

News from the Potato Lab



Fall 2018

Plans Set for 53rd Seed Seminar, November 6-8 in Missoula. The Montana Seed Potato Seminar will be at the Holiday Inn – Downtown Missoula. Montana growers will gather for the annual growers meeting on November 6 at 4PM. On November 7, the morning program will start with updates from our industry and potato organizations. In the afternoon, the Trade Show will be open and we will have sponsored presentations by agribusinesses. The program on November 8 will have invited speakers covering a range of topics including resistance management of insecticides by Andrei Alyokhin from the University of Maine, herbicide resistance management by Andy Robinson, NDSU, and our own Barry Jacobsen on managing development of resistance in fungicides. Soil Health will be covered by Bob Larkin, USDA, Maine. In addition, Bruce Holmes from the Montana Department of Transportation will give an update on electronic logging devices. Our keynote address “Where There is Vision There is Hope” will be delivered by Bruce Vincent from Vincent Logging in Libby. There will be great drawings including 2 tailgate model Traeger grills!

Summer Testing Program Recap, by Steve Hystad

This summer marked my inaugural testing season for the Potato Lab. This year over 3 million leaves were collected across the state by our hard-working picking crews lead by Penni Weyant (North) and Brea McCullough (South). Both crews worked through long hours, intense heat, and the occasional thunderstorm to bring these samples to the lab. While we had a few hiccups along the way, I was very pleased with their efforts this season. Leading the lab was a returning staff of “senior” leaf testers including the Gorski’s, Kyli Ayers, Alan Lu, and numerous other students who worked extremely

hard to ensure the tests were performed quickly and accurately. These students brought their energy and enthusiasm for science to the Potato Lab which we greatly miss now that the season is over.

Upon reflection, the testing of over 3 million leaves across the state is a massive undertaking. This effort is largely driven by enthusiastic college and high school students and wouldn’t be successful without the determination and belief that our efforts are positively impacting the seed potato industry in our state. Lastly, I would like to take the time to sincerely thank all our staff for the unsung contributions that made the summer testing program operate with ease and efficiency.



Summer Potato Crew including South Pickers, Lab Assistants, and Certification Staff

Moving forward, our goal for the summer testing program is to collect, test, and produce results in the most timely manner while maintaining high accuracy. We see various aspects in the summer testing program where we can improve and our first goal for the 2019 season is to increase the number of staff collecting leaves. To help transport more crew members to the field, the Potato Lab has purchased a used GMC passenger van through MSU property surplus. We are excited for this

addition and are looking forward to the 2019 season.

Montana Seed Potato Report

Montana seed potato acreage is up slightly to 10,355 acres which represents a minor increase when compared to 10,220 acres in 2017. Russet Burbank is still the dominant variety and is holding steady at 3921 acres. Clearwater acreage continues to rise dramatically with 1016 acres this season compared to 698 last year, representing a 31% increase. Umatilla is the 2nd most widely produced variety in Montana but was down 16% from 1789 acres in 2017 to 1509 acres in 2018. Ranger Russet acreage is steady at 1172 acres and the Norkotah Russet selections were up 13% to 997 acres. Alturas continue to decline, from 637 acres in 2017 to 588 acres in 2018. There are a total of 57 varieties of potatoes registered for certification. 2018 was a year of early extremes followed by warm, mild conditions. Some Montana growers were planting in early May and some got a late start due to wet conditions in mid May, finishing planting in early June. In the Gallatin and Beaverhead, the early planted potatoes received a hard frost on June 12 and the later planted potatoes ended up staging very similar to the earlier planted potatoes. The rest of the summer we had ideal growing conditions throughout the state with plenty of warm days but no extreme heat or storms. This set the Montana crop up with strong yields of extremely uniform tubers and an optimal size profile.

Late Blight testing for Colorado

Colorado requires a late blight tuber test for any seed shipped to the San Luis Valley for certification. 400 tubers/lot are required. The late blight test requires a 3-week incubation, so we need to have the tubers a minimum of 3-4 weeks before your shipping date. If possible, deliver them with your Hawaii samples, making sure to tag them distinctly to insure they don't get sent to Hawaii!

Postharvest Test Details

Pick-up for postharvest test is October 23 for Kalispell, Ronan, Deer Lodge, Dillon and Three Forks, and drop-off in Belgrade on October 24. Our postharvest test plot is scheduled to be planted starting November 15 at Twin Bridge Farms on Oahu. Nina Zidack and Steve Hystad will be planting this year. There will be some major changes in protocols this year. Our plant spacing is

going to be increased from 9 to 12 inches and planting will be arranged according to variety, rather than randomly as done in the past. We anticipate that these two measures will increase leaf picking efficiency. Nina Zidack will travel to Oahu on December 19 to start picking early emerging varieties. She will be joined by Eileen Carpenter on December 27 to begin visual readings. If you would like to visit the plots give us a call and we will plan on seeing you there!

BRR Sampling

The MPIA board voted for mandatory BRR testing for all G2 to G5 starting with the 2018 crop. Montana rules require 10 tubers/acre for each lot. The minimum sample size is 400. All samples should be divided into subunits of 200 cores and placed in plastic bags that are clearly marked with grower name, variety, field number and acreage. If you need coring tools or have any questions please call Anna at the lab at 994-3150.

Reminders from Elaine Nichols

Order forms for Plants for 2019 crop year and Microtubers for the 2019 crop year will be mailed out early December and will be due December 31. If you are considering new varieties, please have the plants sent to the lab as soon as possible. To have the plants ready for planting, disease testing and increasing takes 3-4 months.

Dates to Remember:

October 23 – Post Harvest Test Pickup

**Kalispell, Ronan, Deer Lodge,
Dillon, Twin Bridges and Three Forks**

October 24 – Post Harvest Test Drop-off

Manhattan area in Belgrade

November 6– Meetings at Holiday Inn,

**Downtown Missoula,
10AM - Research Committee
11AM - MT Potato Advisory Committee
2PM - MPIA Board
4PM - Montana Seed Potato Growers**

November 7

**8AM – Seed Industry Session
10:50AM – Workshop – Economics of Soil
Health
1PM – Trade Show and Sponsored Talks
4:30 PM - Reception**

November 8

8AM – General Session

December 18

Summer Testing Fees Due