Field Highlights from the CCE ENYCHP Team

Crystal Stewart-Courten, Elisabeth Hodgdon, & Chuck Bornt, CCE ENYCHP

Sometimes it’s nice to focus on the little things that make the day special. We thought we’d share a few of those little things that made us smile, and hopefully make you smile, too!

Elisabeth shared with the team that they figured out a handy way to harvest ground cherries which doesn’t involve crawling around under the bushes cursing their very existence (my habitual method).

Ground cherries (aka husk cherry, *Physalis pruinosa*) are ripe and ready to eat after their husks turn brown and the fruits fall off of the plant naturally. Gathering fruit underneath the plants, which can be large and sprawling, is tedious and labor intensive. As part of our Northern New York Agricultural Development Program grant, we tested out a new harvesting method for this crop at Cornell’s Willsboro Research Farm. Farm manager Mike Davis built two frames using conduit pipe and cut flower support netting to lift the ground cherry plants off of the ground from each side of their row. Once the plants are off the ground, the fallen fruits can be swept up using a clean broom and dust pan (Crystal wants to know if this would be a good application of a food hoe. Yes, that’s a real thing.)

Check out our video of the harvesting frame in action on our YouTube page: [https://youtu.be/YCaitW_8XTA](https://youtu.be/YCaitW_8XTA)

One of Crystal’s favorite moments of last week came during a field meeting. After discussing the looming late

Mike Davis (left) and Andy Galimberti (right) collecting ground cherries underneath the harvesting frame. Photo: Elisabeth Hodgdon

(Continued on page 2)
bight creeping west with each storm, we walked through the watermelon patch which separated the tomatoes from our biocontrol trial. Our gracious farm host, Eli Martin, wanted to check to see if his melons were ready. This lead to a lively discussion of how to tell if watermelons are ready (yellow ground spot? Brown tendrils? Hollow thump? Or was it a thwamp?). Naturally we also had to taste all the different varieties he had in the field. It was a delicious addition to talking about diseases. Looks to be a great watermelon year, at least in the Mohawk Valley!

Early potato harvest: Something new we added this year to our potato variety trial was planting a separate 10' plot of each variety to harvest for ‘early’ evaluation. Due to the lateness of the season, our early harvest occurred on August 23.

Next newsletter, Ethan will tell us about one of his field highlights for the season, getting and learning to use a fancy field moisture monitoring system. Have a highlight you’d like to share? Let us know!

(Continued from page 1)

Late Summer Brassica Scouting Report
Elisabeth Hodgdon, CCE Eastern NY Commercial Horticulture

Brassica vegetables are reliable workhorses in the cool temperatures of the fall. Keep an eye out for pests in your fall Brassicas. Last week during my farm visits I found that several insect pests are above thresholds around the region, including a couple that tend to be more problematic later in the season.

Flea beetles

We often think of flea beetles as being more problematic earlier in the season, particularly on spring transplants. However, we have seen fairly large populations in Brassica fields in our region this month. Beetles chew holes in Brassica leaves leaving aesthetic and sometimes more serious damage (Fig. 1). I recently found that flea beetles were causing damage to Brussels sprouts along the stalk of the plant, likely reducing their marketability in the future. Flea beetles on Brassica vegetables appears on several product labels, including neonicotinoids, pyrethroids, carbaryl, and spinosad.

Cabbage aphid

This is a pest that you really want to catch and treat early. Cabbage aphids look a little different than other common aphids in that they are powdery gray. Because aphids reproduce clonally, their populations can build very rapidly. They are particularly problematic in fall Brussels sprouts because they can hide within the leaves of individual sprouts, protected from insecticide application. I find that cabbage aphid populations often start in the apical meristem (Fig. 2), and then the aphids move into the sprouts. They are very difficult to clean from the sprouts once established, and can render sprouts unmarketable. Assail, Admire Pro, Fulfill, Movento, Actara, and other insecticides may be used. For organic growers, alternating between M-Pede and Azera provides control if applications are made prior to heavy infestation. It is not uncommon to find mummified (parasitized) aphids. However, natural enemy populations in the environment, even when fostered by flowering habitat plants, rarely provide adequate control of cabbage aphids.

