From its first issue in March of 2002, the New York Berry News (NYBN) has released 54 issues in 5 volumes. William Turechek, Assistant Professor, Plant Pathology, Geneva, created and launched the berry e-newsletter and served as editor for the electronic publication from its inception in 2002 until his departure in Fall 2004. Since then, Cathy Heidenreich has served as interim editor. Dr. Kerik Cox, Extension Tree Fruit and Berry Pathologist since September 2006, will be assuming editorship in 2007.

The NYBN is posted on the Internet at http://www.nysaes.cornell.edu/pp/extension/tfabp/newslett.shtml in the second week of each month. The e-newsletter may be accessed from the Tree Fruit and Berry Pathology homepage (http://www.nysaes.cornell.edu/pp/extension/tfabp/index.html) or the Cornell Fruit Resources’ Berry page (http://www.fruit.cornell.edu/berry.html). Each monthly issue is available on-line. To allow faster downloading with dial-up Internet connections, a low-resolution copy is also made available. The purpose of NYBN is to keep the New York berry industry informed on new production practices, educational opportunities, and cutting-edge technologies.

New York Berry News Content

Each monthly issue of NYBN offers something for everyone in berry production. The NYBN includes the following:
- a calendar, ‘Currant’ Events
- 4-8 berry news briefs
- 4-6 feature articles
- weekly NY weather summaries

Another important feature of this publication is high-resolution digital images in the feature articles.

The ‘Currant’ Events calendar lists local, state, regional and national berry-related events, including grower meetings, educational offerings, workshops, Extension events and other programs. NYBN also lists events of general interest such as direct marketing conferences, on-farm energy conservation programs, and food-safety seminars. The listing for each event provides the date(s), location, contact information, and web links to registration forms, travel directions, etc.

NYBN News Briefs section (Figure 1) contains press releases public policy concerns, abstracts of research papers, local and regional news, changes in NY pesticide registrations, funding opportunities, etc. Sources for these briefs include, but are not limited to, the USDA Agricultural Research Service, the NY State Department of Agriculture and Markets, the NY National Agricultural Statistics Service, the Cornell Pesticide Management Education Program, and the Environmental Protection Agency. Berry grower organizations, commodity groups, and Cornell Cooperative Extension personnel are also sources for these News Briefs.

The New York Berry News was launched in 2002, and through the internet has become an important worldwide resource of berry information.
Feature Articles cover a wide variety of berry management information both topically and across commodities (Table 1). Specific topics of Feature Articles have included: production resources (14), organic production (12), pesticides and spray technology (11), post-harvest handling and storage (5), alternative berry crops (5), berry health benefits (4), wildlife management (4), food-safety (3), farm safety (3), and labor management (3).

Monthly Feature Articles (Figure 2) usually address the current stage of berry production, i.e. “Early Season Arthropod Management” or “Fall Weed Control in Brambles.” The articles may take the form of seasonal calendars, timely reminders of production-related tasks, lists of pests that should be scouted for, or timely control strategies for pests. Feature Articles also cover new or re-emerging pests, research reports, variety trial results, and recently released berry information. Sequential Feature Articles may comprise a “mini-series” on topics such as alternative berry crops, marketing, and organic production.

Since its inception NYBN has been privileged to have 85 contributing authors including horticulturists, Extension personnel, plant pathologists, entomologists, IPM’ers, agricultural economists, journalists, nutritionists, food scientists, entrepreneurs, and conservationists. Cornell faculty, educators, and staff are the primary authors for the NYBN feature articles. Supplemental Feature Articles are incorporated, as appropriate, from other accredited sources such as trade journals, Extension newsletters, or other states’ Extension and research personnel.
Articles from other regions of the US and foreign countries are reprinted in NYBN when of potential interest or benefit to NY berry growers. NYBN grants permission to reprint from its offerings and encourages information exchange throughout the Northeast and Great Lakes regions.

**NYBN Weather Notes** summarizes NY weather data from nine geographical regions reporting from 30 weather station sites across the state. Tables of weekly weather summaries are published during the production season, April through October (Figure 3). The New York National Agricultural Statistics Service provides the data for these summaries.

**NYBN e-Distribution**

The NYBN e-newsletter was initially announced by providing its Home Page web link in as many grower meetings and e-mail contacts as possible. Currently, an email announcement containing web links to the high- and low-resolution versions and Table of Contents for that month's issue goes out to 62 “multipliers” including the NY Berry Growers Association, the California Strawberry Commission, the North Carolina Strawberry Growers Association, the North American Bramble Growers Association, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food - Canada, USDA, Cooperative Extension, and Land Grant Universities (Michigan, Oregon, Utah, Maine, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Iowa, and Ohio, to name a few). These in turn further distribute either the entire newsletter or portions of it to interested recipients within their organizations.

The email distribution list also includes Extension educators, private consultants, industry personnel, and growers. Another distribution list receives a “text only” version of the

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Figure 2. Excerpt from a NYSBN Feature Article.

