



Maryland Department of Agriculture News



Celebrating Maryland Agriculture

May 2010

In This Issue

- New Buy Local Law
- Cover Crop Incentives
- Call for "Local" Recipes
- Asian Tiger Mosquito
- Giant Pumpkin Weigh Off
- Register Backyard Flocks
- Burn it Where You Buy It
- Spring Fertilizer Tips
- Pesticide Container Recycling
- Termite Control Tips
- People Profile- Warren Bontoyan
- Featured Recipe

Governor Signs Buy Local Bill into Law

Governor Martin O'Malley signed into law 12 agriculture-related bills as the culmination of a positive legislative session for the farm community. The bills signed on May 4 define the terms "locally grown" and "local" for agricultural product sales, reduce the regulatory burden for farmers selling at farmers markets, reform Maryland winery laws, authorize a nutrient credit trading program, and provide more opportunities for landowners to preserve their farmland. Click [here](#) for more information.



Secretary's Corner



MDA, NRCS Team Up to Offer Farmers Better Cover Crop Incentives

MDA and the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) have teamed up to offer Maryland farmers more choices and better incentives to plant cover crops in their fields this fall. This year, MDA will provide farmers with approximately \$15 million to plant cover crops. NRCS has made an additional \$3 million available to farmers who plant traditional or harvested cover crops this fall. This year, farmers can choose from several cover crop planting options. Special incentives are available to farmers who plant rye.



Farmers should contact their local soil conservation district office right away to enroll in the NRCS Cover Crop Program, which is now open for sign-up. The enrollment dates for the MDA program are June 21-July 15, 2010. Click [here](#) for more details.

Lookin at Lucky was the big winner of the 135th running of The Preakness Stakes last weekend. The Preakness is the best known of Maryland's equine events and reminds us that as a state we are very fortunate to have a strong horse industry involving recreational, competitive, racing, and breeding activities. Maryland has more horses per square mile than any other state. Some 29,000 jobs and more than 200,000 acres of undeveloped land associated with the equine sector

depend upon the stability and growth of the industry. Governor Martin O'Malley is committed to keeping the horse industry strong in Maryland through slots, legislation, policy and collaboration with all parts of the horse industry to see that these jobs and the equine-related working farms stay in place.

At the Preakness, Governor O'Malley toured the bustling stable area where one starts to get an idea of how many jobs are dependent on the strength of horse racing in the state. With 40 percent of Maryland's horses involved in racing, it is easy to start to understand how many jobs the other 60 percent of horses can generate. Grooms, exercise riders, veterinarians, riding instructors, farriers, saddleries, event concessions, feed suppliers, farmers who grow hay, laborers on training farms and many others depend on the horse industry for their livelihood.

The first of the slot facilities is slated to open later this year, which will start to send money back into the breeding and racing sectors as well as the racetrack buildings, helping employment opportunities throughout Maryland. These funds should help to keep all of Maryland's racetracks open for business for their real intended purpose, the great sport of live horse racing.

To further support the horse industry we are taking up the recommendations from the 2009 Horse Forum, which was held last August to develop an action plan for the future of the industry. In fact, with the support of the horse industry, the General Assembly passed and Governor O'Malley signed into law measures that increased the funding for the promotion of the industry through activities of the Maryland Horse Industry Board. In addition, we are conducting the first equine census in eight years so that we get a full and updated accounting of the size and value of the equine industry. We hope all horse owners will fill out the census and return it as soon as possible.

On a different front, Springtime brings out the insects from mosquitoes and

Call for "Local" Recipes

Governor Martin O'Malley invites teams to submit original recipes using local ingredients for Maryland's annual "Buy Local Cook Out," to be held at Government House in Annapolis on Thursday, July 15. The cook out is the signature kick-off event for the statewide Buy Local Challenge Week (July 17-25), when all Marylanders are encouraged to eat at least one local product each day of the week. **Entries are due June 1.**

Submissions must be by teams made up of a chef and one or more farmer, waterman, or producer. If selected, teams will have the opportunity to provide, prepare, and share the dish at the Governor's Cook Out.

Recipes that represent Maryland's Best bounty will be chosen in each of the following categories:

- ° Appetizer
- ° Main dish
- ° Side dish or salad
- ° Dessert
- ° Beverage
- ° Table decorations (centerpieces)

Click [here](#) for complete rules of entry and additional information.

