



Gardener News

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Turning Grapes Into Fine Wine



Tom Castronovo/Photo

Members of the Winemakers Co-Op from around the Garden State equally sharing their collectively New Jersey Estate Grown grape bunches for the 2025 Open Source Estate Grown wine in front of grape crushing machines on the Working Dog Winery crush pad.

By Tom Castronovo
Executive Editor/Publisher
Gardener News

As I was delivering the September *Gardener News* to Great Swamp Greenhouses in the Meyersville section of Long Hill Township, Morris

County, NJ, I ran into Justen Beneduce Hiles, co-owner of the greenhouse and garden center operation. Her brother, Mike Beneduce, is owner

of Beneduce Vineyards in Pittstown, Hunterdon County, NJ.

Justen and I spoke about agriculture and (Cont. on Page 13)



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FDU Poll Finds NJ Voters Say Farming Central to NJ Economy

Even as farmers nationwide face new challenges, New Jersey voters say that a strong farming industry is vital to the health of the state, with 64 percent of voters from across the political spectrum saying that agriculture is “very important” to the economy. According to the latest results from the FDU Poll prepared in collaboration with the New Jersey Farm Bureau, an overwhelming majority – 79 percent – also oppose seizing farmland for use in affordable housing projects.

“New Jersey has evolved since our origins as the breadbasket of New York and Philadelphia,” said Dan Cassino, Professor of Government and Politics at Fairleigh Dickinson University, and the Executive Director of the FDU Poll. “But people here still see farming as being an important part of what the state has.”

While partisan divisions define most political and social issues in New Jersey and nationwide, there are no such divisions to be found in the views of agriculture. Sixty-five percent of Democrats say that farming is “very important” to the health of the state, little different from that 70 percent of Republicans or 59 percent of independents who say that same. “Agriculture’s bipartisan appeal should be appreciated as we head toward the upcoming state elections in November,” said Farm Bureau President Allen Carter.

Still, there are some differences based on region and age. Voters in the northwestern part of the state are the most likely to say that farming is “very important” (72 percent), while those in the urban core counties are the least likely (55 percent) to do so. Similarly, older voters are rather more likely to say that farming is “very important” (74 percent for voters 65 and over) than younger voters (48 percent for voters 30 and under).

The perceived importance of farming by New Jerseyans is virtually unchanged from 2016 when the same question was asked in a joint FDU – New Jersey Farm Bureau poll. In that poll, 95 percent said the farming industry was

“somewhat” or “very” important to the state’s economy, no different than the 94 percent saying so in the current poll.

New Jersey residents also oppose farmland being taken by municipalities via eminent domain in order to build affordable housing. This issue came to public attention recently after a public outcry in Cranbury Township (Middlesex County) when the town designated a working historic farm as an affordable housing site. Seventy-nine percent of voters in the state say that municipalities should not be able to take farmland for such purposes, with only 13 percent saying that it should be allowed. Opposition was equally high among Democrats (78 percent) and Republicans (82 percent).

“Building more affordable housing is already a tricky issue in New Jersey,” said Cassino. “But even if voters want more housing, they’re not willing to let farmland be taken in order to get it.”

The FDU Poll also collaborated with the NJFB on other questions in a poll conducted earlier this year. One asked respondents about the safety of the food they buy, while another asked about food insecurity. Seventy-six percent of voters say that they are “very confident” or “somewhat confident” that the fruits and vegetables they buy at the store are safe to eat. “This finding affirms the message contained in the state’s Jersey Fresh promotion program,” said the Farm Bureau president. Another question tested the level of food insecurity among New Jersey households. More than a third of New Jersey voters (37 percent) say that they have struggled with being able to feed their families over the past year. Younger voters are more likely to have struggled with the cost of food than older voters.

“The cost of food has always been a concern. Even in a state as wealthy as New Jersey, food insecurity is a concern among many New Jerseyans,” said Liz Thompson, the executive director of Farm Bureau. NJFB President Allen Carter notes that New Jersey’s state budget

contains funds to purchase produce from local farmers, for distribution to those in need via food banks and a network of soup kitchens and food pantries. “New Jersey has dedicated an increasing amount of funds for this purpose in recent years, and the federal USDA should do likewise,” said Carter.

The NJ Farm Bureau and the FDU Poll have collaborated on polling key agricultural issues on a continuous basis for more than twenty years. The research has consistently documented the popular support in New Jersey for farmers and farming, and has provided vital input to Farm Bureau’s work as the voice of agriculture in the legislature and in local policy.

**The survey was conducted between July 17 and 23, 2025, using a voter list of registered voters in New Jersey carried out by Braun Research of Princeton, New Jersey. Contact attempts were limited to registered voters who had voted in one or both of the last two NJ gubernatorial elections or were newly registered since the last NJ gubernatorial election. These respondents were considered likely voters if they met these criteria and said that they intended to vote in November’s gubernatorial election.*

Respondents were contacted via either live caller telephone interviews, or text-to-web surveys sent to cellular phones, resulting in an overall sample of 806 registered voters in the state. Surveys were carried out via live caller telephone interviews to landlines (282) and cellphones (82) and the remainder (442) were done on a web platform via weblinks sent via SMS to cell phones. Surveys were conducted only in English.

The data were weighted to be representative of the population of registered voters in New Jersey. The weights used, like all weights, balance the demographic characteristics of the sample to match known population parameters. The weighted results used here are balanced to match parameters for sex, age, education and race/ethnicity.



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Gardener News

FORWARD IT TO A FRIEND

Daylight Saving Time Ends November 2, 2025 at 2:00am

Turn your clocks back 1 hour.

Winter Solstice

First Day of Winter
December 21, 2025

October is a great month for agriculture in New Jersey.

We can still find some summer crops wrapping up, with late-season corn and tomatoes still being available in some areas and a plethora of fall crops coming to harvest, including cranberries, spinach, broccoli, cauliflower, apples, many varieties of greens and herbs, onions, potatoes and hard squashes, to name a few.

And of course, one of the most popular in the squash family, the pumpkin.

All pumpkins are squashes, but not all squashes are pumpkins. We grow butternut, acorn, spaghetti, and delicata squashes in the Garden State, but we also have growers who produce a wide array of pumpkin varieties.

Many people think of those round orange vegetables and immediately think of carving them for Jack O'Lanterns for the Halloween season. Some leave them whole (occasionally painting faces on them instead of carving them) and add some cornstalks, Indian corn, and straw bales on their porch as a celebration of the fall harvest and leave them out through Thanksgiving.

Do you know where we got



NJ Dept. of Agriculture

By Joe Atchison III
Assistant Secretary of Agriculture

Pumpkins for Decorations and Food

the concept of carving pumpkins? It traces back to an old Irish story about a man known as Stingy Jack who made a couple deals with the devil and tricked him but was ultimately doomed to wander the land in darkness given only a lump of burning coal to light his way.

He carved the internal mass out of a turnip and placed the coal in there (obviously a better idea than carrying burning coal in his hand) and had it serve as a lantern to light his way. Stingy Jack became known as Jack of the Lanterns which, over time, became Jack O'Lantern, referring to both the legendary character from folklore as well as his ancient "flashlight."

Through the years, the Irish people observed this custom by carving turnips and other

vegetables to ward off evil spirits and eventually settled on pumpkins because they were larger and could provide more light, due to accommodating bigger candles.

As the Irish traditions that made up the Celtic Pagan festival of Samhain (marked on November 1 in ancient times as the "end of harvest and start of winter") evolved over the years into what we now know as Halloween, the Jack O'Lantern became a part of that more secular observance of autumn turning toward winter.

