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Fruit Notes

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Cornell Cooperative Extension
Lake Ontario Fruit Program

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Volume 24 Issue 3 March 21, 2024

Spring Has Sprung in Late Winter Yet Again

Craig Kahlke, Mario Miranda Sazo, Janet van Zoeren, Terence Robinson, Liz Tee

Unfortunately, we find ourselves in a similar situation to 2012, when we had green tip on most varieties by March 18-19. This year some varieties at inland sites have already reached 50% of buds showing green tip by this past Sunday & Monday (3/17 & 3/18). For the immediate future, we expect cold/snow and temperatures maxing out in the 30's, which should result in minimal bud development through the rest of this week. Next week's forecast predicts a mild warmup with a few days calling for highs in the mid to upper 50's (3/26-/28), and lows in the upper 30's and lower 40's at night. If the forecasts holds, we will see further bud development later next week.

Please be aware that this season, some varieties may be achieving budbreak out of their usual sequence. For instance, we typically see McIntosh leafing out slightly ahead of Gala and Honeycrisp. This season, we are seeing Macs behind these two cultivars in some sites. Thus it's very important to scout all of your blocks for bud stage in preparation for cover sprays.

There have been some advances in frost protection in recent years, along with some promising new research that is ongoing. [We plan to have a statewide frost protection webinar this season, prior to the pink stage.](#)

Stay tuned to our email announcements, Fruit Facts, and newsletters for further updates.

This Early Spring Read, Highlight, and Study the New Fruit Quarterly Article Titled "Management of 'Honeycrisp' Apple Trees for Maximum Sustained Yield and Minimal Bitter Pit"

Mario Miranda Sazo and Craig Kahlke

The recent 2024 spring issue of the *Fruit Quarterly* (FQ) magazine (Vol 32 Number 1, Spring 2024) includes one of the largest and more comprehensive 'Honeycrisp' articles published in the last 20 years. There is a significant amount of new Cornell research and recommendations for optimal 'Honeycrisp' management to reduce bitter pit. For years, the Cornell 'Honeycrisp' research and extension program led by Cornell faculties Dr. Terence Robinson, Dr. Lailiang Cheng, and Dr. Chris Watkins, and in close collaboration with the CCE LOF team, have successfully worked together and now have published a very 'grower friendly' article to successfully manage the low vigor and very problematic 'Honeycrisp' apple blocks in NY State. The new article provides extensive technical information based on more than 20 years of research trials at Cornell AgriTech and at grower farms and covers the following topics : (1) rootstock selection, (2) preplant soil preparation, (3) annual fertilization of young and mature blocks, (4) mid-season fruit peel sap analysis for managing 'Honeycrisp' nutrition, (5) irrigation management, (6) foliar calcium spray, (7) peel sap nutrient analysis as a valuable tool for managing bitter pit, (8) pre-harvest applications of PGRs, (9) crop load management via precision pruning and precision chemical thinning, (10) return bloom management, and (11) finishes with a summary that puts together all the new research-knowledge for optimal and more profitable 'Honeycrisp' apple production. The FQ article should be used as a practical field guide for 2024 and beyond. Also of note, there is still a



significant amount of more Cornell research being conducted with 'Honeycrisp' and new publications that will be available this year.



A Spanish pruning crew is introduced by Mario to the precision pruning technique in a young block of 'Honeycrisp' on G.935 this past Monday March 18. They are learning why it is important to intentionally delay the last pruning cut decisions until early spring, and can now correctly assess (not guessing anymore!) if a bud is vegetative or floral when counting buds/tree (photos courtesy: David Bittner).

New York Farm Labor Union Update, Part 3

Bonnie Nelsen, LOF Program Business Management Specialist

Note: This article is provided for educational purposes only and is not a substitute for legal advice.

Implementation of card check procedures in union organizing, a practice intended to ease organizing and increase union membership, makes a proactive approach to educating workers about unions imperative. Employers must be prepared to answer questions from workers and explain the risks of unionization. But what can and can't farm employers do and say?

This article, the last in a three-part series, will outline steps for developing a union strategy for your farm. There is no "one-size-fits-all" union strategy. Each employer's approach reflects their values, opinions, and operational needs. These steps will help you establish a unionization strategy that's a good fit for your farm.

