

# RESEARCHERS SHARE FINDINGS AT FIELD DAYS



## WPVGA takes opportunity to recognize past and present leaders of Association

By Joe Kertzman, managing editor, Badger Common Tater

Summer in the Wisconsin potato and vegetable industry means a flurry of field days.

Those related to potato and vegetable production in the state include the Antigo Field Day, held

July 6, 2023, at the Langlade Agricultural Research Station (LARS); the Hancock Agricultural Research Station (HARS) Field Day, July 13; and the Lelah Starks Elite Foundation Seed Potato Farm Field Day, July 20, in Rhinelander.



Langlade Agricultural Research Station (LARS) Manager Niles Franc welcomed guests to the Antigo Field Day, July 6, 2023.



**Above:** As part of the 2023 Hancock Agricultural Research Station Field Day, July 13, Dr. Amanda Gevens (left) updated attendees on potato and vegetable disease research and the current growing season. *Photo courtesy of Troy Fishler*

At each stop along the “field day tour” over a two-week span, visitors were made aware of current research conducted at the Agricultural Research Stations and funded by the Wisconsin Potato Industry Board and Wisconsin Potato & Vegetable Growers Association (WPVGA) committees.

LARS Manager Niles Franc welcomed guests to the Antigo Field Day, and Brooke Babler of the Wisconsin Seed Potato Certification Lab gave an update on her team’s program.

“The crop’s been dry, and irrigation is a thing this year,” Babler noted. “Field inspections were delayed a little, so we’ve been putting a lot of hours in lately, and everything looks





The wagons were full for field tours and researcher presentations at the Hancock Agricultural Research Station (HARS) Field Day, July 13. *Photo courtesy of Troy Fishler*

great with a lot of varieties out in the fields.”

Wagons took visitors out to fields where Yi Wang, University of Wisconsin (UW)-Madison Department of Horticulture, talked about funded research in nitrogen management and remote monitoring.

Russ Groves, UW-Madison Department of Entomology, discussed a healthy population of Colorado potato beetles, as well as work his team is conducting on the control of aphids, army worms, thrips, leafhoppers, and other crop pests.

Amanda Gevens, UW-Madison Department of Plant Pathology, discussed potato scab treatment evaluation and an early blight systemic fungicide trial. Other research focuses on control of silver scurf, white mold, brown spot, and downy mildew, among others.

**BIO-STIMULANT FIELD**

Rob Jarek of Timac Agro presented research on potato plots treated with the company’s bio-stimulants, saying, “As genetics advance, agronomy needs to catch up. Unless you’ve had your TV turned off, you know the bio-stimulant field has taken off.”

Jarek went on to discuss potato nutrition, nitrogen-fixing bacteria and nitrogen management, maintaining a balanced soil environment, humic

acids, and controlling pests with options other than pesticides.

Proceeding the presentations, food and refreshments were provided by Insight FS at East City Park, in Antigo.

Sponsors of the Antigo Field Day include the Wisconsin Potato Industry Board, WPVGA Associate Division, Wisconsin Seed Potato Improvement Association, Quinlan’s Equipment, Riesterer & Schnell, and Langlade County.

The Annual HARS Potato Field Day is always a special occasion, but even more so in 2023, with the WPVGA

**Top:** Yi Wang, University of Wisconsin (UW)-Madison Department of Horticulture, talked about funded research in nitrogen management and remote monitoring at the 2023 Antigo Field Day.

**Bottom:** Insect control was the logical topic of choice for Russ Groves, UW-Madison Department of Entomology, during the Antigo Field Day at the Langlade Agricultural Research Station.

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using the occasion to honor Hall of Fame members and past and present leaders of the Association as part of its 75th anniversary celebration.

The Field Day agenda included an introduction by HARS Superintendent Troy Fishler, a Storage Research Facility (SRF) update from SRF Manager Amber Walker, field wagon tours, and research reports.

Groves presented “Insect Management in Potato and

Processing Vegetables,” and Paul Bethke, U.S. Department of Agriculture and UW-Madison Department of Horticulture, reported on “Diploid Potatoes—Two Steps Forward, One Step Back.”

Two of Wang’s graduate students in the UW-Madison Department of Horticulture, Taqdeer Gill and Ophelia Tsai, discussed “Using Precision Agriculture in Vegetable Nitrogen Management.”

