The Capital Area Agriculture and Horticulture Program provides agricultural and horticultural education through workshops, newsletters and consultations, utilizing traditional and electronic means.

Albany, Columbia, Greene, Rensselaer, Schenectady and Washington Counties are included in the program.

CAAHP Team

- Steve Hadcock, Beginning Farmer, Market Development
- Henry “Hank” Bignell, Commercial Livestock
- Lily Calderwood, Commercial Horticulture
- Aaron Gabriel, Agronomy
- Sandy Buxton, Farm Business Management
- Tove Ford, Operations Coordinator

Steve Hadcock, Team Coordinator

The following pages highlight the splendid work CAAHP team members performed during 2016. In their individual ways, CAAHP team members provided great educational programming and assistance to the residents of the six-county area we cover.

In 2017, the team welcomed Aine Hardaker to fulfill a summer technician position. Aine was an asset, assisting team members with research projects and setting up field days. As she was leaving the CAAHP team last summer, Aine shared that she felt working with the team was a great and rewarding experience.

In the fourth quarter of 2016, we started preparing and mailing a quarterly newsletter. Team members are making every effort to let residents of the six counties we serve know how we can assist them. We are grateful to the businesses who sponsor the mailing of the newsletter too.

The following pages contain highlights of the educational activities team members conducted in 2017. This is just a glimpse.

If you wish to learn more about any of the work team members do, please feel free to contact any of us.

Sincerely,

Stephen Hadcock
Summer Intern Joins the CAAHP Team

The CAAHP Program was fortunate to have an intern, Aine Hardaker, working with them during the summer of 2017. Aine assisted Dr. Lily Calderwood, Senior Commercial Horticulture Educator and Aaron Gabriel, Senior Agronomy Educator, with various research projects, including Dr. Calderwood’s lavender and mint SARE research project and Aaron Gabriel’s Avipel study.

Second Annual Cut Flower Conference

The Second Annual Cut Flower Conference was thoroughly enjoyed by more than fifty cut flower growers and people interested in diversifying their operations by adding cut flowers to their crops. Organized by CAAHP Senior Educator, Dr. Lily Calderwood, the conference was held at the Carey Institute for Global Good, and attracted growers from the Capital Region and beyond.

Topics included adding cut flowers as a crop to a family farm, high tunnel nutrient management, dahlia production, weed management on small farms, an update on Dr. Calderwood’s lavender and mint SARE project and a farmer-to-farmer panel discussion.

Keeping Farmers Informed of Crop Conditions and Pests

Farmers make many decisions all through the growing season on how to manage their crops. Weather, fertilization, planting, harvest timing, and pests are only some of the things that must be managed. Along with crops, many farmers are managing animals, marketing, and other aspects of the farm. Having timely crop and pest information can make or break a crop.

As in the past, team members have provided the Ag Report with timely information to help farmers make crop management decisions. In 2017, outreach was increased by including a Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/aaron.gabriel.5437). With a start of 150 friends, the Facebook page informs farmers of the latest happenings in the field and directs them to more information in the Ag Report, which is available on CAAHP’s blog. During 2017, the potato leafhopper was causing damage everywhere. The Ag Report alerted farmers to this problem. A new pest, the western bean cutworm, migrated across the United States and reached New York a few years ago, causing significant damage in the Hudson Valley. Farmers can now select corn hybrids that are resistant to this pest for 2018’s growing season.

Farm Discussion Group Meetings

Aaron Gabriel discussed basic insect biology and identification; including practice in using a hand lens to look at insects and sending photos using a cellphone. Sandy Buxton led a discussion on estimating farm machinery costs using formulas and rules of thumb. Further discussion covered making sound decisions when repairing/renting/purchasing machinery.
Cut Flower Field and High Tunnel Production Workshop

Cut flower producers were one group of growers Lily Calderwood focused on in 2017. The educational needs of these producers include sustainable nutrient and pest management, crop rotation, and high tunnel construction. Lily developed a variety of educational activities to meet their educational needs, including the first New York State Cut Flower Conference and on-farm field workshops. In 2017, more than 105 Capital Region cut flower growers (prospective and commercial) were reached by CAAHP.

Basic Farm Business Management and Planning

Designed to provide insight into the skills and decision making necessary to successfully operate a farm business, this short class led by CAAHP Senior Educator Sandy Buxton demonstrates four key financial documents as well as several analysis techniques. Also, as a gateway class, farm business owners are exposed to other resources available through Cornell Cooperative Extension. Thirty-nine participants from over six counties asked numerous questions and received resources and referrals.

Participants of past classes have found knowledge acquired in these classes has enabled them to work more effectively with their loan officers as well as with other vendors during downturns in the market. Over 50% of participants are using at least one of the four documents to make decisions as well as the partial budgeting techniques to evaluate possible changes in their businesses.

By understanding the cash flow through their businesses, participants can better understand issues around financing and investing within their business. 75% discussed the value of computerized records for tracking and creating financial statements and reports.

