligible for the program. Applicants can apply now through **February 15, 2011**. Applications for funding will be reviewed by an advisory committee and awarded based on project merit and applicant creditworthiness.

The loans are made possible by Public Act 242 of 2009, which established the Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Revolving Loan Fund (Energy Revolving Loan Fund) Program to provide low-interest loans to public or private entities for energy efficiency and renewable energy projects and partnerships with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation and the Department of Agriculture. For questions about application requirements, contact: David Binkley at (517) 373-7673 or email: binkleyd@michigan.gov. Questions about projects and technical issues should be directed to Adam Montri at (517)-355-5191 Ext. 1407 or email: admontri@msu.edu

For an application and loan specifications, you can also go to: www.michiganadvantage.org/PSS

27TH ANNUAL BUCKLEY FARM SHOW

Northwest Michigan farmers are invited to attend the Buckley Farm Show on **Thursday, February 17** in the downstairs meeting room of Hannah St. Mary's School located on M-113, one mile East of the intersection of M-37 and M-113. Registration and refreshments at 9:45 a.m. and the meeting starts at 10:00 a.m.

Duke Elsner and Greg Shy will provide updates on MSU Extension and FSA programs and activities. Terry Stiles will report on new cover crops and forage grasses and wildlife food crops. Ed Breitmeyer and Bill Widdicombe will review practices that produced 200+ bu. Corn and Wes Everman will discuss weed control in forages and corn. Dan Busby will have details on new conservation programs, and Greg MacMaster's 2011 growing season weather forecast will be presented. A Zeeland Farm Services representative will highlight the do's and don't of grain marketing. Frank Lipinski will review the list of new corn and bean varieties as well as some crop spraying tips. A C.P.S. representative will discuss fertilizer costs and the new liquid formulations.

Free lunch will be served at noon and a request has been made to MDA for pesticide credits. For more information, call Frank Lipinski at 231-269-4040 or 231-218-0145.

MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEER SPRING TRAINING PROGRAM

The Michigan Master Gardener Volunteer Program is a horticulture education and volunteer leader training program offered by Michigan State University Extension. All adults who have a strong interest in gardening and enjoy sharing their knowledge through volunteerism are invited to apply to become a Michigan Master Gardener Volunteer.

Locally, the volunteer training program is offered each spring at the Northwest Michigan Horticultural Station (6686 South Center Highway/County Rd. 633), located in Leelanau County. **This year, classes will be conducted from 6:00-9:30 PM, beginning March 2nd and continuing every Wednesday through May 18th.** The cost of the program is \$275, which covers the cost of an 800 page training manual, soil test kit, speakers and facilities. Financial aid is available upon request. The application deadline is February 14. (Late applications accepted depending if space is available.)

The program offers an opportunity for interested individuals to increase their knowledge and understanding of such varied horticultural topics as best practices for growing flowers, vegetables, and fruit; caring for lawns and woody ornamentals; house plant care; diagnosing plant diseases; pest identification and control, and much more. A major focus of the program is the use of environmentally-sound practices. Instructors are MSU Extension professionals and other experts.

To become a MSU Extension Master Gardener Volunteer, individuals attend the training sessions, and then volunteer in the community. Examples of volunteer activities include teaching gardening classes, gardening with children, or providing leadership to various garden-related projects in the community, including libraries, nature centers, conservation districts, land conservancies, schools, and community gardens.

Individuals who have questions may contact Pam Schmidt Bardenhagen, Master Gardener Volunteer Coordinator, at the Leelanau MSU Extension office, at 231-256-8323, or email schmi345@msu.edu. Application materials for the program can be downloaded from the following website: <http://www.msue.msu.edu/leelanau> (click on Master Gardener Program).

USDA OFFERS CONSERVATION FUNDING TO ORGANIC PRODUCERS

Agricultural producers who are organically certified or are transitioning to organic production are eligible for conservation financial assistance through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Organic Initiative. In Michigan, just over \$1 million in financial assistance is available for producers who apply by **March 4, 2011**.

