

# Cornell Cooperative Extension Lake Erie Regional Grape Program

Annual Report 2025



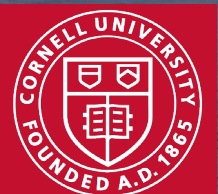
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## **Jennifer Phillips Russo- LERGP Viticulture Specialist, Team Lead**

### **Cornell EPA ESA Roundtable Discussion**

The Lake Erie Regional Grape Program organized a virtual meeting with Viticulture Extension Associates from Cornell and Penn State Universities, Pathologists from Cornell, and Entomologists from Cornell, the United States Department of Agriculture, the Environmental Protection Agency, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, Cornell's NYS Integrated Pest Management, and Cornell's Pesticide Safety Education Program to discuss how to support our agricultural stakeholders during the transitional time of pesticide label requirement changes and changing EPA/ESA regulations. There was a discussion on how to formulate what future Train-the-Trainer education for NYS and PA should look like/require, and the possibility that it could be used as a template for the rest of the land-grant universities to follow. Elyssa Arnold, USDA Regulatory Risk Assessor, Office of Pest Management Policy, presented on the background of EPA's efforts to comply with ESA for pesticide registrations and/or provide some details on the mitigation approaches in the Herbicide and Insecticide Strategies (expected to be mirrored in the upcoming Fungicide Strategy). This meeting generated transparent communication and collaboration towards a successful transition.

### **44<sup>th</sup> Annual Long Island Ag Forum Guest Speaker**

Jennifer Phillips Russo was invited to be a guest speaker at the *44<sup>th</sup> Annual Long Island Ag Forum*, a two-day educational program for those in the agriculture and ornamental horticulture industries. Jennifer presented on *MyEV: Using Spatial Data for Improved Vineyard Management*. MyEV was developed as a free, web-based tool designed to help growers collect, process, and use spatial data to improve vineyard management. The technological components of digital agriculture are developing quickly, and there is growing evidence of the positive impact of precision viticulture applications on production efficiency and environmental sustainability.

### **Michigan State's 2025 Orchard and Vineyard Show Guest Speaker**

Jennifer Phillips Russo was asked to be a guest speaker at Michigan State University's *2025 Northwest Michigan's Vineyard and Orchard Show* in Traverse City, MI. Jennifer presented *Advancements in Spotted Lanternfly Management: Strategies and Insights*, an overview of current strategies for managing the invasive spotted lanternfly, a significant vineyard threat. This event was well attended, with over 100 in attendance.

### **Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture Spotted Lanternfly Quarterly Meeting**

Megan Luke, Jennifer Phillips Russo, and Brian Walsh attended the *PDA SLF Quarterly Meeting* to update attendees on their pilot research on *Spotted Lanternfly and Mechanized Grape Harvest*. This very important work has mobilized industry, regulatory agencies, food science departments, and engineers to begin formulating mitigation and management strategies, as well as taint and toxicity studies.

### **2025 New York Wine and Grape Foundation Reporting Session**

Jennifer Phillips Russo attended the *Virtual New York Wine and Grape Foundation Funding Reporting Session* to communicate research deliverables for projects awarded funding for 2024. Jennifer updated the group on the great work the Lake Erie Regional Grape Program conducted on the Network of Environmental Weather Applications (NEWA) to ensure growers have reliable weather data to aid their viticultural management practices. She also reported on the *project Evaluating Osmotic Protectant, Glycine Betaine, as a Multifaceted Approach to Enhance Grapevine Stress Tolerance and Productivity*, and the *Spotted Lanternfly Mechanized Harvest Pilot Study*.

### **Frost and Frost Protection Strategies Webinar**

Jennifer Phillips Russo and the other Cornell Viticulture Extension Associates organized a *Frost and Frost Protection Strategies Webinar* for growers in NYS and regionally, focused on the impacts of frost on grapevines and strategies for protecting them from frost damage. Attendees heard from Dr. Michela Centinari from Penn State, Dr. Jason Londo from Cornell, and Dr. Jim Willwerth from Brock University as they discussed identifying frost damage and the best methods for safeguarding your vines.

### **Fifth Annual Eastern Viticulture and Enology Forum Webinar Series**

The fifth edition of the Eastern Viticulture and Enology Forum (EVEF) webinar series is a collaborative effort between the Penn State Extension Grape and Wine Team and viticulture and/or enology Extension programs from the following U.S. land grant institutions: Colorado State University, Cornell University, University of Geor-

gia, Iowa State University, University of Maryland, Michigan State University, University of Minnesota, North Carolina State University, Ohio State University, and Rutgers University, Texas A&M University, University of Vermont, Virginia Tech, and University of Wisconsin. This session was a collaborative effort between these viticulture and enology extension programs, coordinated for grape growers and winemakers. Jennifer Phillips Russo and Megan Luke were panelists who helped organize these webinars for growers across the Northeast, and Jennifer Phillips Russo was an expert panelist on floor management strategies. This meeting was well attended, with over 300 attendees.

