



*LERGP Crop Update
October 23, 2025*

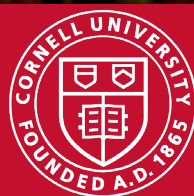
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Kim Knappenberger*

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Lake Erie Regional Grape Program



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The Lake Erie Regional Grape Program is a Cornell Cooperative Extension partnership between Cornell University and the Cornell Cooperative Extensions in Chautauqua, Erie and Niagara county NY and in Erie County PA.

Business Management

Andrew Holden, Business Management Educator, Penn State University, LERGP

Immigration and Labor Update

In the past few weeks, I have been receiving reports that more farm workers have been getting detained by DHS in our region.

I again want to share the Cornell Agricultural Workforce Development resources for immigrant farm workers. Please share these resources with those who could benefit from them.

- While these resources were originally prepared for New York City, almost all of the content is relevant for people living and working in farms across the state.
- [New York State Immigrant Resource Guide](#)
- [Know Your Rights with ICE](#)
- [Know Your Rights with ICE \(Spanish\)](#)
- [Know Your Rights: Federal Immigration Enforcement \(ICE\) – MOIA](#)

It is critically important for immigrants with families or other dependents in the U.S. to have a plan in case of emergency, including immigration enforcement. The [Immigrant Legal Resource Center](#) provides an excellent collection of resources called the [Step-by-Step Family Preparedness Plan](#). Find it here in Spanish: [Plan de Preparación Familiar](#).

I also want to share this recent article from FarDoc on [The Washington Post's Lauren Kaori Gurley reported](#) that **“the Trump administration said that its immigration crackdown is hurting farmers and risking higher food prices for Americans by cutting off agriculture’s labor supply.”**

“The Labor Department warned in an obscure document filed with the Federal Register last week that ‘the near total cessation of the inflow of illegal aliens’ is threatening ‘the stability of domestic food production and prices for U.S. consumers,’” Gurley reported. “‘Unless the Department acts immediately to provide a source of stable and lawful labor, this threat will grow’ with increased funding for immigration enforcement from the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, the Labor Department said in the Federal Register, which is the place where all proposed rules are recorded for the public to view and comment.”

“Also, contradicting comments made by Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins that the U.S. farm workforce will become ‘100 percent American’ as an effect of mass deportations, the Labor Department noted that Americans are not willing to step into farm work and lack the skills to fill agricultural jobs that undocumented immigrants are abandoning,” Gurley reported. “‘The Department concludes that qualified and eligible U.S. workers will not make themselves available in sufficient numbers,’ the agency said.”

“The Labor Department made this case in paperwork documenting a new rule that took effect Oct. 2 that effectively lowers pay for seasonal migrants working in agriculture under the H-2A visa program,” Gurley reported. “The move is aimed at giving farmers easier and legal access to immigrant workers ‘to avoid imminent widespread disruption across the U.S. agricultural sector,’ the agency said.”

New H-2A Rule Could Save Employers Billions

[Progressive Farmer's Chris Clayton reported](#) that **“the wage changes in the interim final rule published in the Federal Register will save H-2A employers \$2.46 billion per year. The rule affected roughly 22,000 farms that hire H-2A workers and approximately 371,000 or so immigrant workers, based on 2024 figures of H-2A employment.”**

“While the federal government has shutdown, the Department of Labor was still able to publish the new interim final rule in the Federal Register. The rule lowers the Adverse Effect Wage Rate (AEWR) methodology for H-2A workers,” Clayton reported. **“Under the changes, H-2A wages will drop between \$1.12 to \$3.18 an hour depending on the state.** At least part of that downward adjustment in hourly wages is due to the Labor Department calculating housing costs for H-2A workers, which employers are not required to pay for domestic workers.”

“The lower wages will lead farmers to hire more H-2A workers. The Department of Labor estimates farmers will hire approximately 119,000 additional H-2A workers as a result,” Clayton reported. “The rule comes after Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins announced USDA would no longer produce the Farm Labor Survey, which farm groups had argued unfairly drove increases in wages. Instead, the Labor Department will rely on its Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS) survey to generate annual analysis on H-2A wages going forward.”

