

F A L L 2 0 1 5

the
Potato Newsletter

Empire State Potato Growers, Inc.



Mark your Calendars!

As harvest winds down and the cold wind begins to blow our thoughts turn to planning for next season, gathering new strategies and learning innovative technologies.



Save the Dates!

Potato Show & Tell

Wed., Dec. 2

Watch for details from Walter De Jong, Associate Professor & Director of Graduate Studies, Field of Plant Breeding, School of Integrative Plant Science, Plant Breeding & Genetics, Cornell University.
607.254.5384,
wsd2@cornell.edu

Potato Expo **Jan. 12-14, 2016**

Mirage Hotel & Casino, Las Vegas, NV. Don't miss your chance to make local and global connections at the 8th annual Potato Expo!

Long Island Ag Forum

Jan. 14-15, 2016

For more info Contact Sandy Menasha, CCE, 631.727.7850 ext.316, srm45@cornell.edu

Potato Day at the Empire Expo **Tues. Jan. 19, 2016**

Empire State Producers Expo, Oncenter Convention Center, Syracuse, NY. Carol MacNeil, CCE Vegetable Program. 585.394.3977 x406; crm6@cornell.edu

WE NEED YOUR OPINION!

We conduct a lot of meetings throughout the year. In order to make these meetings as productive as possible, we have included a grower survey in this newsletter. Please take a moment to let us know which meetings you find most valuable.

Please email your response to:
mwickham@nypotatoes.org

or mail it to:
Empire State Potato Growers
PO BOX 566
Stanley, NY 14561

Thank you for your participation!



Potato Expo

JAN. 12-14, Mirage, Las Vegas, NV.

POTATO EXPO is the largest conference and trade show for the potato industry held in North America. Network with key decision makers and international industry leaders, learn about the latest trends and innovations in the industry and grow your business.

Discover Cutting-edge Technologies, Innovations, and Services at the Trade Show: Network & grow your business at the POTATO EXPO 2016 Trade Show with 60,000 square feet of exhibit space.

NATIONAL POTATO COUNCIL ANNUAL MEETING: Immediately following the POTATO EXPO join growers from all over the US for the NPC Annual Meeting.

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO REGISTER FOR THESE MEETINGS VISIT:

www.potato-expo.com

Potato Industry Leadership Institute

Feb. 17-25, 2016

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The National Potato Council (NPC) and the United States Potato Board (USPB) are accepting applications for the Potato Industry Leadership Institute (PILI) class of 2016. The annual eight-day program, held Feb. 17-25, 2016, is designed to identify, develop, and cultivate new leaders within the U.S. potato industry.

During the program, 20 potato growers and industry representatives from across the country focus on leadership development, public policy, marketing, team building and public communication. The 2016 class will begin in Grand Forks, North Dakota, where participants will receive an overview of the U.S. potato industry and tour local production areas, storages, fresh pack facilities, and processing plants. The group will then travel to Washington, D.C., where the focus will move to national legislative and regulatory policy priorities for the U.S. potato industry.

Participants are selected through state organization nominations and a committee facilitated by NPC and the USPB, who jointly coordinate the program. The Institute is made possible each year through a major sponsorship from Syngenta, which has a long history of commitment to leadership development in agriculture.

The Institute is also accepting applications for two scholarships targeting growers who lack a state or local potato organization. The scholarships cover the \$2,000 PILI registration fee, air transportation, lodging, and meals. Scholarships will be given based upon an application form reviewed by the selection committee.

Registration forms and scholarship applications are available by contacting Hillary Hutchins at hillaryh@nationalpotatocouncil.org or online at:

<http://nationalpotatocouncil.org/events-and-programs/potato-industry-leadership-institute/>

Application deadline is Nov. 15, 2015





Harvest Varied in Quantity, Quality & Timing

Long Island: Harvest got underway in good shape on Long Island although when it started the hot, humid, and dry conditions make it feel more like mid-July than potato digging time. Fields were dry! As potato diggers moved down the field they are shrouded in a cloud of dust and temperatures way too hot to even consider any type of storage. However, in sum, this season's weather conditions were ideal for production. Little to no rain for most of the

growing
season
meant
minimal



disease pressure and cooler early season temperatures led to optimal vine growth and tuber development.