### New York Wine and Grape Foundation's Bold NY B.E.V. Conference

Every year The New York Wine and Grape Foundation sponsors an in-person conference in the Finger Lakes Region, with more than 200 grape growers, winemakers, students, researchers, and business leaders from New York and surrounding states attending. Jennifer Phillips Russo was asked to be an expert panelist on *Weather and Wine: Insights into Climate and Vintage*. Andrew Holden was the business keynote speaker, and discussed *Economics of Grape Production in New York* and *When is it Time to Remove a Vineyard?*

### Monitoring Grape Bud Hardiness

Dr. Jason Londo and the LERGP team have been collaborating on grapevine cold hardiness monitoring since 2019. Dr. Londo's lab focuses on understanding the interaction between climate stresses and genetic diversity in fruit crops, manifested as physiological optimization and adaptation. Dr. Londo manages the Cornell grapevine cold hardiness monitoring program and [associated website](#). The Lake Erie Regional Grape Program has acquired equipment (freezers and data acquisition units) to use Digital Thermal Analysis (DTA) at the Cornell Lake Erie Research and Extension Laboratory (CLEREL). The DTA unit at CLEREL enables the research and extension team to process extension samples on-site and conduct more frequent and detailed evaluations. A major goal is to document how both crop adjustment and crop load impacts bud hardiness and potential crops of Concord, Niagara, and other cultivars – and thereby evaluate the economic risks of over-cropping and potential freeze damage based on production practices. This information would allow grape growers to adjust practices and respond to climatic events.

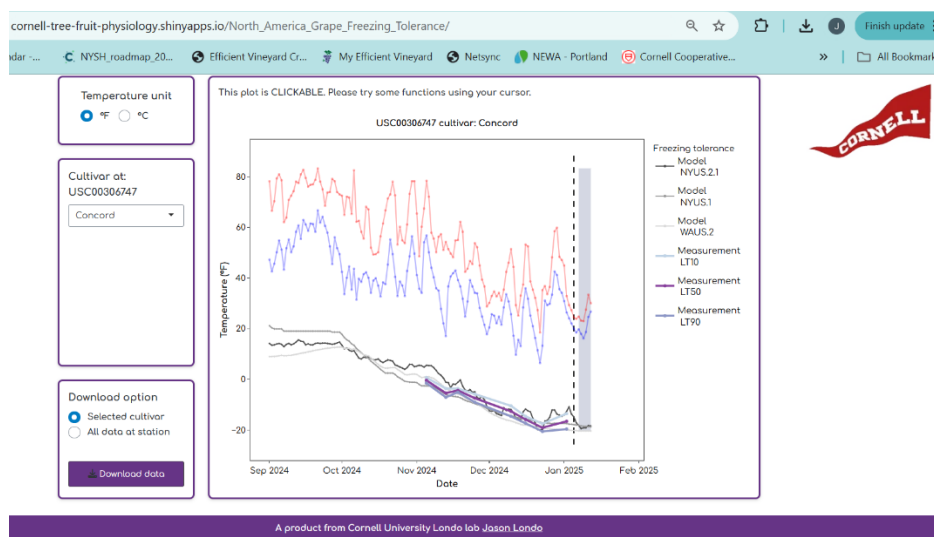


Figure 1. Screenshot of the Cornell Cold Hardiness Website data for Concord in Portland, NY first week of 2025 and previous weeks.

### Measure Impact of Microclimate on Grapevine Cold Hardiness

Jennifer Phillips Russo and Dr. Jason Londo continued the third and final replicate of their winter microclimate study, which tracks local variation in cold hardiness and budbreak phenology in lakeside microclimates in the Finger Lakes and Lake Erie. The team continued to collect and monitor Concord buds at 15 different locations throughout the dormant season to gain a better understanding of microclimates on cold hardiness and allow grape growers to adjust practices and respond to climatic events.

### 2025 Lake Erie Regional Grape Program's In-Person Winter Grower Conference

The Lake Erie Regional Grape Program held an excellent program for the 2025 Winter Grower Conference featuring experts from many fields. As always, the day was full of information on the latest research-based tools that can be taken home and applied to your vineyard. The educational presentations provided the opportunity to get information that growers need regarding cash flow in the wake of disaster, Mancozeb discus-

sion, canopy and fruit thinning, SLF updates, what is needed to become compliant with the EPA's Endangered Species Act regulations changes and label changes, disease identification, disease and pest updates, as well as learn about the information and resources you need to sustain vineyard production.

### Coffee Pot Meetings

Coffee Pot meetings were started years ago in an effort to connect with local growers and address their needs during the growing season. These meetings are typically hosted by grape growers in the region who are willing to invite the group into their barn/garage. LERGP brings coffee, donuts, the latest research information, and recertification credits.

In addition, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (PDA) both approved offering pesticide recertification credits at these meetings to aid our growers. For each meeting, one credit is available to licensed pesticide applicators in both New York and Pennsylvania. This year there were 11 Coffee Pot Meetings. Coffee Pot Meetings are discussions on timely viticulture, business management, and integrated pest management. We are pleased to announce that our successful programming has been adopted in other commodities and states! The LERGP team is excited to be able to continue to offer educational outreach and pesticide recertification credits to our industry stakeholders.

