

# Conservation Highlight - 2011

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## CONNECTICUT



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Jude Boucher  
(foreground)  
from  
Cooperative  
Extension  
System, and  
Stone Garden  
Farms Owner  
Fred Monahan  
scout for pests.

## NRCS Helps Farm Minimize Pesticides While Controlling Pests More Efficiently

Stone Gardens Farm, located in Shelton, was founded in 1998 by Fred and Stacia Monahan. Mr. Monahan signed up for NRCS's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to obtain technical assistance and to learn how to use Integrated Pest Management (IPM) effectively.

During the term of their three year contract, the Monahan's had weekly visits from Connecticut Cooperative Extension System IPM Expert Jude Boucher. During that time, Boucher trained the Monahans on how to recognize pests and disease, identify their presence, and understand the threshold limit when sprays are necessary. The results were excellent crops, reduced pesticide use, and happy customers!

"We are not an organic farm," said Mr. Monahan. "We use a growing method called vegetable IPM, and use pesticides only when necessary. We determine this by looking at seasonal



Boucher identifies a pepper disease and discusses strategies for control.

weather patterns, and extensively scouting crops for pest and disease pressure. When we find an affected plant, we determine at what point it is in its life cycle and whether it can be harvested before too much damage is done,” he said. “If there is no other way to save the crop, we use the most environmentally friendly pesticide/fungicide we can.”

Also, to minimize the use of any type of pesticide/fungicide, Monahan rotates crops yearly; adds compost and manure to the fields every fall; plants cover crops to be tilled into the soil; and tries to plant resistant, but not Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO) varieties, of vegetables. “Our goal,” said Monahan “is to grow healthy plants without harming any beneficial insects, the soil, or ourselves. We raised our family on our fields and want you to feel comfortable doing the same.”

Through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), NRCS provides financial assistance for farmers to reduce pesticide use, take the time to learn IPM techniques, and keep good crop and scouting records. By means of a cooperative agreement, NRCS provides technical expertise through the Cooperative Extension System to train farmers in this environmentally beneficial management strategy. The agreement provides the necessary technical expertise to EQIP growers while helping to fund the costs of maintaining Connecticut’s core of IPM experts.

During a 3-year EQIP contract, farmers work with IPM specialists on their own farms to obtain training in IPM, implement monitoring and recording of pest problems and actions taken, and prepare and follow a pest management plan. The goal is for them to be able to work independently and successfully on IPM farming techniques by the end of the term of the contract. Farmers who wish to apply should contact their local NRCS office.

**To Obtain More Information:**

- [www.stonegardensfarm.com](http://www.stonegardensfarm.com)
  - [www.usda.gov/oce/forum/2009\\_Speeches/Presentations/Boucher.pdf](http://www.usda.gov/oce/forum/2009_Speeches/Presentations/Boucher.pdf)
  - [www.ct.nrcs.usda.gov/programs](http://www.ct.nrcs.usda.gov/programs)
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