

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 Q1 2025



Urban Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Program (Urban CAMP) series participants at Farm.One in Brooklyn, NY. See page 2 for details.

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Urban Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Program in NYC

Farmers in New York City face a serious of climate-related challenges, such as extreme heat, crop stress, intense weather events like drought and flooding. The 2025 Urban Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Program (Urban CAMP) is designed to empower NYC farmers and agricultural advisors in their journey to gain and share knowledge and tools needed to be resilient in the face of climate uncertainty. This program is a partnership between Cornell University, the Harvest NY Program in Cornell Cooperative Extension, and the USDA Northeast Climate Hub. The Urban CAMP curriculum draws heavily from the Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Fellowship (CAMF), created in response to farmers' need for information and technical assistance related to climate change.

The 2025 Urban Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Program (Urban CAMP) consists of a series of in-person workshops, trainings, online webinars, and in-person field days, tailored for the specific needs of farmers in and around New York City. The program began in February 2025 and will run through September.

Five in-person training sessions were held once a week on Wednesdays in February and March with over 60 participants in attendance. There will be a series of three in-person farm tours during the growing season, in addition programming such as the Biochar and Agroforestry field days later in the season. Urban CAMP participants will then work to develop an adaptation or mitigation plan for their urban farm, or a farm they work with. The following topics were covered as part of the Urban CAMP program:

- February 26: Climate Science and Impacts
- March 5: Climate Adaptation
- March 12: Climate Mitigation
- March 19: Climate Farm Planning
- March 26: Climate Funding and Resources

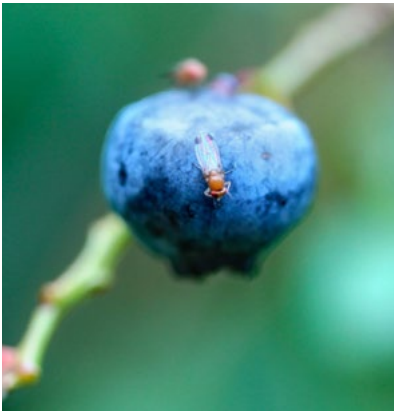


Urban CAMP attendees learn about climate adaptation and mitigation at La Guardia Community College's urban farm.

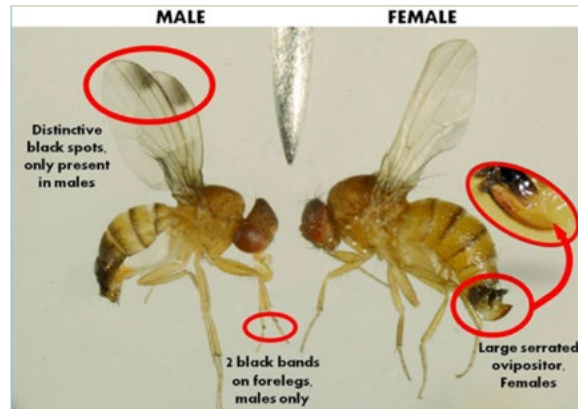


New Research on Spotted Wing Drosophila Hopes to Control the Pest with Less Sprays

The spotted wing drosophila (*Drosophila suzukii*) is an invasive fruit fly affecting New York berry producers since 2010. Unlike other fruit flies, the spotted wing drosophila (SWD) has a serrated ovipositor, which allows it to lay eggs in unripe fruit. SWD populations grow throughout the state during the growing season, and infestations can cause complete yield losses of blueberries, raspberries, blackberries, and late-season strawberries. Controlling the SWD requires an intensive, weekly spray program that incorporates at least 3 different insecticide mode of action groups. A New York Farm Viability Institute grant is enabling our team of researchers to trial two different products designed to reduce sprays while maintaining effective control of the pest.



