



# Happy Holidays!



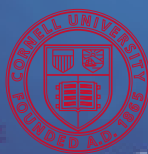
The Lake Erie Regional Grape Program



*Crop Update for December 18, 2014*

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# Business Management

Kevin Martin  
Penn State University, LERGP,  
Business Management Educator

## Farm Bureau and LERGP Meeting

If you did not get a chance to make the meeting at CLEREL on Tuesday, I provided an update on rising costs and highlighted the disparity of cost amongst growers. Positioning a vineyard business operation to survive a depressed market requires shifting of costs that can only be done when yields and prices are above average.

Overall Concord grape production costs will soon exceed \$2,000 per acre. As a grower matures in the industry and reduces debt, costs can drop by more than \$500 per acre. This maneuver is a strategy most growers adopt, but successfully achieving it requires time. A grower in a growth stage cannot eliminate debt but growers with a debt to average yield ratio of 100:1 are in a position to survive medium term price declines.

Another significant cost that pushes growers above \$2,000 per acre is unpaid or paid labor. Operational design of a farm can shift costs from paid labor to unpaid labor or to capital. At this point, investments in capital should be extremely limited. Mechanical pruners for growers above 100 acres likely make sense even in periods of decline. New three and four row sprayers provide a rate of return that is typically too low to justify the expense in this stage of the business cycle. Home brewed modified sprayers that reduce actual paid labor costs are still recommended.

To grow sustainably and minimize the impact that low prices have, growers should target a paid labor expense of \$400 per acre, not including harvest. Growers with mechanized pruning should target a paid labor expense of \$250 per acre. Mechanized pruning does increase the ability of the farm to weather economic and pricing issues. It simply is not realistic for hand pruned vineyards to target paid labor expenses below \$300 per acre unless the operation is small enough to complete pruning with unpaid labor.

On the Farm Bureau portion of the meeting, I would emphasize the importance of communicating the political needs of the industry with your local Farm Bureau. Using this asset to effectively modify or avoid potential regulatory and legislative costs is essential to the long-term sustainability of the industry. As a whole, I believe growers have more valid complaints than Farm Bureau is aware of. That line of communication offers the ability of legislatures to potentially make small changes that boost the sustainability of the industry.





# Cultural Practices

Luke Haggerty  
Viticulture Extension Associate  
Lake Erie Regional Grape Program

## Pruning, What's your Goal?



With the end of 2014 only a few weeks away most growers have already finished a portion of their pruning. It is clear to anyone who travels through the belt that every grower has a different pruning strategy. Over the past few weeks I've heard a common question, "how many buds should I leave?" My answer, "what's your goal?", and from there the conversations vary. Balance pruning every vine is a great approach, but that is not exactly how the current system works. Most crews are told a bud number (60, 90, or 120) and they go to work.

To figure the bud number there are many factors taken into account, such as vineyard/vine health or leaving extra buds in case we have a spring frost. Basically, you are deciding how

hard you want to push a site to hit your targeted tons/acre for next year. To sum up the conversations I've had, based on the gloomy economic forecast, there are two different approaches growers are taking. One strategy is to leave a high number of buds and push next year's crop to compensate for the low prices. The other plan is more long term and focuses on restoring vine health by reducing the number of buds left to bring up vine size. With two back-to-back large crops, a third heavy crop will push down vine size on marginal or poor sites. With the low price forecast, I recommend a plan that brings up vine size on marginal or poor sites. You could prune these sites hard, but there is always the threat of spring frost. The Mechanized approach would be to leave your normal number of buds and use a shoot thinner to adjust shoots after the threat of frost passes. In general, vineyards have decent wood this year leaving you with options.



## Stalking the Ever Stalking the Ever Elusive Pesticide Recertification Credit

It seems like it comes around every year about this time; the start of phone calls from growers looking for courses so they can get just a couple of pesticide recertification credits before their pesticide applicator license expires.

At first glance it would appear that both NY and PA growers have two options to get recertification credits, through attendance at meetings where credits are offered, or on-line through the Cornell University PMEP website.

Typically, the phone calls come when the grower needs the credits in about a month. So, I went to both the NYS DEC and PA PDA websites (links below) to see what meetings were available through the end of January.

NYS DEC course locator website at; <http://www.dec.ny.gov/nyspad/find?1&tab=COURSES>

PA PDA Pesticide Recertification Course Locator at;  
<https://www.paplants.state.pa.us/PesticideApplicator/MeetingSearch.aspx>

The results for both searches shows that at this time of year, getting category credits in fruit by attending meetings is not an option. I do suggest that you visit these sites and bookmark them for future use – just in case.

So, striking out on the on-site meetings, on-line appears to be the best way to go for both NY and PA growers to get the credits they need at this time of year. The Cornell University Pesticide Management Education Program (PMEP) Distance Learning Center <http://pmeppcourses.cce.cornell.edu/> provides the opportunity for growers from New York, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Connecticut and West Virginia the opportunity to receive pesticide recertification credits for their state by completing an on-line course.

To see what courses are offered, look in the left hand column of the home page for Core Courses and Category Courses under the Catalog heading. After clicking on one of those links, a page with the course titles, the number of credits available for successful completion of the course, the cost for the course (typically \$25 per credit) and a link to use for more information. If you locate a course that you think would fit your needs, click on the More Info link and you will be taken to a page that provides an overview of the course, facts about the course module, how many credits and in which NYS categories they are available, how to determine if credits are available in other states for this module and any special computer requirements to complete the module.

