Cornell Cooperative Extension | Cornell Vegetable Program

VEGEdge

YOUR TRUSTED SOURCE FOR RESEARCH-BASED KNOWLEDGE

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Scab of Watermelon

Judson Reid, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Cornell Vegetable Program

We were thrown a curve ball recently in the watermelon field. After a very dry July and early August, watermelons in the Finger Lakes region began displaying disease symptoms including black spots with yellow halos and rapid vine decline. Nearby cucurbits, such as cantaloupe and cucumber appeared unaffected.

Supported by an excellent team of fellow plant pathologists at our AgriTech campus in Geneva, Frank Hay was able to isolate the fungal pathogen *Cladosporium cucumerinum* from affected leaves. This fungus causes the disease Scab of cucurbits. Why was this a curve ball for us?

According to multiple sources:

- Temperatures of 63 to 70°F with wet weather are required for Scab spore dispersal and infection.
- Scab has become an uncommon disease in New York, and according to pathologist Meg McGrath "the last occurrence confirmed by Cornell Plant Disease Diagnostic Clinic staff was in 2010".
- Watermelon is considered to be highly resistant to Scab, more so than any other cucurbit.

Mid-summer growing conditions in this area were not conducive to spore dispersal or infection and the most

Scab of watermelon is not common and can easily be confused with other diseases, and even Two Spotted Spider Mites. *Photo: J. Reid, CCE*

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About VegEdge

VegEdge newsletter is exclusively for enrollees in the Cornell Vegetable Program, a Cornell Cooperative Extension partnership between Cornell University and CCE Associations in 14 counties.

The newsletter is a service to our enrollees and is intended for educational purposes, strengthening the relationship between our enrollees, the Cornell Vegetable Program team, and Cornell University.

We're interested in your comments. Contact us at:
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Help us serve you better by telling us what you think. Email us at *cce-cvp@cornell.edu* or write to us at Cornell Vegetable Program, 480 N Main St, Canandaigua, NY 14424.

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unlikely victim, watermelon, was the only cucurbit in the vicinity showing symptoms. We do note that the affected samples had not received the fungicide applications of other vine crops.

So although this is an anomalous outbreak, it is of major concern to all vine crop growers, as scab lesions that develop on fruit make them unmarketable. Higher risk crops for scab infection are pumpkin, winter squash and summer squash. Cucumber and watermelon are reported to have high levels of resistance to Scab.

Foliar symptoms include pale-green water-soaked spots that turn gray to white and become angular with a chlorotic. On fruit, spots appear as small sunken areas, that may have sticky ooze. These can develop secondary, rotting infections.

This surprise scab diagnosis is one of many challenges that watermelons face right now. We also have confirmed cases of Downy Mildew, Powdery Mildew, Alternaria and Two Spotted Spider Mites. In some fields we find several of these diseases at once.

Control measures? Since cucurbits are the only known hosts, and the spores survive on crop debris, 2-year crop rotation is the first and best management option. Next promote a lower humidity canopy with drip irrigation and site selection. Fungicide recommendations are parallel to Powdery Mildew, and given the multiple disease pressures vine crops face this month, addressing other diseases should check Scab infections.

Scab is of serious concern due to the damage it causes fruit. To date we are only observing foliar symptoms. *Photo: J. Reid, CCE*

Herbicide Resistance Warning Signs

Lynn Sosnoskie, Weed Scientist, Cornell University

Herbicide resistance in weeds develops from the repeated use of the same herbicide or those with similar modes of action. This creates selection pressure that favors the survival and reproduction of naturally resistant individuals, allowing the resistance genes to spread in subsequent generations. Over time, the resistant plants dominate individual fields and farms. Annual weeds that produce large numbers of seeds have a higher probability of developing resistance.

