



## Hort Headlines

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December 19, 2008

- **Sign Up For Tree Fruit Day** – WSHA's 7th Annual Tree Fruit Day is scheduled for Tuesday, February 3, in Olympia. The one-day event will include visits with key legislators and agency officials. Tree fruit industry gift boxes will also be distributed again this year to all legislators and their legislative assistants. Visit the WSHA web-site to download a [registration form](#).
- **New \$8.07 Minimum Wage Rate Goes In Effect** – Washington's minimum wage will increase 48 cents to \$8.55 an hour beginning January 1, 2009. The Department of Labor and Industries recalculates the state's minimum wage each year in September as required by Initiative 688, which Washington state voters approved in 1998. This year's adjustment gave a 5.9% increase to minimum wage workers. Washington currently has the highest minimum wage of all 50 states, with California, Massachusetts, and Oregon close behind. Free minimum wage posters are available from any L&I office or by calling 1-866-219-7321 or downloading from the [L&I web-site](#).
- **Washington Unemployment Rate Creeps Up Again** – Washington's unemployment rate increased in November to 6.4 percent, up from 6.3 percent in October. With Washington's economy slumping, the collapse of large financial institutions and slowing U.S. economy, the number of people looking for work is projected to grow. The state faces a deficit that has ballooned to nearly \$5.1 billion as the 2009 session of the Legislature approaches. Washington lost an estimated 11,700 non-agricultural jobs in November, seasonally adjusted. [Read the full report](#).

- **Pest Management Workshops** – WSU Chelan County Extension will be providing Pest Management Workshops. The IPM workshops cover various topics that highlight critical issues, discuss industry trends, and point out possible horticultural and business solutions. The training workshops are presented by Tim Smith, WSU Extension. For more information email [smithtj@wsu.edu](mailto:smithtj@wsu.edu).
  - **January 28** | 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. Wenatchee Valley College Lyceum (2 credits)
  - **February 17** | 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. Wenatchee Valley College Lyceum (2 credits)
  - **February 7** | 10:00 – 12:00 p.m. Oroville (2 credits)

*(Note Below: attend both sessions 1 and 2 for complete pesticide license pre-testing training)*

  - **February 25** | 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. Wenatchee Valley College Library Lyceum (2 credits)
  - **March 4** | 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. Wenatchee Valley College Library Lyceum (2 credits)
- **Apple Commission Names New President** – Todd Fryhover has been elected as the Washington Apple Commission new president. Fryhover has an agricultural and business degree from the University of Idaho and has worked for several leading apple shipping companies over the past 20 years. Fryhover replaces Dave Carlson, who was placed administrative leave Sept. 1 after five years on the job.

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## Headline Links

**Apple Industry Wary of Union Bill** – Washington apple packers are worried about their workers losing the right to private ballots when voting on whether or not to join a labor union, a chief lobbyist for the apple industry says. Learn more on this story from [the Wenatchee World](#).

**Administration Changes To Farm Worker Hiring Afoot** – As it prepares to leave office, the Bush administration is moving to make it easier for U.S. farming companies to hire foreign field workers, which farmworker groups say will worsen wages and working conditions. Read more at [the Capital Press](#).

**FBI Probes Treatment Of Mexican Workers In La.** – The FBI confirmed Wednesday, Dec. 10, it was investigating allegations that a Louisiana farmer fired shotgun blasts over Mexican guest workers' heads, exposed them to pesticides and paid them less than minimum wage. Read the following article at [the Capital](#)

[Press.](#)

**Bee Experts Look At Breeding-In Varroa Resistance** – Nearly every agricultural crop or livestock line has been improved by cross-breeding, resulting in plants and animals that are disease- or insect-resistant and more productive. Visit [the Capital Press](#) to learn more.

**Officials Say Obama Chooses Energy, EPA Posts** – President-elect Barack Obama intends to round out his environmental and natural resources team with a Nobel Prize-winning physicist and three former Environmental Protection Agency officials from the Clinton administration. Visit [the Capital Press](#) to read more.

**Our Offices will be closed Wednesday, December 24 and 25th in observance of the Christmas holiday. In addition, HORT Headlines will resume January 9, 2008.**

***Wishing You and Yours A Very Merry Christmas & Happy New Year from all of us at the Washington State Horticultural Association!***



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