Asian Tiger Mosquito: Summer Pest Extraordinaire

The tiger mosquito is the most problematic pest species in many urban and suburban areas. Its habits and habitat are a bit different than our native mosquitoes:

- It bites readily during the day and will also follow you into your house or car.
- It is black with distinctive white stripes on its legs
- It won't breed in most natural areas of water, but loves any man-made container that holds water, so check your yard and get rid of or tip out anything holding water weekly Click [here](#) for more tips on preventing mosquito bites and West Nile virus.
- It won't fly very far- about the length of a football field, so it's important to talk to neighbors about checking their yards for breeding containers

More information about mosquitoes and how to control them in your backyard is available [here](#).

Maryland's First Great Pumpkin Weigh-off

Do you want to do something different in your garden or on your farm this year? Why not try to grow a giant pumpkin. It's not easy and will test your patience and skills. But now is the time to start if you want to give it a shot. Sow some giant pumpkin seeds and join in the fun of the Great Maryland Pumpkin Weigh-off in October. The only real rule in this contest is that the pumpkin has to be grown in Maryland by the person entering the contest. Farmers, backyard gardeners, and anyone else growing pumpkins are welcome.



gypsymoths to emerald ash borer among many. We are fortunate to have had extremely low gypsy moth populations this year, requiring very small spray acreage. Mosquitoes on the other hand may be very populous this year if the rain continues.

Other MDA staff are busy this time of year preventing the spread of the emerald ash borer (EAB). May 23-29 is Emerald Ash Borer Awareness Week. EAB week marks the start of summer camping and is a perfect time to remind people not to take firewood with them on vacation. Instead, they should buy firewood where they will burn it. By leaving firewood at home, the emerald ash borer can't spread any distance and can't harm ash trees in our forests and neighborhoods.

Here at MDA, we are very fortunate to have the best staff around. I was very pleased to recognize three outstanding employees for their contributions to the agency. They were nominated by their peers and their supervisors. **Carol Council**, an Administrator with the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation received an award for her leadership. Examples would include her pro-active public outreach explaining the program; impact on policy issues such as natural gas drilling rights in Garrett County; and for mentoring interns to encourage their interest in land preservation and public service.

Jason Keppler, a Programmer and Analyst with the Resource Conservation Office received an innovation award for his work to establish dynamic data-based projects that track and report agricultural best management practices and farm conservation planning that are part of the BayStat (www.baystat.maryland.gov) program and the new Conservation Tracker.

Diana Mullenix, front office manager at the Frederick Animal Health Diagnostic Laboratory, received a customer service award. Diana is a key to the lab's mission of diagnosing and assisting in the control and eradication of animal and zoonotic diseases through her

Growing tips are available at the University of Maryland Home and Garden Information Center [website](#). The official weighing will be conducted by the Maryland Department of Agriculture's [Weights and Measures Section](#) using an industrial strength, large capacity certified scale. For large entries, pallets are recommended. The winner, determined by heaviest weight, will receive a commemorative award and incredible bragging rights.

Details will be forthcoming. Pumpkin growers interested in participating in the Great Maryland Pumpkin Weigh-off should contact Kate Mason, 410-841-5770 or MasonKB@mda.state.md.us. The University of Maryland



Christy Harp and her 1725-pound World Record. Photo Credit: Burrhead, Courtesy of Big Pumpkins.com

Register Backyard Flocks

Many Marylanders are becoming more interested in backyard gardening and growing their own food, including poultry and eggs. With this growing trend, it's important to know that the Maryland Department of Agriculture requires all poultry flocks in Maryland to be registered with department in accordance with Maryland law which was established in 2005.

Since then, MDA has been compiling this data to create maps and tables of poultry in Maryland for purposes of biosecurity and disease prevention/control purposes. This information will be used to help the state quickly identify poultry flocks when a disease hits Maryland's poultry industry and to adequately respond to a poultry disease outbreak. As of May 1, 2010, Maryland has registered over 3,600 backyard and commercial poultry flocks. Is your flock registered? Click [here](#) for more information and registration form.



Stop the Spread. Burn It Where You Buy It.

As we prepare to kick off the unofficial start of summer this month, Maryland is highlighting Emerald Ash Borer Awareness Week (May 23-29). The effort aims to inform residents about ways to help stop the spread of the emerald ash borer, a destructive pest that kills ash trees. Because the insect can be transported through firewood, the campaign encourages campers, anglers, scouts, and other outdoor enthusiasts to leave firewood at home, buy it at their destination and burn it completely.



Click [here](#) to learn more about the emerald ash borer and ways to help stop its spread. Marylanders can call the University of Maryland Home and Garden Information center toll-free at 800-342-2507 or the MDA at 410-841-5920 to report dying ash trees or for help identifying a possible emerald ash borer. Anyone can report suspect EAB through the Maryland Home and Garden Information Center's [online reporting form](#).

recordkeeping, management and interaction with everyone from producers, veterinarians, government colleagues, and everyone who has interacted with the lab for 25 years.

