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Fruit Notes

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Cornell Cooperative Extension Lake Ontario Fruit Program



Introduction

Hi everyone! My name is Zayda Moyle, and I'm excited to join the LOF team as the new Administrative Assistant. I graduated from Lyndonville in 2021 and GCC in 2023, and I've been involved in 4H for nearly 15 years, showing both horses and dogs. I continue to help and support the next generation of 4Hers by helping the kids (and some adults) who ride at my barn. Outside of work, you can find me riding and showing at local open shows, or out enjoying the great outdoors, especially hiking. I'm looking forward to connecting with you all and contributing to the success of our community!

Growing Degree Day & Green Tip Prediction Model Updates

Craig Kahlke, CCE-LOF

Continued cooler temperatures are in the forecast for the next 10 days, with most days having highs in the upper 40's and low 50's. This forecast differs quite a bit from the one 24 hours ago which showed more temperatures in the upper 30s and lower 40s. If this forecast holds, we should see bud development progressing. We are at or close to silver tip now, and we are still significantly behind last year at this time. The chilling and heat unit model from NC, as tweaked by Dr. Terence Robinson, is showing large variation in predicted green tip dates, which appears to be site dependent. I consider 2 of the stations I looked at as reliable. The Medina NEWA site is predicting green tip for early varieties (Idared, NY2, Ginger Gold, Zestar!, etc.) on April 4. Mid-to later varieties are predicting green tip on April 7. Quite a few NEWA sites are predicting green tip on the mid-to late season varieties 6-11 days after the early varieties. This is due to the cold temperatures forecasted. My best guesstimate is for early cultivar green tip at most sites occurring between April 4-8, and April 7-14 for the rest of the cultivars. Stay tuned for updates.

DD 43 BE, starting Jan 1 - Mar 24

DD 43 BE, starting Jan 1 - Mar 24

		'25 forecast through			
	2025	3/30	2024	2023	2022
Appleton N	76	79	103	28	51
Medina	97	102	126	34	83
Will.-Mason	89	93	105	35	71
Will.-DeMarr.	96	101	117	40	62
Geneva AgT N	102	108	119	54	90

Silver tip usually occurs around 82 , and green tip ~ 121.

Don't Forget to Sign Up for the 2025 Fruit Facts!

Please make sure to sign up for a Fruit Facts subscription when you enroll in our program via your county office if you wish to continue to receive Fruit Facts this year. In addition, there were some issues with emails bouncing last year, so if you do not receive any Fruit Facts newsletter next week, and think you should be receiving them, please reach out to Liz Tee asap at emt44@cornell.edu

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Honeycrisp Bud Evaluation & Pruning Recommendations

Mike Basedow (CCE-ENYCHP) & Craig Kahlke (CCE-LOF), bud evaluations done by Liz Tee (CCE-LOF)

First evaluations of vegetative buds versus floral buds on Honeycrisp: A quick evaluation of several branches on several trees found in site 1 (30% vegetative versus 70% floral), at site 2 (72% vegetative versus 28% floral) and at site 3 (49% vegetative versus 51% floral), at site 4 (8% vegetative versus 92% floral).

Dr. Robinson's pruning suggestions:

- The t blocks with >50% floral buds should be pruned normally, or by following the precision pruning program of leaving 1.8x the total number of target fruit per tree, and factoring in the percentage that is floral. (Let's use site 1 as an example. Assume we want to end up with 100 apples per tree. 1.8 times 100 is 180. Since only 70 percent are floral, we then divide 180 by 0.70 to arrive at 257 total buds should be left on each tree.
- Site 2 should be pruned more lightly, removing only one to two large limbs per tree.

These are of course just three blocks and only serve as an example. Your Honeycrisp blocks are likely to vary in their percentages of floral buds this year, depending on:

- Your initial fruit bud load in 2024,
- Your thinning practices,
- Your return bloom practices,
- Along with other more difficult to define factors like tree stress during floral bud initiation.

If you are interested in evaluating buds in your own blocks, here are some of Mike's thoughts from the experience:

- I followed the protocol of two branches (one each from the upper and lower canopy) from 5 representative trees per block.
- I looked at 10 spurs per branch, unless the branch had fewer than 10 spurs. If a spur had multiple buds, I chose a single bud from that spur at random. Since Honeycrisp spurs also tend to produce bourse shoots, terminal buds on these were also fair game.
- I used a single edged razor blade to cut through the middle of each bud lengthwise (figure 1) and looked at the buds under a tabletop dissecting scope (figure 2). These can be purchased online for around \$100. You're also welcome to come in and use the one at the Orleans County CCE office.
- In figure 3, you can see what a floral bud (top) vs. a vegetative bud (bottom) looks like under the scope. The vegetative buds are narrow and will only have leaf primordia at the tip of the bud. Floral buds will appear more rounded, and will have small, light green floral tissues at the tip of the bud. These can be difficult to tell apart at first, so I recommend cutting open a few practice buds until you get your bearings on what is what. I find Honeycrisp particularly challenging to tell apart (it is Honeycrisp, after all). I also looked at buds with a hand lens, but found I couldn't distinguish the vegetative vs. the floral buds very readily with it.
- After getting into the swing of things, each block took me about 70 minutes to fully assess. This does not include the time it took to cut the limbs from the orchard.

