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No. 259

Keeping New Jersey's Farms Viable by Providing an Additional Revenue Stream for Farmers



Tom Castronovo/Photo

Beef cattle grazing around the vertical bifacial solar panels at the Cook Campus Animal Farm in New Brunswick, Middlesex County, NJ.

Agrivoltaics is an emerging technology that involves the practice of using the same land simultaneously for both agriculture and solar energy production. Farming practices

suitable to such structures include growing staple crops, such as corn and soybean, vegetables and hay, and raising livestock.

Federal, state and university

officials are inaugurating a research and demonstration project at Rutgers University-New Brunswick with the purpose of advancing a technology that could produce renewable

energy while making farms more sustainable.

Agrivoltaics can increase the profitability of the land, while maintaining its (Cont. on Page 18)



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Agricultural Research Service Develops Long-Term Roadmap for PFAS in U.S. Agriculture

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)'s Agricultural Research Service (ARS) announced several key outcomes from a workshop to develop a research roadmap that would lead to short and long-term science-based solutions to meet the emerging challenges posed by the discovery of Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in agricultural soils and waters. PFAS have become increasingly found in the environment, posing significant challenges for producers, and farming communities, highlighting the need for agricultural researchers to develop innovative and practical solutions.

ARS, its Center of Excellence for Environmental Monitoring and Mitigation, and the University of Maine, collaborated recently during a three-day workshop to bring together more than 150 interagency researchers, state partners, university partners and other subject matter experts to engage in discussion and identify key research and innovative solutions that address the top challenges PFAS poses to agriculture, agroecosystems, food systems, and farming communities.

Many within the agricultural community are facing new challenges when PFAS chemicals are detected within their farms, resulting in this being a new challenge to farmers' continued capacity to sustain healthy soil and water on their farms, as well as continued capacity to provide safe and dependable food and fiber supplies to our nation and the world. The suggested long-term roadmap solutions for improving these circumstances include finding new means of detecting when PFAS contamination is a problem, better understanding of how it moves through the agricultural system, and innovating new ways to interrupt that movement or remove the chemicals before they can do harm.

Other topics of discussion at the workshop included a strategy for data standardization and integration, how to develop scientific solutions to management of municipal biosolids, and ways of effectively removing existing PFAS chemicals from the production environment.

"The meeting's focus on the gap between PFAS challenges and solutions has empowered and offered hope to ARS, its partners and sister agencies - to address and resolve agriculture-centric problems arising from the use of PFAS in our communities and everyday consumer products," said ARS Senior Management Advisor, Dr. David Knaebel. "The workshop's overarching impact will assist the U.S. agricultural research community and stakeholders to find creative and innovative ways to mitigate and remediate a rapidly

growing PFAS challenge in U.S. agriculture and food systems."

PFAS is a class of man-made chemicals that have been manufactured and used in a variety of industries around the globe, including in the United States, since the 1940s. The chemical has been placed in the category of "forever chemicals" because they bioaccumulate in animals and plants and do not breakdown naturally in the animals or plants or in the environment. These chemicals in agricultural landscapes can cause food producers numerous challenges that require innovative scientific solutions from agriculture research, research and developments, and strategic partnerships.

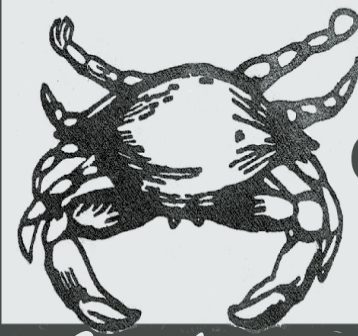
"Currently, our data shows that PFAS is an environmental hazard that does not come from agriculture," said Acting Assistant Administrator Marlen Eve. "But, producers need efficient, cost-effective ways to deal with the challenges when it is detected in our agricultural soils and waters."

Federal and stakeholder workshop attendees plan to move forward with next steps by crafting documents that will communicate solutions to the ag research community – especially in locations where PFAS has critical impacts on agriculture – and to engage in partnerships to realize those research solutions into impactful tools and practices for producers and the agricultural community.

"The University of Maine is pleased to expand our partnership with USDA ARS to find solutions to this national environmental crisis. With our collective expertise — supported by the ingenuity and resolve of our researchers and students — we can accelerate breakthroughs in basic and applied science that will result in new tools and strategies for protecting food systems in Maine and beyond," said Joan Ferrini-Mundy, Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation for the University of Maine System and President of the University of Maine. "Together, we will also expand each other's research capacities, grant funding efforts and infrastructure, all of which will be essential for mitigating the spread of PFAS and other toxic compounds like it. Thank you to U.S. Senator Susan Collins for securing funding for the Center and for her ongoing support of research informing practical solutions for rural farmers and communities."

ARS will continue to expand its PFAS research to address its impact on U.S. agriculture. Future research will ensure that the nation maintains a safe and abundant high quality food supply that is undergirded by sustainable natural resources.

Editor's Note: The Agricultural Research Service is the U.S. Department of Agriculture's chief scientific in-house research agency. Daily, ARS focuses on solutions to agricultural problems affecting America. Each dollar invested in U.S. agricultural research results in \$20 of economic impact.



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I eat every day. In fact, several times per day, and for that, I am thankful.

But there is one meal every year that is my absolute favorite. That meal is Thanksgiving dinner. The plump, juicy turkey cooked for several hours, the fantastic traditional and new side dishes. And, if there's room, freshly made desserts.

New Jersey has an integral tie to the history of Thanksgiving creation as a holiday in this nation. In 1789, New Jersey Congressman Elias Boudinot presented a resolution requesting that Congress persuade then-President Washington to declare a "day of public thanksgiving" to honor the creation of the United States Constitution.

Ironically, some in Congress felt the establishment of a holiday could call into question the prohibition against Congress "establishing" a religion in the First Amendment to the very Constitution Boudinot wanted to honor.

On October 3, 1789, George Washington proclaimed a National Day of Thanksgiving be held, but couched it as a recommendation to the states instead of a federal mandate.

Because New Jersey has such



NJ Dept. of Agriculture

By Joe Atchison III
Assistant Secretary of Agriculture

Giving Thanks in the Garden State

a diverse agricultural landscape, you can prepare just about your whole meal using fresh, prepared, and frozen ingredients from the Garden State. We have several turkey farms throughout the state, and they usually sell out quickly, so if you're interested in a Jersey-Raised bird, place your order early and pick it up a couple days ahead of the holiday.

Nationwide supply-chain issues, and the added increase in bird flu over the past two years, have resulted in millions of turkeys on affected farms having to be "de-populated," although impacts to New Jersey have been minimal. Removing that many birds from the supply chain has resulted in higher prices (simple laws of supply and demand). So, if you have the capacity to store a turkey frozen, getting one before they begin to become scarce is a

good idea.

While you should wait until one or two days before Thanksgiving to buy a "fresh" turkey (defined as one that has never been chilled below 26 degrees Fahrenheit), a frozen turkey can be purchased many weeks in advance, provided you have the room in your freezer and you remember to thaw it properly (generally one day of thawing per five pounds of bird). So, a 15-pound frozen turkey should thaw for three days before cooking.

I'm a bit of a traditionalist when it comes to my side dishes. I like stuffing, Jersey Fresh mashed potatoes, broccoli, cauliflower, or Brussels sprouts. I also like to freeze a whole bushel of Jersey Fresh sweet corn in the fall so that I can enjoy that summertime favorite all winter long.

My family likes to experiment with new sides that we can make using New Jersey's great fall crops, including cranberries, hard squashes like butternut, acorn or spaghetti, various root vegetables like turnips and beets, and my wife's favorite, sweet potatoes. There are so many flavorful options to choose from during the autumn harvest season.

If you want to explore some new choices, check out www.FindJerseyFresh.com, where you can discover "Root Vegetable Gratin" and "Butternut Squash Mac and Cheese" or dip and soup choices like "French Onion and Leek Dip," "Roasted Beet and Lentil Dip," "Apple Squash Cheddar Soup," or "Roasted Garlic Cauliflower Soup." And there are so many great dessert choices using New Jersey apples and cranberries. The possibilities

are endless.

And don't forget several other accompaniments to your meal like Jersey Seafood oysters if you like oyster dressing, a bottle of Jersey wine or distilled spirits, or some "Made With Jersey Fresh" beer. And don't forget honey to add a little sweetness to your dishes.

It's a credit to the diversity of agricultural products made in New Jersey that it really is possible to create an entire "Jersey Thanksgiving" dinner for your friends and family.

So, when you are giving thanks this coming holiday season, please remember to thank our farmers who produce such an array of great, nutritious agricultural products. Give thanks that you live in the Garden State. And give thanks for all the blessings in your life.

Happy Thanksgiving!

Editor's Note: Joe Atchison III is the New Jersey Assistant Secretary of Agriculture. Atchison is also the Director of the Division of Marketing and Development for the New Jersey Department of Agriculture. He can be reached at (609) 292-3976.

NJ's ultimate, last blooming, native flower is witch hazel, whose thin, strappy, yellow petals can be seen in scattered locations in NJ throughout the winter, with a last flower burst recorded at Willowood Arboretum on February 19th. However, my penultimate flower (second to last flower) is wreath or blue-stem goldenrod, *Solidago caesia*, which can still be found blooming away in mid-November.

The genus name comes from the Latin 'solidare' which means make whole (as in restore one's health) and the species name *caesia*, which is Latin for the light blue of the stems (which may also be green or purple). The common name wreath goldenrod comes from the fact that the long flexible chains of flowers make spectacular wreaths for decoration or play.

The aromatic goldenrod has had a long history of being used for medicinal purposes by Europeans, Native Americans, and settlers. They used it for arthritis and wound healing and everything in between. In Europe, *Solidago* has recently been used to treat urinary tract inflammation and to treat or prevent kidney stones, but the



The Native Plant Society of New Jersey

By Hubert Ling
Horticulture Chair

My Penultimate Garden Flower

safety and efficacy of our NJ goldenrods has not been well established, and I strongly discourage experimenting on yourself.

Wreath goldenrod is generally found in partial shade, in slightly acid, rich, well-drained soil. It is also commonly found in deep shade on the forest floor. However, it will also tolerate full sun, sandy, and calcium rich soil. In high light situations it will form bushy clusters 2-3 feet high with graceful stems arching away from the center of the cluster. In deep shade it will grow very slowly with single stems 6-18 inches from the ground and form a vine-like plant with the characteristic zig-zag blue stem.

Wreath goldenrod actually blooms best in September and October, but I needed a plant

for November, thus this article. When in full bloom, clusters of small, brilliant yellow flowers form gay ¾ inch puffs at every leaf axil all along long stems; this plant really lights up dim areas when almost everything has stopped blooming weeks ago. This tardy plant will then set seed in late November or early December; rather inconvenient for seed exchanges when we want to get the seeds in the ground before a hard frost. Each small fruit contains one seed, with a puffy pappus at the far exposed end which allows the seeds to be wind distributed. Mature fruits look like small dandelion heads.

Goldenrods host more than 100 species of moths and butterflies which makes them an essential part of wild NJ. The small flowers produce generous

amounts of nectar and pollen and are essential for migrating butterflies, such as buckeyes, painted ladies, and monarchs, especially late blooming species such as wreath goldenrod. Bees, beetles, flies, and wasps also make good use of goldenrods. At least 10 species of bees specialize in goldenrods and only emerge when goldenrods are in bloom. In addition, goldenrod seeds are a favorite fall and winter food of many grassland, migrating birds, and downy woodpeckers.

Goldenrods have wrongly been connected with hay fever. Although many types of goldenrod bloom conspicuously, commencing in September which is the start of hay fever season, goldenrods are insect pollinated and thus do not release pollen into the air. The real culprit, as

most gardeners know, is ragweed which produces inconspicuous yellow-green flowers which are wind pollinated and are the main cause of hay fever. High magnification electron microscope pictures of ragweed pollen show globular grains with really sinister looking spikes.

