This is the first newsletter of 2010. The newsletter is arriving earlier this year due to the number of crops we are trying to provide updates on and the number of issues that have already arisen. If you would like an electronic copy of the newsletter via email contact me at ajbussan@wisc.edu.

Vegetable Crop Update – A.J. Bussan, Department of Horticulture, UW-Madison, Tel. No. 608-225-6842, email: ajbussan@wisc.edu

The growing season started near the end of March for a number of crops in 2010, with folks planting potatoes and other crops prior to ‘Good Friday’. Weather conditions have been dry allowing for field preparation and plenty of sunshine has warmed soils for planting.

**Potatoes**

**Storage.** I don’t usually provide storage updates, but we still have a large volume of potatoes in storage. Snowden potatoes began to accumulate glucose during March, although we did not see that typical increase in sucrose associated with senescent sweetening. We have seen chip potatoes that required extensive preconditioning due to cold temperatures at harvest begin to senescent sweeten. Norkotah require in line applications to prevent sprout development. Norkotah treated with a single application of CIPC last fall have been sprouting after removal from storage and washing in our trials. We also may have large overages of potatoes due to the large crop last year and tight markets. Unsold potatoes need to be discarded in appropriate ways as the end of the storage season begins to approach us.

**Planting.** Soils have been plenty warm to plant for much of April. However, make sure seed is 45 to 50 F before handling to prevent bruising and try to plant into soil at temperatures within a few degrees of the seed pieces. Soils should be at least 50 F when planting to prevent seed piece decay. Soils are drying quickly with the little moisture we have received, especially if a growing cover crop is established. Water soils 1 to 2 days prior to planting to make sure soils are moist at planting again to prevent seed piece decay. Watering after planting should be avoided if possible. Make sure blades are sharp on seed cutters. Some seed piece decay issues have been reported in other states due to lack of sharpened blades and rough cut seed surface. Dull blades results in rough surface on seed pieces making suberization more difficult and longer to complete increasing the chance for infection of seed pieces by pathogens.

Vegetable Disease Update – A.J. Gevens, Department of Plant Pathology, UW-Madison, Tel. No. 608-890-3072, Email: gevens@wisc.edu

**Potatoes**

**Late blight update:** Late blight has been identified in a few tuber samples submitted for diagnosis during the early spring months. All of these samples were from home gardeners that had stored the tubers from the 2009 growing season. In some of these cases, the tubers were stored for consumption only and in others, the gardeners were intending to plant the tubers as seed. The presence of late blight in the stored tubers indicates an inoculum source for this year’s crop. It is important to be aware of this late blight risk. Additional sources that may be present...
as a result of the 2009 epidemic include infected volunteers, cull piles, seed, and mismanaged compost piles containing late blight-infected material. The WI Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection requires the destruction of cull piles by May 20. To date, there have been no reports of late blight in WI commercial seed or storage.

We will continue to provide Blitecast information via this newsletter and through the vegetable pathology website:  http://www.plantpath.wisc.edu/wivegdis/. We will have weather stations in Grand Marsh, Hancock, Plover, and Antigo. Additionally, we will have two weather stations in tomato production fields to provide Blitecast information to tomato producers in 2010. In 2009, this new late blight strain, now called US#22, appeared to prefer tomatoes. Hence, limiting disease in WI tomatoes will greatly assist in protecting the state’s potato crop.

**Seed update:** When cutting and curing seed, the following conditions need to be met to ensure proper suberization and seed health: 1) warm seed up to the lower 50’s (°F) prior to cutting, 2) post-cutting - maintain humidity at 95%, 3) do not pile cut seed higher than 6 ft deep to allow proper airflow, and 4) maintain temperatures between 50-55°F for proper curing. It is important that oxygen is appropriately provided to the cut seed or the risk of anaerobic bacterial disease increases. Fungicides applied as a powder to wet cut seed can cake or paste up and limit oxygen to the seed.

**Cucurbits**
Cucurbit downy mildew was a significant disease concern on cucumbers in 2009. Early detection and management of this disease is critical. We will be hosting cucurbit downy mildew sentinel plots throughout the state in the 2010 growing season. Each site will host 7 different cucurbit types and we will scout the plants for downy mildew on a weekly basis. First finds will be reported through this newsletter and will be provided to a national forecasting program led by researchers at North Carolina State University. The link to the forecasting website is below. The site has a few new features. Notably, you can enter the location of your farm or farms of interest and select when and how often you want to receive an email or text message alert when a downy mildew report is made. This feature allows you to select a radius of 10-100+ miles around your farm and can help you stay informed with minimal effort during your busy season.