So, I recommend trying it if you have the time and interest. As stated above though, it can be very difficult to tell them apart, so you might want to prune lightly now, and then make more precise pruning adjustments after green tip when you can tell the buds apart on the tree.



Figure 1. Cutting buds to evaluate under the scope. Try to cut as close to down the center as possible to make the floral tissues easier to see.



Figure 2. My scope setup. A dissecting scope like this can be purchased online for about \$100.

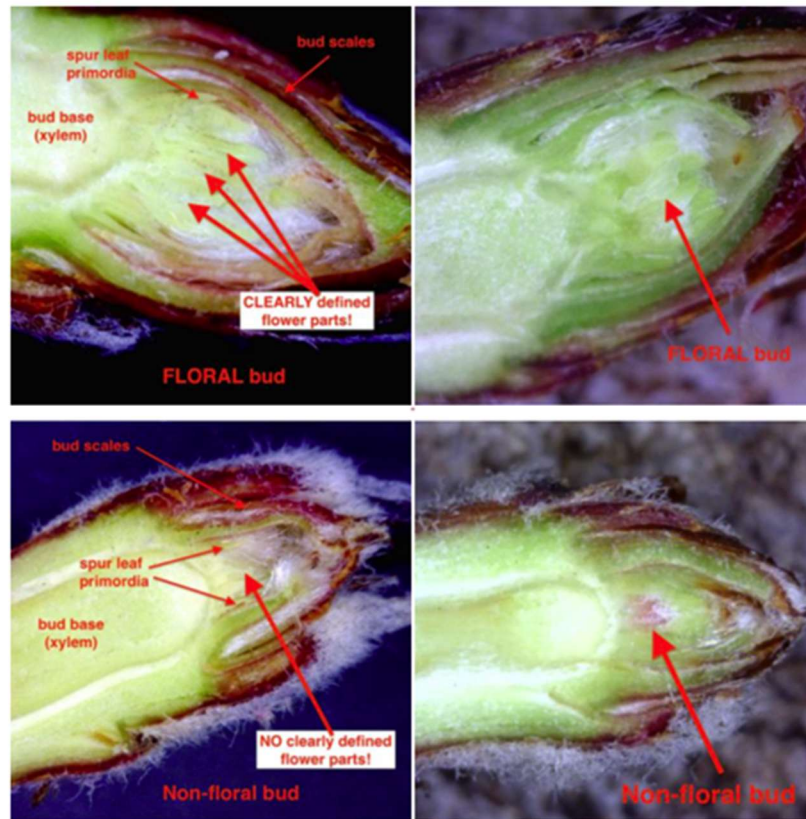


Figure 3. A floral bud (top) vs a vegetative bud (lower). The vegetative bud is narrow, and only shows leaf primordia at the tip of the bud. The floral bud is more rounded and shows light green floral tissues at the tip of the bud. Photo credits courtesy of Jon Clements and Win Cowgill.

Which Soils are the Honeycrisp Soils? Those We Used to Call “McIntosh soils”

Mario Miranda Sazo

(Note: The following article summarizes the main remarks presented by Dr. Terence Robinson at the past Cornell In-Depth Honeycrisp School conducted recently in Syracuse on March 19. The original title of Dr. Robinson’s presentation was ‘Soil Genesis and its Implications for Honeycrisp Growing in NYS and other Regions in the Northeast’).

We do know that there is some soil in WNY, like the lake plains in Orleans County, where it is amazing to see an orchard there and another one quite distant, or nothing for a while, why is that? Because these soils were deposited by a glacier and they are very, very variable and some soils are absolutely not good for apples. In these soils internal drainage is not good, and they have impermeable layers. We do know that many soils that are not perfect can be managed and modified to grow good apples. But the key point that I want to emphasize is that not all those good soils are good for Honeycrisp. The best soils for Honeycrisp are not too fertile, they are not too high in potassium and this last aspect is a key thing. They are similar to what we used to call ‘McIntosh soils’. We almost forgot about it, but we had growers that for many years did not put a drop of nitrogen for 20 years and they still grew green Macs.

There were some soils that were Mac soils, and I have been able to find those soils that were less vigorous were key to growing Macs in WNY and in the Hudson Valley, not so much in the Champlain Valley. I think we need to start thinking in the same context as we did for the Macs soils in the past: Which soils are the Honeycrisp soils? Because not all soil is adequate for Honeycrisp.

The most important soil characteristics for Honeycrisp

Soil drainage is one of the most important. And growers should be installing drainage tiles at least every 30 feet across the field. But the most important factors are soil pH and soil organic matter because higher organic matter soils give too much nitrogen. But too high soil potassium content is a problem too. It is important for bitter pit incidence. And soil calcium content is also important because it is directly related to bitter pit.

