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An Introduction to the Revised Guide

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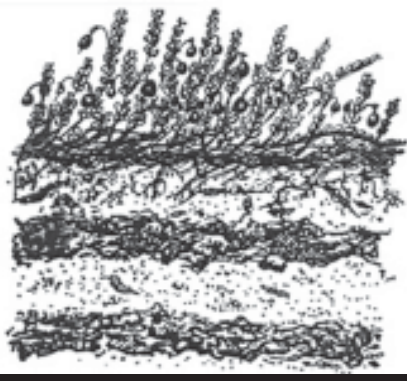


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BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES GUIDE FOR MASSACHUSETTS CRANBERRY PRODUCTION

Introduction to the Revised Guide

Cranberries are grown on approximately 14,000 acres in Massachusetts and are an important horticultural commodity in the Southeastern region of the state. In addition, more than 60,000 acres of open space are associated with cranberry operations. This open space provides habitat to many plant and animal species as well as providing an aesthetic value. Open space associated with cranberry farms serves to protect and recharge watersheds. Cranberry farming also contributes to the economy and quality of life in Southeastern Massachusetts.

In order to preserve the positive benefits of cranberry farming in Massachusetts, it is necessary that cranberry growers be equipped to produce cranberries profitably and in concert with the environment. The melding of economic, environmental, and social interests in farming has been termed 'sustainable' farming. In such a system, the quality of life of the farmer and the community, the profitability of farming, and the preservation of the quality of natural resources and the environment are all taken into consideration. Such a system requires that farming with expert knowledge in some part replaces the indiscriminate use of agrochemical and non-renewable resources.

The University of Massachusetts Cranberry Experiment Station has the mission of providing research and education programs to add to the expert knowledge base for cranberry growers. In order to fulfill that mission, we produced, in 1996, a basic guide for growing cranberries within modern environmental and social constraints. At about that same time, the Cape Cod Cranberry Growers Association, working with the Conservation Districts and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, began working on standards for cranberry farming that could be used in the formulation of Farm Plans. Ocean Spray Cranberries, Inc. was beginning the process of providing Best Management Practices Guidelines to its growers.

All of these groups were brought together to formulate a unified project that was funded by the Massachusetts Department of Food and Agriculture Agro-Environmental Technology Program. The Best Management Practices Guide for Massachusetts Cranberry Production was the result of this process.

In 1999, these same stakeholders came together to revise and expand the BMP Guide, again with financial support from the Massachusetts Department of Food and Agriculture Agro-Environmental Technology Program and the Cape Cod Cranberry Growers Association. Key features of the revised and expanded BMP Guide include expanded information regarding water use and protection and the handling and use of pesticides. This information will be critical to help growers and officials comply with requirements of State and Federal laws and regulations, especially the requirements of the Clean Water Act.

This revised Guide has been designed primarily as a reference resource for cranberry growers. The intent is to provide information that will help growers to farm profitably and in harmony with their neighbors and the surrounding environment. It will serve as a companion to the **Cranberry Chart Book - Management Guide for Massachusetts**, published by Cranberry Experiment Station (UMass Extension). The revised Guide has been set up as a series of 24 'stand-alone' practices (15 new or revised). This facilitates the periodic revision of individual practices as necessary and allows for the addition of more practices over time.

Each section of the Guide begins with a description of the part of cranberry production addressed in that BMP. This information is for the benefit of newer growers and to serve as a point of reference for others (Conservation Commissions, regulators, Environmental groups) who might receive these materials. Following the introductory section is a series of **Recommended Practices** designed to maximize productivity while

preserving the environment. Of course, not all growers will be able to implement every Recommended Practice due to financial and site constraints, but having such a list in-hand should prove valuable as cranberry farmers strive to maintain profitable and environmentally compatible operations. Each BMP ends with a list of reference materials that growers can consult for further information. All of these materials will be available in the library at the Cranberry Experiment Station.

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The 2000 edition of **Best Management Practices Guide for Massachusetts Cranberry Production** is provided to Massachusetts cranberry growers and other interested State residents free of charge due to the generous support of the organizations listed below. Interested parties from States other than Massachusetts may purchase the Guide for \$10.00 plus postage.

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