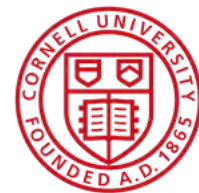


Cornell Cooperative Extension Harvest New York



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 2024



“Strawberry 101” workshop in Upper Manhattan. See page 5 for details. Community gardeners learned how to start a strawberry patch, identify evidence of plant disease, and maintain a strawberry patch for fruitful crop production. Photo: Corey Blant, New York Restoration Project

- **New Monthly Public Radio Interview Spreads Awareness of Challenges, Risks and Successes for NYS Farms and Agriculture**
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New Monthly Public Radio Interview Spreads Awareness of Challenges, Risks and Successes for NYS Farms and Agriculture

In February 2024, [North Country Public Radio \(NCPR\)](#) began featuring Dr. Kitty O'Neil, statewide Ag Climate Resiliency Specialist with CCE Harvest NY, in a monthly, weekday morning radio appearance. This new monthly segment intends to expand community engagement and understanding of farming and food systems, climate, and agriculture in the North Country and New York State. The platform provides an opportunity to address relevant and timely issues for our agricultural sector in New York with NCPR's listening audience. The radio station broadcasts to 34 North Country communities on 24 FM frequencies and also provides real-time and archived streaming of its locally hosted programs and maintains a comprehensive website. NCPR also occasionally shares news stories with the newly formed New York Public News Network, a collaborative group of public radio newsrooms across the state.

The interview-styled segments occur monthly during NCPR's daily 8:00 AM newsmagazine, [Northern Light](#), and are facilitated by news host Monica Sandreczki. [The segment](#) has already covered several timely and relevant topics. In her first 5 monthly appearances, O'Neil has discussed:

- strategies used by farms to keep livestock comfortable during cold weather,
- the challenges faced by tree fruit and grape growers due to erratic spring temperatures and frost damage,
- the impact of avian flu on New York poultry and egg producers,
- the value of livestock manure for NYS crop production and its importance in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and, in June,
- farmworker safety and risks in response to recent NYS farming accidents.

The insights shared through these monthly discussions have the potential to inform public perceptions around farming, agriculture, environment and food, contributing to the overall advancement of climate resiliency and sustainable agriculture in New York State.




Photo: Sasha Israel, CALS

Spring Climate Resiliency Webinar Series

In response to the urgent need to tackle the challenges climate change poses to agriculture in New York State, CCE Ag Climate Resiliency collaborated with Scenic Hudson and the Glynwood Center for Regional Food and Farming to organize a spring webinar series. The series aimed to provide easily accessible education for growers and technical service providers on innovative strategies and practical solutions to increase the resilience of agricultural systems.

The [webinar series](#) consisted of four sessions held throughout May. Each session focused on a different aspect of agriculture and climate change, seeking to offer a well-rounded suite of materials.



Session 1: Introduction to Cornell Cooperative Extension's Ag Climate Resiliency Program - Savanna Shelnutt with Dr. Kitty O'Neil

The opening session featured Ag Climate Resiliency Specialists Savanna Shelnutt and Dr. Kitty O'Neil of CCE Harvest NY, who discussed their program, their services, and funding options for producers interested in adopting climate-smart practices.



Session 2: Agroforestry for Resilient Farm Futures - Steve Gabriel

In session two, Steve Garbiel with Wellspring Forest Farm discussed the basics of agroforestry and how these systems can increase whole-farm resiliency.



Session 3: Biochar and Soil Amendments - Dr. Deborah Aller

In this session, Dr. Deborah Aller with the Cornell Soil Health Program provided an overview of the importance of soil health for farm resiliency. She also discussed amendments that sequester carbon and provide other soil health benefits, like biochar.



Session 4: Luck Favors the Prepared: Federal Insurance for Natural Disasters on Farms - Elizabeth Higgins

Our final session featured Elizabeth Higgins from the CCE Eastern New York Commercial Horticulture Team, who provided information on insurance options to mitigate the impact of weather-related disasters on farm finances.

Overall, the series garnered 117 registrations and has been viewed over 400 times on YouTube. Its success underscores the critical need for continued dialogue and accessible educational opportunities on topics in the ag climate resiliency space. We plan to continue the series this fall/winter. If you want to receive updates on future webinars and events, please [sign up for emails from our Ag Climate Resiliency program](#).

