

# Cornell Cooperative Extension

## Eastern NY Commercial Horticulture Program

# QUARTERLY HIGHLIGHTS

APRIL—JUNE 2023

### **E-Alerts Provide Timely Information and Guidance to Eastern New York Tree Fruit Producers**

*Dan Donahue, Tree Fruit Specialist*

The ENYCHP Tree Fruit E-Alert was introduced by our regional extension team during the 2014 season as a vehicle for communicating critical and time-sensitive information and guidance to our list of 743 tree fruit subscribers throughout our region. E-Alert articles are formatted with easy access and focused content in mind. Lengthy, “newsletter style” articles are saved for use in the Tree Fruit E-News. A short, concise bullet point format is encouraged. Over the years improvements have been made, including: Green, yellow and red color-coding of article titles to facilitate the rapid recognition of critical, time-sensitive guidance; A table of contents at the start of the email, and for the 2023 season the introduction of the “Industry Tech Talk” feature which showcases useful industry-sourced webinars and new product introductions. In keeping with the color-coding scheme, Industry Tech Talk article titles are presented in blue. The Tree Fruit E-Alert format has grown in popularity over the years. Our readership metrics consistently show that 10% of our subscriber list will open a new E-Alert within the first hour, with a total of 50% opening the email within 24 hours. E-Alerts are produced 24/7 on an as-needed basis. We see the response numbers regardless of the date or time of the release as our clientele seem to be “always on”!.

### **Evaluating Insecticidal Tools for Managing Seedcorn and Onion Maggot**

*Ethan Grundberg, Vegetable Specialist*

Since the insecticide chlorpyrifos was banned by the Environmental Protection Agency in 2021, onion growers have been concerned about how to best protect their crop from seed-corn and onion maggots in the spring. When left unmanaged, the two maggot species can reduce onion plant stands by up to 80% under severe pressure.



Vegetable specialist Ethan Grundberg worked with Cornell entomologist Dr. Brian Nault in the spring of 2023 to evaluate 12 different insecticide seed treatment combinations for their ability to suppress maggot populations in direct seeded onions in Pine Island, Orange County. Grundberg and Nault also collaborated to test the performance of two insecticides applied as tray drenches to transplanted onions in Orange County. Preliminary results from the research suggest that onion growers have several effective chemical control options for managing maggots in both direct seeded and transplanted onions; Grundberg will share these results with onion growers both at a field meeting in July 2023 and at the annual Orange County Onion School in March 2024. The field trials are funded in part by a three-year Federal Capacity Fund grant.

## Second Year Evaluation of Winter Protection Treatments on June-Bearing Strawberries at the Cornell Willsboro Research Farm

*Elisabeth Hodgdon, Vegetable Specialist*

In recent years, more strawberry producers in the Northeast have started using row cover in place of traditional straw for winter protection of June-bearing strawberries. Is strawberry yield influenced by row cover versus straw? ENYCHP specialists and technicians began working on an experiment to test the effect of overwintering materials on strawberry yield in 2021 as part of a multi-state SARE Research and Education Grant with the University of New Hampshire and University of Maine. The 2023 strawberry season was the second year of the experiment, conducted at the Cornell Willsboro Research Farm in Essex County. The experiment was also replicated at the UNH research farm in Durham, NH. In Willsboro, strawberries covered by two layers of 0.9 oz. row cover (with staggered application in the fall and staggered removal in the spring) were highest yielding in 2023, while those covered by straw yielded the highest in 2022. Other treatments in the experiment included a single layer of either 0.9 or 1.2 oz. row cover, two layers of 0.9 oz. row cover with staggered removal in the spring, and no protection (uncovered). Statistical analyses of the yield data from both the NY and NH locations are pending. We will prepare a report of the results for growers to be distributed in the ENYCHP research publication, as well as a scientific publication this fall. Other publications from the SARE grant included a report of our experiments testing low tunnels for June-bearing strawberries that was published in the Spring 2023 issue of Fruit Quarterly. The grant will conclude in November 2023.



*Program aide Jenn Stanton (left) and former specialist and volunteer Amy Ivy (right) harvest strawberries with specialist Elisabeth Hodgdon on June 21, 2023 at the Cornell Willsboro Research Farm.*

## New York Farm Viability Grant Studies Tarping for Small Scale Vegetable Growers

*Crystal Stewart-Courtens, Vegetable Specialist, and Natasha Field, Program Aide*

Many small-scale vegetable operations are adopting strategies combining cover cropping and reduced tillage (RT) practices to build soil health and adapt to climate extremes. While winter hardy cover crops can provide valuable soil health benefits for these farms, they are typically managed with intensive tillage to facilitate termination, incorporate residues, and increase nutrient availability ahead of cash crop planting. However, intensive tillage can decrease overall soil health by causing loss of moisture, organic matter and structure as well as causing compaction and soil pans. Tarping is an option for termination of cover crops, to reduce weed pressure and maintain soil moisture.

In 2023, Crystal Stewart-Courtens and Natasha Field installed two replicated tarping trials in Fulton County with cabbage and winter squash to determine the effectiveness of cover crop termination and nutrient cycling with tarping. Comparing four different treatments of cover crop and tarping combinations, some interesting observations have already been made with the weather extremes that Eastern NY has been experiencing this spring. The cabbages will be harvested in late July and the winter squash will be harvested in late September. After harvest, yield and quality will be evaluated and shared with stakeholders at winter meetings, in the newsletter, and in our 2024 research publication. A field meeting will be hosted in mid-July.

