

WSJM March 22, 2006 - 2006 CAT Alerts

This is Al Gaus the Berrien County Extension Educator for fruit and ornamentals reporting from the MSU Extension office in Berrien County.

If you are a commercial producer of fruit, vegetables, field crops, or ornamentals, or are involved with turf maintenance, or operate a greenhouse, you have probably heard of one of Michigan State University's timely information resources -- the MSU Extension Crop Advisory Team Alerts or "CAT" alerts for short.

The CAT Alerts are a timely source of pest and production information provided during the growing season. They are especially timely if accessed through the web at <http://www.ipm.msu.edu/aboutcat.htm>. The first landscape Alert occurred on March 17th. The first fruit CAT will be on March 28th. The first vegetable CAT will be on April 19th.

In general, each week during the growing season (exact timing varies with the crop covered), Extension field staff and faculty from all over the state meet on a conference call. This allows everyone to know the status of crop development and pest outbreaks. From the information supplied in that call, the faculty writes advice-giving articles, while the educators write regional reports.

Most CAT Alerts, depending upon the crop covered contain immediate and long-term pest management tactics, fertilizer recommendations, and pesticide regulation issues. Another useful part of the CAT Alerts is the climatic data, including growing degree-days and precipitation totals.

As mentioned earlier, the quickest method of getting the information is for you to visit the CAT Alert web site at <http://www.ipm.msu.edu/aboutcat.htm>. They are usually posted by 3:00 p.m. on the day of the conference call. You may also have the information mailed to you, but there is usually a minimum of a two-day delay before you actually get the information and a fee for to cover printing and mailing costs.

CAT alerts clearly provide you with the right information at the right time. For more information on how to get these CAT Alerts, give me a call at 944-4126.

That is all for today, this has been Al Gaus for Berrien County Michigan State University Extension.