



# NEWSLETTER

Summer 2004

## *President's Message & Introduction* *Don Hiller - JLW Produce*

We should be into good volume of North Carolina Watermelons at this time and hope all is going well with the harvest and sales. We had all of our auction loads to harvest out of North Carolina with the Queen doing the most promotions during the harvest. The loads are being shipped to all the chains now that bought the watermelons at the Convention. Please go to your local supermarket to help move these melons. Please look for your North Carolina Queen out there on promotions trying to make this the best year yet for North Carolina watermelons. We have a new website now in operation. You can access [www.ncmelons.com](http://www.ncmelons.com) and get information on all the things the Association is doing. We have lots of festivals coming up and watermelon days at the farmers markets. The Queen will be at some of these locations, so go out and give her your support. The year, so far on the wholesale end has been a lot different than last year. There is good supply but not to good on the price. Once the price goes down it is next to impossible to get it back up. When Georgia came in this year, Florida was still harvesting and that really made the supplies too heavy to keep the price up where it needs to be. We cannot control the supply or price but we can help get the watermelons sold with the the great promotions that the Association and the Queen put on during the season. Again, I would like to thank the chain stores that gave us the great support at the Convention. These are: Food Lion, Harris Teeter, Ingles and WalMart. One last thing...it is never too early to start planning for next year's Annual Convention in March at the Marriott Crabtree Hotel in Raleigh, North Carolina. Please give the office a call if there is any information you need about the upcoming Convention.

**Sales Tax on Plastic Mulch:** For many years, North Carolina farmers have been required to pay the general state sales tax rate (currently 7%) on plastic mulch and plant bed covers. The agricultural exemption was not allowed for these items. Because of the hard work and dedication of Senator Marc Basnight

during the last general assembly and budget process, plastic mulch and plant bed covers purchased by farmers are now exempt from NC sales and use tax. This change is effective October 1, 2004 and is under Section 32B.2.G.S. 105-164-13 of the NC General Statutes and reads as rewritten: "105-164.13 Retail sales and use tax. The sale at retail, the use, storage, or consumption in this State of the following tangible personal property and services are specifically exempted from the tax imposed by this Article:.. (1) Commercial fertilizer, lime, land plaster, plastic mulch, plant bed covers, and seeds sold to a farmer for agricultural purposes...". This will represent a large savings for North Carolina agriculture. We thank Senator Basnight and the General Assembly for coming to the aide of North Carolina farmers.

**Thank you Anne:** I want to take this opportunity to say "Thank You" to Anne Meares, NCWA Promotions Coordinator. Anne resigned her position with NCWA in April. For those of you who did not know, the Queen Coordinator position was a part-time "fun" job for Anne. Anne's full-time job is being an Executive with Revlon Corporation in Oxford, N.C. Anne did a superb job in representing the NCWA as Coordinator. We also appreciate the assistance given to Anne by her daughter Kristy, our - 1996 NCWA Watermelon Queen. It goes without saying they both are a big part of the NCWA family and we look forward to spending time with them at future events.

Joining the NCWA family as our new NCWA Promotions Coordinator is Melinda Page. Melinda is no stranger to our industry. Her husband, Mike Page, is employed with Jackson Farming Company, Autryville, NC. Welcome Melinda!

## *Promotions Coordinator Report* *Melinda Page*

Miss Cortney Herring, the 2004 NC Watermelon Queen, is excited and anxious about her new title. She will be a great spokesperson for watermelons. In April she began her promotions in Wilmington

at the NC Azalea Festival from there she attended Strawberry Encounters. May began with visits to NC Welcome Centers along I-95 and I-85. It was so interesting to meet people from all over the United States.

A very special treat was a visit to Gatesville Elementary in northeastern NC to meet with some extra special students and staff. They all made Cortney feel like royalty. We then traveled across the state line to South Carolina to do a promotion for Sav-Mor.

June was the calm before the storm, so to speak. July is shaping up to be our busiest and most challenging month yet. The NCWA sold watermelon slices to benefit the Sampson County Relay for Life. The proceeds from this event went to the American Cancer Society. We stressed the importance of lycopene, an antioxidant found in red fruits and vegetables, to everyone who stopped by our booth. This event raised over \$315,000.00 for the ACS. Susanne Darden, a former NC Watermelon Queen, stopped by our booth several times to draw the crowd in. She told them the watermelon available at our booth was much better and healthier than the ice cream at a nearby booth. On June 20 – 22, we drove up to Washington, DC, for Watermelon Day on Capitol Hill. We were fortunate to be able to serve watermelon at the USDA. From there we went over to the Russell Senate Building, where we had the honor of meeting with several dignitaries. To learn more about our adventures across North Carolina, South Carolina, and the rest of the country, we invite you to look at our new web site, [ncmelons.com](http://ncmelons.com).

Personally, I would like to take just a moment and say Thank-You to everyone that has made me feel so welcomed to the NCWA and to the Watermelon Queens and their coordinators for making the Washington D.C. trip so memorable and allowing me to feel very appreciated.

### ***NCDA&CS Marketing Specialist Michael Smith***

I hope you are doing well and are having a great year with watermelons this year. The last time we were together I told you that I was given a new job and it is going well. But as you can tell, I am still working with you. Sometimes its gets hard to do both but I think we have been doing good.

