

# Cornell Cooperative Extension Harvest New York



An innovative Cornell Cooperative Extension team that focuses on development projects in the Farm and Food Industries of rural and urban New York.

## Quarterly Highlights Q2-Q3 2022



*Harvest NY team, July 2022. Photo by J. Hooper, CCE*

- **CCE Connections Enable Gardening and Nutrition Education Opportunities for Families in Transitional Housing**
- **Advancing Food Security and Mental Well-Being through Community Gardens**
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- **Events Expand *Cannabis* Knowledge Across NYS**
- **Food Systems Specialist Joins Harvest NY Team**





Harvest NY Educator Kwesi Joseph (back left) and members of the Salvation Army Garden and Nutrition Project stand on the grounds where a new garden will be built.

## CCE Connections Enable Gardening and Nutrition Education Opportunities for Families in Transitional Housing

In 2021, Harvest NY Community Gardens Specialist Kwesi Joseph began working with Salvation Army Springfield Family Residence, a transitional housing facility in Queens, NY. The Residence Education Coordinator, Bilqis Benu, saw potential for a children's garden at the site, but lacked funding to implement.

Joseph began working with Dr. Tashara Leak of the Cornell College of Human Ecology on the financial limitations facing the Salvation Army Springfield Family Residence. Leak and Joseph targeted funding available through an Engaged Research Seed Grant—\$4,000 intended to support scholarship and scientific research collaborations with community partners.

But Joseph didn't stop there. While attending the National Urban Extension Conference in May 2022, Joseph engaged with [Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program \(EFNEP\)](#) staff, inspiring him to work with Dr. Leak on EFNEP involvement to provide nutritional education classes for the parents at the Salvation Army Residence.

In early August, the Seed Grant was awarded. Zeynab Jouzi, a Postdoctoral Associate for Dr. Leak and a member of the Action Research Collaborative (ARC), is the lead on the project and will publish the results. EFNEP and Harvest NY are collaborators on the grant. All project collaborators must complete Institutional Review Board training for human participant research.

Nutritional education will begin in December 2022; Natasha Ashley, the EFNEP Coordinator for Brooklyn and Queens, was brought aboard the project along with Monica Gopaul, the Community Nutrition Educator who will be administering the classes.

Joseph will design and build the garden, opening it to the residents in the spring. The families will learn how to grow food in the garden and will be given a self-watering pot to grow herbs in their window. Ultimately, the goal is to expand the program throughout NYC and the rest of the country.





*Harvest NY Specialist Makela Elvy (on the right) at the opening of MS-217 Community Garden.*

## Advancing Food Security and Mental Well-Being through Community Gardens

Over the summer, NYC Civic Engagement Commission completed “The People’s Money,” a participatory budgeting program that allocated over \$1 million to neighborhoods most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Through the involvement in the Taskforce on Racial Inclusion & Equity (TRIE), the Arab-American Family Support Center spearheaded this initiative in Briarwood, Queens. Contributing community members identified the development of community gardens as an impactful way to address two of their most pressing issues: food insecurity and mental health.

To address food insecurity in Briarwood, Queens, CCE Harvest NY Specialist Makela Elvy guided the development of community gardens at MS 217 and PS 117. Months of planning, organizing, and many workdays brought together students, community leaders, school administrators, teachers, and volunteers to revitalize the 10-bed community garden at MS 217. A ribbon cutting ceremony on July 7 debuted the garden and highlighted the team effort that made it happen. In attendance at the ceremony were local officials, U.S. Congresswoman Grace Meng, NYS Senator Leroy Comrie, NYS Assemblyman David Weprin, and NYC Councilmember James Gennaro. At this garden, community members may pick ripe produce whenever they like; access is never limited. Through the concerted outreach efforts coordinated by the Arab-American Family Support Center, over 20,000 community members were engaged throughout the process! On October 5, Elvy completed the second leg of this project with the preparation and planting of 5 garden beds at PS 117 which will provide additional herbs and leafy greens to the community this fall.



