**AGRICULTURE** 

# Maple Mainline

### Vermont Maple Conferences January 15, 22, 29

The University of Vermont Extension, Addison County Maple Sugarmakers Association and Vermont Maple Syrup Makers' Association are pleased to offer the 8th annual Vermont Maple Conferences on 3 Saturdays in January, 2011. The conferences are educational meetings held for the purpose of bringing the latest information and research findings about forest management, sap collection, syrup production, quality control, and marketing to sugarmakers in Vermont and surrounding regions. These all day meetings, which are designed to provide education for maple producers of all levels of skill and experience, are open to the public. Classes are taught by scientists, natural resource professionals and sugarmakers from around the state. Meetings also feature a trade show with vendors displaying maple related equipment and a lunch with a maple theme. These meetings are widely perceived to be among the best educational opportunities for sugarmakers in the US and Canada.

#### Please Note:

The enclosed registration form has two parts. Please fill out the appropriate half, depending on whether you wish to attend the Jan. 15<sup>th</sup> meeting, or either the 22<sup>nd</sup> or 29<sup>th</sup> meetings. Note that the meeting day schedules are different, that the checks are made out to different organizations, and the forms are sent to different addresses. Thank you!

Registration tables will be set up from 7:30 am through noontime, with coffee & donuts &/or pastries. The trade show will also be open at that time.

UVM Extension helps individuals and communities put research-based knowledge to work.









Sat., Jan. 15, Middlebury Union H.S., Middlebury Location: off US Rt. 7 just south of the village. Lunch will feature a pork roast dinner with maple dessert.

Sat., Jan. 22, Lamoille Union High School, Hyde Park Location: West side entrance to Lamoille Union High School, US Rt. 15 in Hyde Park. Lunch will be catered by the Culinary Arts program and will feature Maple Bourbon Roast Pork, with all the fixings.

Sat., Jan. 29, Bellows Falls Union High School Location: off US Rt. 5, just south of Bellows Falls. Lunch will feature ham dinner with homemade casseroles, salad & desert by the Freshman class & parents.

**Pre-Registrations** must be **postmarked** by: December 31 (Middlebury) or January 7 (B.F. and H.P). Thank You! Registrations postmarked by these dates will be assured of a meal, if selected and paid for. Lunch for Walk-ins or registrations postmarked after these dates will be served on a first come, first served basis. Please help us by registering early.

Special needs: If you require an accommodation to participate in this program, please notify our office at 802-223-2389 or 866-860-1382 (toll free, in-state only).

Please Note: All conference sites are on school property. A strict **NO SMOKING** policy must be followed.

You are welcome to attend all of the various meetings. We have developed a very inclusive agenda, with classes for all levels. We sincerely hope this program will be beneficial to you and your maple operation. A drop box for conference evaluations will be provided as you exit.



University of Vermont Extension, 617 Comstock Rd, Suite 5 Berlin, VT 05602 ~ 802-223-2389

Toll free: 1-866-860-1382; Fax: 802-223-6500

## **An Important Message from the Chairman** of the Vermont Maple Industry Council

To Vermont Sugarmakers

For the last 10 – 15 years there have been ongoing discussions about certification of sugarhouses. For various market reasons, this is getting closer. If you're producing just for yourself and maybe your neighbors, this may not affect you. None of us want more paperwork or government intrusion but the marketplace is forcing our hand to have better traceability. Recent food recalls have made retailers and manufacturers paranoid about lawsuits. It's hard to blame them when you look at the last few years:

Year Item recalled
2006 Spinach
2007 Peanut Butter, Baby Food, Ground Beef
2008 Peanut Butter, Frozen Beef, Dairy from China
2009 Peanut Butter, Pistachios, Cookies
2010 Eggs, Eggs and more eggs.

Buyers who are trying to protect themselves force sellers to have independent third party certifiers inspect packing facilities, procedures and paperwork. I contact prospects daily (retailers and manufacturers), and it is not uncommon that one of the first questions they ask me is, "Are you independently certified?" If not, the conversation would end. They would not buy from me. So we go through the process of getting certified. It keeps the door open to sales. When the inspectors are here, a regularly asked question is, "Who certifies the sugarhouses?" We mention that sugarmakers attend maple schools every January to learn the latest production methods and safety procedures. Many of you do. But, it's a minority. The inspectors don't like that answer and it's only a matter of time before they ask to see a sugarhouse themselves. Some packers are saying that within a year or two, they will buy bulk syrup only from certified producers. If their customers won't buy noncertified syrup, they simply don't have a market for it.