Step 1: Create a Great Working Relationship with Workers. The most effective way to avoid unions is to not create a need for them in the first place. Employees who have a positive relationship with employers are seldom motivated to join unions. Instead, workers join unions after trying—and failing—to resolve work-related problems directly with their employer (Orechwa, 2023).

Creating positive employee relations requires that employers, farm managers, and supervisors be open and honest with workers, listen actively and respond to worker complaints, provide equitable wages and good living conditions, and treat workers with dignity, fairness, and respect (Orechwa, 2023).

Step 2: Understand what you can say and do. Both state and federal labor laws establish rules that employers and unions must follow during union organizing (Stup, 2021). One set of rules specifies what employers can legally do and say. The acronym **F-L-O-P** outlines what employers and managers can legally say and do about unions and unionization:

- The "F" stands for facts about unions, which can be shared with employees provided they are verifiable through public resources. Resources include but are not limited to ([Orechwa, 2023](#)):
 - ◆ Websites of labor law firms
 - ◆ Substantiated news reports
 - ◆ Federal and state government websites
 - ◆ University websites (<https://agworkforce.cals.cornell.edu/category/employment-law/unions-and-collective-bargaining/> and <https://migration.ucdavis.edu/rmn/>)
 - ◆ The NYS Public Employment Relations Board (<https://perb.ny.gov/>)
 - ◆ Federal agencies like the National Labor Relations Board, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Department of Labor, Internal Revenue Service and EEOC

- ◆ Union websites (United Farm Workers- <https://ufw.org/>)
- ◆ The Center for Union Facts (<https://www.unionfacts.com/>)

A sample of facts about unions, union organizing, and the United Farm Workers is included in this article.

- The “L” stands for legal representation which helps you protect your employer’s rights. State and federal labor laws allow you to obtain legal counsel and communicate your rights to employees.
- The “O” stands for your opinions about unions. It’s legal for farm employers and managers to state why they believe unions are unnecessary. Your opinions and views form the basis of your philosophy about unions.
- The “P” stands for personal experiences with unions and examples of union involvement. Because farm organizing is new in New York state, few employers will have prior experience with unions. However, some may employ workers who were union members in prior jobs. These individuals can legally share their personal experiences with or opinions about unions.

Step 3: Understand what you cannot say and do. State and federal labor laws also establish rules about what employers and unions cannot do and say—these are called **unfair labor practices or ULPs**. Abiding by these rules will keep you on the right side of the law and go a long way toward maintaining positive employee relations.

The acronym **T-I-P-S-D** outlines what employers and managers cannot legally say and do about unions and unionization (Orechwa, 2023; Stup, 2021):

- The “T” stands for threats. Employers cannot threaten workers with adverse action if they unionize. For example, an employer cannot threaten to close the business if workers organize or “blackball” workers who have signed union cards.
- The “I” stands for interrogation. Employers cannot interrogate employees about their union activities. For example, they cannot ask employees questions such as, “Did you sign a union card?” Or “Why are *you* interested in joining a union?”
- The “P” stands for Promise. Employers cannot promise benefits to employees who refuse to sign union cards or avoid union activities. For example, they cannot promise a reward to employees who refuse to sign union cards or inform about pro-union coworkers.
- The “S” stands for spying. Employers cannot legally conduct surveillance of employees who are engaged in union activity. For example, they cannot monitor a building where a meeting with union organizers is being held to identify employees who attend. Meetings located at on-farm worker housing should not be monitored even if the building is on farm property (this is allowed if workers have limited ability to travel to off-farm meetings).
- The “D” stands for discrimination. Employers cannot legally discriminate against workers who support or assist unions (in this context, discrimination refers to unfair treatment). For example, employers cannot assign pro-union workers fewer work hours or more difficult work tasks as a sort of “punishment.”

Step 4: Teach your supervisors and managers the FLOP and TIPS-D rules. Farm managers and supervisors, including H-2A employees, are **agents** or legal extensions of the employer. Consequently, they must abide by the rules of FLOP and TIPS-D. Employers will be held liable for any unfair labor practices committed by their managers and supervisors even if ULPs are committed unwittingly and without the employer’s knowledge. For this reason, it’s important to educate managers and supervisors about what they can and cannot do and say about unions before they communicate with farm workers. Spend time training supervisors about FLOP and TIPS-D rules and engage in role playing to test their understanding. Employers should correct a manager or supervisor who commits a ULP (even if it is unreported to the NYS Public Employment Relations Board) and let workers know that the action was neither condoned nor representative of management’s intentions. This promotes a sense of honesty, transparency, and good employee relations.

