

KVGA Newsletter



March 2022

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Many of you may be familiar with me from my days as an Extension Vegetable Professor during my time at the University of Kentucky. For those who are not: I've served on the board for the KVGA since 2013, first as an advisor while a professor at UK, then the Vice President for the last several years and now I move into the role as President of the KVGA. I consider myself a scientist above all, but I'm also experienced enough to know that horticulture is a business and that, in the words of my mentor Eric Simonne, "there's no money in growing vegetables, only in selling them."

First, I want to acknowledge and thank Joel Wilson for his time and significant efforts as President of this Association. Joel is a dedicated, knowledgeable advocate for growers and farmers alike who's put his heart and soul into our efforts to encourage and grow Kentucky's vegetable industry. I want to thank him, as well as all the other board members who've served, for your continued leadership, faith in myself, and dedication to the folks we serve. I plan to take a systems-based approach to the problems we face, and collaborate with each of you in the years to come.

I'm aware that the last 24 months have been a roller coaster and we've faced many significant challenges to our way of life. Staying healthy at work, staffing production facilities and farms, supply sourcing, logistics issues, rising costs of materials - these new realities have challenged our industry, and our membership, to the core. I'd love to take on this new responsibility in a time of certainty and prosperity, but the truth is that these new realities we face are not likely to change anytime soon. That said, I've been humbled by the tenacity of this group during such a tough time. I've witnessed, first hand, some of the hardest seasons of my career in these past few years. I have also been humbled to see the members of this Association come together during that time to face these challenges head on as a community.

It is this spirit of collaboration, healthy debate, and constructive criticism that I intend to foster during my tenure as President of the KVGA. I know this is a resilient bunch with a can-do attitude and I'm confident that our combined strength will keep things moving forward.

As we prepare for the 2022 field season, I encourage you to reach out and cooperate with neighboring farmers, build new relationships with vendors, and lean on the Association for support in this challenging time. I ask only what I ask of my own crew: that we have reasonable expectations of, and respect for, one another. If we want to continue to do what we love, we have to get back to the real reason we do it: feeding people.

Shubin Saha, DPM, PhD

President,

Kentucky Vegetable Growers Association

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Dr. Rachel Rudolph, UK Department of Horticulture (Lexington)

Dr. John Strang, Ret. UK Department of Horticulture (Lexington)

Dr. Shawn Wright, UK Department of Horticulture (Jackson)

Survey for Cucurbit Growers

A group of researchers from Iowa State University, the University of Kentucky and Cornell University are conducting a survey to learn about your experiences using row covers and your willingness to adopt a new row cover approach known as mesotunnels.

This study is evaluating the use of mesotunnels in the eastern half of the US for control of the full range of pests and diseases on organic production of cucurbit crops.

Your participation in this survey is important and completely voluntary. You may not have used mesotunnels or row cover systems in your production, that is perfectly fine and the researchers still value your opinions. Your responses are valuable and will contribute to improving row cover innovations.

To participate in the survey, please use this link:

<https://go.iastate.edu/EHWJCH>

The responses you provide will be kept completely confidential, and results will be reported in a summary form only.

Please answer the questions by clicking on a response option or entering text in the box. You will have an opportunity to add detailed comments at the end of the survey.

Thank you!



2022 Kentucky Fruit & Vegetable Conference Recap

On behalf of the planning committee and the hosting organizations, thank you for making the 2022 Kentucky Fruit and Vegetable Conference a huge success!

It was so nice to see everyone in person in Bowling Green. Over the three-day conference in January, we had more than 300 registrants and sessions covering a diverse range of topics. We hope that you also found the conference to be informative and worthwhile. Recorded sessions are available to registrants and an email with the link and password was emailed to participants.

We are already looking ahead to next year's Conference! Mark your calendars for January 3-5, 2023. Because of the holidays, the Conference will shift to later in the week on Tuesday (vendor move in and pre-Conference events) — Wednesday (day 1 sessions) — Thursday (day 2 sessions).

The call for presentation proposals for the 2023 Fruit and Vegetable Conference in Bowling Green will go out this summer. We value your feedback. If you have comments for the planning committee or would like to suggest a topic for the Conference or future educational events, please let the conference planning committee know by sending an email to info@kyhortcouncil.org



Thank You
2022 Kentucky Fruit
& Vegetable
Conference Sponsors!