Wreath goldenrod is easy to grow, and is tolerant of drought, moderate deer and rabbit grazing, and black walnut roots. They don't have any serious disease or insect problems. Propagation is generally done by seeds. Sow them in fall and just scratch them in; the tiny seeds should remain near the surface. Have absolutely no fear that these goldenrods will take over your yard especially if you grow them in moderate or deep shade. I have had them for about 20 years, and they have just doubled in number (from 2 to 4). If you want a shade plant to light up November, consider wreath goldenrod.

Editor's Note: Hubert Ling is Past President of The Native Plant Society of NJ and Horticulture Chair. He can be reached at milhubling@verizon.net.



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New Jersey Landscape Contractors Association



I was going to start this article with the quote from Sally Fields when she won an Oscar in the 1980s and said, "You like me, you really like me". But according to the www, once again the Mandela Effect has happened, and she never said that. I swear "they" are trying to make us nuts!

Anyway, the point of my using that line is that although many may "like" Sally Fields, by honoring her with that award, they were saying that they not only like her but respect the energy and craft of her acting. Entering industry awards programs is very much like that and can be highly beneficial for both landscape contractors and their business. As many of you know, each year, the New Jersey Landscape Contractors Association (NJLCA) recognizes the best of the best during our Landscape Achievement Awards event.

This year's entry deadline of November 1st is being extended through November 7th. Below are just some of the reasons that our members may want to enter this year!

Increased Visibility and Recognition: Winning or even being a nominee for a Landscape Achievement Award can raise your profile or that of your company. It serves as a stamp of excellence that sets you apart from competitors. It shows your superior workmanship, quality craftsmanship, attention to detail and most importantly, your pride



The NJLCA Today

By Gail Woolcott
Executive Director

Recognizing Craftsmanship and the Art of Landscaping

in your work.

Credibility and Reputation: Awards can boost your credibility and solidify your reputation in the outdoor living industry. They show that your work is of the highest quality and recognized by peers and experts in the field, which can instill confidence in clients, partners, or customers.

Networking Opportunities: The Landscape Achievement Awards Dinner and Holiday Gala is attended by leaders and influencers in the green industry. Attending and participating in this event can offer valuable opportunities for networking and building professional relationships.

Employee Motivation and Retention: Recognition from an industry award can boost morale within your teams, giving employees a sense of accomplishment. It can also enhance team pride and help with staff retention by reinforcing a

culture of excellence. Your award-winning status will motivate your existing employees while helping you attract new ones.

Marketing and Public Relations: Awards provide excellent content for marketing and PR campaigns. They can be featured on websites, social media, press releases, and in promotional materials, offering an additional way to promote your business or brand.

Attracting Talent: Award-winning companies often become more attractive to top talent. Recognition from reputable awards like the NJLCA's can demonstrate business success, innovation, and leadership, attracting the right people and even funding.

Customer Trust and Loyalty: Awards give current and potential customers confidence in your products or services. A recognized accolade often strengthens trust and loyalty, as consumers tend

to gravitate towards businesses that are highly regarded in their industries. Some of our winners have even purchased additional award plaques or crystal awards to provide their clients with as a source of pride in their landscape.

Personal Satisfaction and Career Advancement: For individuals, winning awards can validate their hard work, providing personal satisfaction and enhancing career advancement opportunities. It highlights your achievements and sets you up as a leader in your field and let's face it, landscaping and hardscaping is challenging work, and you deserve to be recognized!

These reasons make entering awards programs a valuable strategy for both professional growth and business success. So, take some time to enter the NJLCA's Landscape Achievement Awards program today before the extended November 7th deadline! Anyone who feels that they do an

exceptional job at maintenance, or a fantastic installation, should take a chance and submit an entry. You never know what will happen!

Stay tuned and we'll be announcing our award winners in the January issue of *Gardener News*. Winners also get write ups in the NJLCA's magazine, *The New Jersey Landscape Contractor* magazine.

Editor's Note: Gail Woolcott is the Executive Director for the New Jersey Landscape Contractors Association. Gail received the New York State Turf & Landscape Association 2022 "Person of the Year" award on December 1, 2022. Gail also received a proclamation from the Westchester County, New York Board of Legislators proclaiming December 1, 2022 as "Gail Woolcott Day" in Westchester County. Gail has also been presented with a community service award from the Borough of Fairview, New Jersey for her assistance in leading the 9-11 Memorial Park project and the Legislative Champion of the Year award from the Federation of Employers and Workers of America. She can be reached at 201-703-3600 or by emailing gwoolcott@njlca.org.

Golfers Shine at New Jersey Landscape Contractors Association 24th Annual Golf Challenge

The NJLCA's 24th Annual Golf Challenge, held on Wednesday, October 10 was a spectacular success, bringing together 112 passionate golfers for a day of camaraderie, competition, and charity. Hosted at the stunning Crystal Springs Golf Resort's Wild Turkey Course in Sussex County, participants enjoyed perfect weather and a beautifully maintained course that set the stage for a truly memorable event.

The event helps to provide scholarships for the NJLCA Education Fund. This arm of the NJLCA gives scholarships to students in the green and outdoor living industry and immediate family of NJLCA Members. For more information on the NJLCA Scholarship program, visit www.njlca.org.

The course's layout and scenic views were matched only by the outstanding hospitality provided throughout the day. Golfers were treated to delicious food and refreshments, which kept spirits high and fueled everyone for a smooth and well-paced day of play.

This year's outing wouldn't have been possible without the generous support of our sponsors, whose contributions ensured an exceptional experience for all. We also extend our sincere thanks to each golfer who joined us on the greens; your participation made the day truly special.

We look forward to seeing everyone back next year for another fantastic event!

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Landscape and Snow Contractors Gather at Bobcat of North Jersey

Over 125 landscape and snow contractors gathered at Bobcat of North Jersey for their annual New Jersey Landscape Contractors Association's Snow Meeting on Thursday, October 17.

Attendees were treated to dinner and there was incredible networking during the dinner portion of the meeting.

The speakers included Louis Kilmer, Bureau

Chief, New Jersey Division of Fire Safety Administration. Chief Kilmer spoke about New Fire Code Section 305.6. This code is about landscape materials regarding mulch regulations.

Kevin Dulio, president of Native Fields Landscaping spoke about finding success in providing snow and ice services for HOA's.

The North Jersey Bobcat crew spoke about Bobcat and Ventrac snow equipment available at their location.

Billy Garland, left and Chris Ryan, right, co/owners of Bobcat of North Jersey; and Pat Barckett, left center, director of sales for Bobcat of North Jersey, chat with Bob Pedatella, owner of Kodiak Landscape Design in Haskell, NJ, and chairman of the board of the New Jersey Landscape Contractors Association, about the winter snow forecast.



Tom Castronovo/Photo

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New Jersey's "Next Gen" Farmer Program Seeks Input from the Agricultural Community

The New Jersey Farmland Preservation Program, administered by the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC), is developing its new "Next Generation Farmer Program," intended to support new and beginning farmers in addressing the barriers they face starting and establishing new, viable farming enterprises in New Jersey.

"Developing next-generation farmers is critical to the long-term viability of the agricultural industry in New Jersey," said Ed Wengryn, New Jersey Secretary of Agriculture. "We want input from the agricultural community to guide our focus as we identify how the SADC can help new farmers overcome obstacles, including access to land, equipment, gaining hands-on experience, and learning how to run a successful farm business."

The SADC's Next Generation

Farmer Program is not intended to duplicate existing programs but to coordinate, leverage partnerships, and fill in the gaps to create a more robust and supportive system for new and beginning farmers. The SADC is seeking input from anyone who thinks they have great ideas for how the SADC can support existing efforts and implement a collaborative, comprehensive system to identify, train, equip, and support the next generation of farmers in New Jersey. Your input is crucial in this collective effort.

"The traditional pathways of entering farming and accessing family-held land are no longer as common or viable in many cases," said Charles Roohr, SADC Deputy Executive Director. "Investing in new ways to develop the next generation of farmers and farm viability will immensely benefit New Jersey's agricultural industry for generations to come."

The program's "Next Gen"

Senior Coordinator, Brendon Pearsall, and Assistant Coordinator Jessica Brandeisky are currently conducting outreach through surveys, one-on-one meetings, and focus groups with a wide range of stakeholders, including next-generation farmers, established farmers, agricultural service providers, and other interested parties to help guide the direction of the program. Interested individuals and organizations are encouraged to provide input and share their experiences with the Next Gen staff through online surveys at www.nj.gov/agriculture/sadc/nextgen/surveys/. Brendon and Jessica can speak with you or your group directly and collect your ideas as an alternative to the online surveys.

Future efforts regarding land access, mentorship, training, resources, collaborations, or other topics will stem from the program's research and outreach findings. The program goal is to reach a diverse

range of potential participants, including those from farm families, newcomers from non-farming backgrounds, veterans, women, urban growers, and others in historically underserved communities.

"All members of the agricultural community are invited to provide their input and ideas, to help us create a strong foundation for the program," said Roohr.

By Spring 2025, the SADC will develop a detailed report utilizing information gathered from outreach and research with recommendations for addressing the challenges and enhancing support.

For more information on the Next Generation Farmer Program, to share comments, or to learn about outreach events, visit www.nj.gov/agriculture/sadc/nextgen/ or contact Brendon.pearsall@ag.nj.gov or Jessica.brandeisky@ag.nj.gov.

As Thanksgiving approaches, many of us are preparing to gather with loved ones, share a meal, and reflect on the blessings in our lives. It's a time of warmth and togetherness, where we pause to give thanks for what we have. This year, as you sit down to enjoy your Thanksgiving feast, I encourage you to take a moment to appreciate those who work tirelessly behind the scenes to make that meal possible, our farmers.

From the rains of spring, the heat of summer, and the bustle of fall, our farmers work through every season, ensuring we have the bounty that sustains us. Whether it's the crisp cranberries that brighten our plates, the golden corn, fresh vegetables, or savory turkeys, everything we enjoy at Thanksgiving starts with the dedication of farmers. They work day in and day out, often without recognition, to bring us the food that defines this holiday.

I remember a time when I received fresh cranberries from a friend who is a cranberry farmer here in South Jersey. I turned those cranberries into a delicious cranberry sauce, probably one of the best I've ever had. Knowing that those cranberries



USDA Farm Service Agency

By Bob Andrzejczak
State Executive Director

A Season of Thanks: Celebrating Our Farmers and the Bounty They Provide

were grown close to home made the experience even more special. The flavor was definitely unforgettable, but it was the appreciation for the work behind it that made it stand out. Knowing the care and effort that went into growing those cranberries made them taste that much better.

Working on a farm, I've gained firsthand knowledge of just how much effort goes into putting food on the table. I can remember harvesting corn by hand, running baskets back and forth to the truck, and the long hours of busheling. It was labor-intensive work, but at the end of the day, when you sit down and bite into that fresh, sweet corn, you can truly appreciate the journey it took from field to table.

Here in New Jersey, we're fortunate to have such a diverse range of agricultural products. Our state is home to cranberry bogs, livestock producers, cornfields, sweet potato farms, and even wineries that produce some of the finest wines, rivaling those from Napa Valley or Italy. And let's not forget the Brussels sprouts, squash, and other specialty crops that are essential to any Thanksgiving meal. New Jersey truly offers something for every plate, and we're lucky to have local farmers who provide the ingredients that make our feasts so special.

This Thanksgiving, I encourage everyone to visit their local farm markets. Many farms offer fall activities,

making it a fun and enjoyable experience for families. It's also the perfect opportunity to find fresh, local ingredients for your Thanksgiving meal. Buying local not only supports the farmers who work so hard to feed us but ensures that your meal is made with the highest quality ingredients.

In my role as the State Executive Director of the NJ FSA, I have the privilege of seeing the incredible work our farmers do day in and day out. While much of our work at the FSA involves technical support and programs, at the heart of it, we are here to ensure that our farmers have what they need to succeed. When our farmers succeed, we all succeed. Farmers help feed, fuel, and

clothe the world, and our work at FSA ensures they can continue to do so for generations to come.

