



# U.P. Ag Connections Newsletter

April 2018

Agricultural News from MSU Extension and AgBioResearch

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## ***Laying the ground work for a productive growing season: Selecting the appropriate variety or hybrid***

*To improve field crop production in Northern Michigan, MSU Extension Educators are coordinating local variety trials of forage grains, peas, corn and soybean.*

Michigan State University Extension Educators in Northern Michigan have received grant funding to address variety selection in northern climates. The purpose of these projects are to collect local data on variety performance to enhance local agricultural production. Due to the relatively short growing season and highly variable environmental conditions present across Northern MI and the U.P., tailored variety recommendations are of the utmost importance. These research projects are targeting three commodities: corn, soybean and forage.

The U.P. Corn Hybrid Trials is a part of the Michigan Corn Performance Trials (MCPT) program, funded by Project GREEN and MSU Extension. This year, we are collaborating with the University of Wisconsin’s Corn Hybrid Trials to include short season corn hybrids commonly grown in the U.P. of Michigan. This research project is taking place on a cooperating farm in Stephenson, MI. We are seeking both silage and corn grain entries targeting maturity ranges 85-100 and 80-90, respectively. The Corn Marketing Program of Michigan has provided funding to hold a field day at Meintz Dairy Farm on August 28<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

Our Soybean variety trial has been funded by the Michigan Soybean Promotion Committee to conduct research plots at the Forestry Biomass Innovation Center (FBIC) in Escanaba, MI and on-farm in Hillman, MI. We are seeking entries ranging from 0.00 to 1.80 in maturity group. The 0.00- 1.0 will be the targeted range for Escanaba and 0.8-1.8 will be the targeted range for Hillman. Both herbicide tolerant and conventional varieties will be accepted, as a conventional herbicide program will be used. A field day will be held on September 5<sup>th</sup> at FBIC in Escanaba, Mich. to highlight this project.

Our pea/small grain variety trial, funded by Project GREEN and MSU Extension, is taking place at Upper Peninsula Research and Extension Center (UPREC) in Chatham, MI. Forage peas paired with various varieties of either oats or triticale will be assessed as an annual forage crop. This research project is an extension of our previous work completed in 2017, highlighted here. A forage field day highlighting this research project and other forage related projects, including cover cropping, will be June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2018 at UPREC.

Observations of emergence, plant stand, vigor, pest damage and environmental conditions will be collected during the growing season. Yield and moisture data will be collected at maturity. Summaries of all three trials will be made available through educational outlets including the MSUE website, newsletters and social media. Summer field days will be held at all trial locations during the summer of 2018 to educate producers on production, management and variety performance for Northern MI. By collaborating with growers, MSUE researchers and educators and Agribusiness, we are strengthening our agricultural industry in Northern Michigan.

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*Monica Jean* MSU Extension Educator

## Should you consider a u-pick enterprise?

Consider the advantages and challenges carefully before starting a 'pick-your-own' operation.

By Jim Isleib, MSU Extension Educator

Starting a U-Pick farm, or adding a PYO (pick-your-own) component to your existing farm, can provide a new and potentially profitable component to your farm business. But there are some crucial decisions that need to be made before diving in. Michigan State University Extension fruit and vegetable educators can assist with production and business establishment questions.

Former Delta County Extension Director Don Pellegrini operated a successful strawberry U-Pick farm near Escanaba for many years. Don shared the following questions and tidbits of wisdom with me to use when visiting with people interested in starting in PYO farming:

1. Are you a people person?
  - 98% of customers are good people to deal with.
  - 2% of customers will give you headaches.
2. Where are you at right now?
  - Are you already producing but not selling what you intend to direct market? Are you already producing and selling it? Neither?
  - Producing and marketing need to be addressed separately.
  - Start where you find yourself right now.
  - Be realistic.
3. What kind of market are you aiming for?
  - Niche? Local only? Larger?
4. Who are you going to sell to? Do you have alternatives to the PYO market?
  - Individuals? (least headaches and most profits)
  - Groups?
  - Businesses?
  - Retail, wholesale, or both?
5. Are you assuming you have a market for your product, or have you proved that your market exists?
  - Are you located close enough to a population center to feed the market for your farm?
  - Is your farm conveniently located, or easy to find?
  - Talk to lots of people, visit with organizations (Regional Planning Org, Chamber of Commerce, etc.)
  - Who else is currently selling the same or similar product?
  - Are you going to develop the market for your farm or take away part of another farm's market? If there is another PYO located close by, are there enough customers for both?
  - Can I produce a better product than the competition?
6. Do you have a quality product?
  - Compare your product with the best in the industry, not just your neighbor.
7. Do you have a business plan?

