

# CCE

Cornell Cooperative Extension | Saratoga County

# NEWSLETTER

September 8, 2025

Volume 6 Issue 19

## SARATOGA COUNTY 4-H 4-K WALKATHON

**\$30 for  
Commemorative  
T-Shirt**



**Raise Money!  
Earn Prizes!**

**All Proceeds Benefit the 4-H Training Center!  
Tie-Dye T-Shirts, Hotdogs, Games, Fun for All Ages!  
Alumni Reunion!  
Come see all that the 4-H Training Center has to  
offer our community!**

**Saturday, September 27th  
3:30 Registration, 4:30 Start**

**4-H Training Center  
556 Middleline Rd, Ballston Spa**

Register Here



[walk.sc4h.org](http://walk.sc4h.org)



We are excited to continue the legacy of the Saratoga County 4-H Walkathon with the 2025 Saratoga County 4-H 4K Walkathon.

The Walkathon will be held on Saturday, September 27th, starting at 4:30 pm (Registration at 3:30 pm). The Walk will be followed by food, music and games. For over 50 years, 4-H members, families and community members have been coming together to support what has become the touchstone of Saratoga County 4-H—the 4-H Training Center located at 556 Middleline Road in Ballston Spa—to build and maintain this amazing community resource.

Last year was a record year for the 4-H Walkathon, and it was so much fun to spend time with over 150 members of our 4-H Family! We can't wait to see what 2025 has in store for this amazing event!



## Become a Master Gardener

Do you love gardening and want to expand your knowledge? Here is your opportunity to become a life-long learner, a volunteer, and a force in your community! Cornell Cooperative Extension of Saratoga County welcomes you to apply for 2026!

The Master Gardener Program is an integral component of our county's outreach program in educating home gardeners, youth in after-school programs, individuals with physical and/or developmental disabilities, community gardeners and consumers of horticultural products. The Master Gardener Program is designed to train volunteers to work with the public to provide researched based education and outreach. Master Gardeners are required to volunteer 50 hours their first year, then 30 hours to maintain their active status in the program.

Topics of discussion will range from ornamental and landscape plants, turf management, vegetable gardening, organic gardening to basic entomology, weeds, and diseases. Applications are due by November 21, 2025 but space is limited. The course will be two evenings a week from 5 pm—8pm from mid-January through May in 2026.

For more information or to apply, please contact our Community Horticulture & General Agriculture Manager, Jessica Luse at [jmh452@cornell.edu](mailto:jmh452@cornell.edu) or call our office at 518-885-8995.



## JOB OPENING

### Nutrition Resource Educator

Cornell Cooperative Extension  
Saratoga County

CCE of Saratoga County's nutrition & food program helps Saratoga County residents to promote health and prevent disease through workshops on healthy eating and cooking.

The Nutrition Resource Educator collaborated with multiple partner organizations, funders, and Cornell University program work teams to assess, develop, deliver, and evaluate both existing and new programs. This position solicits grants and manages funder requirements; serves on advisory boards, and works independently and with limited supervision influencing programs for the Association and its constituents.

Program responsibilities include but are not limited to topics around community nutrition, obesity and chronic disease prevention, food and nutrition gaps and trends, food preservation, and Hudson River Fish Advisory Outreach. [Click here for more information.](#)

## CAR SEAT CHECK

CCE Saratoga is hosting their next **FREE** car seat fitting station!

**Thursday, September 11 | 4 pm—8 pm**  
**New Country Toyota of New Clifton Park**

Call Cindy at (518) 885-8995 to schedule your appointment

**\*Extra Bonus\***- MVP Health will be joining us to offer health education for children going back to school, and some awesome give-a-ways!

**Please bring the following to your scheduled appointment:**

- Your child(ren)
- Car seat owner's manual
- Vehicle owner's manual



We ask that your car is free of all debris so car seat technicians can get inside your vehicle.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

The next Board of Directors Meeting is scheduled for **September 24 at 7pm** at the Extension Office. If you are interested in attending or have questions, please contact Wendy at [wlm8@cornell.edu](mailto:wlm8@cornell.edu).