*This work is funded by a grant from New York Farm Viability Institute.*



*Pre-plant tarping of field (above, left); Cabbage planting in previously tarped block (above, right).*

## Enhancing Agricultural Workplace Excellence: ASL Certificate Program Update

*Elizabeth Higgins, Business Management Specialist*

ASL 105 Employee Development and Training was offered in March and April 2023, attracting a diverse group of 42 participants. Four of these attendees hailed from Eastern NY, 64 percent were from New York and the rest came from other states. The program's inclusive nature attracts applicants from all sectors of agriculture, regardless of farm scale. The online course is enhanced by weekly zoom meetings of participants with opportunities for discussion with peers.

The ASL Certificate Program is a comprehensive series of six online courses designed to foster effective leadership, organizational excellence, and an empowered workforce within the agricultural industry. The Ag Supervisory Leadership (ASL) Certificate program has seen a remarkable response since January 2021. We have held ten classes to date, and a total of 254 managers enrolling. Liz Higgins from the Eastern NY Commercial Horticulture Team, has been instrumental in the development of all six courses, and is an instructor in the program. The program offers valuable insights and practical tools for supervisors or managers in the agricultural sector. These courses are thoughtfully designed to empower agricultural supervisors and managers with the skills needed to create a positive work environment, support the growth of their team, and ensure excellence in agricultural operations.

Mark your calendars for future sessions:

1. ASL 101 | Transitioning to Supervisor: Held January 2023, next session date TBD.
2. ASL 102 | Organizing Work for High-Quality Results: Next session November 2023.
3. ASL 103 | Managing Performance: Next session March 2024.
4. ASL 104 | Staffing and Organizing Your Team: Running in June-July 2023, next session date TBD.
5. ASL 105 | Employee Development and Training: Held March 2023, next session date TBD.
6. ASL 106 | Ethics and Employment Regulations for Supervisors (New Class!): Next session January 2024.

Stay tuned for further updates, registration details, and exciting additions to the ASL Certificate Program, including the introduction of the series in Spanish, coming this fall!

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## Thinning Apples at 20mm with the New Thinning Product “Accede”

*Mike Basedow, Tree Fruit Specialist*

Thinning apples is one of the most challenging decisions an apple grower makes. Every May they run the risk of thinning too little and having small, low quality fruit which triggers a light bloom the following spring. If they thin too much, there will be few fruit on the trees, yields will be low, and fruit will be large and less likely to store as well.

Thinning is usually accomplished with chemical applications when fruitlets are between 6 mm and 14 mm. This usually gives growers two application windows to achieve their desired level of fruit thinning—not much at a time of year when the weather is often uncooperative. Valent recently introduced a new product, called Accede, which is based on the plant hormone ACC. This product is unique in thinning materials, as it can thin fruit up to 20mm, which provides a third application window.

In 2023, Mike Basedow set up three thinning trials in the Champlain Valley to investigate the efficacy of ACC applied at the 20 mm timing. Applications were made to commercial blocks of Gala, Honeycrisp, and Macoun. Despite the spring freeze, we were able to adapt our treatments so that we could still determine thinner efficacy. While it is too early to determine treatment differences, it looks promising that trees thinned with Accede are lighter than our control treatments. We plan to host a field workshop at our Gala site in mid-July, and will collect yield, fruit quality, and return bloom data this fall and in the spring of 2024 respectively. We hope to repeat these applications over the next two years, so that we can get a clear picture of how this material works under different weather scenarios.

*This work was funded by a grant from the Northern New York Agricultural Development Program.*

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## Vegetable Specialists Tackle Tomato Yellow Shoulder Disorder

*Teresa Rusinek and Ethan Grundberg, Vegetable Specialists*



New York State ranks #2 in the US for number of farms growing in protected settings with a total of 489 farms and a value of sales at \$28,590,555. Tomato crops are commonly grown in high tunnels and can provide high economic returns; however, growers must maintain high yields of quality fruit. Tomato yellow shoulder is a common disorder that can be exacerbated in the high tunnel growing environment. ENYCHP vegetable specialists Teresa Rusinek and Ethan Grundberg are investigating if foliar potassium applications in conjunction with reflective plastic mulch that cools soils thus improving root function and potassium uptake, can reduce occurrence of yellow shoulder. Ripe tomatoes are harvested and evaluated weekly. Data will be analyzed at the end of the growing season.



**April—June 2023**

**653** Phone Consults

**480** E-mail Consults

**462** Farm Visits

**18** Field Meetings

**398** Field Meeting Attendees

**26** Webinars/Distance Learning

**658** Distance Learning Participants

**32** Tree Fruit E-Alert reports addressing  
weather and pests—delivered to **806**  
growers



*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, Schoenectady, Schoharie, Ulster, Warren, & Washington.*

**Cornell Cooperative Extension**  
Eastern NY Commercial Horticulture Program

99 Troy Road  
East Greenbush, NY 12061  
518-272-4210  
enych.cce.cornell.edu

