

January 2021

News From CCE

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By Jingjing Yin, CCE Chemung

Happy New Year! 2020 definitely wasn't ideal for everyone, but I am grateful that my garden was productive last year, and was a place of joy and calm for me each day in the lockdown of last spring. We are all hoping that 2021 will be a better year.

It is January again. As a gardener, it is never too early to get a jump start on the next growing season. Begin planning your garden for the upcoming season. The season will be here before you know it. Make a planting plan, deciding what to grow, when to plant, and where you will plant your chosen crops. Browse the seed catalogs and place your seed orders – don't hesitate and wait around because stores run out quickly.

If you have never gardened before, and want to start a new garden this spring, Seed to Supper will be offered virtually again in this April. This is a free five-class gardening course for beginners. The topics will include garden planning, garden site and soil development, planting, garden maintenance, and harvesting. More information of this course will be announced in this newsletter and on CCE website in March.

Regional New Master Gardener Training is starting on January 9th, and will last for 16 weeks. This year, the training will be held online, using an online teaching platform called Moodle. We are looking forward to this new, virtual teaching platform for a tried and true program!



Finally, if you have any questions, concerns, or comments, please feel free to contact us. Stay safe and healthy.

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Inside this issue:

- Soil Up Close—Really Up Close!
- New Sheep Parasite Breakthrough
- Why Houseplants Die in the Winter
- Controlling Varmints
- Workshops — online of course
- And more!

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For more information about the Tioga County Master Gardener program, please contact Barb Neal at 607-687-4020 or ban1@cornell.edu.



Getting to Know Houseplants

environment that is higher in humidity. You can also place plants on top of saucers filled with gravel, then add water to the saucer. Just make sure that the bottom of the pot is not sitting in water. Move plants away from heat sources.

During the winter, plants generally require less water in because they are not growing. But, if the air is extremely dry or the plants are near a heat source, they may require more water than in the summer. Remember that watering is dependent on location, humidity and the species of plant.

Why houseplants suffer in winter

By Sue Gwise, Horticulture Educator, CCE Jefferson

Why do my houseplants look so dull during the winter? Sometimes they even die. What can I do?

Once the days begin to get shorter and autumn approaches, houseplants respond in much the same way trees do. Their growth slows down, flowering stops and some may even drop large numbers of leaves. All of these “symptoms” are natural reactions to changes in the environment.

In the spring and summer, houseplants are growing. In the winter, they are “at rest.” This rest period is a good thing that is needed by many plants. Unfortunately, many problems also can crop up during the winter. Low humidity is the biggest problem. In the spring and summer, the heat is off and windows are open. There is more moisture inside our homes. In the winter, with furnaces on, homes may have a relative humidity that is only 10 to 20 percent. Houseplants like the relative humidity to be in the 40 to 50 percent range.

There are several things you can do to overcome this problem. Group plants together to create a mini-

It is better to keep the plants on the dry side. Water when the soil is barely dry to the touch. Also, water thoroughly so that water runs out of the bottom of the pot. Any extra water that remains in the saucer should be poured off. I place all of my houseplants in the bathtub when I water them so that they can drain freely. (*editors note: and I put them in my bathtub if I am going away for a length of time.*)

Houseplants look poorly in the winter because of lack of sunlight. Come spring they will develop a healthier color.

Temperature is another issue. Houseplants like daytime temperatures that are between 65 and 70 degrees and night temperatures of 60 to 65 degrees. Temperatures below 50 degrees may damage some houseplants. Remove plants from cold windowsills and unheated rooms.

Resist the temptation to fertilize them. Many plants need the winter rest period and stimulating their growth may lead to other problems. Start fertilizing again in April or May. The plant will let you know when it is time. You’ll see a flush of new growth.



Winterberry: A Native of Lasting Beauty

By Nadie VanZandt, Extension Master Gardener Intern
University of Vermont

Dominated by shades of gray, the landscape appears bleak in winter. Look closer and you may glimpse muted mauves in the distant mountains or the warm glow that envelopes the land at the golden hour.