As an industry, we need to be proactive and control our future. That is why the Vermont Maple Industry Council formed a committee to come up with reasonable guidelines for sugarhouse certification. Tim Wilmot (UVM Extension) and his team culled recommendations and rules from many sources, industry wide and compiled a solid proposed list of certification requirements.

The big question is, how do we implement a certification program? Ideally, the Vermont Agency of Agriculture would oversee it. We all know their budgets are tight so it would be a fee based system. How much? Well, with a new administration coming in, there is a lot to work out and it is going to take a lot of cooperation. As Dwight Eisenhower said, "The world must learn to work together, or finally it will not work at all."

One thing that has kept this industry moving forward is the pride Vermont sugarmakers take in their product. You want to make a great product and because of that, Vermont is still the preeminent state in the industry. Ask a consumer anywhere in the country what state has the best maple and the majority will say Vermont. That is thanks to the hard work by you and many sugarmakers before us. We need to maintain our leadership position and show the marketplace that we are serious about being the leader for many generations to come. A solid certification program will take us to the next level.

Regards, Arnold Coombs, Chairman, VMIC

### Lamoille Union and Bellows Falls High Schools Jan 22 & 29 Schedule for the day

7:30 ~ Registration opens; Coffee and Donuts
8:30 - 8:45 ~ Welcome (Auditorium)
8:45 - 9:20 ~ Chemical Safety in Maple
Operations (Auditorium)
9:30 - 10:20 ~ Session I
10:30 - 11:20 ~ Session II
11:30 - 12:20 ~ Session III
12:20 - 1:20 ~ Lunch
1:30 - 2:20 ~ Session IV
2:30 - 3:20 ~ Session V
Turn in evaluations; have a safe trip home.

Chemical Safety in Maple Operations ~ Anne Macmillan, toxicologist, VT Agency of Agriculture, and Henry Marckres, Chief, Consumer Protection, VT Agency of Ag. Many sugarmakers use cleaners for tubing, tanks, evaporators, and R.O membranes. These cleaners are often strong acids or bases that have the potential to injure the user, and possibly contaminate syrup and cause damage to equipment and the environment. This important presentation will cover the approximately half dozen chemicals frequently used in maple, with safety guidelines for their use, storage and disposal.

The Current and Future Outlook for Maple Sales ~ Bruce Bascom, Bascom Maple Farms, Gary Gaudette, Leader Evaporator, Steve Jones, Maple Grove Farms (Hyde Park Meeting) and Jim MacIsaac, Highland Sugarworks (Bellows Falls Meeting). What do some of the big players in the maple industry predict for the future? How will the market situation affect large and small operations, bulk syrup buyers and sellers, retail sales, future expansion?

Marketing Maple ~ Panel Discussion. You've made a lot of syrup—now, can you get a good price for it? There are many options besides selling bulk. A panel of sugarmakers, including former VMSMA president Bill Clark and current Maple Foundation president Pam Green will discuss the methods and advantages of selling maple products at fairs and farmers markets, by wholesale, retail store, and over the internet. Come with your questions!



Bill Clark and others will share their marketing wisdom.

Insuring Your Maple Operation ~ Kevin Bourdon, Coop Insurance. This presentation will review insurance coverage that is appropriate for your maple operation. We will review areas of insurance covering your sugar house, including its contents and the products you produce. We will also discuss your liability exposures, including the sugaring premises, products liability, leasing of a sugarbush, coverage for your mobile equipment, machinery, autos and workers compensation coverage.

Syrup Jugs and Private Labels ~ Chris Russo, Sugarhill Containers, Pam Green, VT Maple Foundation President, and Henry Marckres. Chris Russo will demonstrate the new flip top lid for Sugarhill maple jugs, and the heat sealer for making a the jug tamper-proof. He will also present options for private labels for syrup jugs. Pam Green will tell us how she prints her own custom labels for maple cream and other products. Henry Marckres will be on hand to discuss the legal requirements for Vermont maple labels.

Sweet Success--a Marketing Tool-kit to Help You Sell Your Maple Products ~ Catherine Stevens, Vermont Maple Syrup Marketing Director. Whether you are just starting out with a new maple operation, or you've been sugaring for years and want to move from bulk sales into selling your own product, this workshop will give you all the marketing tools that you will need to sell

your syrup and other maple products. Learn how to select the marketing strategies that will work best for you.

