

Cornell Cooperative Extension

Eastern NY Commercial Horticulture Program

QUARTERLY HIGHLIGHTS

APRIL—JUNE 2024

Introducing ENYCHP's New Berry Specialist!

We are happy to announce that Heather Kase was recently hired and will be joining the ENYCH team as Extension Associate Berry Specialist starting July 1. Heather brings a wealth of knowledge and experience working with growers across the Northeast as a technical sales rep for BioBee. she is a well-rounded agriculturalist with specialties in pesticide science, soil fertility, plant physiology, experimental design, plant disease management, and documenting change through evaluation/accountability. Heather has a master's in plant health management from Ohio State University and bachelor's degree in environmental biology from SUNY ESF.

Heather will be housed at the Highland Research Lab in Ulster County. Heather's email is hjk77@cornell.edu.



Spanish Language Integrated Pest Management Twilight Meeting in Orange County

Ethan Grundberg, Vegetable Specialist

As the number of Spanish-dominant owner-operators continues to grow in the Hudson Valley, there is an urgent need to provide the same type of science-based technical support in the preferred language of our stakeholders. Vegetable specialist Ethan Grundberg partnered with CCE Orange County's Raul Lemus Garza and the Glynwood Center for Regional Food and Farming to host Dr. Alejandro Calixto, director of the NYS Integrated Pest Management Program, Leonardo Salgado, PhD student in entomology, and Kensy Rodriguez, PhD student in plant pathology for a Spanish language vegetable pest and disease management twilight meeting on June 13, 2024. The program was hosted by Mimomex Farm on the black dirt in Orange County and attracted over 20 participants. The successful collaboration catalyzed interest in pursuing supplemental funding from the regional Integrated Pest Management centers DEIA mini grant program to offer additional Spanish language IPM trainings; Raul Lemus Garza submitted the proposal and secured \$5,000 for the team to offer two additional in-person trainings and to provide additional technical support to Spanish-dominant vegetable growers in the region.



Wine Faults Workshop

Jeremy Schuster, Viticulture Specialist

Bad wine can be found in every wine region worldwide, including the Hudson Valley. In an effort to increase the quality of wine produced in the Hudson Valley, In April, we coordinated a Wine Faults Workshop with Cornell enologist Anna Katherine Mansfield and Chris Gerling, hosted at Milea Estate Winery. This workshop was developed to assist winemakers in identifying not only wine faults but also what caused them. Many winemakers in the Hudson Valley are new and may not have previously had the opportunity to learn about different common wine faults in a controlled setting.



The 16 attendees learned what a supertaster is and if they were one.

They also had the opportunity to smell several common wine faults, know what caused them and how to avoid them, and learn more about their sensory thresholds and sensitivities. With the growing concerns of wildfires due to climate change, we discussed the effects of wildfire smoke on wine and the risk of smoke taint on the 2023 vintage. Research was also presented on the potential for terpene taint, a wine taint from cannabis plants grown near vineyards. The study showed no potential taints from cannabis terpenes.

This workshop was the first collaboration with the Cornell Craft Beverage Institute held in the Hudson Valley in recent years and was very well attended. Seven different wineries, vineyards, or county extension associations were represented, and the attendees' experience ranged from novice to 30-plus years of winemaking experience.



Helping Orchards Battle Perennial Weeds with On-Farm Field Research

Mike Basedow, Tree Fruit Specialist

In January 2021, apple growers across New York were surveyed about which weeds they most struggled with. The resounding answer was perennial weed species. In 2023 and 2024, Mike Basedow and Janet van Zoeren have been working on an ARDP funded project to better time systemic herbicide materials to help growers better manage bindweed, Canada Thistle, and Quackgrass. Over the two year research period, we have set up replicated, on-farm field trials in Eastern and Western NY, and are now beginning to develop recommendations for growers across the state. To date, we have learned that:



- The products Select Max and Poast do a very good job of cleaning up quackgrass in orchards under high pressure. Three applications, alternated with burndown materials over the course of the growing season, did a great job of reducing quackgrass stands in our trial sites.
- A single application of Stinger applied to the herbicide strip shortly after petal fall did as good or better of a job as two half rate applications at controlling Canada Thistle. We recommend growers save the labor time and only do one application. A single application post-harvest in the fall will also provide good control going into the following growing season.
- A fall application of Unison and Stinger does a great job of cleaning up broadleaves like vetch, clover, dandelion, dock, and plantain in the row middles, but it at best stunts bindweeds. Additional applications of other materials at other timings are likely going to be needed to get it under control.

