

NOURSE

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COMMERCIAL NEWSLETTER

Volume XV – Spring 2006

FROM THE EDITOR,

Many things are developing in our industry that will influence the way we will do business in the years to come. In March, the Senate may pass legislation to tighten our borders in an effort to deal with the problem of undocumented workers. While we had hoped for amnesty as an easy solution, that word will not be in any legislation. The best scenario we can hope for is legislation that mirrors President Clinton's approach of documenting those people who can prove they have been working legitimately for the last 6 – 18 months. However, this or any other reasoning will only be speculation. A powerful industry position "white paper" has been delivered to our Senators and Congressmen written by the Produce Marketing Association and was signed by over 20 agricultural and non-agricultural industry association presidents and CEOs. We encourage you to review and support this position. The National Berry Crop Initiative steering committee members also have drafted an industry position "white paper" that we would also encourage you to review and support. We recommend you write or call your Senators and Congressmen immediately, addressing this issue.

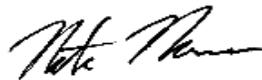
The most recent development that will also affect our industry is a proposal to cut funding for the Fruit Lab at the USDA Research Center in Beltsville, Maryland. We believe this legislation is intended to be a smoke screen/ scare tactic to get us to settle for less from the 2007 Farm Bill. For the last 20 years, we have watched State and Federal officials make budget cuts to agricultural programs of extension and research. Further cuts can no longer be tolerated or accepted, and can only lead to farmers being less competitive. Extension and Research has helped farmers' practices while supplying 4 out of 5 of our top selling strawberry varieties. Once the labor battle is over, we must begin to show our Senators and Congressmen that agricultural budget cuts will no longer be accepted.

After visiting with our growers at the Tradeshow meetings this winter, we know all of you are concerned with the rising prices of supplies for this spring caused by oil prices. This is an opportunity to increase the prices you ask for your berries this year. Direct market customers are going to expect it as they recognize the impact of higher oil prices.

Pick-Your-Own – We have many customers who charge \$1.50 - \$2.00 per pound for strawberries and others who charge more than that. For raspberries, \$4.00 per pound is necessary for a viable income per acre.

Pricing is a difficult area to consider, but important to your farm business. Evaluate your prices now and make the necessary adjustments based on our current economic conditions. Working together to charge the right price for your berries will contribute to your profitability and sustainability.

We understand and agree that all of these issues seem overwhelming, but we encourage you to address them. Contact your Senators and Congressmen at both State and Federal levels and encourage your State Farm Bureau and other organizations to do the same. We know that a little aggressive effort now will pay dividends later.



Nate Nourse, Sales Director

THIS YEAR'S TRADESHOW RAFFLE WINNERS

GREAT LAKES FRUIT & VEG. EXPO

STAN JOHNSON,
POPLAR GROVE, IL

NEW ENGLAND VEG. & FRUIT CONFERENCE

TOM CLEGG
SEEKONK, MA

SE FRUIT & VEG. CONF. & NASGA CONFERENCE

JAMES COOLEY
CHISNEE, SC

WI FRESH FRUIT & VEG. CONFERENCE.

BILL HENRY
FONTANA, WI

NO. AMERICAN FARMERS DIRECT MKTG. CONF.

TONY AUSTIN
PAONIA, CO

OHIO FRUIT & VEG. GROWERS CONG.

ROBERT HILGERT
MOGADORE, OH

INDIANA HORT. CONGRESS & TRADE SHOW

TERRY RICHARDSON
WATERLOO, IN

MID-ATLANTIC FRUIT & VEG. CONVENTION

LEAH M'CORMACK
MIDDLETOWN, NJ

EMPIRE STATE FRUIT & VEG. EXPO

ODED KALIR
BROCKPORT, NY

It was great meeting those of you who attended this winter's tradeshow. Thank you for stopping by!

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ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS: AFFECTING SIZE, YIELD, AND TASTE

NATE NOURSE

Conversations with growers this winter had two distinct themes: flavor, and production. We believe these issues could be associated with environmental conditions the plants were subjected to before, during, and after harvest.