My kids are older now, so we don't do a lot of carving, but we definitely decorate the outside of the house for Halloween and Thanksgiving. One tradition that I passed on to my kids was saving the seeds as we carved the pumpkins, just as my brother and

I did when we were kids.

We then soak and rinse the seeds in cold water and then place them into a 250-degree oven with whatever topping you like. You can use traditional salt, or salt and pepper, hot cocoa powder, cinnamon, or even a little cayenne pepper to make them spicy.

Aside from decoration and seeds, October begins the season for pumpkin pie. While most people use the convenience of canned pumpkin from the store, some cooks prefer to start from scratch, going out and getting pumpkins from a farm, then hollowing out the inside flesh for use in a pie, leaving the shell as yet another Jack O'Lantern waiting to be filled with a light source.

Baking calls for a different

variety of pumpkin called a "cheese pumpkin," which has sweet, smooth, dense flesh that, when roasted, yields a rich, flavorful alternative over canned. Some people also use sugar pumpkins. Your guests will really enjoy the handcrafted, made-from-scratch pie using Jersey Fresh pumpkins.

Which reminds me: Another great pumpkin-related activity on New Jersey farms is the pick-your-own pumpkin patch. This incorporates a family fun day of heading out to a farm and seeking out just the perfect pumpkin for your holiday decorations and food. It can become as much a holiday tradition as heading out to select a choose-and-cut Christmas tree (with the added benefit of occurring in warmer temperatures).

Have a great October and Happy Halloween!

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.

Jersey Tastes!

A Year-Round Celebration of the Garden State's Fruits and Vegetables

INGREDIENTS

FAMILY SIZE, SERVES 4
PORTION SIZE: 5 oz.

- 1 cup cooked quinoa
- 1 NJ apple, cored and diced
- ¼ cup pumpkin seeds, toasted
- ¼ cup crumbled feta cheese
- ¼ cup dried cranberries
- fresh parsley for garnish

Lemon Vinaigrette:

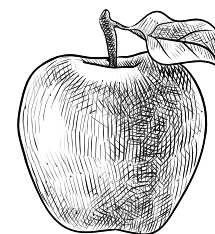
- 2 Tbsp. olive oil
- 1 Tbsp. apple cider vinegar
- 1 tsp. local honey
- juice of 1 lemon
- salt and pepper to taste



FUN FACT!

Strawberry parfait apple is a rare heirloom variety grown in New Jersey, known for its sweet flavor and unusual strawberry or raspberry scent.

Apple & Quinoa Salad



DIRECTIONS

- 1 In a large mixing bowl, combine the cooked quinoa, diced apple, toasted pumpkin seeds, cranberries, and feta cheese.
- 2 In a small bowl, whisk together the olive oil, apple cider vinegar, honey, lemon juice, salt, and pepper until well combined.
- 3 Drizzle the lemon vinaigrette over the quinoa mixture and toss to coat evenly. Garnish with fresh parsley before serving.



<https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/farmtoschool>



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Linnaeus in 1753 gave the scientific name *Liquidambar styraciflua* to our common sweetgum tree. A wounded sweet gum will exude a fragrant, amber-colored sap which thickens to a gum as it ages. The species name *styraciflua* means flowing with styrax, a popular multipurpose plant resin.

The first recorded mention of sweetgum was in 1517 where explorers from Cuba were presented with gifts from the Mayans which included hollow incense reeds, about 9 inches long, filled with dried herbs and a sweet-smelling liquid amber. Later in 1615, Francisco Hernández described a large tree which produced a fragrant gum resembling liquid amber, and in 1681 John Banister sent sweetgum seedlings to England to be planted in palace gardens at Fulham in London.

Sweetgum is a medium to large tree growing from 70-150 feet tall. It can reach a diameter of 3 feet and live 400 years. The tree is easy to identify since it may have 2-4 corky ridges running along its young twigs. It also has 5-pointed star-shaped leaves, which are 3-5 inches in diameter, and distinctive ball-shaped compound fruits.



The Native Plant Society of New Jersey

By Hubert Ling
Horticulture Chair

How Can You Miss with a Name Like Liquid Amber?

These are about 1¼ inches in diameter, with soft spikes which kids love to collect and play with and call spike balls or space bugs. However, some unimaginative adults dislike the tree since they think that space bugs are persistent litter.

Sweetgum trees bloom in April and May. Both male and female flowers are borne on the same tree and often on the same branch. However, male and female flowers are separated into separate clusters. The male flowers remain upright and tend to turn red-orange as they mature. The female flowers form a small ball on a long stalk and when fertilized turn into space bugs.

Sweetgum is a woody deciduous tree which grows naturally in North America in

swamps, wet river bottoms, and also in uplands. It does well in full and partial sun, in acidic to neutral soil. It is moderately resistant to deer, rabbits, drought, fire, heat, flooding, and soil compaction. Sweetgum is native from Connecticut, west to Texas, and south to Nicaragua where it grows in middle elevations of temperate cloud forests.

The tree is generally propagated by the winged seeds which must be stratified for 60 days or soaked in water for 20 days. Cuttings are not used for propagation since they don't root well.

Sweetgum is a valuable member of the forest community. Luna and promethea moth caterpillars eat the leaves and chipmunks, goldfinch, purple finch, and squirrels eat the

seeds. The bark is also a valuable food source for beavers, mice, and rabbits.

Fall sweetgum leaves rival the brilliant color of sugar maple and sourgum. Sweetgum leaves may turn a bright red, orange and yellow. In addition, the leaves can be unusual shades of dark purple shading to brown-black.

Sweetgum is one of the most important lumber trees in the Southeastern US. Commercially it is referred to as sweetgum, redgum, and satin walnut. The sapwood is off-white, and the heartwood is a bright reddish-brown sometimes with dark brown or black streaks. The lumber is satiny, close-grained, and takes a beautiful polish but is difficult to season. It was used to

panel railroad sleeping cars and is currently used for furniture, interior trim, plywood, picture frames, and flooring; it is also used to make upscale chopsticks.

The amber-colored gum had various medicinal uses by Native Americans and our early settlers, and was made commercially into chewing gum. By the 20th century, sweetgum resin was replaced by chicle and later by synthetic bases.

Sweetgum has been a popular landscaping tree around the world because of its ability to grow well in a variety of environments and for the beautiful fall colors. It was extensively planted in California, Bogotá Columbia, and Australia. However, because it has shallow roots it is not prudent to plant it within 25 feet of streets, sidewalks, or buildings.

Consider a sweetgum tree if you have an appropriate spot for it; numerous cultivars are available, and 'Rotundiloba' is sterile and 'Worplesdon' has great fall colors!

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

Without doubt, I appreciate the beauty of a rose. I also appreciate the fragrance for those selections so 'gifted'. As much as I would be hard-pressed to consider roses among my favorite plants, there is always an exception. Several years back I was smitten by the Smooth Rose, botanically called *Rosa blanda* and it was not the flowers nor fragrance of spring that attracted my interest. Rather it was the fall and winter interest combined with its relaxed, colonizing nature.

Rosa blanda is a member of the Rose Family or Rosaceae, which contains 98 genera and over 4,800 species! The Smooth Rose is native to Eastern and Central North America and was described by the Scottish Botanist William Aiton (1731-1793), who served as the Director of the Botanic Garden at Kew from 1759-1793. The species name is from the Latin *Blandus*, meaning alluring or pleasant, certainly very befitting adjectives! Bland has also come to mean tasteless or boring, which is anything but apropos!