What Immigration Experts Are Saying

[Newsweek's Dan Gooding reported that Stuart Anderson, executive director of the National Foundation for American Policy said](#) that “while liberalizing some H-2A rules can help, farmers really want protections for workers who may not be authorized to work and industries, such as dairy, which can't use H-2A visas, need even bigger fixes due to administration policies that have reduced the supply of available workers.”

Rebecca Shi, chief executive officer at the American Business Immigration Coalition, said “food security IS national security. Many of the farmers and agriculture industry leaders American Business Immigration Coalition (ABIC) works with have been saying this for months, as we call for urgent legal work permits for our essential workers, including on farms and in food processing facilities. Now, the Department of Labor itself is calling out the immediate dangers to our food supply from mass immigration enforcement, as well as the risk of food prices increasing. If the U.S. doesn't have a stable workforce, we risk our food security AND our national security,” Gooding reported.

Gooding reported that Mark Krikorian, director of the Center for Immigration Studies said “I think the administration has been doing good work on immigration, but in this instance what they're doing is reducing the incentive for farmers to move away from relying on cheap immigrant labor.”

What I'm Reading/Webinars:

- [Could regulatory reforms make the wine grape market fairer for growers?](#) – Farm Progress
- [Factors Impacting Long-Run Planning](#) – Farm Doc
- [‘Tens of thousands’ of wine grape acres abandoned in California](#) – Farm Doc
- **Webinar: [AgWorks: Farm Taxes—Basic Filing Requirements](#)**
 - Tuesday, December 9, 2025, 12:00 PM EST
- **Webinar: [Labor Roadshow IX: Addressing Key Workforce Challenges in Agriculture](#)**
 - December 1, 12:00–2:00 PM

- December 22, 12:00–2:00 PM
- **In-Person Events:**
 - December 9 – Elks Lodge, Greenwich, NY
 - December 10 – Hilton Garden Inn, Watertown, NY
 - December 17 – Cornell AgriTech, Geneva, NY
 - December 18 – Genesee Community College, Batavia, NY
- Cost: \$75 per participant
 - Payment accepted via cash, check, or online in advance.
- Registration Link: <https://forms.gle/HheZLetKwyi8J3t6A>
 - Early registration is strongly encouraged, as space may be limited.

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Viticulture

Jennifer Russo, Viticulture Extension Specialist, LERGP

I would like to report on the Lake Erie Grape Growing Region, but I have not seen much of it the past three weeks. The Lake Erie Regional Grape Program team has been extremely busy this harvest with Spotted Lanternfly Spray Trials, Spotted Lanternfly surveys with New York State Department of Ag and Markets' inspectors, and just this week we found ourselves driving to the Long Island and Hudson Valley grape growing regions to install Cornell NEWA weather stations through a New York Wine and Grape Foundation grant. Grape growers in Lake Erie, Finger Lakes, Hudson Valley, and Long Island face the risk each season of their vineyards being attacked by insects and diseases whose severity is dependent on the current season's weather conditions. This results in growers needing to modify their vineyard IPM strategy on a yearly, monthly and, sometimes, daily basis. Research-based IPM practices have been developed and modeled for grape pests on the Network for Environment and Weather Applications (NEWA) website. One of the objectives of the grant this year was to increase effective areas with the installation of Kestrel (Rainwise)/Onset weather instruments purchased from this grant to expand and upgrade the NEWA network in our Lake Erie, Finger Lakes, Hudson Valley, and Long Island regions. We installed two new stations in Long Island and two in the Hudson Valley grape growing regions.



I reached out to processors to get their report of the harvest season thus far. The following are their contributions. One reported that all went great here and that they are just busy trying to wrap things up. They will start Catawba on Monday and should be done with that on Thursday. They are seeing great quality but lower quantity than estimated but also mentioned that it was to be expected with the drought. They noticed low juice yields which did lead to pressing issues but were able to figure it out. Color has been great. They reported that they didn't see the issues other processors reported with color drop off.

Another processor reported that Brix was good, yield was 15% lower than crop estimated, color off, and over-all quality was average. The year has been beautiful to pick in but it is evident that there is no water. He added that some processors were complaining about fruit being dry, but they haven't seen that. However, he was concerned with the level of leaf hoppers this year that affected the canopy's ability to support the fruit with insect feeding damaged leaves. This processor was also a little concerned on how the vines are going to be prepared for winter with the lack of water.

