

What's in Season from the Garden State

Seasonal Highlights from Cooperative Extension, a unit of Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station

September, 2011



Chef Gary Giberson from the Lawrenceville School unloads Jersey Fresh produce from a local farm. Credit: New Jersey Farm to School Network.



Mercer High School in Ewing celebrated Farm to School Week last September by incorporating Jersey Fresh into the school lunch program that week and decorating with Jersey Fresh signs. Credit: The New Jersey Department of Agriculture.

RUTGERS

New Jersey Agricultural
Experiment Station

Bring on the Veggies! New Jersey School Food Comes of Age

For every parent who has witnessed their children return from school off a sugar high from classroom treats, or lamented over the blue slushies served in the lunchroom or watched in horror as Chef Jamie Oliver revealed the synthetic ingredients in school processed food in his Food Revolution TV series, take heart. Something, fresh, local and healthy is coming to a New Jersey school near you.

New Jersey has had enormous collaboration on this front involving a number of groups and initiatives in the works for several years. As the 2011/2012 school year gets underway, a package of programs will be delivered to our schools with lots of goodies. Herein is a sampling of what's in store:

New Jersey Farm to School Survey Report: Hot off the press (and as a pdf) this survey was conducted by Rutgers Cooperative Extension Family and Consumer Health Sciences (FCHS) department, in conjunction with New Jersey Department of Agriculture (NJDA), New Jersey Farm to School Network (FTSN) and New Jersey School Nutrition Association. What FCHS department chair Kathleen Morgan describes as the first of its kind in New Jersey, the report reveals the practice and barriers of using local produce in school food programs. Have they used local produce? How did they obtain it? Do they have the facilities, equipment or staff skills to handle fresh produce? Find out what the survey says at: <http://njaes.rutgers.edu/health>.

Jersey Fresh Farm to School Week: Another first! The Jersey Fresh Farm to School Week was established by law to bring attention to the *Farm to School Program*, which connects schools to local farmers to increase the amount of local fresh produce available for consumption by students during the school day. The legislation, introduced by Assemblyman John F. McKeon of District 27, designates the last week in September as *Jersey Fresh Farm to School Week*. This year the week of September 26 – 30 has special programs slated for schools around the state. New Jersey FTSN, working with NJDA has developed a schedule of the week's activities: <http://www.njfarmtoschool.org>. NJ FTSN director Beth Feehan emphasizes that in addition to the use of local farm produce in the school lunches, there is an essential school garden component which will bring students up close and personal with some veggies – a relationship in great need of cultivating. Find out more about Farm to School week at the New Jersey Department of Agriculture's website at: <http://www.nj.gov/agriculture/news/press/2011/approved/press110916.html> and http://www.nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/fn/childadult/farm_to_school.html#1

Continued on page 2

New Jersey Department of
Agriculture's Jersey Fresh
Availability Report



Apples
Arugula
Baby Arugula & Baby Spinach
Basil
Beets
Cabbage
Cantalopes & Melons
Cilantro
Collards
Cranberries, white
Dandelions
Dill
Eggplant
Escarole & Endive
Kale
Leeks
Lettuces
Parsley
Peaches
Peppers
Pumpkins
Radishes
Spinach
Squash
Sweet corn
Sweet potatoes
Swiss Chard
Tomatoes
Turnips
White potatoes

Forecast:

Cranberries, red

National Farm to School Month: And yet another first! New Jersey's FTS week is a prelude to *National Farm to School Month* in October. Coincidentally, New Jersey Congressman Rush Holt introduced the legislation. Says Holt, "As a representative from the Garden State it should not be a surprise that I support bringing Jersey tomatoes or sweet corn into schools". To celebrate the first *National Farm to School Month*, schools across the country will be inviting farmers and chefs to visit their school during the month of October. <http://www.farmtoschoolmonth.org>

Jersey Fresh Prepared Foods for School Lunches: Although there is overlap of the New Jersey growing season with the school year, there are a few months when fresh local produce is unavailable, not to mention that school food service staff need to do more preparation when handling fresh foods. How about prepared products using local produce that can be served year round? In a USDA Farm to School grant administered through the NJDA, the Rutgers Food Innovation Center (FIC) has been cooking up some ideas for value added products that take Jersey Fresh products and transform them into products to be used throughout the school year in the school lunch program. According to Diane Holtaway, FIC Associate Director of Client Services, "With input from renowned farm to school chef Tony Geraci, we have developed a number of prototypes that meet school lunch guidelines and that children will find appealing." What's on the concept menu?: Eggplant rollatini with Jersey veggie primavera sauce, whole grain Jersey Fresh blueberry muffins and yogurt and granola parfait with Jersey Fresh blueberries and cranberries, among others. If you're hungry to sample some of FIC's concept products, they'll be served at the September 30th event of *Jersey Fresh Farm to School Week*: <http://www.njfarmtoschool.org>. Now that the concept foods have been developed, the next step will be sensory testing in schools and identifying a manufacturer to produce them on a wide scale basis, with the target of introducing the foods into New Jersey schools next year.

