

2026 Growing Season Challenges in Schuyler County Fruit Production

by Alec Moore

The 2026 growing season in Schuyler County, New York, has presented fruit growers with a series of weather-related challenges, particularly for stone-fruit crops such as peaches, plums, and cherries. The season began with early spring that encouraged fruit trees to break dormancy and begin developing ahead of schedule. That early development was followed by a significant April freeze, exposing developing fruit buds and blossoms to damaging temperatures across the region.

The spring freeze had the greatest impact on early-blooming stone fruits because their flowers and developing fruit were exposed when freezing temperatures returned. Damage varied between orchards depending on elevation, location, orchard site, and the stage of growth when the freeze occurred. Depending on location, temperatures dropped below 25°F, with some areas reaching as low as 19°F for two consecutive nights in April. Some orchards experienced substantial crop losses, while others retained enough surviving blossoms to produce a crop.

May brought another challenge with frequent rainfall and periods of wet conditions. This increased the risk of fungal and bacterial diseases and made disease-management programs more difficult. Repeated rainfall can reduce the effectiveness of protective fungicides while also limiting the number of suitable windows for growers to make timely applications. The combination of frost damage and persistent moisture created additional stress for trees and increased disease pressure throughout the spring

The impact varied considerably among fruit crops. Apples overall fared well compared with other fruit crops, with minimal to no losses depending on location. Apples generally bloom later than many stone fruits, which helped many apple orchards avoid the worst of the freezing temperatures. As a result, apples were one of the brighter spots of the 2026 growing season.

As the season progressed, fruit crops that retained adequate fruit set benefited from more favorable summer conditions. Summer weather was relatively normal for crop development, providing more consistent temperatures and rainfall after the extremes of early spring and the wet conditions experienced in May.

The more stable summer weather allowed remaining fruit to develop under favorable conditions and gave growers an opportunity to maintain crop health and fruit quality. While reduced fruit set in some crops could not be recovered, favorable summer conditions helped the fruit that remained on the trees continue to develop and mature.

Overall, 2026 has demonstrated how quickly weather conditions can influence an entire growing season, often changing a grower's outlook almost overnight. This year serves as a reminder that orchard location, timely management practices, and unpredictable weather all play important roles in a farm's success. While weather remains one of the greatest factors outside a grower's control, understanding how different crops respond to changing conditions can help growers make informed decisions and better prepare for future growing seasons.



"2026 has demonstrated how quickly weather conditions can influence an entire growing season, often changing a grower's outlook almost overnight..."

...While weather remains one of the greatest factors outside a grower's control, understanding how different crops respond to changing conditions can help growers make informed decisions and better prepare for future growing seasons."

- Alec Moore, CCE Schuyler Commercial Agriculture Educator and owner of Apples and Moore Orchard

If you have Ag and Natural Resources questions, please contact Brett Chedzoy, Senior Resource Educator in Agriculture and Natural Resources and Alec Moore, Commercial Agriculture Educator. Their contact information can be found on the CCE Schuyler Staff Website: <https://cceschuyler.org/staff>

UPCOMING EVENTS:

FREE Pressure Canning Gauge Testing

August 13, 2026 - October 31, 2026 CCE Schuyler Main Office - 9:00am - 2:00pm

It's Canning Season! Are you unsure if your pressure canner's gauge is in proper working order? Stop by the CCESC Office at 323 Owego Street in Montour Falls Monday-Friday any time between 9am and 2pm to have your pressure canner's gauge tested. **This is a FREE service and walk-ins are welcome.**

Plant Medicine from the Garden

September 12, 2026 - CCE Schuyler Teaching Garden- Montour Falls, NY - 10:00am - 11:30am

This course will be discussing plant identification and traditional medicinal uses in the CCE Schuyler teaching garden. Since this class will be held outside, please dress for the weather! **Cost is \$10/person.** Email slt22@cornell.edu for scholarships information if needed. This class size is limited to 20 people, so reserve your spot today! **Registration coming soon to www.cceschuyler.org/events**

