

WINDOW ON AGRICULTURE

Office of the Sonoma County Agricultural Commissioner

John Westoby
Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer

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Marilyn Vernon and Suzanne Ostrom

ORGANIC COST SHARE PROGRAM

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has provided funds to the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) to be distributed to operations that have been certified organic by a USDA accredited certifier. Any operation in California that has been certified between the dates of October 1, 2003 and September 30, 2004, may apply for 75 percent of their certification cost (maximum of \$500.00) to be reimbursed.

The applicant must submit the application form along with a copy of certification and a copy of the associated expenses required by your certifier to maintain your certification.

The application forms are available at the following locations:

Each Certifier operating in California
Each County Agricultural Commissioner's Office
Website at:
www.cdfa.ca.gov/is/fvegc/organic.htm

For additional information contact Ray Green, State of California Department of Food and Agriculture at 916-445-2180.

NEW LOCATION FOR PLASTIC RECYCLE

The Sonoma County Agricultural Commissioner's Office will hold our annual spring plastic recycle day in April this year. Our recycler has requested some changes be made to our recycling program. In order to

one collection site for our spring event. The collection site will be held at the Sonoma County Healdsburg Corporation Yard, which is located on Alexander Valley Rd. in Healdsburg. From Hwy.101, take the Lytton Springs exit, turn right on Healdsburg Avenue, and then turn left on Alexander Valley Rd. The corporation yard is on the left, approximately 0.1 mile. This site is actually across the street from the former collection site at the Healdsburg Transfer Station. The event will be held on Thursday, April 22, 2004, from 9:30 a.m.- 3:00 p.m.

This event is open to growers, nurseries, pest control businesses, golf courses, parks, and government agencies. Plastic containers ranging in size from 1 pint to 55 gallons will be accepted.

Containers must be:

- Triple rinsed, punctured and dry
- The plastic lids must be removed
- All label booklets and plastic sleeves must be removed from containers before recycling, glued labels are ok
- If possible; No cardboard boxes
- **PLEASE - No PVC pipe, plastic tubing, or containers that have held motor oil**
- For up-to-date information on container recycling go to www.acrecycle.org

The Sonoma County Agricultural Commissioner's Office, the Sonoma County Public Works Division and Western Ag Plastic Recycle sponsor this event. For additional information call Pete Albers at 565-2371.

comply with these requests; **there will be only**

RECRUITMENT FOR NEW AGRICULTURAL COMMISSIONER

Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer/Director John Westoby will be retiring the first week of July. The Sonoma County Human Resources Department is currently recruiting for the Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer/Director position on their website. Applications for the position are currently available online. The final filing date is April 30, 2004.

Oral interviews are tentatively scheduled for June 14, 2004, and will be conducted by the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors. The Board of Supervisors appoints the Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer/Director every four years.

A retirement celebration in John's honor is currently being planned.

Next month the newsletter will take a look back at John's career.

RUST RELEASE ON YELLOWSTAR THISTLE IN SONOMA COUNTY

On Tuesday, April 6, 2004, staff biologists from the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) Biological Control Program met with Sonoma County Biologists Priscilla Lane and Marilyn Vernon to release spores of the rust *Puccinia jaceae* var. *solstitialis* on yellowstar thistle (YST). CDFA is releasing this rust as a biocontrol agent to control yellowstar thistle. The release was made in an area of Petaluma near Lakeville Rd.

Before the actual release our staff biologists were shown a PowerPoint presentation about the history of the rust and its current status of being released in various counties in California.

After the presentation, the biologists from both the county and state went to the actual release site. Ms. Lane, who was familiar with

the location, chose the site, because of past biological control insect releases at the site. At the site, the rust spores were hydrated and a

spreader was added to the solution. The suspension was mixed for fifteen minutes. While the rust spores were being mixed, the team found a one square meter site with a moderate to heavy YST seedling infestation. Old plants and foreign material were removed from the site.

CDFA personnel brought with them a one square meter cage, which was placed on the site. Four stakes were hammered in around the cage to mark the location. The cage was then removed. The rust solution was filtered through cheesecloth, and then placed in a small spray bottle. Biologists Lane and Vernon manned the spray bottle, and sprayed the solution from different angles onto the YST. Once the rust spores had been sprayed, the cage was placed over the location. The cage was left on the area, until the next morning. The cage helps to retain moisture and to prevent the plants from being disturbed.

Biologists Lane and Vernon, along with members of CDFA staff, will monitor the area to determine the spread of the rust in the area. The rust will be released in 20 different counties this spring. Sonoma County is one of four counties that will be monitored extensively to examine the spread and impact of the rust on yellowstar thistle.

The rust is a natural enemy of yellowstar thistle in Europe. In 1978, a sample of the rust was collected from Turkey was brought to a United States Department of Agriculture facility in Maryland for specificity testing. Dr. William Bruckart completed testing that demonstrated that the rust was host specific. The CDFA Biological Control Program, in cooperation with Dr. Bruckart, received a limited release permit for the 20 county releases.