Herbicide resistance can be difficult to manage. It is well-worth knowing how to recognize potential herbicide resistance so you can spot it and address it before an herbicide resistant species takes over your fields. These are **some common warning signs:**

- **Survivors of a normally effective herbicide** -- When weeds that are usually well-controlled by the product (at the correct rate and timing) survive treatment, especially if neighboring weeds of the same species are dead (i.e., variable control of individual plants).
- **Single-species escape** -- When one weed species survives while others are well-controlled by the same herbicide treatment.
- **Multiple generations surviving** -- When the escaped plants set seed, and their seedlings also survive the following season, the issue is more likely due to herbicide resistance than a simple misapplication.
- **Species known for resistance** -- Herbicide resistance has been documented in New York or in nearby states for several important weed species, including common lambsquarters, multiple pigweeds (Powell, smooth, Palmer amaranth, and waterhemp), common groundsel, common ragweed, giant ragweed, Italian ryegrass, and marestail/horseweed.
- **Herbicide use pattern** -- Repeated use of a single herbicide or mode of action, both in single year and/or over multiple seasons
- **Failure despite correct application** -- If environmental conditions like insufficient/excessive rain or unfavorable temperatures, sprayer calibration, mixing errors, or soil factors can't explain the lack of control.

If you suspect or confirm herbicide-resistant weeds in your fields, it's important to take action quickly to limit their spread. Rotate and tank mix herbicides with different effective modes of action, as appropriate for your system. Integrate cultural and mechanical practices such as crop rotation, cover crops, and cultivation to reduce weed pressure. Avoid allowing resistant weeds to go to seed, as this accelerates the problem.

Reach out to your local Cornell Cooperative Extension specialists for help assessing whether weeds may be resistant or for guidance on resistance management strategies tailored to your operation. To learn more about herbicide resistant weeds, visit https://cals.cornell.edu/weed-science/herbicides/herbicide-resistance-basics

Look Before Jumping Into a New Vegetable Crop

Richard VanVranken, Rutgers; from Growing Produce, 8/21/2025

[Why talk about new varieties now? Be prepared for next season! I find growing alternative crops fascinating from a horticultural perspective but also from a potential business investment. Growing new varieties is fun. Making money by growing a new crop is challenging. There are many aspects of production that can impact what the selling price might have to be for a new crop to be economically successful. Later this season I will write about several potential crops I have been growing.

Meanwhile, in the latest issue of Growing Produce, our colleague from Rutgers, Richard Van Vranken has an article that should be of great interest for anyone interested in new vegetable crops. Its titled, "Look Before Jumping into a New Vegetable Crop." ed. R. Hadad, CCE CVP]

When growers consider adding a new crop to their seasonal plans, one important question tends to get overlooked. Who actually buys and consumes that produce? We chance upon a new produce item in a grocery store, or see/read a story about some new crop that's all the rage, and suddenly we're trying to see if our growers can add it to their crop mix, assuming it will be highly profitable, with such high prices on the market shelves and all that publicity.

Take for instance, yacon (*Smallanthus sonchifolius*) or Peruvian ground apple, a South American plant grown for its sweet-tasting tuber. My colleague Peter Nitzsche, Morris County (NJ) Agricultural Agent, read some news about it being popular among Central/South American immigrants, as well as having some health benefits being touted on daytime television talk shows.

Our research, by chance, showed we could grow it adequately on white plastic, but not black, in our South Jersey hot, dry, sandy soils, and that it produces prolifically in our cooler, heavier soils in the northern part of the state. Costs of production looked good, and Pete worked with the Food Science Department to do some taste evaluations and recipe development.

What we didn't find were any enthusiastic immigrant communities clamoring for it. And apparently, few health/foodie consumers who frequent farmers markets had heard the news about its healthy prebiotic qualities. The handful of farmers who experimented with us ended up with a lot of leftovers at the end of the season.

Useful Market Research Tools

There have been a few tools created to help determine market potential for new crops, especially if they happen to be popular in recent immigrant communities. The WorldCrops website (https://worldcrops.org/) was created specifically to help growers learn about and understand those cultures and the types of produce they might seek.

Researchers are conducting additional work to link those crops with census data. That includes highlighting the ethnic makeup of the communities around your market. We've piloted this for New Jersey and may expand it if successful. You can find more information on this at https://sare.rutgers.edu/market-research.html. Similarly, the national Market Maker system, which is available in states that have subscribed to the service, helps you identify potential buyers of specialty crops and livestock products.

Check into Crop Prices

High retail prices for new types of produce don't necessarily translate into high prices to the grower either. What makes prices for new produce so expensive? A range of things. Such as novelty crops, short shelf life, special handling requirements, and small supplies available only from a few growers/wholesalers for a short period.

