



INTERVIEW

TIM SCHRANK, technical sales representative, Nichino America Inc.

By Joe Kertzman, managing editor, *Badger Common'Tater*

NAME: Tim Schrank

TITLE: Technical Sales Representative for the Great Lakes region

COMPANY: Nichino America Inc.

LOCATION: Corporate: Wilmington, Delaware, but based in mid-Michigan

HOMETOWN: St. John's, Michigan

YEARS IN PRESENT POSITION: Coming up on two years

PREVIOUS EMPLOYMENT: Michigan State University as a research assistant in multiple programs, including soil fertility, and wheat, soy, and dry bean breeding programs; internship at Corteva Agriscience; Crop Watch; Stoke's Blueberry Farm and Nursery; and Hop Head Farms

SCHOOLING: Bachelor of Science degree in Crop and Soil Science from Michigan State University (MSU)

ACTIVITIES/ORGANIZATIONS: Associate Division member of the Wisconsin Potato & Vegetable Growers Association; Northern Plains Potato Growers Association member; an associate with Minnesota Area II Potato Research and Promotional Council; and while in college, Alpha Gamma Rho-Tau Chapter, student senate, MSU Agronomy Club, and collegiate track and cross-country athlete

FAMILY: Three children—a son and identical twin girls born in October 2023

HOBBIES: Backyard barbecues with friends and family, home improvement projects, and golfing

That good old Midwest work ethic is evident, one realizes, when talking to someone like Tim Schrank, technical sales representative for Nichino America, Inc., of Wilmington, Delaware.

Covering the Great Lakes region, Tim, who hails from Naperville, Illinois, but has lived in Michigan for almost a decade, currently in St. John's, has been working in agriculture for the better part of nine years now.

"My first role in agriculture was working at Hop Head Farms as an intern," he notes. "I was looking for a job where I could work as many hours as possible so that I didn't have to work during college, because I wanted to concentrate on my studies and on cross-country and track and field."

"You can do that on a farm—there's always something to work on. I thought that was the greatest job experience I'd ever had up to that point," he says, "doing everything from small equipment maintenance to driving tractors, irrigation

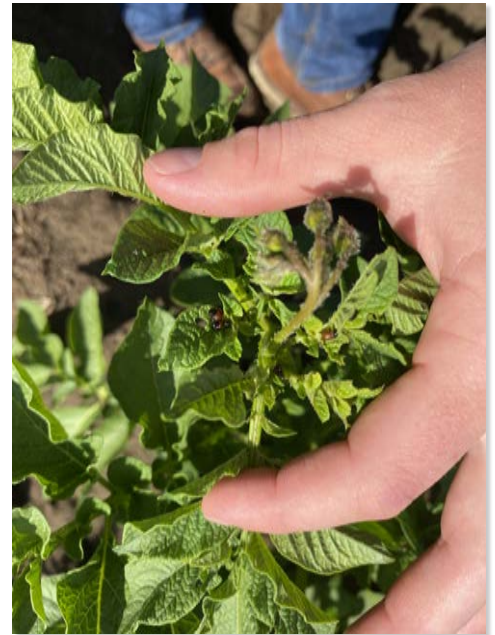


installation, and learning as much as I could in a hands-on way. It was a lot of fun!"

In his current position, Schrank works for Nichino America Inc. and its parent company, Nihon Nohyaku Company, based in Japan. Being established in 1928, it is Japan's first and oldest agrochemical manufacturing company.

That's a far cry from growing up in a Chicago suburb and working on his family's hobby farm in Southwest Michigan where his family had "an

Above: Tim Schrank, Nichino America technical sales representative for the Great Lakes region, scouts for pests in a potato field.



acre of blueberries and a row of hops for home brews.”

“My favorite part of working for Nichino is traveling across the country, all the people I get to meet and just learning from them,” he says. “What’s cool about my position is that I get to work with university extension researchers and assistants, scientists, growers, crop consultants, and sales reps, people from all walks of life.”

How does working for a global company with a rich history help you in your daily work as a technical sales rep in the Great Lakes region?

Working for a global company provides insights into commodities, crop protection, and other ag input trends well beyond the reach of the Midwest.

Having lived in the Midwest my whole life, it has been refreshing to work with such a well-informed group of people who help me navigate my role.

