

# BUILDING BRIDGES BETWEEN IPM AND NRCS—WORKSHOPS AND GUIDELINES

Extension educators and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) staff partner with growers to prevent risks to the environment but have tended to work in isolation from one another in the past. Many NRCS technical staff, unfamiliar with certain IPM concepts, have found it difficult to write conservation plans that encompass pest management principles. Similarly, many IPM practitioners are ill equipped to advise about practices that mitigate pest management problems because they don't understand NRCS vocabulary, perspectives, and processes. This two-year project (August 2006–August 2008), funded by USDA-CSREES, helped to increase the knowledge that NRCS and IPM personnel have of one another's programs and methodologies. We held more than six hands-on workshops in four states for at least 370 growers, NRCS staff, and Extension educators. Attendees rated the workshops high (4.5 on a scale of 5) and also improved their understanding of NRCS, IPM, and how IPM fits within the framework of farm conservation planning and implementation.

According to our surveys, farmers who attended the workshops plan to increase their use of weed mapping, crop disease forecasting, insect traps, synthetic row covers, greenhouses, crop rotation, disease resistant varieties, and pest scouting. IPM and NRCS professionals learned how to help growers earn financial incentives for using IPM practices.

Project directors collaborated to create two products: the *Vegetable IPM Tool* and the *Guide to IPM Elements and Guidelines*. This guide explains how to write checklists and coalesces existing knowledge into one document that may be used nationwide to encourage IPM adoption in audiences that previously had limited knowledge of it. Project cooperators developed and distributed handouts that are posted at <http://northeastipm.org/nrcs.cfm> along with success stories, definitions, links, and contacts.

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NRCS Partners: Tom Akin, Conservation Agronomist, MA; Alice Begin, Resource Conservationist, and Autumn Birt, ME; Kathy Johnson, District Conservationist, CT; Tim Pilkowski, State Conservation Agronomist, MD; and John Timmons, Conservation Agronomist, DE.



Joanne Whalen (center), IPM Coordinator of Delaware, shows root damage of legumes to NRCS staff at a 2008 workshop.



John Timmons, NRCS agronomist from Delaware, scouts beans during the 2008 workshop in Maryland and Delaware.

*"The day was very worthwhile. Now I can apply what I have learned to improve NRCS's perspective of pest management."*  
—NRCS Participant, Maryland/Delaware 2008 Workshop



Soil quality depends on what's below the surface, as demonstrated at the IPM-NRCS workshop held in Jefferson, Maine, 2007. Ninety attendees learned about reduced-tillage machinery, soil tillage, and IPM.



Lorraine Los from the University of Connecticut explains the use of weather stations for disease forecasting at Holmberg Orchards.

At the 2007 workshop in Maine, a grower explains how to keep tomatoes—which he trained to strings in this hoop house—pest-free.



At a Maine workshop, growers, NRCS staff, and IPM educators watch crop consultant Lauchlin Titus (photo at right) with a healthy crop of ragweed in corn. Titus described ways to avoid weed infestations without undue risk to the environment.



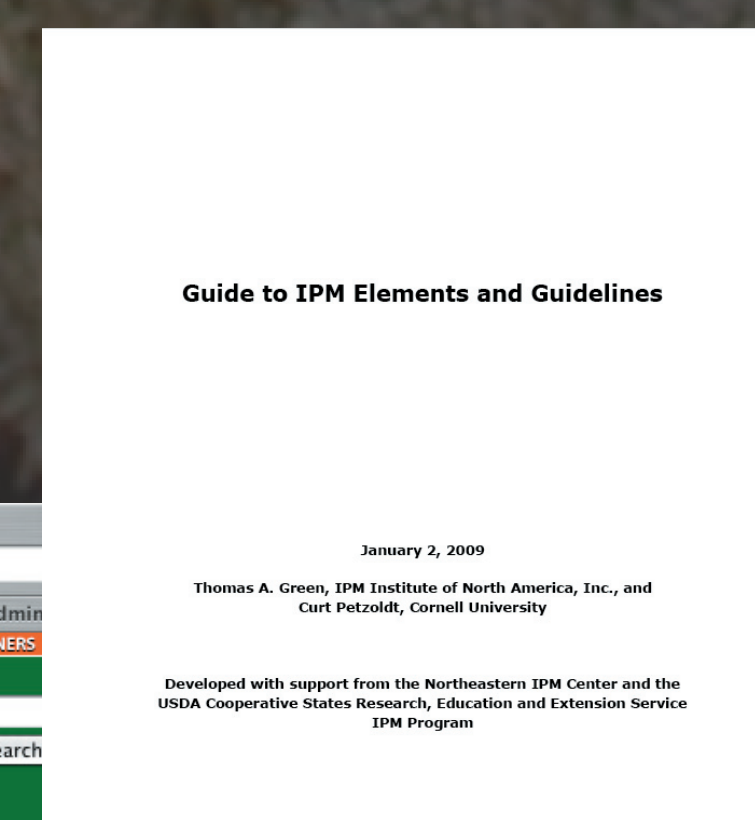
*"Hands-on practical workshops like this are the best."*  
—NRCS Participant, Maine Workshop



Ruth Hazzard from the University of Massachusetts hosted a series of workshops for growers and NRCS staff. Here she explains how to scout sweet corn for lepidopteran pests.

Consult [NortheastIPM.org/nrcs.cfm](http://NortheastIPM.org/nrcs.cfm) for helpful resources. See also the *Guide to IPM Elements and Guidelines* at the Regional IPM Centers' site, where more than 80 sets of elements and guidelines are linked ([ipmcenters.org/ipmelements/IPMElementsGuidelines.pdf](http://ipmcenters.org/ipmelements/IPMElementsGuidelines.pdf)).

The screenshot shows the website interface for the Northeast IPM Center. At the top, it says "Northeastern IPM Center - NRCS and IPM". Below that is a navigation menu with links for HOME, ABOUT THE CENTER, SERVICES AND RESOURCES, RESEARCH IN IPM, REGULATORY ISSUES, EXTENSION, and NEWS. The main content area features a header "NRCS and IPM Working Together" and "IPM Northeastern Integrated Pest Management Center". It includes a "Mission/Definition" section, "Contacts", "Pest Management Practices", and "Resources". There are also images of various crops and a "HOME - BACK TO THE TOP" link at the bottom.



Crop consultant Luke McConnell demonstrates cucumber scouting to 47 NRCS personnel in Maryland and Delaware.



*"Experienced crop consultants were the key to this tour."*  
—NRCS Participant, Maryland/Delaware 2008 Workshop