

# Cornell Cooperative Extension Finger Lakes Grape Program

Quarterly Report: January—March 2021

## Program Highlights

- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, B.E.V. NY 2021 was held as a virtual conference instead of at our regular venue near Rochester. Over 470 people from across the U.S. and Canada attended this year's conference. The format of the event was adapted to keep individual sessions shorter while allowing attendees to participate in sessions on topics that they might not normally attend. Because of the online format, we were able to expand our reach for speakers to other parts of the wine world, including Europe and California, while still featuring many of our own experts here in New York. The online format was very favorably received, so much so that we are now exploring ways to incorporate both online and in-person components into future B.E.V. NY events.
- We submitted one research proposal to the New York Wine & Grape Foundation for funding this year to continue examining the effectiveness of a material that thickens the cuticle of the grape skin to help reduce fruit losses due to bunch rot.
- A related project of ours funded by the New York Farm Viability Institute had been suspended by them in August, 2020 due to state funding uncertainties. In March, we received approval to restart the project beginning on June 1, 2021. We anticipate that we will be able to extend the project for a third season if a no-cost extension is approved by the Farm Viability Institute.

## B.E.V. NY Goes Virtual!

Like so many other aspects of our lives and our work, the COVID-19 pandemic forced us to change tactics for our annual B.E.V. NY conference in 2021. The conference was held March 3 – 5 entirely over Zoom. The structure of the meeting was altered so that each day featured two-hour sessions on Business, Enology and Viticulture, allowing us to provide a similar amount of content as we would in person, but in a format that was more easily digestible for an online conference over three days.



Once again, the Finger Lakes Grape Program and Cornell's Enology Extension Lab (now part of the Cornell Craft Beverage Institute) partnered with the New York Wine & Grape Foundation to organize and present this year's conference. This more formal partnership with the Foundation, now in its second year, has helped to strengthen the business program at B.E.V. NY as well as expanding our marketing and outreach efforts for the event.

Because the conference was held virtually, it allowed us to greatly expand the range of speakers – both in expertise and geography – that we would have on this year's



program. One of this year's keynote speakers for the conference was Jancis Robinson, who is one of the most influential wine journalists in the world, author of several encyclopedic wine books, writes a weekly column for the Financial Times and even advises Queen Elizabeth II on her wine

cellar. Ms. Robinson spoke about how to elevate New York wines on the world stage through strategic production, promotion and the understanding of market challenges and opportunities.

The viticulture program featured two speakers from Germany – Dr. Hans Schultz from Geisenheim, one of the world's experts on how climate change is affecting vineyard productivity and fruit quality, and Dominik Sona, general manager and winemaker at Weingut Koehler Ruprecht, a winery in the Pfalz region of Germany. The speakers brought academic and industry perspectives, respectively, to the issue of how the

## B.E.V. NY Goes Virtual (continued from pg. 1)

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changing climate is impacting grape and wine production in a part of the world that is very similar to the Finger Lakes.

While taking advantage of the opportunity to expand the universe of speakers we could invite, the program also featured many speakers from Cornell and the New York Industry, including growers, winemakers and marketing and tasting room staff. The largest session of the conference, with over 200 attendees, was the pest management session on Thursday afternoon, which featured Cornell experts on weed management, grape diseases, and the spotted lanternfly.

Because the conference was virtual, there was no trade show associated with this year's meeting. However, twenty-one companies and organizations, many of whom are regular participants in the trade show, chose to be part of the meeting as sponsors.

In total, more than 470 people from across the United States and Canada attended this year's virtual conference – more than have ever attended the event in the past. Evaluations from attendees were overwhelmingly positive, both for the content of the program and for the online format. Because of the structure of the program and the pricing (one fee for as much or as little of the content as they wanted), a number of people said that they attended sessions that they normally would not have if the meeting was held in-person and were able to hear about topics that they normally would not have a chance to. In addition, many said they appreciated not having to worry about weather conditions or long trips to attend the conference as well.

Overall, the reception for this year's meeting was overwhelmingly positive. Attendees have encouraged us to consider holding some or all of future B.E.V. NY events online again, even after we can hold the event in-person once again.

## Grant Funding

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### Funded Projects

*Determining the Efficacy of Cuticle-Enhancing Products to Reduce Cluster Rots and Fruit Fly Damage in NY Vineyards.* 6/1/20 – 5/31/22. Funded by New York Farm Viability Institute. Collaborators: Alice Wise, Greg Loeb, Faruque Zaman

This project was started in 2020, but suspended by the Farm Viability Institute in August due to funding uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. We were informed in March, 2021 that the NYFVI Board has approved our request to restart the project as of June 1, 2021 at full funding. We will be requesting a no-cost extension which will allow us to extend the project for another growing season.

*Monitoring Grapevine Bud Hardiness for Winter Survival.* 1/1/21 – 3/31/21, \$2,632. Funded by Kaplan Fund, NY Wine & Grape Foundation. Collaborators: Tim Martinson, Jennifer Russo

This ongoing project provides important information to growers about the winter survival of grapevine buds. Samples are collected every two weeks from Finger Lakes vineyards and analyzed for their ability to withstand cold temperatures. This information is communicated to growers so they can make determine if they need to adjust their pruning practices to compensate for bud injury. Results are posted at <https://grapesandwine.cals.cornell.edu/extension/bud-hardiness-data>.

## Grant Funding

### Proposals Submitted

[Evaluation of a Berry Cuticle Supplement to Reduce Cluster Rots in Vineyards.](#) Submitted to New York Wine & Grape Foundation/Lake Erie Regional Grape Research & Extension Program. Proposed budget: \$19,682 (Year 3 of three-year project). Collaborator: Alice Wise – CCE Suffolk County

This project is evaluating the effectiveness of a product called ‘HydroShield’ at reducing Botrytis bunch rot and sour rot in grapes. HydroShield is a proprietary product currently under development at Oregon State University, but is not yet commercially available. HydroShield is purported to thicken the berry cuticle and therefore provide improved resistance to egg laying of *Drosophila* fruit flies. In preliminary tests in Oregon, when sprayed on grapes, HydroShield has reduced egg laying by *Drosophila suzukii* (spotted wing drosophila) and subsequent development of cluster rot. We did not see a significant impact from the treatment in 2019 or 2020 due to the very low disease pressure that we had at the end of the season.



## Cornell Cooperative Extension Finger Lakes Grape Program

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The Finger Lakes Grape Program is a Cornell Cooperative Extension partnership between Cornell University and the Cornell Cooperative Extension Associations in Ontario, Seneca, Schuyler, Steuben, Wayne and Yates Counties.