Thank you to these three individuals for their outstanding contributions to MDA. Together as an agency and an industry, we are serving Marylanders and making the state a better place each and every day.

Thank you,
[Buddy Hance](#)
Secretary

Quick Links

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Farmers Offer Spring Fertilizer Tips for Backyard Gardeners

Spring is in full bloom and now is the time to plan for your gardens. Maryland farmers have initiated a homeowner education campaign, "[Take it from Maryland Farmers: Backyard Actions for a Cleaner Chesapeake Bay](#)" to help gardeners by offering [fertilizer tips](#) and [online resources](#). The campaign highlights the importance of soil testing and using fertilizers wisely for healthier gardens and lawns this growing season and a cleaner Chesapeake Bay. Additional topics include [trying pesticide alternatives](#) and [composting](#), [controlling soil erosion and rainwater runoff](#), and [conserving water](#).



Pesticide Container Recycling Begins in June Statewide

Maryland's pesticide container recycling program, offered by MDA, helps prevent pesticide residues from entering the soil and local waterways and has saved valuable landfill space by recycling 616,000 empty, plastic pesticide containers. The [program will open its 18th year](#) of operation in June, asking farmers, pesticide applicators and others to properly rinse and recycle their empty pesticide containers. A total of 28 collection days are scheduled June through September at eight locations throughout the state. Click [here](#) to learn more.



Tackle Termites with Licensed Pesticide Firms

Across Maryland, termites are now starting to swarm, spreading out to start new colonies. To control these pest problems, many homeowners rely on the services offered by commercial pest control businesses. Make sure you are getting the service you pay for by taking the following precautions before contracting for any pest control services:

- Deal only with an MDA-licensed firm.
- Ask to see identification cards for sales and service personnel.
- Do not accept service over the telephone without other contact with the company. Ask for an inspection of your property and for a written proposal that outlines the pest control program.

Click [here](#) to learn more about termites and pesticide information.



Photo courtesy of USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org.

People Profile: Warren Bontoyan

Sweet, sour or putrid. These were the taste-test categories used by FDA inspectors as an indicator of the safety of butter entering consumer markets in the late 1950s. If the butter didn't meet the standard, inspectors would call headquarters and marshals would seize the shipment at its destination, usually in New York where most of the butter was sold. Inspectors of the time also checked the many seafood and produce canneries, food processing facilities as well as dairies. Conducting inspections like these across Maryland, Virginia and North Carolina was the beginning of Maryland State Chemist, Warren Bontoyan's, long and distinguished consumer protection career. Today, he leads one of the top state chemistry laboratories - MDA's. Warren has seen dramatic and radical changes in technology, scientific methods, and the role of the government. As he says, "Things are better than they were. It's been exciting to see how the fruits of our labor have helped a lot of people."



Serving as an FDA inspector right after his graduation from the University of Maryland introduced Warren to just about everything in the food processing realm from the back woods to the cities. When he and his team were assigned to more risky undercover illegal drug investigations, he drove over to USDA's Agricultural Research Facility in Beltsville where he quickly landed a position in 1960 as a chemist in the fertilizer laboratory. Not long after, he moved to the Pesticide Formulation Laboratory. In the pesticide lab, he began a rapid rise through the ranks. In no time it seemed, he became director of the Analytical Chemistry Laboratory in the EPA's Office of Pesticide and Toxic Substances. In 1970, the lab, which he headed until his federal retirement in 1990, was moved from USDA to the newly established Environmental Protection Agency.

Warren loves to tell stories of the positive impact science in regulation has had and reminisces about the role of the federal labs in conducting proactive, science-based consumer protection investigations. Government scientists like him once had a great deal of latitude to follow a hunch. As an example, during Warren's EPA years, he and a colleague pondered whether a fumigant used in grain elevators at the time would survive the baking process and leave residuals in breads that were provided to children through the school lunch commodity programs. They launched a laboratory investigation finding that in fact it did. As a result, the particular product could no longer be used in that application. Warren won a Bronze Medal from EPA for this project.

Other investigations led by Warren's federal labs included identifying the cause of the mysterious deaths of premature babies in hospitals around the country in the 1960s; finding out why cattle were dying by the thousands on the range; and determining the reason for a major fish kill on the Mississippi. The situations with the children and the cattle were related to side reactions of certain chemical products in certain environmental conditions or when they interacted with other products. As a result of Warren's laboratory analyses, products were removed from the marketplace or relabeled for safer use.