### 2025 NYSDEC How to Get Certified Course

The Lake Erie Regional Grape Program offered our annual *How to Get Certified Course* at the Cornell Lake Erie Research & Extension Laboratory in Portland, NY. This was a 2-hour course instructed by the NYSDEC in preparation for the pesticide applicator test that was given at the same location the following week. Attendees of this class were able to register for the test during this course. This event was well attended, and attendees could opt to take the pesticide applicator exam the following week.

### JCC AG on Earth Day

The Lake Erie Regional Program collaborated with CCE Chautauqua and Jamestown Community College to man a booth at JCC for Earth Day. This was an educational opportunity to connect with community members and relay information about our program, and discuss the Spotted Lanternfly, an invasive plant-hopper species.

### Webinar: Demonstration of the Grape Cold Hardiness Risk Assessment Tool

The Lake Erie Regional Grape Program collaborated on a webinar to demonstrate the Grape Cold Hardiness Risk Assessment Tool. Dr. Amaya Atucha (University of Wisconsin) provided a demonstration of this new tool that is now available to growers via the NEWA website (<https://newa.cornell.edu/grape-cold-hardiness/>). The tool, developed in collaboration with Cornell University, helps identify potential bud mortality due to cold weather events using data from any weather station in the NEWA network.

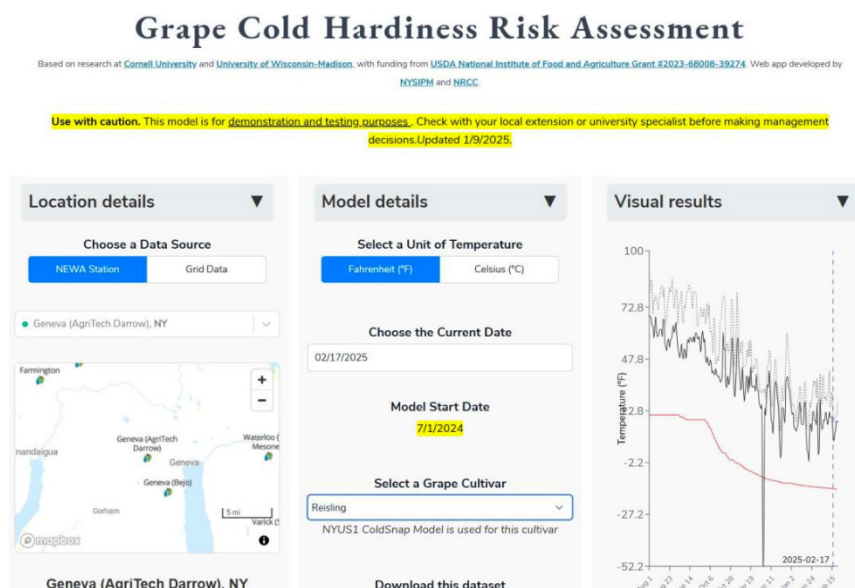


Figure 2 – Screenshot of the Grape Cold Hardiness Risk Assessment Tool



### Microclimate Sensor Grant

Dr. Jason Londo and Jennifer Phillips Russo continue to collaborate on tracking grapevine cold hardiness and phenology across the region with microclimate sensors, deployed in 15 grower-collaborator vineyards. We are collecting data from five locations on Lake Erie, five locations on the bench, and five locations on the escarpment. The team collects data weekly to help achieve the objectives of this study: to conduct phenological assays for Concord grapes across multiple locations, to determine variability between vineyards, and to provide updated field cold hardiness/phenology and hopefully begin building phenology predictions for the New York grapevine industry. This collection continued throughout the third quarter and complemented the NASA Acres/AVIRIS data collection efforts.

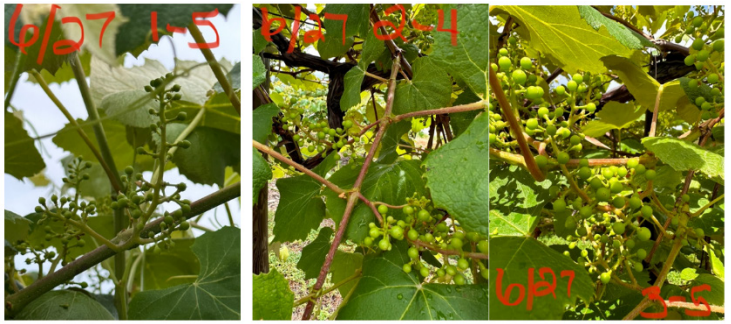


Figure 3 – Concord clusters at different locations

### LERGP Introduced Kyle Bekelja, NYS Grape IPM Coordinator, to Growers

To ensure growers have the tools to combat emerging threats to yield and quality, NYSIPM appointed entomologist and educator [Kyle Bekelja](#) as the Program's statewide grape IPM coordinator.

"We are thrilled to welcome Kyle to the New York State Integrated Pest Management team," said [New York State Integrated Pest Management Program](#) (NYSIPM) Director [Alejandro Calixto](#). "His extension experience, research background and knowledge of fruit IPM, and his ability to connect with people will prove invaluable to New York grape growers."

