

Q1 2025

Quarterly Highlights

The Cornell Vegetable Program (CVP) is a Cornell Cooperative Extension partnership between Cornell University and CCE Associations in 14 counties: Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie, Genesee, Monroe, Niagara, Ontario, Orleans, Oswego, Seneca, Steuben, Wayne and Yates.

The team of Vegetable Specialists provides educational programs and information to growers, processors and agri-business professionals, arming them with the knowledge to profitably produce and market safe and healthful vegetable crops.



Canned samples of beans from the dry bean variety trial were opened and rated at the NYS Dry Bean Meeting and Cutting Event in March. See page 3 for details.

974
farm visits and
direct contacts

56
events &
presentations
featuring CVP
Specialists

3,057
people
attended CVP
presentations

Long-term Field Research in New York Leads to International Recognition

It takes time. University-level field research and pest management strategies develop over years. In the past 5-7 years, Senior Extension Educator and Cornell Vegetable Program (CVP) Specialist Christy Hoepting has conducted local, on-farm research to address the major issues facing onion and brassica growers in the CVP region.

- ✓ Stemphylium leaf blight (SLB) of onion
- ✓ Bacterial bulb rot of onion, the archnemesis of onion growers
- ✓ Alternaria leaf spot (ALS) and head rot of broccoli (applicable to other brassica crops)
- ✓ Finding cheap, easy and effective alternatives to chlorpyrifos insecticide for managing cabbage maggot in transplanted cabbage.

Although new discoveries are made every year in her research trials, it takes several years to develop comprehensive and robust management strategies for these pest issues. The emphasis of Christy's research is on pesticide use as she digs deep into developing programs and strategies, and early detection of fungicide resistance for New York growers.

As a testament to the high quality and pragmatic nature of her research and the expertise that Christy has developed in these subjects, she was in high demand for the winter grower educational circuit. In January, she travelled to northern Denmark where she was a keynote speaker at their onion grower conference. She gave a presentation on managing SLB and then participated in a panel discussion about the subject. Then, she travelled to southern Sweden where she gave presentations at a brassica grower conference on ALS in broccoli and cabbage maggot. In February, she travelled to southern Ontario, Canada to give presentations on these same topics to brassica growers. Unfortunately, bacterial bulb rot of onion was a problem during the 2024 growing season, so Christy was invited to give webinars on the topic to small-scale onion growers in Michigan and Vermont, and to large-scale muck onion growers in Quebec, Canada. She also presented management strategies for SLB to the Quebec growers. In New York, she presented to Mennonite growers on ALS in broccoli at the Ontario Produce Auction in Stanley, to muck onion growers on SLB in Orange Co., and on bacterial bulb rot in Oswego Co. In total, she gave 12 presentations in 4 countries reaching 208 onion and 286 brassica growers and several allied industry representatives. Plus, the recording of the Vermont onion bacterial bulb rot presentation later got 126 views (as of April 14). All time well spent!



Vegetable Specialist Christy Hoepting with a Washington State onion grower and fellow speaker at conferences in Scandinavia in January 2025.

Winter Meetings for Potato and Dry Bean Growers

In February, potato growers came back together for the 2025 NYS Potato School organized by the Empire State Potato Growers with help from the Cornell Vegetable Program. Attendees met for the two-day conference in Waterloo, NY to hear from speakers that travelled in from across the country to speak on a variety of potato-related topics. Representatives from Potatoes USA shared national updates. Growers heard talks on a wide range of topics, including updates from potato processors, potato storage, national chip trials, herbicides, Potato Virus Y, early blight, and data driven decisions for potato production. Attendees also had the opportunity to mingle with each other and processors at the Potato Grower-Processor Dinner on the first night of the conference. Overall, around 120 potato growers and industry members attended this year's Potato School, and the feedback was very positive. Both growers and processors were excited to be back together, and farmers went home with new information they plan to implement on their farms.

In March, dry bean growers got together for the annual NYS Dry Bean Meeting and Cutting Event held in Geneva, NY. In the morning, growers heard industry updates as well as research updates from Cornell and CCE about on-going dry bean research funded by the Dry Bean Endowment. This year's presentations covered topics including breeding and evaluation, dry bean variety trial results, white mold control, western bean cutworm management, and insecticide efficacy. After lunch, attendees were encouraged to attend this year's cutting event, where canned samples of beans from the dry bean variety trial were opened and rated. We had 30 attendees at this year's meeting, and a record number of growers stuck around for the cutting event in the afternoon.