If that doesn't satisfy your yearning for color, consider planting winterberry shrubs. Their allure is in the brilliant red berries that add a welcome splash of color to the winter landscape.

A native woody shrub of North America, the winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*) is one of 30 species of deciduous holly hardy in U.S. plant hardiness zones 3 through 9. Commonly referred to as black alder or winterberry holly, it grows erect to a height of 5 to 12 feet with a similar spread.

In spring its slender branches are covered with small green leaves followed by clusters of tiny white flowers, about one-quarter inch wide, that grow in the leaves' axils (near the stem). In the fall, after shedding its leaves, the shrub reveals an impressive mass of berries of brilliant color varying from bright red to deep orange to golden yellow, depending on the cultivar.

Laden with brilliant berries, this shrub is even more strik-

ing in winter against a backdrop of snow and bare trees.

In addition to aesthetic year-round appeal, winterberries do not mind wet feet. They are ideal for boggy areas or rain gardens. In their natural habitat they grow in waterlogged sites, swamps and near streams and ponds. In such wet environments they tend to form thickets and develop suckers, yet they are not invasive.

As is typical of the genus, the winterberry is dioecious, which means that each plant is either male or female. The gender is identified by the characteristic of its blossoms.

The male winterberry produces staminate flowers (with stamens) while the female produces pistillate flowers (with pistils). Since only pistillate flowers produce fruit, winterberries require a strategic planting of male and female plants to maximize pollination by insects for an abundance of berries.

Planting one male plant for every four or five female plants will optimize pollination and fruit production. Botanists recommend locating a male plant within 40 feet of a female plant. It is important to select male and female plants of the same flowering period for proper pollination by bees and butterflies.

Planting enough shrubs to share with wildlife could enhance the berry show in fall and winter. Many species of birds use this shrub for their nests and eat the berries. Although not a favorite of deer and moose, these mammals occasionally browse on winterberry stems and leaves.

The best time to plant winterberries is in the spring. They are sold as bare rootstock, in containers or balled and burlapped. Be sure to take a soil sample to check the pH of the planting site, and amend the soil accordingly.

Winterberries look best planted "en masse" as a backdrop to other plants or at the forest edge. They grow well in full sun to part shade and thrive in moist soil, rich in humus, with a pH of 4.5-6.5.

Space them three to five feet apart, measuring from center to center. For best results, follow the planting guidelines recommended by the nursery where you purchase your plants.

Once established after two to three years in the ground, you can trim suckers and prune them to shape before growth emerges in early spring. As a bonus, winterberry branches with scarlet berries make attractive floral arrangements both indoor and outdoor during fall and winter.

This winter as you map out the plants you would like to add this year, consider giving this amazing native the place it deserves in your garden.

Wildlife: Excluding and Repelling Problem Wildlife from the Garden

Fact Sheet from UMass Extension

Deer, rabbits, squirrels, woodchucks and birds, especially crows, can cause troublesome damage in the vegetable garden. In some areas, chipmunks, porcupines and voles develop a taste for vegetables. Raccoons notoriously appear just as the corn is ripening.

Exclusion

Proper fencing provides the most reliable way to exclude the larger mammals from the garden. Choose the type of fencing most suitable for the animals that are known to be a nuisance in your area or neighborhood. Different types of fencing include wire mesh, welded wire, plastic meshes, and electric strands. Wooden fencing often requires added wire mesh or electric fencing to make it effective. When you install a fence, design it so that you can integrate future modifications if other pests become a problem. Birds can be excluded with row coverings and fine mesh materials, known as bird netting, supported over crops.