Unlike most roses, *Rosa blanda* is rhizomatous and spreads to produce open thickets, rather than individual shrubs. Inappropriate



Morris County Park Commission

By Bruce Crawford
Horticultural Manager

A Most Alluring Rose

perhaps for formal gardens, this habit is ideal for cottage or meadow-like designs where plants can intermingle! The compound foliage is arranged alternately along the stems, with each leaf composed of 5-9 leaflets that supports the larva of numerous Lepidoptera and provide nesting material for native bees.

The pink flowers appear singularly or in groups of up to four flowers loosely arranged in corymb-like structure. Lightly fragrant, the 2-3 inch diameter flowers bloom for one month, starting in mid-May in Northern NJ. The five obovate petals surround a ring of orange anthers and a central boss of much shorter female styles and stigmas. Following petal drop, the ovary slowly matures into a bright

red, ½-¾ inch diameter rose hip or fruit by late summer. It was these rose hips that first drew my attention to the plant.

The hips are not the only vestige of autumn interest, since the foliage transitions to attractive orange and yellow hues above the rich red stems! Throughout summer, the foliage amply covers the stems, and it is not until the foliage begins to drop that the red stems can be appreciated. Another aspect I appreciate about the stems is the lack of thorns, botanically known as prickles. Technically, a prickle is composed of the outer layer or epidermis of the stem while a thorn is a modified stem! The lack of prickles and the waxy smooth stems were the inspiration for the common name of Smooth Rose. The beautiful red stems and

hips remain throughout the winter and provide a source of food for a number of songbirds, upland gamebirds, and mammals.

Rosa blanda is also called Meadow or Prairie Rose, owing to their frequent appearance in open prairies and are easily grown in exposed or blustery winter sites since they are hardy in zones 2-6! Consider mixing and intermingling the rose with plants appropriate to a meadow, such as Bee Balm (*Monarda fistulosa*), False Indigo (*Baptisia australis*), or any of a number of appropriate grasses, such as Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*) for a colorful, well-blended design.

Other than removing a few adventurous rhizomatous stems from areas where they are not desired, there is very little

maintenance required! The plant has proven to be highly resistant to the fatal Rose Rosette virus and are easily grown in a variety of soils, ranging from silty to sandy and moist to dry. Smooth Rose is impartial to the soil pH, growing well in lightly acidic to alkaline soils in full sun or partial shade. At Willowood Arboretum, the plants average around 3-4 feet in height, although they are reported to reach heights of 5 feet!

Rosa blanda is a rose grown for its spreading habit and four seasons of interest. In fact, I can think of few other plants that offer attractive blooms in spring, great fall color and attractive red fruits and stems for season-long winter interest. Combined with its absence of 'thorns', William Aiton could not have crafted a better species name, as this truly is a most alluring rose!

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

The composites are a family of plants that include a wide array of ornamental plants including the coneflowers, *Echinacea*; sunflowers, *Helianthus*; prairie dock and compass plant, *Silphium*, black-eyed Susan, *Rudbeckia*; tickseed, *Coreopsis*; and the dozens of species and cultivars of asters. They are characterized by the ray flowers, which are the showy flowers of these daisy-like flowers, and the disc flowers, which are the much smaller central flowers such as those of the black-eyed Susan. Ultimately, these become the seeds for these flowers.

Many are grown for thriving in the sun and many can tolerate drought-like conditions. In addition to having an abundance of flowers, the seed heads are attractive to many native seed-eating birds like finches, sparrows, and the American Goldfinch. While not all of the composites are native, many of them are and there are endless choices for the home garden.

All of these will provide great late summer interest with many of them with extended flowering into the fall. *Rudbeckia triloba*, the brown-eyed Susan, reaches three to five feet tall and is covered in bright golden petals with a brown center where the seeds form. This short-lived perennial or annual will freely seed in the garden. It blooms from July to October and attracts butterflies



Pennsylvania Horticultural Society

By Andrew Bunting
Vice President of Horticulture

Late Season Composites

and is deer resistant. Closely related is the sweet coneflower, *Rudbeckia subtomentosa* 'Henry Eilers', which reaches four to five feet tall with separated, quill-like yellow flowers with a brown center. A great new black-eyed Susan introduction is 'American Gold Rush'. This compact plant is grown for its amazing profusion of golden flowers and only reaches two feet tall.

There are many species of *Silphium* that are native to the prairies of the United States. Mohr's rosinweed, *Silphium mohrii*, reaches three to four feet tall with pale yellow flowers and is native to the Tall Grass Prairie in Alabama, Tennessee, and Georgia. The prairie dock, *Silphium terebinthinaceum*, has towering stems to ten feet tall with coarse basal leaves. Atop the wiry stems are yellow daisy-like flowers. It is native to the Midwestern prairies. Related to the prairie dock is another prairie native, the compass plant,

Silphium laciniatum. Another large stature silphium is *Silphium perfoliatum* which will reach over ten feet tall and has an abundance of golden-yellow flowers in late summer. Because of the way the leaves clasp around the stem it creates little vestiges to capture water and goldfinches, in particular, clasp their talons to the stems to take a drink from these tiny reservoirs. Because of the propensity to create an abundance of viable seeds, this silphium can become weedy in the garden by producing a considerable amount of seedling which often emerge the subsequent spring.

The tall coreopsis, *Coreopsis tripteris*, can reach up to eight feet tall. This native coreopsis which is covered in relatively small golden yellow flowers is found throughout the central and southeastern U.S. In the garden, it can self-sow and naturalize. It is tolerant of heat, humidity, and drought. A more diminutive relative is *Coreopsis verticillata*,

the whorled tickseed which is grown for its narrow and fine foliage. This perennial over time will spread and colonize into large masses. 'Zagreb' is a PHS Gold Medal selection with bright golden-yellow flowers, and 'Moonbeam' has pale yellow flowers.

A great native annual is the silver sunflower, *Helianthus argophyllus*. The flowers look like a smaller version of the typical sunflower with four inch wide flowers and a dark center where the seeds will form. From a seedling it will reach up to ten feet tall. It is called the "silver sunflower" because the leaves are an attractive silvery color. It flowers from August to November. In the wild, it can be found in Florida, North Carolina, and Texas.

A selection of the smooth oxeye, *Heliopsis helianthoides* var. *scabra* 'Bleeding Hearts' is grown for an abundance of orange-yellow flowers from late

summer and into the fall. The flowers contrast nicely with the purplish-green foliage.

There are seemingly endless choices of these daisy-like plants that make great additions to the perennial garden, and many are great choices for the native plant garden.

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 (PHS) Launches Strategic Planning Initiatives Ahead of 200th Anniversary

The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS) stands at a pivotal moment in its history. As the organization approaches its 200th anniversary in 2027, it has launched an ambitious project to guide its work into a bold and impactful 3rd century. This 3rd Century Project includes a strategic plan, a visionary plan for our public gardens and landscapes, and a campaign to bring these plans to life.

This next chapter will build on PHS's long legacy of using horticulture to advance health and well-being across the Greater Philadelphia region. With a focus on deepening its impact, broadening community connections, and spreading joy and beauty through gardening, PHS aims to strengthen and expand its mission in the decades to come.