As you gather with family and friends this Thanksgiving, I hope you'll take a moment to think about the farmers who made your meal possible. Let's show our appreciation for them, not just by enjoying the fruits of their labor, but by supporting them throughout the year. Whether that means visiting a local farm market, sharing a kind word with a farmer, or simply being mindful of where our food comes from, we can all play a role in lifting up the people who lift up our world.

From all of us at the Farm Service Agency, I wish you and your loved ones a happy, healthy, and bountiful Thanksgiving.

Editor's Note: Bob Andrzejczak is the State Executive Director of the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) in New Jersey. He can also be reached at 609-587-0104 during regular business hours. For more information, please visit <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/state-offices/New-Jersey/sed-biography/index>



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Director

November Tips to Prepare Your Gardens for the Coming Season

New Jersey Gardeners have more to do in November than they might expect. The effort that is invested during this month can reap significant benefits the following year. It's a time for garden clean-up and to register for education opportunities that will boost your knowledge and increase your success. In November, plants are either preparing to escape, evade, or endure. Whichever strategy the species has evolved to survive New Jersey's winter temperatures, the process must be completed before winter sets in. Here are tasks that need to be done for each type of plant to look forward to a healthy spring garden.

Plants that endure winter are the evergreens. These plants stay awake year-round even though their metabolisms do slow down at this time of year. There are three things to do to set up evergreens for success. First, remove dead, damaged, or diseased branches to ensure that the plant is healthy. Then apply a time-release fertilizer, such as a granule or stake, to provide slow access to nutrients, particularly potassium, which promotes root growth for winter stability. Finally, until the ground freezes, continue to provide water as evergreens are awake. If your evergreen begins dropping needles or leaves, it likely needs water, even in cold weather. A well-watered plant is actually less likely to be damaged by freezing temperatures than a dry plant.

An example of a plant that evades winter is a perennial that goes dormant. These plants often die back to just below the ground or drop all their leaves, going dormant until warm weather returns in spring. These plants also need a good clean-up to remove dead branches and old flower stalks. Clean

up around the plants so they don't sit with damp litter around their crowns. A good watering in November will carry perennials through the winter, as well. Finally, you can increase their success throughout winter by mulching around the plant to protect the roots from freezing.

Annuals represent the escapers. These plants die off when the cold arrives, leaving their seeds to start the next generation in the spring. Remove the dead plants while collecting seeds for spring spreading, if applicable. You can also cover the area with mulch to protect the seeds from freezing and from winter foraging animals. Different plants require different seed storage temperatures, therefore research each species to determine how best to store seeds until you are ready to sow them.

Now that your yard is ready for winter, you have time to grow your knowledge. The best way to deal with missing your gardens over the winter months is to start planning for next year's. Here are three different opportunities for learning, all offered through Rutgers Cooperative Extension (RCE).

Sometimes it is hard to fit ongoing education courses into our busy schedules. There is, however, a self-paced, statewide option called, "An Introduction to Gardening," a beginner-level course in the forthcoming Garden State Gardeners Education Series being launched by RCE in 2025. This self-directed course can be completed at your own pace and in your own home. A series of lectures with a practical spin ensure that beginner and experienced home horticulturists have a solid foundation of knowledge. Best practices are reviewed within a robust curriculum designed to help NJ gardeners achieve their

goals.

Another opportunity that begins in January is the chance to become a Rutgers Master Gardener. This volunteer program has a tremendous impact on the beauty, health, and sustainability of the Garden State. Volunteers contribute thousands of hours through community education programs, troubleshooting for garden issues, food production for food banks, and caring for demonstration gardens statewide. Free orientations designed to help determine if this program is a good fit are happening now, so visit <https://njaes.rutgers.edu/master-gardeners/> to sign up for a session. You must take part in an orientation session prior to applying for this program.

The Rutgers Home Gardener School is another vital resource. This one-day symposium for the home gardener takes place on March 15. There are over 40 sessions and topics for everyone. From vertical gardens to house plants and from perfect lawns to worm farms, you will find an array of interesting and practical talks that are sure to improve your skills. Lunch is included and there are vendors to check out as well. This event is usually attended by over 700 people, so register now at <https://cpe.rutgers.edu/home-gardeners-school> to make sure that you secure your place.

Information about these and other opportunities can be found on the RCE website: <https://njaes.rutgers.edu/extension/>. There are options for everyone! Rather than missing your garden or landscape throughout the winter, enjoy the winter planning, bonding with your houseplants, and learning about the amazing ways that plants enhance our lives in the Garden State!

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RUTGERS
New Jersey Agriculture
Experiment Station

Editor's Note: This article is written by Ruth Carll, State Leader, Consumer Horticulture and Master Gardener programs, Rutgers Cooperative Extension (RCE).

LAND-GRANT UNIVERSITY NEWS

FCHS Educator

Karen Ensle Inducted into 2024 NEAFCS Hall of Fame

Karen Ensle, Ed.D., educator and department head, Family and Community Health Sciences (FCHS), Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Union County, was inducted into the National Extension Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (NEAFCS) Hall of Fame in Tucson, Arizona, on September 19. She was recognized with the 2024 NEAFCS Hall of Fame Award—the most prestigious honor for Extension Family and Consumer Science professionals nationwide.

For nearly 40 years, Ensle has exemplified unparalleled dedication, expertise, and innovation in the field of Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS), making significant contributions that have positively impacted individuals, families, and communities. Her unwavering commitment to excellence, leadership, and service embodies the values and mission of NEAFCS, making her a deserving candidate for this prestigious recognition.

“It was a thrill to be nominated by my FCFS Rutgers colleagues for this award and to receive it at our national NEAFCS meeting in Tucson, Arizona. I have truly enjoyed being an FCFS Extension Educator in Union County, NJ, the last 37 years and have had the pleasure educating local residents on the topics of obesity prevention, healthful meals, physical activity and small steps to health and wealth,” said Ensle.

She noted that the “NEAFCS Strategic Plan aligns with Rutgers Cooperative Extension and supports the education of consumers of all ages to improve the quality of life for individuals and families across the U.S.”

Ensle’s accomplishments are evident through her continued commitment to NEAFCS as a member and leader as well as an FCFS professional, and drew praise from FCFS chair, Sara Elnakib, Ph.D.

“This award is a testament to her unwavering dedication to

NEAFCS and her tremendous contributions through educational resources and leadership that have touched lives in her community, across New Jersey, and throughout the country,” said Elnakib.

Ensle has won more than 20 awards from NEAFCS on the state, regional, and national levels. In addition, she’s served as a reviewer for the Journal of NEAFCS since 2006 and has published articles in the Journal.

She serves selflessly to ensure that both the organization and its members continue to thrive and succeed, which is evident in her service to the organization as a whole and the individual members. She has served as an external reviewer for promotion and tenure packets since 2005, ensuring that NEAFCS continues to attract and foster excellence in its members. Ensle currently serves on the NEAFCS endowment committee and two Public Affairs committees.

Ensle has served on at least 8 different NEAFCS committees dating back to 1991 while holding many affiliate offices. She recently agreed to serve as the affiliate representative for the 90th Anniversary committee.

“From having her local community make a proclamation for Living Well Month to conveying a historical note to new members about NEAFCS, Karen has exemplified what it means to be a dedicated member of her professional association and leader to new and experienced colleagues alike,” said NEAFCS in its announcement.

The NEAFCS Hall of Fame was established in 2019 to recognize an outstanding NEAFCS member/s who has contributed their time, skills, and abilities and/or financial resources to the NEAFCS. The recognition is given to NEAFCS members who have demonstrated their commitment, dedication and effective leadership and involvement in NEAFCS at the state, regional and/or national level.

Nutritional Sciences Department Unveils New Teaching Kitchen

The Department of Nutritional Sciences unveiled a new teaching kitchen on September 11 as part of a state-of-the-art culinary foods lab that is designed to support exciting new courses and serving more undergraduates.

A novel bread ribbon-cutting for the new teaching kitchen drew students and faculty to the second-floor culinary foods lab in Davison Hall on the Cook/Douglass campus, including SEBS Executive Dean Laura Lawson, professor and department chair Joshua Miller, Distinguished Professor Carol Byrd-Bredbenner and Melissa Keresztes, lecturer and Foods

Lab Coordinator.

The new kitchen is equipped with 12 workstations—two of which are ADA-compliant—and support 24 students, whereas the old space had only 10 workstations, none of which were ADA-compliant.

Spacious and visually appealing, the new teaching kitchen also promotes productivity and efficiency for students navigating heavy courseloads and busy schedules.

The kitchen supports the 3-credit course, Culinary Nutrition (11:709:201) paired with the 1-credit lab (11:709:202) in addition to Experimental Foods (11:709:489), a 4-credit course.

Plant Biology Professor Andrea Gallavotti Awarded \$1 Million NSF Grant for Maize Research

Andrea Gallavotti, professor in the Department of Plant Biology, has been awarded a grant worth \$1,088,678 from the National Science Foundation (NSF) for the project, “Collaborative Research: Plant Transform: Morphogenic-based mechanisms of maize regeneration.”

Gallavotti, who is attached to the Waksman Institute of Microbiology, is the principal investigator of the three-year project, for the period Jan 1, 2025, to December 31, 2027. His co-principal investigators on this NSF-funded project are David Jackson, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, Bastiaan Bargmann, Virginia Tech, and Margaret Young, Elizabeth City State University.

Gallavotti completed his graduate studies at the University of Milan in Italy, and trained as a postdoctoral researcher at the University of California San Diego and at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory in New York. He joined the Waksman Institute of Microbiology at Rutgers in 2012.

What is being studied, or what is the scope of the research?

In short, the mechanisms of plant regeneration, the unique ability of plants to generate new plants from different cell types.

What are the objectives of the research?

To study how certain proteins called morphogenic factors can reprogram differentiated cells into forming new maize plants.

Why does this research matter?

This research will provide insights into the molecular basis of tissue- and genotype-dependent regeneration, helping to identify and eventually bypass roadblocks to regeneration. This is important to improve our ability to rapidly modify plant genomes for generating crops resilient to environmental changes.

What are the practical implications and potential benefits going forward?

Our understanding of the molecular steps behind regeneration is essential for the transformation of different plant species. This is still a significant bottleneck in our ability to manipulate plant genomes for specific purposes. Overcoming this limitation is particularly relevant in monocotyledonous – one of the two main groups of flowering plants – crops such as maize, which alone provide most of the calories consumed by humans.

Registration Now Open for 2024 New York Produce Show and Conference

Registration is open for the New York Produce Show and Conference (NYPSC), which celebrates its 15th year as one of the world's most dynamic live networking events connecting produce buyers, wholesalers and global innovators with established and startup businesses.

Hosted by the Eastern Produce Council and Produce Business magazine on December 10-12, 2024 in Manhattan, the NYPSC will feature a full-day trade show at the Javits Center along with co-located networking functions, chef demos, industry tours and dozens of educational sessions at the Sheraton Times Square New York.

Fresh off one of the largest crowds in its history last year, New York Produce Show officials again are expecting thousands of attendees and hundreds of exhibitors to converge for the 2024 conference. Only limited booth availability remains at the Javits Center. Those who are interested in attending can register and book host hotels on the New York Produce Show website.

In addition to the bustling trade show, the 2024 NYPSC will feature critical discussions and panels around key topics such as: how to increase consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables; how to leverage new technology to improve bottom lines; and how to enhance quality and safety throughout the supply chain.

"We have an incredible array of fresh content and engaging speakers planned for the show," says Ken Whitacre, co-founder of Produce Business and chief executive at Phoenix Media Network. "In an industry filled with multigenerational families and great mentors, we are being very thoughtful about our theme of 'When Passion Becomes Action' and providing unmatched experiences for attendees, both in our sessions and on the Javits Center floor."