### CCE Saratoga's Board of Directors

John Mancini - *President*  
Liz Newsom - *Vice President*  
Mark Preissler - *Secretary*  
Jim Pettis, Jr. — *Treasurer*  
Tom Venditti  
Alex Guilmette  
Nancy Wade Leary  
Kevin Veitch — *Board of Supervisors Representative*  
Danielle Hautaniemi - *Cornell Representative*





# FEEDING HORSES

## THE ART AND SCIENCE OF EQUINE NUTRITION

October 18th, 2025

Speakers and Presenters From

**TRIPLE CROWN**

Nutritionists & Experts



Therapeutic Horses of Saratoga  
683 Rt 29 Saratoga Springs, NY  
12866



10:00am - 2:00pm



\$20 - Includes lunch  
& Equine Nutrition  
Goodie Bag

\*Youth are FREE to attend\*  
Registration is Required for Adult & Youth  
Class Max - 24 people

Presented By:

**CCE**   
**EQUINE**



Hosted By:



Contact Us to Sign Up 



518-885-8995



rc926@cornell.edu

Horse owners, equine professionals, and enthusiasts are invited to take a deep dive into the world of equine nutrition at Feeding Horses: The Art and Science of Equine Nutrition, a hands-on educational event on **Saturday, October 18, from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm.**

Building on the success of April's equine nutrition class, this fall session goes beyond theory with live demonstrations, feed evaluation, and practical measuring techniques to better understand the dietary needs of horses.

The program will feature Triple Crown nutritionists and equine experts as presenters. Participants will gain insights into evaluating feed quality, comparing the nutritional standards, and tailoring diets to individual horses.

SUNDAY | SEPTEMBER 14 | 10AM-2PM

NEW YORK INVASIVE SPECIES EXPO

# COMMUNITY CONSERVATION DAY



SARATOGA SPA STATE PARK | NEXT TO THE SPA CITY FARMERS MARKET

**Meet local  
organizations who  
are working to  
protect New York's  
land and waters from  
invasive species!**



## **Family-Friendly:**

- Games
- Activities
- Workshops
- Demonstrations
- & Prizes!



## Fall is for Wildflowers

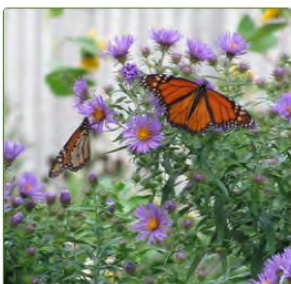


Photo uploaded by [jmorth](#)

The colors of autumn are upon us. While we should sit back and enjoy the show, this is also the time of year to prepare to grow more color for next year. Fall is the perfect time to plant wildflowers in most of the country. Cool, wet days allow the seed of perennial flowers to germinate, while annual flowers can lie dormant until spring.

Whether you're starting a new wildflower patch or renovating an old one, now is the time.

### Selecting Wildflowers

The first step in growing a new wildflower patch is to select the right varieties for your region. Many companies offer general North American mixes and specific regional mixes, such as the Texas blend. Regional mixes feature annual, biennial, and perennial flowers that are known to grow well in a particular area. Some seeds come woven in pre-sown wildflower mats that you just roll out and water. This is the easiest way to get started.

Another approach is to pick out your favorite individual wildflowers and create your own mix. Here are some widely adapted wildflowers to try.

[Indian Blanket](#) - This annual produces red, daisy-like flowers with yellow edging. It blooms in early summer.

[Black Eyed Susan](#) - This classic, perennial wildflower features bright yellow flower petals with a black center. It flowers from midsummer until fall.

[Shirley Poppy](#) - This annual produces papery flowers in shades of pink, red, and white. It flowers from spring until mid-summer and often self sows.

[Purple Coneflower](#) - This native American perennial produces purple-petaled flowers with a prickly orange center (cone). It flowers from midsummer until frost. It naturalizes and spreads easily.

[Lupine](#) - This perennial produces tall flower spikes that bloom in early summer in colors such as red, blue, pink, and white. They naturalize easily.

### Seeding a Wildflower Meadow

Most wildflowers grow best in full sun, so select an area that gets at least 6 hours of direct sun a day. You can plant wildflowers almost anywhere: along a driveway, in a meadow, in a garden, along a road, or on banks. Mow the wildflower area close to the ground. If it's an abandoned field, brush hog the area first before mowing more closely with a lawn mower, if possible. Try to avoid tilling the wildflower area deeply, which brings dormant weed seeds to the soil surface to germinate and compete with your wildflowers for water and nutrients in spring. Instead, kill the existing vegetation by hand pulling tough perennial weeds and using a flame weeder or organic herbicide to kill all the other weeds. Using a flamer and herbicide helps create spaces for wildflower seeds to get started.

After treating the vegetation, shallowly scratch or lightly till the soil surface and sow your wildflower seeds. Scatter them over the area as evenly as possible, first walking in one direction and then in the perpendicular direction. Press the seed into the soil with your footsteps.