A New Approach to Marketing Vermont Maple ~ Dr. Amy Trubek and colleagues, UVM Nutrition and Food Science Dept. The "taste of place" could become a powerful tool for marketing Vermont maple syrup. Learn how panels of sugarmakers and professional tasters are developing descriptors for different syrups, as well as developing a tool to help producers identify sources of off flavors. Presenters will teach you how to use two sensory wheels designed specifically for maple producers; one to easily identify and define aromatic qualities for marketing and outreach, and another to troubleshoot potentially defective syrup. The class is aimed at getting feedback from sugarmakers to help adjust and implement this work.

The Maple Operation at Merck Forest ~ Elaine Eisenbraun, Executive Director. Merck Forest and Farmland Center has an extremely long history of maple production with stories told of processing since the 1920's. Over the years, production has fluctuated until, in 2004, major infrastructure expansion took place in both the woods and the sap house. The improvements took place without a solid business plan and several years of struggle ensued; here is the story of Merck Forest taking a stand to reinvigorate our contribution to the world of maple syrup production.

Forest Management ~ Dave Mance, Sugarmaker and Forester from Bennington County. Deciding when and how to thin the sugarbush is a scary prospect for many producers. Are there some decisions that could lead a healthier and sweeter bush, and others that could lead to stand deterioration? Is there an ideal tree spacing and a target percentage of non-maple species or should we manage for the maximum number of male trees per acre? What should we look for in keepers and culls? Dave will help take some of the mystery out of forest management decisions. Expect a lively discussion with plenty of photos and ideas.

Green Worms and Stem Defects: The Other Maple Pests ~ Barbara Burns, Vermont Dept. Forests, Parks & Rec. Forest Tent Caterpillar made a splash, Asian Longhorned Beetles make the news, but what about the other insects and diseases you may encounter? This will include a slide show of some major and minor pests, information on identifying them, and some management strategies to use if you find them in your sugarbush.

**Building a Sugarhouse ~ George Cook, UVM Extension.** We'll scan a practical eye on building new or re-modeling an old sugarhouse, or even adapting an existing building. A program of photos, plans, guidelines, stories of building your sugarhouse. Recommendations / suggestions of what ought to be considered or included in the design and the building process. Get some pointers from both new and experienced sugarmakers, whether small or large. Share your experience with others.



Marsha Maynard of Cabot has a beautiful new Sugarhouse.

Starting Out With Vacuum ~ Tim Wilmot, UVM Extension. In recent years many producers collecting sap by buckets or gravity tubing have experienced disappointing sap yields. Many producers are considering switching to vacuum collection. In this presentation you will learn the materials and techniques needed for an efficient tubing system; techniques which can also be used to improve gravity systems. There will also be a discussion of the various options for vacuum pumps and releasers, including the advantages and disadvantages of lower cost equipment.

**So How Do R/O's Really Work** ~ **Rick Marsh, Jeffersonville sugarmaker and VMSMA president** Rick will provide an in-depth understanding of how an R/O works. See what the inside of a membrane looks like and how it works. This class is for everyone who wants to understand the "nuts & bolts" of an R/O.

Modern vacuum systems ~ JR Sloan, Green Mountain Mainlines (Hyde Park). Learn new techniques that have proven successful in the field by an expert installer. Ben Wilcox, D&G Inc. (Bellows Falls). Learn some of the latest methods for maximizing sap production in modern tubing and vacuum systems. Among the topics that will be covered are tips on installing tubing and mainline, system layout, wet-dry line systems, benefits of blue vs. black vs. PVC for mainlines, rigid vs. semi rigid tubing, and mechanical vs. electric releasers. The will presentation

cover the use of high vacuum and use of variable frequency drives to aid in leak detection and energy savings.

Sap Yield Research Review ~ Tim Perkins, Proctor Maple Research Center. Several studies at the UVM Proctor Maple Research Center over the past several years have focused on ways to increase sap yield in vacuum tubing systems. Sanitation practices in the sap collection system can have large effects on sap yield. This presentation will compare and contrast the results of using annually-replaceable spout adapters, Check-valve spout adapters, dropline replacement and other strategies to improve sap yield

Sap Collection with Tubing—How did we get here and what's next? ~ Tim Perkins. Maple tubing systems have been steadily improved over the past half-century. The introduction of plastic tubing in the 1950s was a major revolution, and led to innovation and massive changes in the maple industry. Newer tubing formulations and fittings have resulted in far better systems than existed 20 years ago. Tubing systems have continued to change as vacuum has increased in popularity. This presentation will describe recent research aimed at identifying current weaknesses in tubing systems that limit sap yield, and discuss possible improvements to optimize sap flow and vacuum transfer in maple tubing systems.

