

Weekly Article

7-25-2022

Growing Interest in Specialty Crops

Hello, my Name is Richard Purdin with OSU Extension, Ag and Natural Resource Educator and Community Development Educator for Adams County. I hope to better inform local producers and the public of the latest news in the world of agriculture. August has arrived and that means summer is winding down and autumn will soon be here. But don't get too excited about basking in the cool autumn breezes just yet! According to Jim Noel with the National Weather Service, August and September looks to be a warm one with many humid and wet day intermittent throughout the period (just what hay producers wanted too here). August is a tricky month weather wise; mother nature can throw just about everything our way. The tropics also enter the picture due to August being the beginning of the tropical storm season. Some unique facts about August include that it has one full moon known as the full sturgeon moon because the Native Americans had the best results in catching sturgeons on the great lakes and Champlain Lake. August is also the time when flowers such as day lilies, roses, and sacred lotus are in full bloom. August is also the beginning of the horse fly season so make sure to keep an eye on livestock and treat if needed. As I made my rounds across the county this past week, action in the fields were slow with very humid conditions and just enough rain chances to keep hay mowers parked in the shed. On the other hand, crops were very busy growing, and weeds were right there with them. Corn pollination looks to be going quite well and little signs of disease pressure other than a few signs of Grey leaf spot and Northern Corn Leaf Blight at very low pressure. Some soybeans are entering the R-3 and R-4 stage of growth meaning pods are beginning to be formed. This is a critical time for soybeans to receive rain and utilize as much sunlight as possible. Two main weed issues that I am seeing is water hemp escapes and giant ragweed. Summer annual forage harvest occurred with some very good yields and regrowth could make a possible second cutting. Pastures continue to hold up well for mid-summer, in fact some producers are clipping the pasture for a second time to take care of some problem weeds. Wrapper tobacco harvest continues, and pumpkins are forming on the vine. Speaking of pumpkins, I have been receiving more and more calls regarding specialty crop production and a growing interest in growing a crop to diversify their operations.

Ohio has a wide variety of different crops grown, corn, soybeans, and wheat are by far the leading crops grown but, there are many other crops grown as well. In fact, according to the 2017 USDA Agriculture Survey Ohio grew 71,373 acres of Specialty crops and 8,983 of those acres were orchards and 1,584 acres being berry crops,

33,118 acres were vegetable production, and 7,717 Christmas tree acres. Ohio is also well known for its large amounts of maple syrup production with 465,953 total taps producing over 93,000 gallons annually. Specialty crop production is also a big money maker for the state, bringing in as much as \$922,870 net income to the Ohio economy. Some of the specialty crops grown in Ohio currently include:

- **Pumpkins-** 60% of Ohio specialty crop producers raise pumpkins
- **Tomatoes and Peppers-** Make up as much as 58% of Specialty crop producers.
- **Berry crops-** There are currently about 400 blueberry farms in Ohio and the largest farm consist of 27 acres.
- **Sweet Corn-** 41% of specialty crop producers grow and sell sweet corn in Ohio.
- **Green Beans-** Wisconsin is the leading state for green bean production but Ohio can produce very good crops of beans yielding on average 200 bushels/acre.
- **Tobacco-** Adams County has the greatest amount of tobacco farms at 81 and Brown is a close second with 77.
- **Orchards-** Ohio has around 147 active orchards.
- **Hops-** this is growing crop in Ohio, in 2019 there were roughly 75 growers in Ohio.
- **Dandelion-** Research is being done to produce rubber made from certain dandelion plants.

Specialty crops in Ohio continue to be an important means of income and means of diversifying the farm and serving as a risk protection when other cash crops might fail or price dip. For smaller farmers specialty crop production might be the perfect fit, but I always recommend doing considerable amounts of research and budgeting before investing in specialty crops. Due to the higher expense per acre and unpredictable markets, make sure to have a marketing plan before investing in a specialty crop. As always reach out to your local Extension office for factsheets and upcoming field day and educational workshops.

Some other details to go over

- September 26-28, this three-day Artificial Insemination training will be located at the Jackson Research Farm, 19 Standpipe Road, Jackson Ohio. There is a \$100 fee for the course. Registrations will be to the first 20 producers to learn how to register contact me at (937) 544-2339 or purdin.19@osu.edu

Ag Educator Words of Wisdom – “The Nation that destroys its soil destroys itself.” Franklin D. Roosevelt