

Look What's Out There

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<http://www.wvu.edu/~agexten/>

Greenhouses: An Advantage for Organic Growers

Greenhouses offer organic growers a more controlled environment for managing the crop, including containing biological pest control agents inside and protecting the crop from weather problems, including extreme temperatures and rainfall. These same advantages have driven the increase in greenhouse hydroponic production of vegetables and herbs worldwide allowing high quality greenhouse produce to be available year round for the conventional produce market.

A conventional field grower can become a certified organic grower, but must have a three year transitional period in those fields to become fully certified. New greenhouse construction using a soilless production system could become certified in the first year since the production is not in the conventional soil. Existing greenhouse space in conventional production must also have a transitional period, even if in a soilless system.

Challenges of a Greenhouse

The challenge in this system is providing proper crop nutrients in the correct amount and time. Fertilization programs for organic production in a soilless system are difficult to develop because of a limited number of specific individual nutrients that can be used. The fertilizer program must depend upon a complete organic fertilizer material, usually made from composted animal wastes and other ingredients. This type of material can serve as the basis of the fertilizer program but must be fine tuned with additional nutrients supplied by other organic sources.

The other major aspect of greenhouse organic production is the entire area of pest control. The

greenhouse provides a great opportunity by being able to exclude many pests and control the environment inside the greenhouse to reduce disease pressures. Many biological control agents are commercially available and could be important in controlling pests in a certified organic production area.

The whole area of combining greenhouse soilless and organic production has been a controversial area. Some feel as though organic production must involve the soil. The National Organic Program (www.ams.usda.gov/nop), which was fully implemented in October 2002, standardized what will be allowed from state to state. Soilless organic systems can be certified under the current rules of this program. Of course, a final certification reviews all of the systems and practices used on the farm.

As a result, be sure to contact a certifying agent before planning your system. A list of current certifying agents is available at the National Organic Program Web site. [CVM](#)

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Northeastern Pest Management Center

In September 2000, the USDA funded the creation of the Northeastern Pest Management Center (NE PMC) as part of a nationwide pest management information network established to respond quickly to information needs in both the public and private sectors. One of four regional Pest Management Centers, the NE PMC will help USDA and its partner institutions identify, prioritize, and coordinate a national pest management research, extension, and education program to be implemented on a regional basis.

The Center's most basic function is to develop and maintain a pest management information network that will contribute to environmentally and economically sound pest management decisions. The network serves two major purposes: to facilitate communication among key groups of people, and to provide these groups with broad access to pest management information.

NE PMC is working to connect a diverse array of people who have an interest in pest management policy and implementation throughout the region. These include pest management users (farmers, nurserymen, park and turf managers, building superintendents, pest control operators, homeowners, gardeners, and others), consumer and environmental groups, governmental regulatory agencies, researchers, and educators. NE PMC is networking these groups both through the Center's own organization (Advisory Council, Steering Committee, Commodity Work Groups, Project Leaders) and through development of electronic communications structures such as email lists, online bulletin boards, and web pages. Recently, the NE PMC name has been changed to "Northeastern Integrated Pest Management Center."

USDA to depopulate herd with offspring of BSE-infected cow

The bull-calf operation in Sunnyside, Wash., home of the BSE-infected cow's one-month-old calf, will be depopulated, USDA officials announced on Jan. 5. The depopulation, which will proceed sometime this week, will involve 450 animals, chief veterinarian Ron DeHaven told reporters. The entire herd is being depopulated because the calf was not tagged at birth and thus cannot be identified, again raising the issue of how animals are currently tracked in the United States. (*Food Chemical News*, Tuesday, Jan. 06, 2004, Vol.6, Issue 2)

Dunbar sanitary board receives environmental award

PHILADELPHIA – The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency presented the City of Dunbar Sanitary Board, in Kanawha County, W. Va.

with a regional award for excellence in operation and maintenance of its wastewater treatment facility.

The award honors the staff involved in the day-to-day operations of the facility, and recognizes local officials for their commitment to maintain and protect their community's environment. The city is receiving the award in the "most improved" category, which consists of facilities that have exhibited a significant improvement in operations and maintenance. (EPA News Release, December 17, 2003).

Pesticide/Chemical News

*An organic nematicide has recently been cleared for use by the Organic Materials Review Institute. Ontrol® is a mixture of linolenic acid and ketones from Poulenger USA Inc., that is labeled for use on vegetables, fruit trees, and other agricultural applications. (*Citrus & Vegetable Magazine*, November 2003, via Chemically Speaking, UF).

* Bayer receives approval for new insecticide: The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recently approved a label for Bayer's neonicotinoid insecticide, Calypso 4F Flowable, for apples and pears. Thiacloprid is in the same family of chemicals as Bayer's Provado as well as Cerexagri's Assail and Syngenta's Actara. (*The Grower Magazine*, Jan. 2004)

* EPA OKs new miticide: Valent USA recently received federal registration for Zeal, a new miticide that controls spider mites and red mites for up to five weeks on apples, pears and strawberries. The product is not yet registered in California. Zeal contains the active ingredient, etoxazole, which is an insect growth regulator with a new mode of action. No known cross-resistance to the product currently exists.

The product prevents mite eggs from hatching and prevents immature mites from molting. It does not control adult mites, although it does sterilize female adults.

(*The Grower Magazine*, Jan. 2004)