

CORNELL UNIVERSITY **STATION NEWS** GENEVA  
NEW YORK

VOLUME LXXX • NO. 34  
AUGUST 27-SEPTEMBER 3, 1999

**BRIEFS**

*STATION NEWS*

Items for *Station News* should be sent to Pat Blakeslee ([pb64@nysaes.cornell.edu](mailto:pb64@nysaes.cornell.edu)), interim *News* editor in Communications.

**BOB BECKER'S LEGACY**

There are many who, every day, wish they could pick up the phone or walk down the hall to consult with Bob Becker about a particular vegetable, fruit or horticultural practice. Bob, who died in 1996, was featured in a recent article in the "Seed Savers Exchange" magazine that brings us up to date on activities dear to Bob's heart.

The active preservation of horticultural history and heirloom varieties of fruits and vegetable was one of Bob Becker's consuming passions. When he was alive, he played an active role in the Association of Living History Farms and Agricultural Museums, the Genesee Country Museum, and in the establishment of Heritage Farm, in Decorah, Iowa, and the Historic Orchard at Heritage. Currently, there are 18,000 historic varieties at Heritage Farm, which is easily the best collection of heirloom varieties in the world.

Fay Becker and her children have donated Bob Becker's library to the Seed Savers Exchange at Heritage. The Robert Becker Memorial Library was dedicated on October 11, 1998.

Bob's library of 614 historic texts was started by his father, and includes books by Downing, Hedrick, Beach, Vilmorin, Henderson, Fearing Burr and many others who had spent the major portions of their lives recording varietal descriptions. The collection focuses on 19<sup>th</sup> century vegetables and horti-

(*BRIEFS, continued on page 2*)

**SNAP BEAN AND SWEET CORN FIELD DAY  
ATTENDANCE HIGH**



*Fred Musser, entomology, spoke about corn beetles, European Corn Borers, and Monarch butterflies at the Snap Bean and Sweet Corn Field Day last Tuesday. (Photo: Joan Thibeau)*

A very successful Seventh Annual Processing Sweet Corn and Snap Bean Field Day was held on Tuesday, August 17, 1999, at the Vegetable Research Farm. The day began with registration and a bag lunch at the Vegetable Crops Barn.

Guests came from the Northeast and Canada, and as far away as Alabama and Idaho. Twenty-nine guests representing the Ontario Growers Marketing Board came by motor coach from Ontario. There were seven seed company representatives, five vegetable processing representatives, and one bean broker from Delaware. Also joining the field day were several local agri-business representatives and a few New York State growers, including Bill Harris, an active member of the Processing Sweet Corn Research Association. Seven Cornell Cooperative Extension Agents attended from as far away as Wyoming County. Last but not least, 20 Experiment Station faculty and staff attended to speak and support the field day activities, contributing to the day's success.

Steve Reiners, associate professor of horticultural sciences, acted as emcee. He welcomed the over 100 people present and introduced each speaker.

Thomas Björkman, associate professor of horticultural sciences, started the snap bean presentations on snap beans with a presentation on solving the leftover phosphorous problem using ammonium and sodium-bicarbonate release agents. Björkman and Reiners had acquired funding from the USDA for a two-year study.

(*FIELD DAY, continued on page 3*)

(Briefs, cont. 'd)

culture, and reflected Becker's careful, assiduous, but broad, interests.

Remarks made at the dedication reflected Bob Becker's trait of "making things happen for other people," and the fact that this library was an invaluable resource for all living history farms.

Among Bob Becker's significant contributions to the history of horticulture—and one that received international attention at the time—was the publication of a Cornell extension bulletin in 1981, called "The Heirloom Vegetable Garden: Gardening in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century." The bulletin is a guide to 19<sup>th</sup> century gardening and the development of the seed industry. It describes vegetable varieties from the last century along with instructions for their preparation, use and storage. There are 36 varieties described in the bulletin.