To learn about these studies, and many non-herbicide control measures, two field days were held at orchards in June 2024, one at Meads Orchard in Tivoli on June 20, and at Northern Orchard in Peru on June 21. Growers learned about the herbicide trials, but also learned how to identify weed species, and novel weed control methods, including automated robotic weeders, tractor mounted electrical weeders, and tractor mounted mechanical weeders.

When this ARDP grant ends, we anticipate submitting a proposal to further study mechanical weeding technologies during the 2025 growing season, as more growers are now asking for additional, non-herbicide options. Having these projects and field meetings will ultimately give growers more tools to better manage their orchard weeds, increasing their long-term profitability and sustainability.

Strawberry Research Continues at the Willsboro Research Farm

Elisabeth Hodgdon, Vegetable Specialist

Plasticulture strawberry production has been increasing in popularity in the Northeast in the past decade, particularly amongst organic growers. Growing strawberries in plastic mulch offers benefits for weed control and early ripening. In most parts of the country, plasticulture strawberries are an annual crop. Many growers, however, are interested in keeping their strawberries for multiple years to make the most of their investment in the crop's establishment. At the Cornell Willsboro Research Farm in Essex County, we tested whether renovating plasticulture strawberries to matted row could increase yield in comparison to maintaining the plants in plastic beds for a second year. Last year, we renovated strawberries at the farm by removing plastic from one half of the plots, allowing runners to set, while the remainder of the plots were maintained on black plastic mulch. In June this year, we harvested berries from the plots and compared yields. For all three varieties of strawberries grown in the trial, yield was higher in plots converted to matted row. In one particular variety, AC Wendy, yield was nearly three times higher in the matted row plots versus the plasticulture plots. Allowing the runners to set within the bed where plastic was removed allowed for more fruiting potential, and crowns were less crowded within the bed compared to the plasticulture plots.



The experiment was replicated at the University of New Hampshire and was funded in part by a Northeast SARE Research and Education grant awarded to UNH scientists and ENYCHP specialists Elisabeth Hodgdon and Laura McDermott.

Improving the Federal Crop Insurance Program for Onion and Cabbage Growers in New York

Liz Higgins, Ag Business Specialist

Elizabeth Buck (Cornell Veg Program), Liz Higgins (Eastern NY Commercial Hort), and Christy Hoepting, (Cornell Vegetable Program) organized and hosted a farm tour and grower meetings with onion and cabbage growers in Western NY at the end of June, at the request of USDA Risk Management Agency (RMA). Their goal was to better understand onion and cabbage production in New York State and get feedback on changes to crop insurance that are under consideration. RMA is the agency that oversees the federal crop insurance program. Maire Ullrich, of CCE Orange County provided additional feedback on conditions faced by Orange County onion producers for the meeting. RMA staff are aware that the federal crop insurance programs are not working well for NYS onion and cabbage growers and are looking to make changes to the program to make it a stronger safety net.



One challenge is the lack of good data on costs of production for onions and cabbage in New York. Because federal crop insurance is required by law to actuarially sound, this data is necessary RMA to have in order to justify programmatic changes. Higgins, Buck, Hoepting, Ullrich, and Ethan Grundberg have a cooperative agreement with RMA to develop those budgets. That contract is in the final stages and should start this winter. With this information, and the input of growers, the outcome should be an improved crop insurance program.

Hudson Valley Agritourism Meeting

Maire Ullrich, Vegetable Specialist

A Hudson Valley Agritourism Networking Session was held in June in Ulster County. It was a cooperative program with Orange (Maire), Ulster (Uliana), and Sullivan (Melinda) county offices with HarvestNY to discuss the opportunities and concerns with opening a farm to any or all of the agritourism ventures. The Hurd Family was generous to host the meeting and give the group a tour of the many things they offer on their farm. Other farmers who have unique offerings or great experience added to the panel. Ulster County Tourism and ILOVENY also presented some tips for bringing in crowds and keeping returning customers satisfied.



