



## Crops

### New crop releases to increase yields, aid human, environmental health

Breeding improved crop varieties remains a core mission of University of Idaho College of Agricultural and Life Sciences plant breeders who work alongside USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS) scientists: 2006 and spring '07 highlights include:

**Barley**—Four new varieties from the UI and USDA-ARS in Aberdeen address yields, environmental, and health issues. One has high levels of soluble fiber that will reduce blood cholesterol when included in the human diet. Another, a low-phytate barley, is being tested for fish feed. It would reduce fishmeal costs and phosphorus pollution in fish waste. Herald, another low-phytate barley, boasts excellent yields. It will reduce phosphorus levels in manures when fed to swine and other farm animals. Charles, a newly released winter malt barley, offers greater yields than spring malt varieties with reduced irrigation needs. *Contact Juliet Windes at [jwindes@uidaho.edu](mailto:jwindes@uidaho.edu).*

**Canola/Rapeseed**—Clearwater (canola) and Gem (rapeseed) are tolerant to imazamox, the herbicide widely used by pea and lentil growers. Available *Brassica* varieties require at least a four-year planting interval to avoid crop loss caused by residual herbicide. The UI *Brassica* breeding program led by Professor Jack Brown has the most extensive collection of canola, rapeseed, and mustard germplasm in the United States. *Contact Jack Brown at [jbrown@uidaho.edu](mailto:jbrown@uidaho.edu).*

**Potatoes**—Released in 2006 are three new potato varieties, bringing to 25 releases by the Tri-State Potato Variety Development Program in 22 years. Two—Premier Russet and Highland Russet—produce higher yields of No. 1 tubers than does Russet Burbank. Both have good processing potential. Yukon Gem, an offspring of Yukon Gold, offers improved yields and better resistance to PVY and late blight. *Contact Jeff Stark at [jstark@uidaho.edu](mailto:jstark@uidaho.edu).*

### Hand-thinning costs spur interest in UI's Parma blossom-thinning research

With Treasure Valley fruit growers facing hand-thinning costs of \$500 to \$1,200 an acre for stone fruits and several hundred dollars an acre for apples, UI fruit physiologist Essie Fallahi has made chemical thinning a research priority for 17 years. Fallahi's Parma-based pomology program, a national pioneer in blossom thinners, is evaluating more than a dozen different chemicals that reduce competition between fruit, thereby enhancing fruit size,

color, flavor, and sweetness. Two experimental products with particular promise can reduce the costs of hand thinning by 60 to 65 percent when applied at the correct time, Fallahi says.

"In Idaho, we depend on export markets that demand large fruits. Quality, quality, quality is the name of the game for us."

*Contact Fallahi at [efallahi@uidaho.edu](mailto:efallahi@uidaho.edu).*

## DID YOU KNOW?

**\$2** BILLION Cash receipts projected in 2006 from sales of Idaho crops—up 9% from last year and 12% above the 10-year average.

\*The Financial Condition of Idaho Agriculture: 2006 projections, UI College of Agricultural and Life Sciences. [www.ag.uidaho.edu/aers/](http://www.ag.uidaho.edu/aers/)

### Workshop helps northern Idaho nursery industry

Five northern Idaho counties contribute 20 percent of Idaho's nursery stock production—predominantly conifers headed for Rocky Mountain markets. In Boundary County alone, the value of nursery production exceeds \$10 million a year. Although a few producers have developed large-scale operations, most are smaller growers who have converted some acreage to nursery crops to diversify their farm income.

Since the early 1990s, University of Idaho Extension has offered an annual Ornamentals Nursery Workshop to northern Idaho producers. Approximately 60 participants learn about business trends, pest management, and improved production methods.

"Making sure that people are aware of the factors that affect quality is really essential in helping growers produce the best plants possible," says Bob Wilson, area extension horticulturist.

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