### Maintaining Your Wildflowers

Keep the wildflower patch well watered this fall if the weather is dry. In spring the patch should start growing. It's inevitable that some weeds will appear in your new planting. At first, it will be difficult to distinguish them from the wildflowers, but pull any grasses and be highly suspicious of any plant that's growing much faster than everything else. By spring the first flowers will appear. During the first year, many wildflower patches are dominated by annuals such as baby's breath, sunflowers, and cosmos. These showy colors will give way to perennials such as [Black Eyed Susans](#) and [Coneflowers](#) in subsequent years.

### Fall Wildflower Care

Let your wildflowers thrive all summer. Come fall, as the blossoms fade, mow the patch and leave the cuttings on the ground. Many annual flowers will drop their seeds and self-sow to return for a second show next spring.

By maintaining the wildflower patch each year, you can often go 3 to 4 years before weeds and grasses eventually take over your patch. Then it's time to start all over again with another beautiful wildflower meadow.

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NYS IPM Program

## What's Bugging You?

*Not all things that buzz, crawl or slither are pests. Figuring out WHAT is bugging you is the first step.*

**OCTOBER 3 | 12:00 PM—12:30 PM**

**Winterize your home orchard | Feeding Friendly Insect 4\***

In this event we're focusing on fall tasks that are good IPM practices. Cleaning up your home orchard can mean fewer pests to attack your tree fruit in the spring. Fall is also the right time to plant seeds or seedlings of perennial wildflowers that feed friendly insects.

[Register Here!](#)

## Hidden Inside: An Avocado

In case you had not heard, avocado are good in other recipes besides guacamole. This chips and salsa accompaniment has taken life with many new recipes and an appreciation for its healthy fats.

Nutritionally, 1 medium avocado contains around 325 calories, 30g fat, 17g carbohydrate, 13g fiber, 2g protein, and is a source of vitamins and minerals, including vitamins A, E, and K, folate, phosphorous, and potassium. Avocados contain almost no sodium.

That is a lot of calories and fat, but avocados contain mainly unsaturated fats, or as I like to call them, liquid fats. While these are heart-healthy, avocado is still high in calories, so be mindful of your portion.

By the way, you can plant the pit and it will grow into a plant. See directions from [University of Nebraska–Lincoln](#).

- **Buy:** Look for firm and full avocados. Avoid those with soft spot and wrinkled skin. There are different varieties of avocado with darker and lighter skins, so buy what you prefer. When ripe, avocados will give to light pressure. If an avocado feels very soft, it is likely overripe and may have started to oxidize and discolor.
- **Price:** According to the [U.S. Department of Agriculture](#), fresh avocados cost around \$2.24 per pound (or about \$0.96 per 1 cup) on average. Since avocados are grown in different regions of the world, it is likely your store will carry them year-round.
- **Store:** Keep a whole avocado at room temperature until ready to use. If ripe, use within a day or two of purchase. If it still needs to ripen, wait a few days.
- **Prepare:** Wash avocados and cut just until you hit the pit. Keeping knife still, turn the avocado around the pit and rotate to pull into two pieces, like you might a peach. Use a spoon to scoop out the flesh (and pop out the pit), or cut into desired pieces. Refrigerate any leftover avocado within 2 hours of cutting.

Since avocados turn brown (also called oxidizing), use them quickly in recipes to limit the color change. Adding acid, like lemon or lime juice, can reduce the amount of browning in a recipe or even on slices of avocado.

- **Eat:** Besides guacamole, avocado can be used in salsa, as part of desserts, as part of baked goods, added to soups, chili, and stews, and more. Eating on top of toast is rather popular right now.

[Complete article with references.](#)

## Making Guacomole



Did you know that guacamole has its own dedicated day in the US? It's September 16<sup>th</sup>, which is also Mexico's Independence Day (avocados are native to central Mexico and is believed to be created by Aztecs in the 16<sup>th</sup> century).

Having guacamole is typically considered an appetizer, so be mindful of how much you are having before your main meal to avoid excess calorie intake for the day.

