

# 2020 Year In Review



## Cultivating Fruitful Relationships (Social Distancing-Style)

How do you sum up a year that has been filled with so much? So much angst, so much uncertainty, so much tragedy, so much change and adaptation. Yet in the midst of all that, we moved ahead the best we could under our own circumstances. In the case of the Finger Lakes Grape Program, we were fortunate to be considered “essential workers” because of our ties to the region’s vineyards, and could continue much of our work, but with some adaptation of our own. Our field meetings that normally would be held on farms around the area moved online (I’ve never used the word ‘Zoom’ so much in my entire life) so that we could continue to provide growers with information to help them get through this year’s growing season. We still made farm visits, but with plenty of physical distance separating us, and often without seeing the grower at all.

Just before the pandemic restrictions were put in place, we held this year’s B.E.V. NY conference at the RIT Conference Center. We ended up with the largest event in its history, with over 400 people attending over the three days, and a trade show that overflowed into areas outside of the main hall on two of the days. Our partnership with the NY Wine & Grape Foundation to develop the Business program this year proved to be fruitful, with attendance for that program almost double what it was in previous years.

The season itself had its ups and downs. The warm dry weather that predominated for the summer and into fall helped to produce some of the highest quality fruit the Finger Lakes has seen in years. There is a lot of excitement about the potential quality of wines made from this year’s crop. That good news, however, was tempered by the low yields that most growers ended up with this year. Part of this could be explained by a couple of frost events in May that predominantly seemed to impact Concord, but crops were down in most varieties this year.

Yet again, the essential nature of farming for the health and well-being of New York and its citizens was demonstrated this year. And the Finger Lakes Grape Program was honored to continue its support of our farms and farmers by addressing important issues through our outreach and applied research work.

The Finger Lakes Grape Program (FLGP) is a regional extension program of Cornell Cooperative Extension, serving the grape and wine industry of the Finger Lakes where more than 300 farms produce over 125 varieties of grapes from approximately 10,000 acres of vineyards. The FLGP provides unbiased, research-based information to the industry in all areas of grape production including vineyard and pest management practices, vineyard nutrition and soils, new vineyard establishment, and farm business management as a means of **supporting the industry’s** growth and long-term sustainability.



Pictured (from left to right): Donald Caldwell, Ellen Coyne, Brittany Griffin, and Hans Walter-Peterson

## Adapting Grower Outreach to COVID-19 Restrictions

Many of our traditional Extension outreach activities, including field meetings and on-farm visits, had to be curtailed in 2020 in response to the COVID pandemic. At the same time, however, farm businesses continued to operate and were still in need of important information about their crop, operating guidelines imposed by the state, best practices for farm safety, and more.

Like all our regional extension colleagues, the FLGP shifted gears from face-to-face outreach efforts to online. This year's Spring IPM field meeting, our biggest field meeting each year, was our first one to be held over Zoom, and still attracted almost 80 growers from the region. Beginning in June, we started holding our semi-weekly Tailgate Meetings online as well, with 15-20 growers attending each of the six meetings held this year. A surprising number of growers said that they liked the format because they could still get information for their operation but did not have to spend any time driving to and from meetings. Based on this feedback, it is likely that we will incorporate these types of online meetings into our regular programming in the coming year, regardless of restrictions on public gatherings.

While farms in New York were deemed to be essential businesses that could continue to operate, there was a vital need for information on how farm businesses could operate while keeping their employees and visitors safe at the same time. Staff from multiple CCE regional ag extension teams, along with campus-based programs such as Cornell's Agricultural Workforce Development Program, developed a wide range of important resources to help farms navigate the many new programs and requirements that were being put in place.