Nocturnal Friends! - Montour Falls, NY

September 16, 2026 - Family Play and Resource Center - 4:00pm-5:30pm

The Little Sparks Series continues September 16th with "Nocturnal Friends" from 4-5:30pm at the Family Play and Resource Center. Join Parenting Educator, Paula Goodrich for Nocturnal themed crafts and activities perfect for ages birth to 8 years old. Activities Include: Bat-Chalk Rubbings; Raccoon and Owl Construction; Outer Space Yoga; and Moonwalks! **Reserve your FREE nocturnal materials by September 11th. Contact Parenting Educator, Paula Goodrich at pg347@cornell.edu or 607-535-7161 x3229.**

4-H Fiber Arts Club: No Sew Fabric Pumpkins!

September 26, 2026 - Human Services Complex, Montour Falls, NY - 10:00am-12:00pm

The Fiber Arts Club returns September 26th for a fun NO SEW project perfect for the fall harvest and upcoming spooky season! These no-sew fabric pumpkins are perfect for any skill level. This club is open to ages 8-16, pre-registration is preferred, but walk-ins are welcome. **Register for this FREE event at https://reg.cce.cornell.edu/FiberArtsFP_244 or contact Sue Neal at 607-535-7161 x3232**

Master Gardener Volunteer Event: Seed Saving

September 26, 2026 - CCE Schuyler Teaching Garden - Montour Falls, NY - 1:00pm - 2:00pm

Join Master Gardener, Debbie Ball, to learn about gathering seeds from your flower garden to store safely for spring and share with your friends! The class will be held outside, so please dress for the weather! **Cost is \$10/person.** Class size is limited to 20 people so reserve your spot today! **Registration coming soon to www.cceschuyler.org/events**

Summer Tours of the Family Play and Resource Center!

Sept. 1 - Sept. 30, 2026 - Family Play and Resource Center - Call for Appointment

Come take a private tour of the climate controlled play area - perfect for hot summer days! Schedule a private one on one tour of the center with Parenting Educator, Paula Goodrich on YOUR time. Tours include: introduction to the Family Play & Resource Center; age-appropriate activities for your child; opportunities to ask parenting questions. This event is perfect for ages birth to 8 years old! **Call or Email Paula to book your tour today - email: pg347@cornell.edu phone: 607-535-7161 x3229.**



Cornell Cooperative Extension is an employer and educator recognized for providing equal program and employment opportunities in accordance with applicable laws. Photos courtesy of pixabay.com, Dayna Karius & Alec Moore.

Fall Back into Camp Life This October With Hidden Valley 4-H Camp's Fall Weekend Event!

Summer Break may be over, but your camper can still enjoy one more camp experience October 2nd through the 4th!



Campers Ages 10-16 can enjoy nature, hiking, campfire cooking, pumpkin art and more this autumn!

Register today, visit:

<http://tinyurl.com/hv4hcampregistration>

STAY IN THE KNOW, SIGN-UP FOR THE SCNY AG NEWSLETTER TODAY!

Find out about upcoming events in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Horticulture in the Southern Tier through the SCNY Ag News.



SCAN HERE

EVENT HIGHLIGHT:



Learn how to build realistic nutrition practices that fit your life!



Sign Up Today! CCE

New Wellness Experience - Now Accepting Applications

What if healthy eating started with understanding YOUR body?

Introducing Nourish Her Balance — a FREE 6-week women's wellness experience exploring nutrition, hormones, energy, brain health, cooking, and realistic habits for everyday life.

No quick fixes. No "perfect diet." Just knowledge, practical skills, and a little time for YOU.

Limited spots available. The sign-up window closes September 30th!



Sign up for FREE today by taking our survey! Scan the code or go to: www.surveymonkey.com/r/T83JD8G