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Fruit Notes

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Volume 26

Issue 1

March 4, 2026

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**Visit our
website for
all upcoming
events!**



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



Intentional Delay of Dormant Pruning for 'Honeycrisp' & Other Important Biennial Cultivars (Fuji)

Mario Miranda Sazo and Terence Robinson

When pruning a Honeycrisp block without knowing the floral bud percentage (% of floral buds in a 100 bud sample of spurs from randomly selected shoots in a Honeycrisp block), you are risking removing too many of the flower buds if return bloom is low. If the previous crop load was too high then flower bud numbers will likely be below or close to the target number and pruning is likely to remove too many. Floral bud identification at the dormant stage is not easy without dissecting buds and viewing them under a microscope. It can only be accomplished by a professional lab or by a trained grower and/or employee. For this reason, it is helpful to delay pruning until the spring. **We suggest that annual bearing varieties (Gala, McIntosh, Empire, NY-1, etc.) be pruned first and the biennial bearing varieties last.** There is a 3-4 week window from green tip to bloom when it is easy to identify and count flower buds per tree and then prune to the target flower cluster number at that time.

However, many growers who have significant acreages of Honeycrisp (or other biennial bearing varieties) cannot wait to prune all of their trees in the spring. If you must begin pruning biennial varieties during the winter, we suggest two approaches you could consider.

1. Before pruning determine the number of flower buds per tree by sampling 10 branches (3/4-1 inch in diameter) from 5 representative trees in the orchard and dissecting all the spurs on the branches and examining the dissected buds under a microscope to determine what percentage of the spurs are floral. Then, adjust pruning intensity to ensure that the target number of flower buds are left on the tree. Few growers are prepared or trained to sample branches, dissect, and examine buds with a microscope.

To help growers with this task, review Mike Basedow's article from last year:

https://rvpadmin.cce.cornell.edu/uploads/doc_1232.pdf

You can also view our video on precision pruning here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=29cF8yOKup0&t=190s>

2. Another approach is to lightly prune Honeycrisp during the winter by only removing 1-3 large limbs (remember to always leave a longer stub with Honeycrisp, 2-3 fingers length to secure shoot renewal). Then between green tip and full bloom 'touch up' the trees which have too many flower buds by removing additional whole limbs and by spur pruning.

Lastly, we remind growers that to avoid biennial bearing of biennial varieties and to improve fruit size of annual varieties, precision pruning is essential. We suggest counting the total number of flower buds on 5 representative trees and then through pruning the removal of extra flower buds leaving a precise number of buds. To accomplish this the first step of precision pruning is to determine the target number of final fruits at harvest which is a function of desired fruit size, yield and the potential of the trees. Secondly, calculate the number of buds to leave based on the recommended bud load and thirdly, adjust the number of buds to be left after pruning by the percentage of buds that are floral. The following is an example of a final fruit number target and the calculated spur number to leave after pruning on Tall Spindle Honeycrisp trees planted at 3X11 ft. spacing (1320 trees/acre).

Target yield = 900 bu/ac * target fruit size (72 count @260gr) / tree planting density (1,320 trees/acre) = 50 fruits /tree. Remember we suggest leaving a few extra flower buds as insurance against frost or poor set. Based on the most recent Cornell Honeycrisp pruning research we are currently suggesting that growers leave 80% more flower buds than the target fruit number as insurance. In the example where we need 50 final fruits/tree we suggest increasing that number by 1.8 = 90 flowering spurs.

Lastly, if only 50% of the spurs are floral then the number of spurs to leave after pruning would be double that number (180 spurs). The table below gives bud load factors and target final flowering spur numbers for annual and biennial bearing cultivars.

Bud load factors for annual and biennial bearing varieties	Target Final Flowering Spur Number			
	60 fruit per tree	80 fruit per tree	100 fruits per tree	120 fruits per tree
1.5 buds per final fruit number for annual bearing varieties	90 flowering spurs	120 flowering spurs	150 flowering spurs	180 flowering spurs
1.8 buds per final fruit number for biennial bearing varieties	108 flowering spurs	144 flowering spurs	180 flowering spurs	216 flowering spurs

Weed Seed Spread Survey

Lynn Sosnoskie, Cornell University

Weeds don't stay put...and farm equipment can move weed seeds from field to field, in fruit farms as well as in row crops.

Lynn Sosnoskie and Collins Bugingo want to understand how concerned NY growers are about weed seed spread on equipment and what steps are being taken to reduce the risk.