A Vision for Two New York Farm to School Programs

CCE Harvest NY was invited to Coach two teams as a part of the New England Farm to School Institute, which is a year-long professional learning opportunity for select school, district, or early childhood teams that kicks off with a three-day retreat at Shelburne Farms. SJ Whelan coached Jesse T. Zoller Elementary School, located in Schenectady and Katie Sheehan-Lopez coached North Colonie Central Schools, located in Latham. This marks the fourth time Harvest NY Specialists have been afforded the opportunity to learn alongside NY teams in a serene environment that always leaves our cup overflowing with inspiration, ideas, and motivation.

The Institute focuses on building a whole-school team and forging strong cross-departmental relationships. Through dedicated time and space, teams come together to build their skills, network with their peers, engage in hands-on learning, and envision what their Farm to School program will look like. They leave with an action plan to guide their journey over the next year, created through a participatory process, and of course, with the promise of Coaching support throughout.

Jesse. T Zoller's Vision Statement

The Schenectady Central School District Farm to School Program seeks to foster student-centered connections across pillars of food, education, and community. We strive to create a sustainable collaboration across our schools and wider communities through experiential and exploratory opportunities that honor our diversity.

North Colonie's Vision Statement

Shaker High School values providing high quality farm to school educational experiences that

- Are rooted in food equity and nourish all students to support their physical and mental well being
- Educate all students toward a culturally and agriculturally diverse food system
- Create opportunities for student voices and leadership
- Promote collaboration and engagement with the district, families, and community for a sustainable future



Schenectady Farm to School team visioning at Shelburne Farms (top) and proudly standing by their vision statement (bottom).



The North Colonie Farm to School Team visioning on the banks of Lake Champlain.



Participants at the “Strawberry 101” workshop planting ‘Albion’ strawberries. Photo: Corey Blant, New York Restoration Project

The Urban Strawberry Project: Year 2 Update

In 2022, we began the Urban Strawberry Project. This is a research project aimed at increasing day-neutral strawberry fruit production in urban neighborhoods. Our work began in response to community gardeners expressing interest in strawberries as a berry crop. Day-neutral strawberries are suitable for urban growing due to the shallow root system and continuous fruiting from May - November.

After two years of community feedback from three partnering gardens who encountered several challenges with fungal plant diseases, CCE Harvest NY’s Anya Osatuke and Makela Elvy partnered with Dan Olmstead from New York State IPM to see how microclimate and other unique environmental factors may be impacting the presence of disease. In May 2024, our team installed weather data loggers at 6 partnering community gardens to gather detailed micro-climate information. We established a visual scoring procedure for identifying common plant diseases in urban strawberry production. Visual scoring will take place throughout the growing season to determine correlation with disease presence. This will inform the development of future extension resources.

Additionally, on May 29, Osatuke, Elvy and Olmstead facilitated a hand-on “Strawberry 101” workshop in partnership with the New York Restoration Project at their community garden at Sherman Creek Park in Upper Manhattan. Community gardeners learned how to start a strawberry patch, identify evidence of plant disease, and maintain a strawberry patch for fruitful crop production. Twenty-five people participated in the workshop, with several reporting an increase in plant care knowledge.



The strawberry dissection module at the “Strawberry 101” workshop teaches participants how to look for root diseases. Photo: Corey Blant, New York Restoration Project

Helping New Farm Managers Get Their Bearings

Agricultural Extension Specialists in rural areas commonly work with owner-operators—where the farmer, the farm business, and the farm itself are all intertwined. This isn't the case for most of the 60+ commercial urban farms in New York City; more often, the farm site is overseen by an organization or business which hires staff, including one or more farm managers, to run the operation. Farm managers often stay for a few years, then move on to another farm.

This means that each spring, a new cohort of farm managers arrives on New York City's urban farms. Even the most experienced farmer has a lot to learn about their new site, especially with the high level of variability between urban farm locations. This is where Extension comes in. CCE Harvest NY Urban Agriculture Specialists Sam Anderson and Yolanda Gonzalez meet with new hires every year, sharing their own experiences with the site and giving farm managers a head start on understanding the landscape.

This year, for example, four new farm managers took over rooftop farms in Brooklyn and Queens, all of them transitioning from farm jobs on rural farms. Anderson worked one-on-one with each of them to create soil management plans, sharing past soil test results from their sites, taking bulk density measurements, and adjusting nutrient recommendations suit the unique rooftop soil mixes.

Pest and disease issues are an especially important topic for farmers who are new to the city. For example, a Hudson Valley farmer may not have experienced heavy twospotted spider mite pressure on tomatoes, and a New England farmer probably won't know cabbage whitefly as a major pest of brassicas. Anderson met with seven new urban farm managers early in the season to help them prepare integrated pest management plans tailored to their sites, based on the history of pest pressures at each location.

Most importantly, these meetings form the basis of working relationships, make sure that farmers feel comfortable reaching out to Extension when they run into trouble, and establish CCE's role in every urban farmer's support system.



