



HARVEST NEW YORK

QUARTERLY HIGHLIGHTS

Q2 2021

Harvest New York is an innovative Cornell Cooperative Extension team that focuses on workforce development and business expansion projects that increase profitability and investment in key sectors of New York's agriculture industry.



New Faces

expanding the
educational
outreach of
Harvest New York





Urban Garden Specialists Join Harvest New York

Alison Espinosa has been hired as the WNY Urban Gardens Specialist with Harvest New York. She is an ancestral farmer of Afro Caribbean descent with over 10 years experience in Animal Husbandry. As a certified veterinary technician, Alison raises flocks of chickens, ducks and rabbits on a regenerative farm in West Bloomfield, NY. While completing veterinary clinical training, Alison worked on a horse farm in Cayuga County, NY, which inspired her admiration of bucolic living and land stewardship. Over the years, Alison has dedicated herself to studies and internships with mentors and regarded professionals in the fields of herbalism, agriculture, Indigenous culture, seed saving and more. With ancestral ties to the land and a background of agriculture in her lineage, Espinosa raises medicinal herbs, hearty vegetables, ceremonial botanics, and the newest addition to the farm in Summer 2021—honeybees. For the local community, Alison provides seeds, fresh herbs/vegetable produce, herbal tea blends, farm distilled essential oils, chicken/duck eggs, education and advocacy through works with Black Farmer Fund, Black Farmers United NYS, Northeast Farmers of Color (NEFOC), and Buffalo Food Equity Network. Alison hopes to empower, inspire and educate the future generation of earth-workers through educational works and hands-on experiences in community gardens in the Finger Lakes region. Alison can be reached at ame94@cornell.edu



Kwesi Joseph – recycler and attractor of beneficial insects – was born 5° north of the equator in Guyana, South America. As a student in Guyana, he learned about gardening and had a few plants in his backyard. He emigrated to the United States at the age of 12. As a freshman at Brooklyn Technical High School, he was in the last cohort to take the Materials Science class. Materials Science had a major impact on Kwesi; subsequently he furthered his love of science by earning a B.S. in Geology from York College, The City University of New York.

Composting is Kwesi's passion. He started experimenting with composting in his backyard in 2011. Shortly thereafter, he became a Master Composter at the Compost Project at Brooklyn Botanic Garden and has been the Compost Manager at Hattie Carthan Community Garden. In addition to composting, Kwesi has been experimenting with a myriad of Integrated Pest Management techniques – attracting the good bugs to kill the bad ones. His ABCD's of annual plants that attract beneficials are Alyssum, Buckwheat, Cosmos and Dill. Yarrow, Dandelions and Dutch White Clover are the perennial mainstays.

Most recently, Kwesi taught indoor vermicomposting (using red wiggler worms) and introduced the Periodic Table of Elements to 3rd graders at P.S. 5 in Bed-Stuy, Brooklyn. Additionally, he designed and instructed a STEAM summer program based on gardening and composting for students ages 8-13 for a nonprofit in Brooklyn, NY. Taking seemingly complicated subjects and making them understandable is Kwesi's strength as an educator. He takes "chalk and talk" science lessons and converts them into a visual, kinesthetic and tactile laboratory. Kwesi joins Harvest New York to work in the metro NYC area as an Urban Gardens Specialist. Email Kwesi at koj7@cornell.edu

Conservation Biocontrol on Urban Farms

In many agricultural settings, natural enemies can suppress pests when pesticide use is limited. Natural enemies can be attracted to urban spaces by growing nectar- and pollen-rich flowering plants that provide alternate food sources. Harvest NY Urban Agriculture Specialists Yolanda Gonzalez and Sam Anderson conducted farm visits and surveys in 2018 which revealed that nearly all urban farmers in New York City already prefer a non-pesticide approach to pest management, and many expressed interest in conservation biocontrol as an alternative. At the same time, a majority of urban farmers named insect pest management among their biggest day-to-day challenges; certain pests of particular importance for NYC vegetable growers, such as twospotted spider mite and cabbage whitefly, routinely reduce some crops' yield by half or more.