Spotted wing drosophila male on blueberry. Photo: Tim Martinson, Cornell AgriTech

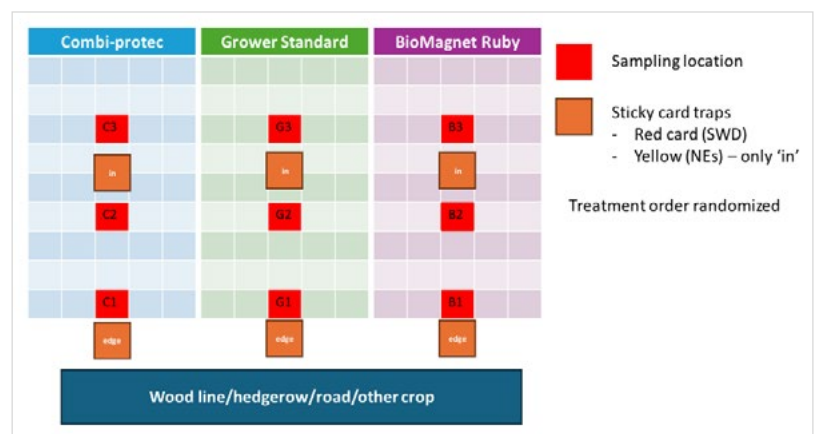


Male and female spotted wing drosophila (SWD). Because females have a serrated ovipositor (egg-laying organ), they can lay eggs in unripe fruit. Photo: John Obermeyer, Purdue University



Spotted wing drosophila larvae found in blueberry. Photo: Carlos Garcia-Salazar, Michigan State University

All product trials will take place on commercial farms in New York. The first product trialed, Bio-Magnet Ruby (deltamethrin), is a small pouch that can be hung in the crop; it will attract and kill SWD with a 0-day Pre-Harvest Interval and Re-Entry Interval. Bio-Magnet Ruby will be used with a half-rate of the standard spray program. The second product, Combi-Protec, is a spray adjuvant and feeding stimulant that is tank-mixed with the standard insecticide that the grower uses. These products will be compared against the standard insecticide program used by the growers.



Treatment maps for the experiments. Credit: Anna Wallis, NYS IPM

Berries will be tested weekly for SWD infestation, and the pest pressure will be measured using sticky cards in the planting. Beneficial insects, the natural predators of spotted wing drosophila, will also be tracked on a bi-weekly basis during this study.

This research project is led by Dr. Anna Wallis of NYSIPM, and collaborators are Dr. Greg Loeb and Steve Hessler from the Cornell University Entomology Department, Dr. Elisabeth Hodgdon and Heather Kase of the Eastern NY Commercial Horticulture Program, Janet Van Zoeren of the Lake Ontario Fruit Team, and Anya Stansell from Harvest NY.



North Country Farm to School Gathering Brings Together Key Stakeholders

On a snowy March morning, 70 Farm to School stakeholders gathered at the Wild Center in Tupper Lake for the North Country Farm to School Gathering. Hosted in partnership with the New York State Education Department (NYSED), the inaugural regional event brought together teachers, farmers, food producers, food service directors, and local CCE Educators from each county in the North Country. The morning featured focused sessions for each of the three C's of Farm to School—Classroom, Cafeteria and Community—followed by a lunch full of local items, and time for afternoon networking. Despite the event taking place outside of the growing season, the lunch featured items from eight local businesses and included ingredients such as butternut squash, wheatberries and ground beef. Ten local businesses or organizations joined the event for tabling to provide samples of their food products and more information to participants.

Classroom

The education focused session led by Farm to School Education Specialist, Kate Preston, hosted eight classroom teachers and three Cornell Cooperative Extension Educators for an engaging and educational morning! Two teachers from Keene Central School District led a presentation on one of their favorite lessons, *Exploring Agriculture through Project-Based Learning: Corn to Community*. This hands-on lesson, designed for pre-K and kindergarten students, offers an interactive way for young learners to explore the journey of corn from seed to plate. Educators worked through five different stations, including creating their own corn lifecycle book and making homemade corn tortillas. The presenters also discussed project-based learning and shared strategies for high school teachers to adapt this lesson for older students. After the hands-on activities, Jeremiah Best from New York Agriculture in the Classroom gave a presentation about their organization. In just 2.5 hours, the session was packed with valuable content, leaving educators feeling inspired and ready to bring new ideas back to their classrooms!