Spotted Wing Drosophila (SWD) Monitoring Key to Management Success

Laura McDermott, Small Fruit Specialist, and Anna Wallis, NYSIPM

The 2024 growing season looked quite different than 2023 for many reasons, but one was the early onset of SWD on eastern NY farms. SWD first captures were reported **the week of 5/27 in Albany and Dutchess Counties**. First captures were reported **the week of 6/3 in Clinton, Columbia, and Washington Counties**. These were some of the very first locations in the state reporting captures.

First captures in 2024 were earlier than has been reported in previous years, this is especially true compared to the 2023 growing season, where first trap captures were recorded nearly two weeks *later* than average. This highlights the need for site and season-specific monitoring efforts to initiate management programs at the appropriate time.

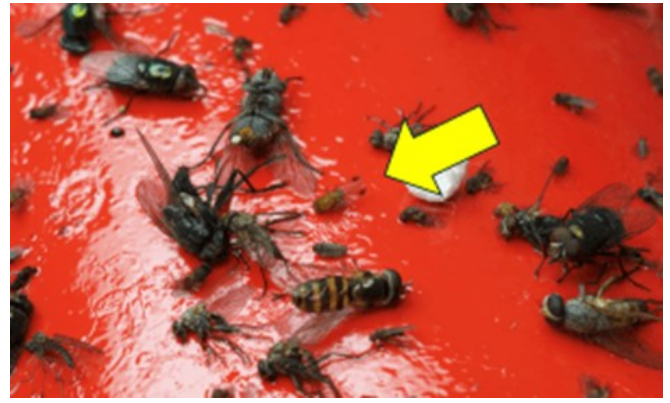


Photo: Male SWD

Credit: A. Wallis

We attribute early trap captures primarily to environmental conditions. In 2023, the spring was cool and dry, conditions less conducive to insect development. In 2024, most of New York State experienced a mild winter, with early warming. (Degree day accumulations have been as much as two weeks earlier than 15-30-year averages). In addition, greater than-average precipitation has been recorded across the northeast.

Site-specific monitoring is also important to account for microclimates that exist from site to site, and the impact on insect development. New this year, the new [Berry Pest Monitoring Network and Map](#) display more precise locations, as compared to county level reporting in the past. This will help account for local microclimates.



Photo: Dr. Binita Shrestha with vial of SWD insect predators ready to release on eastern NYS berry farm.

Site-specific monitoring will succeed only if there are trained CCE staff or farmers that can conduct a wide-ranging monitoring program. CCE ENYCHP staff can support the NYS IPM program led by Dr. Anna Wallis in this effort. NYS Dept of Ag and Markets has provided economic support for this work.

Further work on SWD management is being done by Dr. Greg Loeb and Dr. Binita Shrestha at Cornell AgriTech. They have been working to evaluate sustainable alternatives to insecticides for long-term SWD management by improving biological control using native and exotic natural enemies. Two of these natives were released on eastern NY farms this spring. Monitoring of the environmental adaptation success of these predators will be ongoing.

After many great years in local Extension and on the ENYCH team, Laura McDermott retired at the beginning of July. We want to thank her for all her contributions—as a thorough researcher, as a critical extension agent for many farmers, and as a thoughtful team leader.

We will miss you and have a good retirement, Laura!

April—June 2024

607 Phone Consults

443 E-mail Consults

624 Farm Visits

40 Field Meetings and Trainings

982 Meeting and Training Attendees

27 Webinars/Distance Learning

494 Distance Learning Participants

32 Tree Fruit E-Alert reports were delivered to **748** growers;

5 issues of Vegetable News were delivered to **552** ENYCH subscribers;

6 Business Report: The Bottom Line was delivered to **1388** ENYCH subscribers;

3 Grape News reports were delivered to **293** fruit growers;

And **7** Berry News e-newsletters delivered to **592** 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, Schoharie, Ulster, Warren, & Washington.



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