

VEGETABLE CROPS HOTLINE

A newsletter for commercial vegetable growers prepared by the Purdue University Cooperative Extension Service



Issue: 668
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Welcome to a New Year of the Vegetable Crops Hotline

(Wenjing Guan, guan40@purdue.edu, (812) 886-0198)

Welcome to a new year of the *Vegetable Crops Hotline* (VCH), Purdue Extension's newsletter for people in the business of growing vegetables. As usual, we will have fifteen issues throughout the 2020 growing season. The first issue of the year is sent to all who subscribed to VCH via US-mail in 2019 as well as new subscribers for 2020. To continue receiving future copies through US-mail, renew your *Hotline* subscription using the form attached to this issue. The year that your subscription is paid through is on the bottom right hand side of your envelope. Note that we provide an up-to three years' subscription of VCH at a reduced price.

If you receive the issue through email, you will continue to receive the newsletters on the issue dates. In addition, you will receive emails if there are articles or announcements that need your immediate attention. These articles will be posted under *Hot Topics* and be included in the next issue. All the previous articles published in VCH are available on the website, and you will find

additional articles under *Veggie Extras*.

Frequently we include links to websites or publications available on-line. If you aren't able to access these resources, please contact us or a local Extension office to request a hard copy of the information.

We hope you enjoy the newsletter, and have a happy and productive season in 2020.

A New Soil Test for High Tunnel Growers

(Wenjing Guan, guan40@purdue.edu, (812) 886-0198)

This article introduces a new soil test for high tunnel growers.

Why is there a need for a new soil test for high tunnel production?

Soil tests are valuable tools helping growers decide how much fertilizers and/or other soil amendments to apply for growing a specific vegetable crop. It also helps growers to detect soil fertility-related problems early. The routine soil test and its recommendations for vegetable crops were developed based on research conducted in the open field. When it comes to high tunnel production, the routine soil test and recommendations become less valuable for at least three reasons:

1. Crops growing in high tunnels typically have a much higher yield potential; they require more nutrients than the same crop grown in the open-field with lower yield potential. Therefore the soil test index (low, medium, high) and recommendation for specific nutrients may not apply for high tunnel crops.
2. Since there is no rain to wash excess salts, salt built-up in high tunnel soils is a potential challenge for high tunnel vegetable production. Without specific notification, routine soil test does not test soluble salts thus it fails to alarm growers of the potential salinity problem.
3. Using high alkalinity groundwater as the only irrigation source has led to increased soil pH in many high tunnels. This is the opposite of field crop production in the Midwest where low soil pH is more of a problem. A routine soil test provides recommendations for lime application but it does not provide recommendations for how to reduce soil pH.

High tunnel soil test package from the University of Maine soil test lab.

Good news for high tunnel vegetable growers is that soil test designed specifically for high tunnel vegetable production is available at the University of Maine soil test lab. Depending on the length in production of the high tunnel, the lab provides a Basic High Tunnel Package and a Long-term High Tunnel Package. The basic high tunnel package includes routine soil test (the same soil test used for field crop production) plus soluble salts and nitrate and ammonium nitrogen test. The long-term high tunnel package includes basic high tunnel test plus a **saturated media extract test** for all major and micronutrients. Documented production practices and soil and leaf samples from 20 tomato high tunnels in the northeastern of U.S. were summarized and analyzed and became the basis of developing fertilizer recommendations for the high tunnel soil test. Please refer to the lab's website at <https://umaine.edu/soiltestinglab/> for more information about the high tunnel soil test including how to submit samples, price, and example reports.

What is the saturated media extract test?