This year we received a \$10,700.00 grant to use in the marketing of our N.C. watermelons. We are doing some new things with these grant funds such as paying for city bus ads. We have nine buses in three areas of the state. The good thing about them is that they are always moving around town for the consumer to see. Another effective, marketing tool are the t-shirts that we give out at some of the many promotions that

we are doing. On that note, I would like to thank Mrs. Page and Cortney for the great job they are doing for us this year. These are a few of the ways the grant money is being used. Another way is for the extra in store promotions that they are doing for us.

### ***Research Update Allan C. Thornton, Extension Associate Horticultural Science, NCSU***

I want to take this opportunity to provide you with a brief update on couple of NCWA funded watermelon research projects that I have been involved in this summer. Much of the field work is complete and the data summary process is underway. As such, complete information is not yet available, but I will share some field observations.

Overall, the 2004 trial season went well. I wish I could say the same for the watermelon market. Each project is discussed below.

#### ***Reducing Sandea Injury in Seedless, Seeded and Pollinizer Watermelon - Allan Thornton, K. Jennings, Drs. Jonathan Schultheis, David Monks***

Sandea was applied using five different application methods to determine the safest method. This work is driven by the hope of finding a way to safely use Sandea so we may then pursue a watermelon label. Treatments included a control, 100 percent over the top spray, and spray applications covering 25 or 50 percent of the crown of the plants and also from the tips of the vines. Significant foliar injury occurred following Sandea applications. This persisted several weeks until Sandea treated plots caught up with non-treated control plots. There did appear to be less injury at 25 and 50 percent foliage coverage, however the data needs to be analyzed to confirm my visual observation. Yield data will also be coming later to complete the story.

#### ***Evaluation of Fungicides and Disease Forecasting for Control of Watermelon Gummy Stem Blight - Dr. Gerald Holmes and Allan Thornton***

Fungicides sprayed in this trial included Bravo, Quadris, Pristine, Flint, and Dithane. Bravo and Dithane were sprayed alone while the Quadris, Pristine, and Flint were sprayed in some rotation with Bravo. The plots looked great right up until harvest when a severe hail storm destroyed the melons. However, after about 10 days we were able to rate the trial. Remarkably, some of the fungicide treatments brought the foliage through the hail in pretty good shape. Generally, any of the treatments containing Pristine in the rotation looked very good. In another trial (without hail), spray rotations including Pristine performed very strong. The forecasting portion of the trial saved a spray and was comparable to a weekly schedule.

Look for complete details on these research projects as the data is finalized.

## *In the News*

Wedding Bells to Ring: 1996 NCWA Queen, Kristy Anne Meares will be married Saturday, September 11, 2004 to Derek Athen Sides. The wedding will take place at Longview Center Chapel, Raleigh, NC.

## *Calendar of Events*

**August 26-28**, - 2004 Winterville Watermelon Festival, Winterville, N.C.

**September 15, 2004** - September 15, 2004 North Carolina Cotton Field Day & Exhibition, Registration 12:30 PM Field Tours 1:30 PM - 5:30 PM Dinner & Program, Upper Coastal Plains Research Station, Rocky Mount, NC

**October 26-27, 2004** - NC Greenhouse Vegetable Growers Association Annual Meeting - Wake County Agri Center, Raleigh, NC

**November 3-5, 2004** - Southeast Strawberry Expo, Radisson High Point, High Point, NC

**November 14-16, 2004** - International Pepper Conference, Naples, FL

**November 30-December, 2004** - Southeast Vegetable & Fruit Expo & 23<sup>th</sup> Eastern North Carolina Vegetable School, Greenville, NC

**January 20, 2005** - NC Sweetpotato Commission Annual Meeting, Wilson County Agri Center, Wilson, NC

**February 23-27, 2005** - National Watermelon Convention, Orlando, FL

**March 11-12, 2005** - NC Watermelon Association Annual Meeting, Raleigh, NC

### **Cucurbitaceae 2006**

NCSU will be hosting the Cucurbitaceae 2006. The conference will be held in 2006 (dates to be determined), and will present research information on cucumber, melon, pumpkin, squash, watermelon, and other cucurbits.

Program Topics: Biotechnology, Breeding and Genetics, Entomology, Germplasm, Physiology Plant Pathology, Postharvest handling, Culture and Management

## *2004 Queen Tour*

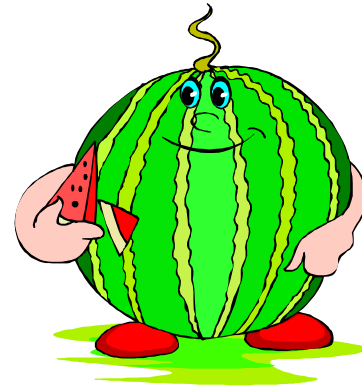
**Aug 27-28** - Winterville Watermelon Festival Winterville, NC

**Aug 31 - Sept 1** - Kroger, Roanoke Rapids

**Sept. 4** - Harris-Teeter Fort Mill, SC

**Oct 9** - Food Lion Appreciation Salisbury, NC

## Mark your Calendars



**2005**

## **NC Watermelon Association**

**Annual Convention**

**Marriott Crabtree**

**Raleigh, NC**

**March 11-12, 2005**