While some elements remain, the look of this year's show promises to be quite different – with new event contractors and managers, unique educational content and an improved live app.

The NYPSC organizers plan to release more information on the conference program in the coming weeks and in the run-up to the December 10-12 event.

Those interested in attending the 2024 NYPSC or any of its special events – including the Global Trade Symposium, Foundational Excellence Program and Foodservice Forum – can register and book host hotels at nyproduceshow.com



In the Chef's Corner

By Andy Lagana
Chef

Nanny's Cucuzza Sicilian Squash Soup with Home-made Italian Bread

Hello! This month, I'm sharing a recipe for Nanny's Cucuzza Sicilian Squash Soup. For the uninitiated, cucuzza squash is an heirloom Italian gourd that is edible when young.

Ingredients are ¼ cup olive oil, 2 cups diced yellow onions, ½ cup chopped fresh basil, 2-3 tbsps. chopped garlic, a pinch of crushed red pepper, 1 cucuzza squash, 8 cups vegetable or chicken broth, 1 (28-ounce) can whole tomatoes, crushed + ½ can water, 1 pecorino or parmesan rind, 1 tsp. of saffron, 2 tsp salt, ½ tsp black pepper, 4 ounces fettuccine - broken into bite-sized pieces, grated pecorino and extra virgin olive oil.

Gather and prep ingredients. Slice off and discard the ends of the squash, then cut it down into more manageable pieces. Peel and de-seed the large ends of the *cucuzza*. Then, cut the squash into bite sized pieces. Heat oil in a 6-quart (or larger) pot or Dutch oven over medium-low heat. Add onions, half the basil, garlic and crushed red pepper, then cook until the onions have softened, about five minutes. Add the *cucuzza* pieces, stir and cook for another two to three minutes.

Then, add two cups of broth and deglaze, scraping up the brown bits on the bottom of the pot. Increase heat to medium. Add the rest of the broth, tomatoes, water, cheese rind, saffron, salt, and black pepper, and stir. Cover the pot and bring to a simmer. Then, partially cover and

simmer for 15 to 20 minutes (until the cucuzza is tender). Next, uncover and stir in the pasta. Cook until the pasta is *al dente*, stirring regularly so that it doesn't clump. Turn off the heat, add remaining basil, and adjust seasoning as needed. Remove remaining cheese rind.

Next is the home-made Italian bread. Set aside 2 cups of water - room temperature, 5 cups bread flour spooned and leveled, 1/2 tsp active dry yeast or instant yeast, 2 1/2 tsp fine sea salt and 2 tbsp. salted butter (softened) or oil.

Combine ingredients in a large bowl, using a wooden spoon until the flour is hydrated and the dough comes together. Then, cover it and let it rest for 30-60 minutes. Run your hands under cold water and with a wet hand, grab the dough on one side and stretch it out without tearing it. Fold it over the rest of the dough, turn the bowl 90 degrees and repeat until you've gone around all four sides. Rest the dough for another 30-60 minutes and repeat with another series of stretches and folds.

Then, cover the dough and let it rise at room temperature overnight - about 10 hours. The dough should be bubbly in the morning. Scrape the dough away from the edge of the bowl, deflating it and then dump it onto a flour surface. Stretch the dough out into a rectangle then fold the top 1/3 of the dough over the center. Repeat with the bottom, folding it on top of

the rest of the dough - like a letter going in an envelope.

Starting at the short end, roll it into a ball. Press the sides down to hide the creases on the sides and roll the dough ball so it's tight and round. Crumple up a sheet of parchment paper and place it into a large bowl. Place the ball of dough into the bowl and cover it. Let it rise for another 60-90 minutes. Meanwhile, place the Dutch oven in the oven and preheat to 425 F°.

Gently press on the dough, which should spring back slowly. If it springs back quickly and feels tight, let it rise longer. Dust with flour and then use a knife or a bread scoring knife to make a large slit and a couple of smaller ones in the dough. Carefully remove the Dutch oven from the oven, take off the lid and place the bread in the Dutch oven with the parchment paper. Be gentle so you don't deflate the bread.

Grab a few ice cubes and slide them underneath the parchment paper. Place the lid back on top and bake for 15 minutes. Remove the lid and bake for another 20 minutes. Then, remove the Dutch oven from the oven and let the bread cool 5-10 minutes. Finally, remove the bread and let it sit on a wire rack until completely cooled. I like to dip mine in a mixture of extra virgin olive oil, crushed red pepper, parmesan cheese, oregano, salt, and pepper. Buon appetito!

Read the *Gardener News*
online at GardenerNews.com

Editor's Note: Andy Lagana is a Chef at Crystal Springs Resort in Hamburg, Sussex County, N.J. For more information on its culinary program, visit www.CSResort.com.

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Sussex County, New Jersey

DEC Announces Annual Arbor Day Poster Contest

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) announced the start of DEC's annual Arbor Day Poster contest. Each year, DEC's Urban and Community Forestry Program coordinates the contest to promote the value of trees in the environment and New Yorkers' lives. The winner of the contest will have their photo or artwork reproduced as the 2025 Arbor Day Poster to commemorate the holiday.

"Each year, Arbor Day reminds us to appreciate the vast benefits trees provide to ecosystems and public health, and as key tool in the fight against climate change," said DEC Interim Commissioner Sean Mahar. "All New Yorkers are encouraged to get outdoors this fall to enjoy and highlight the beauty and importance of New York's trees with their photography and artwork."

The annual Arbor Day Poster contest is sponsored by the New York State Arbor Day Committee, which includes DEC, the Empire State Forestry Foundation, the New York State Arborist Association, State Department of Agriculture and Markets, and Sylvamo North America.

New York State Agriculture Commissioner Richard A. Ball said, "DEC's Arbor Day Poster contest is an annual opportunity to honor New York's forested land, which is so important to our health, our environment, and our economy. From giving us sap to make sweet maple syrup, to cleaning our air and enhancing the scenic beauty of our state, New York's trees are a fantastic natural resource that contribute so much to the daily lives of New Yorkers and visitors alike."

DEC is accepting original photograph and artwork submissions on behalf of the committee until 5 p.m. on Dec. 31, 2024. Entries must feature trees in New York State and be submitted through the online poster contest submission form.

Model consent forms are required for any discernable persons in photos.

For more information about the contest, visit DEC's website at <https://dec.ny.gov/nature/forests-trees/urban-and-community-forestry/arbor-day> or email arborday@dec.ny.gov.

New Neonicotinoid Legislation Passes in New York State

Article 33 of the Environmental Conservation Law (ECL) was amended in 2023 and early 2024 to prohibit the use of certain neonicotinoid pesticides on outdoor ornamental plants and turf beginning on December 31, 2024, for some products, followed by others on December 31, 2026.

In addition, Article 37 of the ECL was amended to prohibit the sale, offer for sale or use, or distribution within the state any corn, soybean, or wheat seeds coated or treated with pesticides containing clothianidin, imidacloprid, or thiamethoxam on January 1, 2029. These amendments to the ECL have been referred to as the "Birds and Bees Protection Act".

Outdoor Ornamental Plants and Turf
Beginning December 31, 2024, Article 33 (ECL 33-1301(13)) prohibits the treatment of outdoor ornamental plants and turf with pesticide products containing clothianidin or dinotefuran and beginning December 31, 2026, this prohibition is further expanded to include pesticide products containing imidacloprid, thiamethoxam, or acetamiprid.

There are several exemptions to this prohibition which would allow the application of pesticide products containing clothianidin, dinotefuran, imidacloprid, thiamethoxam, or acetamiprid. These exemptions include:

- Applications on agricultural commodities;
- Structural commercial applications within

one foot of a building foundation perimeter to manage structural pests provided that the application is not conducted on any blooming plants;

- Applications by, or under the supervision of, a certified applicator for treatment against invasive species affecting woody plants; and
- Applications conducted in accordance with a New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) written order to address an environmental emergency.

Pesticide applicators conducting applications for the treatment of invasive species affecting woody plants or applications in accordance with a NYSDEC written order to address an environmental emergency must take an NYSDEC-approved neonicotinoid course annually and maintain a record of this course for three years.

NYSDEC is currently developing the written order process for environmental emergencies.

This amendment also requires NYSDEC, New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, and Cornell to conduct a study to identify practicable and feasible alternatives to the use of neonicotinoids. The results of the study must be submitted to the governor on or before January 1, 2026, and posted on the NYSDEC's website at <https://dec.ny.gov/>



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Many people like to get an early start on working in their gardens in the spring. After a couple of nice days in late March or early April, they get the itch to get outside and start planting. But then Mother Nature comes roaring back with a couple of days with lows in the teens and high temperatures in the low forties and they are forced to start all over again. But if you really want to get a nice early jump on next year's growing season, it's possible to take advantage of the nice days we have during the fall and get some fruits and vegetables planted that will still grow throughout the winter months and then be ready for harvest next spring.

One crop that does well if it is planted this time of year, is spinach. While it can be planted in the early spring, and grown quite successfully, in my opinion, it does the best when it is planted in the fall. Spinach is one of those crops that thrives in cooler temperatures and does not do as well in the heat of the summer. When



The Town Farmer

By Peter Melick
Agricultural Producer

Fall is for Planting

temperatures get into the 80's and nineties, spinach tends to get bitter in flavor and will bolt, which will severely limit the optimal harvest window. But if spinach is grown during cooler weather, it has much better flavor and a longer period in which it can be harvested.

We like to plant spinach in October. And if October and early November turn out to be warmer than normal, it is possible to start picking some spinach in the late fall. But even if we don't start harvesting then, it will not be harmed by cold winter temperatures, and will then already be starting in April and May. The nice part

about this is that we do not have very many items that are ready that early in the spring. And after a long cold winter, its hard to beat some nice freshly picked spinach.

Another item that we plant in October or November is garlic. As far as vegetable crops go, it is one of the easiest crops to grow, it just takes some time. We fertilize the soil and then make a raised bed and cover it with plastic mulch. We then plant garlic cloves through the mulch and into the soil about eight inches apart with eight inches between the rows. And that is about it. It will sit there all winter with little to no activity. As the temperatures increase in

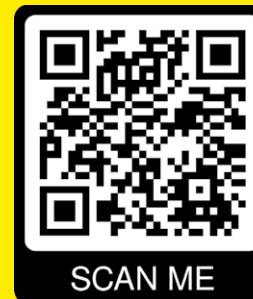
March and April, it will start to grow, and you will see green shoots. When those get to be about 12 inches in length, you can start a limited harvest and use them just as you would use green onions. At that time, they have a nice mild garlic flavor. You can continue to harvest them in this manner until the bulbs reach the size of a golf ball. After that, the stalks become woody and tough, and you should wait until the garlic bulbs mature to harvest the whole plant. But, in the meantime, it is also possible to cut the garlic "scapes" off the top of the plant. This tender and curly appendage will grow out the top of the plant and will be

ready to cut in early June. It is important to cut them while they are still tender. They also have a nice mild garlicky flavor and can be utilized in numerous ways.

In early to mid-July, the garlic will be ready for harvest. Just lift the whole plant out of the ground and shake off any extra soil. Then dry them under cover in a well-ventilated area for a couple of weeks. After they have dried, cut off the stalk and store the garlic in a dry place. It should keep for several months.

Editor's Note: Peter Melick is co-owner of Melick's Town Farm in Oldwick and a 10th-generation New Jersey farmer. Peter is a member of the Tewksbury Township Committee, Hunterdon County, NJ. He also served as a director for the New Jersey Farm Bureau and is a past president of the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture. Peter has also been featured on NJN, News 12 New Jersey and on the Fox Business Network.

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Keeping New Jersey's Farms Viable by Providing an Additional Revenue Stream for Farmers

(Continued from page 1)

agricultural productivity and contributing to New Jersey's renewable energy goals.

The Rutgers New Brunswick project, part of a \$7.4 million effort, consists of 378 vertical bifacial solar panels that can generate electricity whether the sun hits the front or the back of each panel. This design contrasts with typical south-facing fixed-tilt arrays that leave little room in the field for agricultural or horticultural operations.