A detailed list of TIPS-Ds-related activities that should be avoided (they are **ULPs**) is attached to the end of this article. You may wish to use this list when training farm managers and supervisors.

Step 5: Develop Your Farm’s Philosophy on Unions. The court’s decision on February 21, 2024, gave farm employers the right to share their philosophy about unions and employee unionizing with workers. Articulating your philosophy (*and writing it down*) is important—it’s the basis for all union-related communication on your farm. A philosophy is a position statement describing your beliefs and opinions about unions and unionizing in clear, concise terms. It should describe how you feel about unions, your views on the need for unionized labor on your farm, and your intended response to organizing and collective bargaining. To be effective, your philosophy must be authentic—no one will take a philosophy seriously if it contrasts sharply with the employer’s words and actions.

Many people assume that unions are bad for business and should always be resisted. But employers take varied approaches to

unions and organizing (Bahar and Kochan, 2023). For example, some tell workers that they're willing to work with unions in good faith if employees truly want to organize. Others say nothing, choosing to remain silent before and during the organizing process. Most commonly, employers are opposed to unions and actively discourage unionization in their business (this is sometimes called **union busting**). Regardless of your position, be prepared to openly state your philosophy and explain your position.

Step 6: Communicate Your Farm's Philosophy on Unions. Communicating your philosophy to workers is extremely important! You can share your position on unions and unionizing, facts about your business and the union, and opinions about the risks of unionization in a way that supports your perspective. Let employees know the company's desire to maintain a direct connection with them without making them feel threatened. Be sure farm managers and supervisors understand your union philosophy and encourage them to discuss it with workers. Some employers don't know what to say and thus tell supervisors to stay quiet when workers ask about unions—this is a missed opportunity for educating workers!

Employers should communicate their philosophy on unions repeatedly and often. You can communicate in many ways, including posters in the workplace and labor housing (in multiple languages, as appropriate), direct mailing, handouts, email and instant messaging, digital apps, pages on farm websites, videos, podcasts, and group meetings (Orechwa, 2023). One-on-one conversations are always a good way to share your view. New-hire orientation is an excellent time to share your company's philosophy. To promote good employee relations, workers should be compensated while attending mandatory group meetings on unionization.

References

Bahat, Roy E. and Kochan, Thomas A. (2023) "How employers should (and shouldn't) respond to union organizing." Harvard Business Review, retrieved from [How Businesses Should \(and Shouldn't\) Respond to Union Organizing \(hbr.org\)](https://hbr.org/2023/01/how-businesses-should-and-shouldnt-respond-to-union-organizing).

Greenhouse, Steven (2023) "Union wins at New York farms raise hopes for once-powerful UFW." The Guardian, retrieved from [Union wins at New York farms raise hopes for once-powerful UFW | US unions | The Guardian](https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/mar/15/union-wins-at-new-york-farms).

Orechwa, Walter (2023) "What are employers rights during union organizing?" Projections, Inc. retrieved from <https://projectionsinc.com/unionproof/union-organizing-30-things-employers-can-do/#:~:text=Employer%20rights%20during%20union%20organizing%20include%20making%20a%20union%20unnecessary,union%20and%20anti%20union%20representatives>.

Stup, Richard (2021) "What farm employers and managers can and cannot say." Cornell Agricultural Workforce Development, retrieved from [What Farm Employers and Managers Can and Cannot Say About Unions, 2021 | Cornell Agricultural Workforce Development](https://www.cornell.edu/workforce-development/what-farm-employers-and-managers-can-and-cannot-say-about-unions-2021).

