

Farm and Weather Summary

Nick Howell, farm superintendent

Farm Comments

Staffing and Internships. A new position was added to the farm staff in 2008. Dennis Portz joined the farm crew in July as a viticulture technician. His responsibilities include managing the station's 3.5 acres of vineyards as well as coordinating the activities at the research vineyards at Lewis, Nashua, and Crawfordsville, IA. The Horticulture Station staff welcomes Dennis to the crew.

Five student internships were filled in 2008. The first was to test the effects of growing sweet corn on different colored plastics. The second completed a double cropping study of cucumbers and peppers and an earliness study on tomatoes. The third was a high tunnel management study. The fourth worked on a grape maturation study using New York and Minnesota varieties grown in Iowa. The fifth intern evaluated uniformity of water distribution using various setups of the above ground irrigation system. Because of the success of our internships, the job descriptions for six permanent internship positions were developed and the positions will be offered in the spring.

Developments. Major work was completed on the turf research shop. The interior was cleaned and painted. A new roof and insulation was installed in late July funded by the Coles Memorial Farm account. Work on the headquarters building continued with restrooms renovated and ceiling tiles replaced. In addition, the classroom and lab were painted, and the lab was converted into a fruit quality lab.

Landscape cleanup and renovation projects were also completed. Farm staff and interns

continued cleaning and pruning the windbreaks and tree collections around the lake. Also, 500 Norway spruce trees were planted in a nursery to be used as replacement stock in the dying windbreaks surrounding the station. An additional 500 are on order to be planted next spring.

Field Days, Tours, and Class Activities. The station hosted 6 field days, 8 tours, 10 meetings, and 15 student classes. A total of 1,474 people attended events at the station in 2008. One field day of note was the Horticulture Club's fall festival. There were 26 student volunteers and 260 visitors for this first time event.

Weather Comments

Winter 2007–2008. Temperatures and precipitation were below normal in January and February. Despite this there were no adverse effects on perennial crops.

Spring 2008. Temperatures remained below normal throughout the period allowing perennial crops to come out of dormancy slowly. There was no early spring bud damage on apples or grapes. Precipitation rates were well above normal delaying spring planting of vegetable and bulk crops.

Summer 2008. With temperatures below normal and precipitation twice above normal, major insect and disease outbreaks were common. The mortality rate on newly planted perennial crops was higher than normal due to weather conditions.

Fall 2008. Precipitation returned to more normal rates although temperatures remained low during the period. A gradual cool down in the fall allowed perennial crops to enter the winter months fully hardened.

Acknowledgements

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hard work. Thanks also to Coles Memorial Farm account for funding renovations of the turf research shop. The assistance with the irrigation system maintenance provided by John Newton, superintendent, Veenker Memorial Golf Course, is appreciated. I would also like to thank Lisa Harmison, Meg Speer, and the Story Co. Master Gardeners for their assistance with the Home Demonstration Garden Field Day.

Table 1. Horticulture Research Station, Ames, monthly rainfall and temperatures for 2008.

Month	Rainfall (in.)		High 2008	Temperature (°F)			Days 90° or above
	2008	Deviation from normal		Deviation from normal	Low 2008	Deviation from normal	
March	2.78	0.67	42	-6.9	26	-2.3	0
April	5.13	1.45	57	-7.5	37	-3.0	0
May	8.49	3.87	71	-4.7	48	-4.0	0
June	10.68	6.32	81	-3.3	60	-1.6	0
July	9.22	5.12	84	-3.5	64	-1.9	1
August	2.22	-2.88	81	-4.3	60	-3.4	1
September	3.03	0.27	74	-5.6	53	-1.7	0
October	<u>3.32</u>	<u>0.72</u>	62	-3.3	41	1.2	<u>0</u>
Totals	44.87	15.54					2