Farm Food Safety Educational Outreach through GAPs

Calls for information on food safety practices for the small farm community were quite heavy during the winter. Informational requests on setting up wash/pack spaces and operation were high on the list. There were plenty of questions on what the difference was between food safety practices for produce production vs produce processing was also high.

Because a NY Grown and Certified grant program required produce farms applying for the grants to have a Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) audit, there were many calls from across the region and beyond for GAPs trainings to be held. Two virtual trainings were held in this quarter with growers signing in from Monroe, Ontario, Wayne, Seneca, Erie, and Chautauqua counties as well as from a number of counties across the state. More than 40 farmers tuned in.

In February, three lunchtime virtual presentations were held each Tuesday over three weeks, sponsored by the Center for Development of Agricultural Entrepreneurship (CADE). Topics covered were related to the federal produce safety regulations and what it means for small farms, overview of New York State on-farm food processing regulations, and using traceability for more than food safety. Fifty-three attendees listened in and asked a lot of questions.

The need for food safety information seems to be gathering a new audience we have not encountered in the past. Expectations are that with growers trying to attract new markets, more interest will be focused on intertwining food safety in with their farm production and marketing practices.

Adoption of Soil Best Management Practices Can Lead to Healthier Soils, Crops, and Bottom Line

As part of a USDA Conservation Innovation grant, Cornell Vegetable Program (CVP) Educators Judson Reid and Lori Koenick are conducting research on three management approaches for vegetable farmers with high organic matter soils: pH adjustment, cover cropping, and calibrating soil test results to account for bulk density.

Soil microbial activity and diversity associated with the adoption of these techniques are expected to be in correlation with crop health and farm viability. Farmers who adopt Best Management Practices (BMPs) are expected to experience healthier soils and crops.

Indeed, current research confirms increased crop health with mixed species cover crops via higher nutrient uptake. Specifically, we have observed higher potassium levels in tomatoes in our higher performing treatments. Potassium is a critical nutrient for fruit number and quality in tomatoes, and a deficiency can make a difference in profitability. For this data to improve farm economics, we aim to drive on-farm adoption through a vigorous outreach program. Quarter 1 of 2025 saw this vigorous outreach in action as presentations were made to nearly 500 growers across a number of meetings:

- ✓ Finger Lakes Produce Auction 140+ in attendance
- ✓ Ontario Produce Auction 90+ in attendance
- ✓ Growers Crop Expo 200+ in attendance

As our outreach program winds down, we will now begin Evaluation. Impact will be quantified through an Evaluation Plan with measures to document the implementation of BMPs including pH management, bulk density interpretation and/or cover cropping, lab data on microbial communities; crop health as measured by foliar nutrient status and yield; and farmers' knowledge on how to manage high organic matter soils in both urban and rural settings.

Thanks to our cooperating farmers in the CVP counties!



Cover crops help improve soil organic matter without adding unnecessary nutrients.



Judson Reid and cooperating farmer in Yates County incorporate a cover crop in a high tunnel research site.

Processing Vegetable Industry Convened at March Meeting

Seventy-two members of the processing vegetable industry who grow, manage or support crop production for Nortera Foods (formerly Bonduelle North America), Seneca Foods and/or Love Beets USA participated in the NYS Processing Vegetable Industry Meeting on March 11, 2025 in Batavia, NY. Michael Gardinier, VP of Operations for Farm Fresh First and Chair of the NYS Vegetable Research Association & Council reported that five research projects were funded by the Association in 2024 for a total of \$141,718. The research funding comes from grower contracts with the processing companies and is matched by Nortera Foods and Seneca Foods. Commodity managers for green peas, snap beans, sweet corn, beets and carrots provided an update on the 2024 growing season and any issues that were encountered. Research presentations followed and included topics on variety trials, slugs, insect management in sweet corn & snap beans, disease management in carrots and beets, detection and management of tar spot in sweet corn, and weed management with herbicides or new methods such as laser weeders, and other robotic weeders. A wrap-up period provided industry members time to voice their concerns and set priorities for research. A mid-morning “What’s New from Industry?” session gave the nine meeting sponsors an opportunity to thank their customers and talk about the latest developments from their company. Joe Palmer from Nutrien Ag Solutions commented during the session that this is his favorite meeting of the year because of the wealth of practical information provided. The meeting was organized by the CCE Cornell Vegetable Program Processing Vegetable Crops Specialist, Julie Kikkert.