Repellents

Animal repellents are formulated for use in different ways: as perimeter repellents to keep animals from entering an area, or contact repellents applied directly to plants to make the plant distasteful or painful to eat. Because few independent studies have investigated the effects of the many repellents on the market, and because formulations and brands tend to change frequently, consumers have little to go on but the promotional information on the product label. Generally, two categories of repellents are marketed for food crops:

Plant extracts such as capsicum, garlic, mustard oils, and others, as well as putrescent egg solids, which repel based on taste or pain

Animal products such as predator urine, dried blood and meat proteins that induce fear.

Repellents based on plant extracts can usually be sprayed directly on plants. First, spray one susceptible plant or part of a plant, then wait a day to see how the plant responds before spraying all of your plants. Some contact sprays might harm plants. Generally, repellents based on animal products are applied around the perimeter of the area you want to protect. They work best when plenty of palatable food is available outside of the treated area. Repellents suitable for landscape plants are not necessarily safe for edible plants. Read the label of any product carefully before purchasing to confirm that it is labeled for use on, or around, food crops.

Repellents have the advantage of being less expensive than fencing, but their effectiveness depends on many factors:

First, identify the pest - or pests - responsible for damage. Choose a repellent designed and labeled for the species.

If possible, for best results, apply repellents before damage occurs. Otherwise, take action at the first signs of damage, before the animal becomes accustomed to feeding in your garden.

Consider whether to spray the individual plants and/or treat the perimeter of an area.

Individual animals have different taste and smell sensibilities, just as people do. One rabbit might run from blood meal sprinkled on the ground and another might hop right through.

The number of animals in the population near your garden can affect how much damage occurs. One stray squirrel with plenty of attractive food to eat elsewhere is different from 10 squirrels depleting the local food supply. Repellents may not deter a truly hungry animal.

Weather affects some repellents more than others. Monitor closely to determine whether to reapply after each rain or heavy dew.

Animals adapt to certain smells and tastes. Changing brands of repellents during the season might increase positive results.

Other Habitat Management Tips:

Remove nearby resources that attract wildlife: birdfeeders, birdbaths, pet food, watering bowls, and unsecured garbage containers.

Enclose compost that includes fruit and vegetable scraps in pest-proof bins.

Remove potential habitat: brush, debris and rock piles, stands of weeds and overgrown grass (which provide cover for rodents and rabbits).



Deer

Look for hoof prints, split and pointed at the front and rounded at the back, about 1 1/4" – 3 1/2" long. Deer droppings in the summer tend to be bunched up clumps, 1"- 2" in diameter, of dark pellet-shaped material. Deer tend to trample plants and feed in the late evening and very early morning. If deer are detected, act quickly because a few deer can inflict a

lot of damage. If you know deer feed in your area, consider installing a fence prior to planting a garden.

Physical exclusion is the most reliable method for protecting vegetable crops from deer. Though deer will not normally jump a 6' fence, a 7' – 8' fence provides the best security. Deer can crawl under a standard plastic mesh fence. Secure the bottom of the fence with a strand of plastic or steel wire strung tightly from post to post. Generally, electric fences have proven less successful in excluding deer.



Rabbits, Woodchucks and Porcupines

Rabbits

Rabbits can thrive in suburban and urban areas as well as in rural habitat. They are active at dawn and dusk or at night, with most feeding in the few hours after sunrise or sunset. Droppings are round pellets, about ¼" in diameter. Rabbits will eat most vegetables, although they usually ignore corn,

squash, cucumbers, tomatoes, and potatoes.

A low fence of 2-foot chicken wire with 1-inch or smaller mesh will exclude rabbits. Be sure that the bottom is tight against the ground, or buried a few inches deep, to prevent the animals from pushing under the fence. The chicken wire can be rolled up and stored during winter to prevent deterioration. More permanent and more costly welded wire fences will last longer.

Woodchucks

Woodchucks, or groundhogs, burrow in hedgerows, along the edges of fields or under stonewalls, outbuilding and porches. They feed during the day, especially in mid-morning or late afternoon. Woodchucks cover their droppings, so this sign isn't usually present. They consume a wide variety of succulent herbaceous plants, including vegetables and fruits. They will gnaw on maturing melons and squash.