Bekelja, who joined the program in February, holds a Ph.D. in entomology from Virginia Tech, where he served as a postdoctoral researcher since 2022. He shared his vision for working with growers, Cornell Cooperative Extension, NYSIPM, and Cornell AgriTech colleagues to develop and communicate strategies for integrated pest management. He said he looks forward to meeting growers and learning about their unique challenges.

In addition to invasive species and plant diseases, Bekelja said he sees climate and regulatory changes as key threats to grape producers.

Despite the myriad pressures facing growers, Bekelja says he is optimistic about the future and excited to help producers meet challenges and reach their goals.

Bekelja is based at NYSIPM's Geneva office on the campus of Cornell AgriTech. He can be reached at [kmb399@cornell.edu](mailto:kmb399@cornell.edu).



### Podcasts

After preparation, meetings, and discussions with both universities, podcasts continued this quarter with one a week. This content is also distributed through our YouTube channel as a video blog. The video blog has been around for a few years, and views are typically just a little bit higher than the podcast. We delivered 13 Podcasts, 390 views on YouTube for those podcasts, with 1,111 downloads on Buzzsprout. Overall, we've increased total viewership by more than 50% due to the increase in distribution methods.

### Text Message Blasts

LERGP has developed numerous contact lists for purposes of meeting reminders, phenology updates, and other promotional materials. Text Blasts allow us to distribute this material and information via text message. Growers can respond to these alerts, and we have been able to quickly answer questions and expand our contact lists with this technology. A large majority of growers attending virtual meetings prefer to receive these reminders via text and reported receiving them. Previously, growers would often get an email reminder before a meeting, but would not read it until after the meeting was over. We continually collect grower interest in receiving text alerts and have sent out 12 text messages this year, delivering important and timely information to 4,800 connections.

## **NASA's Surface Biology and Geology (SBG) mission**

The Lake Erie Regional Grape Program collaborated with NASA Acres and NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) on a mission set to transform how grape growers monitor and manage vineyards. [Cornell AgriTech's partnership with NASA has been instrumental in showcasing the practical value of NASA's advanced airborne sensors that match the proposed SBG mission sensors, like AVIRIS.](#) This summer, NASA aircraft carrying AVIRIS3 captured detailed hyperspectral imagery across thousands of acres of Cornell research farms-- including Lake Erie Regional Grape Program research plots in grower vineyards and Cornell Lake Erie Research and Extension Laboratory research vineyards—and commercial vineyards in both upstate New York and California. The Lake Erie Grape Team worked in concert with the AVIRIS Flight Crew by collecting data on the ground to help inform the data collected via AVIRIS and future satellites. Detailed hyperspectral imagery from NASA enables precision agriculture practices at an unprecedented level. Growers can optimize irrigation, fertilization, and pest control strategies, reducing costs, enhancing sustainability, and improving vineyard health and productivity.



*Photo 2 - Members of NASA Earth Science leadership, including Dr. Karen St. Germain, Bradley Doorn, and Dr. Alyssa Whitcraft, with Cornell AgriTech and CELREL researchers visiting Daen and Bob Betts, Concord grape growers in Western New York*

## **Spotted Lanternfly Pilot Spray Trials**

The Lake Erie Regional Grape Program Team is part of the Penn State and Cornell Spotted Lanternfly Research Team, working to identify potential risks in highly mechanized grape production regions before SLF arrival and establishment. A potential risk identified was that Spotted Lanternflies present on the mechanically harvested vines would be “harvested” with the grapes, thus contaminating the harvested crop. This team worked to develop a pilot spray trial to reduce Spotted Lanternfly contamination during mechanized harvest by investigating chemistries with different Pre-Harvest Intervals (PHI) to begin developing risk management strategies.

## **New York Farm Viability Funded Floor Management Research**

NYFVI Floor Management Cover Crop Trial research on nutrient and water conservation in non-irrigated juice grapes using floor management strategies continued with data collection across many different cover cropping strategies on both gravel and heavy-clay soils. Weekly data collection started at the end of May and concluded at the end of September. This data will help inform growers of the best floor management strategies to implement in their operations to increase soil and vine health. We look forward to analyzing the data and providing management strategies in the future.

## **Evaluating Osmotic Protectant**

Glycine Betaine, as a Multifaceted Approach to Enhance Grapevine Stress Tolerance and Productivity grant, continued. Grape growers face the risk each season of their vineyards withstanding injury and loss of production from biotic and abiotic stresses whose severity is dependent on the current season's weather conditions. Frost, disease, water availability, and extreme temperatures are just a few of the challenges grapevines face with climate change. Glycine Betaine, an osmotic protectant, uses methods existing in nature for the prevention of plant diseases and pests, and may improve plant productivity and vitality without releasing undesirable pesticide residues into the environment. Through foliar applications, this bio-stimulation product improves plant resistance to stress and stimulates natural processes to improve crop yield and quality. We continued to conduct research on two different cultivars, Concord and Chardonnay, applying timely sprays and evaluating the effect on vine productivity and cluster diseases.