- This is essential if you need to borrow money.
  - Be conservative when making the plan.
8. Do you know your cost of production?
    - How much it costs to produce your product will determine your price and profit margin.
  9. Are you comfortable with the concept of "the customer is always right"?
    - Remember, the customer drives the direct marketing business.

### Other comments:

- Get involved with an association specific to your enterprise.
- The [North American Direct Marketing Association](#) is a good contact.
- The farm needs to pay for itself. Don't use your other income to subsidize farm expenses.

The MSU Extension 2018 Beginning Farmer Webinar Series includes an April 4, 2018, 7pm, 30-minute webinar on "Getting started with U-Pick farming". On-line registration for this webinar, and others in the series can be found at <https://events.anr.msu.edu/BegFrmWeb2018/>.

There are many other on-line resources of value to those exploring PYO farming, including

- The University of Vermont Extension's "[Develop a Pick-Your-Own Business](#)"
- The [Michigan Agritourism Association website](#)
- [pickyourown.org's "How to Start a Pick-Your-Own Farm Operation \(U-Pick, PYO Start-up Guide\)"](#).

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## East and West End Beef Meeting Set

Michigan State University will be conducting beef production meetings sponsored by CISCO in Rudyard and Tapiola. Jeremy Sweeten will discuss beef pasture management and Frank Wardynski will cover herd health and selection criteria. The meetings will start at 6:00 pm. CISCO is covering the cost of the meal. The first meeting will be conducted April 24 at the Rudyard Township Hall and the next on April 26, at the Feedmill Café at 35009 Tapiola Rd in Tapiola. Those wanting to attend and eat need to RSVP by calling the MSU Extension office in Ontonagon County at 906-884-4386.

## Classifieds

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## 20th Annual

## Carney-Nadeau FFA Alumni Consignment Auction

Sunday, May 6th @ Noon

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## Tattle Tales

*Reporting exotic species observations is a good practice, even though many of us are reluctant to do so. Increased knowledge, for both the reporter and the recipient, may be the greatest benefit.*

By Bill Cook, MSU Extension Forester

The impacts of invasive exotic pests are increasing. These species include plants, insects, pathogens, and other life forms. They infect terrestrial and aquatic habitats, and everything in between. Some can be serious game-changers in the management and integrity of our natural systems. All of them spread with the help of humans.

Is that important? If you believe it is, then please consider learning more about these invaders and report what you see.

The professional community that spends much of their time working on exotic pests is not usually the group that makes new discoveries. Most new observations are made by someone who sees something a bit unusual and is curious enough to find out what it is.

Nearly every professional associated with pest management would rather field a contact that ends with; "Oh, that's one of our native species and it's perfectly normal." It's a sigh of relief because we all know, that one day, the nightmare call will come.

What can you do? Learn and watch. Then, maybe, modify your behavior.

Arguably, the best on-line resource is the Midwest Invasive Species Information Network ([MISIN](#)). The Network has good thumbnail sketches of hundreds of species, as well as a way to report observations. To report, you'll need to create an account with a username and a password. It takes a little patience to learn how to navigate the MISIN site, but it's not too bad for those at least a bit familiar with using the Internet.

The MISIN website also provides account access to several citizen science programs, including the [Sentinel Tree Project](#) where you register, monitor, and report on a tree of your choice - or several trees.

Both the Michigan DNR and Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) have a "[watch list](#)" that has information about some of the most sought-after pests (that we don't want to see). The DNR has a nicely-down annual Forest Health [Highlights](#), but their staffing is down and the 2017 report might be on-hold. The USDA has a couple of websites, the [National Invasive Species Information Center](#) and the [Plants Database](#). There are also a group of Cooperative Invasive Species Management Areas ([CISMAs](#)) that cover nearly all of Michigan. County [Conservation Districts](#) are often allied with the CISMAs.

Regarding our forest resource, the current headliners are; Heterobasidion root disease, Asian long-horned beetle, beech bark disease, emerald ash borer, hemlock woolly adelgid, balsam woolly adelgid, oak wilt, 1000 cankers disease of walnut, and the pine shoot beetle. Some of these species are already well-established in Michigan and we need to manage forests with them in mind. Others are either not here yet, or are in the early stages of establishment.

