

2026 Lake Erie Regional Grape Program Winter Grower Conference

March 19, 2026, from 8 AM to 4:30 PM at:

WILLIAM'S CENTER

280 CENTRAL AVE. SUNY FREDONIA CAMPUS

FREDONIA, NY 14063

6:45 AM – Vendor set up

7:15 AM – Grower Check In/Registration Begins

8:00 – 8:15 AM – Welcome by Jennifer Phillips Russo and Program Overview

8:20 – 8:50 AM – Andrew Holden, Penn State University Business Management Specialist, Lake Erie Regional Grape Program – Cost of Production

Andrew will guide growers through the critical financial, agricultural, and strategic factors that should inform financial decisions to help with cost effective management decisions. The emphasis is on business management for commercial growers and small winery operations.

8:55 – 9:55 AM – Dr. Terry Bates, Director of the Cornell Lake Erie Research and Extension Laboratory, Portland, NY, and Panelists

Across our belt, there are different management strategies from minimal pruning, pre-pruning with no hand follow-up, pre-pruning with hand follow-up, combination of all of the above across larger acreages, and more. Terry will discuss research around this topic and then moderate a panel discussion with grower and industry representatives who employ the different techniques.

9:55 – 10:10 Break and Vendor Show

Breakout Sessions

Wine Grape Session - Vineyard to Winery

10:15 – 10:45 – Misha Kwasniewski, Penn State University Associate Professor of Food Science

Dr. Kwasniewski's areas of expertise at Penn State include wine and fermented beverage production, distillation, flavor development, and chemical analysis. Misha will present on his research focusing on canopy management at bloom for optimal wine quality parameters.

10:50 – 11:20 – Chris Gerling, Sr. Extension Associate, Cornell AgriTech, Food Science

Chris's presentation will focus on Yeast Assimilated Nitrogen (YAN) and what we know about it. He will also touch base on Total Acid (TA), pH, phenolics and other qualities that help create the flavor profile in your wines.

11:25 – 11:55 – Dr. Terry Bates, Director of the Cornell Lake Erie Research and Extension Laboratory, Portland, NY

Dr. Terry Bates will discuss his rootstock and wine grape trial. This work examined differing rootstock effects on vinifera viticultural measurements in the soil profiles in the Lake Erie Grape Region.

Breakout Session – Viticulture in Our Region

10:15 – 10:35 – Kyle Bekelja, Cornell IPM (New York State IPM), Grape IPM Coordinator

Kyle will provide updates on his first year in our industry, including his fungicide trial in concords, discuss plans for 2026, and then connect with our grower stakeholders for feedback on how he can support our region.

10:40 – 11:00 AM – Jennifer Phillips Russo, Sr. Extension Associate, Cornell's Lake Erie Regional Grape Program

The Lake Erie Regional Grape Program Update to inform our grower stakeholders of what is being worked on by the team and research at both the North East and Portland Labs in efforts to support the industry.

11:05 -11:55 AM – Dr. Julie Urban, Associate Research Professor, Penn State University

This presentation will give attendees the most recent information on SLF biology, the various host plant species, strategies for control, and hopefully stimulate action to prevent SLF from getting established.

12:00 – 1:30 PM – Lunch, Wine Tasting, and Vendor Show

1:30 - 2:00 PM – Dr. Michela Centinari, Associate Professor of Viticulture, Penn State University

Michela will present on her research on threshold feeding of SLF on grapevines before viticultural parameters decrease.

2:05 - 2:35 PM – Brian Walsh, Penn State Extension

Brian's presentation will discuss management strategies learned over a decade of working with Spotted Lanternflies in vineyards. Grower stakeholders will learn strategies to be well prepared for when SLF begin to show up in our region such as Tree of Heaven (TOH) management or non-management, scouting techniques, pesticide fact sheets, and report on our preliminary SLF spray trial work. Stakeholders will walk away with practical tools.

2:40 – 3:10 PM – Dr. Katie Gold, Assistant Professor and Susan Eckert Lynch Faculty Fellow, School of Integrative Plant Science, Plant Pathology and Plant-Microbe Biology Section, Cornell AgriTech

Katie will give us an introduction into the work that her lab carries out and connect personally to our industry to listen to our needs and how we can direct research to continue sustainability into the future.

3:10 – 3:25 PM – Break and Vendor Show

3:25 – 3:55 PM Jennifer Phillips Russo, Sr. Extension Associate, Cornell's Lake Erie Regional Grape Program

Developing new cover cropping strategies tailored to Concord grapes is crucial. Jennifer will present this research that will not only benefit Concord growers directly but also has the potential to inform sustainable practices across other cultivars and agricultural commodities. This is a critical area of research, and its success could have far-reaching positive consequences. By systematically comparing different floor management strategies and measuring their effects on key parameters, this experiment can provide valuable insights into how to improve soil health, vine capacity, and economic sustainability in non-irrigated juice grape production.

4:00 – 4:30 PM – Megan Luke, Penn State University's Extension Educator in Viticulture and Small Fruits, Lake Erie Regional Grape Program

Megan will present on how Lake Erie Regional Grape Growers can remain confident in their pesticide application strategies and remain in compliance with changing pesticide label regulations. Megan will discuss best practices for record-keeping, including new Endangered Species Act mitigation measures and Bulletins, weather documentation, and equipment calibration. She will review the components of an IPM plan and discuss how recording day-to-day farm practices can aid growers during normal compliance checks.

4:30 PM - Close