## **Grower Fruit Thinning Demo Day**

The Lake Erie Regional Grape Program and Dr. Terry Bates's research team held a Crop Thinning Educational Day. This event was very well attended, with approximately 80 people in attendance. The program began inside, classroom-style, where Jennifer Phillips Russo and Dr. Terry Bates presented on the importance of vine balance, or fruit to pruning weight ratios, and grapevine production sustainability, focusing on fruit thinning at

30 days after bloom. This was followed by an informal discussion/answer session. The second half of the educational program took the attendees outside to watch fruit thinning demonstrations.

### **In-Person Education**

We were hosted by the Erie County Horticultural Society at Gravel Pit Park. This large event in North East, PA, is well attended by Chautauqua County growers. Those in attendance heard timely updates on viticulture and integrated pest management, with recertification credits available.

### **NYS DOT Regulations for Farm Trucks & Equipment**

This program was presented by Trooper Andrew Lawrence, NYSP Commercial Vehicle Unit, located at the Cornell Lake Erie Research and Extension Laboratory in Portland, NY. All farm owners and employees who manage or operate farm trucks and equipment were encouraged to participate in this informational presentation on the current regulations for operating farm trucks and equipment on our local roads. This was a free program.

Topics discussed included: Defining a "Commercial Motor Vehicle", Licensing and Registrations, Rules of the Road, Size and Weights (permits), and Equipment. The information presented aimed to help agricultural businesses remain in compliance and ensure truck and equipment safety.

### **Meeting with State Senator, George Borrello**

Jennifer Phillips Russo was asked to join other agricultural specialists and the Executive Director of Chautauqua County, Emily Reynolds, for a fact-learning lunch with NYS Senator George Borrello. The goal of this meeting was to help bring awareness of the successes and challenges of our region's agricultural sector. The meeting was successful in building relationships, filling in knowledge gaps, and brainstorming how we can work together to support our agricultural communities in Western New York.

### **2025 NVEELC Presentation**

National Viticulture Enology Extension Leadership Conference (NVEELC) regularly gathers viticulture and enology extension and industry (non-sales) outreach specialists for professional development, best-practice sharing, research and regional reports, collaboration and dialogue on the unique challenges in V&E extension. The goal? To lift up, connect, and support the important extension function for the American grape and wine industry. The Lake Erie Regional Grape Team was asked to present on the ongoing Spotted Lanternfly Mechanization Research and give an update on our region.

### **Field Representative Meetings**

The Lake Erie Regional Grape Program meets monthly with our grape industry processor group to discuss how, collectively, we can provide support to our grower stakeholders. During these meetings, we discuss timely needs for viticulture, integrated pest management, research needs, and business management to support the industry. Seven meetings were held this year.

### **Campus Connections Lunch and Learn: Ag and Food Systems**

Jennifer Phillips Russo was invited by Judson Reid, Cornell's Critical Issues Lead and Vegetable Specialist/Team Leader, to present at the first Campus Connection Lunch and Learn Zoom meeting to keep campus faculty and CCE up to date on what is happening in the world of ag extension. This first meeting highlighted regional teams and their role in supporting the various ag sectors presented by Peter Landre, then highlighted a specific commodity/team, and LERGP was selected out of the 10 Regional Teams. Jennifer presented on the Lake Erie/NYS grape industry, the LERGP team, our industry needs, and how LERGP interacts and supports growers. It was a great opportunity to showcase the grape industry and the work that is happening in our region.

### **2025 Fall Advisory Committee**

The Lake Erie Regional Grape Program held an advisory committee meeting in November 2025 to help guide its winter programming. The meeting gathered growers, processors, research, and extension staff to identify critical challenges facing the grape industry and to guide future extension programming, research priorities, and outreach efforts. Discussion points included Mechanized Pruning & Vineyard Management, Labor Constraints & Input Tradeoffs, Vineyard Economics & Market Reality, Need for Paradigm Shifts & Market Development, Extension Tools, Technology & Decision Support, Business Continuity & Succession, and Outreach & Communication.



## **2025 Virtual Spray Program – What's Your Plan?**

The Lake Erie Regional Grape Program held our annual Virtual Spray Program for growers across PA and NY, and we promoted it nationally through the National Grape Research Alliance Newsletter and other land-grant university colleagues. The event was well attended, with 73 people tuned in to learn about the latest research to help make their spray program purchasing decisions for the 2026 growing season and earn pesticide recertification credits.

The program began with Fluctuation of grape berry moth populations in Concord vineyards by Dr. Flor Acevedo, Penn State University. The second presentation was by Dr. Katie Gold, Cornell University, with an update on what's new from Cornell Grape Pathology—dsRNA, next-gen biologicals, disease-resistant varieties, phenology-based scheduling, dynamic spray volume ("smart" spraying), and emerging AI decision support—and how to judge these against the *unchanged* fundamentals of pathogen biology and viticultural practice. Katie's support specialist, Dave Combs, gave an overview of the materials and their effectiveness in the Cornell pathology vineyard field trials in 2025. This was followed by an update from Dr. Tim Miles, Michigan State University, on grape pathology resistance to downy, powdery, and botrytis, along with a discussion on the upcoming IR4 projects in grapes and what that means for our industry. The final was given by Megan Luke, Lake Erie Regional Grape Program PSU Viticulture Educator, who discussed common issues in sprayer set-up, coverage, calibration, and water quality, which may drastically affect the efficacy of your spray program.