Global collaboration allows us to discover and develop new novel chemistries. We can gain a better understanding of where and how these compounds can support specialty crop growers around the world.

With the parent company being Japanese, they have created a culture at Nichino that trusts each person is doing their job to the best of their ability. They invest in their employees right from the start, and the message of “people first” was loud and clear to me when I walked in the door.

Each person at the company has impressed me in some way, and I am beyond grateful to be a part of this organization. Each day we find a way to serve agriculture, protect crops, and improve people’s lives.

Above: Torac® Insecticide from Nichino America is a fantastic tool in the fight against Colorado potato beetle, aphids, leafhoppers, diamondback moths, and thrips.

How many locations/production facilities does Nichino America have worldwide? Nichino is present in over 100 countries via 11 group companies and has a research facility in Kawachi-nagano, Japan.

continued on pg. 10

JOHN DEERE 8RX

310, 340, 370, 410
G5 Technology, Wide Stance And New
EVT Transmission Options Available



BUILT TO
HANDLE
POTATO
COUNTRY



JOHN DEERE



RIESTERER
& SCHNELL



RANDS.COM

Coming Through for You



What are the main Nichino products that fit best into the crop protection programs of area potato and vegetable growers? These products/brands are my best fits for Midwest potato and vegetable growers:

Torac® Insecticide is a broad-spectrum insecticide that targets Colorado potato beetles (CPB), psyllids, aphids, diamondback moths, pepper weevils, leafhoppers, and thrips.

Torac halts feeding damage immediately, and controls pests usually within 24 to 48 hours. To help combat insecticide resistance, Torac is

an ideal rotational partner. Typically, this is a first-generation CPB material or is used as a border spray/last shot.

PQZ® Insecticide is a translaminar insecticide for piercing and sucking insects (aphids). PQZ stops feeding and prevents the transmission of insect vectored virus. For potato seed growers who are battling Potato Virus Y, which is vectored by green peach aphids, this is a valuable insecticide.

Portal® Miticide/Insecticide controls mites, pear psylla, leafhoppers, and some psyllids. It is one of our more recognized products and is used in many crops.

Above: A broad-spectrum, contact-based insecticide, Torac has picked up steam nationwide for use in potatoes, cabbage, tomatoes, peppers, and onions.

Both Torac and Portal have some activity in the control of powdery mildew, making them unique insecticides that also partially double as fungicides.

Gatten® Fungicide is a top-of-the-line powdery mildew fungicide that stops current infections in their tracks, halts formation of new fungi via their “feeding parts” and prevents secondary sporulation.

The active ingredient, Flutianil, is a unique mode of action, Frac code U13, making it one of a kind and a perfect tool for anyone in need of protecting their vegetables or fruit from powdery mildew.

NEW TOOL IN THE TOOLBELT

This product has grown immensely in popularity in tree fruit, grapes, and pumpkin production due to its translaminar activity (ability to move to both sides of the leaf) and its duration control, approximately 10-14 days, as a new tool in folks’ toolbelts.

If battling powdery mildew, Gatten can be a good fungicide to halt infections from spreading early or continue to hold them in check.

Moncut® Fungicide is a liquid in-

NELSON'S
VEGETABLE
STORAGE
SYSTEMS INC.

N7158 6TH DRIVE P.O. BOX 215
PLAINFIELD, WI 54966
OFFICE: (715) 335-6660
FAX: (715) 335-6661

KEEP ON TRACK WITH OUR



SPROUT INHIBITORS AND DISINFECTANTS

STORAGE VENTILATION

- COMPUTERIZED CONTROL PANELS
- HUMIDIFICATION
- REFRIGERATION

SPROUT INHIBITING

- FRUIT GUARD APPLICATIONS
- SMART BLOCK APPLICATIONS
- CIPC, CLOVE OIL APPLICATIONS

AGRI-VENTILATION SALES AND SERVICE

24 HR. EMERG. SERVICE

furrow potato seed piece treatment containing the systemic SDHI fungicide Flutolanil for the control of soil and seedborne Rhizoctonia. Moncut is a more specific in-furrow treatment but makes up for the narrow spectrum of disease control by being highly effective.

Moncoat® Fungicide is a premiere dry potato seed piece treatment with both curative and preventative activity on seed and soilborne Rhizoctonia solani. Moncoat contains Flutolanil, a systemic SDHI, and Mancozeb in an alder bark formulation offering superior suberization of potato seed pieces.