He notes that "industry is so much more in tune with the environment than it was." His time with the federal government was a time in which the field of analytical chemistry was moving very quickly while molecular biology was moving slowly. Today, he sees molecular biology moving quickly and predicts we'll soon see a whole new way of regulating and finding medical innovations and solutions.

Just when Warren thought he might be retiring, MDA Secretary Wayne Cawley and Assistant Secretary Charlie Puffinburger approached him about becoming the Maryland State Chemist. As luck would have it, Warren agreed and transitioned to MDA upon his retirement in 1990. In a matter of a few short years, he turned the lab into one of the most respected on the East Coast. Under his leadership over the past 20 years, the lab has maintained that fine reputation.

The MDA State Chemist Section is responsible for administering state laws regulating the registration, distribution and sale of pesticides, feed, pet foods, fertilizers, compost, soil conditioners, and liming materials. His outstanding laboratory and field staff support this mission by gathering samples and conducting lab analyses for pesticide and toxic substances residue in food and environmental samples. During his time at MDA, Warren and his staff have many, many accomplishments. Among the more recent and most visible were: the identification of dioxin in a nursery product; the stop sale of BSE-tainted dog food; and being among the first in the nation to identify melamine in pet food from China as the product causing animal deaths just a few years ago.

In other professional activities, Warren actively served as an expert advisor internationally with the United Nations' World

Health Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization, the World Bank, and as a U.S. representative on the Collaborative International Pesticide Analytical Council. He is the author of many scientific, peer reviewed, research articles. In fact, he won another EPA bronze medal for creating and editing the "EPA Manual of Chemical Methods and Devices for Pesticides," which continues to be used by states and many governments around the world.

Warren is showing no signs of slowing down or retiring from MDA. He says he "is proud to be a part of investigations to protect people and to help society. It gives me a lot of satisfaction."

A Baltimore native, Warren is married, has two children, four grandchildren and lives in Freeland, Maryland near the Pennsylvania border. He feels blessed that he's never had a job he didn't like and has always worked with people he likes. MDA and all Marylanders are fortunate to have close at hand his expertise and friendly counsel.

Featured Recipe: Strawberry Shortcake with Biscuits

Recipe courtesy of Lucie L. Snodgrass, author "[Dishing Up Maryland](#)" Photo courtesy of Edwin Remsberg.

1/2 cup sugar
2 quarts strawberries, hulled and cut in half
2 cups all-purpose flour
3 teaspoons baking powder
1 teaspoon lemon zest
1/4 teaspoon salt
6 tablespoons cold butter, cut into small pieces
1 egg
1/2 cup half-and-half
1 pint whipping cream



1. Sprinkle 3 tablespoons of the sugar on top of the strawberries and toss. Cover and macerate for 1 hour.
2. Preheat the oven to 425°F. Combine the flour, 3 tables remaining sugar, the baking powder, lemon zest, and salt in a large bowl and mix well. Add the butter, cutting it in until the mixture is crumbly.
3. Whisk together the egg and the half-and-half in a small bowl until blended. Add the egg mixture to the flour mixture and stir until moist. Turn out the dough onto a floured surface and knead it three times. Roll out the dough to a 1/2-inch thickness and, using a biscuit cutter, cutout 6 biscuits. Bake them on an ungreased baking sheet for 10 minutes, until golden brown.
4. Combine the cream and the remaining 2 tablespoons sugar in a chilled bowl. Whip with a whisk or electric mixer until soft peaks form.
5. Split the biscuits and spoon strawberries over them. Top with whipped cream and serve warm.

Upcoming Events

- [Nutrient Trading Seminars](#), May 25, June 2, June 3
- [County Envirothon Competitions](#), May
- [Garden Lecture Series](#), May 22, June 19, July 17, Aug.21, Sept.18, Oct.16
- ["Growing and Marketing Organic Vegetables" Field Day](#), June 16 (White Hall)
- [2010 Commodity Classic](#), July 22 (Centreville)
- [PlanMaryland Public Forums](#), various dates, locations
- [Maryland Farmers' Markets](#), throughout the summer
- [Social Marketing Workshop for Farm Businesses](#), April 27 (Hughesville)

We invite your feedback.

Thank you for reading our latest publication. We are always looking for ways to improve how we serve our constituents. Please send your comments, suggestions and ideas to mdanews@mda.state.md.us or call 410-841-5881.

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Savor Sweet, Juicy Strawberries This Spring!

Spring is in full swing and with the new season comes the availability of delicious Maryland fruits and vegetables. Some of the first Maryland-grown produce to be available are asparagus, broccoli, cauliflower, salad greens and spinach and plump, juicy, bright red strawberries. Click [here](#) to find Maryland's Best fresh produce near you.

[Forward email](#)

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