PHS has engaged Gallagher Consulting Group to facilitate the development of the 3rd Century Strategic Plan. Gallagher Consulting Group is a strategy and executive development firm with extensive experience working with nonprofit organizations, cultural institutions, and public gardens. This comprehensive plan will take a close look at PHS's core strengths and identify new opportunities to grow its programs. True

to its values, PHS is placing community engagement at the center of this effort. The organization has already begun gathering input from key stakeholders to ensure the plan reflects the voices and needs of the people who are at the heart of its work.

Unknown Studio will lead a Visionary Plan to shape the future of PHS's Public Gardens & Landscapes, working alongside a dynamic team that includes ETM Associates, Canopy Strategic Partners, Urban Heritage Project, and AtkinsRéalis. Together, this group brings deep expertise in comprehensive planning, landscape architecture, urban design, engineering, garden design, and cultural landscapes. This project will reimagine the role of public gardens and public horticulture, placing knowledge and horticultural expression at the center of shared public life. By restoring world-class horticulture to public spaces, PHS aims to set a new standard for what public gardens and landscapes can offer: beauty, biodiversity, wellness, and a powerful sense of connection for all.

To support the successful implementation of these plans, PHS has also retained Charlie Haight, a veteran capital campaign consultant with decades of experience

leading fundraising efforts at major institutions. Haight will advise on a comprehensive campaign to raise the resources needed to implement these plans.

A volunteer committee leads the governance of PHS's 3rd Century Project. Chaired by Ann Marshall and Patti Owens, this committee includes Margaret Sadler, Molly Morrison, Tim Riddle, Gabriella Paez, Janet Haas, Leslie Anne Miller, and David Fleischer.

"This moment offers the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society a rare opportunity to build on two centuries of impact while thoughtfully shaping what comes next. As we plan for the next chapter, we're guided by the strong belief that gardening and connected, thriving communities go hand in hand. This work will ensure that gardening and horticulture continue to enrich lives for generations to come." – Matt Rader, President of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society

As PHS prepares for 2027 and beyond, the organization remains focused on its mission to use horticulture to support a healthier, more connected, and resilient Greater Philadelphia region. Additional updates on the process and progress will be shared as the work progresses over the coming 2 years.



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In the Chef's Corner

By Andy Lagana
Chef

Maple-Pecan Crusted Chicken and Pierogi Casserole

Hello *Gardener News* readers. The fall air has a distinct new crispness, and the vibrant colors are starting to show across our landscapes. This shift in seasons always inspires me to bring that cozy, comforting feeling into the kitchen.

This month, I'm sharing a recipe that perfectly embodies the spirit of autumn: Maple-Pecan Crusted Chicken. This dish isn't just a meal – it's an experience that captures the rich, earthy flavors of the season.

The warmth of maple syrup and the nutty depth of toasted pecans come together to create a crust that is both texturally interesting and tasty. This recipe is a departure from my light, grilled fare of summer, and embraces the richer, more complex flavors that we crave as temperatures drop. The addition of Dijon mustard cuts through the sweetness, while the paprika adds a subtle smokiness. It's a combination of flavors that feels both sophisticated and rustic, ideal for a cozy fall dinner.

For ingredients, gather three 6-8oz chicken breasts, ½ inch piece of ginger peeled, 4 cloves of grated garlic, 1 lemon – zested, 2 tbsp. Dijon mustard, 2 tbsp. maple syrup, 1 tbsp. fresh chopped thyme, ½ tsp. smoked paprika, 4 tbsp. EVOO, Kosher salt, black pepper, and 2/3 cup finely chopped raw pecans.

Arrange a rack in the center of oven, preheating to 400°. Place a large ovenproof skillet on the rack to preheat. In a large bowl, whisk together the ginger, garlic, lemon zest, juice from

1/2 lemon, mustard, syrup, thyme, paprika, 2 tbsp. oil, and 1/2 tsp. salt. Transfer 1/4 cup of the ginger mixture to a small bowl and refrigerate until ready to use.

Pat the chicken dry. Halve each breast lengthwise, then season them with salt and pepper. Transfer the chicken to a bowl with the remaining ginger mixture and toss until the chicken is coated. Using an oven mitt, remove the skillet from the oven and pour in the remaining 2 tbsp. of oil. Place the pecans in a shallow dish (like a pie plate). Working one piece at a time, press one side of the chicken into the pecans, gently pressing to adhere. Transfer to a hot skillet pecan side up. Repeat this process with the remaining chicken.

Bake the chicken until cooked through (15 to 17 minutes) with an instant-read thermometer inserted into thickest part registering 165°. Top with the reserved ginger mixture and thyme. Slice the remaining 1/2 lemon into wedges and serve alongside it.

While the chicken is the star of this meal, a perfect side is needed as the co-star. My go-to dish for this entree is a hearty and simple Pierogi Casserole. This dish is pure comfort food, and the kind of meal that wraps you in a warm blanket on a chilly evening.

Gather together 12 oz. of thin sliced kielbasa, 2 tbsp. EVOO, 2 lbs. potato pierogi of your choice, 1 can 10.5 oz. Cream of Mushroom soup, 8 oz. shredded cheddar cheese, 15 oz. ricotta cheese, 1 (5oz.) pack frozen spinach or

cooked down fresh spinach to equal 5 oz., ½ medium onion – finely chopped, Kosher salt and a thin sliced scallion for serving.

Preheat the oven to 375°. Grease a 13 x 9 inch or 11 x 7 inch baking dish with 1 tbsp. oil. Arrange 12 pierogi to cover the bottom of the prepared dish. In a medium bowl, mix together the soup and three-quarters of the cheddar cheese. Pour half of the soup mixture over the pierogi, the crumble half of the farmer's cheese over them. Sprinkle with half each of the spinach, onion, and sausage, then season with salt.

Repeat with the remaining pierogi, soup mixture, farmer's cheese, spinach, onion, and sausage, then top with the remaining one-quarter of cheddar cheese. Season with salt and drizzle with the remaining 1 tbsp. oil. Bake the casserole until heated through and bubbling, about 45 minutes.

Next, heat the broiler. As the dish broils, watch it closely and remove when the top is crispy – which should take about 3 minutes. Top it off with the scallions.

When considering the right wine pairing for the Maple-Pecan Crusted Chicken and Pierogi Casserole, my goal is to find a wine that can stand up to the rich flavors of the meal without overpowering them. The best options are an off-dry Riesling, a lightly oaked Chardonnay, or a fruity Pinot Noir. With whites and reds in the mix, you can't go wrong with any of these to compliment an unforgettable autumn meal. Enjoy!

Reinvigorated Farm to School Grants Supporting American Farmers and Children

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is delivering on its commitment to support child health and American agriculture by opening applications for the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grants. Through this grant opportunity, USDA will invest up to \$18 million in farm to school projects that connect farmers to USDA's child nutrition programs through local food procurement, agricultural education, school gardens, and more.

New this year, USDA reimagined the Farm to School Grant program, implementing several improvements, including streamlining the application, removing barriers to innovation, and emphasizing partnerships to give small family farms the best chance at success.

"Yesterday at the MAHA Report announcement, alongside Secretary Kennedy, we announced one of the key actions USDA has already taken to contribute to making our children healthy again – Farm to School Grants. These initiatives are one of the best ways we can deliver nutritious, high-quality meals to children, while also strengthening local agriculture," said Secretary Brooke Rollins. "These grants will open new doors for small family farms, expand access to healthy food in schools, and inspire the next generation of Great American Farmers. Under President Trump's leadership, USDA is proud to streamline this program, so it works better for families, farmers, and communities across our nation. Putting America's Farmers First starts with putting our children first."

