

# HORTICULTURAL CROPS

## INTRODUCTION

Unlike some of the other crops grown in Ontario, horticultural crops are usually grown on small acreages but are very valuable and require intensive, skilled management. Most are used or consumed directly by consumers. Today's consumers are very demanding. They want high quality and yet, are concerned about the environmental impact of agriculture.

Sustainability and competitiveness have become key words to horticultural crop producers. Growers need to be efficient in production to stay competitive and they need to conserve and protect soil and water to be sustainable. At times, these concepts appear to conflict but actually, they complement each other. Healthy soil and water will make horticultural crops more competitive.

To be considered a best management practice, an action must maintain or increase crop production while minimizing impact on the environment. In the case of many crops, this means using good management so that the crop is well-established and healthy. This allows growers to reduce treatments such as pesticides that may affect the environment. There is no one best management practice for all crops. The best ones for your farm will depend on your individual problems and opportunities.

This booklet does not cover every horticultural crop. Nor is it intended to give you exhaustive information on crop production. What this booklet will do is provide you with a place to start as you assess, develop and adapt your own system.

The booklet is divided into two major sections: Understanding the Basics covers problems and practices that are common to many crops; the other section looks at individual crops and outlines some best management practices.

You may wish to change your crop management system for many reasons: to save money, to increase yields, to save time and labour, to solve erosion problems or to reduce pesticide use. Whatever your reason, the first stage is to assess where you are now and what your goals are. Once that is done, this booklet will help you evaluate the options available.