As these resources were developed, FLGP staff devoted a significant amount of time to sorting through them in order to bring what was relevant to the region's grape growers. A particular requirement that we focused our efforts on was the development and communication of resources for vineyards to develop their individual farm safety plans as required by the state. Many of the vineyards in the Finger Lakes are small operations with very few employees, and developing safety plans even for these farms could have seemed overwhelming. The development and extension of these resources through our Vineyard Update newsletter and at Tailgate Meetings allowed many grape growers to put together and implement these plans for their farms so their employees could work in a safe environment.

## Largest-Ever B.E.V. NY Highlights Sustainable Vineyard Practices, Expanded Business Agenda



This year's B.E.V. NY conference took place at the RIT Inn & Conference Center on February 26-28. The conference was the largest ever both in terms of attendance and the number of vendors in the trade show. This year's conference attracted more than 400 growers, winemakers and other industry members not just from the Finger Lakes but all over New York State, who came to learn about new techniques and practices from a range of experts from Cornell, other academic institutions like Washington State University, as well as private industry.

This year's Business Day program was developed by the New York Wine & Grape Foundation, and it proved to be very successful, with over 100 people in attendance. The program featured more sessions than ever, focusing on topics including digital marketing, effective winery leadership, and a panel discussion of the current state of broader wine industry..



*(Pictured) FLGP's Hans Walter-Peterson was presented with this year's Research Award by Mike Colizzi, owner of Kashong Glen Vineyard and former technician with the FLGP.*

The Enology Program featured some familiar faces to the New York industry, including Cornell's own Gavin Sacks, Randy Worobo and Patrick Gibney, who all provided timely and important information to growers about topics including wine chemistry, critical sanitation practices in the cellar and solutions for fermentation problems. Chris Gerling and Anna Katharine Mansfield, who lead the Enology Extension program, introduced the new Cornell Craft Beverage Institute, which provides technical assistance and outreach for the rapidly expanding craft beverage industry in New York.

Pest management was the focus of most of this year's Viticulture Program, with several talks focused on new and innovative practices that could reduce the need for synthetic chemical applications every year, including the potential for hyperspectral sensors to detect disease before they are visible, materials to enhance the integrity of the berry skin to reduce sour rot, and the use of ultraviolet light to control powdery mildew in several horticultural crops, including grapes.

Wednesday also featured the New York Wine & Grape Foundation's annual Unity Banquet Luncheon, during which the Foundation presents awards to various members of the industry for their work and efforts. This year's Research Award was given to Hans Walter-Peterson, the FLGP's viticulturist and team leader. Other winners from the Finger Lakes included Boundary Breaks Vineyards (Winery Award), Hunt Country Vineyards (Sustainability Award), Fox Run winemaker Peter Bell (Industry Award), and John Brahm III of Arbor Hill Grapery (Lifetime Achievement Award), who passed away the day after last year's B.E.V. NY conference.

## No Longer in a Bind: Management options for Bindweed that reduce reliance on glyphosate



Perennial, vining weeds like field and hedge bindweed are becoming more problematic for New York grape growers. These weeds take advantage of vineyard trellises and benefit from the lack of intensive tillage in vineyards. They compete for vineyard resources, interfere with harvest operations, and act as a host for other pests. While herbicides can help to manage the above-ground portions of the plants, bindweeds are often able to recover from seemingly effective controls thanks to their extensive root systems. Systemic herbicides like glyphosate have been shown to be the most effective chemical option for these weeds, but repeated treatments of glyphosate are required to eradicate them. However, extensive and repeated use of glyphosate has resulted in weeds in some vineyards developing resistance to glyphosate, so there is a critical need to find options that reduce reliance on glyphosate in order to maintain its effectiveness, while still providing acceptable levels of control in vineyards.