L. McCandless

## PAYCHECK RELEASE PROCEDURE

An internal controls audit was conducted at the Station this past spring by the University Audit Office. It covered the period of January 1, 1998, through December 31, 1998. One of the Audit Office's recommendations was that departments consider hand-delivering paychecks or have a central place where employees can pick up paychecks.

Department and unit representatives agreed that the payroll representatives or their designees will be available in a central location (identified within the department/unit) for employees to pick up their checks. At a minimum, the checks may be picked up at 10:00 a.m. and at 3:00 p.m. on payday. Any employee who is unable to pick up his/her check at one of the designated times will make special arrangements with the payroll representative. If an employee is unable to pick up his/her check on payday, the check will be placed in a secured location.

This process will be initiated by September 1, 1999. If you have any questions, please contact your payroll representative or Human Resources, Jordan Hall.

(BRIEFS, continued on page 3)

## WHALE WATCH REPORT



*Mou-Chieh Kao interests festival-goers in comparing samples of apple slices on Sunday.*



*Station director Jim Hunter and his wife, Suzie, volunteered for a shift at the tomato tasting exhibit on Sunday.*



*Corn roasters (from left to right) Bob Seem, Steve Lerch and Hugh Price were kept busy during their stint at the barbecue pit on Sunday. Nearly 1,500 ears were served in two days.*

(FIELD DAY, cont.'d)

(BRIEFS, cont.'d)

Their presentation was followed by Alan Taylor, professor of horticultural sciences, who spoke on seed aging and the effect of cold storage, with emergence data on seed quality declination and yield declination. He spoke about cold/stress tests and seed lab work on germination and the development of current economic information for the growers.

George Abawi, professor of plant pathology, spoke on the management of Bean Root Rot and described his fungicide seed treatment trials along with information about the impact of sub-soiling, rotation, and composting with and without cover crops.

Robin Bellinder, professor of fruit and vegetable sciences, Ithaca, spoke on regulatory information for herbicides, including the EPA rejection of Reflex. "There will soon be a complete registration for snap beans," she said. "It will help increase the number of tools in the toolbox for the growers."

Finally, research support specialist Jim Ballerstein led a walking tour of the snap bean trials and described the sieve size, yield, and quality data for each variety of snap beans. There were some excellent conversations between Jim and seed specialists as he went through each variety. Cans of processed snap beans were displayed on a table near the field trial for a closer inspection of the finished product.

Margaret Smith, associate professor of plant breeding, Ithaca, started off the sweet corn trial portion of the afternoon. Smith specializes in field corn but has been able to transfer useful information to sweet corn programs that deal specifically with pest problems and leaf blight. She spoke about the European Corn Borer (ECB) resistance program at her field trials in Aurora, N.Y. She also explained nitrogen stress tolerances and the genetic work to develop a better sweet corn for the Finger Lakes Region.

Mike Hoffman, associate professor of entomology, Ithaca, spoke about Stewart's Wilt and the use of parasitic wasps as a release inoculation for integrated pest management to control the corn flea beetle.

Fred Musser, graduate student in entomology, continued on the subject of the ECB and the use of parasitic wasps as an IPM control on the egg masses of the corn beetle. He also discussed use of Tracer and Success as insecticides, their effects on milkweed, and, in turn, their effect on the Monarch butterfly.

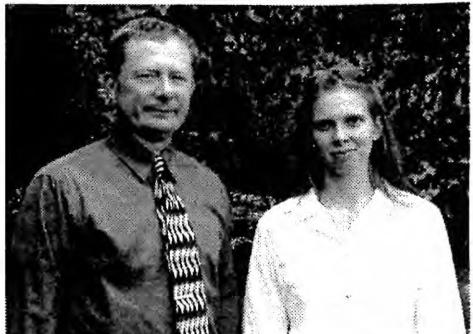
Bellinder returned to provide information about pesticides and specific information about the EPA concerning sweet corn. She also talked about three new herbicides for sweet corn that will be available within the following year. She noted that Acton was good for Velvet Leaf and Aim may be used with 2-4-D for weed control.

Jim Ballerstein finished off the day with a tour of the processing sweet corn trials, describing each variety to the many interested people who stayed until close to 5 p.m. Cans of processed sweet corn were also on display near the field trials for a closer inspection of the finished product.