Winter Green-Up 2017 was a crowd-pleaser

The 9th Annual Winter Green-Up was held on January 28, 2017 at the Century House in Latham, New York. This one-day conference covered topics including nutrition, soil health, marketing, and holistic resource management. Multiple vendors were in attendance as well.

Feedback after Winter Green-Up 2017:

- “Very informative conference, I learned many new things!”
- “Looking forward to the next one.”
- “It has been encouraging to see the enthusiasm about grass-based livestock production.”
- “I love this conference, keep it up.”

Speakers at Winter Green-Up 2017 included Blaine Hitzfield of Seven Sons Farm, Dr. Rachel Gilker of On Pasture electronic newsletter, Phyllis Van Amburg of Dharma Lea Farm, and Doug Carmichael of Michigan State University Lake City Research Station.

Aaron Gabriel, NACAA Distinguished Service Award

Aaron Gabriel, Field Crops Educator with the Capital Area Agriculture and Horticulture Team was awarded the Distinguished Service Award last week at the National Association of County Agricultural Agents Annual Meeting/Professional Improvement Conference in Salt Lake City, Utah.
The Capital Area Ag & Hort Program’s Quarterly News, a print publication, reached over 1,000 subscribers during 2017. This publication is free to producers and highlights CAAHP’s upcoming events while featuring a quarterly article from each CAAHP team member.

Field Crop Research

Applied field research is needed to keep farmers profitable and on the cutting edge of crop production. CAAHP was part of two state-wide research projects. As personnel and resources at Cornell University diminish, more research will be initiated by Extension Educators in the field. One study evaluated fungicides applied to corn early and later in the season. Another study evaluated a product (Avipel) that keeps birds from pulling up corn seedlings and eating the seed. In cooperation with local farmers, who gave generously of their time and resources, one-acre field plots were established for the fungicide trial. For the Avipel study, three 5-acre fields were divided in half, with one side was treated with Avipel. Collecting data was a big effort. Help from our summer intern, Aine Hardarker was essential to conducting these studies. Information from these state-wide studies will be organized this fall and shared with farmers in our winter meetings.

Beef Quality Assurance Training

Beef Quality Assurance is a nationwide certification program that helps ensure a safe, wholesome and quality beef product for consumers. Topics covered include cattle nutrition, handling, and vaccine protocols. The NY Beef Council sponsored the BQA trainings during October, 2016.

Twenty-two participants attended a BQA classroom training facilitated by Tom Gallagher and Hank Bignell. This event was hosted by the Eckhardt family at Kinderhook Creek Farm in Stephentown NY. After completing a quiz, participants went outside to attend a chute-side training with Dr. Dan Roher.

Steve Hadcock worked to plan and conduct the Capital District Direct Marketing Conference, which covered a variety of timely marketing concepts. The conference featured presentations including Using Social Media to Promote Your Farm, Expanding Sales Beyond Farmers’ Markets, Local Wholesale Marketing Opportunities and Market Intelligence and Learning More About your Markets. Galena Ojiam of the New York Federation of Farmers Markets, Will Malcolm of Capital Roots and Sarah McFadden of Cornell Cooperative Extension, Rensselaer County gave presentations to twenty producers.

A farmer panel including Carrie Edsall of Black Willow Pond Farm, John Moore of St. Croix Farm, Annie Metzger of Laughing Earth Farm and Cynthia Gifford of Liberty Ridge Farm discussed using the internet to reach potential customers.
Helping Beginning Farmers Improve Their Bookkeeping Skills

Steve Hadcock worked individually and in workshop settings with beginning farmers, assisting them in enhancing their financial record keeping systems. Participants realized that having more complete and up-to-date financial records are essential to being able to make management decisions based on their financial data.

Steve co-taught an online course with CCE Educator Bonnie Collins that is designed to help beginning farmers learn how to use QuickBooks™ software. During the six-week course, participants learned to successfully track farm income and expenses. They also learned how to customize reports in order to make them useful for their farm needs.

Steve also assisted numerous farmers by answering their questions, giving them ideas of how to capture what they want to do with their farm finances and teaching them how to use unique features of QuickBooks.

Bedding Plant Conference Popular with Greenhouse Growers

CAAHP’s annual Bedding Plant Conference was held on January 11, 2018. This event, organized by Lily Calderwood, was directed to nursery and greenhouse growers, addressing their particular needs. A series of presentations included greenhouse pest and disease management and control, plant root zone monitoring and minimizing the impact of horticultural pesticides on wild and domesticated bees.

Speakers included:
Brian Eshenaur, NYS IPM Cornell University
Anna Giesmann, Cornell University
Dr. Elizabeth Lamb, NYS IPM Cornell University
Neil Mattson, Cornell University
Maria van Dyke, Cornell University

Fifty-three growers attended the 2018 Bedding Plant Conference, which was held in Troy, Rensselaer County, New York for the first time. Participants hailed from seven counties.

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