Mostly early season varieties like Superior, reds and yellows were harvested first. Overall yields and tuber quality are good despite the levels of blackleg observed here during the growing season. However, most of the fields infected with blackleg were in main season varieties like Reba and Norwis and to a much lesser extent in Superior. Plant dropouts were as high as 40% in some of the more severely affected fields so likely yields of these main season varieties will be down but based on what is coming up out of

the ground now, tuber size and quality should not have been compromised.

Upstate NY: Potato production is variable across Western NY/Finger Lakes Region. Many potatoes were planted late, and while some growers were close to finishing harvest early many had to contend with late planted or replanted crops. Yields range from great to below average for fields where the crop was hurt by water or was replanted. Quality ranges from good to fair, again depending on field conditions. Incessant and very heavy rains in some areas during the early season and through most of planting had a lasting impact. Many growers are glad to see the season ending.

Eastern NY: Smaller growers began digging early, while larger growers were still vine killing. Most everyone is pretty well done as a result of the dry fall. Potatoes look good and quality seems good.



US Potato Board School Salad Bar Challenge

The Empire State Potato Growers are partnering with the US Potato Board and United Fresh on a multi-year program that works to bring “Potato-Friendly” salad bars to elementary, middle and high schools in New York.

School salad bars increase student’s fruit and vegetable consumption, introduce them to a wide variety of fresh fruits and vegetables and help them develop healthier eating habits. Potatoes are a natural fit on today’s salad bars, as they can be served hot or cold and in creative ways that stimulate students’ interest in school meals.

A “potato-friendly” salad bar utilizes its ability to keep foods warm or cool, so diverse ingredients can be served on or beside potatoes to make it a full meal kids will love. Think: Pizza Potato Bar. Baked potatoes offered on the warm side and healthy pizza toppings, like low-fat cheese, turkey pepperoni, green pepper and onions in containers on the cool side. This is just one of MANY potato bar ideas the US Potato Board has. Participating schools will have help and support from USPB and ESPB along the way with themed potato bar inspiration, online resources, as well as help to managing ordering and shipping logistics.

Potatoes are one of the lowest cost items in all forms – fresh, fresh-frozen, and dehydrated. Including potatoes in fresh salad bars could help drive down average meal costs for your school. Additionally, research by Texas A&M University shows including a potato item in a meal reduces total plate waste. Not only do kids eat potatoes, they also waste less of the other items on the plate. There was no evidence white potatoes displaced other vegetables in school lunches.

The ESPG reached out to NY schools this spring to gauge interest. We were overwhelmed and pleased with the response from schools. We have begun to develop a list of interested districts. The USPB plans to match every salad bar donated by a potato industry member, grower, agribusinesses or others vested in the US potato industry up to 300 per year for 5 years. That’s 1,500 from industry members plus 1,500 from the USPB for a total of 3,000 potato-friend salad bars installed by 2020. The ESPG is currently pursuing revenue sources, including Farm to School grants, individual grower contributions and other agricultural businesses, to financially support this endeavor.

If you would like more information on how your school district can qualify for a FREE “potato-friendly” salad bar, or how you can financially support this project, please contact Melanie Wickham 585.526.5356 or mwickham@nypotatoes.org.

PAA BESTOWS HIGHEST HONOR ON DONALD HALSETH

By Joseph B. Sieczka

Donald Halseth, Professor Emeritus at Cornell University, recently was honored by The Potato Association of America as Honorary Life Member in Portland, Maine. The organization is a professional society made up of research and extension workers and industry representatives devoted to the improvement of potatoes. Honorary Life Membership is the highest honor of the society.

