

# New Jersey News

## Ernie Christ Memorial Lecture, 2020, Presented by Dr. Chris Walsh at Mid Atlantic Fruit & Vegetable Convention

**Win Cowgill**

*Professor Emeritus, Rutgers University, Win Enterprises International, LLC.*

The Ernie Christ Memorial Lecture, is presented at the Mid Atlantic Fruit and Vegetable Convention in January each year, held in Hershey, PA. Each year we strive to select a speaker that can do justice to the peach industry and Ernie Christ's legacy.

The lecture was established in memory of Ernie Christ, the long time New Jersey Tree Fruit Specialist at Rutgers Cooperative Extension. Ernie passed on September 12, 2000. He was loved and respected by fruit growers across North America. Ernie's passion was the furthering of knowledge of Peach Culture and Science.

Ernie was a great friend and mentor to dozens of young scientists, extension workers and farmers, including Rich Marini, Sue Brown, Jerry Frecon, Mark Robson, Peter Melick, Ken Wightman, Robert Best, Sr., and myself to name only a very few!

We referred to him as Mr. Peach. The fruit industry thought so much of Ernie they named a New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station Breeding Program selection after him, 'Ernie's Choice' (NJ275) which is still grown today.

A speakers fund was established by the New Jersey State Horticultural Society with an initial gift by Adams County Nursery and continued funding from grower donations. The fund supports an

invited speaker each year at the Mid Atlantic Conference. The first Ernie Christ Memorial Lecture was presented by Dr. Rich Marini, Department of Horticulture, Penn State University, in January of 2002.

Dr. Chris Walsh, Professor Emeritus, University of Maryland, presented the 2020 Ernie Christ Memorial Lecture at the 2020 Mid-Atlantic Fruit and Vegetable Conference "Peach Pre- and Post-harvest Handling." After 40 years as a professor at the University of Maryland, Dr. Walsh retired at the beginning of 2020. He received his bachelors degree from Middlebury College in VT in 1969. He worked at Jackson Orchards in VT for 5 years and then returned school at Cornell University, where completed M.S. and Ph.D. degrees. He then was hired at the University of Maryland where he spent his career with an extension, teaching, and research appointment. He worked on tree fruit and small fruit crops and became know for his work on Asian Pears and peaches. Dr. Walsh started an apple breeding program at the University to meet the needs of the growers in the Mid Atlantic apple growing region. Seven cultivars have been released for testing, that have a compact growth habit and are disease resistant. The first is named 'Antietam Blush.'



Dr. Chris Walsh was presented a certificate and a stipend of \$500 from the NJ State Horticulture Society for the Ernie Christ Memorial Lecture: "Peach Pre- and Postharvest Handling". Jamie Bourgeois NJSHS immediate past president and President Adam Costello, NJSHS presenting. Photo Credit: Marcina Estelle Garner.



# Kim Best of Best Fruit Farm's Passes

Kim Louise Best, 63, of Hackettstown, New Jersey, passed away at the Warren Haven Nursing Facility, Oxford, NJ after a lengthy illness. Born on August 4, 1956, Kim was the daughter of Robert Best Sr. and the late Ruth Walters Best. Kim was co-owner of Best's Fruit Farm in Hackettstown, NJ, famous for their outstanding fruit quality. Kim and family have run the farm and store for several generations, co-owner with Bob Sr. and brother Bob Jr. and until last year Ruth Best. Kim was known for her marketing acumen, making sure the customers were served, peaches displayed perfectly, and fruit baskets made.

Kim was a 1974 Graduate of Hackettstown High School and a 1978 graduate of Lafayette College with a degree in Music History and

Theory. When not working, Kim's life was music. She helped form the Pocono Choral Society that traveled throughout the United States and Europe. She also was a member of the Fred Waring Recording Studio. Kim was a member of the Emmanuel Bible Chapel of Schooley's Mountain, NJ. Kim is survived by her beloved father, Robert Best, Sr. and brother, Robert, both of Hackettstown, nieces Heather & Rachael and nephew Justin, and six grand nephews and nieces. Private funeral services and burial will take place at the convenience of the family. The Cochran Funeral Home, 905 High Street, Hackettstown, NJ is in charge of the funeral arrangements. Online condolences may be offered to the family at [www.cochranfuneral.com](http://www.cochranfuneral.com).





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