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## **Andrew Holden, LERGP Penn State Extension Business Management Educator**

### **Winter Conferences**

#### ***PA Wine Marketing Research Board Winter Conference***

I attended the PAWMRB Winter Conference in State College on February 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>. I was able to connect with my Penn State colleges and discuss upcoming research and opportunities for business management programming across the state. Additionally, I met many growers from across the state and listened to the educational presentations about the industry and the research being done currently.

#### ***B.E.V. New York***

I was asked to be the Keynote business speaker at the 2025 B.E.V. Conference, held in Canandaigua, NY on March 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>. My two presentations were focused on when it is time to remove a vineyard from production and using enterprise budgets to calculate operating cost. Hans Walter-Peterson and I co-presented on enterprise budgets. I spoke with many growers afterwards and provided them with resources on budgets and decision tools. I made many great connections with Cornell colleagues and NY state growers alike.

#### **Erie County Horticultural Society Banquet**

Megan Luke and I spoke to the Erie Hort Society at their annual meeting and banquet on March 19<sup>th</sup> in North East, PA. I shared some updates on 1-9 enforcement and reminded growers to make sure they are keeping proper records. The information was timely for many growers and immigration enforcement is increasing its presence and has potential to continue.

#### ***LERGP Winter Conference***

The LERGP conference was held March 20<sup>th</sup> at SUNY Fredonia. I spoke on cash flows and how to calculate potential and current farm cash flows. This topic was from our advisory board and addressed the potential cash flow issues following the spring frost in 2024. The conference was a great day of education for the industry, and I was able to have many in-depth conversations with growers about economic issues and questions. I received suggestions on future programming as well as willingness to participate in future research.

#### **Unmarketable Grape Survey Results**

At the request of grape growers in New York and Pennsylvania, I created a survey to capture data of grapes that did not get sold in 2025 and the value of said grapes. Unsold or unmarketed means that the grapes were grown to be sold but were not utilized in any way due to no buyers willing to purchase them. With the help of my colleagues across both Cornell and Penn State Extensions, we shared the survey across both states in December of 2025 to try and capture as much information as possible. According to the growers surveyed (all



Lake Erie Region (NY & PA)			
Variety	Sum of Tons	Average of Price	Sum of Value
Concord (Cash Market)	2991	\$ 336	\$ 980,125
Concord Cooperative	2249.3	\$ 369	\$ 866,962
Niagara	1068	\$ 375	\$ 384,853
Catawba	285	\$ 273	\$ 75,415
Elvira	85	\$ 303	\$ 26,625
Marechal Foch	78	\$ 600	\$ 46,800
Riesling	76	\$ 1,390	\$ 118,680
Traminette	58	\$ 854	\$ 53,530
Seyval Blanc	53	\$ 514	\$ 32,970
Frontenac	52	\$ 669	\$ 21,000
Cayuga White	33	\$ 625	\$ 21,300
Chambourcin	31	\$ 806	\$ 25,352
Sauvignon Blanc	20	\$ 600	\$ 12,000
Edelweiss	20	\$ 475	\$ 9,500
Fredonia	20	\$ 300	\$ 6,000

regions of NY & PA), **10,938 tons** of grapes with a value of **\$5,392,232** were not sold in 2025. The Lake Erie region reported **7,247 tons worth \$2,815,446 went unsold**. Please see a more detailed breakdown in my crop update article.

### Grants, USDA Programs, and Education

2025 had multiple grants that were available for growers.

These grants/programs included:

- Northeast Regional Food Business Center's Business Builder Grant
- Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program - Equipment-Only Grant
- FSA's Supplemental Disaster Relief Program (SDRP)
- New York State Grown & Certified ITRD Grant Program
- New York State Beginning Farmer Competitive Grant Program
- The Marketing Assistance for Specialty Crops (MASC) program
- PA Farm Vitality Planning Grant
- PAVines
- NRCS EQUIP

Our growers were made aware of such grants through bi-weekly Crop Updates articles, an available grants handout, and at in-person meetings.

### New York Farm Viability Institute Grant Reviewer

I served as a grant reviewer for both the New and Beginning Farmer Grant, and the Grown & Certified Grant, administered by NYFVI. This was a useful experience in seeing how grants are reviewed and will be helpful in advising growers on applications. I appreciate NYFVI for the opportunity.

### Farm Planning and Succession

Individual instruction and one-on-one meetings with growers discussing farm transition and succession

continued into the winter months. Any grower who is interested in having a conversation about planning for the future of their farms is encouraged to contact Andrew Holden to set up a meeting.

### **Wine and Grape Classifieds**

I continue to manage the classifieds for New York and Erie, PA. Listings are updated on a regular basis. The NY Grapes & Wine Classifieds is a website for grape growers, winery owners, and other industry professionals to post and view ads for industry specific items and jobs. The site is run like a classified as page in a paper, but at no cost to run an ad. Item often posted include Bulk Juice/Wine, Equipment, Grapes, Help Wanted, Services, Vines, and Vineyards. Both ads selling and ads looking for items are allowed.

