

Cornell Cooperative Extension

Eastern NY Commercial Horticulture Program

QUARTERLY HIGHLIGHTS

JANUARY—MARCH 2024

Bolstering the Potential of New Farmers: Cornell Small Farms Online Courses

Laura McDermott, Small Fruit Specialist; Mike Basedow, Tree Fruit Specialist; Liz Higgins, Ag Business Specialist; and Natasha Field, Program Aide

The [Cornell Small Farms](#) programs' online beginning farmer training courses provide an important opportunity to reach new, potential farmers in our region and beyond. The ENYCH team is actively supporting this effort by leading a variety of 6-week courses offered entirely online throughout the winter months. Each course runs for ~6 weeks and includes weekly live webinars, recordings of those webinars, online discussion forums, and extensive resources available only to enrolled students. Students have access to the course for years after and are allowed to attend future versions of the same course. Instructors interact with the students throughout the course via email, forums, and live discussions during the webinars.

The courses are geared to beginning farmers and most students are from New York, although other states and even other countries are often represented. This year, Mike Basedow worked with Janet van Zoeren from CCE LOFT and taught 94 students about Tree Fruit Production. Natasha Field, Laura McDermott, and Anya Osatuke, CCE Harvest NY offered a brand-new course on Unusual Berry Crops to 24 students. Elizabeth Higgins routinely provides a business management lecture during the beginning berry, vegetable and fruit courses – an extremely important lecture for new farmers. Retired team member Amy Ivy taught 2-3 different vegetable and berry production classes per year – even after retirement! Crystal Stewart and Ethan Grundberg have also taught courses in the past, and other staff have been guest speakers in courses. Many of our local farmers have been tapped to be guest speakers at these and have been extremely well received. Students appreciate the first-hand perspective. The online courses began in 2012 and ENYCH staff has been involved with the effort since then. An estimated 1800 students have been served just by the courses our staff instructed.

The process of educating new farmers relies on knowledgeable and experienced instructors. The Cornell Small Farms program provides financial support to our program for instructors' efforts and the ENYCH staff is happy to be able to participate. For more information about the online programs visit: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ki8-S5HA950>.



CCE Eastern NY Fruit and Vegetable Conference Continues to Grow!

Chuck Bornt, Vegetable Specialist

On February 22 and 23, 2024, the CCE Eastern NY Horticulture Program held its annual Fruit and Vegetable Conference at the Crown Plaza Desmond Hotel and Conference Center in Albany, NY. This conference draws tree fruit, small fruit, grape and vegetable growers from the Capital District region as well as from Canada, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut and Long Island and speakers this year were from across the region, Central NY, New England and right here locally. In addition to two full days of educational presentations in tree fruit, small fruit, grapes and vegetables, the program also included a full day of agritourism programming and new this year, a cut flower session. The trade show included 48 paid vendors, one complimentary vendor (CCE Harvest Connections) and 6 conference sponsors (\$1,000 each). 2024 registrations were the highest yet with 318 attendees on day 1 and 266 on day 2 with a net profit of approximately \$7,000 (not all expenses have been paid as of the day this was written). Dates have been set for the 2025 Eastern NY Fruit and Vegetable Conference and we hope to include more specialty sessions like 2024 as well as our anchor educational sessions such as tree and small fruit, vegetables and grapes.

Produce Auction Expansion Continues in Eastern NY

Crystal Stewart-Courtens, Vegetable Specialist

The Mohawk Valley Produce Auction in Montgomery County is completing another infrastructure expansion this spring and is welcoming new growers who have relocated to the area and new buyers from Vermont, Connecticut, and Long Island. This expansion will bring revenue into multiple counties in our region and signals continued strengthening of the local food system.

In order to serve this expanding piece of the industry the team is providing extensive education and outreach. This winter we hosted a grower meeting with over 115 attendees who learned about food safety, pumpkins, tomatoes, and nutrient management. This spring and summer two field meetings are scheduled in the region to provide continuing education credits and valuable information about vegetable production. Crystal also holds weekly office hours at the auction on Wednesdays from 9:30-10:30. This allows many growers to bring samples and ask questions in person, and allows her to provide weekly educational updates.