2022 Crop Insurance Training Webinars for Specialty Crop Growers

Over the next year, join the Kentucky Horticulture Council (KHC) and the Kentucky Center for Ag and Rural Development (KCARD) for a monthly Lunch & Learn webinar covering different crop insurance topics. Webinars will be the second Tuesday of each month, with some special content available between webinars. If you are interested in crop insurance options or don't yet know much about the options that are available, these webinars can help you reduce your operation's risk.

2022

April 12	Grower Panel
May 10	A Practical Example: Step by Step with One Farm
June 14	Q&A with an Insurance Agent
July 12	Refresher and Webinar Recaps
August 9	Online Resources for Growers
September 13	Program Wrap Up and Q&A with an Insurance Agent

Register for the webinar series online:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZcvf-iuqDgtG9PpErwxskqi8kZ3fVIRaULI>.

Once you register, you will receive an email confirmation about joining the meetings and can add the details to your electronic calendar. After registration, you can attend any of the occurrences. Don't worry if you can't attend a session, the webinars will be recorded and available on the Kentucky Horticulture Council's YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/c/KentuckyHorticultureCouncil>

Do you have any questions about crop insurance? Submit them to Dakota Moore (Dakota@kyhortcouncil.org) to be covered during the webinars.

Please note that webinar topics may change to accommodate program or deadline changes.

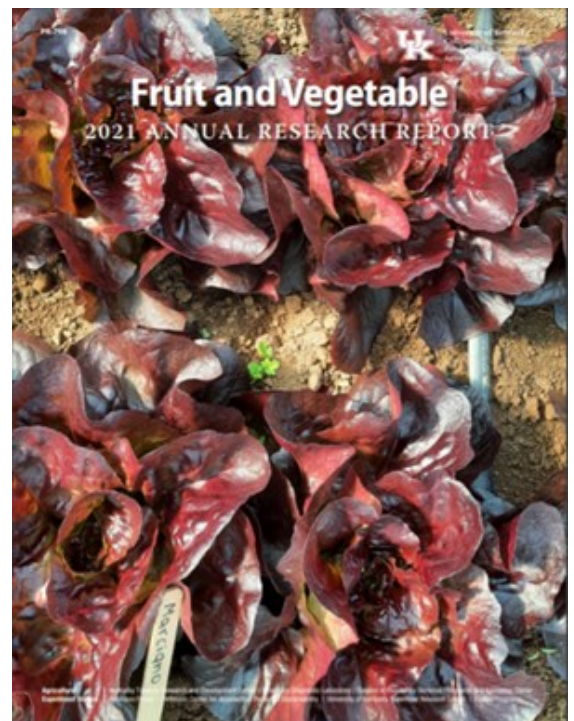
2021 Annual Research Report

The 2021 Fruit and Vegetable Crops Research Report is available online (<http://www2.ca.uky.edu/agcomm/pubs/PR/PR798/PR798.pdf>) and through your local county Extension office.

Specific vegetable projects conducted by University of KY and KY State University faculty and staff highlighted in the report include:

- Impact of Mixing Biochar with Animal Manures on the Yield of Three Varieties of Turnips;
- Evaluation of Spring-Planted High Tunnel Lettuce Cultivars;
- Evaluation of Spring-Planted High Tunnel Kale Cultivars;
- Eastern Kentucky Watermelon Variety Trials;
- Evaluating Salt Leaching Strategies for High Tunnel Soils

Many tree fruit and small fruit trials are also included in the research report.



Hi, Kentucky Vegetable Growers!

Winter is almost over (or so they say), but it has been a nice opportunity for us to get some webinars in. Ric Bessin (UK Vegetable Entomologist), Nicole Gauthier (UK Vegetable Pathologist), and I have hosted a couple of great webinars. We hosted a webinar entirely on all things related to high tunnel tomato production. We also recently provided an update on the results of projects from 2021 as well as any pesticide-related news for 2022. If you missed the webinars, you can find the recordings here:



High Tunnel Tomato Production:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLQEQoZRMbybKUptHA7_L-u9JlJM-Xr7I

2022 Commercial Vegetable Update:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLQEQoZRMbybKIF4-bSDwNL9BjFXFMupgT>

Consider subscribing to the Kentucky Vegetable Extension and Research YouTube channel to stay up to date on any new videos that get posted.