Area teachers work to process locally grown corn into tortillas (left) using two ways of grinding corn (right) as part of the Classroom breakout session.

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Cafeteria

The cafeteria-focused session brought together food service directors and cook managers from across the region for a culinary training led by Ryan Kennedy from Brigaid and Ruth Pino, a NYSED Master Instructor. This training is a key component of Regional Roots, a free statewide local food culinary training program offered by CCE Harvest NY and NYSED. (See *Regional Roots sidebar*.) Participants learned technical cooking skills such as mise en place, workstation set up, knife skills/safety, and weights/measures. They then got to work preparing five recipes full of local foods that all participants got to enjoy for lunch. The recipes included two types of chili, cabbage slaw, roasted potatoes, wheatberry salad, and butternut squash brownies! The recipes prepared were developed by Brigaid, meet Child Nutrition standards, and have been tested and approved by students across NYS.



Food service staff participate in the Cafeteria breakout session.

Community

The producer focused community session led by North Country Farm to School Procurement Specialist, Meghan Dohman, hosted farmers, food producers, and food manufacturers for a deep dive into how schools purchase local food and the types of products they're looking for. Three panelists from Ortman Farms, Essex Food Hub, and Tucker Farms then spoke about their experiences working with schools in terms of both selling to schools, and working with them in an educational capacity. The session concluded with informal networking time for producers to ask pointed questions of their peers. It was a lively discussion and dialogue that resulted in producers forging new connections both with fellow producers and food service directors throughout the region.

This was the first of nine regional events that will be held throughout the state in 2025 and 2026. The next event will be held in the Lower Hudson Valley region on April 30 at Putnam-Northern Westchester BOCES.



Culinary Trainings to Enhance School Meals with Local Foods

School districts frequently share that the skills required to prepare and cook new ingredients can be a barrier to incorporating more local foods into their school meal programs. In response, CCE Harvest NY is partnering with the NY State Education Department (NYSED) to offer *Regional Roots: Culinary Training to Enhance School Meals with Local Foods* for school districts across the state. These high-quality trainings are designed to be fully customized to the specific equipment in each school kitchen, while strengthening the skills needed to prepare locally sourced meals.

The trainings are conducted by [Brigaid](#), a team of Professional Chefs dedicated to supporting institutions to meet their food service goals and NYSED Master Instructors, who have years of experience in school food service and are passionate about using local foods. CCE Harvest NY has been working with Brigaid for several years on developing recipes that use of local foods and providing culinary training to K-12 partners.

The first training was held in March on a professional development day for Dryden Central School District with all 14 food service staff in attendance. The group prepared chicken alfredo with NYS whole-grain pasta, kale Caesar salad with homemade dressing, NYS wheatberry and butternut salad, and blueberry smoothies with NYS greek yogurt. One staff member shared, "*The training was a positive experience, was very comfortable with all we learned and it was presented very nicely. All in all it was a wonderful experience!*" We look forward to delivering these trainings with our partners across the state through 2026.





Un Intercambio Entre Agricultores Urbanos: An Exchange Between Urban Farmers

There are over 2,000 registered or permitted community gardens in New York City, according to the 2023 Community Garden Task Force report, not including neglected lots that have been transformed into livable spaces. These gardens emerged from communities recognizing the need for fresh, nutritious food, especially in low-income areas lacking access to fresh produce. Gardens provide opportunities for skill-building, socializing, and meeting the demand for healthy food. However, these gardens often operate in isolation, with challenges like language barriers, preventing some growers from accessing the same resources and opportunities as English speakers. Limited resources and staff capacity also hinder the gardens' ability to offer as many educational workshops as they would hope to provide, making partnerships essential. To address this need, Harvest NY Specialists, Karen Guzman and Yolanda Gonzalez created an informal gathering, called *Un Intercambio Entre Agricultores Urbanos*, of Spanish-speaking gardeners and service providers, which allowed growers to share expertise and resources.