Don has been an active member of the society participating and leading various sections and committees since 1982. He served on the executive board and as President in 2010.

Don’s leadership in the applied research and extension program in New York was recognized. His involvement in the potato breeding programs at Cornell, USDA, Maine, North Carolina and others has led to the naming of many potato varieties. Don’s participation and leadership in the snack food potato trials has been instrumental in evaluating newly released cultivars and promising lines under differing environmental conditions.



Dr. Robert Plaisted awarded Empire State Potato Growers Industry Leadership Award



We are pleased and honored to recognize Dr. Robert Plaisted as the 2015 recipient of the Empire State Potato Growers Industry Leadership Award.

Bob Plaisted or “Doc” as many call him, is one of those rare individuals who can rub elbows with people from all walks of life and be a positive influence personally and professionally to all he comes into contact with. A quote from AA Milne sums Bob up pretty simply- “What I say is that - if a man really likes potatoes - he must be a pretty decent sort of fellow.”

His potato breeding work, especially in the area of Golden Nematode resistance, pure and simple, is responsible for the continuation of the potato industry in New York State and the protection of it across the United States.

However, his successes reach far beyond our state and nation’s borders into other countries and disciplines. Bob’s work at Cornell University is responsible for not only creation of a viable food product and marketable commodity, but for the development of productive members of society and improvement of the world overall. Bob is always growing, whether it was his varieties or his skills, he has never been resistant to change, not only surviving, but thriving in an ever-changing world. Anyone and everyone who associates with Bob Plaisted comes away changed for the better.

Bob was born January 1, 1929 and raised on a small dairy farm in Steuben County. He jokes,

“Our only potatoes were for our own consumption.” He graduated from Canisteo Central School in 1946 and entered Cornell University that fall.

In 1950 he graduated with a BS degree from the College of Agriculture with a specialization in plant breeding. He credits the late Professor Emeritus Henry Munger with being the reason he chose a career in plant breeding. As Bob tells it in the Cornell publication, *Evolution of Plant Breeding at Cornell University*, “My experience was with dairy cows, so when I applied to Cornell I expected to indicate Animal Husbandry as my area of interest. My vocational agriculture teacher thought that would be quite competitive. He had known Henry as an undergraduate at Cornell and knew how few undergraduates there were in plant breeding. Therefore, he suggested I list that as my preference. Henry became my first adviser and he also employed me for part time work.”

Although immersed in his studies, Bob found time to date. In fact, when Bob met his wife, Ellen, at Cornell University, he was actually dating her roommate.

According to their daughter, Diane, their first date was a hayride in the fall of Bob’s

sophomore year. Bob was quite smitten with the lovely, smart, coed - and they were married February 10, 1951.



Doc. Plaisted cont.

After earning advanced degrees from Iowa State University Department of Horticulture in 1956, Bob returned to his alma mater to develop an ornamentals breeding project and to continue the potato-breeding project that had been the work of JR Livermore. Bob's passion for potatoes grew and in 1964 he became chairman of the Plant Breeding Department. He served as chairman through 1979 and was responsible for navigating the department successfully through numerous challenges and changes.

Bob taught (and continues to teach) by example, which gave his students benefits beyond the lecture hall. He taught in the classroom, in the warehouse, at meetings, in the lab, in the field, at his home. At every interaction with Bob you come away knowing more about the world we live in, and he does it through the humble potato.

While Bob is an incredible teacher, his true passion is in the research. Bob was conducting "participatory plant breeding" long before the phrase became popular. Utilizing his contacts at Cornell, Bob was able to establish a team approach to potato research that has been especially effective in addressing real-world production problems. His life's work is an excellent example of the power of multidisciplinary work involving breeders, entomologists, biochemists, USDA-ARS, state Department of Ag & Markets, extension staff, students and growers. It was a program ahead of the times, not created in response to external pressures but by awareness of appropriate goals and best methods to achieve

them.