A rooftop farm in Queens, May 2024, beginning its first season under new management. Farmers are tarping sections of the farm to reduce weed pressure while starting their crop plan.

Investigating the Cultivation Potential of Edible Mushrooms on Common New York City Trees

Over the past four years, Cornell Cooperative Extension has worked to advance the mushroom industry in New York City through the Community Mushroom Educator Program (CME). As interest has grown in commercial mushroom cultivation, growers are faced with the challenge of sourcing suitable hardwood tree species for shiitake and oyster mushroom production. In collaboration with Randall's Island Urban Farm and the Cornell Small Farms Program, CCE Harvest NY Urban Agriculture Specialist Yolanda Gonzalez has set out to explore the feasibility of cultivating shiitake and oyster mushrooms on select species of commonly found city trees.

For this research collaboration, the project team inoculated 3-foot-long white mulberry and eastern cottonwood logs, or 'bolts,' as the mushroom industry refers to them. The forestry team of Randall's Island Urban Farm harvested these logs as part of a larger effort to manage biodiversity on the island through select removals. The project team hosted a Log Inoculation Party on April 28, 2024 with over 40 volunteer participants who helped inoculate over 120 logs. The following grower participants of this research project will be replicating this trial in their own growing spaces: Randall's Island Park Alliance, NYRP, Kelly Street, New Roots, and Garden of Love. Each of the grower participants accepted 24 logs: six eastern cottonwood logs inoculated with oyster spawn, six eastern cottonwood logs inoculated with shiitake spawn, six white mulberry logs with oyster spawn and six white mulberry logs with shiitake spawn. Throughout the season the grower participants will be soaking the logs to retain moisture, recording observations and collecting data on harvest weight.

The goal of this research collaboration is to expand the possibility of tree species options that growers can select from for log-grown mushroom cultivation. Log sourcing has become the largest roadblock for urban growers as suitable hardwood tree species like sugar maple and oak are more difficult to find locally. If this trial is successful, it could significantly advance the mushroom cultivation industry in New York City.



Volunteers gather on April 28 for a Log Inoculation Party to inoculate 120 logs as part of a research project between Randall's Island Urban Farm, the Cornell Small Farms Program, and CCE Harvest NY.

USDA Urban Agriculture Primer

In collaboration with the USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) New York teams, CCE Harvest NY hosted a primer on USDA programs available to urban growers. This webinar provided an overview of the FSA and NRCS programs that may be best suited to support urban growers. Urban Agriculture Curriculum Development Specialist Kyle Karnuta identified an opportunity to create educational resources for other Extension educators to share learnings from her research. Urban grower access to USDA resources is limited by many structural factors, including a lack of communication and outreach designed specifically for urban growers. This webinar is now a resource available to Extension educators and urban growers to bridge that gap.

After the 2018 Farm Bill authorized the USDA's Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production and other urban agriculture supports, FSA and NRCS initiated new investments into urban agriculture. This webinar highlighted not only the products and resources available to urban growers, but also the history and context required to know how and when to apply for these resources.

The primer was presented as a 1.5-hour webinar on April 15 and attended by 33 people (a mix of urban growers and Cornell Cooperative Extension educators). All [primer resources](#), including the webinar recording and slides, are available on Harvest NY's website.

Impact of Unique Community Nutrition and Gardening Program Shared at the National Urban Extension Leadership Conference

On May 30, 2024, the Action Research Collaborative (ARC), the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP), and Kwesi Joseph from CCE Harvest NY presented their collaborative project at the National Urban Extension Leadership Conference. The presentation focused on their innovative partnership aimed at addressing the public health crisis of homelessness in New York City, which was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The project, conducted at a transitional housing facility in Queens, NY, involved an 8-week nutrition education and gardening program for adult residents with children. The program included weekly EFNEP classes in both English and Spanish, followed by healthy family meals and hands-on gardening activities. Conducted during the summer and fall of 2023, the program's feasibility was evaluated through formative data on retention and satisfaction.

A key highlight of the presentation was the discussion of the program's impact on participating families. The workshops not only provided valuable nutrition education but also fostered a sense of community and improved food security among the residents. By engaging families in gardening, the program equipped them with practical skills and knowledge about growing their own food, which is crucial for long-term nutritional benefits and sustainability. The insights gained from this project are being used to develop an adapted EFNEP curriculum that integrates gardening, specifically tailored for families in transitional housing. The article "[How Can Transitional Housing Be Improved? Insights from Residents' Experiences and Perceptions in New York City](#)," published in the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, was written by ARC based on the research conducted through this collaboration.