*MS 217 ribbon cutting ceremony.*



*PS 117 Community Garden.*



# Buffalo Youth Engage with Urban Farming Experts During Summer Workshop Series

This summer, three Harvest NY Specialists presented a hands-on, three-week workshop series to more than 25 high school youth in Buffalo, focusing on a range of topics including pest scouting on the farm, composting, and the importance of land gratitude.

The [Massachusetts Avenue Project](#) (MAP) urban farm on Buffalo's West Side has been employing youth during their summer leadership program for almost two decades. During their eight-week employment, the high school students get paid to learn about their local food system, sustainable urban farming practices, how to run a successful Mobile Market, and environmental policy issues. These valuable skills are in addition to employment-essential soft skills, such as public speaking, journaling, and artistic expression through outlets like poetry and creative writing. Year after year, the youth graduating from this program go on to college at a much higher rate than the Buffalo Public Schools average.

Harvest NY Community Garden Specialist Mallory Hohl has been involved with MAP since 2014, from Mobile Market intern to community volunteer to Board of Directors chairperson. She was pleased to host her Harvest NY colleagues, Judson Reid and Kwesi Joseph, to Buffalo to present on urban growing topics to enrich the youths' urban farm education experience. The educators' perspectives and hands-on teaching styles brought unique opportunities for the students to experience MAP's urban farm in a new way: scouting for pests and beneficial insects, handling different types of compost, and reflecting on nature in a personal way. After their experiences, the youth expressed their thoughts in their daily journal entry and were invited to share with the group. When exposure to agriculture and growing one's own food may sometimes be limited for urban audiences, this group was able to engage in a rich experience from experts in their field.



*Judson Reid leads Buffalo youth in an exercise on scouting crop pests and identifying beneficial insects.*



*A youth participant is encouraged to hold compost during Kwesi Joseph's presentation.*



## Tracking Beneficial Insects on Urban Farms

As they look for cultural controls to manage the many insect pests of New York City, urban farmers often seek to attract other kinds of insects: predators and parasitoids, those pests' natural enemies. Some can be purchased, but a great many are already present in the city and can be attracted to farms and gardens with strategic habitat plantings. We often think of ladybeetles in this role—and rightly so—but there are many lesser-known beneficial insects present too, from ground beetles and lacewing larvae to minute pirate bugs and a host of tiny parasitoid wasps.

To learn more about which of these beneficial insects are found on urban farms, and to test habitat plants as a way to attract them, Urban Agriculture Specialists Sam Anderson and Yolanda Gonzalez partnered with the New York State IPM Program and three NYC-based urban farms, setting traps to monitor insect populations in vegetable fields and near habitat plantings. With the help of Cornell Cooperative Extension summer interns over the past two years, the project is investigating the effects of conservation biocontrol on the diversity and change in number of natural enemies, pollinators, and pest insects. The research project aims to determine if incorporating beneficial insect habitat to an urban farm would increase the population of beneficial insects and reduce pest populations in vegetable plots.

This year, the team published a pocket guide, “Beneficial Insects on NYC Farms,” which is being translated into Spanish too. Related booklets are also in the works—a guide to planting habitat to attract beneficials, and a pocket guide to the arthropod pests of vegetables in NYC—set to be published in early 2023.

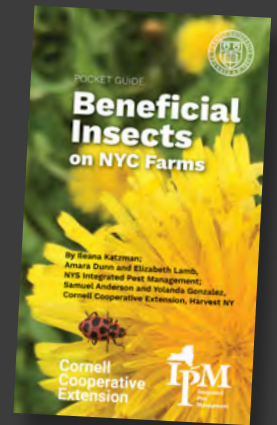


CCE interns set pan traps filled with soapy water near a habitat planting at John Bowne High School in Queens, NY. The traps are used to monitor populations of beneficial insects and pests.



CCE intern Jensen Njagi shares the biocontrol project's approach at a gathering of urban farmers at Oko Farms in Brooklyn, NY.

### Friend or Foe? Pocket Guide Helps Identify Helpful Insects on the Farm



Harvest NY and the New York State Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Program published a full-color pocket guide, “**Beneficial Insects on NYC Farms**,” to help urban farmers and gardeners identify the common predators, parasitoids, and other beneficial insects found in the city’s farms and gardens.

