UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND EXTENSION | AgFS Agriculture & Food Systems

Vegetable & Fruit News

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Asparagus Beetles

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Recent warm temperatures across the state have initiated spring asparagus growth and, with that, the activity of asparagus beetles. Two species of asparagus beetles are found in Maryland: the 'common asparagus beetle' (*Crioceris asparagi*) and the 'spotted asparagus beetle' (*Crioceris duodecimpunctata*). While they share a name and a host plant, their appearances are quite different. Adult common asparagus beetles are about ¼ inch long with metallic blue to black wing covers containing with four white spots and reddish margins (Figure 1, top) while adult spotted asparagus beetles are slightly larger, about 1/3 inch long, and are orange with 12 black spots (Figure 1, bottom).

Figure 1. (top) adult common asparagus beetles, (bottom) adult spotted asparagus beetle, Photo: (top) V. Yurchak; (bottom)

Pro tip: Don't let the spots and orange color fool you! While they may resemble lady beetles at first glance, you can distinguish the spotted asparagus beetle by its more elongated, oval body shape compared to the typically rounder silhouette of a lady beetle.

Larvae of both asparagus beetle species are grayish green with black heads and legs (Figure 2). Look for tiny, 1 mm long, oblong eggs. They are shiny, black, and uniquely attached by one end to the asparagus spears (Figure 3). Initial signs of asparagus beetles in Spring include observations of beetles on newly emerged spears, as well as the presence of eggs. The eggs themselves do not cause any damage; however, their presence may be unacceptable for some consumers.

Figure 2. Asparagus beetle larvae and associated feeding damage. Photo: V. Yurchak.

Life Cycle

Asparagus beetles overwinter as adults in plant debris. As temperatures rise in the spring, beetles emerge to feed on new spears and bud tips before depositing their eggs directly onto the crop. Eggs hatch in about one week, depending on temperature. Developing larvae also feed on the spears and ferns (Figure 2). After the larvae mature, they drop to the ground and burrow into the soil to pupate. In five to ten days, they will emerge as adult beetles. There are two generations per year in Maryland.

Cultural and Physical Controls

Harvest spears as early as possible to reduce the likelihood of damage or egg deposition. Beetles are attracted to plants with an abundance of foliage. Leaving a small area unharvested to produce early ferns results in a type of trap-crop where beetles will preferentially gather and lay eggs. Insecticide control can be used target beetles in this area to reduce applications on spears intended for harvest. This method also facilitates the use of products otherwise not feasible due to longer PHIs. Thoroughly remove all plant debris from the garden and surrounding areas after harvest to eliminate beetle overwintering sites.

Biological Control

Nature provides several allies in the fight against asparagus beetles. *Tetrastichus asparagi* is a tiny parasitic wasp that specifically attacks asparagus beetle eggs. Additionally, several species of lady beetles, as well as some other generalist predators, feed on eggs and small larvae. Keep in mind that most insecticides labeled for use in asparagus are broad spectrum and may reduce the contribution that natural enemies can provide to your pest management.

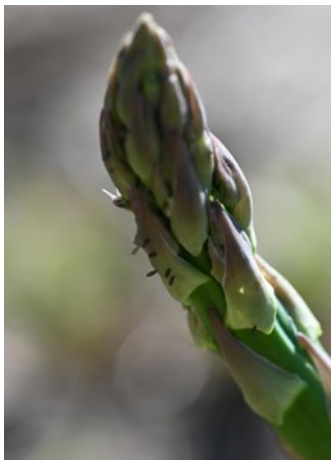

Figure 3. Asparagus beetle eggs on spear tip. Photo: V. Yurchak.

Chemical Control

Insecticide treatment may be justified when 10% of spears are infested with beetles or when 1-2% have eggs present. Remember that since asparagus spears are harvested almost daily, it is important to use insecticides with minimal residual activity. Be sure to follow the necessary PHI between insecticide application and harvest. Pay special attention to newly planted asparagus beds and consider treating more frequently to

2026-2027 Mid-Atlantic Commercial Vegetable Production Recommendations Guide can be found at **https://go.umd.edu/MACVPRG**

Vegetable Insect Scouting Tips

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Asparagus : With the recent high temperatures, asparagus is emerging and asparagus beetles are active and laying eggs on young spears. When scouting, examine 10 plants in 5-10 different spots in the field. Scouting is best performed on a sunny afternoon when beetles are most active. Treatment may be justified when 10% of spears are infested with beetles or 1-2% have eggs.

