



Illinois Extension

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

Illinois Fruit and Vegetable News

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A newsletter to provide timely, research-based information that commercial fruit & vegetable growers can apply to benefit their farming operations.

Address any questions or comments regarding this newsletter to the individual authors listed after each article or to its editors, Nathan Johannng, 618-939-3434, njohann@illinois.edu or Bronwyn Aly 618-695-2441, baly@illinois.edu. The ***Illinois Fruit and Vegetable News*** is available on the web at: <https://extension.illinois.edu/specialty-crops/ifvn>. To receive or be removed from email notification of new postings of this newsletter, contact Nathan Johannng or Bronwyn Aly at the phone numbers or email addresses above.

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Upcoming Programs

See the **University of Illinois Extension Local Food Systems and Small Farms Team's website** at: <https://extension.illinois.edu/lfssf>

- **Addressing Legal Farm Risks** | A series of free webinars from IL Extension and Farm Commons designed to minimize legal risk and build resilience for IL farmers. Additional information can be found [here](#).
 - October 24 [Business Structure Basics](#)
 - January 23 [Farm Liability and Insurance Basics](#)

Regional Reports

From the South Suburban Cook Urban Agriculture Demonstration and Research site (SoSuCo) in Matteson, IL (Cook County)...

The end of the outdoor growing season is ending over the next several weeks at [SoSuCo](#). We are in the process of clearing out our high tunnel tomatoes to prepare for winter crop planting through mid-October. We have been harvesting tomatoes since the second week in June this year. There will be a research report developed based on the projects conducted at the site. You can see from the screen grab below that the indeterminate tomatoes in high tunnels get quickly out of control even with judicious pruning and trellising. Having a movable high tunnel would make the summer to winter transition smoother, but we must make an executive decision to pull the tomatoes in time to hit our winter plant dates. While the tunnel tomatoes are done, we will continue to harvest outdoor tomatoes until the first frost.



We have also been refining our pest monitoring surveys at SoSuCo this year. Since mid-July we have been monitoring many caterpillar pests for moth flight using delta traps and pheromone lures. Our late August traps caught 1 Corn Ear Worm, 1 Beet Army Worm, and 1 Cabbage Looper while we showed no activity at our South Cook site for Diamondback Moth, Black Cutworm, Brown Stink Bug, or Squash Vine Borer in late August. In my latest review of the traps, we had caught a few moths of all species listed here except Squash Vine Borer or Brown Stink Bug. These low numbers could be attributed to late emergence this season mixed with the geographical uniqueness of the SoSuCo site. Even so, we have not had terrible pest pressure this year from insects.

I am still seeing imported cabbage worm flight and monitoring damage then spraying Bt to keep our fall Brassica plantings at a high harvest quality.



Although insects have not been a huge pest this year at SoSuCo, we continue to have a decent amount of pressure from meadow voles outdoors. Damage to peppers have been significant this year in our raised beds. While we trap many of the voles, our use of landscape fabric and tarps for weed pressure also creates a wonderful hiding spot for voles. We will continue to study better solutions for keeping weed pressure down, while not creating hiding locations for meadow voles.



Be sure to stay connected to the [Urban Ag Connect vlog](#) series for other updates related to SoSuCo. Happy fall!

Zack Grant (708-679-6889; zgrant2@illinois.edu)

From southwestern Illinois (Waterloo)... Now that fall is here, we have also had some very fall-like weather to go with it. We had a few hot days in September, but overall temperatures have been very pleasant with highs in the 70s and lows in the 50s many days. We have been very dry and missed some of the rain chances that had passed through only getting a few tenths if anything. Currently, there is no rain in sight for the near future, but lots of sun and more highs in the 70s. This week we have had some cool mornings with lows dipping down into the 40s. I could see signs of a first very light frost from lows on the morning of 9/28. On the rolling hills of our pumpkin fields at home you could see the leaves frosted in the low-lying parts of the field. This is the earliest that I can remember in the last 17 years of pumpkin growing seeing any frost injury. Last year was around October 8 and I thought that was early! Fortunately, it was only the upper leaves that were damaged and I did not see any damage to fruit. We have a few more nights of 40s predicted so I hope we don't get any more frost for now.



Frosted pumpkin leaves in low lying areas from the morning of 9/28/2022. Photo: N. Johanning

Out in the field we are well into apple and pumpkin harvest. I personally have had the best fruit set on apples I have ever had, actually a little too good. I did not get them thinned down quite like I would like so size was smaller but they are very good. Jonathan's are picked and just now picking Golden Delicious and Pixie Crunch. I also have Gold Rush but I will let them hang for another few weeks if I can. Pumpkins are in full swing with local markets very busy. The pumpkin crop for me is a little late due to drought conditions we had in July, but after that they rebounded quite well. Most of August and

September have been moderately cool, which pumpkins really love. Pumpkins size and fruit quality is very good with these cooler temperatures and I have some of the largest pumpkins I have ever had. The dry weather has been good for harvest and reducing fruit rots. We have been monitoring for melon worms in pumpkins and fortunately we have not found any in the traps or in field.