This inaugural gathering of over 20 Spanish-speaking urban growers took place at Project Farmhouse, a central location accessible to commuters from other boroughs. Service providers, both from a city and federal level shared valuable resources, such as available trainings, grants, loans, and online technical assistance programs. Mirem Villamil from the Farm Service Agency (FSA) discussed grants for urban growers looking to expand, Emily Sosa from GrowNYC introduced the Nueva Siembra program for organizing and managing farming operations, and Maria Garcia from CEANYC emphasized the importance of solidarity in the urban agriculture market and the need for a stronger network to support local produce sales and income generation.

In attendance were urban growers from the Bronx and Queens, two neighborhoods with large Spanish-speaking communities. We were also joined by partners from NYC Parks, who support over 550 community gardens citywide. Their participation and ongoing partnership highlight their commitment to continued collaboration to provide the best support for the Spanish-speaking gardener community. Attendees expressed appreciation for the valuable information, much of which was new to them, and voicing interest in additional future events, and successfully sparked an ongoing conversation among growers across the city. The aim is to continue hosting networking events for Spanish-speaking urban growers at different farms, allowing them to exchange ideas that they can adapt to their own spaces and support each other in their shared efforts.

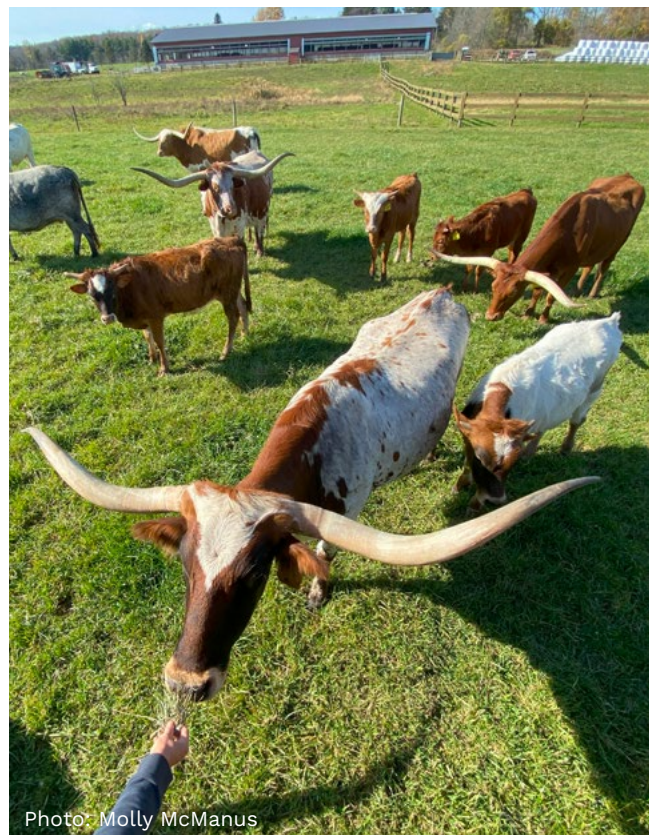
Development of a National Agritourism Curriculum: Empowering Agritourism Service Providers to Strengthen Agritourism Programs as a Farm Diversification Strategy

On October 9, 2024, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced the funding of 46 projects funded by the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP) at \$23.7 million. A single Education Team (ET) grant was funded titled “Empowering Agritourism Service Providers to Strengthen Agritourism Programs as a Farm Diversification Strategy to Enhance Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Success” by Dr. Doolarie Singh-Knights of West Virginia University funded at \$748,140. These projects are designed to identify gaps in beginning farmer and rancher training by evaluating existing programs, and by developing and conducting train-the-trainer projects to address these gaps.

The project’s long-term goal is to provide support to service providers to empower agritourism operators to implement strategies to develop viable agritourism businesses. To this end, this project will develop a “National Holistic Agritourism Training Toolbox”, provide professional development, and organize an Agritourism Community of Practice to help service providers guide and support agritourism operators develop sustainable farm diversification practices. For beginning farms, this could mean laying the groundwork for sustainable agricultural production and operations for agritourism; for established farms, this could mean developing agritourism products and experiences. The “National Holistic Agritourism Training Toolbox” will create a unified agritourism curriculum to help elevate the effectiveness of state and regional agritourism training programs, while still allowing for states to adjust the curriculum for regional fit and credibility.

