

# CAPITAL VEGETABLE NEWS

A newsletter for commercial vegetable growers in Albany, Columbia, Rensselaer, Schenectady and Schoharie Counties.

Albany - 518-765-3500  
 Columbia - 518-828-3346  
 Rensselaer - 518-270-2781  
 Schenectady - 518-372-1622  
 Schoharie - 518-234-4303

The Capital District Area Vegetable Program provides research-based information to commercial vegetable growers through the county offices of Cornell Cooperative Extension.

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## Are you treating your soil like dirt?

Dale Riggs, Area Vegetable Specialist

Are you treating your soil like dirt? If you are, it could spell long-term trouble for the profitability of your vegetable farm. But assistance is as close as the 1997 NYS Vegetable Conference. Wednesday, February 12th has a one half day session devoted to soil quality - a hot topic among growers these days.

Several out-of-state speakers will join a grower panel and Cornell staff to update you about what works for improving soil quality. Laurie Drinkwater from the Rodale Institute will start off the day with practices that growers can implement in 1997 to improve soil quality. Then we'll move into a grower panel with four New York growers discussing what they have been doing to maintain and improve soil quality on their farms. From a three acre organic farm to a 4500 acre processing vegetable farm, your fellow growers will discuss what works under New York conditions.

The increasing interest in soil quality and cover cropping has led to several applied research and demonstration projects throughout New York over the last several years. Thomas Bjorkman will discuss buckwheat's place in soil conditioning and then Lee Stivers will summarize cover crops from Western

New York, the Capital District, and Central New York. Come and learn what cover crops perform well under New York conditions, which ones produce the greatest biomass, and suppress the most weeds.

Certainly, one of the greatest impacts on soil quality comes from tillage implements. The last speaker of the session will be Dr. Fred Magdoff from the University of Vermont. Dr. Magdoff developed the pre-sidedress nitrate test (PSNT) for field and sweet corn, currently being used around much of the country. He has been actively working in the field of soil quality for many years and will discuss how tillage implements affect your soil.

The NYS Vegetable Conference will be held in Syracuse, February 11, 12, 13 1997. Between the soil quality session, an organic production session, leafy greens session, all day sweet corn school, and market crops sessions, all Capital District vegetable growers will find new ideas and practices to use in 1997. The times are changing rapidly. Attend the NYS Vegetable Conference so you can be one who's on the cutting edge and directing change, rather than one who's trying to catch up.

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