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# Looking ahead at Whatcom County agriculture

DAVE GALLAGHER - THE BELLINGHAM HERALD

After an outstanding growing season in 2009, Whatcom County farmers may be a bit nervous heading into this spring.

So far it has been a very warm winter. Bellingham tied the record for the warmest recorded January, averaging 45.3 degrees. The last January it was that warm was in 1986.

The El Nino winter has spurred a bit of early growth of plants, which isn't a bad thing in itself, said Cheryl DeHaan, community education program manager at Whatcom Farm Friends. The problem is the 2010 harvest could be damaged if there is a long sustained freeze in the coming weeks.



PHILIP A. DWYER | THE BELLINGHAM HERALD

- **WHATCOM CO. AGRICULTURE**

**Dairy products** - \$186.5 million (57 percent of total Whatcom County agriculture market value)

**Fruits, nuts and berries** - \$66.8 million (21 percent)

**Cattle:** \$24.1 million (7 percent)

**Nursery:** \$16.7 million (5 percent)

**Poultry, eggs:** \$11.5 million (4 percent)

**Vegetables:** \$10.8 million (3 percent)

**Other:** \$10 million (3 percent)

**Total for all crops:** \$326.5 million.

*Source: USDA 2007 Census of Agriculture*

If El Nino keeps this area warm for the rest of the winter and into the summer, it won't have a huge impact on the harvest timeline, she said.

"A warm winter would make the harvest happen only a few days earlier," DeHaan said.

Farming remains an important component in the local economy. In the most recent U.S. Department of Agriculture census data, which was from 2007, the total amount this area received for its crops was \$326.5 million- ranking first out of the 17 Western Washington counties, sixth in the state and 78th in the U.S.

To learn more about local agriculture, visit Whatcom Farm Friends' Web site at [wcfarmfriends.com](http://wcfarmfriends.com) or call 354-1337. DeHaan and Farm Friends also have published a book, "Food for the body, mind and soul... Whatcom County Agriculture." Details about the book can be found at the Farm Friends' web site.

With the help of DeHaan, here is a month-by-month look at when things are happening, including harvests. Of course, much of what happens depends on what Mother Nature has planned in terms of weather.

## **FEBRUARY**

National Potato Lover's Month

Feb. 20-27 National FFA Week

## **MARCH**

March 5-7 - Whatcom County Home & Garden Show - Northwest Washington Fairgrounds

March 14-20 - National Ag Week ([agday.org](http://agday.org))

March 20 - National Ag Day

March 12 - Whatcom Dairy Ambassador Coronation

## **APRIL**

April 3 - Opening Day of the Bellingham Farmers Market

April 9-10 - Whatcom County Youth Fair - NW Wash Fairgrounds

Planting for grass silage & hay usually begins in April, going through mid-May

April 17 - International Plowing match (location TBA)

April 17 - Opening Day of the Ferndale Farmers Market

April 20-22 - Annual Milk Makers Fest, Lynden

April 30 - National Arbor Day

End of April-Early May - Full bloom Apple Blossom

## **MAY**

Early produce and vegetables available

Tilling of the land begins in earnest for crop planting, such as grass, corn and potatoes

First cuts of grass for silage

National Strawberry Month

National Salad month

## **JUNE**

June 5 - Lynden Heritage Celebration & Farmers Day Parade, Lynden

Strawberries are usually ready to pick starting in mid-June, going through mid-July

Grass is cut every 35 days or so throughout the summer and early fall for silage

National Dairy Month

National fresh fruit and vegetable month

Crops such as grass, corn and potatoes should be planted by the end of June

## **JULY**

July 16-17 - Raspberry Festival, Lynden

Prime raspberry picking time

Blueberries are usually ready to pick the last half of the month

Blackberries start becoming ripe mid-month

## **AUGUST**

Aug. 4-7 - Puget Sound Antique Tractor Show & Threshing Bee, Berthusen Park

Aug. 16-21 - Northwest Washington Fair 100th Anniversary Celebration, Lynden

Aug 27-28 - Lynden PRCA Rodeo

Blueberries are usually ready to pick the first half of the month

Blackberries ripen

Prime raspberry picking time

The early-season apples are usually ready to harvest in late in the month, including Sansa, Sunrise, Gravenstein, Akane, Zestar and Tsugaru

Local corn harvesting usually begins mid-month

Early varieties of potatoes can be dug

Some hay cut and baled

A big month for fresh flower bouquets

## **SEPTEMBER**

Sept 17-18 - Puget Sound Antique Tractor Fall Tractor Pull

Sept. 25 - Toy Tractor Show, NW Washington Fairgrounds

The mid-season apples are usually ready to harvest late in the month, including Jonamac, Honeycrisp, Gala, Jonagold and Golden Supreme

Second round of hay planting

Potatoes are harvested

Annual Lynden FFA corn maze operates weekends, [lyndenffa.com](http://lyndenffa.com)

## **OCTOBER**

Oct. 3-9 - National 4-H Week

Oct. 14-16 - Lynden Harvest Festival

Second round of hay planting early in the month

Late-season apples are usually ready to harvest late in the month, including Fuji, Idared, Sonata and Orin

Corn silage harvesting

## **NOVEMBER**

Local apples still available, along with pumpkins and squash

## **DECEMBER**

Local farms turn their attentions to gift baskets for the holiday season, whether it's frozen berries or exotic cheese

Fresh pickings usually available include apples, potatoes, squash and Christmas trees

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