The final processor that I reached out to mentioned that the fruit was very good quality, high brix and low defects so it is clean. They are



seeing the effects of the drought on yields coming in lower than estimated at 30 days post bloom. He hadn't heard much in regard to acid, color and other attributes so I can't comment too much there but I believe the growing season did have some effect on them. The processor added that something to think about after this harvest is that we will need to do a deeper dive and analysis of the drought and its effects in crop size. We had many growers fruit thin their vines season based on the lack of fruit last season due to the frost and anticipated larger yields on rested vines. He is concerned that people will never crop thin again based on their experience this year, even though the lack of water played a major role.



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PA Update

Megan Luke, Penn State Extension Viticulture and Tree Fruit Educator

As we wrap up harvest, I would like to take a moment to discuss late-season issues impacting grape ripening that have been reported to the team this fall. Early defoliation of grapevines (pre-harvest) can affect grape berry ripening and ultimately brix. It can also impact the cold hardiness of the vines: weakened vines can be more susceptible to winter injury. It can be challenging to identify the cause of early defoliation once all the leaves have fallen, so it is essential to scout as soon as you notice issues such as curling, discoloration, and early leaf drop in your vineyard.

If you identify localized issues in the vineyard, be sure to flag and/or map those areas as high priority for scouting to reduce issues early in the year, rather than having to make late-season management decisions. Prevention and prophylactic treatment are often the most effective measures for preventing defoliation in the vineyard.

Common causes of pre-harvest vineyard defoliation:

- 1) **Nutrient deficiency-** Vines that have been stressed throughout the growing season for key nutrients are more likely to drop leaves early. This is particularly likely when there are extreme temperature fluctuations in the fall, or in cases of prolonged dry periods, such as the drought we experienced in many areas this fall. Many nutrients are only available to the plant if moisture is present in the soil, so if the vine was already deficient, the dry conditions will further exacerbate the situation.

What to do- Test your soil fertility and confirm nutrient availability with petiole testing during bloom next season. Testing your soil early in the year or in the previous fall, prior to applying any fertilizer, can save time and money by providing information about plant-available nutrients for the coming growing season. Sampling early also means that you have more time to apply amendments, and for them to take effect. Best practice is to sample at the same time of year each time, making it easier to analyze trends and assess the efficacy of your management strategies over time. It is also important to compare your soil test results with your plant tissue samples; this allows you to confirm that the nutrients in the soil are being taken up by the grapevines. The organic matter content, percentage of clay in the soil, and pH can affect this relationship, and additional amendments may be necessary for optimal plant uptake. Add fertilizer according to test results.

- 2) **Disease pressure-** Diseases such as powdery mildew can cause foliage stress in the late season if unmanaged. While the disease should not impact berries at this time of year, heavy pressure can cause vines to defoliate, which can impact ripening.

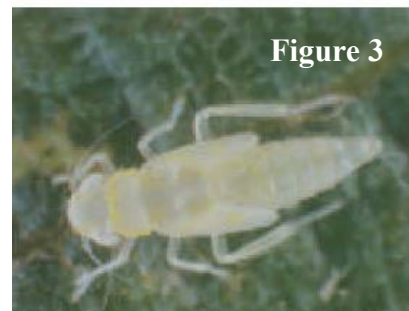
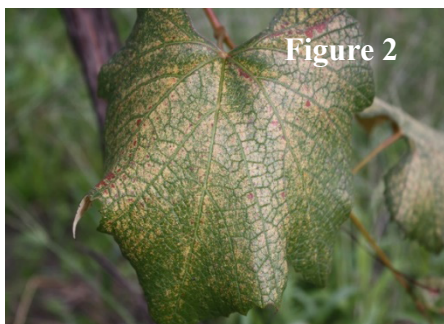
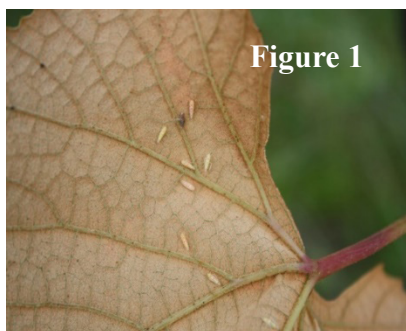
What to do- Scout your vineyards for powdery mildew in late August and early September if you see signs of foliage stress. Apply fungicides as needed, being mindful of the PHI and potential impacts on fermentation if the affected vines are destined for winery use. Remember- leaves do not recover from severe damage. Once they have a dead or discolored area, they are likely to fall, even if the disease is eradicated, so make management decisions before a large % of the leaf surface area, or total leaves, are

impacted.