We can further distinguish these conditions by those we can and cannot control and the cultural practices growers can perform to relieve or limit the damage by excess.

The majority of the time, flavor is affected by too much or not enough water and/or sunlight. Most growers recognize that flavor can be washed out by too much rain or irrigation, but many have recently learned that inadequate moisture and/or sunlight will reduce flavor. This issue is more noticeable in higher producing varieties that require more water. Examples include Darselect strawberry, and Caroline raspberry, which are larger and juicier if they receive adequate moisture.

This leads us to production issues. Before and during flower

bud development, both overall plant health and adequate moisture are key components. After harvest is an important time to provide timely and adequate moisture. Also, disease and insect control to maintain highly efficient foliage, is very important and supported by research. The combination of these conditions will greatly influence flower bud production and subsequently fruit production the following season.

Another factor that can influence both flavor and production is herbicide use. Growers are highly concerned about controlling weeds with the lowest labor cost, but how is herbicide usage affecting plant health? Plants are affected in many ways. First, through a general decline in vigor, due to damage to leaf tissue. Second, by changing metabolic activity because of damage to the roots.

We must also consider that microorganisms are negatively impacted. And finally, the inhibition of root and runner development caused by

herbicides. These negative influences happen to some degree with all herbicides, including those applied to other crops in years prior to planting.

In conclusion, both research and growers' results indicate that there are other environmental conditions that alone may seem insignificant, but together, they make an impact. Is your pH too high or too low? Are imbalances of micro-nutrients affecting health and production? Is less Ozone in the atmosphere letting through too much ultraviolet light, sun burning plants and fruit? These seemingly minor factors will affect certain varieties more so than others, especially our most productive ones. If you add in factors of too much or too little water, and the effects of other management practices, combined with unfavorable conditions, flavor and yield will be impacted.

SPRING FERTILIZATION FOR STRAWBERRIES

TIM NOURSE

Although most States do not recommend spring fertilization, many growers use it as a standard practice. But, with today's newer, high performing varieties, spring feeding can result in increased yields.

WHEN TO CONSIDER SPRING FERTILIZATION:

1. If your plantings went into the fall in a weakened condition, or with heavy leaching fall rains, a spring application of 20 pounds of actual nitrogen would certainly be appropriate.
2. When you suspect signs of winter injury, spring fertilization is a must. We know today that crown damage reduces the efficiency for the plant to take up resources. Therefore, ample feed needs to be available to the newly developing roots to make a crop. Depending on the degree of damage from the winter, a range of 20 to 40 pounds of actual nitrogen would be effective.
3. Under normal conditions, it is appropriate to apply some nitrogen in the spring. If you are satisfied with your present fertilization program, it may not be necessary under your conditions. But, if you question whether or not you have been feeding heavy enough, an application of up to 20 pounds of nitrogen would certainly not hurt your planting, especially if you are applying it through your drip irrigation system.

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PRUNING PRELUDE RED RASPBERRIES FOR BEST RESULTS

TIM NOURSE

In our 2004 Fall newsletter, we discussed the pruning management of Prelude for the best results. Because of the increase in popularity of Prelude, we are repeating the discussion on pruning Prelude for the best yields for the summer crop.

During the winter or early spring, prune the canes back to about chest height (about 4 ½ feet). This pruning will cause multiple fruiting laterals or additional cane development from the top auxiliary buds.

This pruning also removes the primocane wood that produced fruit the fall before and the multiple cane branching that results in increased fruit production for the coming summer crop.

Please contact us for further information.

FERTILIZING POLANA FOR BEST YIELDS AND PERFORMANCE

TIM NOURSE

We have discussed before the additional fertilizer requirements of Polana. Polana is our earliest fall (primocane) red raspberry, and is highly productive.

Growers are experiencing that Polana responds to additional fertilizer. Our recommendation:

1) Make your normal early spring application using a complete formula (10-10-10) at 500 pounds per acre. Splitting this application to apply ½ in April and ½ in May is general practice.