Woodchucks are good climbers. Fences need to be at least 3' high and sturdy, preferably welded wire. To discourage burrowing under the fence, bury the lower edge 10" – 12" deep. An electric fence wire 4" - 5" inches off the ground and 4" - 5" inches from the fence will discourage woodchucks from

climbing. Electrified netting is also effective. Alternatively, the top 15" of the wire fence can be bent outward at a 45° angle.

Porcupines

Though porcupines are more likely to injure fruit trees and berries, they sometimes develop a taste for certain succulent vegetables. Their droppings measure about ½" – 1 1/8" long and are sometimes slightly "C" shaped and strung together. These rodents have a strong attraction to salt from sweat left on tool handles and gloves. Fencing as for woodchucks is usually effective. Porcupines climb, but they don't burrow.

Squirrels, Chipmunks, and Voles

Squirrels forage actively at dawn and dusk. Chipmunks feed during the day. Both rodents may develop a taste for fruits such as tomatoes or strawberries or for sprouting seeds, but they injure leafy vegetables less frequently. Electrified netting or other small electric fences may be useful in keeping squirrels and chipmunks out of gardens and small orchards. Small domes or cages made of fine mesh (1/2" to exclude chipmunks) wire can protect individual plants or small rows until the plants, or crops, mature.

Voles

Voles feed mostly at night. They can damage seedling by chewing stems and leaves. Voles feed on a wide range of garden plants including artichoke, beet, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrot, cauliflower, celery, lettuce, spinach, sweet potato, tomato, parsnip and turnip. Voles burrow through long tunnels at the interface of thick grass and soil, or just under the surface of the soil. They are poor climbers. Look for vole tunnels at the edges of grassy areas. Tilling and cultivating will destroy tunnels and discourage voles from entering the garden. Fear of predators, such as owls, keep them from crossing open ground; mow grass closely around the edges of the garden. Area repellents applied around susceptible crops may be effective if the vole population is low. Fencing for voles requires installing 1/4" wire mesh at least 12" high and buried 6" – 10" in the ground. This can be attached to an existing fence and must be maintained weed-free.

Other Problem Wildlife

Raccoons will go through or climb most ordinary fences, especially for ripening corn and melons. Sturdy, well-maintained electric fences, properly installed, may exclude them. Repellents and scare tactics have little value in deterring raccoons.

Crows and other birds may pull germinating seeds out of the ground. Crows love corn, but will also eat peas and beans; goldfinches will harvest beet and chard sprouts. Light weight, translucent row covers deter birds. Bird netting, supported over plants, excludes them from fruiting crops. Birds tend to acclimate quickly to scare tactics and repellents.

USDA-ARS Researchers Introduce Parasite Treatment

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service on Wednesday announced a ground-breaking treatment that prevents anemia, weight loss, poor wool and meat production, and even death in sheep.

ARS researchers partnered with Virginia Tech and the University of Massachusetts' Medical School to solve *H. contortus* parasite infection, which also happens to be a challenging health problem in the American sheep industry. The parasite infects the stomach of ruminant mammals, feeding and interfering with digestion, before ultimately affecting the animal's overall health and stability.

"The *H. contortus* parasite has developed resistance to virtually all known classes of anti-parasitic drugs," said ARS Researcher Dr. Joseph Urban, who led the research team in testing and implementation of a para-probiotic treatment to kill the parasite that causes *H. contortus*.

The worm parasite mates within the animal and its fertilized eggs pass through the animal's waste into the soil. The larvae then develop to re-infect other unsuspecting animals, spreading the infection throughout a pasture and creating a cycle of infection that hinders animal growth, development and production.

"This is a major problem, and the newly-developed treatment is derived from bacteria normally found in the soil that can produce a protein that binds to receptors in the intestine of the parasite," said Urban. "The treatment will then kill the parasites and reduce debilitating infection in adult sheep."