Since the Farm to School Grant program's inception in 2013, USDA has awarded a total of \$100 million to more than 1,200 Farm to School Grant projects across the country. This year's grants represent the largest total amount USDA has offered in Farm to School Grants in a single year.

Farm to School Grants support projects that:

- Incorporate more unprocessed, locally sourced foods into meals served at school, summer sites, and/or by child care providers;
- Provide producers training on procurement requirements and food safety standards to protect child health;
- Integrate agricultural education into career and technical programs to support the longevity of America's agricultural legacy;
- Encourage increased consumption of fresh, whole fruits and vegetables; and more.

This grant opportunity is open to state and local agencies, Tribes, child nutrition program operators, small- to medium-sized agriculture producers, groups of agricultural producers, and nonprofits. Detailed information about eligibility and application requirements can be found in the request for applications on the Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grant Program website at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/f2s/grant>. Applications close on December 5, 2025.

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From the Director's Desk
Rutgers Outreach
Provided by Brian Schilling
Director

Preserving the Harvest

While the garden season may be winding down here in New Jersey, there is still plenty of time to preserve your harvest so you can enjoy the fruits of your labor all year! You can freeze some greens for a winter soup, can tomatoes for a fresh tasting sauce in February, dry herbs to make your own spice blends, or pickle some vegetables for a special holiday spread.

Preserving food is a great way to extend the shelf life of produce picked during peak season, whether it's homegrown or purchased from a local farmer. One of the key benefits is cost savings, since having preserved food on hand means fewer trips to the grocery store. Another benefit is avoiding the added waste and expense of transportation and packaging associated with commercially prepared items. In addition, home preservation gives the individual full control over the quality and flavor of the preserved items. Plus, preserved foods provide a dependable source of food during emergencies.

No matter what method of food preservation you choose, be sure to follow basic food safety guidelines to ensure health and safety. Here are a few principles to follow:

Clean: always work with clean hands, surfaces, and utensils

Separate: use different utensils for cooked and raw foods to avoid cross contamination

Cook: use a food thermometer to check foods are at the minimum safe internal temperatures

Chill: refrigerate foods within 2 hours of cooking, or within one hour if it is over 90° F

Reminder: check your fridge temperature!

Refrigerators should be at 40° F or below and freezers should be at 0° F or below.

No matter the preservation method you choose, there are some general guidelines that will help ensure both safety and quality. Always begin with fresh, firm produce that is free from spoilage. High-quality ingredients lead to a better final product. Be sure to follow scientifically tested recipes to reduce the risk of botulism and other foodborne illnesses. Accurate measuring or weighing of ingredients is essential when following these recipes. It's also helpful to consider how you plan to use your preserved foods. For instance, a single-person household will likely need fewer dried apple chips for snacking than a family of five. Storing preserved items in single-serving portions, based on your needs, can make them more convenient.

Now for the actual preservation! Freezing is one of the easiest and least time-consuming methods. While freezing slows the growth of microorganisms and chemical changes, it does not sterilize the food. Vegetables should be blanched before freezing for a better-quality product that will not lose flavor or color. Freeze foods rapidly and uniformly by turning down the freezer as low as it will go and leaving space for air to flow around packages. Once items are thoroughly frozen, they can be stored close together.

Drying is one of the oldest methods of food preservation. Dehydrating foods removes moisture so that bacteria, yeast, and mold do not grow. Food dehydrators and ovens are most commonly used. Some items, like apples, benefit from pretreating to preserve color. Dried foods are light and take

up little space, and are great for hikes.

To preserve by canning, foods are placed in jars and heated in a large pot or pressure canner with water, reaching a temperature that destroys microorganisms that can cause illness or food spoilage. While heating, air is driven out of the jar, and as it cools, a vacuum seal is formed. Water bath canning is used for high-acid foods and pressure canning is used for low-acid foods.

If pickling, ingredients are of the utmost importance for flavor and safety. There must be a uniform level of acid throughout the product to prevent the growth of bacteria. Following tested recipes will provide helpful tips about ingredients and produce treatments. Pickled items must be canned for safe storage.

Making jams and jellies is a great way to prolong the shelf life of seasonal fruits. They require a combination of fruit, sugar, pectin, and acid to form. Some fruits have enough naturally occurring pectin to form a gel themselves, but others require commercially prepared pectin. Jams and jellies must also be canned for safe storage.

With the right techniques and attention to safety, food preservation can be a rewarding way to enjoy the flavors of the garden season all year long.

Want to start preserving? Check out the following resources: National Center for Home Food Preservation at nchfp.uga.edu/ and the Rutgers Department of Family and Community Health Sciences (FCHS) preservation webpage at go.rutgers.edu/cjwkj8l3.

FCHS is developing a Home Food Preservation Digital Badge program. To learn more, please complete an interest form at go.rutgers.edu/2e50djzt.

Editor's Note: This article is written by Jennifer Salt Taylor, Family and Community Health Sciences Educator, Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Passaic County.

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LAND-GRANT UNIVERSITY NEWS

Rutgers Unveils New Sweet Bicolor Grape Tomato

After nearly a decade of painstaking research, a new tomato variety is ready for its moment in the sun. “Scarlet Sunrise,” a bicolor grape tomato developed through a long collaboration between Rutgers researchers Peter Nitzsche and Tom Orton, is a sweet, crack-resistant tomato with a golden hue and a reddish blush. Its name is meant to be evocative of the New Jersey skies that inspired it.

The new tomato variety, developed through traditional breeding methods at Rutgers University, was featured at the Open House and Tomato Tasting event on Aug. 27 at the university’s Clifford E. and Melda C. Snyder Research and Extension Farm in Pittstown, N.J.

“This is a great example of how our innovative Rutgers scientists collaborate with New Jersey industries to conduct research that serves communities throughout the state and region,” said Josh Kohut, dean of research at the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences.

Nitzsche and Orton trace ‘Scarlet Sunrise’s’ origins to 2012, when they noticed promising traits in two very different tomatoes. Could the best traits of one, a commercial red grape tomato known for its flavor, be combined with the second, a bicolor cherry tomato which was sweet but prone to cracking open as it grew?

“We saw potential in both,” said Nitzsche, an associate professor and agricultural agent for Rutgers Cooperative Extension. “So, we crossed them, hoping to combine the firmness of the grape with the flavor and color of the bicolor.”

The process of finding a plant with the best combination of characteristics was anything but simple. Because red is a dominant trait, early generations showed no sign of the desired bicolor. It took years of backcrossing, which is a technique used to introduce or reinforce a specific trait, as well as field trials and lab analysis to isolate the right combination of traits.

“There were times we thought it wouldn’t work,” said Nitzsche, who also is director of the Snyder research farm. “Everything was red. No bicolor. That’s when you get frustrated.”

The breeding process was physically challenging, too. “It’s hard to crossbreed grape tomatoes because their flowers are tiny and fragile,” said Orton, now an emeritus professor of plant biology.

In a painstaking process that extended over months, then years, Orton used tiny tweezers to extract parts from hundreds of plants to stop them from self-pollinating and tiny paintbrushes to dab other plants’ pollen on them.

Eventually, the team succeeded. The university has ensured that the intellectual property rights of ‘Scarlet Sunrise’ are shielded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as “plant-variety protected.”

‘Scarlet Sunrise’ was meant to be officially

released in 2020, but its emergence occurred just as the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted seed distribution. Now, with the university actively seeking seed partnerships with commercial growers, the tomato is poised to reach a wider audience.

