Vegetable Crop Update #2
May 20, 2010

If you would like an electronic copy of the newsletter via email contact me at ajbussan@wisc.edu.

Events: Contact me for more information
June 8, Tuesday, 9-3, Fresh Market Vegetable Grower Field Day, King Berry Farm, Waupaca
June 16, Wednesday, Evening fresh market walking tour, Wilton, Monroe County
June 22, Tuesday, Evening fresh market walking tour, St. Croix County
July 6, 10 am, Walking Farm Tour, Tipi Produce, Rock County
July 12, Monday, Evening fresh market walking Tour, Columbia County
July 20-22, Farm Technology Days, River Falls, WI
July 27, Tuesday, Hancock Ag Research Station Field Day, 12:30 to 4:00 pm
August 10-11, Processing Snap Bean and Sweet Corn Demo, Hancock WI

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

Dry weather has continued to promote planting of many crops across the state. Frosts 10 to 14 days ago did nip some emerged potatoes and other crops. Warm weather has promoted emergence of most of the early planted potatoes, sweet corn, and carrots while onions and peas continue to progress nicely. Frost free date has passed in Southern and Central WI, so planting can progress on nearly all crops.

**Potatoes.** The crop has emerged and much of the hilling and side dressing of the first shot of fertilizer has been completed. We are applying surfactant to many of the potatoes at the Hancock Ag Research Station this summer to avoid the dry zone around tubers and to improve irrigation management. Now is the time to scout fields and evaluate stands for even emergence and examine for any issues with seed piece decay that may have affected emergence. Irrigation may be necessary if root zone becomes to dry, but remember the crop is not anywhere near full canopy so actual ET is much lower than the reported 0.15 to 0.20” per day. Irrigation and wet soils prior to tuber initiation can lead to increased incidence of early dying.

**Sweet corn.** Warm soils resulting from sunshine and lack of rain should promote good to excellent emergence of super sweet sweet corn. Soil temperatures below 55 F within the first 3 days of planting can reduce emergence of super sweet sweet corn. Remember not to plant mixed stands of super sweet and standard sweet corn as cross pollination can result in loss of sugary trait in the seed and a not so sweet harvest.

**Tomatoes.** Our research has shown that delaying planting of tomatoes beyond May 25 in Southern and Central, WI can reduce yields by 5 to 10% and also delay harvest of first ripened fruit. Planting tomatoes on plastic mulch increased yields with and without irrigation by 20% as well so it is worth the hassle even beyond the benefits in weed management.

**Onions.** Clint Schock from Oregon State wrote an excellent article on irrigation management in onion in the most recent Onion World magazine. As most of you know, drought stress can
severely limit onion productivity. Onion sensitivity to drought stress is almost immediate as good moisture is necessary for good establishment and to prevent blow outs. Some seeded onions did have to be replanted due to 30+ mph winds during April and early May. Unlike many crops, onion really has no growth stage where drought can be tolerated. Drought stress at the 4 leaf stage can affect leaf development and restrict bulb size. Drought stress during late bulb development can also reduce yield even if the tops have fallen over. Drought is commonly used to mature the crop and is an effective practice. However, the crop will begin to reduce water use as it matures and this is a good means for identifying bulb maturity. Equipment is available at reasonable price for monitoring soil moisture. Anyone interested in more information feel free to contact me.

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: No late blight has been identified on potato or tomato plants in Wisconsin at this time. However, late blight has been confirmed on tomato plants in home gardens and/or greenhouses in Florida, Louisiana, and Maryland. While it is not yet known if this Phytophthora infestans is of the new US#22 type, it is concerning that the pathogen has been identified this early in the season in the south and mid-Atlantic regions of the U.S. While these inoculum sources are geographically at-a-distance, growers should be aware of these findings and be vigilant as potatoes emerge from the ground here in Wisconsin. We will be setting up our weather stations to begin generating early blight and late blight disease forecasting information this week.

May 20 is the deadline to destroy any piles of discarded potatoes, as per officials with the Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection. The cull potatoes could potentially harbor Phytophthora infestans, creating an ‘in house’ source of inoculum for this season.

Frost: Several areas in Wisconsin experienced frosts (and some snow) over the past 7-14 days. On the young potato crop, frost can result in destruction of some or all of the foliage after plant emergence. Frost damage can set back row closure and can result in branching of sprouts if frost burns the plant down below the soil surface. The appearance of frost damage can look a bit like foliar disease.