Responding to the need for cultural controls in urban agriculture, Harvest NY is collaborating with New York State Integrated Pest Management (NYS IPM) Program, to trial and demonstrate conservation biocontrol strategies on three cooperating farms in NYC. Along with Anderson and Gonzalez,

project technician Kelly Guevara and Cornell student and CCE summer intern Ileana Katzman will carry out fieldwork in 2021 to assess the diversity and abundance of natural enemies and pests important to vegetable crops in NYC. This will provide baseline information on the arthropods already present at these growing operations and the damage caused by pests in the absence of special efforts to attract and conserve natural enemies. In 2022, we will plant habitat to support natural enemies and compare arthropods sampled after planting. In addition to working closely with cooperating growers, the project will share results and new techniques with a larger audience through workshops presented in NYC and through the creation of outreach materials to be distributed digitally, including a NYC Natural Enemy Guide. Ultimately, this project will increase urban growers' knowledge of attracting and identifying natural enemies. Urban growers will also add habitat for natural enemies to their growing operations and will achieve improved pest management through these plantings. The results from this ongoing natural enemy habitat project with both Harvest NY and NYS IPM will enhance extension to urban growers and promote sustainability and reduced environmental/human health risks while maintaining yield and quality.



CCE summer intern Ileana Katzman and technician Kelly Guevara set up pitfall traps to collect insect samples at East NY Farms at Pink Houses in Brooklyn.

Introducing the Harvest NY Regional Farm to School Coordinator Program

With the support of the NY Department of Agriculture & Markets and in partnership with a myriad of County Extension Associations, Harvest NY is pleased to introduce you to our new Regional Farm to School Coordinators. It is our intention through this Regional Coordinator Program to provide coordinated and comprehensive support to Farm to School stakeholders, including farmers, distributors, processors, food hubs, school food authorities (SFAs), and educators. We aim to increase the volume and variety of local farm products purchased by SFAs for use in child nutrition programs. We will do this by providing boots-on-the-ground support directly to supply chain partners, and statewide support via resource development, training, and technical assistance to supply chain partners. We will be working collaboratively with partners that are already doing farm to school work at the local level to support and supplement existing efforts. While we have specific counties called out, Harvest NY is a statewide program, and thus available to serve anyone interested in receiving assistance.

Our new Regional Coordinators join an existing Farm to School team, comprised of Program Lead, Cheryl Bilinski, and Becky O'Connor, our Western NY Farm to Institution Coordinator.

If you're interested in receiving Farm to School Coordinator support, and you don't see the county you reside in listed below, please [email Cheryl](#) and she'll connect you with support.

**Kristy Apostolides**

Lower Hudson Valley Coordinator – Orange, Putnam, Rockland Counties

kda4@cornell.edu

845-429-7085 x106

Kristy comes to the position with 20 years of experience in local and community food systems development.

**Katie Sheehan-Lopez**

Upper Hudson Valley Coordinator – Ulster, Greene, Columbia, Dutchess, Sullivan, Delaware Counties

kms369@cornell.edu

845-340-3990 x334

Katie previously worked as a SNAP-Ed Nutrition Educator in the Hudson Valley, providing workshops in the community to promote healthy eating and physical activity.

**Amy Bly**

Long Island, Suffolk & Nassau Counties

ab2353@cornell.edu

Sandy and Amy are serving as co-coordinators during this first year. Sandy is a Vegetable Production Specialist, and Amy, a Senior Nutrition Educator.

**Sandy Menasha**

Long Island, Suffolk & Nassau Counties

srm45@cornell.edu

**Lindsey Pashow**

Northern NY, Clinton and Franklin Counties

lep67@cornell.edu

518-569-3073

Lindsey has been serving Northern NY on behalf of Harvest NY for five years now and is excited to support direct efforts to support Farm to School stakeholders in the region.