In a market dominated by mass production, New Jersey growers face stiff competition from California and Mexico. But flavor remains their edge. And ‘Scarlet Sunrise’ delivers, said Nitzsche.

“We’ve always tried to focus on flavor as the competitive advantage for New Jersey growers,” he said. “It doesn’t have to be perfect-looking. It just has to taste great.”

The tomato’s balance of sugar and acid makes it ideal for snacking – and its distinctive appearance helps consumers recognize it at market.

“It’s yellowish with a reddish blush,” Nitzsche said. “One of our colleagues looked at it and said, ‘That looks like a sunrise,’ and the name stuck.”

Nitzsche didn’t grow up on a farm. Raised in Plainfield, N.J., in a family of engineers, he discovered his passion for plants in college at Rutgers.

“I took a botany course and got hooked,” he said. “Then a vegetable production class made me realize that everyone needs to eat. It felt like a good career.”

He earned his master’s degree under Gerald Berkowitz, a professor at Rutgers, working on sweet bell peppers before turning his attention to tomatoes. His grandmother’s garden in West Orange also left a lasting impression.

“She had African violets everywhere and a terraced garden on a hillside,” Nitzsche said. “I guess that stuck with me.”

The Open House and Tomato Tasting event offered members of the public a chance to sample ‘Scarlet Sunrise’ alongside dozens of other varieties, including heirlooms, hybrids and experimental breeds.

“We grow tomatoes of all shapes, sizes and colors,” Nitzsche said. “People can taste the range of flavors and see the research we’re doing.”

The event included wagon tours, educational displays and support from Rutgers Master Gardeners, who help harvest and serve the fruit.

“We couldn’t do it without them,” Nitzsche said. “They’re essential.”

Even as the researchers prepared ‘Scarlet Sunrise’ for its public debut, Nitzsche and Orton were already working on improvements. The current plants grow to be 6 to 8 feet tall, which can be challenging for farmers and gardeners. New crosses aim to produce more compact plants without sacrificing flavor.

“We’re always trying to improve,” Nitzsche said. “That’s what science is about.”

This article first appeared in Rutgers Today.



Tom Castronovo/Photo

Rutgers researcher Peter Nitzsche holds a ‘Scarlet Sunrise’ tomato, a crack-resistant grape tomato with a golden hue and a reddish blush at the university’s Clifford E. and Melda C. Snyder Research and Extension Farm in Pittstown, N.J.

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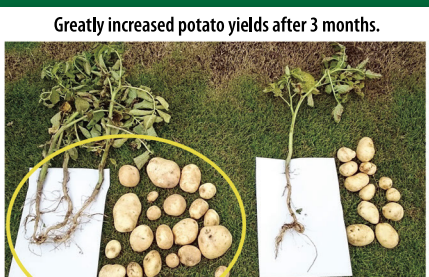




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Turning Grapes Into Fine Wine

(Continued from page 1)



Tom Castronovo/Photo

Mike Beneduce, right, owner and winemaker at Beneduce Vineyards, helps Eric VanSciver, wine maker at Unionville Vineyards, unload his grape bunches onto the crush pad at Working Dog Winery.

horticulture which somehow led to vinification. Vinification is the technique of turning grapes into wine. The discussion immediately focused on her brother, Mike. Justen told me about the Winemakers Co-Op that the vineyard is part of and about the great grape swap that was coming up. I was intrigued. She told me that I should call her brother to find out more about it. As soon as I got back into my SUV, I rang him up in the parking lot. Mike and I had a great conversation.

Mike graduated Magna Cum Laude from Cornell University with a double major in Plant Sciences and Viticulture/Enology. The major was new at the time, and focused on techniques specific to cool climate grape growing and winemaking being utilized in the Finger Lakes region.

He is a Certified Sommelier under the Court of Master Sommeliers and remains an active professional member of the international gastronomic society, the Chaîne des Rôtisseurs. He was named New Jersey's 2022 Outstanding Young Farmer of the Year by the State Board of Agriculture.

This is what I learned from Mike about the Winemakers Co-Op. It is a pioneering non-profit collective dedicated to elevating the fine wine movement in New Jersey. Founded in 2015, the Co-Op celebrates its 10th anniversary this year, marking a decade of advocacy for locally grown, high-quality vinifera wines and steady progress in reshaping perceptions of the Garden State as a serious wine region.

Their flagship initiative, Open Source, embodies their (Cont. on Page 15)

(Cont. on Page 15)



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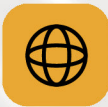


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Tom Castronovo/Photo

As the air turns crisp and the leaves begin their annual transformation, fall reminds us of the constant cycle of growth, renewal, and preparation—much like our own landscape businesses.

Fall color installations—mums, pansies, and ornamental kale—brighten up properties while teams are also focused on leaf removal and preparing irrigation systems for winterization. Hardscape projects often push toward completion before the first frost, and snow divisions are busy lining up contracts, staging equipment, and training crews. It's a season that demands stamina, attention to detail, and careful scheduling—but it's also the time when our work shines brightest.

While landscapers across New Jersey are hard at work wrapping up the season, the NJLCA is also busy preparing an exciting lineup of events and opportunities for our members. This fall season is full of chances to learn, network, and celebrate the successes of our industry. Here's what you won't want to miss:

25th Annual Golf Challenge

A milestone worth celebrating, this year marks the 25th Annual NJLCA Golf Challenge! Scheduled for October 8th at the Wild Turkey Course at Crystal Springs Golf Resort, the event promises a day of camaraderie, fun, and of course, a



The NJLCA Today

By Gail Woolcott
Executive Director

Fall into Learning, Networking and Celebration with NJLCA

little friendly competition. Plus the scenery celebrates the beauty of the fall! Golfers from across the state gather not only to enjoy the course but also to strengthen professional connections. Proceeds from the Golf Challenge help support NJLCA's scholarship program, so by teeing off, you're directly contributing to the growth of our industry. Whether you're a seasoned golfer or someone who just enjoys the social side of the outing, the Golf Challenge is always a highlight of the season.

October Meeting at Bobcat of North Jersey – The Annual Snow Meeting

One of our most popular meetings of the year is coming up in October—the annual “Snow Meeting” hosted at Bobcat of North Jersey on October 16th. As winter prep work looms, this meeting equips contractors with the tools,

strategies, and insights they need to thrive in snow and ice management. From reviewing best practices to checking out the latest equipment, attendees will leave ready to tackle whatever Mother Nature throws our way. This meeting is usually a standing-room-only event, so be sure to mark your calendar and register ahead of time for an evening of learning and networking.

Landscape Achievement Awards and Holiday Gala

As the season winds down, it's time to recognize and celebrate the artistry, dedication, and professionalism that define our industry. The annual Landscape Achievement Awards and Holiday Gala will shine a spotlight on outstanding projects and the people behind them. This elegant evening is more than an awards ceremony—it's a chance to gather as a community,

toast to the year's successes, and look forward to the opportunities ahead. Every year, the creativity and craftsmanship showcased in these awards remind us why landscaping is truly both a science and an art.. If you haven't yet submitted your nominations, now is the time.

Educational and Recertification Classes

Fall is also a season of learning, and NJLCA has a full slate of educational and recertification opportunities on deck. Whether you need pesticide recertification credits, business training, or hands-on classes to sharpen your technical skills, we've got you covered. Education is at the heart of NJLCA's mission, and we're proud to provide programs that help our members grow, stay compliant, and remain competitive in a constantly evolving industry. Keep an eye on

our calendar and emails for coming events.