The New York Grape & Wine Classifieds website can be found [Here](#).

Learn how to create an account and/or post an ad [Here](#).

### **Niagara County Winery Visits**

Jennifer and I visited two wineries in Niagara County on November 5<sup>th</sup> to see how the LERGP could better serve the industry in that county. We had great conversations with those owners and look forward to future collaboration.

### **State of the Industry Meeting**

The Lake Erie Regional Grape Program facilitated and participated in a grape industry meeting with various regional grape processors and the New York Wine and Grape Foundation. The meeting was held to see what the NYWGF could potentially do to assist the Lake Erie grape industry now and in the future. Executive Director, Sam Filler conducted the meeting. Processors shared the current industry struggles and concerns for the future. Promotion of concords and finding new markets was a main theme that was discussed. Labor demand, farm size, and chemical availability were also discussed by those in attendance.

**Coffee Pot Meetings** Coffee Pot meeting were held each Wednesday, from May 7<sup>th</sup> to July 23<sup>rd</sup>, across the grape belt. As a team we presented on timely, research-based information and offered pesticide credits. I specifically talked about grants, FSA Programs, crop insurance, profitability, and custom rates. We receive a lot of programmatic input from growers at this meeting and use them to stay up to date during the growing season.

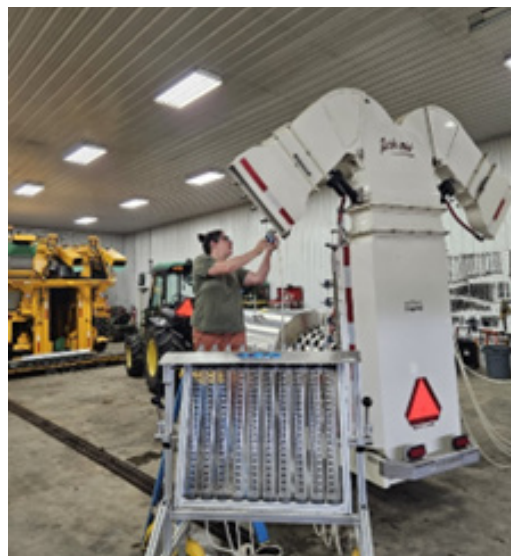
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## **Megan Luke- LERGP Penn State Extension Viticulture & Tree Fruit Educator**

### **Pesticide Sprayer Calibration**

Calibration services were offered for the second time beginning in April of 2025. Fourteen on-site calibrations were performed on grower equipment throughout the season, with follow-up visits in some cases where new nozzle arrays were needed. Services took place in Erie County, PA (4); Chautauqua County, NY (5); Niagara County, NY (2); and Yates County, NY (3). This service will open in March of 2026 to expand grower access in the pre-growing season.

In addition, three full calibration and spray coverage demonstrations were conducted in Niagara County, Yates County (at the request of the Gallo viticulture specialist team), and Erie County, NY (in collaboration with the Cornell Regional Vegetable Team).



*Calibration equipment connected to an air blast pesticide sprayer.*





*Megan Luke demonstrates specialized calibration equipment on an air blast sprayer in a vineyard and outside an equipment barn*



### **Field Day at the LERGREC**

The Lake Erie Regional Grape Program collaborated with Penn State's Lake Erie Region Grape Research and Extension Center in North East, PA, to bring an educational program and tour of the new greenhouse. Pennsylvania Dept. of Ag (PDA) and DEC credits were offered, including core credits. Presentations by LERGP Team members and the Penn State Pesticide Education team included updates on business management and research, entomology, worker protection standards, a primer on weather stations, a discussion of viticulture and wine production, and a seasonal disease pressure update for bloom time. This event reached 86 attendees, including Penn State's Director of Extension.

### **Community Outreach**

Megan Luke served as an advisor to the Board of the Erie County Horticulture Society and helped to organize the Annual Gravel Pit Park Chicken BBQ. This event (located in North East, PA) hosted the LERGP as speakers, as well as guest Leisl Stevenson from the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture and Joni Davis from the Penn State Pesticide Education team to bring timely updates on pesticide use enforcement and Worker Protection Standards. Attendance at this event was approximately 165 individuals.

Water quality talks for pesticide applicator credits were given at Militello Farms Grower Outreach Day (approximately 120 attendees) and at an Ohio State meeting with 70 attendees.

### **Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Timely Updates**

A primary focus for the past year has been following EPA updates regarding pesticide label changes and the re-registration process for many products used in grape production. Articles regarding the status of ziram, captan, and mancozeb have been published on the Penn State Extension website and in LERGP Crop Updates and Newsletters. In addition, reviews of the status of the EPA's new herbicide and insecticide strategies, as well as the implications of these new mitigation measures for growers, have been ongoing and have been the subject of review and discussion. This information is shared and corroborated with faculty and research staff from Cornell and Penn State.

This information was delivered at all Coffee Pot Meetings throughout the growing season.



### **Spotted Lanternfly**

The LERGP has become a significant presence at all regional and national meetings, as well as in research regarding the spotted lanternfly, due to the risks it poses to the Lake Erie region. On the Penn State side, regular communication with the local PDA task force was maintained, allowing for rapid response to potential risks at local sites. Following up on last year's mechanical harvest research, we successfully conducted pilot research on insecticide efficacy for SLF during the harvest season this year.