(Continued on page 3)
Imported cabbageworm (aka “cabbage whites”)

These caterpillars are green and very fuzzy in comparison with cabbage looper (Fig.3). Looking through a field, I often know if I’m going to see these caterpillars before I even examine the plants because I’ll usually see bright white butterflies flying in the field. These caterpillars will chew holes in foliage and heads, and will sometimes chew into Brussels sprouts along the stem of the plants. Bt products are quite effective for caterpillar pests of Brassicas and present minimal risks to beneficial insects. In addition to Bt, several other products are options as well. Treat if more than 35% of plants are infested before head formation, or if more than 15% of plants have caterpillars during head formation. Use lower thresholds for leafy vegetables.

Cabbage looper

Damage by cabbage looper is similar to imported cabbage worm. You’re more likely to see this pest later in the season compared with other caterpillars on Brassicas. Cabbage looper caterpillars (Fig 4) can be distinguished from imported cabbage worm by their striped appearance and sparse tufts of hairs, versus the densely hairy imported cabbage worm. Management is similar to other caterpillar pests.

Swede midge

This pest is very challenging to manage, particularly on organic farms late in the season after populations have been building since spring emergence. Swede midge is a tiny invasive fly (Fig. 5) that has been causing up to 100% losses of Brassica vegetables in the Northeast in recent years. Larval midge feeding results in blind plants and scarring within the growing point, as well as curled and distorted leaves (Fig. 6). In fall Brussels sprouts, the telltale sign of midge damage is a scar where the sprout would be (Fig. 7).

Unfortunately, there are no OMRI-listed insecticides that are effective for swede midge. Protecting fall Brassicas with fine mesh insect exclusion netting immediately after transplanting, or planting Brassicas as far as possible (>0.5 mi) from previously infested fields are the best courses of action for organic growers until we learn more about this pest. For conventional growers, treatment of seedlings with Assail or Admire Pro followed by Movento or Warrior is recommended in addition to crop rotation. Broccoli and cauliflower are susceptible to midge damage until head formation or until the first frost. Keep in mind that for heading Brassicas, midge damage is irreversible. Brussels sprouts can often grow out of damage as long as the apical meristem is not distorted.

Fig 3: Imported cabbageworm on kalette leaves alongside its frass (excrement).

Fig 4: Cabbage looper on kalette leaf.

Fig 5: Adult swede midge, approx. 2mm in length.

Fig 6: Lack of head formation, scarring, and twisting of broccoli due to swede midge.

Fig 7: Swede midge damage causes scars to form in place of sprouts along Brussels sprout stems.
Growers throughout Eastern NY are experiencing quickly escalating levels of Cercospora leaf spot in table beets. Often growers think of leaf spot as unavoidable, especially in red beets, but there have been some advancements in available controls and in resistant varieties to combat this disease.

First, let’s note that there are actually a couple of foliar diseases which affect beets. Cercospora leaf spot has a light tan lesion with a red ring around the outside. Another less common but also potentially damaging disease affecting beets is phoma, which lacks the red ring around the lesions and has concentric rings within the center. Both are illustrated in the image shown at the right.

Second, let’s note that in recent trials it has been demonstrated that these foliar diseases may not affect total yield of marketable roots. However, the lesions make mechanical cultivation difficult and make marketing bunches with tops on challenging. If you need the tops, management is a priority. If you don’t, it’s probably not worth controlling these foliar diseases.

Third, remember that any control program is going to work best if proper rotations are employed. Cercospora can live in the soil for 22 months, so a minimum of two years rotations (along with control of susceptible weeds—lamb’s quarter and pigweed).

These points noted, let’s focus on Cercospora management for today. We are fortunate to have a wonderful subterranean crops specialist at Cornell, Dr. Sarah Pethybridge. She recently completed efficacy trials on organic and conventional products for Cercospora management, so we have research-based information about which recent chemical and biological controls work.

