

# On-Farm Research Networks: Boy, do they work!

Elizabeth Dyck

Organic Growers' Research & Information-  
Sharing Network

**OGRIN**

# Organic Growers' Research and Information-Sharing Network (OGRIN)

- Newly formed, not-for-profit
  - received IRS 501 c (3) status in 2013
- Purpose: generate practical information for organic growers through
  - Farmer participatory research
  - Creating forums for information exchange
  - Website: [www.ogrin.org](http://www.ogrin.org)

# OGRIN

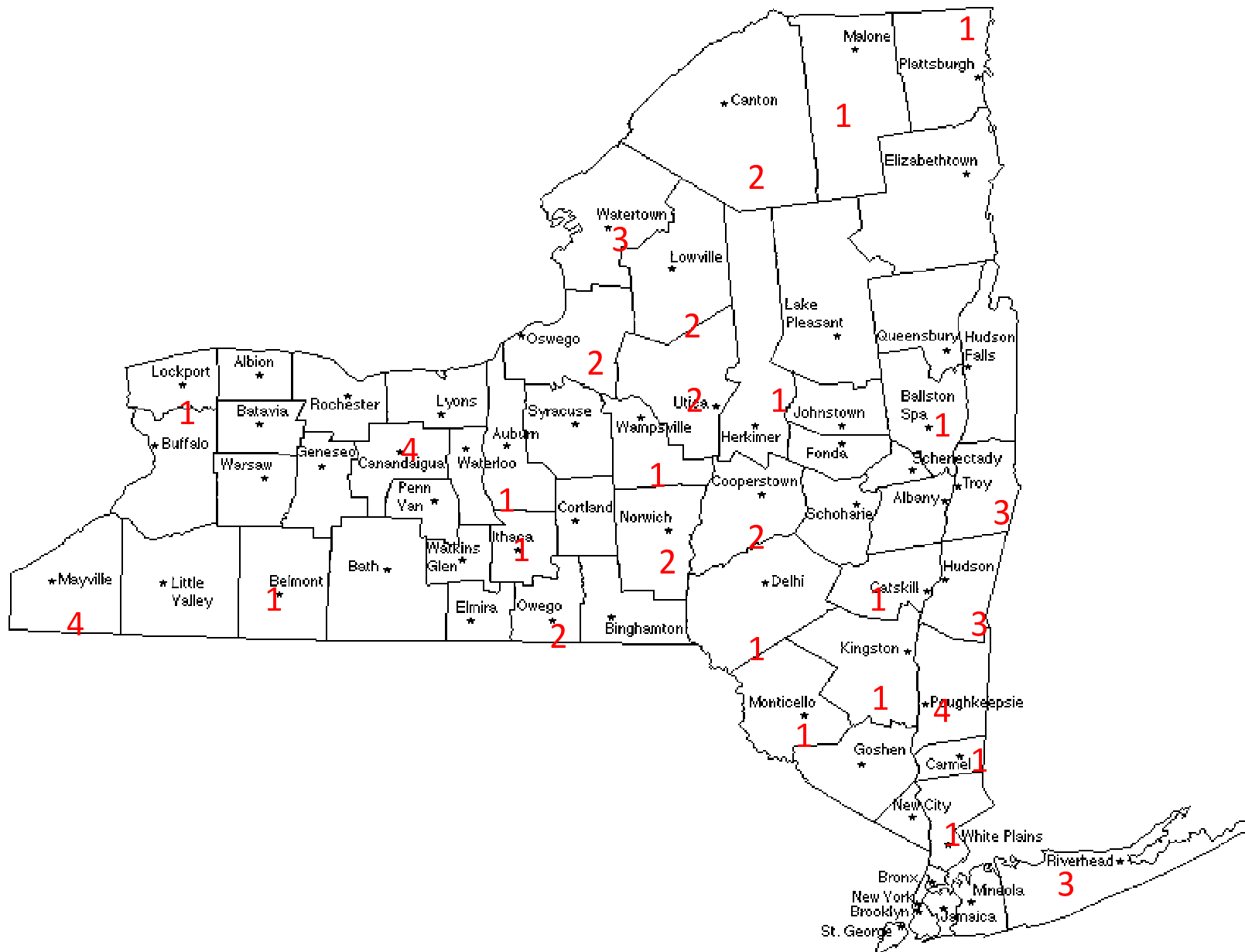
- Methodology
  - Focus on farmers' priorities (problems, opportunities)
  - Develop needed collaborations (research institutes, businesses, etc.)
  - Get useful material (seed, equipment, information) into the hands of growers for experimentation as soon as possible
  - Research from field to table
  - Work with as many growers as possible
    - fairness
    - better info-exchange
    - more robust data and conclusions generated
    - potentially more impact

