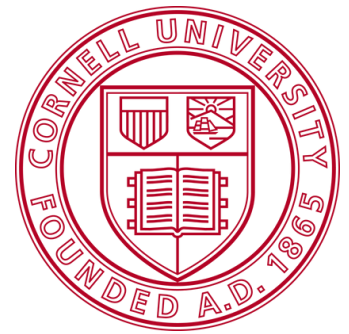


# Cornell Cooperative Extension

## Finger Lakes Grape Program



Q3 2023

# Quarterly Highlights



Picture of different netting to test how well they protect fruit from damage by yellow jackets

## Program Highlights

The Finger Lakes Grape Program team continued to assess the potential impacts of this year's spring freeze on the region's grape crop. Based on information gathered from growers and other sources, it appears the loss in yields will not be as significant as first believed, but will still mean that some growers will have two consecutive years with lower than average crops.

The FLGP is using the MyEV digital mapping tool to demonstrate to growers how spatial data can help them make better informed management decisions based on actual conditions in their vineyards. This tool helps growers to connect how soil conditions and canopy size are related to important parameters like potential yield and ripening. It is also being used to map the presence of disease or invasive species like the Tree of Heaven, the primary host of the spotted lanternfly.

The Finger Lakes Grape Price Listing for 2023 showed that average grape prices increased by about 6% over last year, the largest year-over-year increase in the history of the list. Some important varieties, like Concord, Catawba, Chardonnay and Cayuga White, saw their average prices increase by more than 10%.

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# Assessing impacts to Finger Lakes vineyards from the May freeze

Following the freeze event in May that caused significant injury to many vineyards in the Finger Lakes, the FLGP has been working with growers, fellow Cornell Extension educators, the NY Wine & Grape Foundation, and others to assess the potential impacts to the 2023 grape crop in the Finger Lakes and New York state.

One of the primary purposes for this assessment was to determine if the requirement for New York farm winery license holders to use 100% New York grapes could be waived. The FLGP was asked to provide the Department of Agriculture & Markets with an estimate of the yield loss of grapes due to the frost, so that a determination could be made about the potential to recommend a waiver to the portion of the Farm Winery Law which requires farm winery license holders to only use New York grapes in the wines they produce. The law states that if there is a 40% loss in yield, then such a waiver can be issued by state authorities.

Based on information from several sources, including observations by FLGP staff, Extension colleagues, industry members and others, as well as an online grower survey, the only grape variety that likely met the 40% yield loss threshold was Gewürztraminer. Our survey indicated that yield losses were estimated to be around 45% compared to a “normal” crop this year. While other varieties suffered damage in many vineyards in the Finger Lakes, it did not appear that there was enough of a loss across the entire state to trigger the exemption to the law this year.

As we entered harvest, our estimate for overall crop loss in the region was about 30% - much better than our initial estimates of close to a 50% loss. Early reports seemed to be agreeing with this lower damage estimate, but we will need to collect some information from growers after harvest to estimate the actual losses this year.

## Mapping Tree of Heaven in Finger Lakes vineyards

The Finger Lakes Grape Program is cooperating on a grant-funded project with Greg Loeb, entomologist at Cornell AgriTech, to map the presence of tree of heaven (TOH) near vineyards. The invasive tree is the favored host of the spotted lanternfly (SLF), which also has an appetite for the sap from grapevines. Feeding by SLF on grapevines has been shown to impact the health and productivity of a vineyard if enough SLF are present. The mapping project is intended to provide information to both researchers and growers about potential “hotspots” for SLF activity when the invasive insect reaches the Finger Lakes, where it has not established any populations to this point, except for a small one in Ithaca.

As part of the project, growers are also being taught how to use the MyEV vineyard mapping tool to record the presence of TOH around their own vineyards. These maps are being consolidated into a single source of information that can be used to help guide efforts to locate monitoring and trapping locations to detect SLF in Finger Lakes vineyards as early as possible.