Bob retired in 1995, but continued to work. "I am thankful, because I don't think I could have made an abrupt stop. My successor, Walter DeJong and others on the team, let me continue to help."

Retirement for Bob means staying connected to the things he loves. As his daughter Diane says, "Dad does like to check out the potato fields during the year. Sometimes a trip to the store will have a side trip to Pleasant Hill to see how the potatoes look." Bob and Ellen love trips to visit family in Texas and Iowa. And he continues to tend his garden of vegetables and flowers, growing enough to share with family, friends and visiting grad students."

If a life is judged by accomplishments, Bob's has been one of incredible influence and successful achievements. Let's break Bob's professional accomplishments down into a few simple numbers:

- 75 research publications
- 26 grad students
- 19 potato varieties
- 15 awards & honors
- 11 years as chairman



If it is true, that a leader is someone who's "actions inspire others to DREAM more, LEARN more, DO more and BECOME more" then Bob Plaisted is that - and more...

For these and many reasons we are proud and privileged to honor Dr. Robert Plaisted with the Empire State Potato Growers Industry Leadership Award.

Dickeya Update

The following was compiled from information from Cornell University specialists, National Potato Council, NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets.

The recent immergence in the United States of Dickeya which is closely related to Erwinia is a significant cause of concern for the potato industry. The National Potato Council, the Empire State Potato Growers-along with other state potato organizations, and APHIS are working closely with APHIS to begin the process of identifying what specific type of the pathogen is present in the US and to what extent it is present.

Dickeya has been present in Europe for some time scientists and potato growers there have significant experience understanding and managing the pathogen. **Dickeya dianthicola** and "**Dickeya solani**" are currently the dominant bacterial pathogens of potatoes in Europe.

Symptoms of Dickeya on potato that are characteristic of this outbreak include:

1. Poor stands, with emergence as low as 30-40%, particularly in wetter areas of the field
2. Blackleg in mid-summer, particularly when temperatures became warmer
3. Decayed daughter tubers
4. High incidence of non-emergence or blackleg in the post-harvest test
5. Decay in storage for seed potatoes has not been associated with this outbreak. Decay may be a problem for storage of potatoes destined for processing or fresh market use.

This soft rot pathogen is spread with seed and it is managed through a combination of sanitation and cultural practices (equipment cleaning and sanitation, rogueing, grading out diseased tubers at harvest, harvesting diseased plots last, not replanting lots from fields with disease). Rot is favored by higher temperatures; at lower temperatures such as in storage, rot may not be apparent. Once contaminated seed is planted, with increasing temperatures disease will become evident.

NY researchers and extension agents are working closely with a national cross-functional group formed by APHIS Plant Protection & Quarantine. to oversee and coordinate efforts. APHIS PPQ has formed a cross-functional work group to oversee and coordinate activities. The team meets weekly and continues to work with the states, industry and academia to gather information on the distribution and prevalence of *Dickeya*. Additionally PPQ has initiated a New Pest Advisory Group review. APHIS is also working on a best management practices and will collaborate with stakeholders on its feasibility.

Long Island appears to be the most severely affected area in NY. Sandy Menasha, Cornell Cooperative Extension Specialist, has been working closely with affected growers to develop strategies and learn all they can about managing this threat. For the short-term future growers are being encouraged to obtain the North American Health Certificate associated with seed lots and talk to seed supplier about

results of summer field readings. Work is being done to develop a sanitation protocol specific to Dickeya to limit transfer in seed operations. Sanitation is vital for reducing the spread. Menasha stresses that growers should sanitize all harvesting and handling equipment-including: Harvesters, windrowers, truck bodies, bin pilers, seed cutting equipment, and graders. At this point in the season growers should harvest affected fields last and move them first (avoid storage) Menasha has suggestions for growers to reduce storage losses including:

- Minimize cuts and bruises during harvest and handling
- Hold newly harvested potatoes at 55-60 F with 90-95% RH for the first 1-2 weeks to promote wound healing. Lower the temperature of table stock to 38-40 F for long-term storage.
- Never wash tubers prior to storage.
- Do not harvest potatoes from low areas – bacterial populations likely very high
- Selectively store from "healthiest" portions of field
- Store tubers from more suspect areas in front
- Store potatoes as cold as possible - Dickeya does not survive cold temps well
- Provide good air flow- Pathogen becomes more infectious under low oxygen conditions
- Promote wound healing
- Avoid condensation and wet tuber surfaces
- Post-harvest sprays can do more damage

Work continues on finding ways to better diagnose, identify, reduce spread, manage and prevent more economic loss for the potato industry. Winter meetings agendas in NY include discussions on Dickeya so watch for details and for continuing grower educational opportunities.



ESPG SPONSORED MEETING SURVEY**Please return by November 15th**

The Empire State Potato Growers partners with Cornell University on many meetings throughout the year. Don Halseth's retirement has prompted us to take a hard look at each meeting to determine its value to the industry and growers. We are asking for your help to evaluate the importance you place on each meeting. Please fill out the following survey. We have tried to make it quick and easy, however if you have comments, suggestions and insights you'd like to share we welcome them. We will consider your responses and determine which meetings are most beneficial and worthwhile for the industry to continue with.

Using a scale of 1-5

How often do I plan to attend (1- never, 2-rarely, 3-often, 4-frequently, 5-always)

How important do I feel the information presented is to my business (1-not valuable at all, 2-minimally valuable, 3-sometimes valuable, 4-very valuable, 5-must have.)

Potato Day at the Empire State Producers' Expo, Syracuse OnCenter (Yearly-January, ½ day- full day format, covers broad potato production topics)

_____ How often do I plan to attend (1- never, 2-rarely, 3-often, 4-frequently, 5-always)

_____ How important do I feel the information presented is to my business (1-not valuable at all, 2-minimally valuable, 3-sometimes valuable, 4-very valuable, 5-must have.)

Potato Short Course, Holiday Inn, Liverpool (Every Other Year -Feb.; Full Day, Technical, In-depth coverage of timely production issues facing growers,)

_____ How often do I plan to attend (1- never, 2-rarely, 3-often, 4-frequently, 5-always)

_____ How important do I feel the information presented is to my business (1-not valuable at all, 2-minimally valuable, 3-sometimes valuable, 4-very valuable, 5-must have.)

Potato Research Field Day, Ithaca/ sometimes Lake Placid (Every Other Year-Summer/July, Full Day event to look at in field research being conducted by CALS potato researchers)

_____ How often do I plan to attend (1- never, 2-rarely, 3-often, 4-frequently, 5-always)

_____ How important do I feel the information presented is to my business (1-not valuable at all, 2-minimally valuable, 3-sometimes valuable, 4-very valuable, 5-must have.)

Potato Show and Tell, Ithaca, Cornell's Love Fieldhouse (Annual-Nov or Dec, lunch-afternoon meeting, Walter DeJong presents roundup of promising new potato varieties)

_____ How often do I plan to attend (1- never, 2-rarely, 3-often, 4-frequently, 5-always)

_____ How important do I feel the information presented is to my business (1-not valuable at all, 2-minimally valuable, 3-sometimes valuable, 4-very valuable, 5-must have.)

Upstate Potato Advisory Meeting, Canandaigua (Yearly-Dec., Full Day, open discussion with industry and growers on state of industry)

_____ How often do I plan to attend (1- never, 2-rarely, 3-often, 4-frequently, 5-always)

_____ How important do I feel the information presented is to my business (1-not valuable at all, 2-minimally valuable, 3-sometimes valuable, 4-very valuable, 5-must have.)

Additional Comments: _____

Please return to: Melanie Wickham mwickham@nypotatoes.org, 585.295.9663 PO Box 566, Stanley, NY 14561