"The Organic Initiative allows organic producers to address their conservation concerns without having to compete with non-organic producers for financial assistance. Producers interested in utilizing this program should contact their local office as soon as possible to start the application process," said Garry Lee, state conservationist for the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Fiscal year (FY) 2011 marks the third year of the USDA's Organic Initiative that reserves conservation financial assistance for producers to plan and implement conservation practices that address natural resource concerns in ways that are consistent with organic production. For

example, organic producers may use the funding to plant cover crops, establish integrated pest management plans, or implement nutrient management systems consistent with organic certification standards.

Eligible producers include those certified through USDA's National Organic Program, those transitioning to certified organic production, and those who meet organic standards but are exempt from certification because their gross annual organic sales are less than \$5,000. In FY 2010, NRCS obligated nearly \$24 million through the Organic Initiative to help producers implement conservation practices.

Under Organic Initiative contracts, producers are paid 75 percent of the cost for the organic conservation measures they implement. Beginning, limited resource, and socially disadvantaged producers are paid 90 percent. The program provides up to \$20,000 per year per person or legal entity, with a maximum total of \$80,000 over six years.

Producers interested in applying for Organic Initiative funding must submit applications through their local NRCS Service Center. For more information about the USDA Organic Initiative including contact information for local offices, visit the [NRCS-Michigan Web site](#).

STATE AG DEPARTMENT CONFIRMS BROWN MARMORATED STINK BUG IN MICHIGAN

Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) today confirmed the presence of brown marmorated stink bug (BMSB), *Halyomorpha halys* (Stål), in Michigan. The identity of two specimens – one from Berrien County and the other from Eaton County – were collected by Michigan State University students and verified by USDA entomologists in late January. This is the first confirmation of this pest in the state.

BMSB can be a serious pest of a variety of fruits, vegetables, field crops, and ornamental plants. In its native range, it feeds on a wide variety of host plants. In Michigan, potentially impacted fruits include apples, peaches, and mulberries. It has also been reported on many ornamental plants, weeds, soybeans and beans for human consumption. Feeding on tree fruits such as apples results in a characteristic distortion referred to as "cat facing," that renders the fruit unmarketable as a fresh product.

"Exotic pests such as the brown marmorated stink bug pose a serious threat to the economic health of Michigan's \$71.3 billion agri-food industry and our 53,000 farmers," said Keith Creagh, MDA Director. "MDA and Michigan State University researchers will work in concert to both identify control recommendations for our agriculture community as well as monitor this pest's spread in the state."

Brown marmorated stink bug is native to eastern Asia and was first discovered in the U.S. in Allentown, Pennsylvania in 1998. Since then, it has spread quickly and now inhabits most eastern states, as well as California and Oregon.

BMSB superficially resembles several common species of stink bug native to Michigan. Stink bugs can also be a significant indoor nuisance, entering homes in large numbers in the fall in search of protected overwintering sites – a behavior it shares with another exotic pest, the multicolored Asian lady beetle.

Adults are approximately 17 millimeters long and are shades of brown on both the upper and lower

body surfaces. They are the typical “shield” shape of other stink bugs, almost as wide as they are long. To distinguish them from other stink bugs, look for lighter bands on the antennae and darker bands on the membranous, overlapping part at the rear of the front pair of wings. They have patches of coppery or bluish-metallic colored punctures (small rounded depressions) on the head and pronotum. The name “stink bug” refers to the scent glands located on the dorsal surface of the abdomen and the underside of the thorax.

“Currently, the best available method for controlling BMSB indoors is by sealing entry points like cracks around window and door trim, exhaust vents, air conditioners, ceiling fixtures, etc,” said Gina Davis, acting director, MDA Pesticide and Plant Pest Management Division. “Once they’ve gained entry, vacuuming live and dead bugs is the best option. Pesticide treatments are not recommended because they will not prevent additional invasions.”