"When the treatment was given to infected sheep at Virginia Tech, there was a rapid and dramatic reduction of parasite reproduction and survival, without any negative effect observed in the sheep," said Dr. Anne Zajac, professor of parasitology at Virginia Tech's Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine.

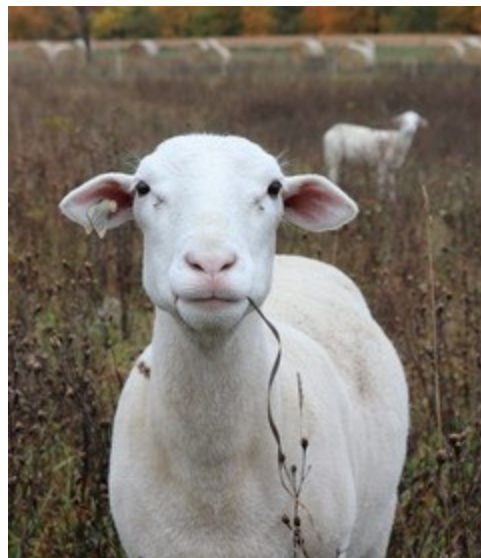
Para-probiotics are "inactive probiotics," or good bacteria that can still provide health benefits. Despite the growing interest in para-probiotic use, these types of treatments are not commercially available. The treatments are currently under review by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and will likely be commercially produced in large

amounts once approved. This will help to protect an even larger population of animals across the country.

"Para-probiotics represent a new evolution and hope in dealing with a malignant and pervasive parasite," said Dr. Raffi

Aroian, a professor in the Molecular Medicine program at the University of Massachusetts' Medical School. "The development of new therapeutics for this issue has been extremely difficult to come by, and I look forward to watching this new advancement unfold in the global and domestic industry."

This project was supported by the National Institutes of Health/National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, and an Agriculture and Food Research Initiative Competitive Grant from USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture.



Support Local Farms and Local Farmers

Some websites to explore:

Buy Local Food—a searchable website with farmers who sell direct to consumers. You can narrow your search for product and location: <https://buylocalfoodny.org/>

Finger Lakes Farm Country—an agritourism website, but includes maple, honey, and other products available for sale: <https://fingerlakesfarmcountry.com/>

Meat Suite: buy quantities of meat from local suppliers: <https://www.meatsuite.com/>



Now's the Time to
Spot Spotted Lanternfly

Photo USDA APHIS.

Photos: Richard Gardner, Bugwood.org

The advertisement features a red background with a magnifying glass icon on the left. The magnifying glass has a pink lens and a green handle. The word 'Spot' is written in yellow inside the lens, and 'Spotted Lanternfly' is written in white to the right. Below the text are two photos of spotted lanternflies on a rock. At the bottom, there are two photos of tree bark with egg masses. The left photo shows a close-up of a light-colored egg mass on a tree trunk. The right photo shows a yellow circle drawn around a similar egg mass on a tree trunk.

**Our egg-masses are subtle, and can be found on bark, rocks,
& many other surfaces. If you spot us, report us!**

spottedlanternfly@agriculture.ny.gov

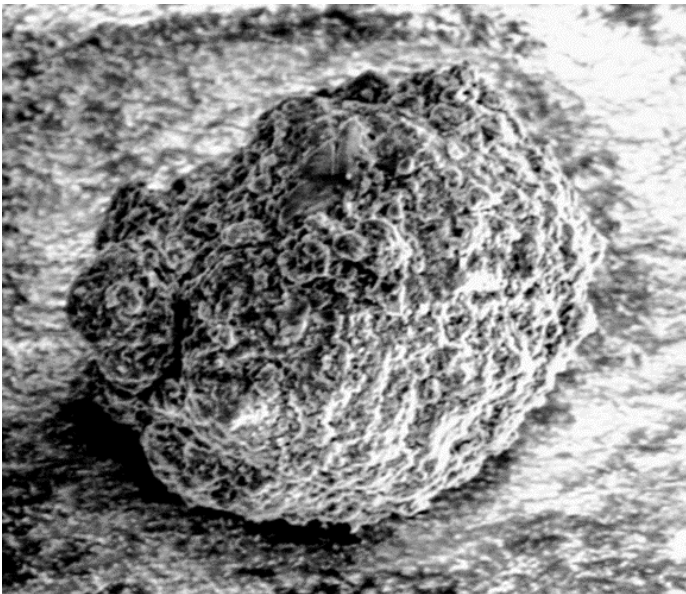
New imaging method views soil carbon at near-atomic scales