2) Once the new growth has reached a height of about 8 inches, apply another 30-50 pounds of actual nitrogen per acre. This application is often split ½ in June, and ½ in July.

Please Note: If you are fertilizing though your drip irrigation system, the extra nitrogen can be applied through the drip at 3 pounds of actual nitrogen per week.

Without extra nitrogen, Polana will often produce very short cane growth. The extra nitrogen will result in taller cane growth and increased yields. Higher canes will also result in easier picking.



SPRING FERTILIZATION FOR STRAWBERRIES CONT'D FROM PAGE 2

APPLICATION METHODS:

Application of spring fertilizers through your drip irrigation system is the ideal application method. Applying 1-3 pounds nitrogen per week allows you to spoon feed your plants, and reduces the possibility of “over-feeding.”

If a broadcast application is your only alternative, use of smaller split applications gives you the best control. Yes, it takes more time, but you can better control the amount and reduce the risk of putting on too much with one application.

SPECIAL NEEDS OF THE CABOT VARIETY:

Many growers like Cabot for its excellent size and good flavor, but under certain conditions the early fruit are rough and misshapen. Looking at the surface of the fruit, the seeds appear to be uneven or have varying levels of development. This is caused at pollination. Boron is an important element in the pollination process. Therefore, a spring application of Boron can reduce this initial fruit roughness.

Boron application rate: Using SOLUBOR, soluble Boron, apply 5 pounds per acre. As Solubor is 20% Boron, 5 pounds equals 1 pound of actual Boron per acre.

Solubor may be incorporated with your fungicide sprays. We suggest you make application just before the fruit flowers open.

Please contact us if you have any questions.

THE CORRECT pH of SPRAY WATER

TIM NOURSE

If you are having inconsistent results with the various sprays in your spray program, the pH of your spray water could be the cause. The best pH for your spray water is 4.5 to .6.0. Many growers experience pH's of 7.0 and higher. To get the best efficiency from your spray compounds, this higher pH must be reduced. And with the high cost of our spray materials today, it is essential to get the best results with each spray.

To deal with this pH issue, first, get a pH reading of your spray water. There are several additives you can use to reduce pH levels. But, one of the common additives is Quest. The label has a pH chart to indicate how much should be added per 100 gallons of the spray water to get to the right level.

Contact us, or your local chemical representative for more details.

NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTORS

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PLANT AVAILABILITY FOR SPRING DELIVERY

We have packed out an excellent crop of plants for planting this spring. We encourage you to order now while we still have a good selection of varieties. *Call us today so you won't be disappointed.*

STRAWBERRIES

All June-bearing strawberry varieties are still available, although several varieties are close to being sold out. For day-neutrals, or ever bearing, we have a limited supply of Seascape, other day-neutrals are available only in trial quantities (25-100 plants).

RASPBERRIES

We still have good availability of the summer-bearing varieties- reds, blacks and purple. A few varieties are approaching the sold-out position. For primocane or ever-bearing varieties, we have an excellent supply of Polana, Autumn Britten, and Caroline. We have a limited supply of Heritage, and Anne is sold out.

BLUEBERRIES

We have an adequate supply of Blueray, and Jersey, all other varieties are in limited supply. It would be important to reserve your spring needs now while there is still some selection.

CURRANTS & GOOSEBERRIES

We have a good supply of currant varieties. We also have Titania black currants available, although it is not listed in our catalog. We also have an excellent supply of Hinnonmaki Red gooseberries.

RHUBARB

We have a good supply of the MacDonald strain.

ASPARAGUS ROOTS

We have a good supply of all asparagus varieties at this time.

Contact us – we look forward to the opportunity of supplying your spring planting needs.

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In This Issue:

- Pruning Prelude Raspberries
- Special Fertilization for Polana
- Spring Fertilization Program
- Environmental Conditions that Affect your Plantings

The logo for Nourse Farms, featuring the word "NOURSE" in a bold, stylized, grey font. The letter "O" is replaced by a white silhouette of a maple leaf.

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