Grow Healthy: What better way to magnify the impact of *Jersey Fresh Farm to School Week* than to implement activities throughout the school year? That is just what will be happening through the *Grow Healthy* program, implemented by Rutgers NJAES FCHS department through a USDA grant awarded to NJDA. The program is being introduced this school year in nine New Jersey counties: Warren, Union, Hunterdon, Somerset, Mercer, Burlington, Atlantic, Gloucester and Cape May. The program combines gardening with nutrition, physical activity, agriculture and locally grown food projects that are fun, hands-on and support NJ Core Curriculum Content Standards. As a school-wide wellness program, school teachers, staff and administration, children, families, and volunteers all work together to make school a healthier place. There are nutrition lessons in the classroom, school and family fitness events, foodservice trainings and wellness council support — all of which build healthier kids and families. For more information on *Grow Healthy* go to: <http://njaes.rutgers.edu/health>.

Where to find Jersey Fresh? Ask for it
where you shop or dine or go to:
<http://www.jerseyfresh.nj.gov>

To receive these reports by e-mail:
njfarmfresh@njaes.rutgers.edu

Web: <http://www.njfarmfresh.rutgers.edu>

For your county Rutgers Cooperative
Extension office go to:

<http://www.njaes.rutgers.edu/county>

See next story on page 3



Ever wonder how those NFL fields look so great? Jersey Turf!

*Rolls of turf at Tuckahoe Turf in Hammon-
ton. Credit: Rick Van Vranken, Rutgers
NJAES.*

Grass is a great filter system for rain water as it removes many of the toxins that water collects in the environment. In urban areas it can aid in the reduction of carbon dioxide emissions, mitigating the heat island effect and contributing to reduce global warming. Real turfgrass provides a natural, comfortable, and safe setting for fun and games while purifying and replenishing our water supply. A well maintained lawn can also add value to your home.

Buy Local Food, Buy Local Grass

*Jenny Carleo, Agricultural and Resource Management Agent,
Rutgers NJAES Cooperative Extension of Cape May County*

Local landscapes have taken a beating from the extreme weather of the past few seasons. Fall is typically the time for lawn and landscape clean-up, renovations and plantings, but this year may require extra effort to replace the large amount of damaged plants and turf. When heading out to purchase new plantings, it is a good time to think about buying local.

In New Jersey, the nursery, greenhouse, floriculture, and sod industry is our number one agricultural industry accounting for 44.9% of total sales. We have 1,682 farms growing these crops in New Jersey generating \$442,953,000 in sales in 2007 according to the last Census of Agriculture conducted by the National Agricultural Statistics Service.

The fall is the perfect time to buy *Jersey Grown* sod for many reasons. The species of grasses that we grow in New Jersey tend to be cool-season grasses which are actively growing in the fall. Allen Carter of Turf and Farm Supplies in Hammonton says this allows the turf to naturally root faster than in the summer months. The plant also has a better chance of survival as it has all winter and early spring to become established before the heat of summer starts.

New Jersey is known for growing some of the best grass in the northeast. Our climate and soils create the perfect environment for turf production. Tuckahoe Turf ships as far as West Virginia, Wisconsin and Connecticut. Venues include the Detroit Lions, Washington Nationals, Eagles, Phillies, Red Sox, Green Bay and many colleges, not to mention local schools and residences.

When purchasing sod it is important to match soil type on your property with the soil type your sod was grown on. Therefore if you have sandy soil purchase sod grown on sandy soil. For sports fields this is important for playability of the field, but for homeowners as long as you have a good rich base, the sod will root to it. The nice thing about sand based sod is that the sand does not hold a lot of nutrients and the sod will be forced to grow roots farther into the soil in order to obtain nutrients.

The most important concept to remember when maintaining turf (aside from choosing the right plant initially) is to minimize stress to the plant. This can be done thorough deep and through watering only when needed, and proper nutrient management. Before adding any soil amendments, including lime, a soil test should be performed to measure the amount of nutrients needed.

The Center for Turfgrass Science at Rutgers NJAES generates and disseminate knowledge, training, and education in the turfgrass sciences by fostering nationally recognized multidisciplinary research; undergraduate, graduate, and continuing professional education; and service programs that support the turfgrass industry. As a result of this effort, Rutgers has produced many fact sheets on all types of turfgrass management and production, including caring for and renovating the home lawn. These can be found at: <http://turf.rutgers.edu/outreach/rcepublications.html>.

Not only is turfgrass one of the largest crops grown in New Jersey, when properly managed it can be a practical and an environmentally sound option for small land management.