

# NEWS FROM THE POTATO LAB



March, 2009

## The Post-Harvest Test

On December 29, Nina Zidack and Eileen Carpenter traveled to Oahu, Hawaii to perform inspections and collect leaf samples for the seed potato post-harvest test. The test-plots were planted by Nina and Manhattan grower John Venhuizen in November. Overall, plant growth this year was excellent and the plots were very uniform. There was a little erosion in the low areas due to heavy rains in December, but only small portions of plots were affected. All plots were inspected twice. The lab results corresponded well with inspections, and also were a good reflection of summer observations. For the lab test, one leaf is picked from every plant in the Hawaii plot. From the 507 plots that were



**Eileen Carpenter inspecting potatoes in Hawaii**

planted in an 11 acre field, a total of 373,790 leaves were picked and sent back to the lab at MSU. Susie Siemsen performed all of the laboratory analysis and coordinated a crew of 10 to crush all of the leaves and prepare them for ELISA testing. The leaves were pooled into 10-leaf samples for a total of 37,379

tests on three potato viruses. Combining all three tests, there were 760 ELISA plates used in the analysis. This was all performed in 8 working days by the potato lab.

On the last day Nina and Eileen were in Hawaii, they hosted a field trip of 40 elementary school students. The students came to the farm and were taught about potato production, and at the end, they were allowed to dig potatoes. This proved to be a delightful experience for everyone involved. The students had an incredible time with their “underground Easter egg hunt” and the staff at Aloun Farms appreciated the opportunity to educate kids on the importance of local agriculture. Nina and Eileen were happy to see a few of our Montana potatoes going home to the tables of Hawaiian families

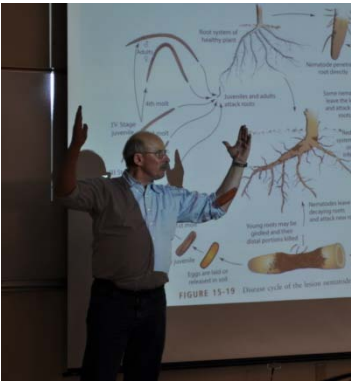


**Hawaiian students showing off their potato harvest**

## Potato Disease IPM Workshop

While March 25 didn't provide great weather for shipping potatoes, it did prove to be a good time to learn more about potato diseases and their control. The first Potato IPM workshop was attended by 36 growers from all of the major growing areas of Montana, and from as far away as Miles City.

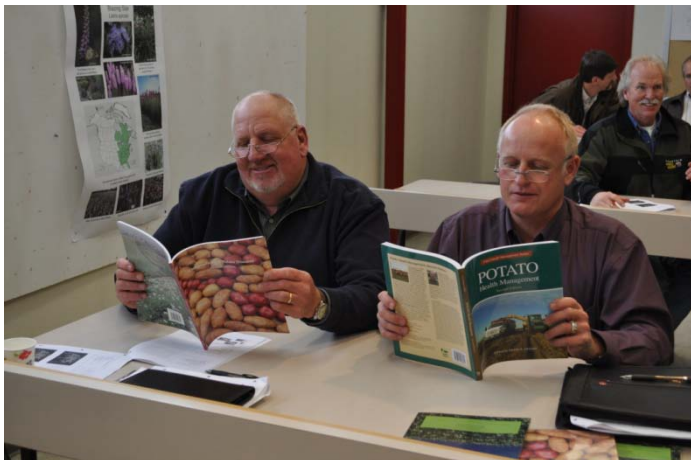
Extension Plant Pathologist Barry Jacobsen presented information on fungal, bacterial and nematode pathogens of potato and their control, and Certification Director Nina Zidack presented information on virus diseases and control of insect



**Dr. Barry Jacobsen educating growers on nematodes (or a fish story!)**

vectors. Eileen Carpenter demonstrated the process for potato cyst nematode extraction, Susie Siemsen presented a primer on ELISA and the PCR techniques for diagnostics of potato viruses, and Elaine Nichols demonstrated the tissue culture techniques she uses to maintain and multiply the potato mother

stocks. This workshop was supported with funds from a USDA Research and Education Grant on Potato IPM that Barry Jacobsen and Nina Zidack received in 2008. All attendees received the "Compendium of Potato Diseases", "Potato Health Management", handouts on all of the lecture materials, and updated fungicide recommendations for use on potatoes in Montana.



**Growers Bill Cole and Nick Schutter check out their new books on potato diseases and their management**

## New Districts Established for MPIA

On February 9 and 10 the Board of Directors for the Montana Potato Improvement Association voted to bring the issue of redistricting before the membership. The plan passed by a large margin and the resulting districts are:

**District 1:** Flathead, Lake, Lincoln, Mineral, Missoula, Ravalli and Sanders

**District 2:** Beaverhead, Deerlodge, Madison, Granite, Powell, Silverbow

**District 3:** Big Horn, Blaine, Broadwater, Carbon, Carter, Cascade, Chouteau, Custer, Daniels, Dawson, Fallon, Fergus, Gallatin, Garfield, Glacier, Golden Valley, Granite, Hill, Jefferson, Judith Basin, Lewis & Clark, Liberty, McCone, Meagher, Musselshell, Park, Petroleum, Phillips, Powell, Pondera, Powder River, Prairie, Richland, Roosevelt, Rosebud, Sheridan, Stillwater, Sweetgrass, Teton, Toole, Treasure, Valley, Wheatland, Wibaux and Yellowstone

Other changes to the MPIA By-Laws included a redistribution of officers within the districts. Current officers are:

- 1A: Roger Starkel
- 1B: Jack Lake
- 1C: Steve Streich
- 2: Bill Cottom
- 3A: John Venhuizen
- 3B: Sid Schutter
- 3C: Steve Maughan

District Officers 1A (Roger Starkel) and 3C (Steve Maughan) are up for re-election this spring. Nominations are due at the Potato Lab by April 15, 2009.

## Important Dates and Deadlines

March 31

Microtuber orders for 2010 due

April 15

Nominations due for officers for District 1B and District 3C

April 26

2008 Post Harvest Fees due

June 10

Registrations due