Alliums: Allium leafminer is out and about, and damage has been encountered throughout most of the state. Control typically requires 2-3 spray applications, with the first application occurring around 2 weeks after egg-laying marks are observed (assuming regular scouting). Based on activity observations across the state, most areas are likely in that 2-3 first application window now. Most of the state has also reached the necessary growing degree days for onion maggot activity.

Cole Crops : Cabbage white butterflies have been active for a week or so now so scouting of cole crops for cabbage worms, and other worm pests, should begin. The threshold for young plants is a 20% infestation. When plants are young and when caterpillars are young, B.t. should provide excellent control without harming natural enemy populations that are beginning to build. These natural enemies can play an important role in keeping caterpillar pest populations low.

Potatoes : Begin scouting potatoes for Colorado potato beetles – especially fields that did not receive an insecticide at planting. Beetles can fly and locate new plantings once the temperatures approach 80 degrees. Look for adult beetles and the bright orange egg clusters laid on the underside of leaves. Thresholds are 1 adult per stem or 50 adults per 50 stems.

Recommended Slicing Cucumber Varieties

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*** This article first appeared on the University of Delaware weekly Crop Update Blog on April 17, 2026.***

In 2025 we tested 19 slicing cucumber varieties in a plasticulture production system. Varieties were direct seeded onto black plastic mulch on May 29. Spacing was 1 foot in the row and 1 foot between double rows on the mulched bed. Plots were harvested twice per week from July 10 through August 15 with eleven total harvests.

Best Performing Varieties

Dominator had the highest marketable yield and a high percent marketable fruit (72%). It also had the highest early yield and maintained production across the season.

Mongoose had high marketable yield, good dark green color and a very high percent marketable fruit (76%).

Speedway had high marketable yield, a high percent marketable fruit (72%) and maintained production across the season.

The General had high marketable yield and maintained production across the season but had a lower percent marketable fruit (68%).

Additional Varieties of Note

Slice More had very high percent marketable fruit (76%) and good yield with season-long production.

Dasher II had had high percent marketable fruit (74%) and good yield with season-long production.

Other Tested Varieties

Superior, Bristol, Racetrack, Stonewall, **Gateway** and **Raceway** produced moderate marketable yields in the trial.

Marketmore 76 and **South Wind** are two open pollinated varieties which were tested. Marketmore 76 produced significantly higher marketable yields than South Wind, but South Wind produced a slightly higher percent marketable fruit (75% vs 71%). Both varieties are later to start producing than the hybrids, but Marketmore 76 is earlier than South Wind.

Brickyard, Torneo 143, Diva, Sweet Success and **Tasty Green** produced low marketable yields in the trial. All had less than half the yield of Dominator, the highest yielding variety. Diva, Sweet Succes and Tasty Green are long-fruited burpless types which tend to produce curved fruit without trellis support. This resulted in a low percent marketable fruit. Of the three burpless varieties, Sweet Success produced the highest yields.

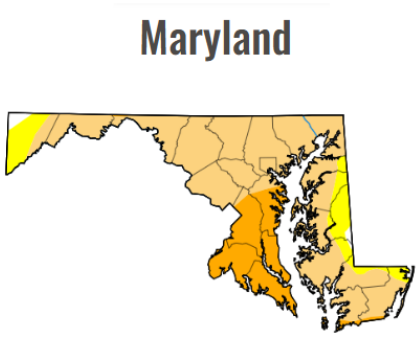
USDA Designates Nine Maryland Counties as Primary Natural Disaster Areas Following Severe Drought

ANNAPOLIS, MD (April 17, 2026) – Due to ongoing dry conditions during the growing season, nine counties in Maryland have received drought disaster designations from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Farmers in the primary designated counties of Allegany, Carroll, Charles, Frederick, Garrett, Howard, Montgomery, Prince George's and Washington are now eligible for certain assistance from the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA).

This drought disaster assistance includes FSA emergency loans. Provided that eligibility requirements are met, the FSA will assess each emergency loan application individually to consider specific circumstances and needs. Farmers in eligible localities have eight months from the date of the disaster declaration to apply for these emergency loans.

According to the U.S. Drought Monitor, these counties suffered from a drought intensity value during the growing season ranging from severe for eight or more weeks to extreme or exceptional.