In some cases, there is so much unmet demand that there's lots of room to jump on an opportunity. However, flooding a tiny niche market with a large, new supply is often self-defeating with the market being unable to absorb any more volume, no matter how low the price drops. Keep in mind that a new crop alternative that looks like a lucrative opportunity is likely already a staple crop for other growers somewhere.

Where to Find Production Tips

Once you've decided you want to try a new crop, you have a wealth of production resources to tap into. Check with your local and state extension offices, USDA programs, and grower organizations. You'll find how-to production guides and descriptions for new, unusual, and alternative crops. These support materials will help you learn how to grow them.

Many researchers and Extension advisers have tested varieties, fertility and seeding rates, and other production traits to see if a new crop will grow in their locale. Collaborating with colleagues in the Ag Economics departments, we try to determine costs of production to see if the crop can be grown profitably.

[County demographic information can be found at https://pad.human.cornell.edu/profiles/index.cfm ed. R. Hadad, CCE CVP]

Cucurbit Downy Mildew Update

Elizabeth Buck, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Cornell Vegetable Program

Crops at Risk

Downy mildew continues to spread and seems to be in most counties covered by CVP. Currently, we believe there is only Clade 2 cucurbit downy mildew present in our region. Clade 2 strikes cucumber and cantaloupe. There are reports of Clade 1 cucurbit downy mildew in western Ohio, Ontario well north of Toronto, Virginia, and Connecticut. Clade 1 strikes cucumbers plus pumpkin, squashes, and watermelon. At the present moment, the risk seems low to fall vine crops and watermelons and no downy-specific materials need to be applied to those crops. That said, Clade 1 downy will continue to move our direction. We'll be tracking it, but please do reach out if you suspect downy mildew in those other crops. It'll help us put the warning out so no one is surprised and loses their fall crops leading up to harvest.

Resistant Varieties

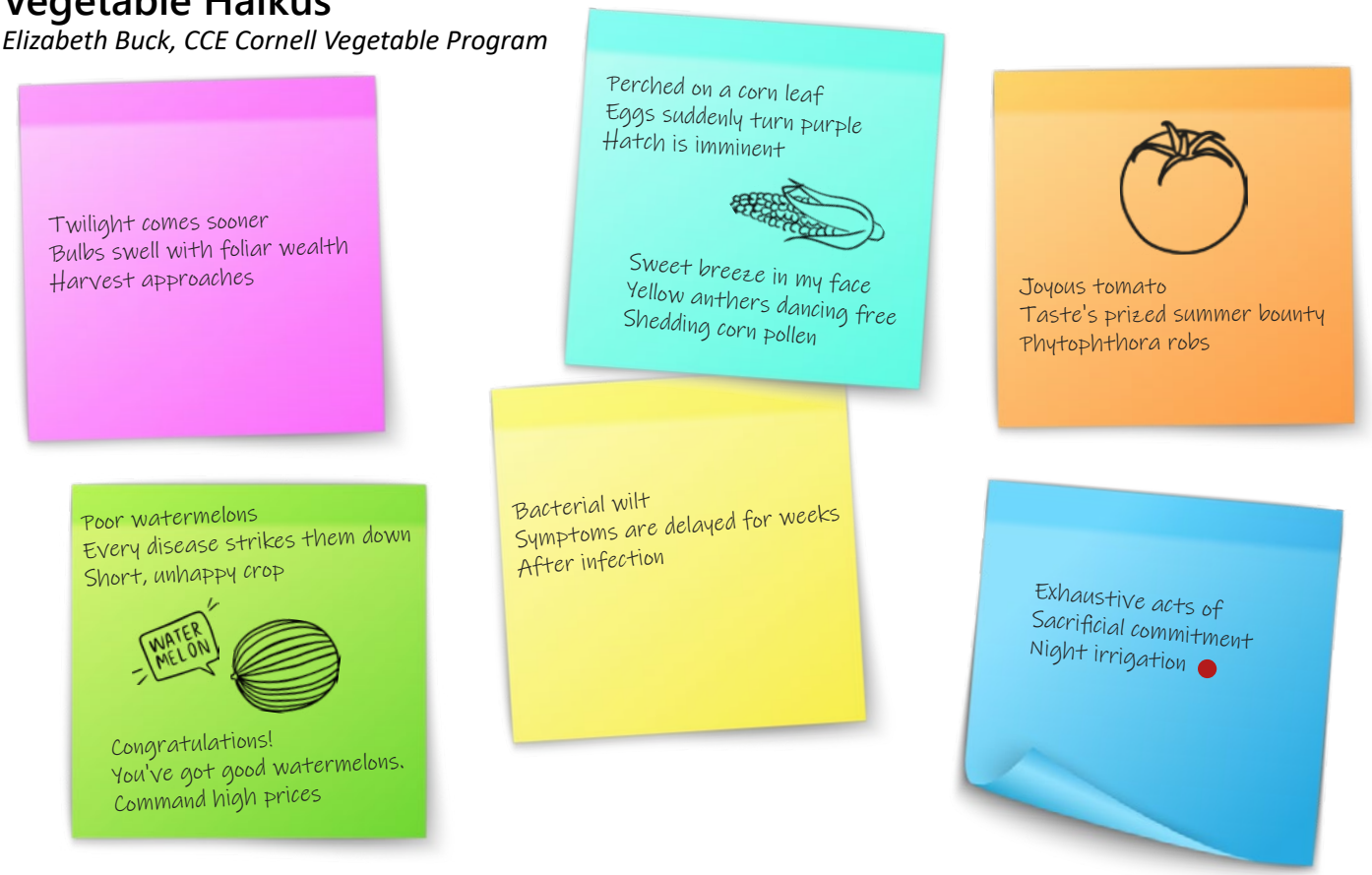
Know that all downy mildew resistance in cucumbers is not complete immunity, it is high levels of tolerance. That means that you'll still see some downy mildew symptoms on resistant varieties. Importantly, these resistant (really they're tolerant) varieties will exhibit substantially less sporulation of the downy, even under favorable conditions. That means downy will not spread as fast in the canopy and that you're not sending a lot of spores (you're still sending some) to infect the neighborhood. They'll have fewer yellow checkers on the foliage, the checkers will develop at a slower pace, and the crop will continue to grow and mature fruit.