Connect with Farm to School

Reach out to your local NYS Farm to School coordinator

Find Farm to School Resources

Connect with Farm to School

NYS Farm to School Webinars

New Farm to School Website Connects Collaborators Across NYS

In April, the NYS Farm to School Program Work Team (F2S PWT) launched the [NYS Farm to School website](#). Hosted by Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE), it is the first state-wide repository of curated F2S content. All those involved with or interested in F2S, from growers and producers, to Food Service Directors and classroom teachers, will find valuable resources and collaboration opportunities when they visit the website.

The website's [interactive map](#) connects school districts, producers, distributors, and educators with F2S Coordinators and support providers. The curated resource catalog focuses on topics including the 30% NY Initiative; education, marketing, and outreach; finding local foods; planning and developing F2S programs; and menu planning. Several resources were designed by CCE Harvest NY's Agriculture Economic Development Specialist Cheryl Bilinski and Farm to Institution Coordinator Becky O'Connor, including the 30% NY Initiative Eligible Product Database, and 30% NY Initiative Documentation Requirement Guidance.

The website's Spotlight feature highlights CCE staff and F2S PWT leadership team members who support F2S efforts statewide and their work, as well as stories of exemplary F2S programs in NY.

Also included on the website are announcements for upcoming quarterly webinars and recordings from previous webinars hosted by the Farm to School Program Work Team. A sampling of previous webinar topics includes *30% NYS Initiative: Opportunities, Barriers, and Pathways to Success*, *Resources for Purchasing 30% NYS Products for Farm to School*, *Creating Farm to School Teams: Connecting Cafeteria, Classrooms, and Communities*, and *More Money & People Power for our Farm to School Programming*. Those interested in F2S work are encouraged to [join the F2S Program Work Team](#), which they can do right through the website.

Small Fruits Extension Specialist Digs Right In

Anya Osatuke joined Harverst NY as the Small Fruits Extension Specialist in June.

"I have been learning about how growers incorporate small fruits and berries into their farm operation. While there is a lot of diversity between farms and individual growers, I've noticed that most growers have interest in:

- pruning and renewal options for overgrown berry patches
- differences between cultivars and cultivar selection
- weed management

My background is in strawberry production and food chemistry. I studied very minor fruit crops (such as paw paws and honeyberries) during my graduate studies and am excited to see them in cultivation across New York State.

For this position, I will be contributing to the Cornell Berry Blog and managing the Berry Diagnostic Tool. I am very interested in using photos and illustrations to convey agricultural information and hope to find ways to make additional educational images for these web resources."



BERRY PRODUCTION

New Lead Trainer for the Produce Safety Alliance

CDC estimates that 48 million people get sick from a foodborne illness each year. In addition, the establishment of the Food Safety Modernization Act in 2011 requires farms and food businesses to adhere to food safety standards. Over the years, Harvest NY has continuously supported our agriculture industry in food safety. This includes providing educational training and working with farmers and food businesses one-on-one.

In 2017, Harvest NY Agriculture Business Development and Marketing Specialist Lindsey Pashow attended a Train-the-Trainer program for the Produce Safety Alliance in Kansas. It was a 2-day program to educate vegetable and fruit farmers on the Food Safety Modernization Act for the Produce Safety Alliance (PSA) and train educators on the material to inform farmers. Once completing the 2-day training, educators can serve alongside a PSA Lead Trainer as a Trainer. Over the past 4 years, Lindsey has served as a Trainer and helped with more than 10 trainings across New York, attended by 500+ people. In Fall 2020, Lindsey applied to become a Lead Trainer for the PSA. She received the Lead Trainer certificate in June. This will allow her to lead PSA trainings in the future. Special thanks to the Northeast Center of Advance Food Safety for providing the funds to enable Lindsey to become a Lead Trainer.

AG BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

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