

Farm and Weather Summary

Vince Lawson, farm superintendent

Farm Comments

Developments. Two personnel changes occurred this year. Myron Rees whose appointment was being split between the Muscatine and Crawfordsville research farms was reassigned full-time to Crawfordsville. A new ag specialist, Joe Hannan, was hired in June to help at Muscatine. These changes were welcome because activities at both farms have been increasing. Joe Hannan grew up in Iowa, attended Western Dubuque High School, and majored in Horticulture at ISU. After graduation he worked for a landscape architecture firm in Arizona before returning to Iowa. Joe will manage greenhouse operations, assist in conducting the various field research and demonstration activities, and will be working closely with Dr. Paul Domoto on the southeast Iowa grape project.

Field Days and Tours. The annual meeting of the Muscatine Island Research Farm Association was held on March 2, 2006 at the Sombrero Restaurant, Grandview, IA. The research farm field tour was on July 17 and featured tomato production, melon disease control strategies, and seedless watermelon production. Our most popular event of the summer was the Home Demonstration Garden Tour on August 1 with Dr. Cindy Haynes. Attendees were able to see and taste a large assortment of pepper varieties, unusual melons, and learn about vegetable nutrition through a garden planted in the form of a food guide pyramid.

New Projects. Starting in 2006, the research farm became a site for the All-America Selections (AAS) Vegetable Trials. The AAS is an independent, non-profit organization that arranges and oversees the unbiased evaluation of new flower and vegetable varieties to identify

superior improvements in breeding. We also started two projects dealing with soybean cyst nematode (SCN)—a seed treatment study and variety trial to determine effect on yield and SCN soil numbers.

Weather Comments

Spring 2006. The frost-free growing season was 169 days in 2006. The last hard freeze occurred on March 26 when a low of 23°F was recorded. Several light frosts followed with the last on April 26 (31°F). April and May were warmer than normal and May was drier than normal allowing spring field work to be completed with little interruption.

Summer 2006. The summer months of June and July were slightly drier than normal, although needed rain came in August and helped maturing field crops. Temperatures were above normal in July and August. Overall, most crops grew and performed well this season with irrigation to supplement the scarce rainfall.

Fall 2006. A light frost (31°F) occurred on October 13 and was followed by a hard frost (26°F) on October 23. September and October were slightly cooler and drier than normal allowing fall harvesting and work to proceed normally. At the end of the growing season (April–October) rainfall was 6.7 in. below normal (Table 1). The 2006 season was the fourth in a row that the farm experienced below normal precipitation. The 2005 growing season was the drier with a season total of 12.2 in. below normal, 2004 was 3.6 in. below normal, and 2003 was 6.7 in. below normal.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank our crew for their hard work and efforts during the 2006 season: Joe Hannan and Myron Rees, ag specialists; Joshua Day, ISU summer intern; and Charles Ricky and Joe Hankins, seasonal employees.

Table 1. Muscatine Island Research and Demonstration Farm, Fruitland, monthly rainfall and average temperatures for 2006.

Month	Rainfall (in.)		Temperature (°F)		
	2006	Deviation from normal	2006	Deviation from normal	Days 90° or above
March	NA	NA	40.9	2.8	0
April	3.88	.32	57.0	6.6	0
May	1.65	-2.55	63.7	2.2	4
June	2.23	-1.9	70.2	-1.5	2
July	2.94	-.85	78.6	3.4	16
August	4.65	.73	75.0	2.0	7
September	1.38	-2.22	61.3	-3.1	0
October	<u>2.33</u>	<u>-.31</u>	50.1	-2.1	<u>3</u>
Totals	19.06	-6.78			32