The group gathered at the Pavilion to continue their conversations over dinner, which was followed by the annual agribusiness portion of the meeting. Most of the information conveyed concerned the effects of weather nationwide: Minnesota is 'too wet,' Idaho 'just right,' Ontario and New York 'dry, but not as dry as Delaware, Maryland, and Pennsylvania.' Concern about consumer reaction in the U.S., Canada, and Europe to genetically modified corn and beans, and the industry-wide attitude of 'wait and see' were hot topics of conversation. Many in the industry are planning to deliver whatever commodities the consumers demand in each niche market, and to monitor crop practices and genes so they can be labelled as the various markets require.

A huge "thanks" goes out to Matt Wavrick, Kathy Campo, Pat Cobb, Cindy Cowan, and Jill Byington along with the FRU crew and others who pitched in to make this field day a huge success.

D.Chicoine



*Stephanie Mittler, a visiting graduate student from Pierre et Marie Curie University in Paris, France, with Dr. Alan Taylor.*

## VISITING STUDENT ENJOYS STATION EXPERIENCE

Stephanie Mittler, a visiting graduate student from Pierre et Marie Curie University in Paris, France, has completed a summer program working in horticultural science with Dr. Alan Taylor. Mittler worked on seed physiology, focusing her efforts on developing non-invasive methods to assess seed viability with an emphasis of water activity on physiological function. Mittler came to the Station on the recommendation of Dr. Daniel Come, a French seed physiologist familiar with Cornell's seed biology program.

Mittler enjoyed her experience at the Station. She was especially impressed by the Station's ability to promote a relaxed and easy-going atmosphere, yet still be a world-class research institution.

Mittler plans to spend the last year of her program in France working on food product marketing. Once she has completed her degree, she plans to work for a major food manufacturer.



**The American Red Cross  
extends its thanks to the 42  
donors who gave 36 pints of  
blood during the Station's  
blood drive on August 23.**

## CALENDAR of EVENTS

AUGUST 27- SEPTEMBER 3, 1999

## SEMINARS

**Monday, August 30, 10:30 a.m.****Room 310 Barton Lab***Coffee and cookies will be provided at 10 a.m.*

Carmenza Gongora will speak on "Chitinolytic Transgenes from Streptomyces albidoflavus as Phytochemical Defenses Against Herbivorous Insects: use in Transgenic Plants and Effects on Plant Development."

**Tuesday, August 31, 3:30 pm****Room 133A Barton Lab, Seminar Room**

Department of Plant Pathology Seminar

Frank Healy, Ph.D., Department of Plant Pathology, Ithaca, will speak on "Characterization of phytotoxin biosynthetic genes in Streptomyces spp."

## LTC

**Tuesday, August 31, 8:30-11:30 a.m.**

Excel Intermediate

**Wednesday, September 1, 2 - 4 p.m.**

DreamWeaver

## CLASSIFIED

**FOR SALE:** 1985 Mercury Grand Marquis. Runs good. Needs brakes. \$500 or best offer. Contact Matt at 789-4332.

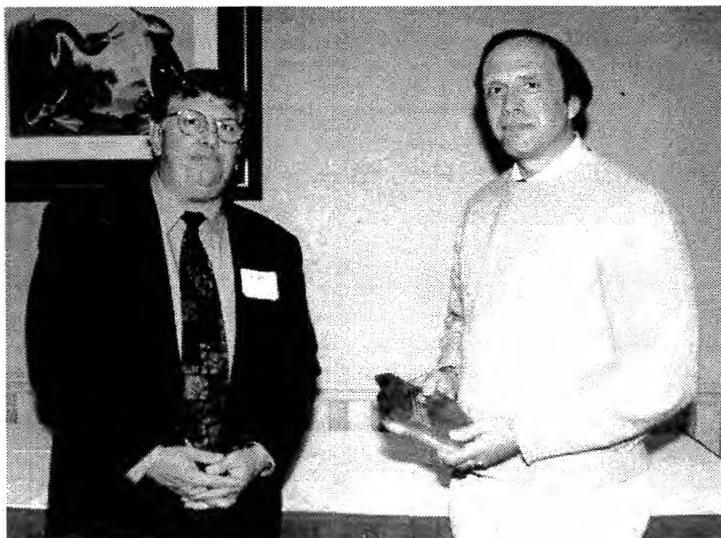
**RESERVE YOUR FRESH LAMB NOW:** Enjoy pasture-raised lamb this winter (and, yes, we still have grass), cut as you like it. \$2.45/lb, cut, wrapped, and frozen. A 100-lb lamb yields about 45 lbs of meat. They'll be ready to go in December. Contact Linda at llm3@cornell.edu or x417.