- 3) Insect damage-** Grape leaf hopper was reported as a severe pest at harvest last year, and in some locations this year, in PA vineyards, especially on the escarpment. (Figure 1). High levels of grape leaf hopper can reduce the vine's ability to ripen fruit due to feeding damage, and several growers with high per-acre tonnage in concord saw lower Brix than anticipated where grape leaf hopper infestations were heavy.

The final round of scouting is typically performed in late August. If you see stippling (white dots on leaves caused by leafhopper feeding) throughout the vineyard block, you should be counting nymphs to determine if an insecticide treatment is recommended (Figure 2). Sampling for leafhoppers at this point in the season is focused on the abundance or quantity of second-generation nymphs. Check four different areas in the vineyard (two exterior and two interior). At each location, look at five lower (basal) leaves (leaves #3-#7 when counting from the base of the shoot) per shoot on five different shoot locations and check for leaf feeding. If no damage or minimal injury is observed, proceed to the next sampling site. If moderate to heavy leaf stippling is observed, then begin counting nymphs (Figure 3) on the undersides of leaves. **If you observe heavy damage and a threshold of ten nymphs/leaf is reached, then an insecticide application is recommended.**

Due to the pest's movement throughout the landscape and its high level of mobility, contact insecticides like zeta-cypermethrin (Mustang Maxx®, Cortez) have limited effectiveness, as they only remain effective against the pest for one to two days. A longer-lasting insecticide or combined chemistry product (Leverage 360, etc.) may be a better choice if the 3-day PHI is acceptable and you have not used all your potential applications earlier in the season. Also, keep in mind that if the pH of your water (ground, surface, or municipal) has shifted due to the drought, your insecticide may be impacted. High pH is common in late season as minerals become more concentrated in the water table due to lower water levels.



Grape leaf hopper adults, leaf damage, and nymphs Photos courtesy of Penn State Extension, Andy Muza

- 4) Crop load-** While defoliation is an obvious issue that can certainly lead to reduced Brix and berry quality, overcropping vines can lead to similar issues. The two issues, when combined, can create a perfect storm, preventing the vine from supplying the necessary resources to the berries. An overcropped vine may drop leaves to mature the berries, and it can be hard to distinguish one issue from the other in the vineyard.

What to do- Perform your regular crop estimation, and engage in thinning practices to ensure that your vines do not struggle to ripen the berries in the late season. Vines that are dropping leaves

and are overcropped will be far more likely to succumb to winter injury and reduced crops in the following year.

Spotted Lanternfly

There have been reports of adult SLF in Erie County, PA, and Chautauqua County, NY. The respective state agencies have not yet found an established a population of SLF this year in either county; all adult insects have been individual “hitchhikers” from infested areas. Erie County is not currently expected to come under quarantine. Grid searches are underway in both states to confirm that established populations are not present or likely to be present next year. The LERGP team continues to participate in research aimed at improving management strategies for grape growers who mechanically harvest their grapes.

The PDA, DEC, Ag and Markets, Cornell, and Penn State Extension are strongly encouraging anyone to report any sightings. In the event of the discovery of an aggregation or established population in Erie County, the PDA will provide mitigation and eradication of the pest on your property to prevent it from spreading.

If you see an adult SLF, catch and crush it, take a photo, report it, and contact a member of the LERGP team immediately!