Saturated media extract test (SME) is a test commonly used for greenhouse bench crop production or in irrigated desert. You will also find the SME method was used in testing organic transplant growing media in our next article. Not like in the routine soil test that the soil is first dried and mixed with an extractant; in the saturated media extract test, the soil is saturated with water. Although nutrient levels are both reported in the unit of ppm, it has totally different meanings. In the routine soil test, the nutrient is converted in dry soil, while the SME test expresses nutrients on an extract basis as mg/L (ppm). The routine soil test measures available nutrients held in soil reserve, while the SME test monitors the pool of immediately available nutrients. Under the situation that the soils in high tunnels have a high organic matter, and are intensively fertigated, the soil may perform just like a soilless media, thus the SME test is more applicable to test the soil. Many soil test labs provide the SME test, and some of the labs may call it the greenhouse mix test.



Submit Your Organic Transplant Growing Media for Chemical Analysis

(Liz Maynard, emaynard@purdue.edu, (219) 548-3674), (Wenjing Guan, guan40@purdue.edu, (812) 886-0198), (Petrus Langenhoven, plangenh@purdue.edu, (765) 496-7955) & (Lori Hoagland, lhoaglan@purdue.edu)

Growing media for organic transplant production vary a lot in their chemical composition: pH, electrical conductivity, nutrient levels, and C:N ratio. This of course influences how seedlings grow. Knowing the characteristics of growing media can help growers decide whether adding nutrients or materials to adjust pH are likely to improve seedling growth. As part of our research into media for organic transplant production we would like to test growing media used by Indiana growers using organic practices. The media could be a commercially available product, or a product made on the farm. If you would like your media to be tested, please fill out the form at https://purdue.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eezVW7ubRhgh3lp . Wait for notice that your submission will be accepted and then send 4 pints of media to Liz Maynard, Purdue University, 1101 Glendale Blvd, Suite 101-A, Valparaiso, IN 46383. To request a hard copy of the form, contact Liz Maynard, emaynard@purdue.edu, (219) 548-3674.

In our research so far we have obtained tests for 9 growing media, listed in Table 1. The graphs below illustrate the wide variation present among media. Figure 1 shows the results of saturated media extract (SME) analysis for 9 growing media. The SME analysis is commonly used for growing media. It provides a snapshot of nutrients readily available to plants, and measures of media pH, and electrical conductivity (EC). The gray bands on the graphs represent the adequate range for young plants in a standard soilless media based on research in conventional production systems. Figure 2 shows the result of a compost analysis for 7 of the growing media. It provides a measure of the total quantity of nutrients in the media; some of which would become available to plants over time. It also provides the C:N ratio, which can be correlated with how readily the organic material in the media will break down and supply N to plants.

Code	Name	Major Ingredients (info. provided by manufacturer)
J512	Johnny's 512 Mix	Peat (brown and black), compost , perlite
M201	Premium Flower 201	Peat, compost , worm castings, Tennessee brown rock
PENN	Penn Valley Potting Soil	Peat, coir , compost , perlite , biochar, pulverized volcanic ash, chelated trace minerals, limestone
PMPO	Promix MP Organik	Peat, coir , perlite , vermiculite , limestone , Mycorrhizae - GHA297
SCOE	Seed Catapult	Peat, compost , perlite , vermiculite , sharp sand, humate, rock phosphate, azomite, Mycorrhizal fungi
SUN1	Sunshine No. 1 N&O	Peat, perlite , limestone , organic starter nutrient charge, gypsum, RESILIENCE, organic wetting agent
VCFL	Fort Lite	Peat (blonde), coir , compost , perlite , vermiculite , herbs, granite, basalt, blood meal, bone meal, kelp meal, gypsum
VCFV	Fort Vee	Peat (blonde), coir , compost , vermiculite , herbs, granite, basalt, blood meal, bone meal, kelp meal, gypsum
ZZRR	Grower mix	

Table 1. Growing media evaluated and major ingredients as listed by manufacturer.

