

Texas-bred potatoes headed to grower fields, marketplace

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SPRINGLAKE – Texas-bred potatoes were highlighted recently at the 26th annual Texas A&M Potato Breeding and Variety Development Program field day near Springlake in the Bruce Barrett potato fields.



Texas A&M AgriLife Research potato breeder Dr. Creighton Miller addresses the crowd gathered at Springlake Potatoes Inc. before going to the fields. (Texas A&M AgriLife photo by Kay Ledbetter)

The potato breeding program is conducted by Texas A&M AgriLife Research and the Texas A&M University department of horticultural sciences under the direction of potato breeder Dr. Creighton Miller in College Station.

The program’s Springlake trial includes 3,936 seedlings and a trial in Dalhart has 51,423 seedlings, totaling 55,359 seedlings from 369 different crosses this year, Miller said.

The field day at Springlake offers potato growers and AgriLife Research collaborators a chance to see how different crosses performed, he said. Side-by-side planting of each variety allows digging of one row of tubers for viewing at the field day, while leaving the second row for plant canopy observation.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C_dqGy0tbVU

“We had a really good turnout this year for our field day and the trials look good,” he said.

“While we don’t have any new varieties to announce this year, we have several we talked about last year and a couple we will release in the next few years that we are excited to see the results of in this field.”

Harlequin Gold is a new release from last year, he said. It is a pinto type with red and yellow skin and yellow flesh that has had some success in the specialty market.



Reveille Russet, developed by the Texas A&M Potato Breeding and Variety Development Program, is making its way to the market. (Texas A&M AgriLife photo by Kay Ledbetter)

“The one that’s really caught on is our Reveille Russet,” Miller said. “It is a russet that we hope will replace the Norkotah strains because it stores better, has a higher percentage of marketable tubers and doesn’t bruise as easily. We have a number of new licensees that showed some enthusiasm for that particular variety.

“We have another variety called Vanguard with larger tubers than Reveille and it is shaped very nice. We think it has a real opportunity.”

Another variety he said he was excited about is a yellow-fleshed russet that has an opportunity in the specialty market in the next couple years.

He said the potato harvest at Springlake will be complete by mid-August. The reds are dug and sold first, followed by the russets, all headed to the fresh market. The Springlake trials include varieties for both the fresh and chipping market but concentrate on the fresh market.

The emphasis of the program in Dalhart, Miller said, is more evenly distributed toward the chipping potato market. His program works with CSS Farms in Dalhart to conduct chipping testing at their facility after growing data are collected.

“So as you can see, we have a stream of crosses that keeps our program flowing with new varieties, although it takes a while to get licensees lined up and to get the seed produced for growers to purchase,” Miller said. “We are well on our way on all those we’ve mentioned.”