

Idaho Grower News from the University of Idaho Extension System

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A Brief History of *the Spudvine* Newsletter—Final Chapter

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In October 1990, I began working for University of Idaho (UI) as an Extension Educator with responsibilities for potato Extension programs in Bingham, Power and Bannock counties. Prior to my arrival, UI faculty working in potato Extension programming had regularly distributed a newsletter titled, *the Spudvine*. I immediately recognized *the Spudvine* as an excellent method to distribute information to potato producers and others in the potato industry in Bingham, Power and Bannock counties, and committed to continue publishing it.

I teamed with other UI faculty, some who are still with UI, some who have retired or resigned and others who began and ended their careers with UI since 1990, to publish *the Spudvine*. I also had the very capable assistance of the secretarial staff in the Bingham County Extension Office who formatted and distributed the newsletter in a timely manner.

During my tenure with the newsletter, one issue was published in late 1990 and then for the next 15 years, 1991 through 2005, *the Spudvine* was distributed 11 times annually January through November. The Idaho Potato Commission (IPC) was instrumental in the success of the newsletter by providing funding to offset production and distribution costs beginning in 1993.

As you likely remember, email and the Internet were in their infancy in the early 1990's, so *the Spudvine* was distributed solely via U.S. Postal mail to approximately 420 people with just over half being potato producers. Most of the remaining people worked in potato-related industries

or were researchers with UI or other universities.

A decade later the Internet became easily accessible, so beginning in 2000, in addition to distributing a hard copy, *the*

Spudvine was published on a web site. Distribution was greatly expanded in 2002 to try to include all Idaho potato producers so the list grew to approximately 1,050. This distribution list was updated in 2006,

Table 1. Number and percent of topics published in *the Spudvine* newsletter November 1990 through June 2010.

Topic	Number	Percent
Diseases	58	28
Economics	14	7
Fertility	12	6
General Topics	18	8
Harvest and Storage	44	21
Insects	13	6
Irrigation	8	4
Planting and Seed	26	12
Varieties	3	1
Weeds	14	7

and the number receiving *the Spudvine* decreased to about 430. The decrease was partially due to fewer potato producers. With the increased use of electronic media, *the Spudvine* was sent via email by request to people beginning in 2003.

In an effort to distribute the newsletter to all potato producers, beginning in early 2009, *the Spudvine* has been circulated by the IPC as an attachment to their newsletter. At present, 65 percent of those on the Bingham County Extension Office distribution list (409 individuals) identify themselves as potato producers. That's a brief history of how *the Spudvine* has been

distributed, and now here's a summary of the information it contained over the past two decades.

Since 1990, 208 issues of *the Spudvine* have been published. It has gone through some minor formatting changes, but except for two or three issues it has been published as a one-sheet newsletter printed on two sides. Table 1 lists the topics that have been published November 1990 through June 2010. The most frequently discussed topic was disease management with 58 articles, followed by 44 articles on harvest and storage, and 25 discussing planting and seed. These three account for approximately 61 percent of the topics published during this nearly 20-year period of *the Spudvine*. Some articles could not be specifically categorized so were grouped into a "general topics" category, some of which are listed in Table 2.

The 210 articles—some of the early newsletters contained more than one topic—were written by 39 authors, some who wrote or contributed to only one or two while others wrote many articles. I wrote 43 articles as the only author, was the first of two or more authors of 65 articles and contributed as a second, third or fourth author on another 32 for a total of 140 articles or 67 percent. Additionally, as editor

Table 2. Selected titles of "general topics" published in *the Spudvine* newsletter November 1990 through June 2010.

Late Season Potato Management
Cool Temperature Effects on Potatoes
Weather Not Only Factor Affecting Hollow Heart and Yield of Potatoes
Managing Specific Gravity of Potatoes
Environment Plays a Key Role in Management Decisions
Tools to Help Pass the GAP Audit
Potato Crop Quality Relatively Consistent
Use an Integrated Approach to Combat Potato Pests
Managing Potatoes in the Future
Yearly Reminder About Foreign Material

I reviewed all but a handful of the issues published. Others who significantly contributed to the success of *the Spudvine* are Phil Nolte, UI Seed Potato Specialist, who authored or co-authored 51 articles and Nora Olsen, UI Potato Specialist, who authored or co-authored 20 articles.

In mid 2006, due to funding shifts, my responsibilities in potatoes were significantly decreased, and have continued to decrease to where I now have a minor amount of Extension programming time allocated for potatoes. With this change in my position assignment and the recent elimination of funding for *the Spudvine* newsletter, this will be the last issue you will

receive from me as editor. The future of this newsletter is uncertain, but it is highly unlikely that *the Spudvine*, even if published, will return to the publication frequency you have come to expect.

I appreciate the loyal readers of *the Spudvine*, have valued your comments and hope *the Spudvine* has served you well. I also appreciate the many years of support from the IPC in publishing this newsletter. In lieu of *the Spudvine*, you are encouraged to keep informed about potatoes by visiting the Idaho Center for Potato Research and Education web site at <http://www.cals.uidaho.edu/potato/> where you'll find a plethora of information on all aspects of pota-

to production, pest management, economics and more.

Again, thank you for your loyalty and allowing me to hopefully keep you better informed about potatoes since late 1990.

Farewell!

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