In collaboration with Annette Wszelaki at the University of Tennessee, I have a webinar series called *Spring into Production Season*. Two webinars have already occurred and you can find the recorded presentations here: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLQEQoZRMbybKyFgPb0ZkabTrkrnCW39Qp>

The most recent presentation of the series was **March 15** (*Tomato grafting and root-knot nematode management*) and the next is **March 29** (*High tunnel crop rotation*). You can register to participate in the live presentations here: <https://tinyurl.com/4k899hnn>

We have been getting a lot of high tunnel work done lately. I'm sure many of you are doing the same. Recently my group and I were out at the Horticulture Research Farm tilling the soil in our tunnels in preparation for tomato planting. We had quite a few winter weeds to pull! We headed out to the Spindletop on March 14 to help prepare the Gauthier high tunnel as well.



Rudolph and Gauthier lab members transplanting lettuce.

Nicole Gauthier (UK Vegetable Pathologist) and I have several collaborations either already in the ground or planned for later in the year. Our current project is evaluating the use of planting date, irrigation practices, and cultivar resistance

to manage *Sclerotinia* in lettuce. This pathogen causes the disease many of us know as lettuce drop. *Sclerotinia* can become a problem when soils are warm and moist. Conditions are often perfect for this pathogen in the spring in high tunnels in Kentucky. You may also recognize the genus *Sclerotinia* if any of you have had or seen timber rot in your tomato plants. This is the same genus, but a different species that causes these two diseases.

Continued on following page...

We have many questions regarding management of this pathogen. Here are just a few we are trying to address with our project:

Can we manage an infested high tunnel soil by planting early to avoid lettuce drop altogether?

Can we manage lettuce drop with irrigation practices that won't negatively affect lettuce yield?

Are resistant crop cultivars enough to manage this disease without special irrigation or planting date considerations?



Both photos are examples of lettuce from the spring of 2021 affected by lettuce drop disease which is caused by Sclerotinia. (Photo credit: Rachel Rudolph)

We are recording soil moisture and temperature for the duration of the project as well as doing weekly disease ratings.

Stay tuned for updates on this project and others!

Happy growing,

Rachel Rudolph

UK Extension Vegetable Specialist

USDA Sustainable Farming Programs Guide

The National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition has published its brand new, fully updated Growing Opportunity: A Guide to USDA Sustainable Farming Programs. This free, comprehensive, practical guide is for growers who want to better understand which key federal programs offered by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) can help them meet their needs and support their diversified, sustainable farming operations. The guide distills technical programs in a way that is accessible, serving as a valuable resource for farmers as they look for opportunities and financing to grow their farms and businesses and help build a more sustainable farming system.

Download your copy here: <https://sustainableagriculture.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Growing-Opportunity-Guide-2022-Interactive.pdf>



Lettuce transplants one-week after transplanting. A soil moisture sensor records the soil water content in each bed.

Growing Vegetables Under Solar Panels

Agrivoltaics (aka Dual-use Solar Energy or Photovoltaics (PV)) is a production system being studied by several research institutes in the US and internationally. In addition to energy production, shading by the panels may improve quality in some vegetable crops and reduce heat stress and water usage. As with any production system, there are anticipated limitations.

A recent article published by the University of Delaware describes the basics of the production system and models under study by institutions including Oregon State University, University of Massachusetts, and University of Delaware. Read more here: <https://sites.udel.edu/weeklycropupdate/?p=19773>.

The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign is leading a multi-state project with the University of Arizona, Colorado State University, Auburn University, the University of Illinois Chicago, and the National Renewable Energy Laboratory to evaluate crop types and climatic conditions. Read more here: <https://scapes.illinois.edu/about-the-project/project-q-a/>.

Rutgers University in New Jersey has established an agrivoltaics program to design, construct, and conduct research on these dual use systems. Read more here: <https://ecocomplex.rutgers.edu/agrivoltaics-research.html>.

What do you think about co-locating vegetable production and solar panels on Kentucky produce farms? Have you tried this on your farm? We are curious! Send a note to info@kyuga.org and let us know!

What is Agrivoltaics?

According to Wikipedia, *agrivoltaics* or *agrophotovoltaics* is the simultaneous use of land for both solar photovoltaic power generation and agriculture.

Coexistence of solar panels and crops shares sunlight between these two production systems.

Design of agrivoltaic systems requires careful consideration to ensure simultaneous optimization of crop yield, crop quality, and energy production.

On-Farm Irrigation or Water Management Projects

Are you considering a new irrigation system or another water related project or upgrade on your farm?

The Kentucky Agricultural Development Fund (KADF) offers an On-Farm Water Program to help KY growers with water projects. The program has cost share funds to incentivize better water management practices.

