



Cornell Cooperative Extension

Eastern NY Commercial Horticulture Program

QUARTERLY HIGHLIGHTS

OCTOBER—DECEMBER 2022

Seed Production Support for Northeast Market Farms

Crystal Stewart-Courtens, Vegetable Specialist, and Natasha Field, Field Technician

Working with seed mentors in Maine, Pennsylvania, and here in New York, and based on the work of the Organic Seed Alliance, with support from Northeast SARE, Stewart-Courtens and Field are developing a seed production online course that covers the basics of seed production; details of economics and sales; and how seed production systems can develop in the Northeast. The course will kick off at the Northeast Seed Conference held Feb 2-5, 2023 in conjunction with the NOFA NY Winter Conference. After that, a seven week educational course begins on Feb 15th with weekly live meetings, online course content, and forums for discussion. During the course, the participants will be able to choose a crop to grow for seed in 2023 and after the course has wrapped up, receive mentorship, guidance and peer discussion during the growing season to successfully grow the seed crop. Participants in the course are being recruited right now, with more than 40 market farmers currently signed up and a final goal of 65 participants.

Alongside the market farmers, they will also be working with 30 Indigenous Seedkeepers from the region to assist them in growing out cultural crops and managing disease. The mentors are Amirah Mitchell of Sistah Seeds, Heron Breen previously of Fedco Seeds, Tina Square of the InterTribal Ag Council and Angela Ferguson of the Onondaga Nation. The seed course is also paired with seed production research held at Philia Farm in Johnstown, NY. Stewart-Courtens plans to run the course in 2024 as well with biennial seed mentorship and production stretching into 2025.

Using IPM to Reduce Stink Bug Damage in Champlain Valley Orchards

Mike Basedow, Tree Fruit Specialist

In February 2022, Mike Basedow was sent photos from a Champlain Valley orchard showing severe damage to WildTwist, a late-season apple variety. The grower estimated the damage was fairly widespread, and was likely to decrease his crop value. Mike was able to identify the injury as stink bug damage, and discussed the possibility of setting up stink bug traps during the 2022 growing season to monitor for stink bugs in the affected block. Mike planned to work with Janet van Zoeren (CCE LOFT) and Dr. Monique Rivera (Cornell University) on a stink bug research project through ARDP, and the Champlain orchard became another collaborating site. In July 2022, three stink bug traps were deployed at this orchard. These traps were checked weekly from July through late October. Overall stink bug pressure was relatively low in 2022, but there were a few weeks late in the season when stink bugs were being caught, and where stink bugs could be observed within the orchard. Mike and Monique gave management recommendations to the grower during these times, which the grower implemented. In late October, 200 fruit were harvested from the orchard. 100 were inspected for stink bug damage at harvest, while another 100 were stored for 5 weeks and subsequently rated for damage in September. 0% of fruit had stink bug damage at the October rating, and only 1% damage was observed at the December rating. While it is difficult to determine if this low level of damage was due to the management program, or from simply being a light year for stink bugs, the grower has much less stink bug damage than last year. We plan to continue monitoring for these pests in 2023 to help the grower keep his losses to stink bug to a minimum.



New England Vegetable & Fruit Conference Draws in Record Number of Attendees, Including Many New York Producers

Elisabeth Hodgdon, Vegetable Specialist



Hudson Valley producers present on growing Asian vegetables to a large crowd at the NEVFC in December 2022

After a three-year hiatus from its in-person format due to the pandemic, the New England Vegetable & Fruit Conference (NEVFC) was held on Dec. 13 – 15, 2022 in Manchester, NH. The conference experienced a record number of attendees, all enthusiastic to network and learn in-person. Thirty sessions and 15 farmer-to-farmer roundtables spanned the three days of the conference, covering vegetable, small fruit, tree fruit, cut flower, and other topics. Specialists from the ENYCHP, including Elisabeth Hodgdon, Teresa Rusinek, Ethan Grundberg, Mike Basedow, and Laura McDermott, participated as conference planners, speakers, and session moderators. The conference is an excellent professional development and networking opportunity for fruit and vegetable growers in eastern New York. This year, 70 registrants for the NEVFC were from New York, representing the Capital District, North Country, Hudson Valley, and beyond. The next NEVFC will be held in December 2024.