**Above:** Yi Wang’s Ph.D. student, Taqdeer Gill (left), undergraduate summer help, Finn Johnson (center), and master’s degree student, Ophelia Tsai (right), in the UW-Madison Department of Horticulture, discussed “Using Precision Agriculture in Vegetable Nitrogen Management” during the HARS Field Day. *Photo courtesy of Troy Fishler*

### WEED MANAGEMENT

Jed Colquhoun, UW-Madison College of Agricultural & Life Sciences, Plant and Agroecosystem Sciences Department, gave an update on



HARS visitors heard Jed Colquhoun (standing at left), UW-Madison College of Agricultural & Life Sciences, Plant and Agroecosystem Sciences Department, give an update on water quality research, with input from Guolong Liang (right), outreach specialist, UW-Madison Extension Ag Water Quality Program. *Photo courtesy of Troy Fishler*



Matt Ruark (left), professor and Extension soil scientist in the UW-Madison Nutrient Cycling and Agroecosystems Lab, presented his report on “Potato Soil Health” at the HARS Field Day. *Photo courtesy of Troy Fishler*



water quality and weed management research.

Gevens presented her potato and vegetable disease research and gave a current season update, and Jeff Endelman, who leads the potato variety development program in the UW-Madison Department of Horticulture, gave a breeding update.

Matt Ruark, professor and Extension soil scientist in the UW-Madison Nutrient Cycling and Agroecosystems Lab, gave his report on "Potato Soil Health."

In honor of the WPVGA's 75th Anniversary, Executive Director Tamas Houlihan acknowledged Hall of Fame members, as well as current and past presidents of the WPVGA, Wisconsin Potato Industry Board, Wisconsin Potato Growers Auxiliary, and Associate Division, presenting gift items to each of the dignitaries.

He also congratulated graduates of



In honor of the WPVGA's 75th Anniversary, Executive Director Tamas Houlihan (left) acknowledged Hall of Fame members at the HARS Field Day, as well as current and past presidents of the WPVGA, Wisconsin Potato Industry Board, Wisconsin Potato Growers Auxiliary, and Associate Division, presenting gift items to each of them. *Photo courtesy of Troy Fishler*

the WPVGA Member Development/Leadership Training Program and recognized current and retired UW-Madison potato researchers for their collaborative efforts to improve potato and vegetable

growing throughout Wisconsin.

A social hour in the HARS outdoor pavilion included a free barbecue dinner and refreshments sponsored

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**Above:** WPVGA Hall of Fame members present at the HARS Field Day are, from left to right, Dr. Keith Kelling, Larry Alsum, Mike Finnessy, Steve Diercks, Jerry Bushman, Richard Pavelski, Nick Somers, Dennis Zeloski, Randy Van Haren, Dr. Walt Stevenson, and Paul Miller. *Photo courtesy of Troy Fishler*

**Left:** With WPVGA Hall of Famer Louis Wysocki (right) not able to attend the HARS Field Day, Tamas Houlihan presented him with 75th Anniversary gift items at his home on August 17.

by the WPVGA Associate Division and prepared by Swine & Dine.

The day wrapped up with an optional open house tour of the UW Potato & Vegetable Storage Research Facility, and self-guided tours of the

A.R. Albert & Villetta Albert-Hawley Horticultural Garden.

**SEED POTATO FARM TOUR**

Wrapping up a whirlwind of field days, the Lelah Starks Elite Foundation Seed Potato Farm Tour

began with welcome remarks from Babler, associate program director of the Wisconsin Seed Potato Certification Program (WSPCP).

Babler recognized several staff members, including Wisconsin Potato Coalition Farm Manager Cody Bandoock and Assistant Manager Matt Young, as well as Erin Harmelink, WSPCP greenhouse manager.

Endelman discussed the Spud Pro program's development of new



Past and present WPVGA presidents were honored during the HARS Field Day. In attendance were, from left to right, Randy Fleishauer, Larry Alsum, Steve Diercks, Andy Diercks, Kirk Wille, Richard Pavelski, Andy Wallendal, Ron Krueger, Mark Finnessy, and Nick Somers. *Photo courtesy of Troy Fishler*





**Above:** At the HARS Field Day, in honor of the WPVGA's 75th Anniversary, Tamas Houlihan recognized current and retired UW-Madison potato researchers and collaborators for their efforts to improve potato and vegetable growing throughout Wisconsin. From left to right are Paul Sytsma, Russ Groves, Matt Ruark, Keith Kelling, Jim Busse, Maria Caraza-Harter, Guolong Liang, Jim Drought, Troy Fishler, Amber Walker, Walt Stevenson, A.J. Bussan, and Amanda Gevens.



**Left:** During the Lelah Starks Elite Foundation Seed Potato Farm Tour, Jeff Endelman, who leads the potato variety development program for the UW-Madison Department of Horticulture, discussed Spud Pro's development of new varieties, which started over 70 years ago, and said he is looking forward to working with the Potato Coalition in advancing research.

varieties, which started over 70 years ago, and said he is looking forward to working with the Potato Coalition in advancing the research.