For more information on available assistance programs and the application process, please visit the Maryland FSA State Office website at www.fsa.usda.gov/state-offices/Maryland



Map released: Thurs. April 16, 2026
Data valid: April 14, 2026 at 8 a.m. EDT

Intensity

- None
- D0 (Abnormally Dry)
- D1 (Moderate Drought)
- D2 (Severe Drought)
- D3 (Extreme Drought)
- D4 (Exceptional Drought)
- No Data

Authors

United States and Puerto Rico Author(s):
Brian Fuchs, National Drought Mitigation Center

End of Gramoxone: What Growers Should Know

Kurt Vollmer, Ph.D., Extension Specialist, Weed Management. University of Maryland

Syngenta recently announced it will stop manufacturing Gramoxone at the end of June. The product contains paraquat, a widely used herbicide for controlling weeds before planting, at planting and post-directed after crops emerge. Paraquat is an important tool for managing tough weeds, including herbicide-resistant weeds such as Palmer amaranth.

Only the Gramoxone brand of paraquat will be discontinued. Based on current estimates, Gramoxone supplies should be adequate for 2026, but growers may want to begin exploring alternative brands.

Other paraquat brands may not be labeled for all the applications listed on the Gramoxone label. For example, only certain formulations allow post-directed applications in cucurbit crops such as watermelon. Because labels vary, fruit and vegetable growers should carefully review each paraquat label and follow all state requirements before applying.

Product	Manufacturer	Cucurbits	Orchards/ Vineyards	Solanaceaous
Axil Solutions Paraquat 3SL	Axill Solutions LLC	No	Yes	Yes
Better Choice Brands Paraquat 3SL	Better Choice Brands, LLC	Yes	Yes	Yes
Devour	Invictus Crop Care, LLC	No	Yes	Yes
Gramoxone SL 3.0	Syngenta Crop Protection, LLC	Yes	Yes	Yes
Helmquat 3SL	Helm Agro US, Inc.	Yes	See label	See label
Paraquat Concentrate	Solera Source Dynamics, LLC	No	Yes	Yes
Para-Shot 3.0	Sharda USA, LLC	No	Yes	Yes
Parazone 3 SL	AMVAC Chemical Corporation	Yes	Yes	Yes
Quick-Quat	Drexel Chemical Corporation	No	Yes	Yes
Willowood Paraquat 3SL	Generic Crop Science, LLC	NO	Yes	Yes

Recent Increase in Tomato Prices

Seowoo Sophie Lee, Assistant Extension Specialist in Farm Viability, Rutgers.

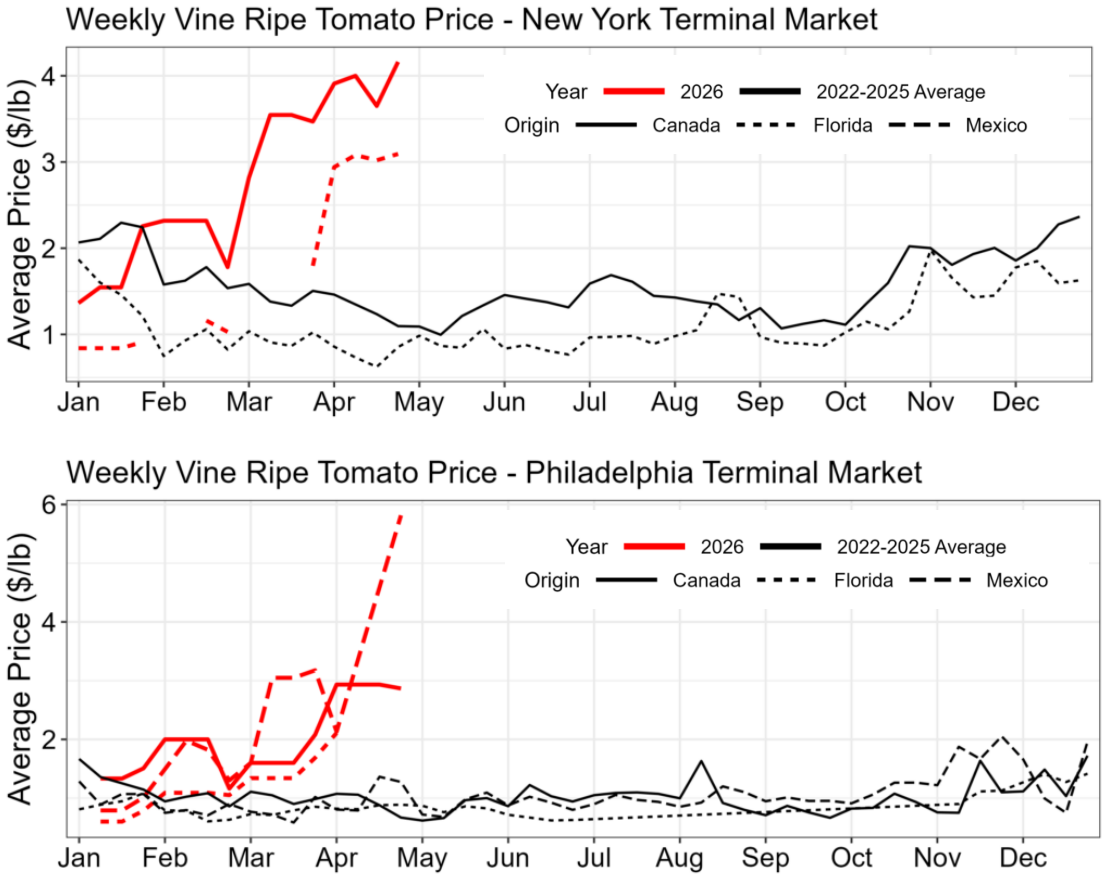
*** This article first appeared on The Rugters Plant & Pest Advisory Blog on April 12, 2026.***