By [Krishna Ramanujan](#) | *Cornell Chronicle*

December 21, 2020

The Earth's soils contain more than three times the amount of carbon than is found in the atmosphere, but the processes that bind carbon in the soil are still not well understood.

Improving such understanding may help researchers develop strategies for sequestering more carbon in soil, thereby keeping it out of the atmosphere where it combines with oxygen and acts as a greenhouse gas.



Angela Possinger, Michael Zachman, Barnaby Levin/Provided
Scanning electron microscope image of an aggregate of soil used in this study.

A new study describes a breakthrough method for imaging the physical and chemical interactions that sequester carbon in soil at near atomic scales, with some surprising results.

The study, "[Organo-organic and Organo-mineral Interfaces in Soil at the Nanometer Scale](#)," was published Nov. 30 in *Nature Communications*.

At that resolution, the researchers showed – for the first time – that soil carbon interacts with both minerals and other forms of carbon from organic materials, such as bacterial cell walls and microbial byproducts.

Previous imaging research had only pointed to layered interactions between carbon and minerals in soils.

"If there is an overlooked mechanism that can help us retain more carbon in soils, then that will help our climate," said senior author [Johannes Lehmann](#), the Liberty Hyde Bailey Professor in the School of Integrative Plant Science, Soil and Crop Sciences Section, in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. Angela Possinger Ph.D. '19, who was a graduate student in Lehmann's lab and is currently a postdoctoral researcher at Virginia Tech University, is the paper's first author.

Since the resolution of the new technique is near atomic scale, the researchers are not certain what compounds they are looking at, but they suspect the carbon found in soils is likely from metabolites produced by soil microbes and from microbial cell walls. "In all likelihood, this is a microbial graveyard," Lehmann said.

"We had an unexpected finding where we could see interfaces between different forms of carbon and not just between carbon and minerals," Possinger said. "We could start to look at those interfaces and try to understand something about those interactions."

The technique revealed layers of carbon around those organic interfaces. It also showed that nitrogen was an important player for facilitating the chemical interactions between both organic and mineral interfaces, Possinger said.

As a result, farmers may improve soil health and mitigate climate change through carbon sequestration by considering the form of nitrogen in soil amendments, she said.

While pursuing her doctorate, Possinger worked for years with Cornell physicists – including co-authors [Lena Kourkoutis](#), associate professor of applied and engineering physics, and [David Muller](#), the Samuel B. Eckert Professor of Engineering in Applied and Engineering Physics, and the co-director of the [Kavli Institute at Cornell for Nanoscale Science](#) – to help develop the multi-step method.

The researchers planned to use powerful electron microscopes to focus electron beams down to sub-atomic scales, but they found the electrons modify and damage loose and complex soil samples. As a result, they had to freeze the samples to around minus 180 degrees Celsius, which reduced the harmful effects from the beams.

“We had to develop a technique that essentially keeps the soil particles frozen throughout the process of making very thin slices to look at these tiny interfaces,” Possinger said.

The beams could then be scanned across the sample to produce images of the structure and chemistry of a soil sample and its complex interfaces, Kourkoutis said.

“Our physics colleagues are leading the way globally to improve our ability to look very closely into material properties,” Lehmann said. “Without such interdisciplinary collaboration, these breakthroughs are not possible.”