- **Pennsylvania Reporting:** 1-888-4BAD-FLY (1-888-422-3359) or <https://services.agriculture.pa.gov/SLFReport/>

- **New York Reporting:** <https://survey123.arcgis.com/share/a08d60f6522043f5bd04229e00acdd63>

Additionally, if you or someone you know is traveling into a quarantine zone, be sure to check vehicles for adult SLF hitchhikers upon arrival in Erie, PA, or Chautauqua County, NY. Going through a car wash prior to entering the NON-quarantine area will reduce the likelihood of SLF on vehicles.

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Updates and Information

Kimberly Knappenberger, Viticulture & IPM Extension Support Specialist, LERGP

NEWA Location	Precip. this week	Precip this growing season	Precip this year
Burt (Lakeside Tabor)	0.94	8.53	19.53
Newfane (Chateau Niagara)	1.30	8.11	17.28
Ransomville	1.27	8.41	19.67
Lockport	2.07	11.77	22.29
Brant	4.12	17.31	31.5
Versailles	3.22	12.79	28.05
Hanover	3.41	14.32	26.43
Silver Creek (Route 5)	4.34	16.24	29.65
Silver Creek (Double A)	3.98	13.28	26.87
Dunkirk (Route 5)	4.26	12.23	22.76
Sheridan	4.24	15.18	29.33
Sheridan (Liberty)	3.75	14.98	26.29
Forestville	3.32	9.02	19.28
East Fredonia	2.79	14.52	24.92
Brocton Escarpment	2.89	15.71	29.21
Portland/Portland LERGP West	2.2/3.10	11.08/12.17	31.9/26.79
East Westfield	2.41	12.98	23.89
Westfield	2.90	15.07	26.73
Westfield (South)	4.92	21.54	40.36
East Ripley	2.85	13.38	26.45
Ripley	2.96	15.72	28.53
Ripley Escarpment	3.02	15.55	29.08
Ripley State Line	3.11	13.19	17.12
North East State Line	3.45	16.14	31.19
North East Escarpment	3.42	18.44	30.46
North East Sidehill	3.64	16.93	30.77
North East Lab	3.28	15.06	28.92
Harborcreek	3.67	15.17	27.53
Harborcreek Escarpment	3.35	15.22	27.82
Lake City	2.67	16.73	31.57
Lake City (Mason Farms)	1.67	13.51	26.45

Table 1. Precipitation as reported by NEWA at newa.cornell.edu. Data is subject to functionality of the weather stations at each site. Precip for this week includes 10/19/25-10/23/25 at 9:00 AM. Growing season includes 6/1/25-10/23/25. Year includes 1/1/25-10/23/25.

NEWA

As you can see from the precipitation chart we are finally catching up on some much needed precipitation across the region. With the recent rains it was obvious that some of the rain buckets needed attention and were cleaned out. Dunkirk (Route 5) and the Portland (LERGP West) were the most recent. If you notice that some of the precipitation data does not seem right – too low or too high, please reach out to Kim at ksk76@cornell.edu. The East Westfield station is getting some interference lately and is reporting high precipitation amounts. This still needs to be looked into, but will hopefully be resolved in the near future. If you use this station and check the rainfall just keep in mind that every instance of interference adds about 2.5" and it looks like there have been about 10 instances over the past year as of the writing of this article. I have accounted for that in the totals above.



The Willaimson (Young Sommer) weather station has not been reporting for a while and that was recently taken down and brought back to the lab for troubleshooting. It was finally repaired yesterday and a new anemometer installed because it had not been collecting wind direction. We anticipate setting the station back up next week. Until then you can see the estimated data on NEWA.



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SEASON AFTER SEASON

Upcoming Events and Mark Your Calendar Days

Wednesday, December 3, 2025- “What’s Your Spray Program?” ZOOM Meeting
More information to follow in very near future.

Thursday, March 19, 2026- Winter Grape Grower Conference

Links of Interest:

Cornell Cooperative Extension:

<https://cals.cornell.edu/cornell-cooperative-extension>

Efficient Vineyard:

<https://www.efficientvineyard.com/>

LERGP:

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

<https://lergp.com/>

NYSIPM:

<https://cals.cornell.edu/new-york-state-integrated-pest-management>

Veraison to Harvest:

<https://cals.cornell.edu/viticulture-enology/research-extension/veraison-harvest>

Spotted Lanternfly Pocket Guide:

<https://lergp.com/spotted-lanternfly>