Consistency is the Key to Making High Quality Maple Syrup ~ Brad Gillilan, Leader Evaporator. Brad will discuss the best practices in boiling to make good tasting, high quality syrup. He will cover even firing, firebox construction, and evaporator efficiency. Hyde Park Only.

#### Boiling Techniques and High Sap Concentration ~

Glen Goodrich. Firing technique, sap level, defoamer use, niter control, draw off methods—Glen will discuss these and other important components of evaporation to make a superior product. The presentation will also cover concentration of sap using RO and special boiling techniques necessary for processing high concentrate. **Bellows Falls Only** 

The USDA Rural Energy for America Program funding opportunities for grants and guaranteed loans ~ Cheryl Ducharme, USDA, Montpelier. This presentation will give an overview of the program that has already provided grants to dozens of Vermont Sugarmakers for energy savings equipment like reverse osmosis machines and Steamaways. Hyde Park Only.

Cooking with Maple ~ George Cook, UVM Extension. A moderated open discussion where all participants are requested to bring 1 or 2 of their favorite recipes using maple syrup or maple sugar to share with the group, some

traditional, some unique. Bring a copy of them on a CD, along with your email address and we'll compile them and email them back to you. The discussion will include what works and what doesn't, a special time for "this works for me", horror stories of what not to do, etc. We learn quickly from our mistakes, and some new creations have occurred as a result of our mistakes. This would be an informal opportunity to share the delights of cooking with maple with your maple friends.

### Middlebury High School Jan 15 Schedule for the Day

7:30 - 8:30 Registration; Coffee & Donuts

8:30 - 9:00 Welcome (in Auditorium)

9:30 - 10:45 Session I

11:00 - 12:15 Session II

12:15 - 1:30 Lunch & Trade Show

1:00 - Door Prize Drawing in Cafeteria

1:30 - 2:45 Session III

3:10 - 4:15 Session IV

4:15 - Have a Safe Trip Home

#### Sap Yield Research Review ~ Dr. Tim Perkins, PMRC.

Several studies at the UVM Proctor Maple Research Center, over the past several years, have focused on ways to increase sap yield in vacuum tubing systems. Sanitation practices in the sap collection system can have large effects on sap yield. Tim Perkins will compare and contrast the results of using annually-replaceable spout adapters, check-valve spout adapters, drop-line replacement and other strategies to improve sap yield.



Custom releasers used for research at the Proctor Center

Creating Value Added Products ~ Pam Green, Green's Maple Products. Pam will demonstrate how to make maple products that will help increase your bottom line and open up other markets for your syrup.

The Beginning Sugarmaker ~ Bill Scott, FFA Instructor Emeritus. Two sessions will cover production from the tree to the sugarhouse and from the sugarhouse to the can. Attendees of the second session will also learn quality control measures and what is a good and bad finished product.

**Starting Out With Vacuum** ~ **Tim Wilmot, UVM Extension.** In this presentation you will learn the materials and techniques needed for an efficient tubing system; techniques which can also be used to improve gravity systems. There will also be a discussion of the various options for vacuum pumps and releasers, including the advantages and disadvantages of lower cost equipment.

**State of the Industry ~ Panel Discussion.** In this session you will hear what is going on in the maple industry now and what is coming down the pipe to impact the industry. Pricing, equipment, promotions, Canadian influence and other topics are open for discussion. Gary Gaudette, President of Leader Evaporator, will head the panel with other invited industry veterans.

Pest Control and Forest Management ~ VT Forests and Parks Specialist, plus Andy Hutchinson, Addison Co. Sugarmaker. A discussion of tree pests like the Asian Longhorned beetle and Emerald Ash Borer, as well as proper forest and sugarbush management practices to reduce, contain or avoid devastating infestations.

Syrup Grading and Off-Flavors ~ Henry Marckres, VT Agency of Ag. Henry, chief of consumer protection and long-time maple advocate, will explain the factors that go into grading syrup: density, clarity, color and flavor, and then demonstrate what happens when syrup is bad! Learn how and why off flavors happen and understand how to prevent them.

**Boiling 101 ~ Glen Goodrich, Cabot Sugarmaker.** Glen will present the best practices of boiling, whether in your backyard sugarhouse or in a 10,000 tap operation, and whether you are using wood, oil or another fuel.

Sap Collection with Tubing—How did we get here and what's next? ~ Tim Perkins. Maple tubing systems have been steadily improved over the past half-century. This presentation will describe recent research aimed at identifying current weaknesses in tubing systems that limit sap yield, and discuss possible improvements to optimize sap flow and vacuum transfer in maple tubing systems.