In honor of Mexico's Independence Day, here is a traditional and easy guacamole recipe from North Carolina Cooperative Extension:

### TRADITIONAL GUACAMOLE

#### Ingredients

- 4 ripe, avocados, seeded and peeled
- 1 lime, juiced
- 3 Tbsp. onion, finely minced
- ½ Tbsp. diced jalapenos, more or less depending on your heat preference
- 1 clove garlic, finely minced
- 2 Tbsp. cilantro, finely chopped
- 1/8 tsp. pepper
- 1 tomato, medium, ¼-inch diced

#### Directions

In a medium bowl, mash avocado with lime, onion chili, garlic, and cilantro (if using) until the guacamole is mostly smooth only small chunks of avocado remain. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Stir in tomatoes, gently, so as not to mash them and serve immediately.

*Serves 8.*



# Build a Better Bagged School Lunch



Sending your child to school with a bagged lunch is a good way to ensure your child has food she or he likes; it may also save money. However, some parents struggle to find the right balance of convenience and nutrition. It is easy to rely on pre-packaged convenience foods, but many are high in sodium, saturated fat, and trans-fat. They can also be low in the vital nutrients children need to grow into healthy adults, including calcium, fiber, and Vitamins C and A. The good news is that there are plenty of easy, affordable, and nutritious foods you can prepare at home for your child's lunch.

A great resource for ideas on packing your child's lunch is MyPlate, the USDA's nutrition icon. MyPlate depicts the five major food groups (vegetables, fruit, dairy, lean protein, and grains) that everyone should eat.

To meet MyPlate guidelines, pack a lunch that makes half of your child's "plate" (i.e., lunch) fruits and vegetables. One quarter should be whole grains. One quarter should be lean protein. Include a serving of low-fat dairy too. By following MyPlate as a guide, you can be sure that your child is meeting the recommended nutrition goals in the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Give these food group tips a try to build a better lunch.

## FRUIT

**Fresh Fruit** - Fresh Fruit is easy to pack and keeps well at room temperature. Some kid-friendly favorites include clementines, small grape bunches, apples and oranges cut into slices, mixed berries, and bananas. Make a fruit cup by dicing mangoes, strawberries, and peaches. Or mix with low-fat yogurt for a homemade parfait. Pick fruits that are in season. They are at their ripest and most affordable.

**Canned Fruit or Fruit Cups with 100% Fruit Juice (not Syrups)** - Canned fruit or fruit cups are a convenient way to add fruit to a lunch. Choose fruits in water or their own juice, not syrup. Syrup is high in added sugar. Great options are pineapple tidbits, Mandarin oranges, fruit mixes, applesauce, or peaches. Decorate the fruit containers with stickers to personalize the snack. Or combine sugar-free gelatin with diced fruit in reusable plastic containers for a DIY version.

**Dried Fruit** - Dried fruit is convenient and does not require refrigeration. It pairs well with yogurt, cottage cheese, salads, granola, cheese, seeds, and nuts. Try raisins and other dried fruits, such as dried cranberries, mango, and pineapple. Dried fruit makes a sweet addition to lunch. Look for brands that are low in added sugar and be mindful to keep portion sizes to ¼ cup.

**Apple Slices with Nut Butter and Granola** - Apple slices topped with nut butter and granola are a great boost of fiber, vitamin C, protein, and healthy fats. They will help your child stay focused and energized throughout the school day. If your school has a strict "no peanut" allergy policy, try peanut butter alternatives that are also high in protein and healthy fats, like almond, sunflower, or cashew butter.

**Fruit Salad** - This is another great option. Pack it plain or top with a tablespoon of yogurt. Use assorted colors and varieties of fruits for the most nutrient potential.

## VEGETABLES

**Salads** - Create a unique salad. Start with a base of mild greens (baby spinach, romaine, spring mix) and add different toppings. Try teriyaki-style chicken, light tuna salad, grilled chicken, hard boiled eggs, dried fruits, avocado, strawberries and other berries, apples, sunflower seeds, or other crunchy additions. Use lots of fresh, raw vegetables to give a vitamin boost. Try some "unconventional" vegetable toppings, like edamame, low sodium canned black beans, cherry tomatoes, corn, peas, and red cabbage.

**"Shake and Serve" Salads** - Pack salad components in a bag or sealed cup with the dressing in a small container on the side. At lunch time, children can add dressing and shake. It's a great way to get kids more involved in their lunch. It also keeps the salad from wilting. Make dressings easily at home with a few simple ingredients. They can double as dips for fresh vegetables, too.

Homemade dressings are lower in added sugar and saturated fat. Try out basic dressing recipe, or search for "salad dressing" recipes at MyPlate: [MyPlate Kitchen Recipes](#).

