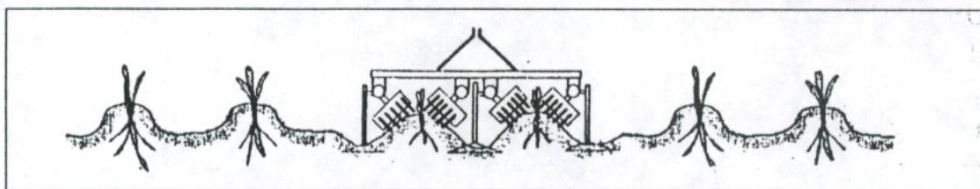


Cultivation Workshop Informative

Brian Caldwell



On May 17, there was a unique vegetable cultivation workshop held at the Freeville Research Farm. [The workshop was sponsored by NOFA-NY and was funded by a SARE grower grant.] It started with a viewing of the video, "Vegetable Growers and their Weed Control Machines," made by Vern Grubinger and Mary Jane Else of the Vermont and Massachusetts Extension Services. This video features vegetable growers from throughout New England demonstrating their cultivation equipment and techniques. It showed stale seedbed methods, blind cultivation, tine tooth weeders, regular sweeps and knives, basket weeders, Lilliston rolling cultivators, Bezzerides tools, flame weeders, and more. The photography in this video is excellent, so that one can get a good view of how the tools are mounted and how they work. This video is available on loan from

each Cooperative Extension office in our the Southern Tier area.

Then there was an open discussion in which longtime organic vegetable growers Lou Johns, Anne Mendenhall, Robert Perry, and organic grain grower John Myers (800 acres) shared their insights. Anne showed photos of the Perfecta field cultivator, which looks to me to be a less soil damaging tool than the rotovator for seedbed preparation. John spoke in some depth about using rotary hoes before and after corn and soybean emergence. He does this fast—in road gear under some conditions!—for best results. Lou described his system of permanent beds with sod wheel track strips. This reduces compaction in the beds. Robert gave a wry account of his father's experiences with herbicides and the time commitment required for cultivation in the old days.

Though it drizzled a bit, we went outside after lunch and saw some equipment in action. In particular, the Lely tine-tooth weeder was used on strawberries transplanted about 10 days previous, and peas about 3 inches tall. The weeds in both were at the optimal size—just emerged—and the machine gave what appeared to be good weed control with some, but minimal, damage to the crops. It also works best when driven at a pretty good clip, at least 4 MPH. The advantages of this tool, used for "blind" over-the-row cultivation, is that it gets many of the weeds *in the row* and can greatly reduce hand work in these crops. This demonstration also pointed up that it is necessary to fine-tune the aggressiveness and setup of any cultivation tool to current soil, weed, and crop conditions for the best results.

It was too wet to demonstrate the European brush hoe, but we did see the "wobble hoe" in action, in which two people ride behind the tractor and operate sweeps for more precision. The mounting for this tool did not take well to the uneven bed preparation at Freeville, and often rode out of the ground. This showed that each part of the system needs to be well-matched for good weed control. Speakers earlier stressed the importance of good seedbed preparation and straight, mechanically-planted rows for cultivators to track well and at the proper depth.

Finally, a group of strawberry growers headed down Route 38 to Stoughton Farm in Newark Valley. We saw their beautiful plantings and discussed fertilization, diseases, insect control, varieties, row covers, frost control timing with Drs. Marvin Pritts of Cornell and Kevin Maloney of Geneva. All in all a perfect cap to a long, informative day! Brian Caldwell is an Extension Educator in Production Agriculture in the Southern Tier, based in Owego. His Hemlock Grove farm has been certified by NOFA-NY for 10 years.

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NOFA-NY CERTIFIED ORGANIC FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

March 29, 1998

Dr. Frederick Magdoff
SARE Northeast Region Coordinator
Hills Building
University of Vermont
Burlington, VT 05405

Re: Project FNE 97-166

Dear Dr. Magdoff,

Grant funds were allocated to hold two workshops:

Mechanical Cultivation Equipment Workshop

Held at Cornell Vegetable Research Farm on May 17, 1997. NOFA farmers worked closely with Dr. Robin Bellinder and her staff. We utilized the facilities, staff and equipment for a full day at no cost to SARE. Plots we set up ahead of time to coordinate workshop and testing of equipment with New York State Berry Growers Meeting and field tours (see attached write up by Brian Caldwell.

Soils Workshop

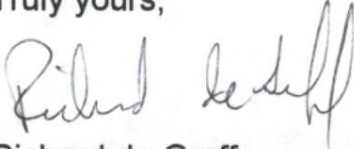
Held at the Cooperative Extension offices in Auburn, NY on December 9, 1997. It was held at this location as it is situated central to most of the agricultural population of New York State. Approximately 75 people attended. Mr. Will Brinton of Woods End Lab did an exceptional presentation on soils, composts and their biological systems. Soil test kits were handed out for some people to test their own soils.

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There was no charge for either workshop as we wanted to have as many in attendance as possible. Both workshops were advertised through Cornell Cooperative Extension newsletters as well as local papers as SARE sponsored workshops.

If you have any questions regarding the foregoing, I am available at the number shown above. I will be out of town and returning after April 8.

Truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Richard de Graff".

Richard de Graff

Mechanical Cultivation Workshop

This workshop was held on May 17 1997 at Cornell research Farm Freeville, N.Y. This date was chosen to allow farmers to see the equipment before the season progressed. NOFA farmers and Cornell educator Robin Belinder worked closely to present cultivation ideas, methods, and equipment to an attentive audience at the well attended workshop.

The in-field demonstration was also attended by a group of New York berry growers. The equipment was demonstrated on a strawberry test plot set up by Marvin Pritts from Cornell. Brian Caldwell, an Extension Educator, assisted in the coordination of the groups to impact more growers. See the enclosed article published in September/October issue of *Organic Farms, Folks & Foods*.

Soil Fertility Workshop

This free workshop was held at the Cooperative Extension office in Auburn as it is located close to the center of New York State. Will Brinton of Woods End Lab presented a session on compost production and soil fertility to approximately 50 people. Following the presentation, soil test kits were distributed for six folks to test their own soils. Results were to be sent to me to be included in this report; however, only two have been received to date. A list of workshop attendees is included.