

NEWS FROM THE NJDA

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Important Dates for your Calendar:

October is National Vegetarian Month

Oct. 28 - State Board of Ag Mtg. in Trenton, NJDA Bldg.

Oct. 31 - Halloween and Carve a Pumpkin Day

Nov. 2 - Deviled Egg Day

Nov. 3 - Election Day

Nov. 11 - Veterans Day

Nov. 18 - State Board of Ag Mtg. in Trenton, NJDA Bldg.

Nov. 23 - Eat a Cranberry Day

From the Secretary's Desk



NJ Secretary of Agriculture, Douglas H. Fisher

It's fall, such and exciting time of year, especially for farmers and families because of the many opportunities for agri-tourism. There are so many activities to enjoy that are both educational and fun. We hear from people across the tri-state area about the growing popularity of these events that allow New Jerseyans to get out on a farm. Agritourism augments farmers' income that fluctuates due to the many changing conditions farmers face every day, like the weather.

Besides agritourism, another great way to experience life on the farm is to participate in a "gleaning" for a feeding operation. Gleaning is harvesting produce to provide to the less fortunate. In the coming weeks, I will be participating in a gleaning with New Jersey Farmers Against Hunger, announcing gleaning grants for feeding organizations and volunteering at a food bank as we head into the time of year when we give thanks for all we have and we help those in need.

By getting involved in your local community to help others, everyone benefits from the experience.

From the State Board President



State Board of Agriculture President, Marty Bullock

The State Board met on September 30, at the Public Health Environmental and Agricultural Laboratory (PHEAL), New Jersey State Police Headquarters Complex, 3 Schwarzkopf Dr., Ewing.

Planning continues for the 2016 State Agricultural Convention to be held at a new location, Harrah's Resort and Waterfront Convention Center. The Resolution process will begin shortly so County Boards should begin working on Resolutions that they would like considered at the Convention. Resolutions should be sent to Department staff member, Jeffrey Beach @jeffrey.beach@ag.state.nj.us

The next meeting of the State Board will be Wednesday, October 28 at the Health & Agriculture Building, beginning at 1:30 pm.

The Board was excited to be one of the first to see the Department's new Farm to School website! <http://farmtoschool.nj.gov/>

Resources for procurement, food service staff training, events, recipes and ideas can all be found through the new site.

In addition, a social media campaign has been launched and we invite you to follow the farm to school program on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Pinterest by searching "farmtoschoolnj" on each.

NJDA Officials Observe Farm to School Week

It is a well-known fact that fresh fruits and vegetables are healthy for us, and if they are grown near where we live, they are even better. It makes sense, then, to serve fresh, New Jersey produce to school children in their school meals programs. That is the basis of the farm to school movement and to celebrate this connection between New Jersey schools and farmers, the New Jersey Department of Agriculture celebrates Jersey Fresh Farm to School week each year the last week of September.

This year, New Jersey Secretary of Agriculture Douglas H. Fisher kicked off Farm to School Week on September 22 with a visit to Philips Academy Charter School in Newark to highlight the school's efforts to incorporate local produce into their school meals program and educate students about where their food comes from.

"Each year, excitement about the farm to school program has grown around the state with more schools serving New Jersey produce and growing it themselves in school gardens," said Secretary Fisher. "Students are benefiting greatly from eating more healthy, local fruits and vegetables and learning about agriculture."

Philips Academy converted from an independent school in 2013 and has 370 K-8 students from Newark, East Orange and Irvington. The school has a 4,600-square-foot rooftop garden, started in 2009, that is currently growing leafy greens and herbs as well as some remaining summer harvests. Lunch is served family style and features made-from-scratch dishes using seasonal, local produce.

The Academy hosts a unique, co-curricular program known as EcoSPACES, which is committed to providing students with the tools to lead healthy and environmentally productive lives through an interactive approach to learning. Frank Mentasana, EcoSPACES Director, said the program empowers children and their families with the education needed to be able to make good decisions to lead healthier lives.