# CCE Harvest NY Specialist Yolanda Gonzalez Named a ‘Rising Star in NYC Food Policy’

*written by NYC Food Policy Editor, 7/7/22* – The Hunter College New York City Food Policy Center has released its annual class of New York City’s 40 individuals under 40 years old who are working to transform and improve the food system. The Center’s Class of 2022 honorees include policymakers, educators, community advocates, and innovators who are making significant strides to create healthier, more sustainable food environments and to use food to promote community and economic development. The work of these impressive individuals has been more necessary than ever as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The [40 Under 40](#) roster reflects the Center’s broad perspective around food policy. Food policies are not simply regulations imposed by governmental bodies; we believe that food policy impacts millions of New Yorkers every day, at home, and at work, as well as our surrounding environmental, community and economic ecosystems.

## Yolanda Gonzalez

**Age:** 34

**Grew up in:** Long Island

**Background and Education:** My parents are originally from Lares, Puerto Rico, a rural, mountainous town, where I grew up visiting family during summer school vacations. I have fond memories of collecting acerolas from my aunt’s backyard and snacking on quenepas on long car rides in the countryside. My grandfather was a farmer his entire adult life, so having a career in agriculture is the ultimate homage to my jibarita roots. After woofing and working on small farms throughout the Northeast, I obtained a BA in Spanish and Environmental Studies from SUNY Geneseo and a joint MPA/MS degree from Syracuse University and SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry in Public Administration and Environmental Science. Over the past five years, I have had the privilege of working with urban growers throughout the five boroughs of New York City, providing technical assistance and educational programming in a variety of areas, including fruit tree care, mushroom cultivation, and food safety. In my time off, I love to visit extended family and spend time on regenerative, agroecological farms in Puerto Rico.

**One word you would use to describe our food system:** Misaligned



Read Yolanda’s full interview and more on the Class of 2022 on [NYC Food Policy’s website](#).



# New York State Pawpaw Conference

Harvest NY partnered with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Oswego County to host the state's first pawpaw conference. Pawpaw, *Asimina triloba*, is a fruiting tree native to the eastern United States. Pawpaw has been explored commercially by Cornell University in the past, and the resulting orchard has garnered interest over the years as a source of fruit and nursery stock. This conference is a response to interest expressed by small fruit growers, who would like more information about pawpaw as a potential crop to add to their repertoire.

The NYS Pawpaw Conference took place in-person on Saturday, October 1, 2022 at the Historic Kallet Theater in Pulaski, NY. The Conference was organized into five sessions:

- history and distribution of pawpaw in North America
- pawpaw fruit production
- pawpaw as a processed and value-added product
- pawpaw marketing
- a review of Cornell University's pawpaw research and Extension activities



*Small fruit growers gather at the NYS Pawpaw Conference to learn about the history of the fruit, production considerations, and market opportunities.*

The lineup of 11 speakers included researchers, authors, business owners, growers, and Extension Specialists including Harvest NY Berry Specialist Anya Osatuke.

The Pawpaw Conference reached an audience of 89 registrants. Attendees were offered fresh pawpaw fruit and pawpaw ice cream over the course of the day. One attendee wrote, ***“Just wanted to say that the conference was wonderful.”***



# NY Food Show Connects Farm to School Supply Chain Partners

The seemingly simple task of *finding* New York products proves to be a pervasive challenge for our school food partners. In the case of institutional food procurement, *finding* New York products involves navigating a web of complex regulations and logistical quagmires. New York foods must be intentionally added to school food bids. Awards are often determined based on ‘*lowest cost*’, two words that can exclude New York food and farm partners from the school food market by just fractions of a cent. Next, New York foods must land at a school loading dock, which requires the producer to either direct deliver or, more often, plug into an existing distribution channel; there are notably limited supply chain partners that cater to the school food market given said complexities. Lastly, food service departments—nearly all of which suffer capacity challenges like labor, staff, and/or equipment—must prepare New York foods within federal meal pattern guidelines and entice students to eat them. The Harvest NY Farm to School team, which consists of eight Specialists, excels at navigating these challenges.