Hiring Asylees into Agriculture and Food Manufacturing Jobs Webinar on April 5

Rich Stup, CCE Ag Workforce Development

Cornell Agricultural Workforce Development, Cornell Small Farms, and Dairy Foods Extension to host "Hiring Asylees into Agriculture and Food Manufacturing Jobs" webinar on April 5, from 11 AM -Noon. New York City has experienced an influx of asylum seekers. These individuals represent a new pool of labor available to agricultural employers. Many come with work experience in agriculture and food manufacturing from their home country. All are eager to find full-time employment. This webinar will share what we have learned about asylee skills and interests, services that the NYS Department of Labor is providing to employers and asylees authorized to work, and experiences of... Read more here: <https://agworkforce.cals.cornell.edu/2024/03/20/hiring-asylees-into-agriculture-and-food-manufacturing-jobs-webinar-on-april-5/>

Register for the webinar here: https://cornell.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_tyQqsCMDQjW9MXdVOgbU6w#/registration

Virtual IPM Scout Training Agenda

What: Join us for a live, virtual training on scouting of major insect pests of apple orchards. Anna Wallis (NYSIPM Program), Mike Basedow (CCE ENYCHP), and Janet van Zoeren (CCE LOFT), will broadcast from orchards in their region to discuss best practices for monitoring. We will review monitoring/scouting procedures for major economically significant pests. We will also share resources available for helping with identification of pests and forecasting pest activity.

Who: Anyone on your farm with IPM responsibilities, who is looking for new or refresher training.

When: Monday April 15, 2-4PM

Where: Virtual via Zoom. Registration information coming soon.

Agenda:

- Welcome
- Introduction – Why is IPM monitoring important?
- General best practices for monitoring
- Monitoring economically significant pests
- Resources for monitoring: MyIPM app & NEWA quick sheet
- Questions

Watch for more information coming soon, and for now mark your calendars to watch live via Zoom!

Drone Demo at Cornell AgriTech – Next Thursday March 28, 1-3:30pm

Unmanned aircraft systems (UAS), also known as unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) or simply drones, are becoming more popular and available in tree fruit perennial systems. Next week an educational and demo activity will feature the drone company Outfield from England. The Outfield system provides fruit counts, fruit size profiles, blossom loading and variability maps. Surveys are carried out by the grower or by Outfield using low cost and readily available drone systems. Outfield's company founders will be demonstrating the system and sharing the experience of growers using Outfield last year.

Meeting agenda:

1. Presentation from Outfield and the Cornell DATA program
2. Field data acquisition and transfer using consumer-grade drones
3. Access to the Outfield dashboard for data analysis and interpretation
4. Q & A

This activity will be **conducted at RS20 or RS28 at the Fruit Research Unit (FRU) of Cornell AgriTech**. Below are the GPS coordinates. Follow the Cornell fruit event signs when you get closer to Cornell Agritech!.

[42°52'03.6"N 77°02'01.4"W - Google Maps](https://www.google.com/maps/place/42°52'03.6\)

Check the following link for more details: <https://lof.cce.cornell.edu/event.php?id=1916>

USDA to Gather Data about Farm Labor

Robert Bradley, Robert.bradley@usda.gov, 717-657-6306

HARRISBURG, PA – USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) will conduct its biannual Agricultural Labor Survey (https://www.nass.usda.gov/Surveys/Guide_to_NASS_Surveys/Farm_Labor/index.php) in April. More than 2,000 Northeastern U.S. farmers and ranchers will be asked to participate in the survey online at: <https://portal.agcounts.usda.gov/portal/s/> or by mail. The survey is an opportunity for producers to provide accurate information about hired farm labor, including total number of hired farm workers, total hours worked, and total wages paid for the weeks of Jan. 7-13 and Apr. 7-13, 2024.

“We ask about two separate time periods each time we collect these data in order to publish biannual data and capture seasonal variation,” said Charles Butler acting Director of the National Agriculture Statistics Service, Northeastern Regional Field Office. “This method reduces the number of times we survey farms, while ensuring useful data are available.”

USDA and the U.S. Department of Labor use the survey data to estimate the demand for and availability of seasonal agricultural workers, establish minimum wage rates for agricultural workers, and administer farm labor recruitment and placement service

programs.

Survey recipients who do not respond by Apr. 17 may be contacted by NASS to arrange an interview or sent a reminder email.