For organic control of Cercospora, the most effective combination of products is copper octanoate + Bacillus amyloliquefaciens strain D747. Note, this is using both products tank mixed—the two used separately as a rotation were not as effective. The trial used Cueva and Double Nickel, but other formulations of copper and B. Amyloliquefaciens may also be effective. For conventional control of Cercospora, it is first important to note that strobilurins are no longer effective. The most effective controls now are Benzovindiflupyr + difenoconazole (Aprovia Top) or propiconazole (Tilt).

If you are not planning to do any chemical or biological control of Cercospora but value the beet leaves, you might consider looking into some different beet varieties. As a general rule, the lighter a beet is, the more Cercospora resistance is present. Chioggia, yellow and white beets all have nicer foliage than most red beets. Beyond that, look for varietal resistance. Old favorites like Red Ace and Ruby Queen are still largely unrivaled for root yield, but there is improvement in foliage with maintenance of nice roots. Look for a few new varieties and trial them on your farm this coming year.

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**Grants Available Now for Farmland Access, Transfer, or Conservation**

*Elizabeth Higgins, CCE Eastern NY Commercial Horticulture*

American Farmland Trust is accepting applications for *Putting Down Roots: Farmer Microgrants*. Microgrants of up to $2,500 are now available to support farmers in hiring professional advisor services to secure access to farmland, develop or implement farmland transfer plans or conserve their farms for agricultural use.

Applications, submitted to American Farmland Trust, will be accepted on a rolling basis until available funds are expended, but all services supported by the grant must be completed by December 31, 2019. The application can be downloaded at [http://bit.ly/2NB0wF1](http://bit.ly/2NB0wF1). For information about the program or to discuss project ideas, contact Tim Biello of AFT at (518) 581-0078 x305 or tbiello@farmland.org.

Information about the farmer microgrant was covered at this month’s Last Monday Grants for Fruit and Vegetable Farmers Webinar. The PowerPoint of the webinar, webinar recording and application form, and microgrant guidelines are all available on-line at [https://sites.google.com/a/cornell.edu/higgins/home/grants](https://sites.google.com/a/cornell.edu/higgins/home/grants). You can register for upcoming grant webinars or find information about grants that are available now or will be available in the future at that site. Registration information is also available at our team website [https://enych.cce.cornell.edu](https://enych.cce.cornell.edu). In September, I will be discussing the NYS New Farmers Grant Fund.
Preparing for the Fall Flight of Allium Leafminer
Ethan Grundberg, CCE Eastern NY Commercial Horticulture

The invasive fly pest, allium leafminer (ALM), has been established in the region since 2016 and has caused crop damage as far north as Washington County (see map for known distribution). In research trials, the fall flight has caused damage to over 98% of leeks that were not covered or managed with insecticides, so now is the time to prepare a plan for managing ALM on your farm!

Lifecycle: Though we still do not have accurate phenology models to allow us to predict the emergence of the fall flight, fall ALM adult activity has begun in mid-September the past two years (September 19th, 2017 and September 11, 2018), so we anticipate a similar emergence time this year. In 2018, adults were active at a research trial site in Ulster County for 7 weeks, or through the end of October. Emerged adults create the diagnostic line of oviposition puncture marks on allium leaves during feeding and egg-laying. Larvae that hatch from eggs eat their way down the inside of the leaves toward the bulbs opening up physical wounds where soft rot pathogens often enter. The larvae then pupate either inside the bulb and stem or in the soil around the plants for the winter and early spring. The spring generation typically emerges in mid-April and is active for about 5-6 weeks. We are actively scouting locations with known ALM infestations in an effort at early detection of adult activity this fall; watch for alerts from our team once we confirm the beginning of the fall flight.

Damage: Since there are typically fewer cultivated and wild alliums in the environment in the fall, growers in Pennsylvania and New York have experienced a “concentration effect” with their fall grown alliums. Leeks that were not treated with insecticides averaged almost 14 maggots per plant, with a high of 41, in research trials conducted by Teresa Rusinek and Ethan Grundberg in the fall of 2018. In that same trial, 98% of untreated leeks had at least 1 ALM maggot or pupae present in the plant.