The new cryogenic electron microscopy and spectroscopy technique will allow researchers to probe a whole range of interfaces between soft and hard materials, including those that play roles in the function of batteries, fuel cells and electrolyzers, Kourkoutis said.

Coauthors include Michael Zachman Ph.D. '18, a former graduate student in Kourkoutis' lab; Akio Enders, a former researcher in Lehmann's lab; and Barnaby Levin Ph.D. '17, a former graduate student in Muller's lab.

The study was funded by the National Science Foundation, the Technical University of Munich Institute for Advanced Study, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the Cornell College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Alumni Foundation.

Our own Ryan Maher, the coordinator of our [Reduced Tillage project](#), organized these sessions on soil health, cover crops and reduced tillage. The sessions will take place on Tuesday, January 12, 2021, from 8:45 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. Explore the full 2021 Empire State Producers Expo schedule and register online.

In the first of two sessions, you will learn the latest research on selecting and managing summer cover crops in your rotation from Rebecca Brown (University of Rhode Island). Then Skip Paul (Wishing Stone Farm, RI) will talk about the advantages of cover crop interseeding and share his successes and failures with establishing cover crops in brassica cash crops on his farm.

For the second session, Chad Cochran (USDA NRCS -NH) and Nathan Johanning (University of Illinois Extension and farmer) will team up to get into the details of managing no-till (NT) vegetables and the decision points for different crops. You will learn about NT vegetable transplanters, tips for modifying equipment, and NT management practices for sweet corn and pumpkins. Bring your questions for discussion and walk away with ideas on how you can keep more of your soil covered, reduce your inputs, and improve productivity with less tillage on your farm.

Learn more about our work supporting organic practices to manage weeds, cover crops, and soils with less tillage, on our [Reduced Tillage project page](#).



Like that article and want to learn more about soil health? Check out the Cornell Small Farms Sessions During 2021 Empire State Producers Expo!

Join us next week to hear farmer experiences and research on cover cropping and no-till practices from around the region during the Soil Health Sessions at the virtual 2021 Empire State Producers Expo.



QuickBooks for Farmers

Online Course Begins January 18, 2021

Want to start the New Year right with a commitment to improving your farm recordkeeping system? Want to use financial data and reports to make better business decisions? This 5-week interactive online [QuickBooks for Farmers](#) course can help you get there.

Summary

- Online course includes readings, pre-recorded "how-to" videos and 5 live webinars
- Webinars take place from 1:00 -2:30pm every Friday from Jan 22 to Feb 19
- Webinar recordings will be available for students who cannot attend the live sessions
- Course fee is \$190 and includes 12-month access to all online course materials
- Farm Service Agency has approved this course for FSA borrower education
- Questions? Contact Mary Kate MacKenzie by email at mkw87@cornell.edu

Register here: <https://south-central-ny-dairy-field-crops.teachable.com/in/quickbooks-for-farmers>

Course Description

By combining the theory and practice of farm business accounting into a single class, this training will empower students to set up and maintain a record-keeping system that is accurate, efficient, and useful. This year we are teaching the course in an online format, providing self-paced learning from the comfort of your home.

The course covers basic farm accounting principles, which students will apply to create and manage a financial record-keeping system for their farm. We use QuickBooks Online to conduct this training, so students will gain in-depth technical experience with that software platform. However, the skills we teach are highly transferable to other versions of QuickBooks and other accounting systems.

Upon completing this course, students will be able to:

- Choose the right accounting system for their farm
- Set up QuickBooks Online with a customized chart of accounts
- Manually record and classify farm business transactions
- Synchronize QuickBooks Online with farm bank accounts and credit cards to automatically import transactions
- Reconcile accounts on a monthly basis to ensure accuracy
- Generate and analyze financial reports to evaluate business performance

This training is appropriate for beginner and intermediate QuickBooks users who are looking to implement a new record-keeping system or enhance the efficiency and functionality of their current system. It is also a great fit for QuickBooks Desktop users who are curious about QuickBooks Online.