Overall, I've been quite satisfied with the disease performance I've watched for varieties DMR 264, DMR 401, Bristol, Brickyard. Citadel is the new variety this year, I imagine it is just as good but I've not gotten to watch it yet. On the whole, I've seen the resistant varieties offer 2-3 weeks more production than susceptible varieties grown adjacent. For organic farms, using resistant varieties is the best management practice for anyone wanting to harvest cucumbers in August or September.

Cucurbit downy mildew excels at overcoming fungicides. Varietal tolerance is an important tool to help preserve fungicide efficacy. The downy mildew pathogen is resistant to or beginning to tolerate at least 18 different active ingredients that belong to 10 different fungicide groups. At present, only 6 or 7 chemistries offer confident control of cucurbit downy mildew. Resistant varieties reduce reliance on fungicides because the pathogen can't grow as fast and struggles to sporulate. Applications can be spaced out further and may have more "mileage". You'll need to spray less, so there are economic, labor and environmental benefits, too.

Vegetable Haikus

Elizabeth Buck, CCE Cornell Vegetable Program



CROP Insights

Observations from the Field and Research-Based Recommendations

GENERAL

As the weather pattern shifts to cool and, in some areas, rainy conditions, expect to see a surge of fall diseases like downy mildew and alternaria in brassica, anthracnose and white mold in many crops, and a slew of fruit rots in solanaceous and vine crops. Sudden wilt is likely in cantaloupes and watermelons plantings that had root rot troubles in the spring and are now experiencing cold nights. Fruit can crack or split with the influx of rain if they have been perpetually dry this summer. Even large fruit like melons can crack. – EB

BEETS

Cercospora leaf spot and Alternaria leaf spot remain a concern through the rest of the season. Recent rain is welcome to help size up roots, however, we may see splitting/cracking of roots that have gone from drought conditions to receiving rain this week with subsequent root rot diseases invading the wounds. – JK