There are a number of both CORE and category courses on this site that would be applicable to grape growers. I have created three courses “Introduction to NEWA and its use in IPM Strategies”, “Scouting Basics – The How’s and Whys” and “Introduction to Developing IPM Strategies, Components, and Resources”. Andrew Landers has also developed a number of sprayer courses that should be of interest to many grape growers including “Nozzle Selection and Calibration for Vineyard Sprayers”.



This is an excellent way to get the credits you need from the comfort of your own home and with a minimal investment. One caution before taking one of these on-line courses, you have to spend a minimum of one hour logged on and working on this course module or else you will not get the recertification credit. There is a pre-test, the module and then a post test that must be passed to successfully complete the course.

Hopefully this information will help out those who are in need of a credit or two before our LERGP Growers' Conference on March 16, 2015.

And, if this rushing around looking for credits seems like a hassle, come join us during any of our meeting during the year. In 2014, the Lake Erie Regional Grape Program Extension team held 26 meetings where 7 core credits and 25.5 category credits were available for NY Pesticide Applicators. For those with Pennsylvania pesticide applicators licenses it doubled to 14 core credits and 51 category credits (PA gives 2 credits per hour of training where NY gives 1 credit. Our meeting schedule typically starts with our Growers' Conference in March, Core credit meetings in Portland, NY and North East and Girard, PA in April and then our Coffee Pot meetings start up in May followed by LERGP twilight meetings sponsored by the Erie County Hort Society BBQ and Thompson Ag in August. Keep watching the Crop Updates and newsletters for specific dates, times and meeting locations for educational events with pesticide recertification credits near you.





## Viticulture, enology and marketing for cold-hardy grapes

### Webinar Schedule

Webinars are generally presented on the second Tuesday (subject to change) of each month from November through April, once at noon and again at 7 PM Eastern (11 AM and 6 PM Central).

#### November 20, 2014

*"Trellis Design and Construction and Pruning Fundamentals Prior to Your First Cut"*  
Steve Lerch, Cornell University and Mike White, Iowa State University

#### December 16, 2014

*"Stuck on you – Sulfur Spray Residues in the Vineyard and Winery"*  
Chris Gerling and Gavin Sacks, Cornell University

#### January 13, 2015

*"Emerging Cold Hardy Wine Grape Cultivars"*  
Tom Plocher, Northern Winework, Inc. and Mark Hart, Mt. Ashwabay Vineyard & Orchard

#### February 10, 2015

*"Comparing and Contrasting Vertical Shoot Positioning and Top Wire Cordon Training Systems"*  
Tim Martinson, Cornell University; Bob Utter, Flying Otter Vineyard and Winery; and John Thull, University of Minnesota

#### March 10, 2015

*"Tannin Addition and Retention in Red Hybrid Wines"*  
Anna Katharine Mansfield, Cornell University

#### April 14, 2015

*"Branding Studies for Cold Climate Wines"*  
Bill Gartner, University of Minnesota

**Information about upcoming webinars is sent via the Northern Grapes Project Webinar Series email listserve. If you are not a member, and would like to join, go to the [Contact Us](#) page to send an email.**



The Northern Grapes Project is funded by the USDA's Specialty Crops Research Initiative Program of the National Institute for Food and Agriculture, Project #2011-51181-30850

Follow this link to the web-site for information on this webinar series:  
[http://northerngrapesproject.org/?page\\_id=252](http://northerngrapesproject.org/?page_id=252)

## LERGP Website Links of Interest:

Table for: Insecticides for use in NY and PA:

<http://lergp.cce.cornell.edu/submission.php?id=69&crumb=ipm|ipm>

Crop Estimation and Thinning Table:

[http://nygpadmin.cce.cornell.edu/pdf/submission/pdf65\\_pdf.pdf](http://nygpadmin.cce.cornell.edu/pdf/submission/pdf65_pdf.pdf)

Appellation Cornell Newsletter Index:

<http://grapesandwine.cals.cornell.edu/cals/grapesandwine/appellation-cornell/>

Veraison to Harvest newsletters:

<http://grapesandwine.cals.cornell.edu/cals/grapesandwine/veraison-to-harvest/index.cfm>

Go to <http://lergp.cce.cornell.edu/> for a detailed calendar of events, registration, membership, and to view past and current Crop Updates and Newsletters.





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This publication may contain pesticide recommendations. Changes in pesticide regulations occur constantly, and human errors are still possible. Some materials mentioned may not be registered in all states, may no longer be available, and some uses may no longer be legal. Questions concerning the legality and/or registration status for pesticide use should be directed to the appropriate extension agent or state regulatory agency. Read the label before applying any pesticide. Cornell and Penn State Cooperative Extensions, and their employees, assume no liability for the effectiveness or results of any chemicals for pesticide usage. No endorsements of products are made or implied.

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Contact the Lake Erie Regional Grape Program if you have any special needs such as visual, hearing or mobility impairments.

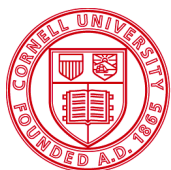
CCE does not endorse or recommend any specific product or service.

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