FARM SAFETY PROGRAM

Leelanau MSU Extension and Michigan Farm Bureau will host a Farm Safety Program with Craig Anderson from Farm Bureau and Deb Chester from MI FACE on **Wednesday, March 9** at the NW Michigan Horticultural Research Station from **9-12**.

FARM EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS SERIES: Safety Pays in a Buyer Driven Market

What does it really cost an agricultural operation that employs youth and has not implemented proper safety practices on their farm? As a result of an *ABC News “Nightline”* report and a Michigan Department of Civil Rights Report, produce buyers raced to include or implement contract provisions regarding proper employment, safety and security requirements *as well as* expanding the contract provisions to include industry consensus standard(s) (such as Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Good Handling Practices (GHP)) compliance as a condition of sale. *Are you prepared?*

This 3-hour Seminar will provide content pertinent to local crops and management issues. Three (3) pesticide applicator recertification core credits for commercial and private applicators are available. The cost is \$5 payable at the door. For more information, call the Leelanau MSU Extension office at 231-256-9888.

AG LABOR MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Dr. Rob Sirrine, Extension Educator, Leelanau Co.

Leelanau MSU Extension and Michigan Farm Bureau will host an **Ag Labor Management Program** on **Wednesday, March 16** at the NW Michigan Horticultural Research Station from **8:30 am-3:30pm**.

This day-long program will cover agency enforcement and education strategies, responding to media events and other crisis’s, procedures, immigration issues, housing issues, employer/employee rights and responsibilities, youth employment, farm labor and independent contractors, interaction with GAP and other food safety and security procedures, and more.

The cost of the program is \$75 for the first participant from your farm or operation, and \$50 for each participant thereafter. Lunch and handouts are included in the cost of the program. Core pesticide recertification credits have been applied for. **Participants must be prepaid and pre-registered to attend.** To register, complete the enclosed brochure and mail with a check, or call

the Leelanau MSU Extension office and register by phone using your credit or debit card as payment. For more information, call the Leelanau MSU Extension office at 231-256-9888.

CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM

[Conservation Reserve Program \(CRP\)](#), administered by the Farm Services Agency (FSA), provides annual rental payments and cost-share assistance to establish long-term conservation practices on eligible farmland. Land can be enrolled for a period of up to 15 years. For more information, read our most recent blog post on CRP [here](#), or visit the USDA CRP website [here](#). The 40th general sign-up will be held from **March 14-April 14, 2011**.

SFI TRAINING SESSIONS FOR LOGGERS OFFERED BY MSUE

MSU Extension (MSUE) in cooperation with the Michigan Forest Products Council (MFPC) will be offering a series of forestry educational programs across the northern Lower Peninsula this winter. Any logger or forester interested in attending any of these sessions is invited to participate. Continuing education credit hours are also available for those participants who need their annual 8 hours of Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) training.

The following logger education continuing education programs are scheduled across the NLP:

Logger Education Cont. Ed Program #1

February 24, 2011

Audie's Restaurant

314 Nicolet Street

Mackinaw City, MI

Time: 8:30 AM – Noon

1:00 PM – 4:30 PM

(AM or PM = 4 hours credit/person)

Logger Education Cont. Ed Program #2

March 29, 2011

Michigan Works Meeting Room

401 N. Lake Street

Cadillac, MI

Time: 6:00 PM – 9:30 PM

(Session = 4 hours credit/person)

Logger Education Cont. Ed Program #3

April 14, 2011

Ogemaw Co. MSUE Office

205 S. Eighth Street (behind County Building)

West Branch, MI

Time: 6:00 PM – 9:30 PM

(Session = 4 hours credit/person)

In addition to these sessions, there will be one Core Training program offered in the Lower Peninsula this winter as well. Core Training is the first step in the certification process and is considered the initial entry into the SFI training process. This training will be held:

Lower Peninsula Core Training

March 23-24, 2011

Grayling Township Hall

2090 Viking Way (off M-72 West near M-93)

Grayling, MI 49738

Time: 8:30 AM – 4:30 PM (both days)

To register for any of these programs or for more information, contact Russell Kidd, Roscommon MSUE, at 989-275-5043. Email: kidd@anr.msu.edu FAX: 989-275-8864.