Cultural Controls: The most effective strategy for limiting damage from ALM this fall is to use row cover before the flight begins on all alliums that still have lush green growth in the field (storage onions that are still field curing are not at risk) to prevent adults from landing on host crops. Growers have had success using insect netting, like Protek-Net, if you are concerned about heat stress associated with remay. Rusinek and Grundberg have also found that ALM severity was reduced by about 33% in both spring and fall scallions and well as fall leeks when those alliums were planted on reflective plastic mulch. However, fall leeks on reflective mulch in 2018 still had, on average, over 9 ALM maggots per plant, so using reflective mulch alone does not appear to provide sufficient suppression.

Chemical Controls: Dr. Brian Nault conducted insecticide efficacy trials in fall 2017 and the spring of 2018. Based on preliminary findings from those trials, it appears as if a number of conventional chemistries were effective at reducing damage from ALM on transplanted onions. Those included in the trials that are already labeled for leafminer management on leeks and green onions in New York include Trigard (cyromazine, IRAC Group 17) at 2.66 oz/acre, Exirel (cyantraniliprole, IRAC Group 28) at 13.5 oz/acre, Radiant (spinetoram, IRAC Group 5) at 8 oz/acre, and Agri-Mek (abamectin, IRAC Group 6) at 3.5 oz/acre (NOTE: Liriomyza leafminers only appear on the NY supplemental label for Agri-Mek SC). Growers who have been spraying leeks all summer for onion thrips need to make sure that they have not already reached the maximum annual application rate of products like Agri-Mek, Radiant, and Exirel (cyantraniliprole is also in the pre-mix product Mirecto Pro and counts toward maximum active ingredient application rates). Please note that there is a 7-day PHI for Trigard and Agri-Mek on bulb vegetables (including leeks, chives, and green onions) whereas Exirel and Radiant have a 1-Day PHI.

Organic growers unable to use row cover are encouraged to use Entrust (spinosad, IRAC Group 5) at the 6 oz/acre rate mixed with a 1%-1.5% v/v solution of M-Pede (potassium salts of fatty acids) for better penetration of the waxy cuticle. Given the resistance management restrictions on the Entrust label, growers are only able...
This week we saw a spike in the number of Corn Earworm moths compared to what we have been seeing—that means spray schedules may need to be tightened (see Table 1 below) or a change in insecticides might be needed. CEW is also different compared to the other sweet corn worm pests that we deal with because we actually use the trap catches to time our insecticide sprays unlike European Corn borer and Fall Armyworm in which we scout the corn and look for damage.

In my opinion, CEW is harder to deal with because the damage they cause occurs right in the very tip of the ear because they lay their eggs on freshly silking corn. As those eggs hatch, the larvae follow the silk channel to the tip of the ear and begin feeding, usually resulting in an unmarketable ear (and a nasty surprise when you open up the ear!). For this reason, it is very important that insecticide coverage be maintained in the ear zone on silking corn. Once they enter the tip of the ear they are very protected from insecticides. Coragen (Group 28) or Besiege (pre-mixes of Coragen and Warrior Group 28 + 3) and Radiant (Group 5) have longer residuals compared to straight pyrethroids used alone. The best control is to time the frequency of sprays based on moth counts being sure to target the ear zone in particular.

Remember, Coragen alone does not control sap beetles or aphids so you may need to add an additional material in the mix to control these pests. Warrior II, Grizzly, Artic, Mustang Max or Lannate will all control aphids and sap beetles. If you have not been using any Warrior II or other pyrethroids, consider adding them into your next worm spray or consider a specific aphid material such as Assail (1 DTH but a 7 DTH for Sap beetles).