This quick survey will help guide practical recommendations and future research for you and other NY growers.

Here is the survey: https://cornell.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_4Mlv5Xi2wwe4tTg

USDA Seeks Stakeholder Input

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is requesting stakeholder input on opportunities, challenges, and emerging needs related to statistical data, analysis, and research produced by the Economic Research Service (ERS), the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), and the Office of the Chief Economist's World Agricultural Outlook Board (OCE-WAOB).

This request for information will help USDA identify future program directions, potential new initiatives, and funding priorities. Stakeholder feedback is important to ensure that USDA data products and analyses continue to meet the needs of researchers, Extension programs, and agricultural industries.

I want to emphasize why responding to this request matters - not only for researchers, but for anyone who relies on USDA data, including farm operators, industry groups, agencies, nonprofits, and educators. Requests for Information (RFIs) are one of the few formal ways data users can communicate the importance of USDA datasets to decision-makers. When agencies set priorities and allocate limited resources, documented input matters. If stakeholders do not highlight which data products are essential, they can be more easily reduced or discontinued.

Deadline for comments: April 9, 2026

Federal Register : [Request for Information on Opportunities, Challenges, and Emerging Areas in Statistical Data, Analysis, and Research at the U.S. Department of Agriculture](#)

\$1 Billion Assistance for Specialty Crop Farmers (ASCF) Program Finally Announced

Deadline for Sign up is March 13, 2026

Elizabeth Higgins, CCE-ENYCHP

After waiting for months, USDA has finally announced the sign up for the \$1 Billion allocated for specialty crops (and sugar) through the previously announced Farmer Bridge Assistance Program. Specialty crop producers now have less than a month (until March 13th) to report their 2025 acres to USDA FSA. This is a one-time payment and if you are eligible and miss that deadline you will be out of luck. Many eligible specialty crop farms in Eastern NY missed the sign up for the Marketing Assistance for Specialty Crops in January 2025 which ultimately provided over \$ to growers in New York State.

Who Is Eligible

To be eligible, producers must meet the following requirements:

Be actively engaged in farming.

- Have risk and interest in the eligible planted commodity
- Report eligible acres for the 2025 crop year by 5 p.m. ET on March 13, 2026
- Have an average adjusted gross income (AGI) of \$900,000 or less

The per person/per entity payment limitation for this program is \$155,000 (like other USDA FSA programs). The specific payment rates, per crop, will be released at the end of March.

These are the eligible crops (in alphabetical order), For ease of reading I took out crops that don't grow in New York, (like bananas and cacao) but if you also have a tropical farm somewhere there are some missing crops on this list. As you can see the list is quite large.

(A) Apple, Apricot, Aronia berry, Artichoke, Asparagus **(B)** Bean (Snap or green; Lima; Dry edible), Beet (Table), Blackberry, Blueberry, Broccoli (including Broccoli Raab), Brussels Sprouts **(C)** Cabbage (including Chinese), Carrot, Cauliflower, Celeriac, Celery, Cherimoya, Cherry, Chestnut (for Nuts), Chive, Collards (including Kale), Cranberry, Cucumber, Currant **(D)** Dry Edible Beans and Peas* **(E)** Edamame, Eggplant, Endive **(F)** Fig, Filbert (Hazelnut) **(G)** Garlic, Gooseberry, Grape (including Raisin), **(H)** Horseradish **(K)** Kiwi, Kohlrabi **(L)** Leek, Lettuce, **(M)** Melon (All Types), Mushroom (Cultivated), Mustard and Other Greens **(N)** Nectarine **(O)** Okra, Olive, Onion, **(P)** Parsley, Parsnip, Pea (Garden; English or Edible Pod; Dry edible), Peach, Pear, Pecan, Pepper, Persimmon, Plum (including Prune), Potato, Pumpkin **(Q)** Quince **(R)** Radish (All Types), Raspberry, Rhubarb, Rutabaga **(S)** Salsify, Spinach, Squash (Summer and Winter), Strawberry, Sweet Corn, Sweet Potato, Swiss Chard **(T)** Tomato (including Tomatillo), Turnip **(W)** Walnut, Watermelon

ASCF payments are based on reported 2025 planted acres. **Eligible farmers should ensure their 2025 acreage reporting is factual and accurate by 5 p.m. ET on March 13, 2026.** Commodity-specific payment rates will be released by the end of March. Crop insurance linkage will not be required for the ASCF Program. In other words, unlike some other recent programs, you will not be required to sign up for crop insurance if you receive a payment from this program.