pH, EC, and Nutrient Content of Growing Media

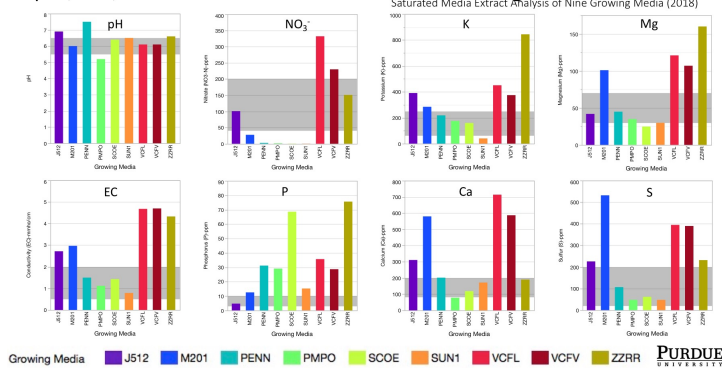


Figure 1. pH, EC, and nutrient content of nine growing media determined using saturated media extract (SME) method. Values are based on one sample of each media. The generally adequate range for each measurement is shaded in gray.

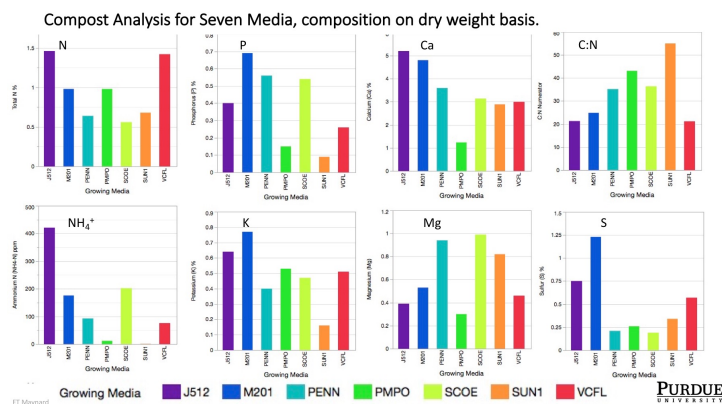


Figure 2. Nutrient content and C:N ratio of seven growing media determined using standard methods for compost evaluation. Values are based on one sample of each media.

Summer Squash Cultivar Selection for High Tunnel Production

(Wenjing Guan, guan40@purdue.edu, (812) 886-0198)

Warm-season vegetables like tomato, cucumber, pepper etc. often receive premium prices if they were sold at farmers' markets earlier in the season. The same happens on summer squash, with the different fruit shape and color, summer squash provides a great diversity to the market. High tunnels that are planted with warm-season vegetables are often closed to maintain heat inside the structure in the spring. Growers often hesitate to bring beehives to high tunnels because of the increased production cost and potential worker safety concerns. Under such circumstances, crops that can set fruit without pollination (parthenocarpic) have an advantage for early-season high tunnel production. Previous studies indicated parthenocarpic character exists in some summer squash cultivars. But such information is not always clearly indicated in seed catalogs. Without knowing the information, farmers may miss the opportunity of growing summer squash and targeting for an early harvest in high tunnels.

In the spring 2018, we selected 6 summer squash cultivars (Cavili, Dunja, Golden Glory, Multipik, Noche, Partenon) that had previously shown high percentages of setting fruit without

pollination. Three-week old transplants were planted in a high tunnel at the Southwest Purdue Agricultural Center in Vincennes, IN on April 2. Seedlings were planted on black plastic-covered beds with an in-row plant spacing of 2 ft apart. Side-walls of the high tunnel were closed until mid-May.

Cultivar Multipik developed the earliest female flowers on April 9, which was about 10 days earlier than male flowers. Other cultivars either developed male and female flowers around the same time or developing male flowers earlier than female flowers around April 20. Cultivar Multipik had the greatest number of aborted female flowers while cultivar Golden Glory had the least number of aborted female flowers prior to mid-May. Cultivar Cavili and Partenon were harvested the earliest. The first harvest was on Apr. 29. The first harvest of all the other cultivars was on May 4. Harvest lasted from April 29 to June 11, all cultivars had yields above 6 lb/plant. Figure 1 shows the yield of the cultivars. Cavili had the highest yield (8.58 lb/plant) although it was not significantly different from other cultivars. Multipik produced the greatest number of straightneck fruit with smaller sizes compared to the other zucchini cultivars.