What we have learned about Honeycrisp and nutrients

- Honeycrisp requires less K than other varieties for optimum fruit quality
 - Too much K results in bitter pit
 - Soils with high amounts of K are difficult to manage successfully with Honeycrisp
- Honeycrisp requires high amounts of Ca for optimum fruit quality
 - Low Ca results in bitter pit
 - Soils low in Ca can be managed successfully but require high additions of lime
- Honeycrisp requires less N than other varieties
 - High N results in poor fruit color and increased bitter pit
 - N fertilizer inputs must be limited but many growers use N to obtain adequate tree growth to fill the space and then suffer from high bitter pit.
 - Soils with high organic matter, can supply too much N to Honeycrisp and result in bitter pit

Types of soils and their impacts on Honeycrisp

- WNY soils
 - Relatively high in pH
 - Relatively high in Ca
 - Moderately high in K
 - Moderately high in Mg
 - Easy to prepare for Honeycrisp by small additions of calcitic Lime
- Appalachian soils
 - Relatively low in pH
 - Relatively low in Ca
 - Relatively low in K
 - Relatively low in Mg
 - Difficult to prepare for Honeycrisp, They require high additions of lime
- Western US soils
 - Very high in pH
 - High in Ca
 - Very high in K
 - High in Mg
 - Impossible to prepare for Honeycrisp. They have too much K and Mg and don’t need lime.

Effects of soil organic matter on Honeycrisp

- WNY soils
 - Relatively high in organic matter (3-5%)
 - Each 1% of organic matter produces ~20 lbs N per acre each year
 - Easy to prepare for Honeycrisp by additions of almost no N
 - However, soils that are high in organic matter are difficult to manage with Honeycrisp
- Appalachian soils
 - Moderately levels of organic matter (1-3%)
 - Easy to prepare for Honeycrisp by additions of moderate amounts of N
- Western US soils
 - Very low in organic matter (0.1-0.5%)
 - Easy to add nitrogen but often over-applied in the West
 - Western growers often 'push' young trees with 200-500 lbs/acre of N

Conclusions

1. The natural levels of pH, soil Ca and soil K have a large effect on Honeycrisp fruit quality especially bitter pit
2. Some soil characteristics are hard to change and may take 20+years to influence
 - High K levels decline slowly over time
 - High organic matter produces excess N and declines very slowly
3. Performing soil tests before planting and thoughtful plans for soil modification are essential for successful Honeycrisp
 - Pre-loading the soil with the proper amount of Ca is essential
 - Increasing soil pH to 7.2 will make overall performance of Honeycrisp higher

New Preplant and Maintenance Soil Preparation Recommendations for Maximum 'Honeycrisp' Tree Performance

Mario Miranda Sazo

(**Note:** The following article summarizes the main remarks presented by Dr. Terence Robinson at the past Cornell In-Depth Honeycrisp School conducted recently in Syracuse in March 19. The original title of Dr. Robinson's presentation was 'New Preplant and Maintenance Soil Preparation Recommendations for Maximum 'Honeycrisp' Tree Performance. His presentation was co-authored with Dr. Lailiang Cheng).

Soil targets for Honeycrisp:

Soil pH

- Raise pH to 7.2-7.3
- Soil organic matter
 - 2-3% Organic matter
 - Every 1% of organic matter generates about 20 lbs N per year
 - Soils high in organic matter (>4%) will have greater tree growth but more bitter pit
- Soil Ca content
 - Target 5,000-6,000 lbs per acre
- Soil K content
 - Soil K content should be 15-20X lower than Ca content.

In the past we have suggested that the ratio of Ca:K of the soil should be at least 15:1

- For Honeycrisp, we suggest the ratio of Ca:K should be 20:1
- High K content results in large fruit size but high bitter pit
- Most corn growers put on little K so planting Honeycrisp on corn ground is often desirable

Target of 5,000 to 6,000 lbs of calcium per acre for Honeycrisp:

- High Ca content in the soil will help ensure that the maximum amount of Ca will be deposited in the fruit (depending on the many factors that influence Ca uptake and movement into the fruit each year).
- Since both K and Mg are involved in high incidence of bitter pit, it is desirable to apply only calcitic lime (CaCO_3) to Honeycrisp blocks (avoid dolomitic lime which has Mg).

Maintenance plan for soil calcium:

- The pre-plant loading of the soil with Ca will last for several years.
- To maintain soil Ca levels at 6,000 lbs/acre, add 1-2 tons of calcitic lime every 2-3 years beginning in year 4.