In 2018, the FLGP started a three-year field trial to examine different chemical and cultural options to control hedge and field bindweed, in cooperation with Dr. Bryan Brown, IPM weed scientist at Cornell AgriTech. The trial for hedge bindweed was conducted at the Teaching & Demonstration Vineyard near Penn Yan, NY, and the field bindweed trial was at a commercial vineyard near Branchport, NY. The objectives of both trials were to:

- Compare the effectiveness of other herbicides to glyphosate for their ability to control bindweed, in both the year of application and the following season.
- Examine how mechanical cultivation could be used as a control strategy for bindweed.
- Compare the financial costs of different weed management programs to provide growers with information that can help them make more informed decisions regarding the management of bindweed.



*Pictured: FLGP viticulturist Hans Walter-Peterson and technician Donald Caldwell collect data on effectiveness of different control options on hedge bindweed.*

One of the main impacts of this project has been illustrating how different hedge and field bindweed are in terms of effective control measures. For example, we found that rimsulfuron (trade name 'Matrix') provided very good control of hedge bindweed, but virtually no control of field bindweed. The results from this study were accepted by the NY Department of Environmental Conservation as justification for the approval of rimsulfuron for control of hedge bindweed in New York vineyards, providing grape growers with another tool to control this perennial weed.

Field bindweed, however, was not significantly impacted by any of the chemical treatments we tested, except for glyphosate. We did observe, however, that a combination of mechanical cultivation and glyphosate used at different times during the season could control field bindweed as well as multiple glyphosate applications. This means that growers can still control the growth and spread of field

bindweed while reducing the amount of glyphosate used in the vineyard. This may not necessarily reduce the management costs for this weed but reducing the number of glyphosate applications can help to reduce the chances of resistance to the herbicide from developing.

## ENROLL IN THE FLGP

Enrolling in the FLGP gives growers access to research-based information that enhances productivity, profitability, and sustainability of the grape industry in the Finger Lakes region.

Benefits of enrollment in the FLGP include:

- *Finger Lakes Vineyard Update* – our weekly electronic newsletter sent every week during the growing season.
- *Veraison to Harvest* - weekly updates on fruit maturity and other harvest-related information leading up to and during harvest season.
- Important announcements about upcoming events, meetings and workshops.

For more information or to enroll online, visit <http://flgp.cce.cornell.edu/enrollment>.



### FLGP Industry Advisory Committee Members

#### Ontario County

Eric Amberg, Amberg Grapevines  
TJ Brahm, Randall Standish Vineyards

#### Schuyler County

Tina Hazlitt, Sawmill Creek Vineyards  
John Santos, Hazlitt 1852 Vineyards

#### Seneca County

Bill Dalrymple, Dalrymple Farms  
Cameron Hosmer, Hosmer Winery

#### Steuben County

Matt Doyle, Doyle Vineyard Management  
Peter Weis, Weis Vineyards

#### Wayne County

Steve Sklenar, Sklenar Vineyard  
Herm Young, Young Sommer Winery

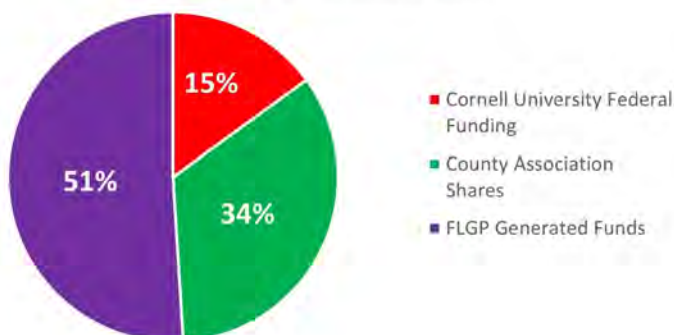
#### Yates County

Eileen Farnan, Barrington Cellars  
Harry Humphreys, Overlook Farms

#### Other Members

Chris Gerling, Cornell AgriTech  
Luke Haggerty, Constellation Brands  
Kim Marconi, Three Brothers Wineries & Estates  
Gregg McConnell, Farm Credit East  
Justine Vanden Heuvel, Cornell University

Sources of FLGP Funding in 2020



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<https://flgp.cce.cornell.edu/>



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