NASS will publish the data May 22 in the *Farm Labor* report available at: <https://www.nass.usda.gov/publications/>

“When hiring workers and estimating expenses, timely and accurate agricultural labor data are vital,” said Butler. “By participating in NASS’s Agricultural Labor Survey, farmers and ranchers help ensure accurate information for farm programs.”

For more information about the Farm Labor Survey program, visit: <https://www.nass.usda.gov/Surveys/>

[Guide to NASS Surveys/Farm Labor/index.php](https://www.nass.usda.gov/Surveys/Guide%20to%20NASS%20Surveys/Farm%20Labor/index.php), or call the NASS Northeastern Regional Field Office at 1-800-498-1518

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NASS is the federal statistical agency responsible for producing official data about U.S. agriculture and is committed to providing timely, accurate and useful statistics in service to U.S. agriculture.

Short Survey on the Economic Impact of Black Stem Borer

Please consider taking a few minutes to fill out the following survey, to help us understand the economic impact of ambrosia beetles. Thanks for your time! https://uGeorgia.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_b2YDw1uhsO29IHk

Cash Rent and Custom Harvest Survey - Please Help Us!

Katelyn Walley, CCE-SWNY Dairy, Livestock, and Field Crops Team
kaw249@cornell.edu, 716-640-0522

Nicole Tommell and Katelyn Walley are working on a NYFVI grant to collect Cash Rent and Custom Harvest Fee survey data from farms across New York. To date, there is limited information available about rental rates and fees for crop harvesting. Farms can use this valuable information for their farm business planning to help improve decision making and profitability.

<https://farmbusiness.cornell.edu/cashrates/>

The data that we collect, and the subsequent reports/findings/resources will be helpful for all of us to answer that call of “what’s the average rental rate in my area” and “how much do people charge to combine oats”.

Our central website for this project will be: <https://farmbusiness.cornell.edu/cashrates/> . Here we will include survey updates and resources as we continue to go along. Additionally, there are helpful outreach materials including printable surveys, newsletter versions, social media posts, email blurbs, and more. Please feel free to use any and all of the materials there.

We appreciate your help in spreading the word and will continue to populate the site with additional marketing materials!
Katelyn and Nicole

Pruning Help Needed in Jefferson & Wayne Counties

A small tree fruit and berry grower in Wayne County needs some pruning help. William Gillette’s farm is in Savannah. He has under 100 each of fruit trees (mainly apples and a few peaches) and berries (highbush blueberries). He’s willing to pay fair wages for the job. William Gillette, 315-406-6721

A small apple grower in Jefferson County (~3 miles from the Oswego County border) needs pruning help.

A small new orchard in Ellisburg are leasing 2 acres, 70 mature full sized apple trees that need heavy pruning. They are willing to pay fair wages, and can provide transportation if needed. Call Dave Bartoszewski, 315-591-1767, lbartoszewski@hotmail.com

Farm Manager Position Open

Mack’s Apples is one of the oldest farms in New Hampshire dating back to 1732. They are looking for a Farm Manager to join their team. Submit a completed resume and cover letter to jmills@bcmadvisorygroup.com.