CARROTS

Prolonged periods of leaf wetness are favorable for disease infection. Bacterial lesions are small yellow areas on the leaflets with brown, dry centers often surrounded by a yellow halo. Copper is labeled for Bacterial leaf blight. Cercospora leaf spot, caused by the fungus *Cercospora carotae*, is prevalent during hot and humid weather. Cercospora lesions are small, circular, tan, or gray spots with a dead center which appear along the leaf margins causing them to curl. The Cercospora fungus attacks younger leaves. Alternaria leaf blight caused by the fungus *Alternaria dauci*, first appears as deep brown to black irregular spots on the margins of the leaflets. Lesions on petioles and stems are deep brown and girdle the stems, killing them. As the disease progresses, entire leaflets may shrivel and die. Lesions are more prevalent on older foliage. There are several fungicides labeled for carrots as outlined in the 2025 Cornell Vegetable Guidelines. Choices should be based on which disease(s) you are trying to control, cost, and PHI. – JK

COLE CROPS

Hearing reports of brassica downy mildew and cabbage aphids. Beware of white mold in fields with a history – now is likely the time to begin your preventative program in moderate to high-risk fields. – EB

Brassica downy mildew ID and management, as told by haiku:

What cool refreshment
The weather finally changes
Dewy mornings arrive

Fine blue lace outlines
Golden foliar patches
Adorn the cabbage

Thin pillars of fluff
Brassica downy's white spores
Reside beneath leaves

Difficult target
Translaminar, systemic
Fungicide needed

Forum, Ranman, fight
Orondis, eliminate
Zampro, Revus kill

These knights who rescue
Your crops do need their squires
Protectant required

Oomycete plague
Your banishment is complete
Cabbages rejoice

CUCUMBERS

Downy mildew continues to spread and seems to be in most counties covered by CVP. See article, page 5. – EB

DRY BEANS

Western bean cutworm trapping continues this week at 15 fields in locations in the region (Table 1). Moth numbers are largely declining across the region, and we should see few to no moths in fields in the next couple of weeks. *(Project funded by the NYS Dry Bean Endowment and led by Margie Lund, CVP)*

Table 1. Western bean cutworm adult moth numbers by date for each dry bean trap location. Red text indicates peak flight.

Dry Bean Location	July 1	July 8	July 15	July 22	July 29	Aug 5	Aug 12	Aug 19	Cumulative Moths
Attica (Wyoming Co.)	0	0	10	21	16	10	11	1	**69**
Avoca Valley (Steuben Co.)	-	0	0	6	68	10	12	3	**99**
Avoca Hill (Steuben Co.)	-	0	1	32	112	95	46	7	**293**
Caledonia 1 (Genesee Co.)	1	0	0	22	60	56	18	3	**160**
Caledonia 2 (Genesee Co.)	0	0	0	35	101	69	40	10	**255**
Churchville 1 (Monroe Co.)	1	0	10	112	86	42	48	8	**307**
Churchville 2 (Monroe Co.)	0	1	2	27	29	17	22	5	**103**
Geneva 1 (Ontario Co.)	0	0	0	7	28	40	28	6	**109**
Geneva 2 (Ontario Co.)	0	0	1	2	8	27	4	2	**44**
LeRoy 1 (Genesee Co.)	-	0	0	16	89	34	20	6	**165**
LeRoy 2 (Genesee Co.)	-	-	0	25	34	20	15	2	**96**
Pavilion (Wyoming Co.)	0	0	3	33	65	18	11	11	**141**
Penfield (Monroe Co.)	-	2	9	47	100	103	83	18	**362**
Wayland Valley (Steuben Co.)	-	0	2	17	65	45	35	8	**172**
Wayland Hill (Steuben Co.)	0	2	1	30	134	145	34	11	**357**

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ONIONS

Pulling has begun and will be in full swing after Labor Day. Many fields have gotten their last fungicide/insecticide sprays and sprout inhibitor, although a few fields will be getting their last fungicide/insecticide sprays this week. It has been very hot and very dry in July and August this year. Although the very dry August is quickly turning into an average August for rainfall (Table 2). We asked for "bulb rain" a month ago but did not get it. And, as luck would have it, now we are getting "rot rain", because upright plants that are not putting on new leaves and have soft necks have a gap in their leaf axils where rainwater can pool and enter into the neck tissue where it favors infection and progression of bacterial disease, which can lead to bulb rot (Fig. 1). Gently rolling onions lay down those plants that are upright so that their leaf axils are protected from rain, preventing new infections from occurring and reducing favorable conditions in the neck in plants already infected (see video, https://youtu.be/C2-xtuVRdrk?si=yTSnrrqq3Jeyqf9v).

