

Research Profile – Kathy Wiederholt

Name: Kathy Wiederholt

Position: Fruit Project Manager for the *Northern-Hardy Fruit Evaluation Project*

Department: Carrington Research Extension Center

REC Location: Carrington, ND



Brief background about yourself:

I have been the fruit project manager at the Carrington Research Extension Center (CREC) since the project's inception in 2006. I had Master Gardener training through the University of Wisconsin Extension and took botany and horticulture classes in college - although I majored in bacteriology and completed a Masters in dairy food microbiology. I have a lifelong love of plants and had a pressed plant collection selected for the Wisconsin State Fair when a young 4-H member.

Tell us about the goals of your research program?

1. The primary objective is to evaluate each crop for adaptation, disease resistance, winter hardiness, productivity, fruit quality and processing potential under North Dakota growing conditions.
2. Distribute the research-based information obtained in objective #1 to a broad constituency as a means to foster new economic enterprises.
3. Communicate and create opportunities for established food and wine companies of North Dakota to utilize fruit produced at CREC to evaluate and develop new products.
4. Encourage growers to develop orchards to supply the demands of food and wine companies.

More specifically, what is the primary focus of your current research?

My primary research goal is to grow and evaluate hardy fruit crops so that the CREC can make recommendations for the most hardy and tasty selections to growers, homeowners, wineries and jelly/jam makers in North Dakota. The CREC also distributes fruit to area businesses so that they and their customers can try new products.

What are your long term objectives?

The overall goal of the Northern Hardy Fruit Evaluation project is to identify new fruits that diversify North Dakota's agricultural base, thereby creating profitable niche markets. The CREC's collection of accumulated data will inform people about the most reliable fruits to choose to grow.

How do you feel it will impact the region, nationally, globally?

The Northern Hardy Fruit Evaluation Project is the only known research-based project that is determining the suitability of selected cultivars of northern-hardy fruits for both home gardeners and commercial production in the upper U.S. Great Plains or Midwest. In the past year, information has been requested from Minnesota, South Dakota, Iowa, Montana, Oregon, Washington and British Columbia.

When finished, what will your work mean? What will it mean to the state of ND?

The plants in these studies are hardy, adapted to ND climate and soils, easy to grow, and produce fruits high in phytonutrients and antioxidants – shown by research to be important to human health. With knowledge gained from the Fruit Project, constituents will grow these fruits and request or recognize these healthy fruits when they shop.

In a recent survey of Fruit Project clientele, the number of fruit plants grown in North Dakota increased from 2,200-3,100 plants to 8,000-10,000 plants in the last five years, an increase of 241%. Eighty-two percent of respondents indicated that they will be planting more fruits in the coming years.

What excites you the most about your project?

It is exciting to learn about each of these new crops and how they are used or grown in other parts of the country or world. It is also gratifying to communicate that knowledge to people who come to us for more information. Our research program has reached about 3,350 people so far.

What is your advice for students who want to go into your field of study?

A person needs a great curiosity and fascination about different life forms to be a scientist in any field. Scientific principles and studies of life will reveal that although creatures seem mind-bogglingly different, in the end, almost all life forms share proteins, enzymes and metabolic pathways. This is cool!



Although I studied bacteriology and dairy food microbiology in school, I am fascinated by plants, animals, insects, worms, rocks, the weather – you name it. Read about everything that interests you.

What are some of your hobbies/activities you like to do when you are not spending time on your research project? Gardening! She has a large perennial flower garden and a vegetable garden from which they freeze, can and share produce. She and her husband, Ron, have three dogs and they all enjoy duck, grouse and pheasant hunting. They like the outdoors and also enjoy birding, photography and fishing. She loves to cook and make fruit samples to take to her presentations.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact Kathy:

Fruit Project Manager / Carrington Research Extension Center
NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY
663 Hwy. 281 NE; PO Box 219
Carrington ND 58421-0219
phone: 701.652.2951
fax: 701.652.2055

kathy.wiederholt@ndsu.edu
www.ag.ndsu.edu/CarringtonREC/
www.ndsu.edu
www.facebook.com/crecfruit