To assist School Food Authorities in finding New York foods, the Farm to School team hosted a **NY Virtual Food Show** which featured products from 11 food manufacturers, attracting nearly 150 participants over the course of two days. Participants included School Food Authorities, brokers, distributors, food hubs, and food manufacturers. The goal was not only to connect producers with buyers, but also to create business-to-business relationships among supply chain partners.



Following the virtual food show, regional product samplings were offered on Long Island, and in the Hudson Valley and Western NY. While full impacts are still being assessed, collectively efforts resulted in:

- Long Island: 19 New York food products were added to the Long Island School Food Co-Op bids. The Co-Op represents about 50 school districts serving over 200,000 students.
- Hudson Valley: Ulster BOCES, which serves 7 districts, added 3 new New York food products. In the lower part of the Hudson Valley, 8 SFAs and 1 BOCES added 28 new New York food products to 2 bids, serving 15 school districts. One of the bids resulted in a new distributor delivering New York food products to Orange County.
- Western NY: Erie 1 BOCES added 2 new products to their grocery bid, which already included a long list of New York food products and Erie 2 Chautauqua Cattaraugus BOCES added 1 new New York product. Several individual SFAs purchased featured products following the showcases, and intend to purchase more during the 2022-23 school year.
- Southern Tier: Broome Tioga BOCES, which serves 15 school districts, added 7 new New York products to their bids.

New York products added to school food bids included fresh and minimally processed produce, beef, chicken, grains, and other value-added products. While a bid isn't a guarantee of purchase, it's a critical step required to connect New York food with New York schools.



# Harvest NY's Farm to School Coordinator Program Expands

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## Upper Hudson Valley/Catskills

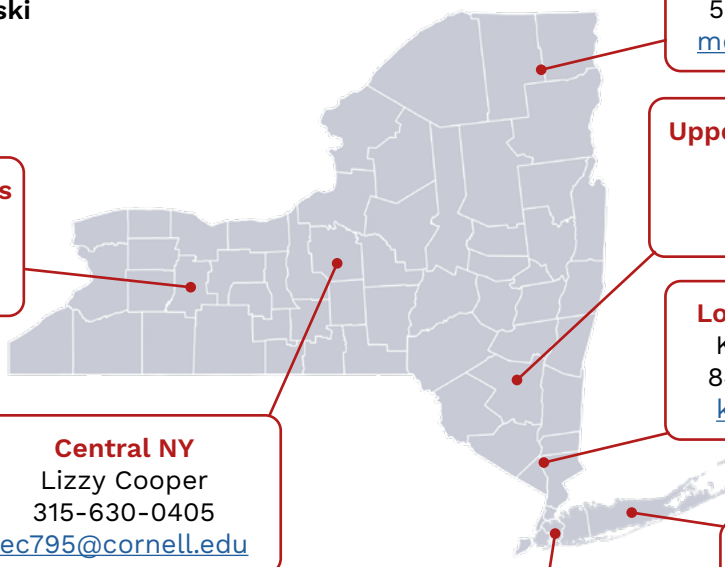
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Lizzy Cooper

Lizzy Cooper is the new Central NY Farm to School Coordinator. She works with producers, community partners, and school food authorities to increase the quantity and variety of local foods in K-12 schools in the region. Lizzy earned her M.S. in Agriculture, Food, and the Environment from Tufts University's Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy with a concentration in food systems planning and policy and her B.S. in Environmental Studies from Gettysburg College. Prior to attending grad school, Lizzy worked for non-profits to coordinate food systems projects including a gleaning program, a nutrition incentives program, and a community farm. Lizzy can be reached at [ec795@cornell.edu](mailto:ec795@cornell.edu) or (315) 630-0405.



SJ Whelan

Sara Jean (SJ) Whelan joined the Harvest NY team in May as the NYC Farm to School Coordinator. In this role, SJ is working directly with the NYC Office of Food and Nutrition Services to increase local procurement for NYC public schools. SJ has a dynamic background in food systems work. She co-founded an e-commerce-based vegetable farm in Vermont, seeking to make farm-direct food more accessible to her community. With a Housing First program in Vermont, she established a community garden and supported clients in accessing federal nutrition benefits. Additionally, SJ worked with Vermont FEED to support Farm to School work in the state. She currently serves as the board co-chair of Slow Food NYC. After nearly eight years in Vermont, SJ relocated to NYC in 2021 to pursue her master's degree in the NYU Food Studies program. SJ can be reached at [sw954@cornell.edu](mailto:sw954@cornell.edu) or at 929-895-2257.