"At Philip's Academy Charter School, we believe farm to school is important because it provides support systems that assist us as educators in instilling in our students the core values of our EcoSPACES Program," said Mentasana. "Our focus on food literacy is taught through our various learning environments to enable students to understand where food comes from, the importance of seasonal, local and whole foods, in addition to wellness. Farm to School is a great resource for these initiatives."

During the visit, Secretary Fisher was able to visit the school's rooftop garden and the cafeteria to see the school lunch service.

On September 24, NJDA Division of Food and Nutrition Director Rose Tricario visited Nathan Hale School in Carteret, which serves 500 students grades pre-K to 5th and is one of 151 schools in the state to receive the New Jersey Department of Agriculture's Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program this year. Through this program, the school receives a grant which provide students with fresh fruits and vegetables as a snack during the school day.

School Principal Christian Zimmer said the school community is thankful to have been selected to receive the generous and needed grant for the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program.



Photo, left to right: Rose Tricario, NJ Dept. of Agriculture, Director, Division Food and Nutrition; Janice Vecchione, NJ Dept. of Agriculture, School Nutrition Programs Northern Region Specialist; Secretary Fisher, in the Philips Academy school garden.

NJDA Officials Observe Farm to School Week (cont.)

“Nutrition is a very important part of our educational process and we are thrilled to have this opportunity,” said Zimmer. “It is vital to support our local farms and we work with Maschios, our food service management company, to deliver the best fresh fruits and vegetables for our students.”

During the visit, Tricario visited Jessica McGrath’s first-grade classroom to observe the fresh fruit and vegetable program in action. Peaches from Larchmont Farms in Deerfield, NJ were served. As part of the visit, the students were able to ask Tricario a few questions about her job and school lunches. They talked about their favorite fruits and some students even saved their peach seeds in hopes that they would be able to plant a tree at home.

To wrap up Farm to School Week on September 25, Tricario celebrated outstanding school gardens at Dorothy L. Bullock School in Glassboro and Timber Creek Regional High School in Gloucester Township.

Bullock School’s garden was built in May 2015 with the help of Ahmed Hassan, a California-based contractor who hosted the HGTV show “Yard Crashers” and DIY Network’s “Turf War.” Supplies and labor were donated by Elite Landscaping of Berlin. An army of volunteers pitched in over the course of a weekend to install the garden.

Since then, garden coordinator Sonya Harris, a first-grade special education teacher at the school, said the garden has thrived with the help of the staff, students, parents and community. “The community members love it and parents love coming with their children, who enjoy giving their parents tours of the garden,” said Harris. “We are currently planning for fall planting of lettuce, broccoli, and collard greens and are creating a project-based STEAM Lab/Garden Observation Classroom to teach the students science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics through garden education.”

Harris said currently, the school has Wellness Wednesdays where a Food Corps representative prepares a healthy dish with the students. This month, children made salsa using tomatoes harvested from the garden.

At Timber Creek Regional High School, Tricario toured the school garden and watched student members of the Green Team, a club charged with the task of reducing the school’s carbon footprint, plant soybeans and harvest eggplant, tomatoes, peppers and herbs for the culinary class, who prepared tomato bruschetta and eggplant parmesan for the guests to sample.

“The food from the garden has been used for various purposes around the school,” said Charles Renner, AP Environmental Teacher and Green Team advisor. “The cafeteria staff has used some of the vegetables on the salad bar. Our Multiple Disabilities program has used the veggies to teach the kids about proper cutting techniques, nutrition and culinary skill, as has our culinary classes. I use the garden in my classes to teach nutrition, crop rotation, watering techniques, soil types, composting, testing for nutrient levels and other lessons.”

In addition, the Department of Agriculture launched a new Jersey Fresh Farm to School website at www.farmtoschool.nj.gov. The website has resources for schools on how to start a farm to school program, where to source New Jersey produce and how to plant a school garden. For farmers, the website provides information on how they can sell their produce to schools and gives them farm to school marketing materials.