Target of soil K or Mg content per acre should be 15-20X less than Ca:

- If Ca content is raised to 6,000 lbs /acre, then K or Mg should be ~300 lbs/acre

Other recommendations for pre-plant soil modification:

- Add P preplant as Mono Ammonium Phosphate ~125 lbs MAP
- MAP is 52% P₂O₅ thus 125 MAP=65 lbs P₂O₅
- Other elements such as B and N can be added as a part of the annual fertilization

Conclusions

1. Apple trees grow very well at pH's above 7.0 We suggest a target pH of 7.2-7.3.
2. Lime applications before planting can be plowed down and are more effective than lime applications after planting (Ca as lime moves down in the soil about 1 inch per year)
3. Target 5,000-6,000 lbs of Ca /acre
4. Apply ~60 lbs of P before planting and plow it down since P moves very slow in the soil.
5. Apply K sparingly if needed.
6. Add 1-2 tons of lime every 2-3 years beginning in year 4.

Union Fact Sheets Available in English & Spanish

Bonnie Nelsen, LOFP Business Specialist

As spring approaches many growers will be welcoming H-2A workers to their farms. The onboarding/training period is an excellent time to talk to your workers about unions. It's perfectly legal to share facts, experiences, and opinions about unions and answer workers' questions. Three fact sheets about unions in general, and the United Farm Workers specifically, are now available in English and Spanish to help you start the conversation: a simplified fact sheet is available in English and Spanish, and a longer detailed fact sheet is available in English only. These fact sheets were developed by Jill MacKenzie, co-owner of Two of Clubs Farm, and Mary Bess Lewis of Cornell's Agricultural Workforce Development Center, both of whom have kindly agreed to share them with the grower community.

It's a good idea to block time during your onboarding process to talk about unions and share your views. Holding mandatory meetings about unions is permissible provided that workers are paid for their time (mandatory unpaid meetings are illegal). Have copies of the union fact sheets in a language that your workers understand available for distribution. Because some workers may have trouble reading, you may wish to have a crew leader or respected employee read the fact sheet aloud in a language workers understand. Encourage workers to ask questions and talk about union membership amongst themselves and potential workers at home. You can't tell workers what to think or do regarding unions, but you can answer questions and offer facts, views and opinions.

If you have questions about talking to your workers about unions, please contact Bonnie at (315) 980-9926 or bjn2@cornell.edu. And be sure to thank Jill and Mary Beth for sharing these union fact sheets!

Below are the short versions on the fact sheets. Here is a link to the longer versions: [Longer Factsheet about unions.pdf](#)

Union Factsheet for Farm Employees

Farm employees often have questions about unions. Here's a simple guide to help you understand them:

1. **What is a labor union?** 🤝 A union is a group of workers who come together to try to improve their work conditions, like pay, benefits, schedules, safety, and more. The United Farmworkers (UFW) has organized several farms in New York.
2. **What is a union contract?** 📄 A union contract is an agreement between the union and the employer about work conditions. It can cover anything from pay to safety rules.

3. **Why form a union?** 🧑 Workers join unions to have more power when negotiating with their employer. Unions can help get better pay and working conditions. They can also support workers if they are treated unfairly.
4. **Why not form a union?** 🚫 Joining a union means giving up the ability to negotiate directly with the employer. Workers will also pay union dues, which are about 3% of their pay. Unions can't guarantee better pay or conditions, and workers must pay dues even if they didn't join the union.
5. **Why are union organizers visiting farms now?** Since the 2019 Farm Laborers Fair Labor Practices Act, farmworkers can form unions. Organizers are visiting farms to help workers understand unions and get them to sign a union card.
6. **What is a union card?** 📄 A union card shows you agree to join the union and pay dues. Make sure you understand everything before signing. Take a picture of the card because this date is important for revoking the membership. If you change your mind later, you must wait a year.
7. **How does joining a union affect my immigration status?** Joining a union doesn't affect your immigration status. Only the government can change that.
8. **Are farmworkers required to join a union?** ❌ No. You can choose whether to join, but if more than 50% of workers sign up, the union can represent everyone, and all workers must pay dues.
9. **Can I talk to my employer about unions?** 💬 Yes! You can ask your employer about unions, but they can't stop you from organizing.
10. **Can I stop a union organizer from talking to me?** 🛑 Yes. You can tell an organizer to leave you alone. If they don't, you can call the police.
11. **Why doesn't my boss talk about unions?** 😬 State law prevents employers from discouraging unions or interfering with organizing efforts, but you can bring up the subject and talk to your boss about activities of union organizers, and ask questions.
12. **Can we leave the union later if we don't like it?** It's possible, but it's a long process. If most workers want to leave the union, they can contact the state's Public Employer Relations Board (PERB) to start the process.

This sheet is for informational purposes. Always make sure you fully understand your rights and options before making decisions.