Growing Every Day

At NJLCA, our tagline “Growing Every Day” comes to life in the fall. Just as landscapes prepare for renewal beneath the surface, our association continues to provide opportunities for members to grow—professionally, personally, and collectively as an industry.

So, as you juggle leaf blowers, mowers, and snowplows, take some time to invest in yourself and your business. Join us at these upcoming events and be part of a community that supports, celebrates, and grows together.

Editor's Note: Gail Woolcott is the Executive Director for the New Jersey Landscape Contractors Association. Gail was 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.

Turning Grapes Into Fine Wine

(Continued from page 13)

collaborative spirit. Each vintage, Co-Op members create individual wines from a shared, collectively grown lot of grapes. The resulting wines—each a distinct interpretation—serves as a showcase of technique and winemaker expression. Open Source is both a literal and symbolic signature for the group: a commitment to openness, experimentation, and elevating the regional conversation around wine.

Each winery typically produces about 23 cases of their version of Open Source, available at Co-Op events and in their tasting rooms until sold out. Each Open Source wine features a unique label showcasing fine-line topographic artwork that represents the contours of the vineyard where the grapes originated—a visual cue to the individuality of each bottle.

I was honored when Mike then invited me to this year's Great Grape Swap on Friday, September 12. The event took place at Working Dog Winery, located in the rolling hills of eastern Mercer County, NJ, at 610 Windsor Perrineville Road in Hightstown.

On a beautiful Friday afternoon, I traveled to Working Dog Winery. Co-Op members from around the Garden State brought 1,000 pounds of Estate Grown grape bunches to their crush pad. The grapes were divided equally, with which each winemaker returned to their own winery. Each winemaker will build their own expression of each Open Source wine.

Beginning with a series of Chardonnay releases in 2016, Open Source has been produced each year, with the exception of 2020. Releases

highlight grapes and blends that show the most potential in the state and have included a 2019 Bordeaux Blend (released in 2023), the 2023 Pinot Blend (released in 2024), a unique white wine blend of all four variations of the Pinot grape, and a 2021 Rosé that included both still and sparkling wines.

This year's release will be the Open Source Cabernet Franc 2022, showcased at the group's annual horizontal tasting, where attendees will taste all six wines side by side and hear from each winemaker about how they crafted their expression. The tasting will take place on Thursday, November 6, 2025, from 6-8pm at Cree Wine Company in Hampton, NJ. Tickets are limited to 50 people.

According to WineAmerica, the National Association of American

Wineries, the production, distribution, sales, and consumption of wine in New Jersey benefits many sectors of the state's economy and generates close to \$5.64 billion in total economic activity. This ultimate value-added product preserves agricultural land, provides American jobs, attracts tourists, generates taxes, and enhances the quality of life.

The wine industry is the ultimate value-added beverage. The broader economic impact flows throughout the state, generating business for firms seemingly unrelated to the wine industry. Real people, with real jobs, working in industries as varied as farming, banking, accounting, manufacturing, packaging, transportation, printing, and advertising depend on the wine industry for their livelihoods.

The New Jersey wine industry also generates sizeable tax revenues on the local, state, and national levels. In 2025, the industry will pay nearly \$383.39 million in state and local taxes and \$436.48 million in federal taxes for a total of \$819.86 million. In addition, the industry generates approximately \$31.89 million federal consumption taxes and \$194.94 million in state consumption taxes which include excise and sales taxes.

The New Jersey wine industry includes a total of 86 wine producers as well as 1016 acres of vineyards. Throughout this study, the winery count refers to the number of winery facilities. A single winery may have multiple facilities throughout the state or country. Each of these facilities is included in the (Cont. on Page 20)



Tom Castronovo/Photo

Family Business Offers Quality, Community, and Service

Michael Costello, CEO of Costello's Ace Hardware, left, and his brother Joey Costello, Director of Strategic Partnerships for Costello's Ace Hardware, look over one of the store's endcaps in the lawn and garden section that features Jonathan Green grass seed during the Warrenville Hardware store's grand-reopening on Friday, September 12, 2025. The Costello family recently purchased the Warren Township, Somerset County, NJ location, and now currently operates 51 retail locations in five states.

The Costello family of stores provides products and services for home preservation and renovation, property maintenance, and enhanced backyard experiences, serving DIY, contractors, and businesses with a focus on personal service and expert advice.

The first Costello's Ace Hardware store opened in 1973 and is one of the nation's largest groups of family-owned and operated Ace Hardware stores.

Jonathan Green is a family owned business that was founded in 1881.

The story of a man named Jonathan Green began before the middle of the last century in the North of England. Born in December 1836 in the small Yorkshire village of Kirkby-Malham, Jonathan Green was first employed as a gardener.

Jonathan Green experimented with different grasses and combinations of "grass families" in an attempt to improve the quality of bowling green turf, eventually constructing greens in towns all over the north of England. Eventually Jonathan Green's sons joined him in the family business. In 1907 Jonathan Green's youngest son Hubert sailed to America taking with him many years of turfgrass experience learned working side by side with Jonathan Green. A few years later in 1912, Jack Green also set sail for America.

In the five generations which have passed since Jonathan Green began experimenting with turfgrass varieties and grass seed mixtures, the family business was run by Jack Green, then his son Barry.

Today, Jonathan Green's great-great-grandson Barry II and his brother-in-law Todd Pretz remain committed to producing and providing superior lawn and garden products to other independent family businesses

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How do new apple varieties get introduced to the public? Who decides what varieties are grown? On what basis are new varieties chosen? Why do we even need new varieties? These are just a few questions about growers and consumers choosing which apples they should grow/consume.

When it comes to breeding and introducing new apple varieties to the public, things do not move very fast. In fact, even under the best circumstances, the selection process, coupled with the time for growers to plant and grow the varieties, as well as the time needed to scale up as an industry to meet demand, can easily take fifteen to twenty years. Unlike vegetables, which can go from a "promising selection" to an "industry standard in a relatively short amount of time, there are quite a few time-consuming steps that have to be taken.

First of all, an apple breeder somewhere has to identify a promising variety that they believe is worth trying to breed. It could be a completely new variety that fills some type of need/want in the apple universe. Maybe it has great flavor or great appearance, or maybe it is



The Town Farmer

By Peter Melick
Agricultural Producer

Apple Varieties

resistant to disease. Or it might be a new and improved strain of an already existing variety. For example, we just started harvesting an earlier ripening strain of Honeycrisp that matures ten days earlier in the season than the traditional Honeycrisp. We felt that this feature was worth dedicating some of our apple acreage to, and so far, it looks good. Then, a good breeder will evaluate that variety for a number of years to ensure that those characteristics will remain true. It is also beneficial to grow the new selection in different areas of the country where apples are grown to see how it performs with different weather and growing conditions. Certain varieties can have very different characteristics when grown in

different regions of the country. For example, Macintosh apples develop their best color and flavor in the cooler regions of the Northeast. They are not suited to the warmer apple growing areas of the country like the interior Northwest or the Southeast.

Once a decision is made that a new cultivar is potentially suitable for commercial growing, some decisions have to be made on what to do with the variety. Traditionally, breeders who were affiliated with a university breeding program contract with commercial nurseries who would then propagate the trees and charge a royalty on each tree produced, which would be returned to the breeding program. This would mean that any grower would be able to purchase these

varieties, assuming that they were willing to pay the royalty. With this business model, what would often happen is that growers would have some early success with a variety, and then over-plant it. In a few years, overproduction would set in which would lead to lower prices for the growers.