# BRINGING THE FARM TO SCHOOL

## Farmer to School Producer Readiness Training Coming to New York

The [NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets](#), in partnership with CCE Harvest NY and American Farmland Trust, received an \$82,000 grant to support producer readiness trainings across New York, using the nationally-developed [Bringing the Farm to School](#) curriculum. Producers that attend this training will:

- Learn about accessing school markets and growing products for schools
- Hear from producers that have successfully navigated school markets
- Gain new knowledge and resources for integrating school markets into their business plan
- Meet local peers and experts, and have questions answered
- See school markets and farms through site visits

Two trainings are being developed, focusing on Central NY and the Hudson Valley, and will take place during the first half of 2023. To familiarize our team with the curriculum, Harvest NY Farm to School Coordinators went through a week-long train-the-trainer program, and Specialist Cheryl Bilinski also served on the project's Advisory Council.



Harvest NY's Ag Climate Resiliency Specialists.  
Photo: RJ Anderson, CCE

## Guiding Statewide Efforts in Ag Climate Resiliency

### On-Farm Visitations

After being contacted by interested landowners or connected through partner organizations, Harvest NY's Ag Climate Resiliency Specialists, Jenna Walczak and Zach Spangler, visited farms in the Hudson Valley to have one-on-one discussions about climate mitigation and adaption practices that might make sense for their operations, as well as potential funding mechanisms to implement these projects. By meeting on the farm, the Specialists better understand the goals, challenges, opportunities, and history that make each farm unique.

### Broad Outreach & Education

To continue engaging with community horticulture in New York, Jenna Walczak presented on 'Climate Resiliency for Community Horticulture in New York State' as part of Cornell Garden-Based Learning's Sustainable Landscapes Lunch & Learn series in September. Spangler and Walczak have also continued to spread awareness of this program area through meetings with CCE county associations and other teams, as well as county Soil and Water Conservation Districts. Outreach efforts will continue this fall and winter.

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## Exploring Agroforestry Innovation

To gather information on successful agroforestry systems, Harvest NY Specialists Walczak and Spangler attended the 5th World Congress on Agroforestry in Quebec City in July. **RIGHT** – Following the conference, Walczak visited a medicinal forest farming operation—a combination of oak and sugar maple trees in rows interplanted with plants such as black cohosh, goldenseal, Canadian wild ginger, and American ginseng. **BELOW** – Spangler visited a large-scale alley cropping system. **LOWER RIGHT** – A novel tree-based intercropping system, designed to address cash flow challenges, mixes trees with vegetable crops.



**Harvest NY seeks to expand these resilient agriculture practices right here in New York State.**

## Ag Climate Resiliency Funding Opportunities Resource Created

Navigating the complex web of funding opportunities that support climate resilient agriculture is often a daunting task. Harvest NY's Ag Climate Resiliency team has created a list of funding opportunities related to on-farm climate adaptation, mitigation, and resiliency projects. The list summarizes federal, state, and local programs including information on the types of projects that can be funded, application deadlines, program goals, eligibility requirements, and more. This quick [reference guide](#) is now available to be shared with the New York State ag and Extension community.

## Extension Educators Surveyed to Determine Their Need for Additional Ag Climate Related Resources

In early July, Cornell Cooperative Extension Associates were surveyed to assess their knowledge of climate resiliency topics and identify their needs for additional educational resources. The team received 88 responses to the survey from county association staff and regional commercial agriculture team specialists. Walczak and Spangler are currently analyzing the survey results, and will release the findings next quarter.