Tomato prices in the United States have risen notably in recent months, driven by a combination of supply constraints, trade policy changes, and rising costs throughout the supply chain. Tomato prices at the consumer level nationwide, as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), increased **18% from February to March** and were **24% higher than a year earlier**. Consistent with this trend, wholesale market data from terminal markets in New York and Philadelphia indicate strong price increases.

Why Are Tomato Prices Increasing?

One of the primary drivers of higher prices is tight supply conditions. Weather disruptions in major producing regions such as Mexico and Florida have reduced available volumes, creating shortages across the supply chain. Trade policy has also played a significant role. The imposition of tariffs on Mexican tomatoes, which account for roughly 70% of U.S. fresh tomato consumption, has increased import costs and contributed directly to higher market prices.

In addition, broader economic factors are amplifying price pressures. Rising fuel and transportation costs have increased the cost of moving perishable goods such as tomatoes, while higher input costs (e.g., energy and fertilizer) are raising production expenses, particularly for greenhouse production.



Source: USDA Market News; figure created by the author. Weekly tomato prices (non-organic) at the New York and Philadelphia Terminal Market by origin and year. Prices in 2026 are highlighted in red, while earlier years (2022–2025) are shown for comparison. Line types distinguish between origins.

Upcoming UME Events!

Additional upcoming events can be found on the UME events website. *If you need a reasonable accommodation to participate in any event or activity, please contact your local University of Maryland Extension Office 2 weeks prior to the event.*

IPM Webinar Series:
The series meets on the third Thursday of every month from 12 to 1 pm. For more details and registration, visit https://go.umd.edu/ipmwebinar. Maryland Pesticide Credits are available. If you need a reasonable accommodation to participate in this event, please contact Hayden Schug at 301-226-7502.

- **May 21st** Vegetable Pest Control with Beneficials - Dr. Veronica Yurchak, University of Maryland Extension Specialist, Vegetable Production
- **June 25th** Spotted Wing Drosophila: Management in Berries and Small Fruits - Dr. Kelly Hamby, Associate Professor, Department of Entomology, University of Maryland

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Virtual H-2A Farm Labor Series

April 21, 2026 — *State Department of Labor Considerations.* Speakers: Ross Weiner, Maryland Department of Labor; Ellen Romero, Delaware Department of Labor
The virtual seminars will be held on April 21, 2026 via Zoom from 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m.
The seminar series is offered at no cost; however, advance registration is required.
Participants can register online at **https://go.umd.edu/H2AWebinars.**
This program is supported by the Northeast Extension Risk Management Education Center through USDA-NIFA award no. 2024-70027-42540.
This program is offered by land-grant institutions committed to equal opportunity and access. Individuals requiring accommodations should contact program organizers at least two weeks prior to the event.

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