

April 2023

Rutgers Award-winning Film Highlights Efforts to Protect Basil from Blight

Fields of Devotion, a science in action film, [follows the unique partnership between local farmers and Rutgers plant geneticists](#) who painstakingly isolated genes for disease resistance in commercial basil, a high-profit crop that small family farmers depend on. **James Simon**, Distinguished professor in the Department of Plant Biology, leads the Rutgers [basil breeding program](#) alongside **Andy Wyenandt**, extension specialist in the Department of Plant Biology. On March 26, *Fields of Devotion* won the [Best Short Documentary Award](#) at the 2023 Garden State Film Festival. This is the second award for the film, which won Best Climate Film by the New York Science and Nature Feedback Film and Screenplay Festival in late 2022. The film was also screened at the Princeton Environmental Film Festival on March 25 in collaboration with Rutgers Masters Gardeners of Mercer County.



EMRE Grant-funded Multi-State Project on Diversifying Agritourism Operations



Agricultural agent, RCE of Gloucester County, **Michelle Infante-Casella**, is working with Cooperative Extension personnel from Penn State University, University of Vermont, West Virginia University, and Cornell University on a multi-state project to educate farmers about diversification of their agritourism operations. This project is funded by an Extension Risk Management Education grant, “Beyond the Pumpkin Patch,” and features a series of webinars that began in

February and continues into May 2023. RCE’s **Agritourism Working Group** has produced extensive [educational and outreach resources for farmers with agritourism enterprises](#). In March, **Claudia Gil Arroyo**, agricultural agent, RCE of Cape May, succeeded Infante-Casella, who served as chair of the working group since 2011. The group includes county agricultural agents **Stephen Komar** (Sussex), **William Bamka** (Burlington), **Peter Nitzsche** (Morris), **Richard VanVranken** (Atlantic), **William Hlubik** (Middlesex), **Meredith Melendez** (Mercer), **Brian Schilling**, director of RCE, and **Jeffrey Everett**, associate director for agricultural retention, development and conservation at NJAES.

New Pathway for CUNY Undergraduates to Transfer to Rutgers Animal Sciences Program

Students at the Fiorello H. LaGuardia Community College (LaGCC) will be able to [seamlessly transfer and earn an undergraduate degree in animal sciences at Rutgers](#), thanks to a new articulation agreement between the two institutions. LaGCC is a federally designated Hispanic-serving institution in New York City that serves low-income, inner-city students, and is part of the City University of New York (CUNY) system. LaGCC is the only program in the CUNY system with an animal science track that will prepare students for a four-year degree and potential internships in the field. Successful transfer

candidates into the animal sciences undergraduate program at Rutgers will be exposed to a wide range of relevant topics, including veterinary science, companion animal science, equine science, laboratory animal science, and production animal science.

Of Interest

The following fact sheet has been updated and is available on [NJAES Publications](#):

[FS230: Aphids of Vegetables](#)

Ghidiu, G.; Ingerson-Mahar, J.; Holmstrom, K.; and Nitzsche, P.

Thierry Besançon, associate extension specialist in weed science for specialty crops in the Department of Plant Biology, [received the 2023 Outstanding Educator Award from the Northeastern Weed Science Society](#) (NWSS) and the 2023 Outstanding Weed Science Journal Reviewer Award from the Weed Science Society of America (WSSA). In addition, he was elected vice president of the NWSS board and joined the WSSA Public Relations Committee.

The 32nd Annual Rutgers Turfgrass Symposium was hosted by the **Center for Turfgrass Science** on March 16 and focused on modern approaches to research in turfgrass science. The keynote address on barley and wheat molecular genetics was presented by Gary Muehlbauer Distinguished McKnight University Professor in the Department of Agronomy and Plant Genetics, University of Minnesota.

Grants

Christopher Obropta, extension specialist in the Department of Environmental Sciences and director of **RCE Water Resources Program**, was awarded a \$45,000 grant from the Dodge Foundation to provide technical support to New Jersey communities to adopt green infrastructure strategies and implement projects designed to address stormwater pollution, improve water quality, and reduce flooding.

Bingru Huang, Distinguished Professor in the Department of Plant Biology, is the principal investigator for the grant, "Mitigating Bentgrass Summer Decline Utilizing Endophytic Plant Growth-Promoting Bacteria," funded at \$95,756 by the U.S. Golf Association.

Hemant Gohil, agricultural agent, RCE of Gloucester County, was awarded \$7,000 from the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture for continued evaluation of standard peach varieties, with new planting of advanced selections to be conducted at Rutgers Agricultural Research and Extension Center (RAREC) in Bridgeton, NJ, and \$7,000 from the New Jersey Peach Promotion Council for the design of a market survey of peach vendors in an effort to study sourcing of locally grown peaches.

Events

Introduction to Backyard Beekeeping on May 6 at the Middlesex County EARTH Center in Davidson's Mill Pond Park, South Brunswick. [Backyard beekeeping has become vital to the conservation of bees and the protection of their habitat](#). Contact Carol Richiusa at carol.richiusa@co.middlesex.nj.us.

Core Basic Pesticide Training Course, [the first step to becoming a licensed New Jersey pest control operator and/or applicator](#), is offered by NJAES Office of Continuing Professional Education on May 11. Contact Joe Canzano at joe.canzano@rutgers.edu or call 848-932-7317.

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