References: [Union strikes and lockouts](#) – Matt Austin Labor Law (2023); [The pandemic and California's farmworker union](#) – The Sacramento Bee (2021); [NY's new tax break—for a few](#) – Empire Center (2018); [Union dues explained](#) – Unit (2021); [Challenges for United Farm Workers](#) – Cal Matters (2022); [United Farm Workers of America](#) – Influence Watch (2024); [Union dues](#) – National Labor Relations Board (2024); [Union memberships](#) – NY State Unified Court System (2024); [UFW and FLOC: Income and members](#) – Rural Migration News (2019); [Can I deduct union dues?](#) – TurboTax Help (2023)

Información sobre sindicatos para empleados agrícolas

Los empleados agrícolas a menudo tienen preguntas sobre los sindicatos. Aquí tienes una guía sencilla para entenderlos:

1. **¿Qué es un sindicato?** 🧑 Un sindicato es un grupo de trabajadores que se unen para tratar de mejorar las condiciones laborales, como el salario, beneficios, horarios, seguridad y más. Los United Farmworkers (UFW) (Unión de Campesinos) han organizado varias granjas en Nueva York.
2. **¿Qué es un contrato sindical?** 📄 Un contrato sindical es un acuerdo entre el sindicato y el empleador sobre las condiciones laborales. Puede cubrir desde el salario hasta las reglas de seguridad.
3. **¿Por qué formar un sindicato?** 🧑 Los trabajadores se unen a los sindicatos para tener más poder al negociar con el empleador. Los sindicatos pueden ayudar a obtener mejores salarios y condiciones laborales. También pueden apoyar a los trabajadores si son tratados injustamente.
4. **¿Por qué no formar un sindicato?** 🚫 Unirse a un sindicato significa renunciar a la capacidad de negociar directamente con el empleador. Los trabajadores también deben pagar cuotas sindicales, que son aproximadamente el 3% de su salario. Los sindicatos no pueden garantizar mejores salarios ni condiciones, y los trabajadores deben pagar las cuotas, aunque no se unieran al sindicato.
5. **¿Por qué los organizadores sindicales están visitando las granjas ahora?** Desde la Ley de Prácticas Laborales Justas para Trabajadores Agrícolas de 2019, los trabajadores agrícolas pueden formar sindicatos. Los organizadores están visitando las granjas para ayudar a los trabajadores a entender los sindicatos y hacer que firmen una tarjeta sindical.
6. **¿Qué es una tarjeta sindical?** 📄 Una tarjeta sindical muestra que estás de acuerdo en unirse al sindicato y pagar cuotas. Asegúrate de entender todo antes de firmar. Toma una foto de la tarjeta, ya que la fecha es importante para revocar la membresía. Si cambias de opinión más tarde, debes esperar un año.

7. **¿Cómo afecta mi estatus migratorio unirme a un sindicato?** Unirse a un sindicato no afecta tu estatus migratorio. Solo el gobierno puede cambiarlo.
8. **¿Los trabajadores agrícolas están obligados a unirse a un sindicato?** ❌ No. Puedes elegir unirse, pero si más del 50% de los trabajadores se inscriben, el sindicato puede representarlos a todos, y todos deben pagar las cuotas.
9. **¿Puedo hablar con mi empleador sobre los sindicatos?** 💬 ¡Sí! Puedes preguntarle a tu empleador sobre los sindicatos, pero no pueden detenerte de organizarte.
10. **¿Puedo impedir que un organizador sindical me hable?** 🚫 Sí. Puedes decirle a un organizador que te deje en paz. Si no lo hace, puedes llamar a la policía.
11. **¿Por qué mi jefe no habla de los sindicatos?** 🤖 La ley estatal impide que los empleadores desanimen a los sindicatos o interfieran con los esfuerzos de organización, pero puedes hablar del tema con tu jefe sobre las actividades de los organizadores sindicales y hacer preguntas.
12. **¿Podemos salir del sindicato después si no nos gusta?** Es posible, pero es un proceso largo. Si la mayoría de los trabajadores quiere dejar el sindicato, pueden contactar al Public Employer Relations Board (PERB) para iniciar el proceso.

Esta hoja es solo para fines informativos. Siempre asegúrate de entender bien tus derechos y opciones antes de tomar decisiones.

Referencias: [Union strikes and lockouts](#) – Matt Austin Labor Law (2023); [The pandemic and California's farmworker union](#) – The Sacramento Bee (2021); [NY's new tax break—for a few](#) – Empire Center (2018); [Union dues explained](#) – Unit (2021); [Challenges for United Farm Workers](#) – Cal Matters (2022); [United Farm Workers of America](#) – Influence Watch (2024); [Union dues](#) – National Labor Relations Board (2024); [Union memberships](#) – NY State Unified Court System (2024); [UFW and FLOC: Income and members](#) – Rural Migration News (2019); [Can I deduct union dues?](#) – TurboTax Help (2023)

Update on Terminated & Frozen USDA Funding: What it Means for Farmers

Bonnie Nelsen, LOFP Business Specialist

As it undergoes a sweeping review of 409 programs, the USDA has frozen or terminated some funding for farmers despite the Trump administration's assurances that its federal overhaul would not negatively impact U.S. farmers. Some frozen funds are tied to farm programs and conservation contracts that were funded by President Biden's 2022 Inflation Reduction Act, which included approximately \$19.5 billion for farm programs over 10 years (Huffstutter and Douglas, 2025). Other programs have been paused due to shuttering the U.S. Agency for International Development, an independent agency which the Trump administration plans to put under State Department control. This freeze has resulted in halted payments, project delays, and employee layoffs, causing uncertainty among farmers, land-grant universities, and nonprofit organizations. To date, the programs affected include:

- Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities: Payments for this program, which was expected to invest \$3.1 billion in 141 projects to reduce greenhouse gases, have been suspended (Huffstutter and Douglas, 2025).
- Rural Energy Assistance Program (REAP): Funding for this program, which supports energy efficiency upgrades and renewable energy projects on farms and small rural businesses, has been cancelled. Thousands of farmers across the country are waiting for payments of over \$410 million despite some REAP funding being restored (Jones et al., 2025; Tilton, 2025).
- Funding for other conservation programs funded by the Inflation Reduction Act, including some Natural Resource Conservation Service's (NRCS) EQIP programs intended to curb soil erosion and conserve water, have been terminated (Huffstutter and Douglas, 2025). Farmers who expected EQIP funds to offset the cost of improvements have been notified that their contracts will not be fulfilled. Perhaps the best-known example is Skylar Holden, a Missouri cattle rancher who posted several videos on TikTok after being notified that his NRCS EQIP \$240,000 contract for fencing, a well, and water lines would not be honored. "I've already done a bunch of the work, already paid for the material and the labor, so I'm out all that cost," Holden said in one video, adding, "We are possibly going to lose our farm if NRCS doesn't hold up their contract with us (Huffstutter and Douglas, 2025)."

- The USDA has cut two federal programs that spent over \$1 billion annually to help schools, childcare programs, food banks, and other feeding programs buy food from local farms and ranchers (Brown, 2025; Fields, 2025). The Local Food for Schools Cooperative Agreement Program and the 2025 Local Food Purchase Cooperative Agreement Program were intended to create a more resilient food supply chain by reducing reliance on major food companies and supporting local farmers and ranchers. Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins described the programs as “nonessential” (Douglas, 2025). A letter penned by Senate Agriculture Committee members Amy Klobuchar, Adam Schiff, and Ben Ray Lujan have urged Secretary Rollins to reinstate both programs, stating that “at a time of uncertainty in farm country, farmers need every opportunity to be able to expand market access for their products (Douglas, 2025).”
- After a six-week review, 83% of programs—approximately 5,200 contracts--funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) have been cancelled. The remaining 18%, about 1000 contracts, will be administered by the U.S. State Department (N.A., 2025). While the State Department is vague about which programs have been retained, dismantling USAID has already produced funding cuts at 19 land-grant based innovation labs in 17 states, putting a sudden stop to thousands of agricultural research programs which focus on improving crops, agricultural practices, and developing markets abroad (Huso, 2025).
- The loss of USAID commodity purchases also impacts farmers. USAID is a major purchaser of commodities (the agency spent about \$5 billion on food assistance in the 2023/2024 fiscal year, with \$2 billion of that going to purchase U.S.-grown agricultural commodities (Huso, 2025). Farmers who have previously sold crops like soybeans, corn, sorghum, beans, rice, peanuts, potatoes, and oil seeds to USAID no longer have this market.

The Department of Government Efficiency (formerly the United States Digital Service) was established by President Trump to improve efficiency and eliminate waste in government using modern technology and software. Under this mandate—and with the approval of Agriculture Secretary Rollins, DOGE is undertaking a comprehensive review of contracts, personnel, employee training, and DEI programs (USDA, 2025). Cuts may limit farmers’ access to some USDA services, including the following:

- On March 3, 2025, the Department of Government Efficiency’s (DOGE) website announced the termination of leases for 59 Farm Service Agency and Natural Resource and Conservation Service offices, including the NRCS office in Syracuse, New York (AGDAILY, 2025; Hanrahan, 2025). More lease terminations for FSA and NRCS offices are expected to be announced. This move is part of a broader initiative to reduce agency spending. So far, a total of 748 lease terminations totaling 9,587,384 square feet have been announced by DOGE (AGDAILY, 2025). The USDA expects FSA state and county lease terminations to save \$9.7 million, while NRCS lease terminations are expected to save over \$19.3 million (Hanrahan, 2025). No plans have been made to relocate the shuttered offices, but agency officials reportedly remain open to renegotiating leases.
- Beyond the lease terminations, USDA’s Farm Service Agency and NRCS are facing significant staffing reductions which may exacerbate problems of access. DOGE offered over 2 million federal workers buyouts that traded approximately \$25,000 paid over an eight-month period in exchange for voluntary resignation. About 75,000 federal workers, or 3% of the federal workforce (Hanrahan, 2025), accepted the buyouts, a figure that fell short of DOGE’s cost cutting goal (Fuscaldo, 2025).
- Because the buyout failed to cut headcount sufficiently, DOGE directed government agencies to terminate all probationary workers (Bassler, 2025; Hanrahan, 2025). On February 13, 2025, the U.S. Department of Agriculture complied by announcing that 5714 probationary employees were terminated (Griffiths and Hoff, 2025). In response to lawsuits filed by the AFL-CIO, several unions, and multiple states, the USDA has been ordered to rehire all probationary workers over a 45-day period and provide each with back pay from the date of termination (Bassler, 2025).
- Being reinstated doesn’t mean that probationary USDA workers are actually working, however. On the subreddit r/fednews, a USDA employee identified as u/ExpressAdeptness1019 described their return-to-work experience on March 25, 2025: “I am a USDA probationary employee that was fired and reinstated. Was on admin leave for a couple of weeks. Last Friday I was told to report to the office Monday (yesterday). It’s now Tuesday morning and I have no keycard, no temporary password. No ability to get into my computer to do my job. My job is based on the computer. So I’m just sitting at my desk with nothing to do and no one has a sense of urgency at all. Might just take leave and go home. I sat here all day yesterday. Why sit here doing nothing for another day. What a cluster. Wish they had planned ahead so we could all get back going right away. Who am I kidding... (u/ExpressAdeptness1019, 2025).