The Mohawk Valley Produce Auction is open Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from mid-April through Mid-November, and is located at 840 Fordsbush Road, Fort Plain. All are welcome to attend.



Improvements in Tree Fruit Extension Outreach and Content Creation for the 2024 Season

Dan Donahue, Tree Fruit Specialist

Electronic (print) tree fruit extension outreach in Eastern New York has changed in recent years to take better advantage of the evolving media consumption preferences of our clientele. Our growers are switching from conventional print to electronic delivery via email messaging, blog posting, and podcasting. Our tree fruit extension outreach is constantly changing to better meet these changing media preferences.

ENYCHP Tree Fruit E-Alerts provide focused and actionable information and guidance in a fast-reaction email format. The ENYCHP Tree Fruit News Blog allows us to publish in-depth information and analysis, including graphics, in a searchable format. Faculty at Cornell AgriTech and the New York State Integrated Pest Management Program (IPM) are producing a weekly podcast called "Scaffolds" which offers growers and industry professions with an overview of timely tree fruit industry issues. To serve our information consumers who prefer to read rather than listen to the podcast, our team publishes a weekly transcription of the podcast in the Tree Fruit News Blog.

The ENYCHP team held two meetings in March to foster greater coordination and cooperation within the ENY region. The Cornell Hudson Valley Laboratory has embarked on a rebuilding effort that includes the hiring of two new professionals, a plant pathologist and entomologist, who will be providing expert guidance to our growers via ENYCHP extension media outlets. For the first time in the 4-decade history of the NYS IPM Program, the Tree Fruit IPM Coordinator is now based at the Hudson Valley Laboratory instead of AgriTech in Geneva, a very welcome change that provides increased extension outreach value to our ENY growers. Along with the content provided by our Harvest New York Extension Climate Specialist based in the Hudson Valley, another new position, our tree fruit extension team will become even stronger and will provide improved educational and information services to growers in Eastern New York State.

Virtual Workshop Held for Food Safety Educators and Regulators Working with Plain Sect Growers

Elisabeth Hodgdon, Vegetable Specialist

On March 20, CCE regional specialists Lindsey Pashow, Robert Hadad, Crystal Stewart-Courtens, and Elisabeth Hodgdon organized an informational webinar for food safety educators and regulators who work with Amish and Mennonite produce growers. The virtual workshop was sponsored by a USDA Food Safety Outreach Program (FSOP) grant awarded to the group of specialists (PI Lindsey Pashow). The objective of the workshop was to bring together professionals from across the country to share their experiences working with Plain Sect communities. Elisabeth and Robert shared outcomes of the FSOP grant, including the development of a culturally appropriate food safety curriculum that will be shared through the Northeast Center to Advance Food Safety Clearinghouse. Speakers from the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets and the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture discussed their approaches to working with Amish and Mennonite growers from a regulatory perspective. The last portion of the program included break out rooms in Zoom that allowed groups of participants to share their lessons learned and strategies in navigating cultural differences and improving food safety adoption amongst Plain growers. 42 participants attended the workshop from across the country, and 93% reported having learned something during the workshop that they will use in their future outreach with the Plain population. The FSOP grant continues this growing season and will fund the project team's continued work with Plain communities, including twilight meetings, food safety trainings, one-on-one farm visits, and further refinement of the adapted food safety curriculum.

Multiple Avenues of Pruning Outreach for ENY Apple Growers

Mike Basedow, Tree Fruit Specialist

While snow covered apple trees evoke a quieter time in the orchard, winter is prime time for the annual task of pruning. Growers prune trees to remove the dead and diseased wood within the orchard, and to open tree canopies up to more sunlight, which encourages the production of higher quality fruit in the following growing season.

Pruning can be a daunting task. New growers are often nervous about where to begin, while experienced large-scale wholesale orchards are looking to reduce their labor costs and teach their new crews how to prune as efficiently as possible.

To help growers of all sizes, ENYCHP offered multiple pruning workshops this winter. On March 1st, we held a beginning cider apple pruning workshop at Scrumpy Ewe Cider in Schoharie County. The group learned to prune high and medium density cider apple trees from Dr. Greg Peck. This meeting had about 25 attendees representing all orchard sizes and experience levels.

