

#### **RU Ready to Farm**

Getting Rooted in the Garden State





### **Project Team**

- Program Director: William Hlubik County Agent I/Professor
- <u>Co-Director: William Errickson</u>
   County Agent III/Assistant Professor
- <u>Co-Director: Dr. Lauren Errickson</u>
   Director of Rutgers Gardens & Campus Stewardship
- Senior Program Coordinator: Brendon Pearsall
- Farm Coach: Alex Sawatzky
   Rutgers Student Farm Manager
- Program Assistant/Videographer: Linnea Eberly















### **Program Background**

- In New Jersey, the average age of farmers is approaching 60 years old
- There is a critical need for a next generation of local farmers to secure our local food system and ensure sustainable food access.
- In September 2020, Rutgers
   Cooperative Extension was awarded
   a grant from the USDA NIFA Beginner
   Farmer and Rancher Development
   Program





#### **Program Structure**

#### Phase 1: Fundamental Farm Skills (2021)

- Online courses
- Farm tours
- Office hours

#### Phase 2: CSA Training Program (2022)

- NJAES research farm
- Hands-on
- Cooperative management

# Phase 3: Farm Placement & Incubator Sites (2023)

- Individually managed
- Shared equipment and infrastructure





#### **Phase 1 – Farm Business Fundamentals**

- 15 2-hour recorded sessions
- Bi-Weekly office hours with program staff
- Reading assignments, quizzes, discussion boards
- Focus on small-scale, low-input agriculture
- Business, marketing, economics, budgets
- Field trips



86 students have completed the phase 1 program so far (48 in 2021; 38 in 2022). 22 more currently on waiting list for next year,

### **Farm Tours and Work Days**







### Local Knowledge

- <u>17 local farmers</u> served as panelists and lecturers
- 6 local farms
   hosted field tours
   for experiential
   learning









#### **Phase 2 – On Farm Training**

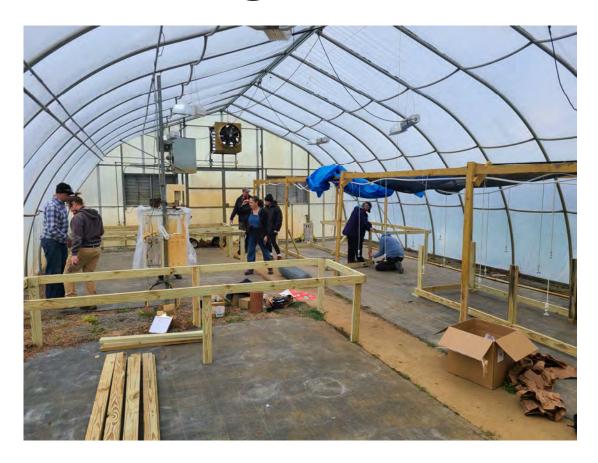
- 12 participants from the first year's class.
- Hosted at the Rutgers Specialty Crop Research and Extension Center in Cream Ridge.
- Produced a 10-week CSA style farm share for 46 paying customers.
- Each participant was responsible for managing 3 crops, a mix of cool and warm season.
- In addition to crop production, the participants also learned other hands-on skills such as:
  - Basic carpentry Building greenhouse benches and shelves
  - Building a wash station
  - Setting up caterpillar tunnels







## **Building**







# **Delivering**





#### **Donating**

- Following the completion of the 10-week CSA, remaining crops were gleaned and donated.
- Nearly 1,000 lbs of production to Replenish and other local food banks.
- Modeling behaviors to reduce food waste.
- Incubator Farmers will donate a portion of their produce in lieu of payment.









#### **Phase 3 – Farming and Incubator**

- For 2023 and beyond the goal is to transition students from CSA training into productive agricultural work.
- This will include:
  - Facilitating placement as a farm worker, intern, or apprentice.
  - Assisting with land acquisition by helping to evaluate sites and providing guidance on lease and purchase agreements.
  - Helping those with land plan and execute their farm business.
  - Creating a farm business incubator to allow graduates to begin farming on their own in a lower-risk environment with equipment and infrastructure already in place.
- Working with municipalities and private landowners to open up opportunities for program graduates.







#### **Building Community**

- More than about education and business planning, to have a chance of succeeding our beginner farmers will need a strong network and support.
- It's about connections, the connection between farmers and customers, extension experts, and other farmers.
- Not all will go on to own farms, but many will develop into skilled and reliable farm workers and farm managers.





#### Thank you to our beginner farmer community!





#### Special thanks to all of our collaborators!

- James Klett Fairgrown Farms
- Steven Specca Specca Farms
- Tim VonThun VonThun Farms
- Larry Kuser Fernbrook Farms
- Jim Giamarese Giamarese Farm
- Allison Akbay Snapping Turtle Farm
- Candice Howard Duchess Farms
- Leah Ducey Spring Wind Farm
- Alex Stein Good Earth Nursery
- Rebecca Kutzer-Rice Moonshot Farm
- Justine Gray Dryer Farms/Taste Profit
- Rose Robson Robson's Farm
- Mike Hlubik Hlubik Farms
- Ray Hlubik Hlubik Farms
- Fred and Kim Cattani Cattani Farms
- Jen LaMonaca Walking Bird Farm

- Alex Sawatzky Rutgers Student Farm
- Kate Brown RCE Burlington
- Meredith Melendez RCE County Agent Mercer
- Pete Nitzsche Snyder Farm, RCE County Agent Morris
- Megan Muehlbauer RCE County Agent, Hunterdon
- David Specca Specca Farms/Rutgers EcoComplex
- Kris Holmstrom NJAES Vegetable IPM
- Dr. Andrew Wyenandt Extension Specialist in Vegetable Pathology
- Hank Bignell RCE Warren
- Ashley Pierce Cornell Extension
- Robin Brumfield Extension Specialist in Farm Management
- Madeline Flahive DiNardo RCE Union
- Dean Polk Director of Rutgers Specialty Crop Research and Extension Center/Fruit IPM Program
- Dr. Joseph Goffreda Rutgers Fruit Tree Breeding Expert
- Thierry Besancon Extension Specialist in Weed Science

#### Thank you!

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