This situation is dynamic, and I will continue to keep you updated.

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2025 Special Permit Training

Special Permit Training will be held on April 7th in Wayne County and April 9th in Orleans County. This year we are not publicly advertising this event.

NOTE: Additional information is being required by DEC, when registering please be sure to include the Supervisors Name, Certified Pesticide Applicator License #, and expiration date. By providing this information when you register online, we can preprint the documents reducing the amount of time spent filling out the roster when you arrive at the training.

Cost: \$30/person by March 31st

\$50/person after March 31st until April 3rd late registration will incur an additional \$20 fee

Please register by March 31st using the following links:

April 7th 2025 Wayne County - 2025 DEC Special Permit Handler Training - <https://lof.cce.cornell.edu/event.php?id=2057>

April 9th 2025 Orleans County - DEC Special Permit Handler Training - <https://lof.cce.cornell.edu/event.php?id=2058>

Questions or concerns can be directed to Elizabeth Tee at emt44@cornell.edu or Christy Hoepting at cah59@cornell.edu

LOF Website: <https://lof.cce.cornell.edu/>

CVP Website: <https://cvp.cce.cornell.edu/>

Respirator Fit Testing in Wayne Co.
Thursday April 17, 2025
Pultneyville Lodge, 4035 Lake Rd Pultneyville, NY

Please Register by April 7, Space is Limited!

To register contact Janet van Zoeren at
[585 797 8368](tel:5857978368) or jev67@cornell.edu

Schedule & Requirements

Respirator medical certification, fit testing and training on the proper use of respirators.

\$90 per person, checks can be made out to 'Finger Lakes Occupational Health Services'

Must have a respirator with clean particulate filters for each person

Individuals must be clean shaven where the respirator seals to the face.

Reservation Schedule:

9:00 am - 8 people

10:00 am - 8 people

11:00 am - 8 people

1:00 pm - 8 people

2:00 pm - 8 people

3:00 pm - 4 people



Paperwork can be requested ahead of time at Donna.Lawrence@URMC.Rochester.edu

If completing paperwork at the clinic arrive 10-15 minutes early to complete paperwork

Paperwork is also available in Spanish

Space is limited, please register by April 7th

Please contact Janet van Zoeren with any questions: 585 797 8368 | jev67@cornell.edu

Pre-Harvest Agricultural Water (Subpart E) Update

Craig Kahlke, CCE-LOF

FSMA has published a final rule on Pre-Harvest Agricultural Water. Largest growers need to be in compliance by early April. On your FSMA inspection during this year's harvest, inspectors will be checking records and educating in this first year. CCE-LOF and CCE-CVP have attempted to have a webinar on this topic, but it was cancelled due to low registration.

This rule applies to water used up to harvest. This does not apply to water used at harvest and post-harvest. That final rule is unchanged, and folks need to comply now. For pre-harvest ag water, this includes water you use in your crop protectants and spraying the edible portion of the crop anytime during the growing season.

Please read the link below for the requirements.

<https://www.fda.gov/food/food-safety-modernization-act-fsma/fsma-final-rule-pre-harvest-agricultural-water>

Basically, you need to do an **agricultural water assessment**. This is a comprehensive look at your use of ag water on your farm and where the potential risks may be. If the risks are high, you need to have mitigation measures in place to reduce the risks.

Note: this rule does NOT require water testing as part of your agricultural water assessment. However, if you currently do water testing for a buyer driven third party food safety audit, you can use these test results in analyzing your water quality and it can be part of your assessment.