Qiana Mickie, Executive Director of the Office of Urban Agriculture in NYC, addresses the attendees of the Spring Urban Ag Conference in Rochester, NY.

Rochester's 2024 Annual Urban Ag Conference was a Great Success!

Rochester's grassroots, community-driven Urban Ag Working Group (UAWG) hosted its annual Spring Urban Ag Conference on April 27 at Edison Tech High School. With 150 folks in attendance, the day was filled with networking, learning, and sharing all about urban agriculture and community gardening.

One of the major highlights of the day was the keynote address from Qiana Mickie, the NYC Mayor's inaugural Executive Director of the Office of Urban Agriculture. Qiana shared her work around urban ag-supporting policy in NYC, as well as her vast experience working with non-profits in that space. Following the keynote was a panel discussion, focused on sharing successes and challenges supporting urban growing across NYS, with panelists from NYC, Rochester, Buffalo, and Syracuse. The afternoon was filled with eight diverse workshops—everything from urban beekeeping, hands-on mushroom inoculation, food preservation, policy roundtables, and stories from Black urban growers.

This free Conference was made possible by the donation of time, talent, and treasure from urban growing supporters all around Rochester and WNY! The Rochester UAWG is pleased to sponsor more events and garden workdays in the coming months, including an Urban Garden Celebration Day in the fall.

Cannabis sativa Hemp Starting a Strong Summer Season



This year's 10th annual NYS Organic Summit was well represented by the Harvest NY team discussing the state of the *Cannabis sativa* industry in New York State. The Organic Summit featured hemp specialist Dr. Daniela Vergara (center right), Jean Bonhotal (right), Director of the Cornell University Waste Management Institute, Sashti Balasundaram (left), founder of WeRadiate, a company dedicated to improving soil nutrients, and Josh Allyn (center left), founder of the cannabis company Tap Root Fields. These experts are collaborating to pioneer sustainable waste management practices in the cannabis industry in New York State.



Another CBD hemp company that continues to thrive is Glenna's CBD, with multiple plants being grown both outdoors and indoors. Glenna Colaprete, the company's founder and director has done a tremendous job at innovating on multiple products including a wellness line for pets. This woman-owned company, along with the Harvest NY team and other collaborators, are joining forces to empower the workforce in the NYS' cannabis industry. From left to right: Mike Kincaid from Harvest NY, Glenna Colaprete from Glenna's CBD, Daniela Vergara from Harvest NY, Melissa Moore from SUNY Niagara, and Sam Scott from Glenna's CBD.



Agritourism Worldwide: Second World Agritourism Congress

On May 16-18, 2024 the EURAC: Second World Agritourism Congress was held in Bolzano, Italy. Over 200 participants attended the conference in-person and online from over 35 countries. There were 80 presentations, 11 keynote speakers, nine different farmer tour options. A team from Cornell Cooperative Extension attended the conference: Victoria Giarratano, Assistant Director for Agriculture, Food Systems and Community Development; Lindsey Pashow, Agriculture Business Development and Marketing, Yolanda Gonzalez, Urban Agriculture, and Makela Elvy, Urban Community Gardens from CCE Harvest NY, and Mary Godnick, Communications and Digital Marketing from CCE Essex County. This team is part of the Agritourism Program Work Team (PWT), a group of educators, farmers and stakeholders, supporting agritourism across NYS.

During the conference, Elvy, Giarratano, Godnick, Gonzalez, and Pashow all participated in the sessions and farm tours. They also participated in the conference as presenters and poster contributors.

- Developing Agritourism Economic Sustainability through the Taste NY Program – *Giarratano and Pashow (Presentation)*
- Sustainable and Regenerative Agriculture and Agritourism Values, Practices, and Policy – *Pashow (Presentation)*
- Urban Agriculture, a comparative analysis of urban and rural agritourism in NYS – *Elvy and Gonzalez (Presentation)*
- Agritourism as an ‘Ambassador’ for Sustainable Agriculture, Culture and Heritage-Country-Specific Case – *Pashow (Poster Session)*
- Economic Impact and Case Studies of New York’s Taste New York Program – *Giarratano and Pashow (Poster Session)*
- A Taste of Agritourism in the Adirondacks – *Godnick (Poster Session)*

Pashow also lead the Global Agritourism Networking (GAN) Sustainable and Regenerative Agriculture and Agritourism Committee meeting during the conference.

This conference was an opportunity to learn from academics, farmers, and other agritourism stakeholders from around the world. Agritourism around the world is very different depending on the location but the key take away is that it helps support sustainability for agricultural operations and allows the operations to diversify their revenue opportunities.

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