PURDUE UNIVERSITY | Extension

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VEGETABLE CROPS HOTLINE

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

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From The Editor's Desk

(Petrus Langenhoven, plangenh@purdue.edu, (765) 496-7955)

Dear Valued VCH Readers,

Welcome to this week's edition of the Vegetable Crops Hotline!

What a difference a few days can make! After weeks of hot, humid weather that kept us busy managing disease pressure, we're looking at a dramatic atmospheric shift that will bring much cooler temperatures to close out August. The National Weather Service predicts a nearly 100% chance of sustained below-normal temperatures through August 26-30, with some northern Indiana locations potentially seeing lows in the upper 40s—the coolest we've experienced since early June.

This weather turnaround brings both relief and new considerations for growers. Corn earworm monitoring shifts focus entirely to late-planted sweetcorn, where thresholds drop back to just one moth per night with green silk present. It's also an opportune time to think beyond this season's harvest and consider how cover crops could benefit your operation—whether you're managing acres or tending a home garden.

This week's newsletter covers these timely pest management updates and explores the multiple benefits cover crops can offer as we transition toward fall. We'll also highlight upcoming educational opportunities, including a hands-on Cleaning and Sanitation Workshop at the Purdue Student Farm on September 8th and the Southwest Purdue Ag Center's Pumpkin Field Day on September 17th. Plus, we'll share a valuable resource for tracking the vegetable price index.

As we navigate this seasonal transition, stay alert to how these cooler temperatures might affect your crops and pest populations.

Pepper harvest is now in full swing at the Purdue Student Farm. We initiated harvest on August 12. One of the tapered pepper varieties that shows promising results is Cornito Rosso (Figure 1). It is producing a lot of fruit, and the fruit size is very uniform with few defects. Once again, Flavorburst is not disappointing (Figure 2). It produces early, with many fruits that are free of blossom-end rot. An interesting find is the sweet pepper variety Aconcagua. It produces very large fruit, and so far, there is no sign of any blossom end rot (Figure 3). The results of the variety trial will be discussed at our upcoming winter meetings and will be published in the Midwest Vegetable Trial Report.

Figure 1. Sweet pepper variety Cornito Rosso (Photo by Petrus Langenhoven).

Figure 2. Sweet pepper variety Flavorburst (Photo by Petrus Langenhoven).

Figure 3. Sweet pepper variety Aconcagua (Photo by Petrus Langenhoven).

Growers and Purdue Extension Educators

Your input and expertise make this newsletter a truly useful resource. If you have hot topics you'd like us to cover, success stories to share, or questions for our Extension specialists, please get in touch with us at plangenh@purdue.edu or contact the specialist directly. We also welcome high-quality photos of pest issues, unusual symptoms, or innovative production practices you've implemented on your farm.

Website Links in Newsletter Articles

We frequently include links to websites or online publications. If you are unable to access these resources, please don't hesitate to contact your local Purdue Extension office or us to request a hard copy of the information.

Midwest Vegetable Production Guide

The 2025 Midwest Vegetable Production guide is now available for growers to visit online at **mwveguide.org**, or you can download and print a guide from your computer at **mwveguide.org/guide**. The guide can also be purchased for $15 per copy. Contact your Extension Office or Stephen Meyers (slmeyeres@purdue.edu) directly to buy a copy.

Midwest Vegetable Trial Reports

Are you still considering purchasing vegetable seeds? The Midwest Vegetable Trial Reports feature many articles to help you make an informed decision. The resource also hosts research results related to production.

Best regards,

Petrus Langenhoven
Clinical Assistant Professor and Vegetable Extension Specialist
Department of Horticulture and Landscape Architecture
Purdue University

Super cool & super dry for August's end: How the weather tables have turned

(Jacob Dolinger, jdolinge@purdue.edu)

With brute and sudden force, the atmosphere is doing its job: acting like a fluid. Weather is not a precise science, which means the atmosphere is constantly shifting. There tends to be some sort of pattern shift come mid-late August, and it looks like it's just about here. Temperatures are on their way down, as the National Weather Service's Climate Prediction Center (CPC) predicts a nearly 100% chance of sustained below-normal temperatures 6-10 days out from writing, so August 26-30 (Figure 1). We're talking lows in the upper *40s* in certain spots across northern Indiana—brr! Cities like Fort Wayne, Lafayette, South Bend, and Valparaiso could be seeing these temperatures. The last time minimum temperatures dropped below 50°F in Lafayette and South Bend was on June 2.