### Corn Earworm Moths

**Chuck Born, CCE Eastern NY Commercial Horticulture**

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### Table 1: Average Corn Earworm moth pheromone trap catches during silk stage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Per day</th>
<th>Per 5 days</th>
<th>Per week</th>
<th>Days between sprays</th>
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<tr>
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<td>&lt;1.0</td>
<td>&lt;1.4</td>
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<td>0.5-1.0</td>
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<td>Over 91.0</td>
<td>3 days</td>
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</table>

Spray intervals should be lengthened by a day if daily maximum temperatures were less than 80°F for the previous 2 to 3 days.
How Do I Know When Winter Squash are Mature?

Chuck Bornt, CCE Eastern NY Commercial Horticulture

Here is the follow-up to last week’s “Is my winter squash ready” podcast. It’s getting to that time of year when squash vines start looking a little rough and it’s hard to tell if the crop that is on them is ready or not.

First, just because vines are going down does not mean the crop is mature – it could mean that the plant has succumbed to a disease or environmental factor etc. In the last couple of weeks I have seen a lot of bacterial issues including Angular leaf spot in many different vine crops. Typically immature winter squash will not store well and flavors may not be optimal. If the vines are dead, then the best thing to do is to harvest the squash if it is reasonably mature with reasonably good flavor. Leaving it in the field without living vines/leaves will not help them mature and in fact will probably result in more fruit loss - especially those whose rinds are dark in color like buttercup, kabocha, and acorn which are much more prone to sun scalding issues.

Fruit may become infected by soil dwelling pathogens like Phytophthora capsici or Fusarium, especially during rain events. As vines go down striped cucumber beetles and squash bugs will start directly feeding on fruit causing scarring damage but also opening up entry points for diseases. And not that you would think it today, but temperatures below 50 F cause chilling injury in many of these winter squash and reduce the storage potential and eating quality.

So how do you tell? Many of the dark skinned cultivars will have a nice dark orange spot of color on the side touching the soil surface including hubbard, acorn and kabocha/buttercup types. Sweet dumpling and Delicata wil also have that orange coloring on the bottom. Even the hybrid orange hubbards will have a different color on the bottom when mature. Butternut type will usually turn slightly darker tan, that is duller in color and will have a hard rind when they are mature that is difficult to penetrate with your thumbnail. For me, I also look to see if the green stripes that you normally see when it is younger have completely either faded or are hardly there. (Ed: you can also press your thumbnail into the skin on most winter squash, and if it still gives easily, the squash is not mature.)

Spaghetti squash – it is really important to handle this squash as gently as possible. These, buttercup and delicata, are notorious for not holding up. Part of the reason I think is because spaghetti squash is quite susceptible to blackrot issues (the fruit phase of the Gummy stem blight pathogen that produced those brown to tan colored rings that eventually turn grayish black). I feel that rough handling and bruising of this squash tends to result in higher levels of this disorder in storage. I also think we wait too late to harvest, so get out there and check to see if it has turned a nice yellowy tan color – if it has, get it out of the field, cured and into storage.

Pumpkins are a little bit different, but from what I have seen and been taught, pumpkins are mature when the handles are stiff. I know this does not sound like anything scientific, but I learned this from a cucurbit breeder long ago and it has seemed to make sense. Immature fruit will tend to have handles that seem a little bit “wobbly” compared to one that is mature and un-wobbly. This method usually works best on fields that have had a good fungicide program and do not have a lot of disease in them already.

Tips on harvesting and storing squash: These things are nothing new and really should be followed for all crops – including pumpkins!