If using dry seed piece treatments, then Moncoat is an ideal fungicide with a very loyal collection of growers who swear by it.

Moncoat and Moncut are options that potato growers, especially those growing for seed, should learn about. They can be excellent alternatives to what other growers are using and allow farmers to rotate chemistries between one's seed operations and those farms that have fresh, chip, or processing as the end use.

These are the best examples for potato and vegetable growers. If you wish to learn more about our entire portfolio, you can visit our website, www.nichino.net, for information on each of our products and contact information for our sales and technical representatives.

So, do you offer all three—weed, insect and disease control products—for potato and vegetable growers? Nichino focuses specifically on specialty crop protection products. We have some fungicides, herbicides, and insecticides for a variety of specialty crops.

For potatoes specifically, we have two potato seed piece treatments and three insecticides. We also have an herbicide, Venué®, that can be used for pre-plant burn down, however it is not labeled for in-season use.

continued on pg. 12

“I was looking for a job where I could work as many hours as possible so that I didn’t have to work during college, because I wanted to concentrate on my studies and on cross-country and track and field.”

– Tim Schrank

technical sales rep, Nichino America



SPUDNIK Harvester



Used - 1994 Lenco Model 4RSPA
65" 4-Row Air Head Harvester



Used - 1998 Lenco
Harvester Model 4RSPA



Used - 2009 GRIMME Model GL38T-2
8-Row Planter, 36" Row Spacing.
3 Available!

Proud Dealer of: AFE ADVANCED FARM EQUIPMENT... SPUDNIK DEMCO FAE FAE Multi-Row Seed Counters FORAX FORUMS & SUPPLIES LS Tractor Wishek Salford BROEKEMA **New & Used Sales Service • Repair**

2731 Maple Drive • Plover, WI 54467 • 715-344-3401 • Toll Free: 1-888-696-4019

www.bigironequipment.com

Interview . . .

continued from pg. 11



Have local growers adopted Torac into their crop protection programs, and is it seeing more adherents in Wisconsin and the Midwest?

Torac is a fantastic tool in the fight against Colorado potato beetle (CPB), aphids, leafhoppers, diamondback moths (DBM), and thrips. I have not seen psyllids in the Midwest, but I hear Torac has excellent control on those, too!

Torac is a contact-based insecticide, and therefore, the insects need to be present in the field already to control them. We typically say at least 50% egg hatch of CPB before a spray is warranted.

It also does require the synergist Piperonyl-butoxide (PBO) to be paired with it. PBO blocks a specific pathway in some insects that they

use for the metabolization of foreign chemicals.

We recommend a rate of 5.5 fluid ounces for PBO pairings with Torac. There are a few options on the market for PBO, but we do not manufacture or sell it. Reaching out to your local distributor would be your best bet for more information there.

I often must manage expectations for folks regarding Torac and water volumes, pH of their water, choice of adjuvant, and the amount of time the insecticide provides activity against insects.

The active ingredient does not have activity for long periods of time, but it makes up for that with high lethality when applied as recommended. I

am happy to help anyone fine-tune their applications who has not had a satisfactory experience with it. It's often as simple as increasing gallons per acre of water output or using a different surfactant/pH adjuster.

STAPLE IN GROWERS' PROGRAMS

Torac has become a staple in many local growers' programs, as it is a unique mode of action and can be used to really knock back populations when pressure is high. I often recommend it as a first-generation spray, as it is active for all life stages and will help you start the season off with your population under control.

Torac has really picked up momentum here in Wisconsin, and I would be remiss to not mention some of the folks who continue to support it. For growers, Heartland Farms, Wysocki Produce Farm, Alsum Farms & Produce, R.D. Offutt Company, and Gumz Muck Farms are just a few.

Above: Tim Schrank says one of his favorite aspects of the job is traveling across the country and meeting people from all walks of life, learning from each of them. "All the people at trade shows—you'd be surprised who all attends them and the diversity of what they have to offer," he says. Schrank is shown at the 2022 Great Lakes Expo and the 2023 Northwest Michigan Orchard and Vineyard Show.