Eradication success stories are possible with early detections. That's why it's important to have as many informed "eyes in the landscape" as possible. The Lake States forests were forever changed by the historic logging and wildfire era, and the subsequent human development pressures. However, these may look like minor events compared to what exotic invaders are capable of inflicting.

If you care enough, then listen, learn, report, and act. It's both interesting and rewarding.

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## Smart soils, plants, and gardening for pollinators key themes at Escanaba home and garden show

Attend free presentations, win garden-themed door prizes and learn how to help native pollinators and birds in your backyard at the Kiwanis Club Home and Garden Show April 6–8, 2018, in Escanaba, Michigan.

By Rebecca Krans, MSU Extension Educator

Plan now to attend Michigan State University Extension's free Smart Gardening presentations held throughout the Kiwanis Club Home and Garden Show/Pancake Feed April 6–8, 2018, in the Ruth Butler Building at the Upper Peninsula State Fairgrounds. Show times run from 5–8 p.m. Friday, 9–7 p.m. Saturday and 9–2 p.m. Sunday.

From smart soils, compost and food preservation to mason bees and inviting birds to your landscape, there is something for everyone to enjoy. All who attend the presentations will have a chance to win garden-themed door prizes, including free plants, tools, gift certificates and local food and wine gift baskets. Some items such as power tools will be on display for a silent auction until noon Sunday, April 8.

See the full Smart Gardening presentation schedule at the Kiwanis Club Home and Garden Show/Pancake Feed [website](#) for more information.

Other opportunities and resources that will be available include a Smart Gardening informational booth, which will include a number of free tip sheets on smart soils, smart plants, smart lawns, smart vegetables and smart gardening for pollinators. New tip sheets this year include "Understanding and managing invasive plant species," "Considerations for growing backyard small fruit" and "Smart gardeners improve their soil and weed control with organic mulch."

Extension Master Gardeners trained in Smart Gardening outreach will be on-hand to help assist with smart gardening questions. Also, while supplies last, Extension Master Gardeners and trainees will be presenting demonstrations about song birds and providing free bird feeders to attendees, compliments of local sponsors listed.

No registration is required for the Kiwanis Club Home and Garden Show/Pancake Feed. Admittance to the home and garden show is free, and pancake feed tickets are available to help support the Kiwanis Club.

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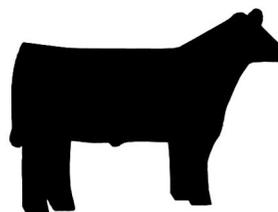
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### Market Report

Choice Steers	\$115—\$125 per 100 lbs.
Holstein Steers	\$80—\$92 per 100 lbs.
Hogs	\$51—\$56 per 100 lbs.
Lambs	\$150—\$175 per 100 lbs.
Cull cows	\$45—\$60 per 100 lbs.
Calves	\$75—\$130 per 100 lbs.
Goats	\$125—\$150 per 100 lbs.

#### Breeding and Feeder Animals

Grade Holstein cows \$1200—\$1600/head

Grade Holstein bred heifers \$1000—\$1600/head

#### Feed Prices across the U.P.

	Avg. \$/cwt	Avg. \$/ton	Price Range
Corn	\$10.36	\$207.25	\$160-244
Soymeal	\$22.90	\$458.00	\$420-552
Oats	\$11.63	\$232.25	\$200-450
Barley	\$9.75	\$195.00	\$160-240
Average price/100 wt. for 1 ton lots			