- Handle squash as gently as possible to avoid bruising or cutting the skin. Wounds will allow soft rot bacteria and other disease to invade and reduce the storage life of your squash.
- As hard is it might be as the faster you move the more you pick up, instruct your help to “gently” place the squash in the bins/baskets. Do not throw or drop them in or if using buckets, just drop the buckets from the top of the bin! It only adds to the bruising and wounding that leads to more breakdown and lost storage potential!
- Avoid picking up squash that is wet with dews or recent rain. This increases the risk of pressure bruise and breakdown.
- If possible, try curing your squash to encourage cuts or bruises to heal over. Place in windrows in the field (this also allows the stem ooze to dry up) especially if the weather is going to be warm and dry for several days. However, this might be more difficult to do this early in the season, especially with upper 80’s and lower 90’s forecasted for this week. They can also be placed in a warm, dry atmosphere (70-80°F) with good air movement. Greenhouses or high tunnels with fans turned on and shade cloths would work nicely.
- Many growers will remove the stem especially from butternut and acorn. This practice helps reduce puncturing that can happen in the bins but squash should definitely be cured for up to a week before going into storage.
- Be sure not to pile squash too high in the bins especially if they will be stacked on top of one another. Pressure bruise is another way to decrease squash quality and storage potential.
- After curing, move squash or pumpkins to a dry, well ventilated, warm storage area. Store squash at 55-60°F with a relative humidity of 50-70%. If humidity levels are lower than that, moisture is removed from the fruit resulting in “pithiness” or shriveling. Humidity higher than that results in conditions that favor decay organisms. Avoid chilling injury by avoiding exposing squash to temperatures below 50°F in the field or in storage.
- Lower temperatures in the storage slowly so not to produce condensation on the fruit.
- And I know I sound like a broken record but one of my biggest pet peeves (yes, I have a few) is seeing bins and baskets of beautiful produce loaded on farm trucks or wagons and watching them bounced and jounced all over the place as the driver drives way too fast on farm roads! All of this movement can cause additional more bruising and wounding.
Clarification on Ag Labor Housing
Elizabeth Higgins, CCE Eastern NY Commercial Horticulture

If you heard last week’s Veg News podcast when it first came out – that’s great! Except that I would like to clarify some information that I provided on changes in the law new farmworker law affecting worker housing. On July 17th Governor Cuomo signed into law the Farm Laborers Fair Labor Practices Act.

The law includes the following language:

§ 9. Paragraph (m) of subdivision 5 of section 225 of the public health law, as amended by section 51 of part A of chapter 58 of the laws of 2010, is amended to read as follows:

(m) require that application be made for a permit to operate a farm or food processing labor camp as defined in the sanitary code; authorize appropriate officers or agencies to issue such a permit when the applicant is in compliance with the established regulations; prescribe standards for living quarters at farm and food processing labor camps, including provisions for sanitary conditions; light, air, and safety; protection from fire hazards; maintenance; and such other matters as may be appropriate for security of life or health, provided however, that the provisions of the sanitary code established pursuant to the provisions hereof shall apply to all farm and food processing labor camps intended to house migrant workers and which are occupied [by five or more persons]. ...

The change in the law is that it removes the language in the public health law restricting application of that law (regarding farm labor camps) to farms housing 5 or more workers.

The big error in the podcast was that I provided the regulations for the current law as the process that a small grower would need to follow, but new regulations still need to be developed for this change and it cannot be assumed that smaller farms will automatically be subject to the same regulations that governed farms with 5 or more workers. This is, however, something that growers that house 4 or fewer workers should be aware of as the details have yet to be determined and are unlikely to be in effect in the 2020 growing season. If I freaked you out during the podcast – I apologize.

Keeping Yourself Safe from Severe Weather
Crystal Stewart-Courtens, CCE Eastern NY Commercial Horticulture

We had an F-1 tornado go through my hometown of Johnstown last week. No significant damage, fortunately, but as I was watching the clouds left of the high tunnel stream west and the ones right of the tunnel stream east, and listening to the low rumbles building as the storm curled into a nasty little hook, I found myself thinking about farm safety and the ability of different structures to shield us from the weather. Of course a high tunnel is a terrible place to be during a tornado (yes, we left the tunnel), but what about during a thunderstorm? Is it safe to shelter in your car? It turns out that Growing For Market published a great article on this topic, available here: http://bit.ly/2ZoAtrI. I’m personally hoping to never have to employ the strategy which minimizes your risk of being struck in an area without cover—it sounds pretty awkward! But I’m glad to know what to do if I need to.

Corn Trap Counts

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