# OGRIN: Northeast Organic/Sustainable Potato Project

- NE SARE-funded project (SARE report database)
- Collaborating with: Keith Perry and Michael Glos (Cornell Univ.), NOFA-NY
- Objective: Identify high-quality specialty potato varieties suitable for organic systems and markets
- Over 3 years, worked with 113 growers to trial 48 varieties, including American, European, Peruvian cultivars and experimental germplasm

# Who were the growers?





## OGRIN: Northeast Organic/Sustainable Potato Project

- Each year growers could choose up to 8 varieties to trial
- Sent 10 or 20 tubers of each variety (project paid for postage)
- Asked to follow basic planting instructions that helped to ensure equal treatment of each variety
- Sent plot labeling stakes, flags, a sharpie
- Asked to fill out data sheets. (Those who did not return at least some data were ineligible for further trialing.)





# OGRIN: Northeast Organic/Sustainable Potato Project

- Data sheets

- Information on acreage, soil types, marketing outlets

- Fertility inputs and pest and disease management

- Rating of varieties (1-5) scale on

Emergence and vigor

Flavor

Pest and disease incidence

Texture

(foliage and tuber)

Customer reaction

Tuber appearance

Grow again?

## Also asked to record yield

<b>Variety name</b>	<b>Spacing between tubers</b>	<b>Spacing between rows</b>	<b># tubers planted</b>	<b>date harvested</b>	<b># tubers harvested</b>	<b>total yield (lb)</b>
<b>Red Maria</b>	18"	36"		12-Aug	226	37
Peter Wilcox	18"	36"		12-Aug	173	28
Rose Valley	18"	36"		12-Aug	205	35
Bernadette	18"	36"		12-Aug	70	16
Octavia	18"	36"		12-Aug	156	13
Waneta	18"	36"		12-Aug	74	15
Early Ohio	18"	36"		12-Aug	254	36

## 2009 Adaptability Analysis: Average Yields\*

Variety	Yield (cwt/A)
Chieftain	281a**
Early Ohio	241ab
Daisy Gold	225bc
Peter Wilcox	169c

\* 22 growers reporting

\*\*Yields followed by the same letter do not differ significantly according to statistical analysis.

## Also asked to comment on each variety

- Aggeblomme: “Has developed a following at our markets for people looking for small tender potatoes for boiling, skins and all. We like their prolific yields.”
- Magic Molly: “Large plants, some brown tips started in July, difficult to harvest. Skin strong tasting, earthy.”
- Blossom: “Had no hopper damage when all the others did (very impressive).”
- Valisa: “Plants grew well and looked good, but the tubers were large, multi-directional and ugly. Inside they were white with red spots and had an unpleasant taste. “

**Comments turned out to be particularly valuable for other growers, potato breeders, and potato seed growers.**

Many growers sent pictures



French Fingerling

Keuka Gold



**Growers identified 10 high-performing varieties, 5 of which have since become commercially available in the Northeast.**



## OGRIN: Northeast Organic/Sustainable Potato Project

- Large number of growers returned data (averaged 77% over the years of the project)
- “Triangulation” approach to reporting—rating, comments, yield helped to develop a full picture of each variety--its characteristics, strengths, weaknesses
- Single replicate per variety  
(1 plot of each variety) per farm  
provided robust data when many farms were involved
- Farmers generated info for their community and identified varieties that fit with their own production and marketing systems