Note: an agricultural water system assessment - which has been required in the past and is required for a lot of third-party buyer-driven audits, is only part of your agricultural water assessment. See this description:
<https://resources.producesafetyalliance.cornell.edu/documents/AGWA-FSMA-PSR-Agricultural-Water-System-Inspection-is-Different.pdf>

FDA Agricultural Water Assessment Factsheets are here: <https://www.fda.gov/media/178221/download?attachment>

FDA Agricultural Water Assessment Builder here: <https://www.fda.gov/food/food-safety-modernization-act-fsma/agricultural-water-assessment-builder>

Downloadable templates in MS Word: <https://resources.producesafetyalliance.cornell.edu/documents/Templates.docx>

If you have not already, it is highly recommended that you attend a live webinar or recorded video presentation. Growers who have attended the PSA Grower Training Courses in the past and who have received certificates should have been emailed the information. Here is a link to sign up to view the video: https://cornell.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_4NlqVzTctlGvule




Questions? Don't hesitate to contact Craig Kahlke (fruit growers) at cjk37@cornell.edu, 585-735-5448 or Robert Hadad (vegetable growers) at rgh26@cornell.edu, 585-739-4065.

Mark Your Calendar!

Meeting Title	NY FarmNet Free Webinar: Survivors of Suicide Loss
Dates	April 2
Time	1 PM
Location	Webinar
Cost	Free
Brief Description of Meeting/Registration	<p>Panelists: Karen Heisig, Jeff Winton, Karl Czymmek Webinar Description: Losing a loved one to suicide can be a profoundly painful and isolating experience. The complexity of the emotions can feel overwhelming, and often surviving friends, family, and co-workers struggle to know who to talk to. Learn about common emotions and challenges, the grief journey, and what can help. Hear the stories from several survivors of loss and how they coped.</p> <p>Register here: https://cornell.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_mlkWe_U4SnOVzu94oR3-EA#/registration</p>

Meeting Title	2025 Special Permit Training
Dates	April 7 (Wayne County), April 9 (Orleans County)
Time	See registration info on links.
Location	See registration info on links.
Cost	\$30 per person by March 31, \$50 per person 3/31-4/3. After 4/3, and an additional fee of \$20.
Brief Description of Meeting/Registration	<p>See the article in this newsletter.</p> <p>April 7th 2025 Wayne County - 2025 DEC Special Permit Handler Training - https://lof.cce.cornell.edu/event.php?id=2057 April 9th 2025 Orleans County - DEC Special Permit Handler Training - https://lof.cce.cornell.edu/event.php?id=2058</p>

Meeting Title	Respirator Fit Testing in Wayne County
Dates	April 17
Time	See info in this newsletter.
Location	Pultneyville Lodge, 4035 Lake Rd Pultneyville, NY
Cost	\$90 per person
Brief Description of Meeting/Registration	See article in this newsletter. Please Register by April 7, Space is Limited! To register contact Janet van Zoeren at 585 797 8368 or jev67@cornell.edu

Meeting Title	Heat Illness Prevention Webinar for the Hispanic Workforce – conducted in SPANISH only
Dates	April 23
Time	12-1 PM
Location	Webinar
Cost	Free, brought to you by CCE Ag Workforce Development
Brief Description of Meeting/Registration	<p>Your workforce can join our webinar on heat illness prevention, designed specifically for Hispanic farm employees. With potential changes in New York State laws, it is essential to understand best practices for maintaining a safe and healthy work environment. Learn key strategies to prevent heat-related illnesses and keep everyone protected in the field. The webinar will be hosted by María Bess Lewis from Cornell Agricultural Workforce Development and Anna Meyerhoff from the New York Center for Agricultural Medicine and Health (NYCAMH).</p> <p>Topics Covered in the Webinar:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to recognize and prevent heat-related illnesses • The importance of hydration and what drinks to avoid • How to safely adapt to heat exposure (acclimatization) • Rest and shade: key factors in preventing heat stress • Proper clothing for working in high temperatures • Strategies to minimize heat risks <p> Date: April 23 -  Time: 12:00-1:00 PM EST</p> <p> Zoom Link: https://cornell.zoom.us/j/95344481427?pwd=BX4WpoJTF3L82alQeyLBPIODNkmn9e.1</p> <p>This webinar will be conducted ONLY IN SPANISH. Don't let your workforce miss it!</p> <p>Translated below: Cornell Agricultural Workforce y NYCAMH organizarán conjuntamente un seminario web sobre prevención de enfermedades causadas por el calor, presentado en español para la fuerza laboral hispana el 23 de abril.</p>

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- Honeycrisp Bud Evaluation & Pruning Recommendations
- "McIntosh Soils"
- New Preplant and Maintenance Soil Preparation Recommendations for Maximum Honeycrisp Tree Performance
- Union Fact Sheets (English and Spanish)
- Update on a Terminated & Frozen USDA Funding: What it means for Farmers
- 2025 Special Permit Training
- Respirator Fit Testing
- Pre-Harvest Agricultural Water (Subpart E) Update
- Mark your Calendar!

Cornell Cooperative Extension

Lake Ontario Fruit Program

12690 Rt. 31

Albion, NY 14411

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 | mmr67@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