Installed on a three-acre grassy field at the Rutgers University Animal Farm at the Rutgers School of Environmental and Biological Sciences (SEBS), the system will enable researchers to test whether modern farming practices can be combined with generating solar energy. The vertical bifacial solar array is the first such installation in New Jersey.

"DOE recognizes the enormous opportunity for agrivoltaics to combine agriculture with clean energy production, while increasing revenue for farmers and landowners," said Dr. Becca Jones-Albertus, director of the U.S. Department



Tom Castronovo/Photo

New Jersey Senator Bob Smith, left center, and Dave Specca, Assistant Director of the Rutgers EcoComplex and lead of the Rutgers Agrivoltaics Program, right center, cut the ceremonial ribbon as New Jersey Legislators, Federal Officials, Rutgers County Agricultural Agents, Rutgers Professors, Rutgers Scientists, as well as New Jersey State Officials cheer them on.

of Energy (DOE) Solar Energy Technologies Office. "We congratulate Rutgers University's Agrivoltaics Program for its commitment to innovation and driving renewable energy deployment forward for the state of New Jersey and beyond."

"New Jersey continues to be a national leader in solar and today marks another major milestone for solar innovation in the Garden State," said New Jersey Board of Public Utilities President (NJBPU) Christine Guhl-Sadovy. "As the BPU aims to launch a pilot dual-use program in partnership with the Department of Agriculture, the Rutgers Agrivoltaics Program will continue to inform our efforts to ensure responsible solar development on farmland."

The project represents a crucial step in efforts to counter the adverse effects of climate change, as sustainable energy solutions like solar power play a significant role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and mitigating the impacts of climate change, she said.

The installation on College Farm Road on the George H. Cook campus will allow researchers (Cont. on Page 21)



Tom Castronovo/Photo

Vertical bifacial solar panels at the Cook Campus Animal Farm on College Farm Road in New Brunswick, Middlesex County, NJ

Have you planted all of your spring bulbs yet? Got sore knees? A career's worth of bulb planting left my knees in bad shape, so the idea of planting bulbs standing up is very appealing. There's still time to create a beautiful spring blooming container featuring bulbs.

Let's begin with the container. I like a heavy duty, broad-based, quality plastic container because once it's filled with soil, I can still move it around. Weatherproof terra cotta is nice if you have a plan for lifting it. I create a big display with a number of containers instead of one large one for just this reason. Just for reference, a 12" diameter pot should fit 9 or so daffodils or tulips. Select a container with good drainage. Add a layer of porous landscape cloth, and a few inches of pea gravel or pottery shards to the bottom. It must be sufficiently deep as bulbs need space for their roots and enough soil to support their stems. Generally speaking, bulbs should be planted at a depth that is 2.5x the diameter of their width. A 3" wide tulip bulb needs to be planted about 8.5" deep. Check the planting instructions on your bulb packet or online. Your largest bulbs will determine



The Garden Historian

By Lesley Parness
Garden Educator

Knees-Free Bulb Planting

how deep the container must be.

You will be "layering" the bulbs in the pot. Larger bulbs are planted more deeply than smaller bulbs. Odd numbers of bulbs have a more natural appearance than even numbers. If varmints are an issue, apply repellent prior to planting. A nice light mixture of a coarse potting mix with some extra peat and bark provides the critically needed drainage. If you are planting all one species, layer the bulbs by placing the later bloomers lower and the earlier bloomers higher. If you are planting multiple species, place the biggest bulbs lower and the smallest bulbs higher. Start with 3 inches of soil, then begin planting, making sure that the bulbs do not touch each other or the sides of the container. Cover them with soil until you reach the depth of your next largest or

next blooming bulb. Repeat the process until you have planted all your bulbs then top the container with an inch or so of sharp gravel to keep bulbs from heaving. Finally, water well.

Beginners may want to plant just one kind of bulb, but with careful planning, you can layer for a whole season's worth of bloom. Bulbs of the same species are offered in early, mid, and late season bloom. By choosing bulbs with staggered bloom times, you will have a succession of flowers from early March through mid-May.

Aftercare is important for success. After planting, water the pot thoroughly. Place the pot in a uniformly cool spot. I keep mine in the garage on a thick wooden board to protect it from the concrete floor's extreme cold and wrap an old blanket around the

pot, secured with cord. I water the pots lightly once a month. Don't let them dry out completely but they should not be too moist. Some gardeners keep their pots outside buried in mulch, straw or leaves. When temps are reliably above freezing, take the pot out of the garage, or pull the mulch away and place pots in a bright sunny area. Water sparingly until growth above ground begins. When actively growing, water every other day. When in bloom cycle, water daily if needed.

After bloom? You have two choices. Consider this as you would an annual display and compost it. Or recycle the bulbs in your garden (back on your knees!). To do this, use a slow release bulb fertilizer.

For me, the fun part is selecting the bulbs. How I love the wall of bulbs offered at nurseries this

time of year. Crocus, muscari, scilla, daffodil, hyacinth and tulips are all good choices for a container display. Color schemes could include pastels, monochromatics, or themes (like Patriotic red, white and blue). Use your container bulb display to emphasize your entryway, add a bright spot to a dark place, or perk up your perennial beds, drawing your winter weary eyes and welcoming spring back again.

Editor's Note: Lesley Parness offers a variety of presentations and workshops for garden clubs, plant societies, and horticultural gatherings. Recently retired from her position as Superintendent of Horticultural Education at the Morris County Park Commission, and with four decades of teaching environmental science and garden education, her focus now is garden history. A complete listing of her talks can be seen at lesleyparness.com and she can be reached at parness@verizon.net. This column will appear in the paper every other month.

NASDA Members Elect Next President and NASDA Leadership

During the 2024 National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) Annual Meeting, members elected their 2025 officers. Arkansas Department of Agriculture Secretary Wes Ward will serve as NASDA's 2024-2025 President.

"I am honored to continue serving this organization and proud to be elected as this year's president by my fellow NASDA members," Ward said. "Our theme for the 2025 NASDA Annual Meeting is 'Securing our Future through Agriculture,' and I look forward to continuing collaboration with agriculture leaders from across the 50 states and four U.S. territories to advance agriculture and support farmers and ranchers in producing a safe, affordable and abundant food supply for all."

NASDA's 2025 Board of Directors will also include:

- Vice President: Maine Agriculture Commissioner Amanda Beal
- Second Vice President: Washington Agriculture Director Derek Sandison
- Secretary-Treasurer: Iowa Agriculture Secretary Mike Naig
- At-Large: Oregon Agriculture Director Lisa Charpilloz Hanson
- Past President: Oklahoma Agriculture Secretary Blayne Arthur

Connecticut Agriculture Commissioner Bryan Hurlburt, Tennessee Agriculture Commissioner Charles Hatcher, North Dakota Agriculture Commissioner Doug Goehring and Montana Agriculture Director Christy Clark will serve as the Northeastern, Southern, Midwestern and Western representatives respectively.

Following his election, Secretary Ward appointed the leadership of NASDA's six policy committees:

Marketing and International Trade Committee
Chair: New York Commissioner of Agriculture Richard A. Ball (Continuing)

Vice Chair: Kansas Secretary of Agriculture Mike Beam (Continuing)

Natural Resources and Environment Committee

Chair: New Mexico Secretary of Agriculture Jeff Witte (New position)

Vice Chair: Indiana Director of Agriculture Don Lamb (Newly appointed)

Animal Agriculture Committee

Chair: Tennessee Commissioner of Agriculture Charlie Hatcher (Continuing)

Vice Chair: Nebraska Director of Agriculture Sherry Vinton (Newly appointed)

Plant Agriculture & Pesticide Regulation Committee

Chair: Missouri Director of Agriculture Chris Chinn (Continuing)

Vice Chair: Idaho Director of Agriculture Chanel Tewalt (Continuing)

Rural Development and Financial Security Committee

Chair: Vermont Secretary of Agriculture Anson Tebbetts (New position)

Vice Chair: Georgia Commissioner of Agriculture Tyler Harper (Newly appointed)

Food Systems and Nutrition Committee

Chair: California Secretary of Agriculture Karen Ross (Continuing)

Vice Chair: Connecticut Commissioner of Agriculture Bryan Hurlburt (Continuing)

NASDA is a nonpartisan, nonprofit association which represents the elected and appointed commissioners, secretaries and directors of the departments of agriculture in all 50 states and four U.S. territories. NASDA enhances American food and agricultural communities through policy, partnerships and public engagement.

The 2025 PHS Gold Medal Plant recipients are all native trees, shrubs and perennials. They have been selected for their ornamental attributes; their ability to thrive in the Mid-Atlantic region; availability at local garden centers and nurseries; and for having numerous ecological functions. The selections are also relatively easy to cultivate and grow in gardens.

Acer rubrum Redpointe® is a selection of red maple. It has exceptional red fall color that will occur when grown in full sun. The native maple will reach 45 feet tall at maturity and is hardy in zones 4-8. It is fast growing and has an upright and pyramidal habit. Like other red maples it is one of the few red maples that can tolerate wet conditions and poorly drained sites. This is an exceptional tree selection to be used in urban areas as a street tree.

Amelanchier x grandiflora 'Autumn Brilliance', apple serviceberry, is an exceptional deciduous shrub or small tree that has an upright spreading habit and round canopy. It is noted for its brilliant fall colors of red and orange. In early to mid-spring the tree is adorned with clusters of star-shaped white flowers. Following the flowers, it produces an abundance of edible berries which attract song birds. It will



Pennsylvania Horticultural Society

By Andrew Bunting
Vice President of Horticulture

2025 Gold Medal Plants

grow to be 15-25 feet tall. In the winter, as it matures, it should be noted for its smooth silvery bark. 'Autumn Brilliance' looks best with an evergreen backdrop such as *Thuja* 'Green Giant' or *Cryptomeria japonica* 'Yoshino' that can set off the white flowers in the spring and the red-orange fall color.

The Cherokee sedge, *Carex cherokeensis*, Cherokee sedge, is an evergreen groundcover with clumping grass-like leaves which is a great alternative to more traditional groundcovers like *Pachysandra terminalis* and *Liriope spicata*. It is 12-24 inches tall and wide at maturity. It is hardy in zones 6-8. It combines nicely with other native groundcovers, such as, the Christmas ferns, *Polystichum acrostichoides*; maidenhair fern, *Adiantum pedatum*; American ginger, *Asarum canadense* and the foamflower, *Tiarella cordifolia*.

Leucothoe axillaris 'ReJoyce', coast leucothoe, is

a native evergreen shrub. In the spring, new leaves emerge red. White, urn-shaped flowers form in short clusters on gently arching branches. In the fall, foliage turns deep bronze-purple. It can grow to be 2-4 feet tall. It is hardy in zones 5-7. This versatile evergreen shrub can grow both in partial shade and in dry shade conditions. In the landscape it is effectively used in masses, combining well with other native shrubs such as the summersweet, *Clethra alnifolia*; Virginia sweetspire, *Itea virginica* and the winterberry holly, *Ilex verticillata*.

Monarda 'Gardenview Scarlet' is a selection of beebalm which grows to three feet tall with an abundance of flowers in mid-summer. It is great for attracting hummingbirds, butterflies and other beneficial pollinators. It is truly deer resistant. 'Gardenview Scarlet' can grow in areas where there is poor drainage and combines well with different native

hibiscus and queen of the prairie, *Filipendula rubra*.

Solidago rugosa 'Fireworks', the rough goldenrod is one of the best goldenrods for home gardens. It has a relatively compact habit, and it attracts scores of pollinators when it is in bloom in late summer and fall. The yellow flowers are small and fragrant and resemble fireworks. It can grow to be 3-4 feet tall and can spread to be three feet wide in 3-4 years. It is hardy in zones 4-8.

