

## House Republican Press Release

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Press Office: 860-240-8700

### So how are your tomatoes doing??



*By State Representative John J. Ryan*

I should be sitting back and philosophizing about how great it was to finally take a weekend off this year and do two days at Tanglewood (including the iconic and incandescent Yo-Yo Ma in an all Dvorak program ), but that would only lead to ruminating on why there are no tourism/arts venues in Connecticut that rival Great Barrington, or how classical music can't be totally dead if upwards of 18,000 attended this past Saturday night's event at the Koussevitsky Shed; when we are supposed to be keeping the focus on **government**. But rather than continue with our look at various legislative committees, [which we will resume in the future] perhaps a more topical issue relates to how your summer vegetable garden is growing, and how your State can actually help!

Since there are more topics to cover in our government than one can ever imagine, [not that much of the media would know of most of them] I am continually reminding myself of information constituents can make good use of! Another example came to mind when I attended 'Plant Science Day' last week, the annual event sponsored by the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station at their Lockwood Farm in Hamden. After I thought about it for a minute, it occurred to me that if you are not a farmer, or a garden club, you are probably not even aware that we have an AG Station!

Now if you are Frank Valente growing your famous tomatoes on West Avenue here in town, you might not need the resources of our Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, founded in 1875. My few tomato and pepper plants are doing great this year, thanks, but I certainly don't have Frank's expertise and experience, so you might want to know not only that the highly qualified AG Station folks exist, but that they are actually user-friendly, "hands-on" and willing and able to tell you what to do if powdery mildew is attacking your summer squash plants! Their mission statement to "develop, advance, and disseminate scientific knowledge, improve agricultural productivity and environmental quality, protect plants..... [and seek] solutions across a variety of disciplines for the benefit of urban, suburban, and rural communities" does a pretty good job of summing up the many things they do.

Naturally, there is much more to tell you about than we have room in this space, but you can go to the Ag Station website through the Connecticut government portal; go to [www.ct.gov/caes](http://www.ct.gov/caes) for their home page! A snapshot of just how much was going on

during my visit to 'Plant Science Day' at Lockwood Farm can be gleaned by going to 'publications' from the CAES home page, and perusing the [31 page program](#) of the day's activities (page 30 of which gives you a lengthy history of your host, "the first Agricultural Experiment Station in the United States")! Of course the website succinctly gives you locations, directions, phone numbers, but since you were not at this year's event, and you need to get some info on the pesky critters devouring your flowers, the 'publications' page tells you how to get their "Plant Pest Handbook". Want more info on the regular news of what they are doing at the Station this month, or need someone to come and speak on a topic to your Garden Club - it's all there, including The Sound School program.

Want some background on ticks and Lyme disease? The entire detailed yet readable [and illustrated] 71 page Tick Management Handbook is available to you on line. Concerned about West Nile Disease and the mosquitoes heading to your back yard....see the entry on 'mosquito surveillance'. If you heard something about "invasive plants" and think it may have been one of Steve McQueen's early movies, you can get the real information right on-line. And I will, of course, get the blame if their switchboard heats up, but in fact nearly all of the assorted experts and staff related to the Station seem to actually love their work, are friendly and helpful and really enjoy helping you with routine gardening issues. (And how often can we give plaudits like that these days?)

We are only scratching the surface here, and a stroll through the website and 'other resources' will give you a good idea about just how much there is available by way of information to you in this area - you can find a publication like 'Connecticut Gardener' ( see [www.comngardener.com](http://www.comngardener.com) ) or even join up and become an Associate of the Station ! And sadly, it seems to be a hallmark of effective entities like the AG Station that there were efforts in the past (and probably will be someday in the future) to phase it out, or merge it out of existence and an important role of elective office is not to vote to create new, expensive or non-well-thought-out programs, but to preserve and protect those organizations that actually have a track record of success and results! So if you have questions on composting, or growing cauliflower, lookup the Connecticut Ag Station, and good luck with your garden this summer.

As always please feel free to contact me with your concerns and issues. As your state representative, it is my job, and my priority to represent you and to make sure that your needs and concerns are addressed at the capitol. You can write to me at Room 4200, Legislative Office Building, and Hartford, CT 06106-1591, send me e-mail at [John.Ryan@housegop.ct.gov](mailto:John.Ryan@housegop.ct.gov) or call my office toll-free at 1-800-842-1423.