The trial showed that all the six summer squash cultivars evaluated in this study are suitable for growing in high tunnels without insect pollination for early-season production. Since trellis summer squash is more difficult than trellis tomato and cucumber, growing summer squash in high tunnels takes more space, especially when plants develop large canopies, which is also the reason we ended the harvest on June 11 considering field-grown summer squash would enter the market shortly, thus it was less valuable to grow summer squash in high tunnels.

Reference:

Reiners, S. 2014. Producing summer squash without pollination-ranking varieties. 2014 Conference Proceedings. Cornell University. Jan 28 2020 <

<http://www.hort.cornell.edu/expo/proceedings/2014/Vine%20crop%20Seedless%20squash%20Reiners.pdf>>

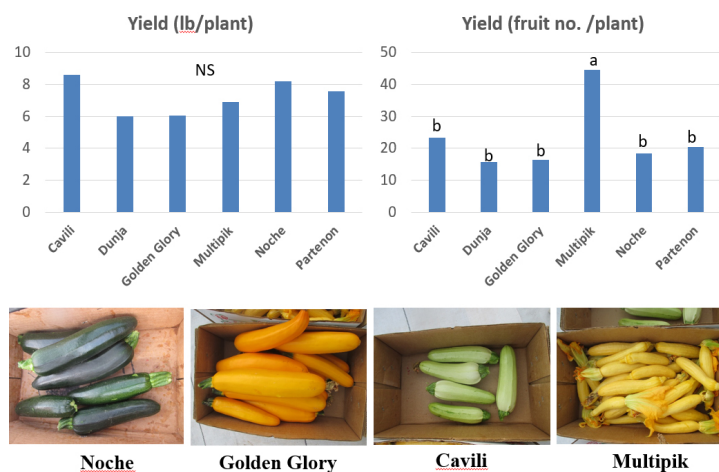


Figure 1. Yield of summer squash cultivars in the high tunnel evaluation

Rain has Dominated Snow this Winter Created Saturated Soils Across Indiana

(Beth Hall, hall556@purdue.edu)

The 2019/2020 winter has not been very white so far, and as we move further into February, it is not looking like any snowfall records will be broken. Starting October 1, 2019, most of the state is 50-75 percent of normal through February 18, 2020. This translates to as much as 10 inches of snow behind average! The 1981-2010 normal snowfall amount for the rest of this season (i.e., February 18th through April 16th) ranges from 2 inches in southern Indiana up to 10 inches in northern Indiana. Unless some major snow events occur over the next several weeks, this winter season will be one of the least snowy.

That does not mean Indiana is in a drought, however! The precipitation has been falling – just not the frozen kind. Since October 1, 2019, Indiana has received above normal liquid precipitation ranging from a few inches above normal in the northern part of the state to over 6 inches above normal in the southern half! This has caused saturated soils in many places that are having a hard time drying out with the low temperature and cloudy days.

Will these conditions continue into spring? The climate outlooks are not looking like conditions will turn around anytime soon. While this spring may not be as wet as last year, outlooks from the Climate Prediction Center are predicting relative confidence of wetter than normal conditions for March-May. Hopefully, these spring rains will be accompanied by warmer temperatures and clear skies so that the moisture does not keep the soils saturated too much longer.

Please Let Us Know Whether These Articles Are Helpful!

(Liz Maynard, emaynard@purdue.edu, (219) 548-3674)

Did you read this article about [How Growing Media for Organic Production Compare](#) ? Or this one about [Abnormal Transplant Symptoms Might be Caused by Poor Media](#) ? Please let us know whether they were helpful by taking a short survey here: https://purdue.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_54rCQ6xW3w7ZcXz

Call for Growers' Participation of Grafted Cucumber Research

(Wenjing Guan, guan40@purdue.edu, (812) 886-0198)

Thanks to the support from NC-SARE, we are going to continue the study of evaluating grafted cucumbers for early season production in greenhouses and high tunnels by collaborating with farmers in 2020. You can find our 2019 on-farm trials' summary here:

<https://ag.purdue.edu/arge/swpap/Documents/Summary%20of%202019%20On-farm%20Grafted%20Cucumber%20Trials.pdf>.