The project assembles some of the most prolific agritourism experts across the U.S. from Clemson, Rutgers, California, Vermont, Troy, Penn State and Cornell Universities as well as the Alaska Native Tourism Association and FarmStay USA.

If you are an agritourism service provider or are interested in working to support agritourism operators in your state or region, and would like to learn more about this project, contact Lindsey Pashow at lep67@cornell.edu.



A Season of Collaboration and Education in Ag Climate Resiliency

As warmer weather returns and the 2025 growing season comes into view, the Harvest NY Climate Resilient Agriculture team reflects on a productive and impactful winter programming season.

Our mission is to create opportunities for resilience and sustainability by providing evidence-based information and recommendations. We also work closely with industry, government agencies, and public institutions to advance shared goals.

Broad and Impactful Winter Programming Season

This winter, as in years past, we implemented a mix of in-person, virtual, group, and individual events to meet our mission and achieve measurable impact. Traveling across the state, we partnered with numerous organizations to deliver educational sessions and workshops, while also hosting programs of our own. High participation rates reflected the relevance and timeliness of topics like weather forecasting, pest pressures, and disaster preparedness, highlighting the importance of the information shared.



Kayla Walsh, NY Sea Grant Coastal Climate Specialist, presents during Urban CAMP session 1 in Brooklyn, NY, organized in part by Harvest NY.

- ✓ We began the season by hosting an Ag & Climate Change session at the annual Ag, Food & Environmental Systems In-Service Conference, organized by Cornell Cooperative Extension. Over 70 agricultural professionals attended, engaging with presentations on carbon markets, updated climate projections, weather tools, silvopasture strategies, and ruminant diets aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- ✓ A statewide tour of regional and county Crop Congresses provided opportunities for Kitty O'Neil to discuss farm-specific climate adaptation plans with cash crop, livestock, and dairy farmers. These talks addressed challenges such as soil management, pest pressures, and environmental risks. Kitty also shared her expertise on soil health and climate change with farmer audiences in Michigan and Vermont.
- ✓ Savanna Shelnett explored climate change adaptation and mitigation at the inaugural Hudson Valley Cut Flower Conference and presented on climate disaster preparedness at the Long Island Agricultural Forum. Collectively, Kitty and Savanna addressed climate resilience topics at more than 20 events across New York State this winter.
- ✓ A standout program was the Urban CAMP project in New York City. Savanna Shelnett and Yolanda Gonzalez collaborated with Cornell specialists and the USDA Northeast Climate Hub to deliver climate adaptation and mitigation programming for urban farmers. [See page 2](#) for details. The initiative will continue through hands-on demonstrations and farm visits over the next two years.

Expanding Our Reach Through Media

In addition to in-person programs, Harvest NY staff amplified their message through regional and national media. Kitty O'Neil continued her monthly segment on North Country Public Radio, providing timely updates on farming topics, and appeared on NPR's Science Friday.

A Statewide Community Garden Leadership Program Begins

In 2024, Harvest NY partnered with the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets to develop the Community Garden Leadership Program. The initiative aims to strengthen the operations, management strategies, and leadership development of community gardeners across New York.

The program launched in December 2024, and is led by Harvest NY Community Garden Leadership Specialist Makela Elvy. It consists of twelve online learning modules, cohort gatherings, and an independent study project—all designed to empower gardeners to leverage their knowledge of their neighborhoods and create meaningful local impact.

Between January to March 2025, the inaugural cohort completed the first four of the twelve modules toward certification. These modules focus on organizational leadership principles, communication and marketing strategies, partnership building, and navigating policy in preparation for their independent study project proposals. The cohort will begin independent study projects in June. In addition to instructing the online portion of the program, Elvy continues to conduct targeted outreach and workshops across the state, including a presentation at the Rochester Urban Ag Conference, to spread information about the program, facilitate meaningful discourse around community garden management and foster more interpersonal relationships amongst gardeners.