This is all welcome news for anyone who has worked outdoors and has not enjoyed what has been an incredibly humid summer. The Lafayette area has had the second-highest number of dew points greater than 70°F this summer. For reference, dew points of 65°F-70°F are generally considered humid, while dew points above 70°F are very humid. Dew points can also reach above 75°F, as they have on several occasions this summer, and that is considered oppressive humidity. We're going to see some very low dew points through the end of the month, but that doesn't mean the humidity has left for good. Some models indicate a

major warm-up again around Labor Day Weekend—another example of the atmosphere acting as a fluid, with all of its highs and lows.

Even with all the dramatic swings in temperatures and humidity, we will at the very least have sunshine. In fact, maybe too much sunshine, as below-normal precipitation is also quite likely in the 6–10-day outlook (Figure 2). We tend to get a bit drier in Indiana in August and September, but this period is expected to be drier than normal, which means anyone with stakes in agriculture may want to monitor soil moisture closely.

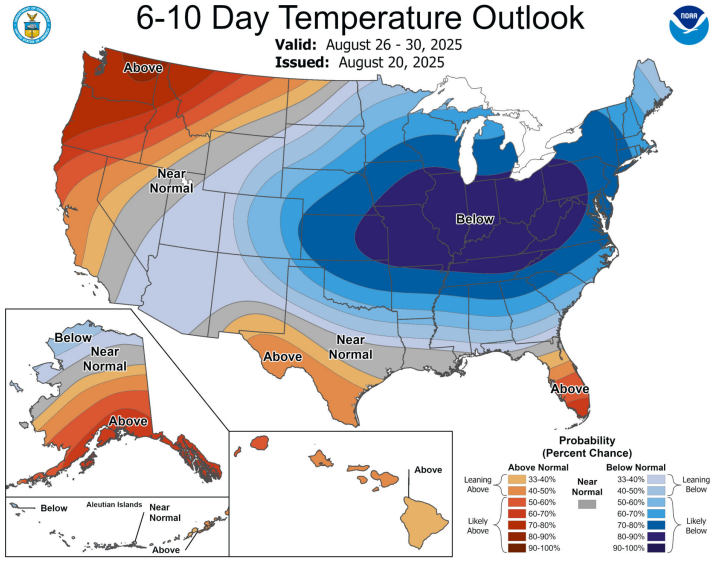

Figure 1. The CPC indicates a nearly 100% chance of below normal temperatures over much of the Midwest.

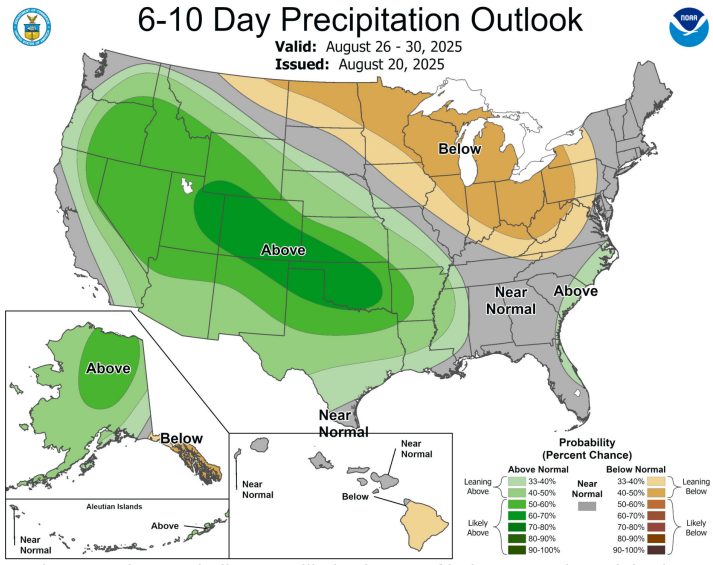

Figure 2. The CPC indicates a likely chance of below normal precipitation across the Midwest.

Using Cover Crops in the Home Garden

(John Woodmansee, jwoodman@purdue.edu, (260) 636-2111)

Maybe after you finish your vegetable harvest, you mentally say, “I’m done this year,” and wait to start again next year. But a cover crop could benefit you in several ways. By researching now, you can be prepared to install cover crops this year.

Like many farmers, home gardeners have been exploring and using cover crops in their vegetable gardens. If you’ve never considered cover crops, let’s examine their benefits and some plant species you could use.

Today, I’ll glean a few insights from the Purdue Extension publication, “Cover Crops in the Home Garden.”