## International Workshop on Agritourism Highlights the New Culinary Trail Collaboration in Northern New York and Neighboring Regions

The International Workshop on Agritourism was held in Burlington, Vermont from August 30 - September 1. The global event was hosted by the University of Vermont with a total of 505 participants from 57 countries with 352 participants in person and 153 participants online. The conference had a mixture of farmers, researchers, tourism professionals, and more.

Cornell Cooperative Extension was a sponsor of the event plus 8 Extension professionals, from various Extension offices and teams across New York State, participated in conference sessions. Harvest NY's Ag Business Development & Marketing Specialist, Lindsey Pashow, was the Cornell lead for the event, participating in multiple conference planning committees, chaperoning the Shelburne Farms tour, and presenting, "Bring an International Agritourism Experience Home to your Agritourism Community."

### International Culinary Trail Promoted

The International Culinary Trail—a 1,000-mile trail that directs tourists to local agriculture and farm-to-plate offerings such as farms, wineries, breweries, and restaurants—stretches across Ontario, Quebec, Vermont, and Northern New York. During the



conference, Anson Tebbetts (Vermont's Secretary of Agriculture, Food, and Markets), Heather Pelham (Vermont Commissioner of Tourism and Marketing), and Marie-Claude Francoeur (Quebec's Delegate to Boston) all highlighted the agritourism trail as an exciting, multi-region collaboration and opportunity.

Pashow has worked with the International Culinary Trail as the main representative for New York State on the organizing committee, guiding conversations and initiatives.

The International Culinary Trail will be officially inaugurated in 2023.



# Events Expand *Cannabis* Knowledge Across NYS



## Science of Cannabis Symposium

The Science of Cannabis Symposium will be held November 18-19 in the Finger Lakes region. Harvest NY Specialist Daniela Vergara will be a featured speaker at the event. Partnering organizations include Entertaining and Elevating with Cannabis, Roc NORML, Bristol Extracts, Certainty Analytical Labs, Agricultural Genomics Foundation, and Glenna's CBD / Glenna & Co.

Photos: RJ Anderson, CCE

## Hemp Field Day Offers Research Updates, Field Walks, and Equipment Demos

Cornell's Hemp Field Day 2022 was a success with almost 200 attendees from different parts of New York State and other states in the Northeast. Cornell researchers and educators disseminated important information regarding weed, disease, and pest management. The field day also included a sickle back harvest and a baling demonstration.



CCE Specialist Judson Reid presents information on soil health and high tunnel management at Hemp Field Day.

## Latinas Grow Masterclass Series

Organized by Latinas Grow, an organization that educates, incubates, and supports New York State Latinos in *cannabis*, the "Let's Grow" Masterclass series featured Harvest NY Specialist Daniela Vergara. Vergara addressed genomic science, including that of the National Institute of Drug Abuse NIDA who is the sole producer of cannabinoid *cannabis* for medical and scientific research.



Members of Latinas Grow—Sophia Bos-Shadi, Carlene Pinto, and Janel Nunez—with Dr. Daniela Vergara of Harvest NY.



## Food Systems Specialist Joins Harvest NY Team

Precious Tshabalala is the new Food Systems Specialist with Harvest NY. Precious is a native of Zimbabwe, with her BSC in Agricultural Economics from University of Fort Hare (South Africa), her MS in Agricultural Economics from University of Pretoria (South Africa) and a PhD in agricultural policy from Universiti Putra Malaysia (Malaysia). She has research experience in Malaysia and South Africa looking at how agricultural policy can transform agricultural productivity in various climate conditions and through local economies. Precious has teaching experience at Solusi University in Zimbabwe and at University of Fort Hare in South Africa as an adjunct lecturer. She also has worked with several non-governmental agencies in analyzing and drafting ag related policy from her time at the Agricultural Research Council in South Africa.

Precious is working statewide with producers, food processors, distributors, and consumers to strengthen the New York State food supply chain. Her focus is on distribution, procurement, diversification, access to new markets, promotion of local foods, and economic analysis, with an emphasis on increasing New York State produced foods into urban markets.

Precious is located in the Southern Tier of NYS, working between CCE Broome and the Cornell campus. She started on September 1 and can be reached at [pt385@cornell.edu](mailto:pt385@cornell.edu)



*Precious Tshabalala*

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