

All Hopped Up

Defining Quality – It Starts on the Farm *part 2*

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Last month we discussed things to look for in the field that are indicators of potential quality issues. I cannot stress this enough: sloppy fields indicate uncontrolled production. The production values of farming are right out there for you to see first-hand in the field. You wouldn't shop at market with food on the floor, and wouldn't go to a doctor with messy exam rooms. Why purchase from a farm with a trellis in disarray and less-than-pristine hops on the bine?

Okay, off of that soap box and onto another one. So the field passed the appearance test and things look good. Let's take a closer look at the plants themselves. Healthy plants will have medium to dark green foliage, 28-24 leaf nodes at maturity, bright green stems and thick, woody bines near the ground.

New Growers

The Charter Grower Program is currently accepting applications for the 2012 season and interest is high. We plan to accept 15 acres for expansion that includes

It is not uncommon for the older leaves on mature plants to be a bit tattered, broken, or just plain missing. Growers should be removing these leaves after flowering anyway. If they have not, ask why.

Any yellowing of the leaves, odd streaking, or brown leaf spots or edges indicate nutrient issues. Again, lower older leaves on mature plants show these symptoms regardless. Look at the actively growing portions to determine nutritional concerns.

Ask how old the plants are. Keep in mind that 3+ year old plants should be full trellis height by the end of June in most of the Upper Midwest and Northeast. Side arms should also be present by this time. Side arm length varies by variety but all varieties should have them. If mature plants lack side arms something is wrong with the fertility,

irrigation or systemic plant health.

Finally take a look at the cones (if present). Flowers should form in early July at the earliest. If plants are flowering well before this time they can present imbalanced chemical profiles and it is likely that spring pruning was not performed correctly.

Cones should be tight, dense and bright green. Depending on how close to harvest they are they may or may not have a pungent odor. Cones may show a browning bract here or there, but it should not be a large percentage. This indicates either disease or physical damage. It may not mean that the crop is destroyed, but it is an indicator of the grower's practices.

Next month will focus on harvest preparation, wet hop picking, and determining ripeness...

program growers looking to increase their operation size. If you are interested in becoming a Charter Grower, please complete the Application form located on our

http://www.gorstvalleyhops.com/charter_grower.php

We're filling up quickly so get your application in ASAP!!!

Workshop Updates

Keep the dates in mind for upcoming workshops.

July 16th – Tarrytown NY
Hops 101 Introduction to Small Scale
Brought to you by Atlantic Hops
Registration Open on-line...

www.atlantichops.com



Hop Bine Borer larvae and adult moth



Hop Bine Borer (*Hydraecia immanis*)

Sometimes it may feel like everything in nature is hunting our hop plants! Well, all creatures need to eat and the Hop Bine (vine) Borer is no exception.

The caterpillar attacks the underground portion and tunnels up into the bine from underneath to hollow out the base of the stalk. Above-ground damage is detectable as wilting or death of the single bine.

Larger bines become stunted and exhibit yellow or wilted outer leaves.

When scouting the field you may come upon a single bine in a trained group that looks wilted while the others appear completely normal. Follow the wilted bine to the ground and give it a gentle tug. It will probably come away in your hand and look otherwise normal. Gently split the

base of the bine open and you'll likely find one of these larvae snug in the middle of the pith.

These are a real problem in corn fields and are very closely related to the Potato Vine Borer. Remove tall grasses, weeds, etc from the immediate area. If an extensive infestation persists, granular insecticide may be required.

Hops Are a Food Product

Did you know that pelletized hops are considered a food product by most states? That means anyone processing hops must have a food processing license and submit to regular inspections, etc.

WI, MI, CT, NY all

consider hops to be food ingredients and processing facilities must provide product tracking, product recall ability, and prove capable of proper sanitizing and contamination control procedures. Facilities must also comply with food processing regulations.



Hops 201 Technical Workshop

GVH is trying to gauge interest of our readership in attending the Hop 201 Technical Workshop in fall. This is a very detailed course that dives deep into soil and water chemistry/physics, irrigation calculations, oast design and construction.

Hops 101 is a pre-requisite and we do not backtrack to cover basic principles. The few times we have offered the course everyone is exhausted at the end of the day...it would help if Dan didn't show so many fan designs and crazy charts on moisture, eh???

"A friend has a PTO [flat die] pellet mill, which I used yesterday to attempt to see what it could do to a sample of last year's crop. Answer: it didn't work well."

- Hops 101 Attendee

Tell us what info you are looking for...

Are we addressing your questions, concerns, and general inquisitiveness? Let us know what you want more, less, new, repeat, etc.

I hate to tell you I told you so, but... I told you so.

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Gorst Valley Hops is working to reintroduce hops in Wisconsin. The mission of our business is to provide farmers with a high-value crop that they can produce on small acreage within a system that returns the majority of the value of the crop back to the grower.

Gorst Valley Hops is committed to providing high quality pelletized and leaf hops to everyone from craft brewers to home brewers while maximizing environmental stewardship through sustainable growth and processing of our product and that of other hop growers throughout the upper Midwest.

We are continuously adding workshops and training sessions around the country. We love the enthusiasm and are doing everything we can to educate those interested in growing hops.