**FOR SALE:** Exciting! Special Wolfsburg edition VW convertible. Pampered. No rust (garaged winters). Leather, air conditioning, power steering, cruise control, alloy wheels, 1986 model, 94,000 miles. \$4,900. 1990 Pontiac minivan. Lots of space, 7 individual seats, very comfortable, front wheel drive, V6, air conditioning, NO rust, excellent condition, 92,000 miles, factory recall engine replaced at 55,000 miles. \$6,900. Please contact Jan or Thomas Henick-Kling (781-7011 or x277 or th12@cornell.edu).

**MULTI-FAMILY YARD SALE.** Aug. 28 and 29, from 9 a.m.- 4 p.m. 5296 Old Lake Rd. (Rt. 14), 7 mi. south of Geneva. Household items, toys, kids clothes, and some furniture.

**FOR SALE:** Twin bed mattress and box spring. Nearly new. \$30, including delivery. Contact Pat Blakeslee at pb64@nysaes.cornell.edu or 548-5192.

## GIBBONS RECEIVES ALUMNI ACHIEVEMENT AWARD



Dan Marion, professor of Environmental Conservation-Outdoor Recreation at FLCC (left), presented John Gibbons (right) with the 1999 Outstanding Horticulture Alumni Achievement Award. (Photo courtesy of FLCC)

John Gibbons, technician and weather network specialist for Cornell Cooperative Extension in Ontario County, received the Outstanding Horticulture Alumni Achievement Award from the Department of Environmental Conservation-Outdoor Recreation at Finger Lakes Community College.

The award, presented at the 15th annual Widmer Banquet in May, recognized Gibbons for his contributions to the field of integrated pest management. After earning AAS degrees from FLCC in Natural Resources Conservation (1979) and Ornamental Horticulture / Landscape Development (1983), Gibbons began his career as a research assistant for the Eli Lily Co., where he assisted in the testing of new fungicides, field data collection, and harvest evaluations. In 1986 he was hired by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as crew leader for a survey of golden nematodes in soil conducted by the Animal Plant Health Inspection Service. His participation in this project earned him special distinction from the USDA in 1986 and 1987.

Gibbons joined the Cornell Cooperative Extension as a technician in 1988 to support projects that fostered educational opportunities for vegetable growers in Ontario, Yates, and Wayne counties. In 1992, his responsibilities expanded to include development and implementation of an electronic weather network for the New York State IPM Program, based here at the Station.

"We have a network of about 50 electronic weather stations around New York and Pennsylvania that collect temperature, relative humidity, leaf wetness, precipitation on an hourly basis," says Curt Petzoldt, associate director of the IPM Program at Geneva. The data, downloaded daily over phone lines, are summarized into formats that can be used with insect and pest forecasting models for various crops to provide current information to growers via the World Wide Web.

"Growers and others pay for access to this data through a nonprofit organization called the Northeast Weather Association (NEWA)," Petzoldt explains. Gibbons has been instrumental in securing outside funding for this endeavor. He also developed cooperative arrangements with weather forecasters to provide localized forecasts for NEWA members.

"John is the person we look to keep the network functioning," says Petzoldt. "He is one of the principal programmers of the software that downloads the data, he developed and maintains the websites for data access, and he is responsible for setting up and maintaining the weather instruments each year."

P. Blakeslee