The same as in previous years, we are going to supply grafted

and normal cucumber transplants for free. These plants were grown in a conventional greenhouse using untreated rootstock seeds.

What we want from growers is to grow the same number and variety of grafted and normal cucumber plants, and keep track of the performance of the plants and the yields. We will provide a stipend for your efforts in tracking the data. In addition, we encourage farmers to learn grafting technique and produce grafted plants on your own. We will provide you with technical support and help with the process on-site if it is needed.

For more information about this project, please contact Wenjing Guan at guan40@purdue.edu or (812) 886-0198.

Learn How to Graft Tomato and Cucumber Plants

(Wenjing Guan, guan40@purdue.edu, (812) 886-0198)

Tomato and Cucumber growers who are interested in grafting tomato and cucumber plants by themselves may find this information helpful.

Step-By-Step instruction of how to graft tomato plants is available from Purdue Extension publication *Vegetable Grafting:*

Techniques for Tomato Grafting

https://mdc.itap.purdue.edu/item.asp?Item_Number=HO-260-W

as well as a Purdue Extension video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Ufx66lsf88>

A cucumber grafting instruction was also released. It provides step-by-step guidance of cucumber splice grafting technique. The publication is available at

<https://www.extension.purdue.edu/extmedia/HO/HO-328-W.PDF>

The cucumber grafting video is available at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z-tXoobiMnY&t=1s>



A grafted tomato plant grown in a high tunnel

Indiana Vegetable Grower Membership Renewal

It is time to renew your Indiana Vegetable Growers Association (IVGA) membership for 2020. Please use the form attached to this newsletter or download from ivga.org/renewal.pdf and send in with your membership dues.

About IVGA

IVGA was established in the early 1900's to be the Voice for Vegetable Growers in Indiana and is dedicated to the improvement of vegetable production and marketing in Indiana. The IVGA supports education and research about vegetables and melons in Indiana, and as your advocate, the IVGA is your resource to help find solutions for your everyday problems. Join today and be a part of a great team in Indiana!

Specialty Crop Irrigation Meeting

(Liz Maynard, emaynard@purdue.edu, (219) 548-3674)

Vegetable growers in Northwest Indiana may want to take advantage of a March 17 Specialty Crop Irrigation Meeting in Benton Harbor, Michigan. Presenters Phil Ausra, Trickl-Eez Irrigation Inc., Dr. Younsuk Dong, MSU Department of Biosystems and Agricultural Engineering Irrigation, and Lyndon Kelley, MSU Extension/Purdue Extension Irrigation Educator will cover irrigation scheduling, irrigation design process, and using irrigation for fertilizer and chemical application, in addition to Michigan rules and regulations. For more information see the brochure at

<https://www.canr.msu.edu/irrigation/uploads/files/Specialty%20Crop%20Irr%20Meeting%2003.17.20%20FINAL.pdf> or contact L. Kelley, (269) 467-5511, kelleyl@msu.edu

Southwest Indiana Melon and Vegetable Growers Annual Meeting

(Wenjing Guan, guan40@purdue.edu, (812) 886-0198)

Southwest Indiana Melon and Vegetable Growers annual meeting will be held in French Lick, IN on March 13, 8:30 am to 4:00 pm. Participants will learn from Purdue extension specialists about the newly searchable *Midwest Vegetable Production Guide*; new updates on food safety; watermelon grafting; impacts of pesticide use on pollinator health; weed management; lessons from truck and equipment collision. In addition, Jamie Campbell Petty from the Midwest Hemp Council will give the presentation *Hemp as a New Crop*. A detailed agenda is attached.