Your Source for
**Machined plastic parts
Plastic modular conveyor belts
Agricultural and dump truck liners
Manure and fertilizer augers**

Locally owned since 1984
800-456-7228



**Badger Plastics
& Supply**

office@badgerplastics.com • www.badgerplastics.com

Torac has also really picked up steam all over the country in cabbage, tomatoes, peppers, and onions. Anyone battling CPB, thrips, or DBM should have it in their IPM program.

Here in Wisconsin, I worked with Gumz Farms to help get onion thrips under control. They were fantastic to work with, and when they followed my suggestions, we had great results.

I am fortunate to be able to work with so many top-notch farms across the entire Midwest.

How important is it to have another Colorado potato beetle control option in the toolbox?

It is essential for growers to have as many tools in their toolbox as possible. More pest control options prolong the lifespans of all chemistries being used in a production system.

Managing resistance, especially with Colorado potato beetles and thrips, is key for Wisconsin.

Should Torac be used in rotation with insecticides of different modes of action?

Of course, rotation is essential for all integrated pest management programs. In potato production, Torac is a unique mode of action, so if it is not already in your potato or vegetable IPM program, it should be one that you consider.

To better protect chemical options for the future, pesticide rotation should always be considered. Torac is no different.

Do most Nichino America crop protection products tank mix well with other chemistries?

It's important to always follow label instructions, but our products mix well with other chemistries. One of our goals when creating new formulations is to have container sizes that are practical to growers, and as I like to say, "play nicely together" in tank mixes.

As a technical sales rep, what are your most important responsibilities in working with growers and their integrated pest management (IPM)



programs? My most important responsibilities when helping with IPM programs include ensuring growers follow the labels, get recommendations that work for their farms, and have successful applications.

It is of utmost importance to me that growers have healthy crops and profitable seasons.

Above: Tim Schrank (right) poses with Kalie Christensen (left) and Jacalynn Gumz (center), both of Gumz Muck Farms, at the 2023 Spud Seed Classic golf outing in Deerbrook, Wisconsin.

Are the needs of each farming operation different, and how do their crop protection or IPM needs differ?

Of course, every farm is unique and there is a plethora

continued on pg. 14

An advertisement for Noffsinger Manufacturing. At the top left is a logo celebrating 100 years, with the text "100 YEARS" and "AMERICAN MADE SINCE 1924". To the right of the logo is the headline "THE NORTH AMERICAN LEADER IN BELTED CHAIN". Below the headline is a large image of a green potato harrow in operation, with potatoes being processed. A red banner on the left side of the harrow image lists "BELTED CHAIN", "HOOK CHAIN", "WIRE BELT", and "PARTS". At the bottom left, another red banner contains the text "NOFFSINGER MANUFACTURING", "800.525.8922", and "Noffsingermfg.com". At the bottom right, the text lists "USA: Greeley, CO • Filer, ID Menahga, MN" and "CANADA: Montague, PEI".

Interview . . .

continued from pg. 13



of factors that play into why each farm has unique needs. Soil types, weather, geography/landscape, IPM programs and crop mix of neighboring fields are all examples of things that can influence decisions on a farm.

Are potato and vegetable growers a large and important part of Nichino's overall market? Absolutely. As a company that focuses on specialty crops, vegetable growers are a large part of our customer base.

I've had folks that I call on tell me that their operation is not sizable enough for a visit or that we don't have anything in our portfolio for them, but I explain that we still value them and want to help find solutions for their farms.

Nichino's proprietary chemistry can provide a solution to the challenging pest and disease concerns faced by growers. Nichino has long been a supporter of programs, like IR-4, that focus specifically on specialty

crop growers.

What are your biggest challenges in today's market as a technical sales rep? Currently, my biggest struggle is inventory costs within the supply chain. It has become more expensive for companies to store products in their warehouses due to increasing interest costs.

This has caused more people to buy products as they need them versus having them already stocked at warehouses nearby. This can cause some strain on products getting where they are needed in a timely fashion.

We take great care to remind people that if you think you may need something to reach out earlier rather than later. I am thankful that we have talented people who manage inventories closely to ensure growers and distribution channels can receive their purchases on time.

What have your biggest successes

Above: I guess you can forgive a Michigan State University alumni like Tim Schrank for posing with Sparty, the college sports mascot, here at the 2024 Winter Potato Conference put on by the Michigan Potato Industry Commission.

been so far? I am the first Midwest-based representative for Nichino, so there were a few growers for whom I was the first Nichino team member they had ever worked with.