To learn more **Farmer Bridge Assistance (FBA) Program | Farm Service Agency:**

<https://www.fsa.usda.gov/resources/programs/farmer-bridge-assistance-fba-program> (scroll to the bottom to learn about specialty crops). Also contact your local USDA FSA office:

<https://www.farmers.gov/working-with-us/service-center-locator>

(Continued on next page)

Reminder - the deadline for the **Supplemental Disaster Relief Program**:

<https://www.fsa.usda.gov/resources/programs/supplemental-disaster-relief-program-sdrp>

is **April 30, 2026**. I covered this program in detail in an **earlier issue of this newsletter**:

<https://myemail.constantcontact.com/The-Bottom-Line--No--31.html?soid=1134048615939&aid=78xn8vISihc>

It provides a payment for losses due to a natural disaster that were not covered by USDA crop insurance or NAP and provides a higher payment for those crops that were covered.

Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) Food Safety Training

March 10, 9am - 4pm, CCE-Wayne

Craig Kahlke

Learn about food safety on the farm! This event hosted by the Cornell Vegetable Program, Cornell Lake Ontario Fruit Team, CCE Wayne County, and the NYS Department of Agriculture, will cover good agricultural practices (GAPs) to help reduce the risk of microbial contamination on the farm, keeping food and consumers safe.

Goals of this workshop:

- Learn about food safety on the farm
- Learn about farm good agricultural practices that help to reduce the risk of microbial contamination keeping food safe and consumers from getting sick
- Understand how GAPs (Good Agricultural Practices) impact produce safety
- How to integrate GAPs into your production practices
- If you are looking for new markets or if your buyer requires it, learn what is needed to have a USDA GAP audit
- If applying for a NY Farm Viability Institute grant, several of their programs require GAPs certification
- Learn about what is needed to begin writing a farm food safety plan. A food safety plan is helpful in implementing practices and should be written in a way to comply with a USDA GAP audit for certification.

COST: \$75 per person, includes lunch and resources. REGISTER ONLINE! :

https://cvp.cce.cornell.edu/event_preregistration_new.php?id=2170 --clicking this link will take you to the Cornell Vegetable Program website to complete your registration.

For more information, contact Robert Hadad, Cornell Vegetable Program, at 585-739-4065, rgh26@cornell.edu, or Craig Kahlke, Cornell Lake Ontario Fruit Team, 585-735-5448, cjk37@cornell.edu.

Note: This is the most basic GAPs training that we offer. It gives you the basic information you would need for developing a food safety plan and prepping for a basic third-party audit. It is NOT a FSMA Grower Training Course.

Postharvest Water Management, Sanitation, and Traceability Workshop

March 18, 9am - 4pm, CCE-Orleans

Craig Kahlke

Cornell University personnel from the National GAPs Program and the Produce Safety Alliance are presenting a workshop on postharvest water management, sanitation, and traceability. This workshop will include a mix of short talks and hands-on activities to provide attendees with applied experience with sanitation, postharvest water, and traceability topics.

This workshop will help participants:

- Understand sanitizer labels
- Effectively use sanitizers when managing postharvest water
- Implement effective cleaning and sanitizing practices
- Understand expectations in the FSMA Food Traceability Rule (FSMA 204)

COST: \$50 per person. Registration includes coffee, tea, snacks, lunch, hands-on training materials, and a certificate of attendance. REGISTER ONLINE:

https://cvp.cce.cornell.edu/event_preregistration_new.php?id=2168 -clicking this link will take you to the Cornell Vegetable Program's website to complete your registration.

For more information, contact Craig Kahlke, Cornell Lake Ontario Fruit Team, at 585-735-5448, cjk37@cornell.edu or Robert Hadad, Cornell Vegetable Program, at 585-739-4065, rgh26@cornell.edu.

This workshop is supported with funding administered by the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYSDAM). Funding was made possible by a grant/cooperative agreement from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the USDA.

