



**Cornell University**  
 Cornell Cooperative Extension  
 Eastern New York Commercial Horticulture

# 2016 Year in Review

*The Eastern NY Commercial Horticultural program welcomed two new regional specialists to our area during the past year. Elizabeth (Liz) Higgins joined the team in early September and Ethan Grundberg began work in the lower Hudson Valley in early August.*



Liz Higgins has experience in rural economic and community development as the director of the Center for Rural Development at Louisiana Tech University and most recently worked with Cornell Cooperative Extension in both Ulster and Sullivan Counties as a program leader in Nutrition and Consumer Programs, Watershed Management and Agriculture and Natural Resources. Liz will be providing research and extension support to growers in Eastern New York in farm business management, business planning and risk management and agricultural economics.



Ethan Grundberg received his Master's degree at the University of California, Davis specializing in agroecology and vegetable production. While there, he managed some of the university's certified organic research land and provided instruction in safe equipment use to student employees. Upon graduation, he returned east to work for the New Entry Sustainable Farming Project. Most recently, Ethan worked as the farm manager at Allandale Farm, a 40 acre diversified vegetable farm in eastern Massachusetts. Ethan will be based out of the CCE Orange County office in Middletown.

*"I have always enjoyed my involvement with [ENYCP]. Much of my success growing was a result of what I learned from Cornell."*

- George Armstrong  
 Retiring ENYCHP Grower

*"Thank you for keeping growers informed"*

-Anonymous Responder  
 Newsletter Survey 2016

*"Applied research is our top priority, we have so many issues to resolve"*

-Advisory Committee  
 Member / Local  
 Tree Fruit Grower



## 4,800 people attended 144 field meetings in 2016

The second annual field cultivation equipment demonstration twilight meeting was held at the Poughkeepsie Farm Project in October. Nearly 40 attendees had the opportunity to see seven different specialty cultivating tools in action. This includes homemade sweeps on a toolbar to a high-tech HAK steerable hoe. Growers discussed the timing of their use as part of a broader weed management plan. Farmers in attendance also shared their own experiences with the equipment to better inform off-season tool purchases for different soil types and production systems.



As a follow up to Chuck Bornt's participation in a three day northeast regional SARE workshop, he along with Dr. Paul Salon, a Northeast Soil Health Specialist with USDA NRCS and Dave Wilson, a former agronomist with King's AgriSeeds, put together a SARE proposal for a cover crop demonstration trial that was accepted and received funding. The purpose of the demonstration trial was to expose growers to new cover crops or multi species mixes that are becoming increasingly popular, but are still not common or mainstream with most growers. In total over 40 different crops were planted. By incorporating different species and mixes at different times we are hoping to determine which ones might perform better under our climatic conditions.

Photos from a field meeting held at Stanton's Feura Farm to highlight this work and educate growers in October. Further presentations on this research will take place at the ENYCHP Winter Schools in 2017.







**A tomato trial field testing new hybrid lines developed for commercial release by Dr. Mutschler of Cornell University was conducted in partnership between ENYCHP and the Hudson Valley Farm Hub this summer.** These lines have been bred for resistance to Late blight, Early Blight and Septoria. Dr. Mutschler's new hybrid crosses were screened to eliminate undesirable traits such as radial cracking and small fruit size. Field trials at the Farm Hub and other locations (Freeville, Riverhead) allow us to evaluate disease resistance levels, overall fruit quality and yields as well as to select superior lines.

On August 31, 2016, growers from around the Hudson Valley region gathered at the Farm Hub to see how the varieties performed this growing season. Dr. Margaret McGrath from the Cornell LI Research Lab in Riverhead and Teresa Rusinek led groups through the trial and answered questions. Afterwards, growers enjoyed a tomato tasting that featured several new Brandywine Hybrids with disease resistance developed by Dr. Mutschler.

## 2,156 Farm visits were conducted throughout 17 counties

**A 'perfect storm' of weather events this spring caused an epidemic of Fire Blight, a bacterial disease, in the Champlain Valley.** While it has previously been reported in this region, in most seasons conditions are not conducive to infection, and growers have virtually zero experience managing it. **Extension responded with farm visits to diagnose disease, e-Alert notices detailing management strategies, consulting with experts and individual farmers to provide recommendations, a fire blight workshop in early August to provide an overview of the circumstances and management strategies.**

Over 20 site visits (including repeat visits) were made to provide diagnostic and management recommendations, each with follow-up emails and/or phone calls. At least 10 growers received site specific recommendations. New research experiments were established on commercial farms and at the HVRL. Extension specialists and faculty are currently drafting proposals to fund research in fire blight biology and management, directly related to this season's problems.







**Farmer training programs throughout eastern NY continue to expand to meet a growing need to train the next generation of farmers.** CCE is being sought as a resource to help with this training now more than ever. This year our team contracted to teach 120 hours of educational programming at the Hudson Valley Farm Hub to the Pro-Farmer Program; taught two workshops for Stone Barns Internship Training; co-taught a beginning farmer workshop at Glynwood's farm incubator; taught a Farm Beginnings workshop for Grow NYC; and six educators were involved in teaching 4 beginner farmer webinars. These relationships allow us to reach farmers at the beginning of their careers, providing research-based information and also solidifying Extension as a trusted source of advice for people entering farming.



Harvest data from an ongoing Cornell Cooperative Extension ENYCHP field research study showed an extremely high incidence of the calcium deficiency "Bitter Pit" in Hudson Valley Honeycrisp apples in 2016, with the potential for substantial economic losses to producers if the crop was placed in cold storage for later sale. Growers were promptly notified of the research findings via an email blast with recommendations on how to mitigate potential losses. **Producers/marketers who followed the CCE ENYCHP guidance may have saved \$2,000 - \$3,000 per acre in some orchards.**

**76 webinars were presented to 1556 participants**

**1,300 readers received 160 ENYCHP newsletters and e-alerts in 2016**



Throughout the summer of 2016, prices of different commodities from weekly farmers' markets were aggregated, averaged, summarized and provided to growers in ENY. After completion of data collection, analysis of the data was performed and shared at the 2016 Agriculture and Food Systems In-Service at Cornell University. **This data helped determine an average market-clearing price for different geographical regions and allowed farmers to maximize their revenue streams by making better informed business decisions.**