

Organic Hops for MI Apple Orchards



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Hops: An organic opportunity
Organic Hops are in short supply and may provide another market for Organic tree fruit producers. Like modern apple plantings, hops require a trellising system for support and face similar pest management problems; primarily from fungal pathogens.

foreign produced hops (Europe, New Zealand, and China) with organic hops commanding high prices (up to \$10,000/acre [gross]).

2009 OFRF Research Project: Currently we are performing a pilot project to assess the feasibility of producing organic hops using trellis and pest management techniques adopted from high density organic apple production. To this end we have planted 16 hops varieties on a 16' tall, two wire trellis system and are monitoring growth and development as well as pest problems. So far there is little to report and it seems that the cold weather this spring has significantly slowed bine development. A full report from this summer's research will be made available by Summer 2010.



Young Hops Bine

Introduction: Hops are a perennial vine that provide important flavor and preservative properties to beer. Hops are grown in hop yards on trellis systems. Only female plants produce the flowers or “cones” that are used in beer production and hops are planted using rhizomes.

Hops used to be produced throughout the Eastern United States including in MI. In the early 20th century Hops production in the Eastern US crashed in response to increasing disease and pest pressure as well as the beginning of prohibition. By the 1940's almost all hops production had moved to the Northwest, and currently WA and ID produce the vast majority of the US supply.

Increased consumer interest in microbreweries and organic beer, has formed new niche markets for organic and specialty hops. To a large extent these markets have been served by



Modified Apple Trellis System



Measuring Hops Growth