*Megan Luke, Jennifer Philips-Russo, Kim Knappenberger, and Penn State Extension Associate Director of Programs Mike Masiuk at a concord/Niagara/Catawba vineyard near Pittsburgh, PA*

## Kim Knappenberger- Viticulture and IPM Extension Support Specialist

### NEWA:

Provided extensive grower support through emails, phone calls, site visits, crop updates and newsletter, and solving 286 help desk tickets. Presented at the annual winter conference and conducted NEWA demonstrations at 10 coffee pot meetings and the Hort Society annual meeting. Organized, ordered, and coordinated deployment of four new weather stations—two in Long Island (Riverhead, Peconic) and two in the Hudson Valley (Cambridge; Westport handed off for installation). One additional station is pending installation in the Lake Erie Region once a host post is set.

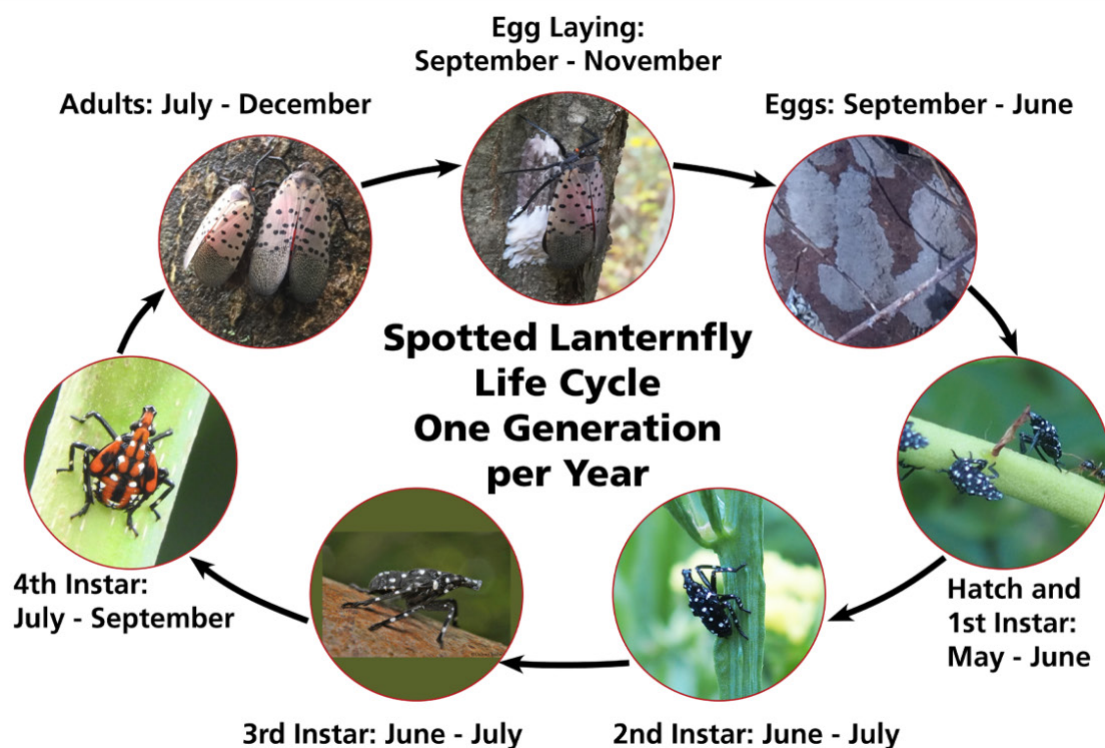


### Spotted Lanternfly (SLF) scouting:

Managed seasonal trap scouting with nine traps deployed June 2025 and removed in early November, requiring 20 scouting trips. Conducted additional scouting in September following detection of an adult SLF in Ripley. Tabled for LERGP at JCC Ag Day, attended a Hudson Valley SLF meeting, and participated in an SLF spray management trial in Hershey, PA, including pre- and post-spray counts.

### CAPS:

Coordinated with NYS Ag & Markets and regional cooperators through meetings and regular email updates to conduct the Grape Commodity again this year. Deployed CAPS traps in the Lake Erie Region on June 5–6, 2025, across two nurseries and ten vineyards; serviced traps seven times with scouting at each visit, and collected traps on September 9, 2025. Collaborated with Ag & Markets to organize an in-person grape virus training in Geneva.





# Meet the Team



Jennifer Phillips Russo-  
LERGP Viticulture Specialist,  
Team Lead



Andrew Holden-  
LERGP Penn State Extension Business  
Management Educator



Megan Luke-  
LERGP Penn State Extension  
Viticulture & Tree Fruit Educator



Kim Knappenberger- Viticulture and  
IPM Extension Support Specialist

## 2025 Year totals:

Publications - Lake Erie Vineyard Notes Newsletters (7) and LERGP Crop Updates (31)

Web resources - <http://lergp.cce.cornell.edu>, <http://lergp.com> and  
<https://www.efficientvineyard.com>

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