Table 2. Weather conditions during July and August and subsequent bacterial bulb rot in Elba muck, 2022-2025.

Growing Season General Weather Conditions	July & August[1]		August only[1]		Bacterial Bulb Rot (%)[2]	
	No. days > 90°F	Rainfall (inch)	No. days > 90°F	Rainfall (inch)	Average	Range
2022 Average temp & rain	7	5.03	5	1.97	3.1	0 – 17.5
2023 Cool & wet	3	8.22	0	2.78	10.4	2.7 – 24.4
2024 Cool & wet	4	5.88	1	2.71	17.0	3.4 – 41
2025 Very hot & very dry	16	2.26	5	1.77	TBD	TBD

1 Weather data obtained from NEWA weather station located in central Elba muck.
2 Data collected from 6-8 commercial onion fields in Elba muck, as part of CCE CVP onion scouting program.

Figure 1. When onion plants begin to lodge, the plant is no longer putting on new leaves and there is a gap in the leaf axil where rainwater can pool, increasing the risk of bacterial infection. *Photo: C. Hoepting, CCE*

Since it has been very dry during the crop stage that is most susceptible to bacterial infection (5% to 50% lodging, Table 2), and we have seen very few plants with foliar symptoms of bacterial infection (see diagnostic video, https://youtu.be/pTYmdIwj-bao?si=mxxeHfXBwkcs1noH) in our scouting program, this would suggest that incidence of bulb rot would be low this year. However, the current "rot rain" could increase bacterial infections. Recently, we have noticed in some plants that the innermost onion leaf has dried up and is starting to rot, especially in fields that had been irrigated (Fig. 2). I do not know what causes the inner leaf to dry up, although I suspect it has to do with the hot temperatures this summer. Nonetheless, unlike typical foliar symptoms of bacterial disease, a dried-up inner leaf is not visible when walking an onion field and is only detected by inspecting the leaf axils of the plants (which could be detected when counting thrips). The "rot race" is the race to get the neck tissue dried down, which is impassable to bacteria before the bacterial infection in the neck tissue enters into the bulb. Dry and sunny conditions during windrowing are ideal. Avoid topping/harvesting when neck tissue is green.

Figure 2. Sometimes when the inner leaf of an onion plant dies and dries up (left), it can become infected with bacterial disease (right: yellow arrow), which could progress into the bulb. *Photos: C. Hoepting, CCE*

When you go to pull a lodged onion plant out of the ground and the roots are "letting go" so that it pulls out easily, it has finished putting on size and can be pulled. If the roots are still "holding on" and it requires a tug to pull the plant out of the ground, the bulbs are still sizing up. Onion plants are ready to be pulled when at least 50% of the foliage has dried down. Pulling and harvesting should be avoided when temperatures are > 85°F, especially when the humidity is high, the sunlight is bright, and onions are immature as these conditions can cause sunscald and black mold.

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Optimum conditions for harvest, curing and storage of dry bulb onions

- Do not harvest onions when temperatures are > 85 °F due to risk of sunscald and black mold.
- Do not harvest wet onions.
- Optimum conditions for artificial curing are 68-86°F (3-5 °F above the ambient air temperature) and 70% relative humidity (50% going in, <100% coming out) with airflow of 3 cubic feet per minute per cubic foot of product for at least 12 to 24 h, until neck is sealed.
- Best skin develops at 75-90°F.
- The optimum conditions for long-term storage of onions is 32°F with 65-70% relative humidity.

Muck Donut Hour is closed for the season. Thank you to the growers, crop consultants and researchers who made this 25+ year Elba muck tradition epic!