I have tried a few new pumpkin varieties this year. One I'll mention now is 'Lemonade.' This is a Harris Moran variety new to the market. I really loved its consistency and size and it yields very well. It is a *C. pepo* type (Jack O'Lantern) fruit and it eventually will turn from pale yellow/off-white to a light, golden yellow when mature. Not all consumers are ready for a yellow pumpkin but many love how it stands out or complements other colors in a mixed display.



New pumpkin variety 'Lemonade'. Photo: N. Johanning

Hopefully the weather continues to cooperate especially with some beautiful weekends, when so many people get out and visit on farm stand, fall activities and of course buy pumpkins.

Nathan Johanning (618-939-3434; njohann@illinois.edu)

From Dixon Springs Ag Center...It continues to be very dry in our part of the state, and temperatures have been typical for this time of year. With the continued lack of moisture, irrigation will continue to be important for our perennial small fruit crops, especially blueberries, that are setting the fruit buds for next year's crop. Plasticulture strawberry transplants have been set, and while they are receiving irrigation from the drip tape, nothing beats a good shower from mother nature to help get them settled into their new home. The last round of harvest from late planted sweet corn is underway.

We are in the process of removing all of the plants from one of our tunnels in preparation for the start of our next funded grant project, "Strategies for Improving Biological Control of Insect Pests for Vegetable Growers Utilizing High Tunnels". Within this tunnel, we will be planting cover crops by October 1, and they will overwinter with termination planned for the first part of March. Tomatoes, peppers and cut flowers will be planted into the tunnel around the first week of April. Our other in ground raised bed high tunnel will serve as a control and no cover crops or cut flowers will be planted into it, just tomatoes and peppers. This will be a two year project, working with Dr. Athey, and will



involve insect monitoring, sampling, analyzing, and releasing. Look for continued information on this project in the coming months.

For the past two years, we have been the southernmost site involved in the Midwest Hemp Growers Database project. We have grown out a few plants of several different industrial hemp varieties, submitted samples, and taken harvest data. It seems like for the past couple of weeks we have been up to our necks in hemp, literally, as the varieties have been ready to harvest.

Bronwyn Aly (618-695-2441; baly@illinois.edu)

Fruit & Vegetable Production & Pest Management

Mild End to the Summer & Start to Fall

Following a very warm start to summer, temperatures were milder in August and the first half of September. Average temperatures over the past month and a half are within 1 degree of normal statewide. Humidity, while still higher than the long-term average, was also much lower in August and the first half of September than in 2020 and 2021. The milder August balanced a very warm June, and the summer 2022 statewide average temperature was only 0.9 degrees above normal and the 40th warmest on record.

Mixed Bag of Rainfall: Heavy rainfall in early August brought 2-3 times the normal monthly rainfall to the [Effingham-Olney](#) and [Freeport](#) areas. Meanwhile, a large part of western Illinois was very dry in

August and the first half of September, with some parts of Brown, Adams, and Hancock Counties picking up only 0.5 inches of total rainfall for August, less than 20 percent of normal. September has brought a bit more rain to western and central Illinois, while most of far southern Illinois has remained dry. As of September 21st, the US Drought Monitor showed moderate drought in parts of western and central Illinois, and pockets of abnormal dryness across the southern two-thirds of the state.

Summer 2022 was also a mixed bag for rainfall. June was drier than normal virtually everywhere in the state, and extremely dry in east-central Illinois. Meanwhile, July and August were quite a bit wetter outside of western Illinois. In all, most of northern and southern reaches of the state were 2-4 inches wetter than normal in summer 2022, while most of central Illinois was 1 to 5 inches drier than normal in summer. This summer was the 50th wettest on record statewide since 1895.

Outlooks: Most outlooks – from the next 7 days to the entire month of October – lean drier than normal in Illinois as we move into the heart of fall. Meanwhile, above normal temperatures are expected over the next 4 to 6 weeks; however, this does not remove the potential for an early fall freeze. The median first fall freeze date ranges from mid-October in northern and east-central Illinois to early November in far southern Illinois.

Trent Ford, Illinois State Climatologist (217-244-1330; twford@illinois.edu)

Less Seriously...



Photo by B.Aly.

Apparently, an over-zealous high school summer worker thought the tomato stakes needed to be driven two feet into the ground, but since school is back in session, they aren't around to help remove the stakes. Don't get me wrong, I appreciate the work ethic, but really? The steps in removing these stakes have included: wiggling, wiggling aggressively, wetting up the soil, digging around the stakes, prying the stakes with the shovel, using the post puller, and last but not least, chain and side by side. Injuries incurred during the extraction process ranged from splinters to sore backs to a bleeding head wound. Sometimes it takes all the tools in the arsenal to accomplish what should be a simple task.

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