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Blueberry conference set for July 25–28 in Kalamazoo

EAST LANSING, Mich. – The North American Blueberry Research and Extension Workers Conference (NABREW) has been a key educational forum for blueberry researchers, Extension educators and industry leaders since the first meeting in 1960.

This year's conference will run from July 25–28 in Kalamazoo, Mich. The conference will include oral and poster presentations, and conclude with a one-day tour of the Michigan blueberry industry.

A welcome reception kicks the conference off on Sunday, July 25. Sessions will include regional industry reports; breeding and genetics; cultural practices; pest, disease and weed management; organic production and post-harvest handling.

Dr. Mike Mainland of North Carolina State University will be presenting the keynote address, "The History of North American Highbush Blueberry Culture," on July 26. Sessions on genomics and organics will be the highlight on Tuesday, July 27, followed by a conference dinner at the Kalamazoo Air Zoo complete with free flight simulator rides. On Wednesday, July 28, the 2010 NABREW conference will conclude with an all-day tour of Michigan blueberries.

Kalamazoo is located near the major blueberry producing counties in Michigan with more than half of the 20,000 acres of blueberries in the state located between Kalamazoo and Lake Michigan. Michigan has had a significant blueberry industry since the 1930s. The tour is designed to show off many new developments in the Michigan blueberry industry as well as some of the older production areas in the region.

The tour is designed with relatively short travel time of approximately 30 minutes between stops to allow plenty of time visiting the different tour stops. Attendees will visit several large blueberry farms, packing and processing facilities, and U-pick and roadside markets that sell value-added products such as blueberry souvenirs and preserves. Visitors will also view modern mechanical harvesting equipment in the field.

Highlights of the tour include:

- A mature planting of Liberty and Aurora, two new Michigan State University varieties
- New plantings of Draper, Bluegold and Liberty in several different management systems
- Older fields of 40 years or more of Jersey and Bluecrop blueberries
- A stop at The Blueberry Store
- Lunch at Fenn Valley Winery
- Tours of modern fresh market packing lines

- A tour of a modern blueberry processing facility
- A demonstration of new blueberry harvesting equipment
- Dinner at a large modern U-pick farm market with an attached bakery

There will also be a bus tour of South Haven, Mich., and an opportunity to see Lake Michigan during the scenic drive to lunch at Fenn Valley Winery.

The deadline to register has been extended to June 30 - to learn more information or register go to <http://nabrew.msu.edu>.

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