Mark Your Calendar

Meeting Title	Outfield Demo at Cornell Agritech
Date	Thursday March 28th , 1-3:30 PM
Location	Cornell AgriTech - be conducted at RS20 or RS28 at the Fruit Research Unit (FRU) of Cornell AgriTech . Below are the GPS coordinates. Follow the Cornell fruit event signs when you get closer to Cornell Agritech! <a @42.8676389,-77.0337222,15z"="" href="https://www.google.com/maps/place/42°52'03.6\" n+77°02'01.4\"w="">42°52'03.6"N 77°02'01.4"W - Google Maps
Brief Description of Meeting/Registration	Drone demonstration from Outfield, and updates from the Cornell DATA program. See short article in this newsletter. No registration required- more info here: https://lof.cce.cornell.edu/event.php?id=1916 Contact Mario for questions, 315-719-1318, mrm67@cornell.edu
Meeting Title	Respirator Fit Testing Clinic
Date	April 3 rd 1p-5p and April 4 th 8a-noon
Location	Cornell Cooperative Extension-Orleans County, 12690 NY 31, Albion NY 14411
Cost	\$40/78* * \$78 fit testing fee applies to farms with annual gross receipts greater than \$350K
Brief Description of Meeting/Registration	Call NYCAMH 800-343-7527 or email fit.test@bassett.org to register. Must have a respirator with clean particulate filters for each person. Individuals must be clean shaven where the respirator seals to the face.
Meeting Title	Hiring Asylees into Agriculture and Food Manufacturing Jobs Webinar
Date	April 5th , 11 AM-Noon
Location	Webinar
Cost	Free, but you need to register.
Brief Description of Meeting/Registration	See short blurb and link in this newsletter. More info: https://agworkforce.cals.cornell.edu/2024/03/20/hiring-asylees-into-agriculture-and-food-manufacturing-jobs-webinar-on-april-5/ Register for the webinar here: https://cornell.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_tyQqsCMDQjW9MXdVOgbU6w#/registration
Meeting Title	DEC Special Permit Handler Training - Wayne County
Date	April 9 th
Time	English: 8:30am check-in, 9am - 12:30pm Spanish: 1pm check-in, 1:30-5pm
Location	Cornell Cooperative Extension-Wayne County, 1581 NY-88, Newark, NY
Cost	\$30 (\$50 if registering after April 3 rd)
Brief Description of Meeting/Registration	Register on our website at: https://lof.cce.cornell.edu/event.php?id=1883 .
Meeting Title	DEC Special Permit Handler Training - Orleans County
Date	April 10 th
Time	Both English and Spanish: 8am check-in; 8:30am - 12pm
Location	Cornell Cooperative Extension-Orleans County, 12690 NY 31, Albion NY 14411
Cost	\$30 (\$50 if registering after April 3 rd)
Brief Description of Meeting/Registration	Register on our website at: https://lof.cce.cornell.edu/event.php?id=1882 .
Meeting Title	Respirator Fit Testing Clinic
Date	April 11 th 9am-3:30pm
Location	Pultneyville Lodge, 4035 Lake Rd, Pultneyville NY
Cost	\$90 per person
Brief Description of Meeting/Registration	To register contact Janet van Zoeren at 585 797 8368 or jev67@cornell.edu . Please register ASAP as space is limited. Must have a respirator with clean particulate filters for each person. Individuals must be clean shaven where the respirator seals to the face.
Meeting Title	2nd Annual Western NY Fruit Grower Tour
Date	Tuesday, August 13 th
Location	Centered in Orleans County
Cost	Minimal thanks to sponsor support!
Brief Description of Meeting/Registration	Save the Date! This is the second annual tour that we are co-hosting with Lake Ontario Ag Consulting, Inc. Stay tuned here, and in our email communications for more details as we get closer. Sponsors – we'll be contacting you shortly with the same announcement.

Cornell Cooperative Extension

Lake Ontario Fruit Program

12690 Rt. 31

Albion, NY 14411

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Fruit Notes

Fruit Specialists



Craig Kahlke | 585-735-5448 | cjk37@cornell.edu
Team Leader, Fruit Quality Management

Areas of Interest: Fruit Quality and factors that affect fruit quality before, during, and after storage.

Crops: Blueberries, Raspberries / Blackberries, Strawberries, Apples, Apricots, Cherries, Nectarines, Peaches, Pears, Plums



Mario Miranda Sazo | 315-719-1318 | mrm67@cornell.edu
Cultural Practices

Crops: Blueberries, Raspberries / Blackberries, Strawberries, Apples, Apricots, Asian Pears, Cherries, Currants, Gooseberries, Nectarines, Peaches, Pears, Plums



Janet van Zoeren | 585-797-8368 | jev67@cornell.edu
Integrated Pest Management (IPM)

Areas of Interest: IPM of tree fruit and berry pests, biological control, pollinators.

Crops: Blueberries, Raspberries / Blackberries, Strawberries, Apples, Apricots, Asian Pears, Cherries, Currants, Nectarines,



Bonalyn Nelsen | 315-980-9926 | bjn2@cornell.edu
Business Management

Areas of Interest: Fruit Farm Business Management, Farm Labor & Regulations, and Evaluation of ROI of New Technologies

Crops: Blueberries, Raspberries / Blackberries, Strawberries, Apples, Apricots, Cherries, Nectarines, Peaches, Pears, Plums

For more information about our program visit us at lof.cce.cornell.edu