In my two years, I have been able to build strong relationships in the tree fruit, vegetable, and potato markets.

What can Nichino America offer to potato and vegetable growers that perhaps other agrochemical companies can't? Growers need all the tools they can get. We see our product line fitting the needs of the grower alongside the offerings from our competition.

One difference with Nichino is our small size. If I need to call our president, I have his number saved in my phone. We don't have a lot

of corporate layers. We can make things happen on a dime. We all work together to serve our customers.

Can you help growers with regulatory issues, and if so, how?

Nichino has a dedicated regulatory team supporting our labels and participating in industry groups like Crop Life America, Responsible Industry for Sound Environment, and other industry advocates. When questions arise, I have access to experts within the Nichino organization.

Are regulatory issues becoming more problematic for you and growers?

EPA timelines have been increasing each year in recent memory. This means growers have fewer new options to control pests and diseases on the horizon.

We need to preserve the efficacy of the currently available products since new products will be few and far between.

How important is servicing the client after the sale?

It's critical. Nichino comes from a long tradition of responsibility to their customers—striving to be a valuable partner in their agricultural business.

Understanding our customers' goals, challenges, and opportunities makes us better at helping them succeed. We aim to be their trusted source for answers, advice, and solutions.

Training and learning from local representatives within all the distribution companies is also key to ensuring clients continue to have a good experience with our products.

Is there anything you'd like to add that I might have missed regarding Nichino America and the products in your portfolio?

Despite being a smaller company with a small portfolio of products, we have a broad impact across the country.

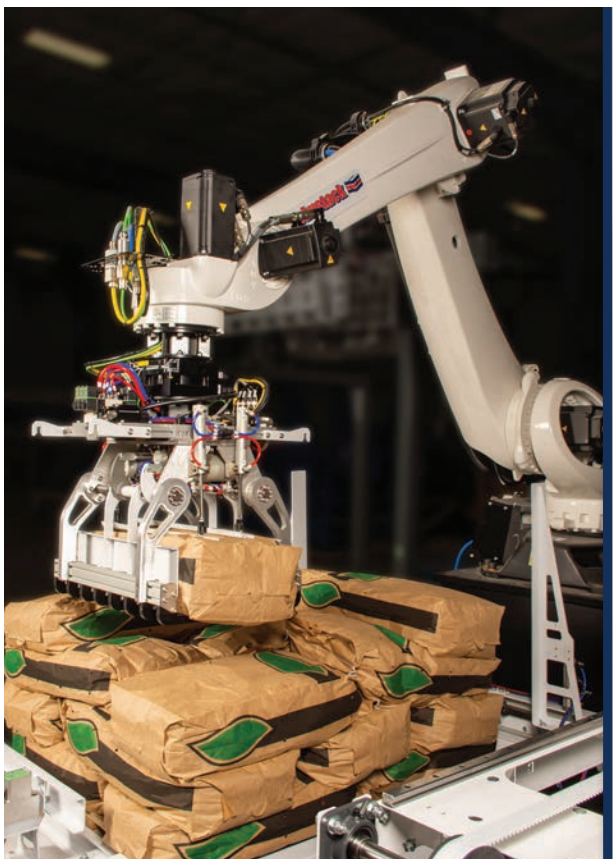
I believe that the approach of having

fewer products with experts for each is better than having a vast number of SKU's that have varied efficacy and limited knowledge from manufacturer representatives.

Although I focused primarily on tree fruit, vegetables and potatoes in the Midwest, Nichino also does a lot of work in the fruit, cotton, rice, peanut, and tree nut markets.

If you are interested in learning more about us and if we can be of help to you or your operation, do not hesitate to visit us online or reach out to a representative of ours. I can be reached at tschrank@nichino.net, or 989-763-3506.

Also, if you plan on being at the WPVGA Associate Division Putt-Tato Open, make sure to say "hi" and introduce yourself. Mention this article, and I will have a gift for you! **BCT**



ROBOTIC PALLETIZING

Volm Companies' robotic solutions team has expertly designed a wide range of end-of-arm tools capable of handling various products, including bin filling, RPC cases, sealed bags, and open trays. Our versatile robotic palletizing systems are not only capable of high-speed stacking but also excel in creating display-ready presentations for your customers.

Contact us today to see how Volm can best help you.

