

All Hopped Up

Defining Quality – It Starts on the Farm *part 1*

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“You can’t make a silk purse from a sow’s ear...”

“You can’t squeeze blood from a turnip...”

How about, “Garbage in, garbage out...”

Well, that makes enough sense. The idea that the product of artful crafting is only as good as the quality of the raw materials is ingrained in our lexicon. But what does it really mean? For hops and brewing, it means high quality hops start on the farm.

When I’m, asked by a brewer how to identify quality hops at the farm I tell them to look at the hops last. Paying particular attention to the appearance of the yard can raise early warning flags.

Are the rows full of weeds? Weeding is a never-ending operation in hop production. Some growers select cover crops to out-compete weeds

while others choose to use chemical controls. Regardless, if a yard looks weedy and unkempt odds are the grower isn’t paying enough attention to production.

Are the bines well trained or are they running wild? This is the second most labor intensive part of hop production. Training and pruning are a constant operation from emergence through flowering. Sprawling bines and thick basal growth around the crown invites disease.

What does the trellis look like? Never mind how the poles look, especially if a grower is using locally harvested timber. Look at the height. Standard trellis height should range between 16 and 22 feet tall. Short trellises are only designed for dwarf hop varieties and only one group in Michigan is producing them. Does trellis height

make a difference? Standard varieties require a combination of proper height and sunlight to flower correctly and produce chemical profiles typical of the variety. There are no short cuts.

Is there an irrigation system? Hops require huge amounts of water for optimal yield and chemical balance. If there is no irrigation system the grower is relying on Mother Nature to provide...and She is fickle at best. Any grower interested in producing the highest quality hop they can should be investing in irrigation. Otherwise quality due to water availability will fluctuate every year.

Granted, every hop yard is different but there are a few commonalities. Use these simple observations to give yourself a hint before sealing any deals...

Brewer News

Lakefront Brewery is increasing production of Local Acre. Russ and crew have invested considerable time in sourcing all local ingredients for this brew. When we look at the

focus these breweries are giving to utilizing local and regional ingredients we realize this is not a fad. Craft beer lovers are very vocal and loyal to the industry and they are

embracing the movement. Artisan brewing is an industry filled with creative, pioneering spirits. We applaud your courage and vision.

Workshop Updates

Keep the dates in mind for upcoming workshops.

July 16th – Tarrytown NY
Hops 101 Introduction to Small Scale
Brought to you by Atlantic Hops
Registration Open on-line...

www.atlantichops.com



Downy Mildew Alert!

For many of us, 2010 was a very, very wet season. Wet summers make for good hop yields but provide good mildew yields as well. Last season's leaf mildew may have turned into this season's basal spikes and flag shoots.

We've recently observed several hop yards from North Carolina to Wisconsin to New York and Ontario showing early

season Downy Mildew infection. This should not be a surprise and our treatment programs should include both preventative and acute fungi prescriptions.

As a reminder, Downy Mildew infections can begin early in the season showing stunted shoots rising from the crown. These shoots have compressed node spacing, are typically

yellowish, and often brittle.

These are called basal spikes and if allowed to mature will form black spores on the leaves. Spores lead to secondary infections of other plants.

Scout fields early and often to find these infected plants. Chronic infection will cause plant death. Downy mildew is the single most impactful hop disease and should be treated seriously.

Need Poles???

We've been made aware of WI harvested Tamarack poles perfect for hop yards. The poles are pre-cut, peeled, and coated if you would like. They can even be delivered to your site.

Keep in mind what your needs are for 2012 and plan to install this fall to save big headaches next spring. Contact us at info@gorstvalleyhops.com if you're interested in obtaining poles for your hop yard.



Downy Mildew spike. Notice the compressed nodes and necrotic leaves.

2011 Pre-Harvest Allocation Continues

GVH is in the midst of the pre-harvest allocation for the 2011 crop. As stated earlier, we plan to have several hundred pounds of the following varieties:

Cascade, Nugget, Willamette, Sterling, Brewer's Gold,

We're also planting the following varieties for 2012 availability (some 2011 possibly):

Centennial, Newport, Chinook, Columbus, Liberty.

Get them while they last! We're approximately 80% allocated already.

Contact james@gorstvalleyhops if the crop is of interest.

" James and staff...Jim and I can hardly wait...Its funny how our hops yard has all the neighbors talking! A bunch of 20 foot poles lined up in rows certainly has people guessing. My favorite response to the questions is "we're raising climbing strawberries-bring your own ladder! "

- Mike Bronk,
2011 Charter Grower

Processing Queue

Do your hops need processing this year? Don't wait until the last minute to contact your closest processor.

Processing is an involved operation requiring a good deal of planning. Typically it is a first-come, first-served type of arrangement. As production volumes increase the processing

window expands. Soon we'll all be processing for months instead of weeks.

If you are looking for organic processing look to the [Michigan Hop Alliance](#) for 2011, with Gorst Valley Hops coming on-line for organic in 2012.

[Gorst Valley Hops](#) can handle most any volume, from 25 pounds to 25,000

pounds for the Midwest /Great Lakes folks.

If you're on the east coast look to [Atlantic Hops](#) in NY for the New England and Atlantic States and [Echoview Farm](#) in NC for the southern part of the coast.

Phone

608.228.3117

Web

www.gorstvalleyhops.com

E-mail

info@gorstvalleyhops.com

Gorst Valley Hops is working to reintroduce hops in Wisconsin. The mission of our business is to provide farmers with a high-value crop that they can produce on small acreage within a system that returns the majority of the value of the crop back to the grower.

Gorst Valley Hops is committed to providing high quality pelletized and leaf hops to everyone from craft brewers to home brewers while maximizing environmental stewardship through sustainable growth and processing of our product and that of other hop growers throughout the upper Midwest.

We are continuously adding workshops and training sessions around the country. We love the enthusiasm and are doing everything we can to educate those interested in growing hops.