'Fireworks' combines nicely with other late season native perennials including many of the fall blooming asters 'October Skies' and 'Raydon's Favorite'. It also can be planted with the ironweeds, including *Vernonia lettermannii* 'Iron Butterfly' and native grasses including switch grass, *Panicum virgatum*; prairie dropseed, *Sporobolus heterolepis*; little bluestem, *Schizachyrium scoparium* and big bluestem,

Andropogon gerardii.

The 2025 PHS Gold Medal selections join a list of over 150 trees, shrubs, perennials and vines which have been selected for both ornamental and ecological attributes. These are all available through local garden centers and nurseries or can be found at native plant sales.

Editor's Note: Andrew Bunting is Vice President of Horticulture for the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society. He is one of the most recognized horticulturists in the Philadelphia, Pa., region and a highly regarded colleague in the world of professional horticulture. Bunting has amassed a plethora of awards, including the American Public Gardens Association Professional Citation, Chanticleer Scholarship in Professional Development, Delaware Center for Horticulture's Marion Marsh Award, and the Certificate of Merit from the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society. In addition, Bunting has lectured extensively throughout North America and Europe, and participated in plant expeditions throughout Asia and Africa. Learn more at <https://phsonline.org/team/andrew-bunting>

Pennsylvania Horticultural Society Announces 2025 PHS Philadelphia Flower Show Theme

PHILADELPHIA, PA – How can gardening shape a better future? The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society's (PHS) 2025 PHS Philadelphia Flower Show will explore this and more with its theme, "Gardens of Tomorrow." Globally renowned for its stunning floral displays, garden landscapes, and premier plant and botanical art competitions, this year's exhibits invite you to explore the future through the eyes of visionary designers, expert gardeners, and passionate green enthusiasts as they merge nature's brilliance with human ingenuity. Guests will experience imaginative designs, innovative ideas, and boundless inspiration on how to cultivate the possibilities of tomorrow through gardening.

The 2025 show is scheduled for March 1-9, 2025, at the Pennsylvania Convention Center.

"'Gardens of Tomorrow' invites us to envision a future where our actions today nurture a healthier planet. Through the simple act of gardening and planting trees, we plant seeds of hope for a greener future. The 2025 PHS Philadelphia Flower Show highlights the transformative power of plants and inspires us to create a beautiful, more resilient future

together," said VP and Creative Director of the Philadelphia Flower Show, Seth Pearsoll.

Whether you enjoy gardening for its many health and wellness benefits, you plant for your community and the connections it fosters, or you garden with sustainability in mind to strengthen our planet's ecosystem – every act of gardening is an act of hope that can improve our outcomes.

As part of the 2025 PHS Philadelphia Flower Show announcement, PHS is unveiling the first in a series of thematic art pieces inspired by "Gardens of Tomorrow." Digitally hybridized flowers, using historic photos and illustrations from the PHS McLean Library, hint at a future of possibilities echoed by the prismatic effect and varied fonts. With more versions to come in the new year, this first release teases the idea of what could sprout tomorrow with what we tend to today.

Now in its 196th year, the award-winning PHS Philadelphia Flower Show is a world-renowned gardening event and PHS's main fundraiser for its lauded greening work throughout the Philadelphia region that aims to advance health and well-being for

all.

"PHS has long championed gardening to positively transform ourselves, our society, and our health and well-being. This belief drives not only the Flower Show but our year-round work planting trees, supporting community gardens, remediating vacant land, and creating dynamic, free, public gardens. As we look towards the future, the 2025 PHS Philadelphia Flower Show envisions a world where gardening is both a joyful hobby and a celebrated force for creating a healthier planet, society, and people." said PHS President, Matt Rader.

Tickets for the 2025 PHS Philadelphia Flower Show, "Gardens of Tomorrow" are on sale now! Purchase individual tickets with one of the many ticketing options and experience the beauty and innovation of this world-class event. Don't miss out on the Twilight Ticket; offering discounted admission evenings starting at 4pm. Ticket pricing will be divided into weekday, Friday/weekend, and after 4pm pricing tiers, to offer guests greater flexibility.

To purchase tickets please visit tickets.phsonline.org.

Bobcat Company Expands Product Lineup with Backhoe Loader

Bobcat Company, a global equipment, innovation and worksite solutions brand, has expanded its North American product lineup with the introduction of the B760 backhoe loader. Designed with legendary Bobcat performance and versatility, the B760 offers the most digging depth in its size class.

With a wide range of job site solutions built into one tough machine, the backhoe loader features an impressive lift capacity of more than 2,200 pounds at full reach; digging depth of 18 feet, 5 inches; and nearly 180 degrees of backhoe swing for less repositioning and fast cycle times.

The backhoe loader comes with a standard-equipped extendable arm that provides up to 8 inches of additional dig depth compared to other machines of the same size. The B760's performance and versatility extend throughout

the machine, with the front-end loader providing a lift capacity of 7,985 pounds with its standard, general purpose bucket.

"The new B760 helps operators accomplish more on the job site with its dig, load and carry versatility," said Jamison Wood, Bobcat product development specialist. "The backhoe loader is designed for durability, easy operation, simple maintenance and incredible performance. Its size keeps it accessible on sites with limited space, while its impressive travel speeds keep operators productive across large job sites."

Powered by a turbocharged 3.4-liter Bobcat engine, the B760 delivers powerful, high-torque performance and efficiency. It achieves emissions compliance without the use of a diesel particulate filter (DPF).

With powerful backhoe and loader breakout forces, operators can confidently dig in and

conquer some of the most challenging job site tasks such as excavation, site preparation, material handling, trenching, snow removal and more. The power shift transmission provides quick direction changes while the backhoe loader's swift travel speeds allow operators to minimize the need for a trailer.

With controls that are thoughtfully laid out and easy to use, new operators can reach maximum productivity in less time. The easy-to-read, 5-inch, color display panel provides full-featured machine interaction and monitoring capabilities for efficient and productive operation. The operator station and optional cab are designed for all-day comfort, with controls designed for easy use and minimal operator fatigue.

The B760 backhoe loader will be available at Bobcat dealerships across North America in late 2024/early 2025.



Tom Castronovo/Photo

Rutgers SEBS Executive Dean Laura Lawson, who also serves as executive director of the Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, left, and New Jersey Secretary of Agriculture Ed Wengryn, chat about the Rutgers Agrivoltaics Program.

Keeping New Jersey's Farms Viable by Providing an Additional Revenue Stream for Farmers

(Continued from page 18)

to investigate how the design affects grazing strategies for beef cattle and ease of hay harvesting. Scientists will also assess whether certain crops fare better in New Jersey's climate using an agrivoltaics system, compared with crops produced in other regions of the United States employing agrivoltaics.

"Rutgers University is proud to be leading the effort in developing agrivoltaics for our region," said SEBS Executive Dean Laura Lawson, who also serves as executive director of the Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station.

"This new technology has the potential to produce renewable energy needed to reduce our carbon dioxide emissions while simultaneously making our family farms more viable and sustainable."

Most existing solar farms in the U.S. employ low-mounted and closely spaced solar panel arrays that allow for only limited agricultural applications, such as grazing for small animals or providing pollinator habitats, according to university officials. Such systems usually emphasize electricity generation at the expense of agricultural production.

"There's always been this issue that when a big solar farm goes in, it pretty much takes that ground out of agricultural production, so you can no longer grow crops or raise

animals for the lifespan of the system," said David Specca, Assistant Director of the Rutgers EcoComplex and lead of the Rutgers Agrivoltaics Program.

As part of the project, two other agrivoltaics systems were installed at the Rutgers Agricultural Research and Extension Center in Upper Deerfield, and at the Clifford E. and Melda C. Snyder Research and Extension Farm in Pittstown. Through these systems, scientists will evaluate a different solar array design known as a single-axis solar tracking system.

Executive Dean Lawson added, "Today we celebrate the completion of construction of our three state-of-the-art research and demonstration sites and the beginning of the much-needed research and outreach component of this program."

Rutgers scientists will study the different designs to better understand how each allows for a variety of different farming practices. A multi-year research plan has been developed and started at the beginning of the 2024 growing season.

"We define agrivoltaics as systems that allow for a more diverse range of agricultural or horticultural practices, including grazing large animals, producing staple and specialty crops, and hay," Specca said. "Our approach emphasizes food production and considers the generated electricity as (Cont. on Page 25)

NORTHEASTERN ASSOCIATION OF STATE

The Northeastern Association of State Departments of Agriculture convenes the following 10 states: Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Delaware Launches Agricultural Financing Program

The Delaware Department of Agriculture (DDA), in partnership with the Division of Small Business, officially launched the Delaware Agricultural Financing Program (DAFP). This new program aims to increase the viability of Delaware's agricultural industry by broadening lending opportunities across the agricultural sector.

"Attracting new farmers and producers into our number one industry is a critical need for Delaware," said Secretary of Agriculture Michael T. Scuse. "We are excited to offer this new loan program, in cooperation with the Division of Small Business, as a way to help farm and aquaculture producers purchase the equipment they need to get started or expand their operations."

Delaware farmers, producers, and food processors actively engaged in crop, livestock, aquaculture, and/or food production in Delaware are eligible to apply. Low-interest equipment loans will be available for supporting activities, including production, processing, packaging, aggregation, and distribution for small and large operations.

"Agriculture is such an important industry in our state, and we are proud to partner with the Delaware Department of Agriculture to ensure it continues to thrive and grow," said Division of Small Business Director Regina Mitchell. "DSB prides itself on being a good steward of state funding and is honored to lend its financial expertise to help Delaware farmers, producers, and food processors meet their needs to sustain their livelihood and contributions to Delaware's economy."

The DAFP currently has \$1.5 million in funding available. The program will provide loans of \$25,000 to \$250,000 with a maximum loan amount of 50% of a project's total cost. Applicants must demonstrate eligibility from a private lender for the balance of project costs. Final closing will be contingent on the approval of all participating lenders. All loans will have a term of up to seven (7) years, with interest-only payments due in the first year, followed by full amortization. Interest rates will be fixed at 3.35% for first-time farmers and aquaculture projects and 4.25% for all other projects.

According to Jimmy Kroon, DDA Administrator, "Agriculture and aquaculture financing tends to be more difficult to obtain through traditional banks. Producers may not have formal business training, the industry has thin margins and higher risks, and specialized equipment sometimes doesn't provide good collateral. Yet, according to nearby state agriculture financing programs, farm loans tend to be safer investments than non-farm business loans. We want to lend a hand to that first time farmer or aquaculture producer who is trying to overcome these hurdles to get started in the business."

The applicant must provide proof of farm or food business or an IRS Schedule F tax form from the previous year. DAFP requires that all work be performed by experienced and qualified contractors licensed by the State of Delaware, whose primary business location is in Delaware.

Those interested in applying for a DAFP loan can find more information and an application online at <https://de.gov/dafp>.

PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

\$1 Million in Research, Marketing to Grow Pennsylvania's Wine Industry

Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding announced that the Shapiro Administration has invested \$1 million in eight research and marketing grants to increase sales, production, and quality of Pennsylvania wines.

"William Penn literally planted the seeds of Pennsylvania's wine industry," said Secretary Redding. "We've grown from transplanted vines in a colonial-era Philadelphia park to the fourth-ranking wine producer in the nation. Investing in research and promotion will keep that success growing. The Shapiro Administration is investing in keeping Pennsylvania agriculture a national leader in the years to come."

Earlier this year, the Pennsylvania Wine Marketing and Research Board released findings of the study, Economic Impact of the Pennsylvania Grape & Wine Industry. The study found that the industry supports 10,756 jobs, paying wages of \$518.2 million, and directly contributes \$1.77 billion to the state economy annually. Pennsylvania ranks 4th in wine production in the nation, up from 5th in 2018. Grape production in PA has grown by about 970 tons per year in that period.

With now more than 400 licensed wineries across five distinct regions, Pennsylvania wineries generate \$747 million in tourism revenue every year. October is Wine Month. Find an event, a winery to visit, or just learn more about Pennsylvania wines on the Pennsylvania Winery Association's website pennsylvaniawine.com.