# EDUCATION ON THE FARM



**Save this Date!**  
**Saturday, June 9, 2018**

**2018 Farm Hosts:**  
**Peaceful Acres & Wallis Family Farm**

<http://www.clmcd.org/eof.asp>

### Did you know....

- The five most common tree species, by volume, in the U.P. are sugar maple, cedar, red maple, hemlock, and quaking aspen. Together, they represent 60 percent of the timber volume.
- Continued forest health issues are emerald ash borer, beech bark disease, oak wilt, and spruce budworm. Statewide, beech and the ashes have shown negative growth.
- The vast majority of Michigan wildfires are started in the spring by people doing stupid things. Please don't be one of those people.
- Avoid pruning or damaging oaks from mid-April to mid-July, due to the threat of spreading oak wilt.
- The reasons to stop moving firewood around are increasing every year. Sure, it's a U.P. tradition, but modern exotic species that damage forests will need to trump tradition.
- Most "pine" cones are NOT from pine trees. The U.P. and fourteen species of woodland conifers. Only four them are pines. Cedars, spruces, firs, hemlocks, and tamarack do not produce "pine" cones. Spruce trees grow spruce cones, etc. About a quarter of the U.P. conifer volume is from our pines.
- The U.P. may be the only U.S. region where forest ownership is roughly split among the government (42%), corporate (24%), and family (34%).
- Michigan has over 14 billion trees over one-inch in diameter. That's more trees than if every Michigander planted a thousand trees.
- The annual volume added to our inventory was over 88 million cords (equivalent). Laid side to side, that cord pile would stretch nearly 67,000 miles. That's half-way to the moon!
- Michigan has more forest area than at any time since the 1930s.
- Most of the Earth's "fresh" oxygen is produced by the oceans, not by trees (not even close). Interestingly, green plants use oxygen, just like humans do, through respiration. However, the net oxygen / carbon dioxide balance from usually tips in favor of oxygen, especially the younger forests.
- That trees grow TWO annual rings each year? The wider, light-colored ring grows in the springtime, followed by the narrower, darker-colored ring in the summer-time. Then, a tree stops growing wood for about six months.



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## Nurse crops for new alfalfa or mixed hay seedlings

*If you're thinking about a nurse crop with your new hay seedling, consider the pro's and con's first.*

By Jim Isleib, MSU Extension Educator

Does Michigan State University Extension recommend including a 'nurse' or 'companion' crop along with a new alfalfa or mixed, grass-legume seeding? Not necessarily. It depends on the situation and should be considered carefully. Some people don't like the term 'nurse' crop, since the typical cereal grain used for the purpose may act more like a weed, taking up water and nutrients needed by the more important perennial forage crop. On the other hand, when soil erosion is a serious threat, a nurse crop can save the day.

Here are a few pro's and con's:

### PRO

- Nurse crops provides erosion control where needed
- Nurse crops can help with weed suppression
- Roundup ready alfalfa provides easier control of nurse crops at early stage of growth
- Nurse crops can provide extra forage or grain during the establishment year for a perennial forage

### CON

- Alfalfa or mixed hay harvest usually begins sooner without nurse crops
- Nurse crops use water, nutrients and sunlight otherwise available to the perennial forage crop
- Nurse crops generally reduce first year perennial forage crop yield and may result in thinner stands
- Excessive nurse crop seeding rates add to seeding cost

Generally, nurse crops should be used only when needed. Otherwise, clear seeding of alfalfa or mixed hay is likely to be more efficient in the long run. Waiting to harvest grain from a nurse crop can result in significant reduction of stand in the alfalfa, or other perennial hay seedings. Consider the comparable value of oat grain from a thin, nurse crop seeding compared to the value of a good stand of multi-year alfalfa or mixed hay forage established without a nurse crop.

Removing the nurse crop early will reduce the competitive effect on the desired forage seeding. Spray the small grain

nurse crop with a labeled herbicide when the small grain is 4-6 inches tall. Of course, if the seeding is mixed grass and legume, killing a nurse crop with a grass herbicide will kill the forage grasses, too. Delaying nurse crop removal until the small grain is ready for forage harvest is another option. However, it results in extra competition with the perennial forage. Small grains should be removed no later than the boot stage. The seeding rate of small grains used as a nurse crop should be light: ½ -1 bushel per acre of oats, barley or triticale are common. Field peas are sometimes included to improve the protein content of the resulting nurse crop forage.

In 2018, a nurse crop trial funded by Project GREEN through the MSU Agriculture and Agribusiness Institute will be established at the MSU Upper Peninsula Research and Extension Center. Oat, barley and triticale, with and without 4010 field peas, will be seeded with alfalfa at low, medium and high seeding rates. The nurse crops will be harvested as forage. Total forage yield of nurse crop and alfalfa during the establishment year will be compared. An alfalfa seeding plot without nurse crop will be included for comparison. Alfalfa stands will be evaluated and compared from the various treatments in fall, 2018 and spring 2019.



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## ***Calendar of Events***

### **Beef Meetings**

April 24—Rudyard Township Hall @ 6 pm  
April 26—Feedmill Café in Tapiola @ 6 pm

### **Forage Twilight Walk @ UPREC**

June 13th—Details to be announced in May newsletter!

### **Farm Bureau Education Program @ UPREC**

June 26th—Details to be announced in May newsletter!

### **Life of Lake Superior**

July 10, 12, and 17 from 8 am—4:30 pm  
July 19 from 1—7 pm

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