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE ANNOUNCES SPECIALTY CROP GRANT OPPORTUNITY

Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) Director Keith Creagh and U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow, Chairwoman of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry today announced new opportunities for Michigan businesses thanks to the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Ag Marketing Services. The program is designed to enhance the competitiveness of Michigan's specialty crops. Grant proposals must be received by MDA no later than April 1, 2011.

"This grant program provides a unique opportunity for our state's specialty crop producers to enhance their profitability by expanding their domestic and international markets," said Creagh. We appreciate Senator Stabenow's continued support of Michigan's agriculture industry and look forward to continued partnerships in the future."

Because of Senator Stabenow's work, the 2008 Farm Bill (Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008) was the first one in history to recognize the importance of specialty crops fruits, vegetables, nursery products, and floriculture.

"I authored this grant program during the most recent Farm Bill so our growers can continue to make significant investments in Michigan's specialty crop sector," said Senator Stabenow. "These grants support the men and women who grow fruits and vegetables and create thousands of jobs throughout Michigan."

The grants, ranging from \$10,000 to \$75,000, enhance the competitiveness of the state's specialty crops, including, but not limited to: research, promotion, marketing, nutrition, trade enhancement, food safety, food security, plant health programs, education, increased knowledge and consumption, increased innovation, improved efficiency and reduced costs of distribution systems, environmental concerns and conservation, product development, good agricultural practices, good handling practices, and good manufacturing practices.

Eligible applicants include non-profit organizations, local, state, and federal government entities, for-profit organizations, and universities. The organizations must be legal entities recognized by the IRS, and applicants must reside and/or conduct their business or organization in Michigan. Applications should demonstrate how the project will potentially produce measurable impacts for the specialty crop industry as a whole and not-for-profit to a specific product, single organization, institution, or individual.

For program information, application form, or submission criteria, please visit www.michigan.gov/mda or contact Mike DiBernardo at dibernardom@michigan.gov or 517-373-9144. Proposal must be RECEIVED (not postmarked) by 5 p.m. on Thursday, April 1, 2011.

SUPPLEMENTAL REVENUE ASSISTANCE PAYMENTS FOR 2009 LOSSES HAS OPENED

Christine White, Exec. Director of USDA's Farm Service Agency in Michigan reminds eligible producers that the sign-up period for the 2009 crop year Supplemental Revenue Assistance Payments (SURE) program has opened. SURE is one of five disaster programs included in the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (Farm Bill) that provides assistance to farmers who have suffered losses due to natural disasters.

“Natural assistance can turn what would be a profitable crop year into a year of hardship and financial loss,” White said. “Any eligible producer who suffered losses during the 2009 crop year is encouraged to visit a local FSA office to learn more about the SURE program and how to apply.”

To be eligible for SURE, a farm or ranch must have:

- At least a 10% production loss on a crop of economic significance;
- A policy or plan of insurance under the Federal Crop Insurance Act or the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) for all economically significant crops;
- Be physically located in a county that was declared a primary disaster county or contiguous county by the Agricultural Secretary under a Secretarial Disaster Designation. Without a Secretarial Disaster Designation, individual producers may be eligible if the actual production on the farm is less than 50% of then of the normal production on the farm due to a natural disaster.

Producers considered socially disadvantaged, a beginning farmer, or a limited resource farmer may be eligible for SURE without a policy or plan of insurance or NAP coverage.

Farmers interested in signing up, must do so before **July 29, 2011**. For more information on the 2009 SURE program, visit any USDA Service Center or FSA county office or <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/sure>.