SNAP BEANS

Late planted beans are at higher risk for Sclerotinia white mold because plant canopies hold moisture from rain, irrigation, and/or morning dew in late August through harvest that may stretch into early October. Fungicide applications are meant to target early bloom because that is the susceptible stage for infection. Currently, we do not have any recommendations to halt or cure white mold once it has developed. Keep a record of the history of white mold in a field. A rotation of at least 2 years between susceptible crops is required to reduce primary inoculum. However, given that a small number of sclerotia (hard black structures that overwinter in the soil) are sufficient to initiate a white mold outbreak, a longer rotation (3+ years) may be beneficial. Timely tillage of crop residue to bury sclerotia after harvest to promote degradation is also encouraged. – JK

SQUASH

The cool, dewy nights will encourage fruit rot development. There was a fair amount of gummy stem blight earlier this season in portions of the southern tier where they caught some rains in July and August. Gummy stem blight becomes black rot on the fruit in fall. It would be wise to make an application against gummy/black rot now if you suspect you may have had gummy stem blight this summer. The other major fruit rots are caused by anthracnose and fusarium. Inspire Super or the generic version Vango ESQ can treat gummy/black rot, anthracnose, and many foliar diseases. There are many options of fungicides for targeting specific diseases. Watch your PHIs approaching harvest.

Some squashes are coming in early, particularly if they were reliant on the scarce rain this summer. Be patient and make sure your fruit are fully mature. Acorns should have bright orange bellies. Spaghettis should be yellow, not creamy. Butternuts shouldn't have any green streaks or veins. Winter squash should be hard to a fingernail. So long as you have canopy coverage and aren't experiencing decay issues, you can leave your squash on the vines. Good powdery mildew management helps the vines stay healthy long enough to fully mature the crop. – EB

SWEET CORN

Northern corn leaf blight is present in our region in both sweet and field corn. It is easily recognized by the cigar shaped lesions (Fig. 3). Tar spot was confirmed Aug 26 in Chautauqua County which adds to the report in Livingston County on July 30. I expect more tar spot reports in our region as the season progresses because of the more favorable weather conditions we are experiencing now. – JK

From the NYS Sweet Corn Trap Network Report 8.26.25, https://sweetcorn.nysipm.cornell.edu: Reports received: 29 of 34 monitoring sites submitted data this week. Trap catches this week: European corn borer (ECB-E): reported at 3 sites European corn borer (ECB-Z): reported at 3 sites Corn earworm (CEW): reported at 26 sites, 21 high enough to be on a 4,5, or 6 day spray schedule Fall armyworm (FAW): reported at 7 sites Western bean cutworm (WBC): reported at 17 sites. One of the fields I scouted this week had aphids over threshold. This is a good time to look for corn leaf aphids, record the number of plants with more than 50 aphids. The threshold for corn leaf aphid at tassel emergence is 50% of plants with more than 50 aphids.

Figure 3. Northern corn leaf blight lesion on corn leaf. *Photo: J. Kikkert, CCE*

Upcoming Events

Chipping Potato Twilight Meeting

September 4, 2025 (Thursday) | 5:00 pm - 6:00 pm
Mahany Farms, 10046 NY-36, Dansville, NY 14437

Join us for a brief, on-farm meeting including insect pest updates and viewing of the chipping potato variety trial. 1.0 DEC credits in categories 10, 1a, and 23 will be offered. Dinner follows the event. FREE! No pre-registration required.

Rochester Soil Health Field Day

September 16, 2025 (Tuesday) | 2:30 pm - 6:00 pm
Foodlink Community Farm, 585 Lexington Ave, Rochester, NY 14613

Join us for a hands-on soil health field day! This event is for small-scale and urban growers, gardeners and farmers is a part of the 2025 Soil Health and Climate Resilience Field Days. Topics include cover cropping in small spaces—species selection, seeding and termination strategies; cover crop demonstration plots; building soil health in raised beds; best practices for dealing with heavy metals soil contamination in the urban environment; soil health demonstrations on impacts of cover crop and other management practices from NY Soil Health.

COST: FREE, light refreshments provided. Space is limited! Pre-registration required. Register at: https://cvp.cce.cornell.edu/event.php?id=2082 Hosted by CCE Harvest New York and Cornell Vegetable Program, NY Soil Health, Monroe County SWCD, Taproot Collective, Rochester Urban Ag Working Group, Foodlink and more.

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