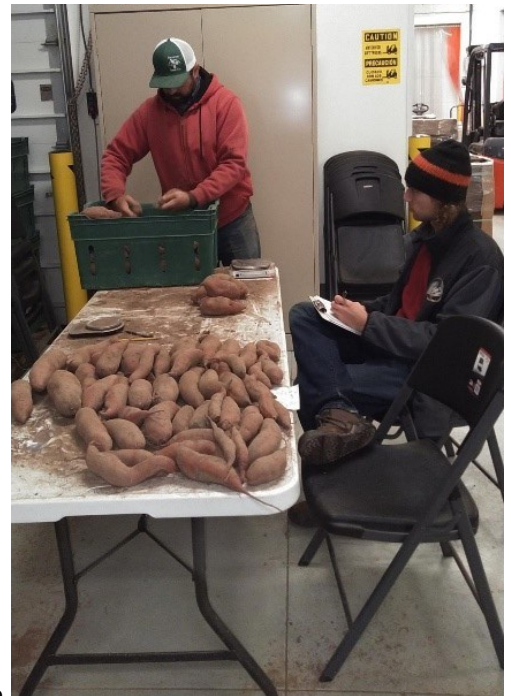
The Challenge Continues: Improving the Yield and Quality of Sweet Potatoes Grown in NYS

Chuck Bornt, Vegetable Specialist



Since 2012, Chuck Bornt has been working on different methods of improving sweet potato production in eastern NY and throughout the state. The project undertaken in 2022 at the Hudson Valley Farm Hub, located in Kingston, NY, involved the comparison of sweet potato slips grown with plastic mulches or bare ground in a raised ridge system. In addition, the team evaluated the difference between using slips that were grown at the Hudson Valley Farm Hub or those that were purchased from a commercial sweet potato slip producer in North Carolina. To produce our own slips in early March for late May cutting, we need to supply supplemental heat to the seeding beds. This has been the biggest challenge due to problems with heating mats working on GFI outlets. Chuck and the team were able to produce enough of slips to plant the trial, but not enough to be able to determine the feasibility of producing slips locally. Fortunately the

hot, dry weather during summer 2022 was excellent for producing sweet potatoes. Preliminary results suggest that producing slips on plastic produces more marketable roots compared to bare ground ridges. There does not appear to be a significant difference between slips produced locally and commercially produced purchased slips. Data is being analyzed and will be shared with growers throughout the state via our CCE ENYCHP Blog post.



Left: Covington sweet potato slips being grown in the greenhouse in Kingston, NY

Above: Sweet potato grading, December 2022

Farm Net Mental Health Training – Think CPR

Marie Ullrich, Vegetable Specialist

In late October, Maire, at CCE Orange County hosted a Mental Health First Aid training for farmer/farmworker service providers. These trainings are being hosted all over NYS state this Fall and into the Winter to educate providers. Just as CPR helps someone assist an individual having a heart attack, Mental Health First Aid helps assist someone experiencing a mental health or substance use-related crisis. In the Mental Health First Aid course, attendees learned risk factors and warning signs for mental health and addiction concerns, strategies for how to help someone in both crisis and non-crisis situations, and where to turn for help. There were 15 attendees at this program. Attendees came from a variety of agencies that serve farmers, farmworkers and others in the community.



CCE-ENYCHP Staff Host the 98th Cumberland Shenandoah Fruit Worker's Conference in Winchester, Virginia

Daniel J. Donahue, Tree Fruit Specialist

The 98th meeting of the Cumberland Shenandoah Fruit Workers (CSFW) professional organization was held on December 1st and 2nd of 2022 in Winchester, Virginia. CSFW membership includes academic faculty, extension educators, private consultants, and industry professionals working in the tree fruit industry from New York to Georgia with the goal of facilitating the dissemination of recent research and extension findings and experiences. In short, a fantastic networking opportunity for tree fruit professionals. The 2022 meeting was attended by 98 members and represented a return to an in-person format following successful "virtual" meetings in 2020 and 2021.

