

# Creating an Internet access point to pest management information at MSU

Web sites at universities are often created by groups of people working on specific projects or funding sources. MSU's IPM and related crop management information is no exception – expanding in an often segmented fashion organized by project teams. The IPM Program realized it was time to step beyond having a website about the program and enhance its role as a tool for locating IPM information at MSU. IPM Coordinator Mike Brewer and Assistant Coordinator Joy Landis met with the program's advisory council and several MSU Area of Expertise teams to discuss the projects objectives and to learn the web interests of each group. Based on those conversations, the IPM web site has been reconstructed to better organize information based on the user's needs rather than program or department structure. The web address remains the same: [www.ipm.msu.edu](http://www.ipm.msu.edu).

To help develop appropriate linkage for Michigan's many commodity groups, each Area of Expertise (AoE) team assigned a member to work on this project. This representative met with the IPM Communications staff to identify their existing resources and determine

how best to feature them at the new site. This process helped tailor the pages to suit the needs and interests of each cropping area, while retaining some uniformity to the way information is presented. Additional members of the AoEs were invited to test draft web pages and were encouraged to collect information from growers and consultants. The web site was also tested by attendees at the 2005 Great Lakes Fruit, Vegetable and Farm Market Expo. Our IPM advisory committee, the Michigan IPM Alliance and Project GREEN made further recommendations.

The resulting home page has a navigational bar featuring current topics and links to related MSU programs and organizations. On the right side of the page, users find information by category (e.g., fruit, turfgrass, home and yard). The new weather information resource Enviro-weather, is also prominently featured. Publications, a hallmark of MSU IPM's collaboration with departments, are also readily accessible.

From the home page, clicking on one of the categories such as vegetables brings up a page customized for that commodity grouping. In the case of vegetables, there are links to current season updates such as the *Crop Advisory Team (CAT) Alert* newsletter and the weather data at the Enviro-weather site. Another section groups pest management recommendation bulletins. And a third section groups a variety of resources including

## Partners

MSU IPM Program; Project GREEN; Sustainable Ag and Food Systems Initiative; Area of Expertise Teams (Vegetables, Fruit, Field Crops, Ornamentals, Christmas Trees); Roger Brooks, Running Water Publishing

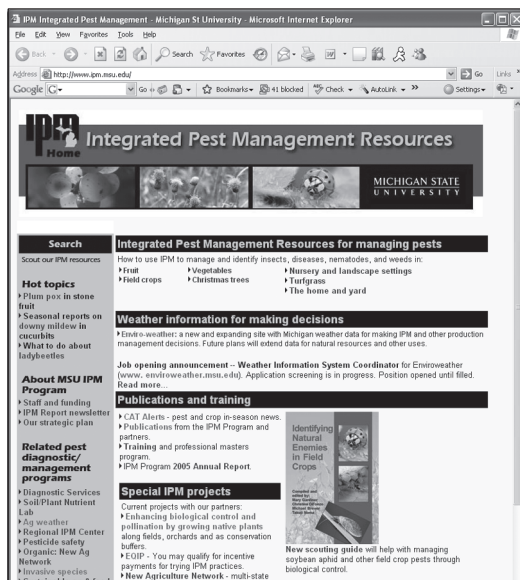
## For more information

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websites on topics such as cover crops, soil fertility and nutrient management, organic agriculture and the research database at the Michigan Agricultural Experiment Station. The navigational bar at this level in the website is shorter and includes links to related services such as Diagnostic Services.

The website team contracted with retired MSU professor Roger Brook to help expand the search capacity for several AoEs. Brook had an existing search engine under development with the Vegetable AoE team (VegInfo). This project helped him evaluate its usability based on principles identified by web usability expert Steve Krug.

The new structure of the IPM web along with the introduction of a companion service (Enviro-weather at [www.enviroweather.msu.edu](http://www.enviroweather.msu.edu)) caused a surge in web use at the IPM web address. During 2005, the site averaged about 25,000 hits per week. During spring 2006, the hits jumped to an average of approximately 50,000 per week. From June and July 2006, the hits were recorded at 75,000 to 80,000 per week. ♦



## Are web resources relevant for rural America?

Internet connectivity among adults in the U.S. hit an all-time high in 2006. A February 15 – April 6, 2006, survey shows 73% of respondents (about 147 million adults) are Internet users, up from 66% in a January 2005 survey. In rural communities, 63% of the population accesses the web. (Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project.)