Projects can include irrigation infrastructure, microirrigation systems, high tunnel gutters and catchment systems, and many more strategies to help you manage water for your produce crops.

Program guidelines can be found online: https://www.kyagr.com/agpolicy/documents/2022-Program-Guidelines-Applications/ADF_APP_project-guidelines_water.pdf

2022 Deadlines:

April 29

August 26

December 16



Virtual Trading Post

The Trading Post bulletin board is always a popular feature of the annual Kentucky Fruit & Vegetable Conference. Now you don't have to wait until January to let others know if you need or have land, supplies, or used equipment. The KY Horticulture Council is offering a free service online for KVGA members to list items for sale (or to give away).

Just email KHC (info@kyhortcouncil.org) a description of the items along with your name, phone number, and the price as well as any other important information.

Descriptions are supplied by the sellers – it is the buyer's responsibility to read carefully and ask questions if you are interested in an item; neither KVGA or KHC takes responsibility for the quality, operational status, terms, etc... of any item listed.

The web address is: <https://kyhortcouncil.org/trading-post/>

Kentucky NAP Vegetable Pricing Survey

KVGA and KHC are asking for your participation in a quick survey, the Kentucky NAP Vegetable Pricing Survey.

This survey helps set a local pricing basis that KY vegetable growers can use for crop insurance claims!

Without Kentucky specific data, growers will have to use national data that may be significantly lower than local prices if they experience a loss due to natural disasters.

No previous or current NAP coverage is required to take the survey!

Scan the QR Codes in the picture with your phone or follow this links: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2021NAPVeg>



Kentucky Seasonal Eating Resource Hub

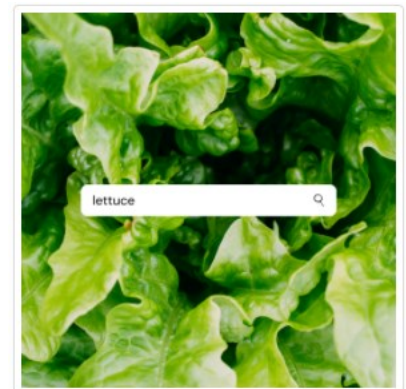
Do you get questions from customers about how to use produce?

Are you interested in providing recipes to your customers?

Have you been looking for attractive images to share on social media of produce commonly grown in Kentucky?

The Kentucky Seasonal Eating Resource Hub (<https://foodconnection.ca.uky.edu/seasonalhub>) has recipes, cooking videos and graphics you can use on social media, in newsletters, or emails featuring produce tips.

Many different crops are featured on the site including: Lettuce, Beet, Radish, Strawberry, Kohlrabi, Peas, Squash Blossoms, Tomatoes, Asparagus, Broccoli, Sweet Potatoes, and Zucchini. Each of these crops has a combination of recipes, social media graphics, downloadable photos, and videos that you can use to promote your products.



Lettuce

- [Social Media Graphics with Lettuce Tips](#)
- [Early Spring Salad Recipe](#)
- [Crunchy Spring Salad - Video](#)
- [Washing Salad Greens Two Ways - Video](#)
- [Making Salad Vinaigrette Two Ways - Video](#)

Produce Grower-Buyer MeetUp:

match-making Eastern Kentucky vegetable growers with regional markets

KVGA co-hosted a Produce Grower-Buyer MeetUp on Friday, February 25 that provided the opportunity for Kentucky produce growers to meet with a buyers representing restaurants, retail and wholesale businesses, institutions including school systems, and other buyers like food banks and processors. This was a regional event held in advance of the Eastern Kentucky Farmers Conference in Prestonsburg (Floyd Co).

After a short welcome from Cindy Finneseth, Kentucky Horticulture Council, buyers introduced themselves to the group noting their purchasing geography; desired volumes and crops; and details such as requirement of third-party GAPs certification. Growers then met face-to-face with buyers of their choice to ask questions and exchange contact information. Experts from several organizations were on hand to discuss resources available to Kentucky growers.

This free event was hosted by the Kentucky Department of Ag (KDA), the Kentucky Horticulture Council (KHC), the Kentucky State Horticulture Council (KSHS), University of Kentucky MarketReady program, and KVGA.

Participant feedback was extremely positive, indicating an interest in similar events in the future.



Group Health Insurance for Kentucky Vegetable Growers

Do you offer health insurance benefits to your employees and want to see if you are getting the best price and coverage possible? Or, are you thinking about offering health insurance?