The PA Department of Agriculture's Wine Marketing and Research Board selected the following projects for funding through the PA Liquor Control Board. Recipients, grant amounts, and project titles are listed below:

Pennsylvania Winery Association – \$441,180

Pennsylvania Wines marketing strategy – Continued funding for comprehensive, five-year promotional strategy

Penn State University – \$71,999

Development and application of a simple diagnostic test to measure latent precursors of deleterious volatile sulfur compounds in Pennsylvania wines

Penn State University – \$80,922

Evaluation of grapevine nutrient levels and sufficiency ranges in Pennsylvania

Penn State University – \$42,214

Measuring oxygen uptake from harvest through bottling: identifying and mitigating negative impact of dissolved oxygen on wine quality

Penn State University – \$97,860

Integration of chemical aging of wine into traditional production: acetaldehyde addition impacts before and after primary malolactic fermentation

Penn State University – \$84,811

Characterization of wine oxygen pickup under different scenarios common in Pennsylvania wine production

Penn State University – \$91,021

Mitigating frost damage in Pennsylvania vineyards

Penn State University – \$89,993

Using wine grape microbiome to control dissolved oxygen and sulfur dioxide levels in final wines



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DEPARTMENTS OF AGRICULTURE NEWS

NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Inaugural Meeting of the NJ Organic and Regenerative Farming Board

The Inaugural Meeting of the NJ Organic and Regenerative Farming Board will take place from 4-6 p.m., on November 14, 2024, at the New Jersey Department of Agriculture at 200 Riverview Plaza, Trenton, NJ 08611. The meeting will take place in-person and on TEAMS. The TEAMS sign-in information is:

Meeting ID: 252 684 421 387

Passcode: czL6zT

Fernbrook Farms Wins Farmer Recognition Award

The New Jersey Department of Agriculture recognized Fernbrook Farms in Burlington County as the winner of the Jersey Fresh Farm to School Farmer Recognition Award for 2024.

Ethel Jacobsen School Recognized for Outstanding Program

The New Jersey Department of Agriculture presented Ethel Jacobsen School in Ocean County with the Cream of the Crop Award during a visit to the school's classrooms, garden, and cafeteria.

Dogwood Hill Elementary School Connects

Students to Local Produce

The New Jersey Department of Agriculture presented Dogwood Hill Elementary School in the Oakland School District in Bergen County with the "Best in New Jersey Farm to School Award" during a visit to school's Farm to School field day and the cafeteria.

The presentations took place during the celebration of the 14th annual Jersey Fresh Farm to School Week and Second Annual Ag Literacy Week held September 23-27.

NEW YORK DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Program Provides \$50 Million Over Five Years to Help Improve Kitchens and Cook Meals for Students Using New York Farm Products

State Agriculture Commissioner Richard A. Ball announced, during Farm-to-School Month, that \$10 million is now available through Round 2 of New York's Regional School Food Infrastructure Grant Program. The program will support projects in New York schools that improve meal preparation and distribution for Kindergarten through Grade 12 students. First announced in Governor Kathy Hochul's 2023 State of the State, the program will provide \$50 million over five years to eligible applicants to facilitate the on-site processing and preparation of fresh, nutritious meals, increase the use of more healthy, local New York food products, and provide a boost to New York farmers.

Commissioner Ball said, "Here at the Department, we are working hard to ensure our farmers are New York's best and first customer across the board, and that includes our schools. The Regional School Food Infrastructure program provides a tremendous opportunity to collaborate with our partners across the state to strengthen our food system and provide delicious, healthy and locally sourced meals to our students by ensuring our schools have the equipment they need to cook from scratch and use ingredients made by our farmers and producers. I'm excited to see the progress made by one of the first recipients of this program and encourage eligible organizations across the state to apply to the second round."

The Regional School Food Infrastructure Grant Program is providing New York schools the resources they need to prepare fresh, nutritious meals for students from scratch. Funding from the program will go toward developing facilities to allow organizations to aggregate, store, process, and prepare farm products on-site. The program also encourages workforce development by providing training to schools, communities, and students in culinary arts, food processing, safe food handling and storage, logistics, delivery, and more, based on community need.

To highlight the success of the first round of the program, launch Round 2 of the program, and kickoff Farm-to-School Month, Commissioner Ball joined the team at Champlain Valley Educational Services (CVES BOCES) and local farmers to unveil renderings for a brand-new \$5 million commissary that will be built using funding from Round 1 of New York's Regional School Food Infrastructure Grant Program. At the event, farmers and producers provided samples of food they grow and produce for CVES BOCES students, including cheese from McAdam/Cabot Creamery; vegetables from Dyer Farms and Shields Vegetables; beef sticks from Giroux Family Farms; beef sticks from Coakley Farms, apples and sweet tangos from Chazy Orchards; carrots from Juniper Hill Farm; yogurt from North Country Creamery; homemade granola from the cafeteria staff at CVES; and maple syrup produced by students of the CV-TEC Career and Technical Education program. CVES BOCES, which was

one of two recipients of the first round of the program, was awarded \$5 million to establish a central food hub, two state-of-the-art educational facilities, and retrofit existing school cafeterias. The project will help consolidate school food processing and preparation and increase the nutritional value and local focus of the foods served at 16 component school districts and at CVES BOCES.

CVES BOCES is currently in its ninth year of participating in a farm-to-school program. The team works closely with the farmers in their community, using a geographic preference bid every year to procure local food while fostering longstanding, trusting relationships with their region's agricultural community. The organization serves local food every day for both breakfast and lunch to about 5,600 students in eight schools in the North Country, including a colorful salad bar, locally sourced beef, eggs, yogurt, oats, wheat berries, and lentils.

Round 2 of the Regional School Food Infrastructure Grant Program

Applications for Round 2 of the Regional School Food Infrastructure Grant Program are open. Project proposals should be regionally focused on improving meal preparation for K-12 school children, reducing food insecurity, increasing market opportunities for New York State producers, and strengthening the resilience of our state's food system. The program requires that funded facilities serve multiple school districts and support their local community, including by providing workforce development opportunities. Funding will be awarded to every region of the state over the course of five years. The first round of funding was awarded to projects in Western New York and in the North Country. Two additional regions will be awarded \$5 million each in subsequent rounds, until all regions are awarded.

Grant funds are available for the costs of capital projects that support the preparation and distribution of fresh meals for regional school infrastructure, such as aggregation, storage hubs, and/or commissary-type kitchens. Eligible applicants include not-for-profit organizations, local municipalities, school districts, and Boards of Cooperative Education Services (BOCES).

Proposals are due on December 5, 2024, at 4:00 pm. For more information on the program, project eligibility, and how to apply, visit <https://agriculture.ny.gov/rfp-0358-new-york-state-regional-school-food-infrastructure-grant-program>. Additionally, an informational webinar will be held on October 29, 2024, at 12:00 pm. To register, visit <https://meetny.webex.com/webappng/sites/meetny/meeting/register/44c94947d71347a591fab24acfd4f0de?ticket=4832534b000000072732a85437f03f2e5a9656289c23bb7ef307a744c6c562bd8e48d1d90bb99480×tamp=1728840268098&RGID=rcc85cle7b0321bc1725002eecd7c52b6>. The workshop will be recorded and posted on the Department's website.

One of my favorite trees, *Quercus rubra* or northern red oak, is the New Jersey state tree. At maturity, these majestic trees can attain a height well over 100 feet, with an average crown or canopy spread of approximately 2/3 of their height.

In prime growing conditions, including full sun, the northern red oak is a fast growing hardwood tree. Its prized wood is of reddish brown color, hence its common name, red oak, and is used for veneer, trim, flooring, furniture, along with structural beams and framing. Although a strong, beautiful wood, it does not hold up well unprotected outdoors. It will stain and decay as a result. I have heard the wood is so porous you can blow smoke through a freshly sawn board.

The leaves are large, some being up to ten inches long, arranged alternately and of oblong oval shape with 7 to 11 lobes terminating in sharply pointed ends. The bark is grayish brown with broad, thin, rounded ridges. An identification feature often exhibited by mature trees is their vertical random striping or "ski trails" apparent on the main trunk. Red oaks tend to have a very fastigate or upright form, although open grown trees



Tree Notes

By Bert Kuhn
NJ Licensed Tree Expert (LTE)
Licensed Tree Care Operator (LTCO)

New Jersey's State Tree

will display larger spreading canopies, especially if they don't exhibit very symmetrical crowns.

From a tree climber's perspective, they are a joy and privilege to work on as typically they do not possess a lot of interior conflicting growth, making them easier to move through. They usually also offer good central tie-in points for climbers to anchor to limbs, allowing for favorable "angles of dangles." Unless in a declining state, typically they are fairly clean, requiring minimal pruning. Pruning of substantial amounts of live growth is best done while the trees are dormant to inhibit the spread of disease.

Acorns of red oaks require two years to mature and are sought after by numerous mammals, ducks and turkeys, lending valuable nutrition through the fall and winter months.

Their canopies provide nesting sites and shelter for many birds and small animals.

Hopefully reading this, your awareness is heightened as to the red oak's grandeur, beauty and its importance to wildlife and us. This tree, although very hardy, is being adversely affected by Bacterial Leaf Scorch (BLS). Caused by the bacterium *Xylella fastidiosa*, BLS affects the vascular system of infected trees. Although leaf margins die and have a distinct yellow border, separating the dead tissue from the green tissue, browning irregularly or non-uniformly in the canopy is a common symptom and lab testing should be performed for confirmation. Leaf scorch due to soil or root disturbance, moisture extremes, or mechanical injury is fairly common, so lab testing leaf

tissue is necessary to determine if the bacterium is present. The bacterium *Xylella fastidiosa* inhabits the xylem, or the water-conducting vessels of the tree, causing leaf scorch by limiting moisture reaching the leaves.

If BLS is suspected, collect at least 20 symptomatic leaves with intact petioles which show marginal scorch symptoms. They should be submitted to Rutgers extension office on the same day they are collected.

Unfortunately, there is no cure for bacterial leaf scorch and infected trees will continue to decline over a period of several years. It is recommended to prune out branches displaying symptoms, which improves aesthetics along with reducing potential safety concerns. Antibiotic trunk injections applied yearly, combined

with growth regulators applied every two years, offers good control; however once BLS is present it is never fully eradicated.

Trees seem to be under constant duress in today's environment. They are dynamic, have evolved, and will continue to do so. Now more than ever they need our nurturing care. As always, healthy trees are far less susceptible to adversity brought by insects and disease. Through proactive care and wise management practices being employed, man can play a critical role in helping combat the adverse effects of these destructive pests.

The red oak is a vital part of New Jersey's natural heritage. It was officially authorized by a resolution on June 13, 1950, to be the official state tree. Through awareness of their challenges leading to proper care, hopefully we can ensure these magnificent trees survive for our future generations.

Editor's Note: Bert Kuhn is President of the New Jersey Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture and CO/Owner of Action Tree Service (# NJTC768009), based out of Watchung, NJ. He can be reached at 908-756-4100

I have always found November to be magical. There is an ever-evolving symphony of fall color mingled with the season finale of flowers and the intriguing yet subtle beauty of seeds! Some plants such as Milkweed have seeds as intriguing as their flowers! Botanically known as *Asclepias*, the parachute-like seed structures and graceful movements about the garden has elevated these seeds to an artform.

Asclepias has roughly 200 species found in North and South America and Africa. Originally, it was in its own family of Asclepiadaceae but was shifted to the Dogbane Family or Apocynaceae. The genus name was officially penned in 1753 by the Swedish botanist Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778) honoring Asclepius, the Greek god of healing. The inspiration for honoring the deity is somewhat clouded, although an ancient herbal named *Asclepius* was used by the Roman naturalist Pliny the Elder (23/24-79 AD) and the Greek pharmacologist Pedanius Dioscorides (40-90 AD). Considering Milkweeds were also used medicinally by Native Americans, adopting the name of the ancient herbal as the genus was certainly appropriate!