As part of the field tours, Bandoack and Young gave an update on the Wisconsin Potato Coalition and potato planting at the Elite Foundation Seed Potato Farm.

"This year, it took us about two weeks to plant everything and another week to cut the seed," Bandoack said. "We are looking forward to harvest and the crop looks really good."

Gevens and Groves gave their respective vegetable pathology and entomology updates.

Gevens noted that her program uses hyperspectral imaging to detect disease in potatoes, saying that late blight, particularly, can be detected two days prior to symptoms appearing. There are plans to expand the research to include early blight detection.

### WEATHER STATIONS

Groves said the Vegetable Disease and Insect Forecasting Network is a valuable tool for growers and expressed enthusiasm over the new Wisconsin Environmental Mesonet

series of state-wide weather stations that Chris Kucharik, UW-Madison, Department of Agronomy, is spearheading.

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Groves also noted that aphid, thrip and two-spotted spider mite numbers are up this year.

Babler gave a WSPCP program update, saying the first field inspections were complete and the dry weather helped in that regard.

“There’s not a lot of potato blackleg this year, or Dickeya,” she noted, “no symptoms. But that doesn’t mean the pathogen isn’t still there.”

Her team is offering Eliza leaf testing focused on varieties that have no or low symptoms; conducting work

**Left:** Reville Russet potato plants put their purple flowers on full display during the Leelah Starks Elite Foundation Seed Potato Farm Tour.

**Right:** Wisconsin Potato Coalition Farm Manager Cody Bandock (right) and Assistant Manager Matt Young (left) gave an update on potato planting at the Elite Foundation Seed Potato Farm.

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using an aeroponic system to increase potato yields; practicing potted plant production in the greenhouse; and dormant tuber testing for Potato Virus Y antibodies.

As guests gathered under a tent for lunch catered by Swine & Dine, and refreshments, Houlihan announced gift items for all attendees in recognition of the WPVGA's 75th anniversary.

Case IH, Beaver Machine, New Holland and Swiderski Equipment were recognized for supplying several tractors and implements to the farm over the years.

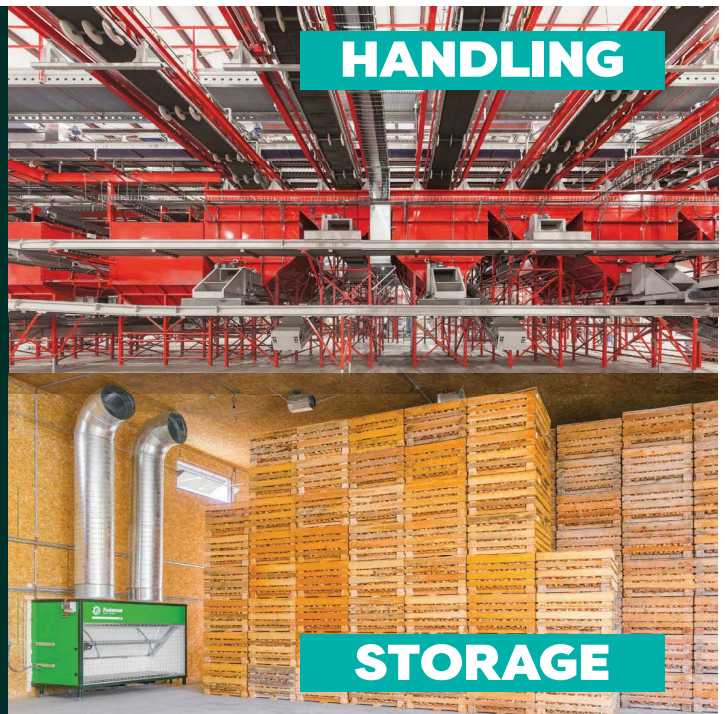
The Lelah Starks Elite Foundation Seed Potato Farm Tour wrapped up the summer's field days specific to potato and vegetable production in the state of Wisconsin. **BCT**



The Wisconsin Seed Potato Certification Program staff was out in full force during the Lelah Starks Elite Foundation Seed Potato Farm Tour. They are, from left to right in the back row: Brooke Babler, Niles Franc, Dianna Kessler, Dr. Amanda Gevens, Jolene Spurgeon, and Jerry Kuczumarski; from left to right in the middle row: Erin Harmelink, Laura Schwabe, Sarah deVeer, Shari Biesik, Katelyn Fillbrandt, and Sean Malone; and from left to right in the front row: Kevin Bula, Cole Lubinski, and Marge Hall. Not pictured: James Meyer.

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