First of all, what is a cover crop? Cover crops are plants grown to improve soil quality or to provide a benefit to the ecosystem. They are generally not harvested, and they are generally sown in late summer or early fall, left through the winter, and terminated or tilled under in the spring. We used to call these crops “green manures,” but I always thought that was a somewhat confusing term.

Some cover crop benefits include reducing erosion, improving soil structure, reducing weeds, recycling nutrients, improving soil fertility, and providing forage and habitat.

Erosion may be less of a concern with a garden on level soil, but it’s a big concern for farmers. Cover crops slow runoff and allow more water infiltration. Besides water erosion, we can also have wind erosion. So, if your garden is in a windy area, you could benefit from a cover crop.

Soil structure has an impact on soil tilth, a term sometimes used synonymously with soil structure. Soil structure is how the soil is held together. Tilth refers to the physical condition of soil as related to its ease of tillage, fitness as a seedbed, and its relative impedance to seedling emergence and root penetration. Cover crops will help you by adding biomass below the soil surface, which in turn enhances soil pore spaces and promotes better water infiltration, drainage, and aeration.

Weeds are the bane of many gardeners. Cover crops compete with weeds for light, water, and nutrients. Some cover crops can also decrease weed growth by secreting allelochemicals from their roots that inhibit the growth of weeds.

Cover crops help recycle nutrients by scavenging for nutrients in the soil that might otherwise be leached out or lost with surface runoff. The cover crop takes up the nutrients, uses them, and then returns them to the soil when terminated or tilled under. New garden crops can use them.

In addition to scavenging for nutrients, some cover crop species (legumes) can be used to increase soil nitrogen content. Legumes are plants that “fix” their nitrogen from the air by means of soil-borne bacteria and nodules on the roots. Thus, some nitrogen is returned to the soil upon termination of the legume.

Finally, aboveground cover crop vegetation can provide food and shelter for numerous animals, including insects, mammals, and birds. Cover crops allowed to flower can provide pollen and nectar to pollinators. Belowground, earthworms benefit from the habitat provided by cover crop roots.

Cover crops come in many types, including grasses, legumes, non-legume broadleaves, and mixtures.

Grasses can include cereal rye, oats, wheat, and pearl millet.

Annual ryegrass is used in agriculture, but can be difficult to terminate. When used in the home garden, it can sometimes become a weed.

Cover crop legumes can be white clover, crimson clover, Austrian winter (field) pea, hairy vetch, or sunnhemp.

Non-legume broadleaves include oilseed radish, field turnip, mustard, canola, and buckwheat.

For additional details, including planting dates, seeding rates, and termination methods, search for publication HO-324-W, Using Cover Crops in the Home Garden, at Purdue Extension's Education Store: https://edustore.purdue.edu/.

Insect Trapping Updates

(Laura Ingwell, lingwell@purdue.edu, (765) 494-6167)

Corn Earworm

https://extension.entm.purdue.edu/veg/cornearworm/

Our dent corn is through with pollination, leaving only our late plantings of sweet corn as a resource for the abundant moths in the landscape. Our thresholds are back down to 1 moth per night AND green silk on the plant to trigger a pesticide application.

Did you know that corn earworm (*Helicoverpa zea*) goes by many common names, including tomato fruitworm, cotton bollworm, and soybean podworm? So, don't be alarmed when you see the number below because there are other hosts out there on the landscape, but corn is definitely a favorite!

According to trap catches that have been reported over the past week (8 days), this is where we stand:

- Jennings Co. 63 per night
- Knox Co. 7 per night
- LaPorte Co. 92 per night (highly variable between locations)
- Lawrence Co. 3 per night
- Randolph Co. 156 per night
- Tippecanoe Co. 165 per night
- Hendricks Co. 88 per night
- Whitley Co. 142 per night

As you can see, while it is variable across the state, all reporting locations are exceeding the threshold. If you have late plantings, be sure you are protecting your ears (Figure 1)! There are a lot of pests out there (Figure 2), but sometimes you have nature's little helpers around to assist (Figure 3).

Figure 1. Ear protection. Image generated by Microsoft CoPilot.

Figure 2. The diversity in colors of corn earworm larvae (Photo by John Obermeyer).

Figure 3. A corn earworm being eaten by a lady beetle larva (Photo by John Obermeyer).