The meeting is sponsored by Southwest Indiana Melon and Vegetable Growers Association. Everyone is welcome to participate in the meeting. \$15.00 per person will be collected at the time of registration to join or renew your Southwest Indiana Melon and Vegetable Growers Association membership, which includes lunch on March 13, as well as dinner at a winter technical meeting, which will be held in Nov. at the Southwest Purdue Agricultural Center.

Private Applicator Recertification Program credits will be available for an additional \$10.00 per person and will be collected at the end of the **PARP session**. You must attend all the PARP sessions indicated on the agenda to receive credit. Bring your PARP card or number with you. We have also applied for CCH credits for category 1 and RT. Please RSVP for this meeting no later than March 1, 2020. You can call the SWPAC office at (812) 886-0198 or email Barb Joyner (joynerb@purdue.edu) with reservations including all those in your household or business that will be attending with you.

If you are interested in having a booth at the meeting, please also contact Barb Joyner ((812) 886-0198 or joynerb@purdue.edu)

Southwest Indiana Melon & Vegetable Growers Annual Meeting

French Lick Resort & Casino

8670 W. State Rd. 56

French Lick, IN 47432

Phone numbers: French Lick 1-888-936-9360; Dan Egel, Wenjing Guan, (812) 886-0198

Friday - March 13, 2020

8:30 am - 9:00 am	Registration and Viewing of Exhibits
9:00 am - 9:20 am	Find Pest Solutions Online Using the Newly Searchable <i>Midwest Vegetable Production Guide</i> - Dan Egel, Purdue University
9:20 am - 9:40 am	Food safety Update - Scott Monroe, Purdue University
9:40 am - 10:00 am	Current Status of Watermelon Grafting - Wenjing Guan, Purdue University
10:00 a.m.-10:30 am	Introduction of Commercial Exhibitors
10:30 am - 11:30 am	Hemp as a New Crop - Jamie Campbell Petty, Midwest Hemp Council
11:30 am - 1:30 pm	Lunch (included with \$15 registration) - View Exhibits
1:30 pm - 2:00 pm	Updates on the Impacts of Pesticide Use on Pollinator Health - Laura Ingwell and Sebastian Shepherd, Purdue University
2:00 pm - 2:30 pm	Weed Management Updates and Recommendations - Steve Meyers, Purdue University
2:30pm - 3:30 p.m.	Learning from Truck and Equipment Collisions - Fred Whitford, Purdue University
3:30 pm - 4:00 pm	Sign PARP sheet

Don't forget to sign the pesticide form (PARP) at the end of the meeting.

PARP and CCH credit is pending.

(Must attend program from 1:30 pm to 3:30 pm to receive Private Applicator Recertification credit.)

New Survey to Shed Light on Trade-offs Between Food Safety and Conservation Practices on Produce Farms in the Eastern United States

Recent studies have suggested that on-farm food safety practices can have unexpected economic and ecological impacts. Despite the potential for negative consequences, limited data is available on the costs and benefits of implementing specific practices. Co-managing farms for food safety and sustainability is further complicated because farms are linked to adjacent environments so that management decisions can have unexpected ecological, economic and food safety consequences. A comprehensive understanding of the links between agricultural and adjacent

environments is key to ensuring environmental health, sustainability, and food safety. A new survey, funded by the Atkinson Center at Cornell University, promises to give a clearer picture of these linkages and what this means for growers.

Specifically, to meet this need, a new collaborative research project between researchers at Cornell University, the University of California, and the University of Rochester is reaching out to growers in the Eastern United States to fill out a survey on food safety. The survey asks for information on how monetary and labor costs associated with on-farm food safety, agricultural water use and treatment, pest management and conservation practices. The survey also provides an opportunity for participating farmers to report any obstacles or difficulties they have encountered. Filling out the survey should take about 20-30 minutes, and all responses are confidential.