If you are a member of KVGA, you are most likely eligible through the Kentucky Horticulture Council (KHC) to join the Kentucky Ag Health Care Trust. Eligible horticulture businesses can access 21 different Anthem health insurance plans. If you have a horticulture-related business, have at least two employees (this can include yourself). This is a great benefit for small businesses that are currently offering or thinking about offering health benefits to employees. Joining the Plan gives you the purchasing power of a large group and this often results in access to better plans and better pricing.

Where do I start?

- Contact Melissa Hinton (The Hinton Agency; 859-351-6559) to fill out the paperwork to get started on a quote. Note: you will need to provide some specific details about your business and each employee.
- Review and analyze the quote to determine if this is a good option for your business.
- Complete paperwork and join KHC as an employer-member.

Several frequently asked questions are listed on the KHC website: <https://kyhortcouncil.org/khc-ag-health-care-trust/>. Other questions can be submitted to info@kyhortcouncil.org or info@kyvga.org or call 859-490-0889.

Growin' with Dr. Owen:

Be Aware of Greenhouse Rodent Damage and Activity in Vegetable Transplants



In winter and early-spring months, heated greenhouses used for vegetable transplant production create the perfect habitat for rodents such as mice, rats, and voles. The warm environment offers protection from winter weather and predators and provides ample food and water supplies. Under these conditions, rodent populations can increase and be challenging to control; therefore, growers should be aware of the signs of rodent activity in the greenhouse.

In Kentucky, the most common rodents that may be encountered in the greenhouse include the deer mouse, house mouse, white-footed mouse, hispid cotton rat, Norway rat, and pine vole. In the greenhouse, mice and rats are the most common rodents encountered, and problematic during transplant production. Mice will uncover and eat seeds resulting in uneven germination and partially germinated

trays (Fig. 1). They will also eat young seedlings and transplants in propagation trays no matter if the trays are on the greenhouse floor, riser, or bench top (Fig. 2).

Voiles are less likely to be found in greenhouses; however, they are commonly found among overwintered herbaceous perennials and nursery stock. Voiles often feed by chewing on young transplants as well as on roots, bulbs, tubers, and rhizomes.

Greenhouse growers should monitor for mice, rat, and vole activity in the greenhouse and identify entry points. Mice can squeeze through cracks, gaps, and holes about ¼-inch in size. Consider installing metal screening or mesh hardware cloth around the outside greenhouse perimeter. Secure the screening to the greenhouse knee wall or baseboards, bend the bottom edge away from the greenhouse, and bury. This technique will help mitigate tunneling into the greenhouse.

Baited snap traps can help control mice, rats, and voiles. Baits that are effective include peanut butter, oatmeal, and apple slices. Repellents have not been shown to be consistently effective and most often will be stock piled or hoarded (personal experience). Other baits marketed as anticoagulants or formulated with zinc phosphide may be used but care must be taken to protect other non-target animals and children. Baits formulated with zinc

phosphide are restricted, therefore you must be a certified pesticide applicator to purchase and apply.



*Figure 1. Propagation trays exhibiting partially germinated cabbage (*Brassica oleracea* var. *capitata*) seedlings caused by mice feeding in a heated greenhouse during early March. Photo by: Dr. W. Garrett Owen, UK.*



*Figure 2. Missing and destroyed cabbage (*Brassica oleracea* var. *capitata*) seedlings caused by mice in a heated greenhouse during early March. Photo by: Dr. W. Garrett Owen, UK.*

Growers should always follow the manufacturer's directions and label rates when using any product.

Upcoming Industry Events

- April 4-6 Kentucky Direct Marketing Virtual Mini-Summit
- April 8 OAK Regional Conference (Burlington)
- April 12 Crop Insurance Webinar: Grower Panel
- April 28 PSA Grower Training (virtual)
- May 10 Crop Insurance Webinar: Step by Step with One Farm
- June 14 Crop Insurance Webinar: Q&A with an Insurance Agent
- June 28 Crop Insurance Webinar: Other Types of Insurance Growers May Need
- July 12 Crop Insurance Webinar: Refresher and Webinar Recaps

Do you have a question about production, marketing or another veggie-

related topic? Send in your question and you may see it answered in a future newsletter!



Info@KyVGA.org

Save-the-Date

2023 Kentucky Fruit & Vegetable Conference

Jan. 3 — Pre-Conference Events

Jan. 4-5 — Educational Sessions & Trade Show