Now however, as the production and marketing of apples have become more centralized, the rights to new varieties are often bought outright. What this means is that private interests can now control the variety in every way. They control who grows it and where it is grown. They decide who packs and ships the fruit and where the apples will be sold and at what time of year they will be marketed. Their objective

in doing this is to regulate the production of these apples so that they can increase demand by controlling a relatively limited supply thereby increasing their profits.

The downside to this approach is that it does severely limit who can grow these new varieties as well as the areas that they are grown in. This also means that many of these newer proprietary varieties are only available in supermarkets, at least for now. But a plant patent on a new variety is only good for 20 years. After that, anyone can grow them. I said that this was not a quick process. Happy Fall!

Editor's Note: Peter Melick is co-owner of Melick's Town Farm in Oldwick and a 10th-generation New Jersey farmer. Peter is Mayor of Tewksbury Township, 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.

Gardener News

Gardener News is the leading Agricultural, Environmental, Horticultural & Landscaping industry publication, both online and in print, in the New Jersey metropolitan area.



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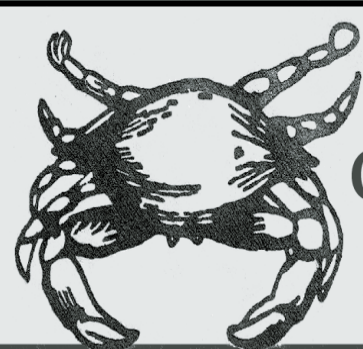


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Turning Grapes Into Fine Wine

(Continued from page 15)

winery count. Vineyard acres refer only to independent farms not owned by wineries, which are counted under “Winery.”

Thank you, Justen and Mike, for the conversation. All the Co-Op owners and winemakers were great folks.

You can learn more about the Co-Op at <https://thewinemakersco-op.com>.



Tom Castronovo/Photo

Members of the Wine Makers Co-Op proudly displaying their harvest on the crush pad at Working Dog Winery. From left to right are Carlee Ludwig and Sharon Kyle, Working Dog Winery; Mike Beneduce, Beneduce Vineyards; Todd Wuerker, Hawk Haven Vineyard & Winery; Eric VanSciver, Unionville Vineyards; Jules Donnini, Auburn Road Vineyards & Winery; and Bryan Heritage, William Heritage Winery.



Tom Castronovo/Photo

A tub of equally divided Estate Grown Chardonnay grape bunches on the crush pad at Working Dog Winery.

Editor’s Note: Tom Castronovo is executive editor and publisher of Gardener News. Tom’s lifelong interest in gardening and passion for agriculture, environmental stewardship, gardening, and landscaping, led to the founding of the Gardener News, which germinated in April 2003 and continues to bloom today. He is also dedicated to providing inspiration and education to the agricultural, gardening, landscaping, nursery, and outdoor living communities through this newspaper and GardenerNews.com.

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CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

CT DoAg Awards Nearly \$1.5 Million to Projects that Build Resilience Across Middle of Food Supply Chain

Connecticut Department of Agriculture (CT DoAg) announced that it has awarded \$1,476,000 for 17 projects through the Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program (RFSI), funded by U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS). These projects seek to build resilience across the middle of the supply chain and strengthen local and regional food systems.

"When we invest in the middle of the supply chain – things like local processing, storage, and distribution – we're not just supporting farmers; we're making it easier for families

to access fresh, local food," said Agriculture Commissioner Bryan P. Hurlburt. "Strengthening these often-overlooked links builds a more resilient food system, one that can better withstand disruptions and keep healthy, affordable food flowing to communities statewide."

This is the second round of grant funding to be awarded through the \$2.1 million CT DoAg received in February 2024 to administer the program. Applicants could apply for equipment only grants or infrastructure grants with funds used to support expanded capacity for the aggregation,

processing, manufacturing, storing, transporting, wholesaling, and distribution of locally and produced food products, including specialty crops, dairy, grains for human consumption, aquaculture and other food products, excluding meat and poultry. The initial award round occurred in October 2024 with more than \$670,000 awarded to fund three projects.

This award round concludes the availability of grant funding through the RFSI program, but any agriculture producer is able to receive free business technical assistance through three contracted

groups. More information can be found by visiting the agency's website at <https://portal.ct.gov/doag/adarc/adarc/grants/resilient-food-systems-infrastructure-program/related-resources> or by contacting Cyrena.Thibodeau@ct.gov for questions of how to enroll.

RFSI is federally funding through the United States Department of Agriculture authorized by section 1001(b)(4) of the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act of 2021 (Pub. L. 117— 2), as amended, and administered by the CT Department of Agriculture.

NEW YORK DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

New York State Agriculture Commissioner Announces \$8.5 Million Awarded to New York State Grown & Certified Farms and Food Businesses

New York State Agriculture Commissioner Richard A. Ball today announced \$8.5 million has been awarded to 69 farms, food processors, and distributors across the State through the New York State Grown & Certified Infrastructure, Technology, Research, and Development (NYS G&C ITRD) grant program. The program is helping agricultural operations—from apple growers and vegetable growers to dairy processors and craft beverage producers—to purchase equipment and enhance infrastructure, supporting the use of state-of-the-art practices to bring NYS Grown & Certified food and beverage products to market.

Commissioner Ball said, "Congratulations to all the recipients

of this terrific program, which is providing funding for much-needed infrastructure enhancements and equipment that support the innovative practices taking place today on farms and food businesses across the State. These improvements will ultimately help our farms and agribusinesses meet the growing needs of the industry and consumer demand, including producing food that is grown and packed with food safety measures and environmental consideration top of mind, which is what the NYS Grown & Certified program is all about."

The NYS G&C ITRD grant program was created to strengthen the businesses that produce, process, or distribute NYS Grown & Certified food or beverage products.

This round of competition sought infrastructure and technology projects focused on distribution capacity enhancement; processing and packaging; production automation and labor efficiency. Proposals were evaluated in two tracks: Projects under \$50,000 and projects between \$50,000 and \$250,000.

Administered by the New York Farm Viability Institute (NYFVI), in coordination with the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, the NYS G&C ITRD grant program was included in Round XII and Round XIII of New York State's Regional Economic Development Council Initiative.

Launched in 2016, NYS Grown & Certified assures consumers that

the food they are buying is local and produced to a higher standard by requiring participating producers to adopt food safety standards and enroll in an environmental management program. Since the program began, NYS Grown & Certified has grown and evolved to include 20 agricultural commodities and processing industries. This voluntary program is a cooperative effort among producers, processors, wholesalers, retailers, restaurants, and the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets to meet consumer demand for high-quality food and agricultural products. It is supported by a marketing campaign including on-product labels, promotional materials, and sales materials.

Gardener News

2025 Person of The Year Nominations Now Being Accepted



Do you know someone in the “Outdoor Living Industry” whose contributions deserve recognition? *Gardener News* is accepting nominations for its 2025 Person of the Year Award.

Nominee must be from the agricultural, gardening, garden center, landscape, outdoor living or nursery industries who best epitomizes concern for, involvement in, and dedication to those pursuits. Or a person who performs exemplary outstanding service to the environment and/or outdoor living industry.

The deadline for receiving nominations for 2025 is November 1, 2025.

Gardener News annually bestows our “Person of the Year” Award in our January edition.

Nominations can be submitted at GardenerNews.com under the “Awards” link on the navigation bar.

● Full Moon October 6, 2025 ○

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