Leasing Taps or Purchasing Sap ~ Panel Discussion. Ben Shepherd, Dudley Leavitt and Mike Christian, Addison County sugarmakers, will discuss their experiences with leasing and buying sap. Learn the pitfalls and benefits of each practice and things to look for in contractual agreements.

Efficiency Through Design ~ George Cook, UVM Extension. So you have installed a vacuum system, RO and filter press—but is your sugarhouse design working against you? George will present several ideas that will make your sugarhouse a more effective and efficient building in the production of syrup.

Getting the Most Out of Your Tubing ~ Glen Goodrich. While tubing looks easy, there is a right and a wrong way. Learn from Glen Goodrich, of Cabot, Vermont, the techniques in setting up a solid, workable mainline, creating drops, vacuum and plotting out the next line through the woods.

Marketing Your Products ~ Tim Hescock, Shoreham Sugarmaker. Tim will speak to techniques, strategies and experiences in successfully selling a wide variety of maple products, including value added, through the web and a print catalog. Check out <a href="www.vermonttradewinds.com">www.vermonttradewinds.com</a> to see his website, and come with questions.

Got Parts? ~ Brad Gillilan, Leader Evaporator. Brad will discuss how all the components of a vacuum system work together to get sap from the tree to the evaporator. If these parts don't do that, your hard work could be for nothing.



## Tim Wilmot UVM Extension Maple Specialist

UVM Extension helps individuals and communities put research-based knowledge to work.

## Vermont Maple Syrup Makers' Association President's Message

I'm sure over the years most of you have heard people tell you "you're never too old to learn." For many of us this has never been truer than it is in today's maple industry. For just about the same price you get for selling one gallon of maple syrup you can attend one of our Vermont Maple Conferences and come away with the knowledge that could not only help you do a better job marketing your products but also help you to produce more high quality syrup, I've heard some folks even say "attending these schools was the best thing they've ever done to improve their maple operation". sugarmakers still enjoy producing syrup the way they did ten or even twenty years ago and there is nothing wrong with that, but a lot has changed in our maple world and we all need to keep up with these changes. Attending one of these schools is a great way to do just that. So if you want to hear about what's coming for changes or learn things like new ways of installing tubing, how to operate and maintain an r/o, better understand what type and size of vacuum pump you may need, how to make quality maple products or just browse through a large trade show with all the latest in maple technology then come to one of these conferences.

Thank you and see you there!

Rick Marsh Pres., VMSMA



Marketing syrup in jugs with a custom label is just one of the many skills you can learn at the 2011 Vermont Maple Conferences to increase your profits.

## **Maple Conference at Middlebury Union High School** Saturday, January 15, 2011 ~ Sponsored by the Addison County Sugarmakers Association ~

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UVM Extension 617 Comstock Rd. Suite 5 Berlin, VT 05602-9194

#### The Health of Sugar Maple in Vermont in 2010

Reported by the Vermont Dept. of Forests, Parks, and Recreation

The most significant event of the year was spring frost damage, which was mapped on 414,901 acres. Sugar maple leaf-out was several weeks ahead of normal. This left many trees vulnerable to below-freezing temperatures during the week of May 9th. Although most trees refoliated shortly after the freeze event, new growth did not fully expand. Some trees retained damaged leaves all summer. Intermittent dry periods may have been responsible for the incomplete refoliation. Because tree health is at risk when foliage is compromised for an entire growing season, additional stress in 2011 could easily initiate decline and mortality. Recommendations for evaluating sugarbush recovery are at <a href="www.vtfpr.org/protection/documents/VTFPR">www.vtfpr.org/protection/documents/VTFPR</a> EvaluatingSugarbushRecoveryfromFrost Sept2010.pdf, or available

Containing the spread of Asian longhorned beetle remains a primary concern. Although infested trees continue to be detected around Worcester, MA, the eradication effort has made a substantial impact. There has already been success elsewhere. Most of the infestations in the New York metropolitan area are thought to be eradicated, with only one infested tree detected in New York City this year. A new infestation was detected in Boston this summer. Thanks to early detection, it does not appear to have spread from the small planting where it was found.

Most of the spread of Asian longhorned beetle within North America has been on firewood. Second-homes, camping areas, or festivals in your area may increase the risk to maples if firewood is being transported from outside the state. We have a variety of materials available to help you increase public awareness in your community. More information is at <a href="https://www.firewood.vt.gov">www.firewood.vt.gov</a>. or by contacting 802-241-3606, or visit <a href="https://www.vtforest.com">www.vtforest.com</a>.