Conference Energizes Urban Growers in Rochester & the Region

On March 22, over 230 growers and gardeners gathered at the 2025 Rochester Urban Agriculture Conference and Seed Swap, an event organized by the Urban Agriculture Working Group (UAWG), with assistance from Harvest NY and the CCE Cornell Vegetable Program. The UAWG, a collaborative group of urban agriculture stakeholders in Rochester, has organized a spring conference for the last 9 years that brings together local gardeners and farmers for a day of celebration, connection, and skill sharing. Attendees came from Rochester, Buffalo, Syracuse, and surrounding areas.

This year's event featured 11 interactive workshops organized into themed tracks, 17 partner tables, and a guided seed swap. Workshop topics ranged from building healthy soils, to managing rats and other pests, planting an orchard, to organizing community gardens, and more. New this year, there were two workshops offered in Spanish. The seed swap, a highlight of the event, led by Petra Page-Mann of Fruition Seeds, brought attendees together in gratitude and celebration. During the midday networking and lunch block, a lunch using local produce was served by the Rochester Supper Club.



Attendees participating in the seed swap at this year's 2025 Rochester Urban Agriculture Conference and Seed Swap.
Photo: DeJon Washington

Event feedback has been very positive. In a post-event survey, attendees commented that they appreciated the knowledgeable presenters, the resources shared and ample time for networking, the energy in the room, and the clear event organization. Considering the overwhelming interest and response this year, the UAWG looks forward to expanding capacity and offerings next year!

Building Urban Ag Connections with Shop Talk

For the hundreds of individuals who work on New York City's 60+ urban farms, finding opportunities to meet each other is difficult. When these opportunities do arise, like anywhere else, farmers make the most of it by talking shop, comparing notes about what's been working for them and what hasn't. Urban farmers consistently communicate the value of these chances to build connections with each other; in response, Harvest NY's urban agriculture programming emphasizes creating space for farmer-to-farmer interactions and information sharing. One example of this, The Urban Farmer-to-Farmer Summit (TUFFS), has become a much-anticipated annual event in the NYC urban farming community.

The 5th annual TUFFS was hosted in February 2025 by Farm. One, an indoor hydroponic farm in Brooklyn. This year's event featured the largest yet in-person TUFFS turnout of 75 urban farmers representing all five boroughs of NYC, along with stakeholders from state and federal government and colleagues from Cornell and other institutions. After two hours of networking and semi-structured shop talk, many participants stuck around, with conversations wrapping up on the sidewalk more than an hour after the event ended.

This enthusiasm carries into the NYC CRAFT schedule—a partially self-organized farmer group founded in 2022 by CCE Urban Agriculture Specialists—with farms planning to host colleagues for farm visits throughout the season, and with an increasingly active email list (240 members) used for job postings, coordinating bulk purchases, and other farmer-to-farmer resource sharing.

The approach also informs other CCE programming. For example, each spring Urban Agriculture Specialist Sam Anderson organizes a workshop for NYC farmers to share emerging pest and disease challenges and solutions – not strictly a presentation, but a participatory session in which urban farmers share their experiences with each pest or disease issue. At this year's event, held at Brooklyn Botanic Garden on March 31, attendees shared successful strategies for managing emerging pest issues, including broad and russet mites, aster yellows, and onion thrips.



Vergara Honored with the Plant Pioneer Award by BLOOM ROC

Dr. Daniela Vergara, Hemp Specialist for Harvest NY, was recognized by BLOOM ROC, a nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering community members applying for New York State's Cannabis Licensing.

Dr. Vergara was honored with the Plant Pioneer award at the BLOOM ROC Award Ceremony & Fundraiser Gala in Rochester, NY. This award acknowledged her remarkable contributions to equity in New York's cannabis industry, where her research and education supported cultivators and entrepreneurs navigating the evolving regulatory landscape.



Dr. Daniela Vergara (right) with fellow honoree Glenna Colaprete of Glenna's (left) and BLOOM ROC President Precious Brown (center).