Asclepias also benefits many



Morris County Park Commission

By Bruce Crawford
Horticultural Manager

November – A Magical Month

insects, including the Monarch Butterfly. In fact, interest in planting *Asclepias* grew rapidly over the past 20 years when it became apparent the dwindling populations of Monarch Butterflies were directly tied to dwindling populations of Milkweed. Agricultural spraying combined with urban sprawl was reducing the natural habitat for the plant, resulting in declining populations.

Fortunately, the educated gardener can help the Monarch's plight by planting these attractive plants! Perhaps the most well-known selection is *Asclepias tuberosa*. Oddly, it does not display the milky white sap that fostered the common name! Named by Linnaeus in 1753, the plant is native to much of North America. It is a clump forming perennial for full-sun locations and grows from a

tuberous root system as the species name implies. Stems reach 12-30" tall and are topped by umbels of orange or more rarely yellow, 3/8" diameter flowers. By definition, an umbel is a flower cluster in which the floral stems are all roughly equal in length and originate from the same point. Each 2-5" diameter umbel has around 20 flowers, providing an effective impact from June through September.

For moist soils, consider *Asclepias incarnata* or Swamp Milkweed. Native to much of North America, this plant was once again named by Linnaeus in 1753. The species epithet is derived from the Latin *Carnis* meaning flesh and *Atus* meaning possessing a feature, describing the fleshy pink color of the flowers. Clump forming, it grows much taller than its cousin, reaching 3-4' tall. Measuring

1/4," the individual flowers are slightly smaller but, with each inflorescence consisting of several umbels, the overall floral impact is greater! Belying its common name, it readily grows in soils of average moisture, although the soils should not dry out during the spring flush. Both species are hardy in zones 3-9.

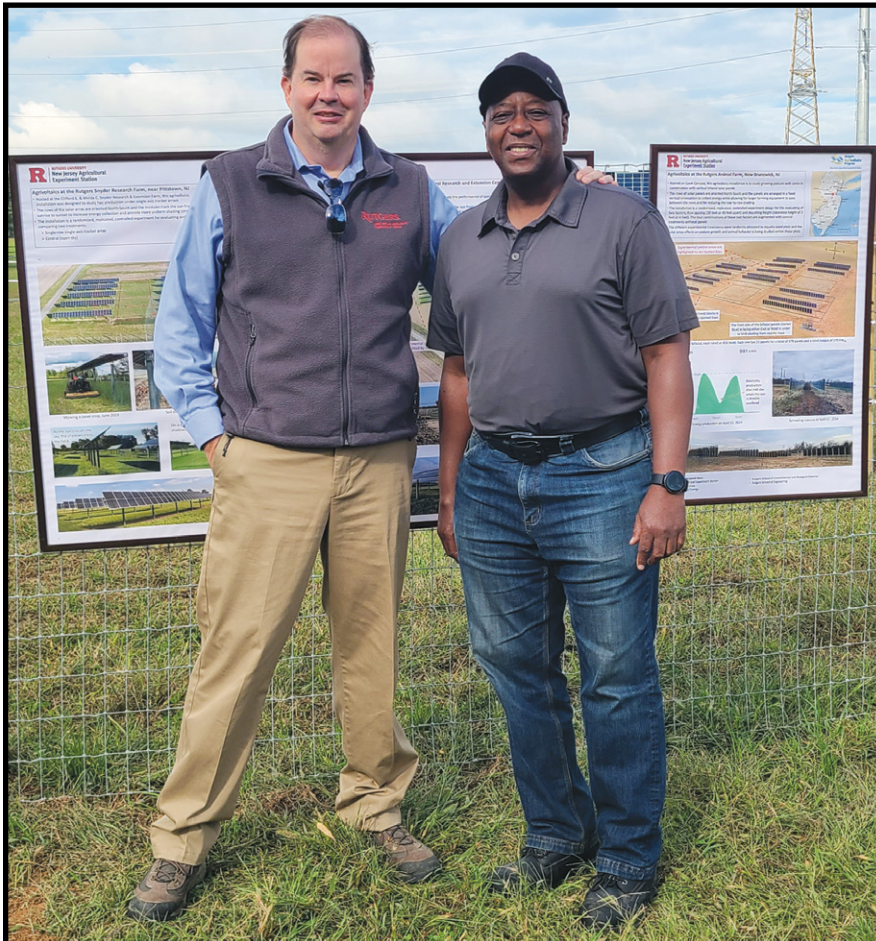
Come autumn, the flowers transition into horn-like seed pods, measuring 3-5(6)" in length. As they ripen, they split open to reveal 200-400 brown seeds neatly arranged in rows. Attached to the seed is a feathery plume called a coma that develops from the ovoid shaped seed. Attached at the narrow tip of the seed, each 1-2" long coma is actually a hollow tube, allowing it to readily float about in the air or on water as it travels to its new home. In fact, during WW2 the buoyant comas were gathered to

fill life preservers!

All Milkweeds combine well with shorter or upright forms of ornamental grasses. For *Asclepias tuberosa*, it looks stunning combined with the blue flowers of Bellflower or with selections of Black-eyed Susans and Beardtongue. *Asclepias incarnata* looks great with moisture loving Iris, Iron Weed and even some of the shrubby Willows. Both species are also resistant to deer browse!

For gardeners who enjoy the magical motion of those fluffy comas or butterflies flitting from flower to flower, these species of *Asclepias* are garden essentials. For children, the thrill is in collecting and rubbing the incredibly smooth comas between your fingers or blowing the seeds from your palm. Yes, November is indeed a magical month!

Editor's Note: Bruce Crawford is a lover of plants since birth, is the Manager of Horticulture for the Morris County Parks Commission, and a Past President of the Garden State Gardens Consortium. He can be reached at BCrawford@morrisparks.net



Tom Castronovo/Photo

Brian Schilling, Director of Rutgers Cooperative Extension, left, and New Jersey Assemblyman William J. Spearman at the entrance of the Rutgers Agrivoltaics Vertical Bifacial Solar Panel Field.

Keeping New Jersey's Farms Viable by Providing an Additional Revenue Stream for Farmers

(Continued from page 21)

a low-risk and supplemental income for farmers.”

Agrivoltaics offers the potential to further the renewable energy goals of New Jersey with an anticipated minimal disruption to New Jersey's roughly 700,000 acres of farmland, according to A.J. Both, a Professor and Extension Specialist in the Department of Environmental Sciences at SEBS. New Jersey is home to more than 10,000 farms, with about one-third of these farms on preserved land, according to the New Jersey Department of Agriculture.

The New Jersey state legislature and representatives of utility companies are focused on substantially increasing electricity generation from renewable energy sources. The New Jersey Energy Master Plan includes a goal of 100 percent of the state's electricity generation from renewables by 2050, while Gov. Phil Murphy has proposed to move faster,

achieving that objective by 2035, Both said.

“The technology offers several advantages, including reducing the operating costs for farmers by covering some or all of their electric costs,” Both said. “It also will assist in reducing society's carbon footprint and helping maintain farmland in active production.

Funding from federal and state agencies has made the project possible.

After securing a \$104K seed grant from the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station that allowed the formation of and early investigations by the members of the Rutgers Agrivoltaics Program, the team received \$2.9 million in state appropriations for the construction of the three agrivoltaic systems at three of the university's farms.

In addition, funding from the U.S. DOE was received through a multi-institutional grant totaling \$1.6 (Cont. on Page 26)

It's been another whirlwind year for lawns. Mother Nature seems to be a bit angry, but also the economy hasn't helped the situation either. Heat, drought, fungus, insects all came into play this year, making it hard for you to achieve the perfect lawn. Will we ever have the perfect lawn all year round, I doubt it?

Everything was going just fine and then mid-April it started to rain and rain and rain for many weeks into late spring. This was good for the grass to grow but also took away many weekends for lawn care, including fertilizing, weed control, or applying grass seed. Then the exact opposite happened in June, it started to get hot and dry as expected and this continued through mid-July in most regions putting most lawns under great stress. Was your grass turning “brown” from heat, drought, fungus, insects, who knows? Many lawns seemed like they might



Turf's Up

By Todd Pretz

Professional Turf Consultant

How does our lawn look?

not make it through the summer months at all. Next, later in July and through August the weather actually cooled down and bit and we got a little rain, more than usual for hot, dry summers. So, fall finally arrived and many folks needed to re-seed dead areas of their lawn. But, September was very dry and grass seed seemed to just sit on the ground showing no signs of germination, very frustrating.

So now it's November, how does your lawn look? What can you do to finish out

the year of lawn care? First of all, it is not too late to apply grass seed or lawn fertilizers and achieve success. The ground is still warm, and the air temperatures are usually cool, great weather to thicken and fill in lawn areas. Apply grass seed to any areas that need it, either dead grass or bare spots. This time of year is better than waiting until spring since next summer's weather may be just as bad as this year. It's best to get new grass seed established rather than wait for the cold, wet spring to delay germination.

Even if you have applied a lawn fertilizer this fall, for best results apply a “Winter-type” Lawn Food for increased growth. New Jersey's lawn fertilizer laws allow you to apply until November 15th. Licensed Turf Professionals are allowed to apply lawn fertilizers until December 1st.

The US economy also was struggling with prices and some families needed to buy coffee and food and gas instead of lawn and garden products. In the future both grass seed and fertilizers should come down some, but

the market may not allow it until later in 2025.

The last thing I would like you to do to your lawn is apply a “Winter” fertilizer in the next few weeks. Winter formulas have higher Potassium levels, it's the last number on the bag. Potassium helps to prepare the grass plants for the harsh winter ahead. It also will keep your lawn greener into early winter and help prevent diseases. Some formulas contain iron and sulfur which also help to green and thicken your lawn. Next spring your lawn will also turn green earlier as a result of this application. Good luck and Happy Thanksgiving!

Editor's Note: Todd Pretz is Vice President of Jonathan Green, a leading supplier of lawn and garden products in the northeast. For more information, please visit: www.jonathangreen.com

Happy Thanksgiving from the *Gardener News* Family!



Keeping New Jersey's Farms Viable by Providing an Additional Revenue Stream for Farmers

(Continued from page 25)



Tom Castronovo/Photo

New Jersey Legislators, Federal Officials, Rutgers County Agricultural Agents, Rutgers Professors, Rutgers Scientists, as well as New Jersey State Officials, listen to remarks about the Rutgers Agrivoltaics Program.

million as part of the agency's FARMS program. Collaborators on this grant include Delaware State University, American Farmland Trust, and the National Renewable Energy Laboratory. DOE's goal is to develop strategies that allow agrivoltaics to thrive within diverse agricultural landscapes,

protecting farmers and farmland, while expanding clean energy generation.

The Rutgers Agrivoltaics Program (RAP) consists of a multidisciplinary group of faculty and staff committed to conducting applied agrivoltaics research and outreach. RAP is part of the New

Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station and Rutgers Cooperative Extension, which provide research, outreach and education resources to residents, communities, and businesses in New Jersey and beyond.

Learn more at agrivoltaics.rutgers.edu

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Gardener News is published monthly by

Gardener News, Inc.
16 Mount Bethel Road #123
Warren, NJ 07059

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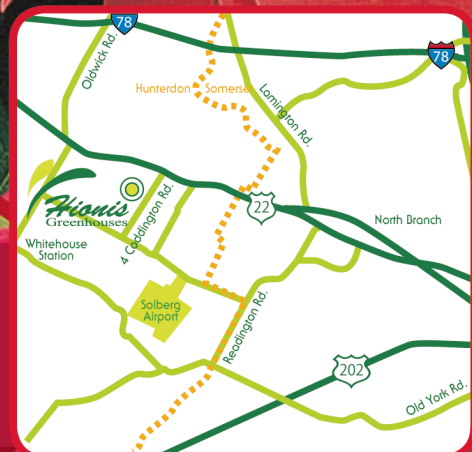
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