



CHARLIE BAIER, Iowa State University Howard County Extension Education Director

FOR THE WEEK OF August 22, 2005

Organic Farmer forum

The Howard County Extension office is hosting an organic farmer information exchange meeting on September 15, 2005 at the Extension office at 132 1st Ave. West, Cresco IA. The meeting is open to anyone currently farming organically or thinking about changing over to organic farming. There is no cost, no agenda, just a free flow of information between people who want to learn and share information with each other. The meeting starts at 7 PM and ends when people are ready to go home around 9 or 9:30. Charlie Baier Howard County Extension Director share information from ISU and take questions from the group back to ISU and bring the answers back to the next session. At this meeting I will be getting your ideas for an organic workshop to be held in this area this year. Working with Jerry DeWitt from Iowa State University I want to develop a workshop that will address subjects of interest to organic farmers in this area. If you would like to join us for the next meeting please just call my office at 563-547-3001.

When is My Watermelon ready?

I have had several calls from home gardeners ask how can you tell when a watermelon is ready to harvest. If you use a combination of the following indicators it will help you to know when they are ripe. The first is when the light green, curly tendrils on the stem near the point of attachment of the melon turns brown and dry. The second indicator is when the surface color of the fruit turns dull. The third indicator is when the skin becomes resistant to penetration by the thumbnail and is rough to the touch. And number four is when the bottom of the melon (where it lies on the soil) turns from light green to a yellowish color. These indicators for choosing a ripe watermelon are much more reliable than "thumping" the melon with a knuckle.

Muskmelon. The fruits of muskmelon or cantaloupe are mature when the stem pulls (slips) easily from the melon. The melon is not ripe if the stem has to be forcibly separated from the fruit. Other indicators of maturity are based on touch, appearance, and aroma. The flower end (the end opposite the stem) of the melon should be slightly soft. The skin between the netting turns from green to yellow. Finally, a ripe melon produces a strong muskmelon aroma.

SLUGS feeding on Hosta

Slugs are especially numerous during rainy seasons and in well-irrigated gardens.

If slugs are a problem, it is best to use a variety of tactics to reduce their numbers.

Water in the morning so plants are dry by evening. Thin or divide plants if they are too crowded. Trapping and handpicking helps lower slug numbers. To be effective, traps must be checked and cleaned out several times a week. You can trap slugs by setting out damp newspapers. Checks under the trap the next morning and kill any slugs you find. Traps containing beer or other fermenting food can be used. Place a jar, can, or pans into the ground so the top is level with the ground Pour beer or a water and yeast mixture (one teaspoon of yeast to three ounces of water) into the container. Slugs are attracted to the odors, fall in and drown.

ISU Northeast Research Farm Annual Fall Field Day

NASHUA, IA Thursday September 8, is the annual fall field day at the Iowa State University Northeast Research Farm near Nashua. The afternoon program from 1:30 to 4:30 will feature topics on both crop production and grain marketing. The field day is free and open to the public. Pre-registration is not required. CCA credits will be available at a nominal fee. The Northeast Research Farm is located on 290th Street 1 mile south and 1 1/2 miles west of Nashua. From Hwy 218, take Exit 220 (Nashua exit), turn west onto B-60 (280th St). Go 1.5 miles to Windfall Avenue, then 1 mile South to 290th St.