The website has a listing of farm to school events and news and has helpful links for students and parents. Also, each month a “Top Tomato” will be highlighted, a person who has made a difference in Farm to School. In addition, the website links to the newly-created Jersey Fresh Farm to School Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Pinterest pages.

“Successful farm to school programs need the support of school administrators, teachers, parents and the community,” said Fisher. “We congratulate all the schools and farmers across the state that are currently involved and encourage those not yet involved to visit our new website or call the Department for assistance.”

Tree-Killing Emerald Ash Borer Found in Six NJ Counties

New Jersey Department of Agriculture officials today reported the emerald ash borer (EAB), an invasive beetle that attacks and kills ash trees, is active in 14 towns in six counties.

A trapping program in 82 towns over the summer and reporting from homeowners has resulted in the discovery to date of the beetle in Hillsdale, Bergen County; Edgewater Park and Westampton, Burlington County; Ewing, Hamilton Township, Hopewell, Princeton, West Windsor., Mercer County; Monroe and South Brunswick, Middlesex County; Bridgewater, Franklin Township and Hillsborough, Somerset County; and Allentown, Monmouth County.

“Just as emerald ash borer has swiftly spread through other states in the nation, it has now moved to New Jersey and we must prepare for the impact of this highly destructive invasive pest, which could lead to the death of ash trees,” said New Jersey Secretary of Agriculture Douglas H. Fisher. “We ask that towns and counties act now to put plans in place to respond to the beetle.”

In an effort to protect the state’s ash trees, the Department of Agriculture initiated the field release this fall of biocontrol parasitoids for emerald ash borer in four locations in Bridgewater, Hillsborough, Franklin and Ewing Townships. Releases of almost 9,000 larval and 1,600 egg EAB parasitoids were made in wooded ash sites containing low levels of EAB in September in an effort to help suppress building EAB populations. The beneficial insects were supplied by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s EAB Biocontrol Laboratory in Brighton, Michigan.

Municipal officials and residents of those towns and counties are encouraged to visit the New Jersey Emerald Ash Borer website www.emeraldashborer.nj.gov where they can find resources on how to protect their ash trees or what to do with dead or dying trees.

Emerald ash borer was first discovered in New Jersey in May 2014 by a private citizen in Bridgewater. EAB is now present in 25 U.S. states and two Canadian provinces. It was first discovered in Michigan in 2002 and has since killed tens of millions of trees.

The adult emerald ash borer is a metallic green insect about one-half inch long and one-eighth inch wide making it hard to detect in the wild. The female beetles lay eggs on the bark of ash trees. The eggs hatch and the larvae bore into the bark to the fluid-conducting vessels underneath. The larvae feed and develop, cutting off the flow of nutrients and, eventually killing the tree. EAB attacks and kills North American species of true ash, and tree death occurs three to five years following initial infestation. EAB is native to Asia.

The New Jersey Emerald Ash Borer website, developed by the New Jersey Emerald Ash Borer Task Force, made up of representatives of the NJDA, NJ Department of Environmental Protection, Rutgers University, and U.S. Department of Agriculture, has many resources for municipal officials, woodland owners and residents. The site explains the signs of the beetle, how to identify ash trees, how to report a possible infestation, and what to do with dead or removed trees. For towns, there is an Emerald Ash Borer Management Plan template and a tree removal cost calculator. For homeowners, there is a risk map and treatment options. For woodland owners, there is a list of companies that will accept ash.

New Jersey is part of a federal quarantine to prevent the spread of the beetle, which prohibits movement of ash trees outside of the quarantine zone. The Department also recommends not moving firewood. Firewood is a vehicle for movement of tree-killing forest pests including EAB. Use locally-sourced firewood when burning it at home and when travelling, burn firewood where you buy it. Make sure to burn all wood purchased.

Report signs of the beetle to the Department of Agriculture at **609-406-6939**. For more information about Emerald Ash Borer, visit www.emeraldashborer.nj.gov.