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[Northeast Organic Seed Conference](#), January 16-24, virtual

The third biennial Northeast Organic Seed Conference will take place virtually from January 16 – 24, 2021. A “conference within a conference”, this event is held in conjunction with the Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York’s NOFA-NY Winter Conference.

Winter Crop Meeting Goes Virtual for 2021

Four-week series; Thursdays, Jan 14- Feb 4 from 1:00-2:00 pm

The South Central NY Dairy & Field Crops Team offers its annual Winter Crop Meeting as a virtual 4-part weekly series from 1-2 pm on consecutive Thursdays, beginning January 14 and ending February 4. The program features experienced agronomists and a plant pathologist.

Dates and topics to include are as follows:

- **Jan 14; Allen Goodwin, Pioneer Field Agronomist** will discuss *Crop Stress and Management Strategies to Minimize Their Impact*.
- **Jan 21; Jaime Cummings, NYS IPM Field Crops Coordinator**, will provide an update on the findings from a survey of *Soybean Cyst Nematode* presence in the state. She will explain what this means to soybean producers, along with best management recommendations for dealing with SCN on farm.
- **Jan 28; Joe Lawrence, Dairy Forage Systems Management Specialist** with the NYS PRODAIRY Program will present data on **corn silage hybrids and management practices for harvesting and preserving high-quality corn silage**. Data from recent trials will be used to illustrate management principles.
- **February 4; Martin Battaglia, agronomist** and post-doctoral associate with the Cornell Spear nutrient management program, will present the findings from a multi-year study **measuring the effects of factors that contribute to high yields in corn production under standard management and intensified management**.

One DEC pesticide recertification credit will be earned on Jan 21 in categories 1A and 21. CCA credits will be available for all sessions.

The cost of the workshop series for all 4 sessions is \$20.00. An individual session is \$10. Pre-registration is required by January 13, 2021.

To register, sign up online at <https://scnydfc.cce.cornell.edu> or contact Donette Griffith at dg576@cornell.edu or call 607.391.2662. For questions, contact Janice Degni at 391-2672 or jgd3@cornell.edu.

Conservation Reserve Program General Signup Begins Today and Ends February 12

WASHINGTON, Jan. 4, 2021 – Agricultural producers and private landowners interested in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) can sign up for the popular program beginning today, Jan. 4, 2021, until Feb. 12, 2021. The competitive program, administered by USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA), provides annual rental payments for land devoted to conservation purposes.

Through CRP, farmers and ranchers establish long-term, resource-conserving plant species, such as approved grasses or trees, to control soil erosion, improve water quality and enhance wildlife habitat on cropland. Farmers and ranchers who participate in CRP help provide numerous benefits to their local region and the nation’s environment and economy. CRP general signup is held annually and is competitive; general signup includes increased opportunities for wildlife habitat enrollment through the State Acres For Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) initiative.

New cropland offered in the program must have been planted for four out of six crop years from 2012 to 2017. Additionally, producers with land already enrolled but expiring on Sept. 30, 2021, can re-enroll this year. The acreage offered by producers and landowners is evaluated competitively; accepted offers will begin Oct. 1, 2021.

Cornell Small Farms Courses Start Soon!

Mushroom cultivation, beekeeping, season extension with high tunnels, and more. Check out the online course offerings at: <https://smallfarms.cornell.edu/online-courses/>.

Raising Goats on the Homestead

Friday, January 15, 4-5:30 p.m.

Goats have a reputation for being a bit naughty, but they also have lots to offer on the right homestead – including milk, meat, fiber and even help clearing new land or controlling weeds! Join Jacki Perkins, organic dairy and livestock specialist with Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Assoc. (MOFGA), for this introductory webinar on how to get started raising goats on a very small scale. Fee: sliding scale from \$0-\$15. Register here: <http://mofga.org/MOFGA-Events/raising-goats-on-the-homestead>



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