This recognition highlights the impact of Cornell Cooperative Extension's work and how it is valued by stakeholders.

We congratulate Dr. Vergara on this well-deserved recognition and celebrate her ongoing dedication to advancing the emerging crop industry in New York State.

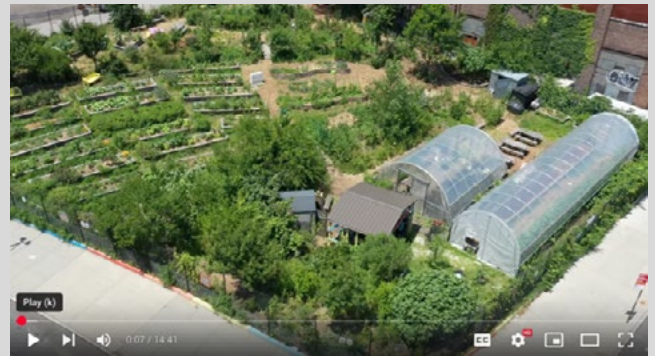
New York City Urban Farms Featured in New Educational Videos Developed by Harvest New York

As part of the National Urban Agriculture Initiative (NUag), Cornell Cooperative Extension's Harvest New York team is developing an urban agriculture training for United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) employees. Urban Agriculture Curriculum Development Specialist Kyle Karnuta reached a major project milestone this quarter by finalizing the first drafts of six videos featuring urban growers that will be highlighted in the training. The videos feature farmers in New York City (Sheryll Durrant from [New Roots Community Farm](#)), Cleveland (Annabel Khouri from [Bay Branch Farm](#)), Chicago (Sandra Reno from the [Gary Comer Youth Center](#)), and Atlanta (Greg Crafter from [Produce'd](#)) and were filmed and edited by videographers Mike Femia, Cornell Cooperative Extension, and Bryan Yee of Cornell AgriTech. In each farm overview video, the producer explains their farming operation's background, production practices, business models and market strategy, and strategies for scaling up urban agriculture.

An additional video features Greg Crafter from Produce'd describing three hydroponic techniques he practices at his fully indoor operation. Hydroponic and indoor agriculture were specific subjects requested by the USDA to be covered in the training. Harvest NY will film and edit one final video with TigerMountain Foundation in Phoenix, AZ in April 2025.

The new videos, currently planned to be used as supplements in the USDA employee urban ag trainings, are not available to the public. Get a sneak peek at these direct links:

- [NUag Grower Educator Introductions](#)
- [Farm Overview: New Roots Community Farm](#)
- [Farm Overview: Bay Branch Farm](#)
- [Farm Overview: Gary Comer Youth Center](#)
- [Farm Overview: Produce'd](#)
- [Innovative Production: Hydroponics at Produce'd](#)



New Roots Community Farm in The Bronx, as shown at the start of the Farm Overview: New Roots Community Farm video. Each overview video begins with a drone shot or video walk through of the farm.

Sharing Soil Science and Nutrient Sovereignty

This quarter, Harvest NY Urban Gardens Specialist Kwesi Joseph participated in two high-impact speaking engagements that brought Cornell Cooperative Extension's work to new audiences and helped frame nutrient sovereignty as a practical and justice-driven approach to managing urban soil pollution.

On January 15, Kwesi was a featured panelist at the NYC Urban Agriculture Data Convening, where he expanded on the concept of nutrient sovereignty. He discussed how this shows up in his current work—from applying rock dust and cover crops in Queens and Brooklyn gardens to co-leading compost and biochar education efforts in the Bronx. He also shared updates from the Tree of Life garden project in Southeast Queens, where building healthy soil is central to community programming.

In March, Kwesi joined the Legacy Pollution and Urban Farming Roundtable hosted by Pace Law School in White Plains, New York. The panel, co-organized by Qiana Mickie of the NYC Mayor's Office of Urban Agriculture, explored how pollutants like microplastics and heavy metals impact urban farms. Kwesi emphasized biochar as a powerful tool to trap microplastics in soil, drawing parallels to how compost binds heavy metals.

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