Conference Energizes Urban Growers in Rochester and our Region

On March 22, over 230 growers gathered at the 2025 Rochester Urban Agriculture Conference and Seed Swap, an event organized by the Urban Agriculture Working Group (UAWG) with assistance from the Cornell Vegetable Program and Harvest NY. The UAWG, a collaborative group of urban agriculture stakeholders in Rochester, has organized a spring conference for the last 9 years that brings together local gardeners and farmers for a day of celebration, connection and skill sharing. Attendees came from Rochester, Buffalo, Syracuse and surrounding areas.

This year’s event featured 11 interactive workshops, 17 tabling organizations, and a guided seed swap. Workshop topics ranged from building healthy soils, to managing rats and other pests, planting an orchard, to organizing community gardens, and more. New this year, there were two workshops presented in Spanish. The guided seed swap, a highlight of the event, was led by Petra Page-Mann of Fruition Seeds and brought attendees together in gratitude and reflection. Midday lunch, provided by Rochester Supper Club, allowed for joyous networking.

Event feedback has been very positive. In a post-event survey, attendees commented that they appreciated the knowledgeable presenters, the resources shared and ample time for networking, the energy in the room, and the clear event organization. Considering the overwhelming interest and response this year, the UAWG looks forward to expanding capacity and offerings next year!

Newly Funded Grants & Projects

Your Trusted Source for Research-Based Knowledge

Managing the Invasive Swede Midge on Organic and Urban Farms

Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) – Research and Education Grant Program, 3/1/2025 – 11/30/2028, \$249,392 (\$79,818 for CVP), (Hodgdon, Hoepting, Koenick)

Improving Management of Stemphylium Leaf Blight in Onion

New York Onion Research and Development Program (NY ORDP), 4/1/2025 – 3/31/2026, \$34,550 (\$32,127 for CVP), (Hoepting, Hay)

Late-Season Applications of Pre-Emergent Herbicides for Extended Weed Control Through Harvest in Muck-Grown Onions

New York Onion Research and Development Program (NY ORDP), 4/1/2025 – 3/31/2026, \$29,545 (\$15,879 for CVP), (Hoepting, Grundberg)

Evaluating the Potential for Seed Treatments to Reduce the Incidence of Bacterial Bulb Rots in Muck Grown Onions

New York Onion Research and Development Program (NY ORDP), 4/1/2025 – 3/31/2026, \$21,500 (\$10,993 for CVP), (Grundberg, Hoepting)

Seed Treatment Packages that Protect Bulb Onions from Early-Season Pests and Diseases

New York State Specialty Crop Block Grant, 1/1/2025 – 9/29/2026, \$99,993 (\$28,535 for CVP), (Nault, Hoepting, Grundberg)

Effective Alternatives to Lorsban for Cabbage Maggot Control in Transplanted Cabbage

New York Cabbage Research and Development Program (NY CRDP), 4/1/2025 – 3/31/2026, \$12,142 (all for CVP), (Hoepting, Nault)

Integrating the Fungicide, Cevya, into Management Programs for Foliar Health of Table Beet in New York

New York Vegetable Research Association, 4/1/2025 – 3/31/2026, \$13,800, (Pethybridge, Kikkert)

Susceptibility of Sweet Corn Varieties to Foliar Diseases

New York Vegetable Research Association, 4/1/2025 – 3/31/2026, \$13,900, (Pethybridge, Kikkert)

Towards an Integrated Disease Management Program for Watermelons in NY

Towards Sustainability Foundation, 2/1/2025 – 1/31/2026, \$10,945, (Pethybridge, Kikkert)

Preparing Sweet Corn Growers for the New Kid on the Block: Tar Spot

New York Farm Viability Institute, 4/1/2025 – 3/31/2027, \$124,999.76, (Pethybridge, Kikkert, Buck)

Creating Active-Learning, Grab n' Go Pesticide Safety Education Modules and Toolkits

Northeast Extension Risk Management Education, 4/1/2025 – 9/30/2026, \$74,996, (Buck, Barkley, Miller)

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