Figure 3. New York Berry News Feature Article.
current issue as an attachment. New multipliers are constantly being added, although no additional promotions have been done. Beyond the monthly email distribution list, NYBN benefits from other web sites that feature links to its Home Page, including:

- North American Strawberry Growers Association
- Penn State Small Fruit Page
- Cornell Fruit Resources Page
- New York Berry Growers Association
- Ohio State University Agriculture and Natural Resources web site
- North American Bramble Growers Association
- Cornell Home Gardener’s Page
- Cornell Small Farms Program
- Ohio Fruit ICM News

Publishing the NYBN on the web makes it freely accessible to anyone who wishes to read it or excerpt from it. Other berry newsletters often reprint NYBN Feature Articles and News Briefs, many on a regular basis, and include:

- New York Berry Grower Association Berry Notes Newsletter
- Small Fruit News of CNY Newsletter - CCE Oswego County
- Fruit Notes, Western NY Fruit Extension Program
- Hudson Valley Small Fruit Newsletter
- Northeast Fruitlet, NE NY Small Fruit Newsletter
- The Bramble (NABGA Newsletter)
- Utah Berry Grower’s Newsletter
- Vermont Vegetable and Fruit Newsletter
- Ontario Berry Grower Newsletter
- University of Massachusetts Berry Notes

In exchange, many of these publications have authors who regularly contribute material to NYBN.

Who are the Readers?

Because not all of our readers are a part of our multiplier distribution list (in fact most are not) we were curious to know if NYBN was being accessed online. This would give us an indication whether the NYBN e-newsletter was an effective communication tool for berry production in NY. Since NYBN is accessed over the Internet through the Tree Fruit and Berry Pathology Website, we compiled web page usage statistics for the NYBN Home Page and for the individual Monthly Issues (monthly PDF files).

We first examined which top level domains accessed NYBN (Figure 4). A domain is an organization’s Internet name, and usually consists of two parts: the first identifies the organization, the second the top level domain. There are relatively few top level domains: .gov - government agencies .edu - educational institutions .org - nonprofit organizations .mil - military .com - commercial business .net - network organizations (i.e. private individuals, growers) .countries (.ca – Canada)

Private sector (.com and .net) domains were the most numerous and frequent visitors to the NYBN Home Page from 2002 to 2006 (Figure 4). This suggests that the NYBN may be reaching its target audience, the berry industry of NY.

The intent of NYBN is to facilitate and accelerate berry production communication within the Northeast. In addition, the newsletter is being accessed about 10% of the time by international audiences. Since its inception, 106 countries have accessed the homepage or individual issues at least once and 96 access NYBN on a regular basis (Table 2).

The statistics on NYBN access support predictions about the utility of the Internet for information delivery and relate to its global availability, its linkability by other websites, and free access to articles for publication in print media.

NYBN Home Page and Monthly Issues Hits

Table 3 shows hits to the NYBN Home Page and the individual monthly issues for the years 2002 to 2006. “Hits” describe the total number of successful requests for information on a particular page, regardless of source requesting it. The number of hits gives a rough estimate of readership or usage frequency.

During its first five years, NYBN has enjoyed a total of over 27,000 requests for the Home Page and over 60,000 requests for the monthly issues. This calculates out to about 1,000 requests per issue. Note that this is 16-fold higher than the number of our 62-member email distribution list, indicating the substantial impact of web browsers and email multipliers. From 2002 to 2006, the Home Page has seen access increase 3-fold and the monthly issues 2-fold.

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<th>TABLE 2</th>
<th>Countries accessing NYBN on a regular basis, about 10% of total access.</th>
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It is of interest to note that monthly traffic to the Home Page remains relatively consistent during the course of the year, with slight increases during peak production months. It is also of interest that individual issues continue to be accessed in years after their release with significant frequency (data not shown). Traffic to the monthly issues increased between 2002 and 2004 and has been relatively constant from 2004 to 2006, which may indicate a stable readership base. Hits for 2005 and 2006 are slightly less than 2004; this may be due in part to fewer issues being released in those years as compared to 2004.

New York Berry News - Future Directions

The cutbacks in human resources in extension, coupled with shrinking budgets heightens the need to provide timely delivery of research and extension information in a non-traditional, web-based format so that it is freely accessible to agricultural audiences on a regional and global scale. This information then becomes available on demand to growers and extension audiences in the public and private sectors. New York Berry News fills a need in the Northeast region, successfully integrating several disciplines to report on topics of importance to berry crops. It also serves as an important venue for alerting growers to emerging pests and timely berry plant protection updates.

Cornell Berry Extension faculty, educators and staff, under the editorship of Dr. Kerik Cox, will continue to offer the New York Berry News as a bridge between ongoing research and Extension programs in berry crops for the Northeast Region. Plans are to continue production and on-line publication of the New York Berry News for calendar year 2007. During that time steps will be taken to continue to increase readership, expand the web link email distribution list, and identify sustainable resources of ongoing support for NYBN.

Comments or suggestions for the New York Berry News? E-mail: Kerik Cox, kdc3@cornell.edu or Cathy Heidenreich at mcm4@cornell.edu.

Bibliography


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Cathy Heidenreich, is an extension support specialist who works with Marvin Pritts, chair of the department of horticulture, Ithaca who leads Cornell’s Berry Crops Program. Craig Cramer is a communications specialist in the department of horticulture, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY. Juliet Carroll is a senior extension associate and leader of the Fruit IPM Program, Geneva. Kerik Cox is an assistant professor in the department of plant pathology, Cornell University, Geneva, NY and leads Cornell’s Fruit Extension Pathology Program.