May – 2026 Respirator Fit Testing, Orleans County - CCE Orleans | Albion, NY

\$78 per person (\$40 for eligible farms)

OSHA Compliant Fit Testing & Training (English & Spanish)

- **Proof of Medical Clearance Required**
- *Provide respirator make, model, & size when scheduling.*

To Schedule an appointment or learn more call 800-343-7527 | email fittest@bassett.org

Harmonized GAP Plus+ Plan Writing Session

March 20, 7:30AM - Noon, CCE-Wayne

Craig Kahlke

Join us for this specialized workshop to cover requirements for this specific audit. Commercial fruit and vegetable growers are increasingly being asked to have the Harmonized GAP Plus+ audit to satisfy some large buyer's requirements. In this workshop, you will get an overview of the audit standards. Following this, you will have time to start writing your food safety plan to adhere to this audit. You will receive a food safety plan template tailored to the Harmonized GAP Plus+ standards. Extension educators and NYS Ag & Mkts auditors will be available for help.

Lunch and refreshments are included.

Please bring a laptop that contains Microsoft Word.

7:30 AM - Check-in and refreshments.

8 AM - Audit Standards overview, and intro to the food safety template.

10 AM - Break

10:20 AM - Begin writing your plan

Noon - Lunch & Adjourn

Register here: https://lof.cce.cornell.edu/event_preregistration_new.php?id=2173

CleanSweepNY

Preregister with NYSDEC 518-225-8146, cleansweep@dec.ny.gov

Return completed registration form to DEC by April 27, 2026.

Participants will be sent a CleanSweepNY appointment confirmation, which will include your drop-off date, time, and location.

Safely transport your items to the assigned collection site

- Depew – Tuesday, May 5, 2026
 - Lockport – Wednesday, May 6, 2026
 - Spencerport – Thursday, May 7, 2026
 - Waterloo – Friday, May 8, 2026
-

FREE Farming Under Pressure Workshop Stress Management and Suicide Prevention for Farmers

March 19, 8:30AM, CCE Orleans- Registration not required

Participants will learn about:

- Common stressors in agriculture and how they impact mental health
 - Practical stress management tools you can use right away
 - Warning signs of suicide risk
 - How to start conversations and support someone who may be struggling
 - Available local and regional resources for farmers
-

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- CleanSweepNY
- Farming Under Pressure Workshop
- Upcoming Educational Opportunities!

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



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



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

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

Check out our YouTube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC6PXjEkx7nLDY1A81Ek5brQ>

Mark Your Calendars

Events Calendar: <https://lof.cce.cornell.edu/events.php>

Date	Event	Time	Location	Info
Mar 9	DEC Certified Pesticide Applicator License Pre-Exam Training – Day 1	8:15 AM – 12:30 PM	CCE Orleans	Reserve by March 1
Mar 10	Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) Food Safety Training	9:00 AM – 4:00 PM	CCE Wayne	Register Now
Mar 11	2026 USDA-SCRI SPARC Heat School	All Day	Wenatchee, WA / Waterport, NY Learning Hub / Virtual	In-person hub in Waterport or attend virtually
Mar 11	Tree Fruit Scouting Online Course – Week 3	4:30 – 6:00 PM	Online	Free
Mar 12	Cornell Winter Fruit Webinars: Inoculating Orchards with Mycorrhizal Fungi	11:00 AM – 12:30 PM	Online	Register Now
Mar 13	DEC Certified Pesticide Applicator License Pre-Exam Training – Day 2	8:15 AM – 12:30 PM	CCE Orleans	
Mar 16	DEC Certified Pesticide Applicator License Exam	8:30 AM	CCE Orleans	Register with DEC by March 1
Mar 18	Postharvest Water Management, Sanitation, and Traceability Workshop	9:00 AM – 4:00 PM	CCE Orleans	Register Now
Mar 18	Tree Fruit Scouting Online Course – Week 4	4:30 – 6:00 PM	Online	Free
Mar 19	Cornell Winter Fruit Webinars: St. Peachtrick's Day – Cherry Pruning Strategies and Plum Varieties for the Northeast	11:00 AM – 12:30 PM	Online	Register Now
Mar 20	Harmonized GAP Plus+ Plan Writing Session	7:30 AM Sign-in	CCE Wayne	Register Now
Mar 24	Pesticide Applicators Review Course & Exam – Day 1	9:00 AM – 1:00 PM	CCE Wayne	Register Now
Mar 25	Tree Fruit Scouting Online Course – Week 5	4:30 – 6:00 PM	Online	Free
Mar 26	Pesticide Applicators Review Course & Exam – Day 2	9:00 AM – 1:00 PM	CCE Wayne	
Apr 2	DEC Certified Pesticide Applicator License Exam	9:00 AM	CCE Wayne	Register Now
July 30	2026 Cornell Fruit Field Day		Geneva	Stay tuned for updates