Tree of Heaven adjacent to a Schuyler County Vineyard

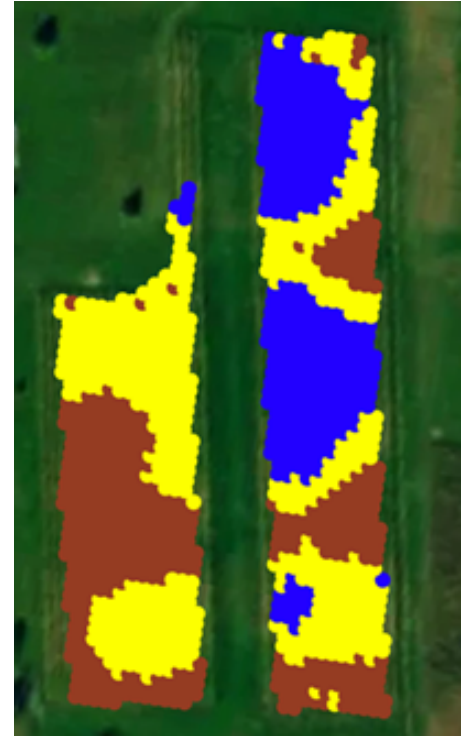
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# Mapping vineyard variation to improve management decision making

The saying “You can’t manage what you don’t measure” has never been truer in grape production in recent years. The development and improvement of sensor and digital mapping technologies for vineyards is allowing farmers to gain more insight and understanding of their vineyards than ever before. The FLGP is part of a multi-year project, funded by USDA’s Agriculture & Food Research Initiative, to introduce growers to these new technologies and explore how they might improve vineyard management.

At three different times during the season, we collect NDVI (“normalized difference vegetative index”) data in several vineyards using proximal sensors that are driven between the rows on a tractor or all-terrain vehicle. The NDVI data, which represents the relative density of green plant tissue, is recorded by a logger that also records the location of each data point. That data is then loaded into the MyEV online tool and can be visualized on a map of the vineyard block. The spatial patterns of this information can help growers to decide how to address factors that cause this variation, such as thinning fruit from overcropped vines, or addressing soil issues that are hurting vine production in a certain part of the vineyard. The MyEV tool can be used to map almost anything a grower wants to measure in the vineyard, allowing them to better manage it



Predicted yield map for a Yates County vineyard based on NDVI and sampling data.

## FLGP Publishes Annual Grape Price List

For almost 25 years, the FLGP has published a list of grape prices from about 13-15 wineries and processors who purchase fruit from the region’s vineyards. The prices are compiled by the FLGP and published for the industry’s benefit each year. This year’s listing can be found on the program’s blog at <https://blogs.cornell.edu/flxgrapes/2023/09/19/updated-flx-grape-price-listing/>.

This year, grape prices increased by an average of 6% overall compared to 2022, with some cultivars, such as Concord, Niagara, Lemberger, Cayuga White and Chardonnay, increasing by more than 10% over last year’s average prices. This increase is likely due to a couple of factors: 1) the freeze event in May caused significant injury in many vineyards, which will result in a below average crop for the second year in a row for many growers, and 2) a slow but steady increase in demand for Finger Lakes grapes.

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# 'Veraison to Harvest' Grape Maturity Project Begins



The annual Veraison to Harvest project got started in the last week of August. The project has provided growers and wineries across New York with updates on harvest progression, fruit ripening, and other issues for the industry during this critical time of the growing season. Each week, fruit samples are collected in vineyards from across the state and sent to Cornell AgriTech for chemical analysis to show how fruit ripening is progressing. Each regional grape program also provides a brief update about the harvest, and fruit and vineyard conditions that week. The newsletter is distributed to more than 500 growers and other industry members over the 8-10 week duration of the project, and all issues are also posted at the project website, <https://cals.cornell.edu/viticulture-enology/research-extension/veraison-harvest>.

This year, in response to multiple requests from growers, the participating programs started to record short podcast episodes that summarized the information for that week as well. While listenership was fairly low this year, we did receive positive feedback from several growers in different regions about the podcast.

## Tailgate Meetings this quarter

- July 11 – Young Sommer Winery, Williamson (Wayne County)
- July 25 – Gage Vineyards, Naples (Ontario County)
- August 8 – Tango Oaks Vineyard, Hector (Schuyler County)
- August 22 – Fox Run Vineyards, Penn Yan (Yates County)



### Cornell Cooperative Extension Finger Lakes Grape Program

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<https://blogs.cornell.edu/flxgrapes/>

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.