On March 18th, we held a “Labor Efficient Pruning” event in Clinton County. Dr. Terence Robinson walked attendees through pruning with labor efficiency in mind, and discussed his most recent work looking at precision crop load management. We also discussed labor saving tools like mobile pruning platforms and mechanical hedgers. The meeting concluded with a live demonstration of Chazy Orchards’ two hedging units. This meeting was attended by 30 people from apple orchards around the Champlain Valley, and even Vermont, Quebec, and Ontario.

For those unable to attend the meetings in person, we worked with Dr. Peck to develop a short series of cider apple pruning videos. We now have six videos on pruning high density cider apples, each video focusing on a specific variety (Porter’s Perfection, Harrison, Binet Rouge, Harry Masters Jersey, and Piel de Sapa). While these are all cider varieties, the videos all contain pruning principles that can be applied to fresh fruit varieties as well. The full playlist can be viewed on our team YouTube channel here: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLk2Q-bw9Aiu5YI18-cLnOr1eT0WHZZLx>

In addition to these videos, we have also written two blog articles discussing pruning considerations for the region, both of which can be accessed on our blog at the following links:

<https://blogs.cornell.edu/enychp/tree-fruit/apples/2024-intentional-delay-of-dormant-pruning-for-honeycrisp-other-important-biennial-cultivars-fuji/>

<https://blogs.cornell.edu/enychp/uncategorized/performing-floral-bud-evaluations-on-honeycrisp-ahead-of-precision-pruning/>

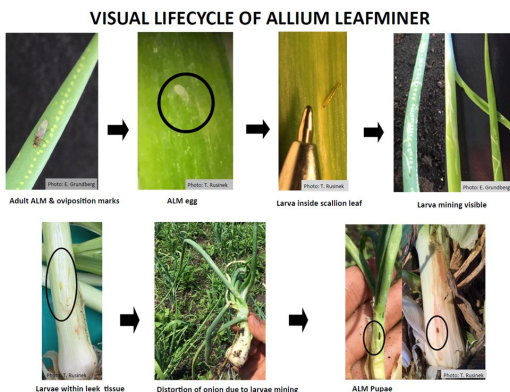


Earliest Detection of Spring Allium Leafminer Activity

Teresa Rusinek, Vegetable Specialist

Allium leafminer was first detected in New York in the Hudson Valley in the fall of 2016. Since then, vegetable specialists Teresa Rusinek and Ethan Grundberg have been monitoring and documenting the emergence, distribution, and damage caused by this invasive pest. This year, the spring emergence of adult ALM was detected on March 29th in a patch of cultivated chives growing in Ulster County. This is the earliest ALM has been detected in the Hudson Valley. Timely emergence information is critical for allium growers so they can take actions to prevent damage to susceptible allium crops such as onions and garlic. Alerts containing detailed management recommendations are posted on the ENYCHP blog and emailed to farmers. See <https://blogs.cornell.edu/enychp/category/vegetables/>. In addition, Rusinek and Grundberg continue to refine ALM management options for organic and conventional growers by conducting field trials on cooperating farms throughout the Hudson Valley.

Summary of ALM Emergence by Date and Growing Degree Days (GDD)



	Spring Emergence*	GDD**	Fall Emergence*	GDD**
2017	April 20	368	Sept. 19	4216
2018	April 27	190	Sept. 11	4271
2019	April 15	196	Sept. 9	4077
2020	April 8	223	Sept. 8	4137
2021	April 9	193	Sept. 3	4057
2022	April 12	203	Sept. 12	4327
2023	April 5	185	Sept. 6	3986
2024	March 29	171		

*Emergence dates based on observations in Mid-Hudson Valley, New York

** GDD derived from Mid-Hudson NEWA weather stations using Base 40, accumulated from Jan.1

January—March 2024

224 Phone Consults

263 E-mail Consults

84 Farm Visits

36 Field Meetings and Trainings

2258 Meeting and Training Attendees

44 Webinars/Distance Learning

1739 Distance Learning Participants

12 Tree Fruit E-Alert reports and **5** blog articles were delivered to **768** growers;

6 Veg News were delivered to **573** ENYCH subscribers;

3 Grape News were delivered to **303** growers;

1 Berry News was delivered to **617** growers;

The Business Report: The Bottom Line was launched and was delivered to **1755** ENYCH subscribers;



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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