Sugar and saturated fat are associated with increased risk for overweight, heart disease, and hypertension. When shopping for salad dressings, use the Nutrition Facts label and select dressings with less added sugar that are lower in saturated fat. As a guide, choose dressings with no added sugars and less than 1-gram saturated fat per serving.

**Fresh Vegetables** - Cut carrots, zucchini, celery, bell peppers, and other favorites into strips/sticks for dipping. Veggie sticks are a great "crunchy snack" alternative for chips. Pack dips, such as nut butter, salsa, or hummus with your sticks. Vegetable sticks can be layered into sandwiches or grated to pack more easily into a wrap. Add "filler" veggies like spinach, avocado, and cucumbers to salads and sandwiches. It is a great way to sneak more nutrients into your child's lunch. A "kid favorite," purchase edamame fresh or frozen at your market. Steam it up ahead of time and refrigerate. Kids like to "pop" it out of the pods, but you can also buy the beans already popped and ready-to-eat.

## GRAINS

**Pasta Salads** - Use leftover whole grain pasta and fresh cut vegetables, such as bell peppers, tomatoes, onions, and spinach for a healthy lunch entrée. Mix them together with olive oil and garlic, or light Italian dressing. Select shapes like wagon wheels or spirals, or choose colorful specialty pastas (i.e., vegetable, red lentil, chickpea) to make dishes more fun. While specialty pastas may add color, they do not provide as much whole grain or grains as whole wheat or regular pasta would. Tip: Prevent pasta from sticking when packing it away. Mix 1 tablespoon of olive oil into the cooked pasta before it cools completely.

**Walking Salad** - Wrap your salad in a whole wheat tortilla or pita. Use chopped lettuce and spinach, shredded carrots, diced tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, beans, and other favorite vegetables. Top with shredded cheese and guacamole or light dressing for added flavor.

**Muffins** - Muffins can be a great source of whole grains for desserts. Bake your favorite muffin recipe but replace 1/3 of the white flour

*Article continued on next page*

## Bagged School Lunch - continued from previous page

with whole wheat flour for a boost of B vitamins and fiber. Try incorporating vegetables and fruit into your muffin recipes too, such as shredded carrots or zucchini, or substitute applesauce for some of the oil. The conversion rate for applesauce to oil is 1 cup:1 cup. So, if your recipe calls for ½ cup vegetable oil, reduce the amount to ¼ cup vegetable oil and add ¼ cup applesauce. Read the Nutrition Facts label when buying muffins. Some store-bought muffins are very large. They are often low in whole grains and high in sugar, fat, and calories.

**Breads for Sandwiches** – Choose breads that list 100% whole wheat flour in their ingredients with less than 140mg sodium per slice and at least 2 grams fiber per slice. For more variety, try wraps, pitas, English muffins, or rice cakes as a substitute for bread. Whole-wheat wraps are a kid-friendly favorite and can be used with fresh vegetables or left-over salad and homemade dips to make a "walking" salad.

**Snacks** - Baked whole grain tortilla chips or whole wheat pretzels with salsa, hummus, or guacamole are a great, crunchy snack to include in lunches.

**Whole-Grain Trail Mix** – Mix together whole grain square breakfast cereal or popcorn with low-sugar dried fruits, sunflower seeds, nuts, and a small amount of dark chocolate pieces for a healthy snack kids love.

**Granola** – Combine rolled oats with low-sugar dried fruit and spices to create a grab-and-go snack or a quick breakfast cereal option. Spices can be changed based on taste or season. (Use pumpkin pie spice for fall, apple pie spice (cinnamon/nutmeg/allspice) for summer, or ginger for winter).

### PROTEIN

**Lean Proteins (Turkey, Chicken, Tofu, Eggs, Fish)** – Lean protein can be cooked ahead and stored for 3-4 days in the refrigerator. Shred or dice proteins to make eating easier for little ones and add into a sandwich or salad. Shredded turkey, chicken, tuna, tofu, or eggs make great additions to salad mixes. Combine with diced vegetables, dried fruits, and low-fat dressings or non-fat Greek yogurt sprinkled with your favorite seasoning. If selecting an animal-based, canned protein, select "light" tuna or meats packaged in water. To prepare tofu for lunch, slice in half and press before seasoning or marinading. Pressing out the extra moisture helps brines and marinades adhere to the tofu.

**Hard Boiled Eggs** – Eggs are an excellent protein source. Hard-boiled eggs can be fun for kids to crack and peel themselves. They also keep well if peeled at home and packed in lunch box. Or use them to make egg salad for sandwiches and wraps.