Producer Price Index by Commodity: Farm Products: Fresh and Dry Vegetables

(Petrus Langenhoven, plangenh@purdue.edu, (765) 496-7955)

Good to know. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics via FRED® is a valuable resource for fruit and vegetable producer price index and other data.

https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/WPU0113#

Below is an example of one of the data sets that is available.

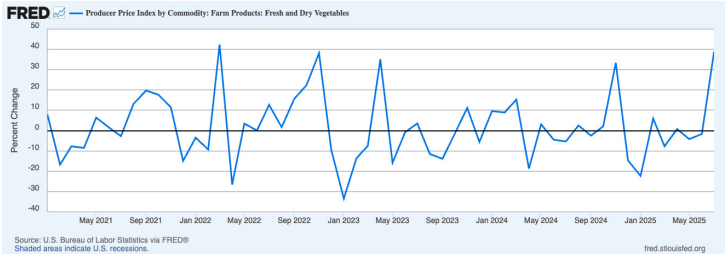

Figure 1. Producer price index graph.

Cleaning and Sanitation Workshop

(Sarah Hanson, sspeedy@purdue.edu)

Keeping produce safe and meeting buyers' and regulatory expectations starts with strong cleaning and sanitation practices. Farms that implement proper procedures not only protect public health but also improve efficiency and build trust with customers. To help growers and farm workers strengthen these skills, we invite you to join us on **September 8th from 1:00 PM to 5:00 PM at the Purdue Student Farm** for a **free**, hands-on Cleaning and Sanitation Workshop. Attendees will learn from Purdue Extension experts about:

- Cleaning and Sanitizing Basics: wash/pack area practices, sanitizer dilution, and using a
- Regulatory Requirements: understanding cleaning and sanitation rules for produce
- SSOPs and Recordkeeping: writing Sanitation Standard Operating Procedures and maintaining records for third-party audit preparation.
- Water Sample Collection: hands-on activity to properly collect and handle a water sample
- ATP Meter Activity: using an ATP meter to test cleaning and sanitation efficacy in real

Don't miss this chance to gain practical, farm-ready skills that strengthen food safety programs and prepare for audit registration is free!

Registration Link:
https://purdue.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_81blwfocQNWOSYS

***Date**: 09/08/2025*

***Time**: 1-5 pm (DST)*

***Location**: Purdue Student Farm (PSF)*

1491, Cherry Ln, West Lafayette, IN, 47906

Southwest Purdue Ag Center Hosts Pumpkin Field Day

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

Mark your calendars for an exciting educational opportunity! The Southwest Purdue Ag Center invites you to join their Pumpkin Field Day on **September 17, 2025, from 1:30-5:30 pm EDT** at 4369 N. Purdue Road, Vincennes, IN 47591.

This hands-on event provides participants with the opportunity to explore a diverse range of pumpkin and winter squash varieties while gaining valuable insights into cutting-edge agricultural practices. Attendees will learn about the latest research developments in no-till farming techniques, effective weed control strategies, and integrated pest management approaches that can enhance crop production and sustainability.

The field day welcomes growers, gardeners, educators, and anyone with an interest in pumpkin cultivation. Admission is free, but registration is required as space is limited to 50 participants.

To secure your spot, register online at

https://tinyurl.com/SWPACpumpkin or call 812-886-0198. For questions or cancellations, contact Barb Joyner at joynerb@purdue.edu or 812-886-0198. Early registration is encouraged to ensure availability and help organizers accommodate all interested participants.

Southwest Purdue Ag Center

Pumpkin Field Day

4369 N. Purdue Road, Vincennes, IN 47591

Wednesday, Sep. 17, 2025

1:30 pm – 5:30 pm EDT

Join us for a Pumpkin Field Day!

- Come explore a wide selection of pumpkin and winter squash varieties, learn about the latest research on no-till, weed control, and integrated pest management.
- Don't miss the field showcase and an interactive insect and disease "treasure hunt" to help sharpen your scouting skills.
- Whether you're a grower, gardener, educator, or simply curious about pumpkins, there's something here for you!

The Field Day is free to attend, but space is limited to 50 participants. If you are interested, please register: https://tinyurl.com/SWPACpumpkin or call 812-886-0198
If you have any questions or need to cancel your registration, please email Barb Joyner at joynerb@purdue.edu or call 812-886-0198. This will help us ensure that we can accommodate others who are interested in attending the event.

Purdue University is an Equal Opportunity/Equal Access University. If you are in need of accommodations to attend this program, or an interpreter or translator, please contact Valerie Clingerman (clingerman@purdue.edu).

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