Cornell Cooperative Extension Eastern New York Commercial Horticulture Program (CCE-ENYCHP) tree fruit specialist Dan Donahue had been elected by CSFW membership to serve as CSFW President for 2022 and organize the 2022 conference. With the assistance of CCE-ENYCHP Fruit Technician Kaitlyn McNamee and members of the CSFW Executive Committee, Mr. Donahue assembled a program two plenary session speakers and 34 research presentations organized into concurrent session covering topics in Entomology, Plant Pathology, and Horticulture. Following the traditional "Call of the States" where participants make brief presentations describing their local growing season experiences, Ms. Diane Kurrle of the United States Apple Association and Dr. Clayton Meyers of the USDA made presentation on the current status of general federal agricultural policy as well as a more specific discussion of pesticide re-registration issues. Donahue and McNamee are currently in the process of editing the post-conference proceedings publication.

Feedback from attendees was positive and participation in the evening networking social was excellent. Clearly the CSFW membership was eager to return to the in-person format as demonstrated by attendance reaching pre-pandemic levels. The annual business meeting was well attended where work moved forward on the project to digitize the historical archive of conference proceedings as well as the plan to establish an award for the best presentation by a graduate student at the 99th conference to be held in December of 2023. Groundwork was laid for the celebration of the 100th meeting of the CSFW organization in December of 2024 .

Costa Rice Agritourism Tour

Laura McDermott, Berry Specialist

In early December 2022, Laura McDermott and 25 local farmers and ag industry professionals visited Costa Rica for a week of farm tours, international agriculture talks and relationship building. The group consisted of diversified vegetable farmers, orchardists, vineyard manager and winemaker, extension professionals, dairy farmers, beef farmers, thoroughbred horse breeders and a large animal veterinarian. Over the week the group visited a papaya collaborative farm, a large scale stockyard that was making compost, a protected culture berry and flower farm, an organic pineapple operation, a sugar cane and oil palm farm, and a coffee plantation. The post-survey tour revealed that 88.8% thought the tour was excellent and the remainder thought it was very good. All participants said they would go on a similar tour again, and most folks offered suggestions to where they would like to visit. A great aspect of the trip was getting to know other tour participants. It was great to have enough time to better understand how our own farms work, and sometimes it takes going elsewhere to make that happen.



Improving High Tunnel Winter Spinach Production

Teresa Rusinek, Vegetable Specialist

Leafy greens such as spinach can be prone to tipburn during winter production in high tunnels. Tipburn is often caused by inadequate transport of calcium to growing plant tissue at leaf margins. Affected tissue collapses and eventually becomes necrotic or "burned" looking. Vegetable specialists Teresa Rusinek, Ethan Grundberg, and Elisabeth Hodgdon have designed trials located in Northern NY and the mid-Hudson Valley, to test the effectiveness of foliar calcium applications in reducing tip burn on spinach. Two types of calcium supplements are being tested to determine which, if any, are more readily transported into leaf tissue. Calcium sprays are applied to plants at various time intervals over the production period to determine optimal application schedules. To monitor and compare the amount of calcium absorbed by the plants in each treatment, samples of the leaves are sent to Waters Ag Lab for analysis. Harvest evaluations are also conducted to compare yield from each of the treatments. Once all the data has been collected, the researchers will be analyzing it to determine if there is significant marketable yield increase and/or calcium absorption between any of the treatments. If this work is successful, it could markedly increase winter greens yield on farms across New York.

October—December 2022

285 Phone Consults

271 E-mail Consults

215 Farm Visits

20 Field Meetings

1478 Attendees at Field Meetings

19 Webinars/Distance Learning

234 Participants in Distance Learning

53 personalized, farm-specific vineyard reports addressing weather and pests—delivered to **194** growers for a total of

10,282 unique reports



The Eastern NY Commercial Horticulture Program is a Cornell Cooperative Extension partnership between Cornell University and the CCE associations in Albany, Clinton, Columbia, Dutchess, Essex, Fulton, Greene, Orange, Montgomery, Putnam, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schoharie, Ulster, Warren, & Washington.

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