The project will not only identify grower costs associated with various farm practices, the information generated will also be integrated, using big data analytics, into models to quantify trade-offs between different grower aims including food safety, conservation and profit. This model will then be used to develop guidelines for how to best co-manage produce farms for these

aims. The survey is a key part of this process, as it will clarify how costs vary among farms of different sizes, cropping systems/types, location, and organic certification status. The research will also shed light on how voluntary third-party audits, conservation incentives and other initiatives affect growers.

The results of this survey should point to opportunities for improving food safety and conservation on-farms while reducing costs for growers.

If you grow vegetables, fruits, or nuts in the Eastern United States and would like to participate in this effort, please visit the following website: <https://bit.ly/2t6EQsO>. The person most directly in charge of managing food safety should take the survey. All responses are confidential and reported results will be fully anonymized.

The first 300 people to complete the survey will be eligible for a \$15 e-gift cards. The survey will be open through May 31st, 2020.

For further information, please contact the project directors, Dr. Daniel Weller (Daniel_Weller@urmc.rochester.edu), Aaron Adalja (aaron.adalja@cornell.edu), or Patrick Baur (pbaur@berkeley.edu).

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2020 Vegetable Crops Hotline Subscription Form

The *Vegetable Crops Hotline* newsletter provides the commercial vegetable grower with timely information about disease, insect and weed pests, fertility practices, post-harvest problems, pesticide label changes, meetings and much more. Each year, the *Hotline* is published 12 times during the growing season (April - September) with additional issues in February, March and October.

In addition to the regularly scheduled issues of the *Hotline*, subscribers will be emailed articles published between issues about pressing matters. Growers may also use this form to sign-up for Veggie Texts. These texts, which will be of 160 characters or less, will deliver critical information to mobile phone numbers or email addresses.

This year we will offer 3 subscription options: 1 year for \$15 / 2 years for \$25 / 3 years for \$30

Yes, I would like to subscribe to the 2020 *Vegetable Crops Hotline*. Enclosed is a check made payable to **Purdue University**. (one year \$15, two years \$25 or three years \$30)

Mail to: Vegetable Crops Hotline Subscription
Southwest Purdue Ag Program
4369 North Purdue Road
Vincennes, IN 47591

***** (Please complete the following) *****

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone: _____ (home) and/or _____ (work)

____ **Yes, I would like to receive Veggie Texts.** Please provide your cell phone number and provider or an email address:

Cell Phone: _____

Carrier: (eg: Verizon, AT&T) _____

Email address: _____

If you would like to receive free email notification when a new issue of the *Vegetable Crops Hotline* is published online, please give us your email address or visit lists.purdue.edu/mailman/listinfo/vch to sign up: E-Mail address: _____

Indiana Vegetable Growers Association

Membership Renewal/Application

To renew or join, fill out the form below and send in with your check payable to IVGA. Memberships run January – December.

Your contact information will be included in the membership directory and used for IVGA correspondence.

Name: _____

Company: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Tel: _____ Fax: _____

Email: _____

Web: _____

Would you like to receive **free subscriptions** to trade magazines that may be offered to IVGA members? If yes, we will provide your address to publishers who offer this. ☐ Yes ☐ No

Payment Form

Membership Dues

Regular, \$20/year \$____.00

Industry/Corporate, \$80/year \$____.00

Publications

Midwest Vegetable Production Guide ID-56,
\$15 each. \$____.00

Postage if mailed to you \$5 \$____.00

Vegetable Crops Hotline, \$15 for hard copy \$____.00

Vegetable Crops Hotline, email notice
check here to receive email _____ \$0.00

Total Due \$____.00

Make check payable to:

Indiana Vegetable Growers Association (IVGA).

Return to:

Indiana Vegetable Growers Association

PO Box 1321

Valparaiso, IN 46384-1321

Questions? Call 219-508-1429 or email ivga@ivga.org

Office Use Only: Check no. _____ Check Date _____

Date Received: _____ Received by: _____