**Beans** – Beans are a tasty, inexpensive, and versatile source of lean protein. There are many options to choose from: black, navy, pinto, kidney, garbanzo, black-eyed peas, cannellini, lima, fava, edamame and great northern to name a few!

For a protein-fueled, fun lunch idea, mix black beans with salsa, shredded cheese, and guacamole. Wrap in a whole-wheat tortilla or pita. Use chickpeas to make a delicious hummus worthy of dipping for pita bread or fresh vegetables like carrots, celery, cucumbers, bell peppers, or broccoli florets. Edamame in pods or shelled makes a tasty lunch snack too.

**Chicken, Tuna, or Salmon Salad** – Use Greek yogurt or light mayonnaise to make a tasty, lighter version of traditional tuna/chicken salad. For chicken salad, use leftover cooked chicken, or lower sodium/no-added-salt chicken packaged in water. When using canned tuna or

chicken, select low-sodium brands that are packed in water, rather than oil. Look for "light" brands of tuna as opposed to "white," "albacore," or "gourmet." Mercury levels are much lower in "light" tuna, which is made from smaller skipjack tuna. Children under 6 can eat up to three 3-ounce portions per month of "light" canned tuna; older children and adults can eat it once weekly. Or use canned salmon, prepared similarly to tuna or chicken salad, as an alternative. (For more information on mercury and tuna visit [FDA's Advice about Eating Fish](#)). Regardless of which protein you choose, "veggie up" your salad with grated carrots, minced celery, baby spinach/romaine lettuce, and diced tomatoes. Add diced apples, raisins, dried cranberries, or nuts for a more sophisticated flavor. Serve on a whole wheat pita.

### DAIRY

**Yogurt** – Yogurt is an excellent source of calcium, vitamin D, and protein, but choose wisely to select the most nutritious option:

- Select lower fat yogurts.
- Choose brands that limit added sugar. Check the ingredient list and skip the yogurt if sugar is listed as one of the first three ingredients.
- Select yogurts with as little added sugar as possible. While a maximum of 18–23 grams sugar per 6-ounce serving is a good goal, it may take some time to find a yogurt that fits this goal.
- Plain, nonfat yogurts have less added sugar than flavored yogurts. Choose plain yogurt and add your own fruit.
- Kids' yogurts can be high in added sugar. Compare yogurts to find the lowest sugar option. Compare kids' yogurts to adult versions, too. Adult versions can be lower in sugar.
- Choose brands that have live and active cultures.
- Greek yogurt has more protein than traditional yogurt, but it is lower in calcium.
- When choosing non-dairy yogurt, look for products that are fortified with calcium and vitamin D and limit added sugars. Fortified soy-based yogurt has the closest nutrition profile to dairy-based yogurt; coconut milk and almond milk yogurts are lower in protein.

**Beverages** – Pack the beverages of choice – water, low- or fat-free milk, or plant-based milks without added sugar. All are available in non-breakable containers. Milks are not just for drinking. Combine milk with granola or cereal for a crunchy lunch.

**Cheese** – Low-fat cheeses, such as Swiss and mozzarella, are great on sandwiches and salads. They make a tasty way to add the calcium and Vitamin D that kids need. Try low-fat cottage cheese with dried or fresh fruit, or low-sodium and low-fat string cheese as convenient snacks for lunch.

### WHAT ABOUT ...?

**Treats** – It is tempting to add a special treat to your child's lunch. Whether it's cookies, muffins, chips, or candy, be prudent. Give treats occasionally, not every day. Limit portion size or the amount you pack. For example, 1 or 2 cookies or a small snack bag of chips. Read food labels. Choose products that are lower in fat, sugar, and sodium. For example, choose low-sodium pretzels or baked chips instead of regular chips.

[Read full article](#)



## Get Your Reusable Coolers Ready!

### New York State's Foam Ban is getting cooler in 2026!



New York State's Foam Ban has been in effect since 2022, and prohibits disposable food service containers and packing peanuts made of polystyrene foam from being sold, offered for sale, or distributed in New York State. To further reduce plastic pollution from polystyrene foam, keep the recycling stream clean, and encourage the use of more sustainable container and packaging options. Starting January 1, 2026, polystyrene foam coolers and other foam containers designed or intended to be used for cold storage will also be banned in New York State.

Why does this matter? Polystyrene foam has been a top contributor to litter in the environment and is not recyclable in most residential recycling programs. Plastic litter can pollute waterways and harm ecosystems and our communities. It never fully breaks down and instead turns into microplastics, which have been detected in fish, wildlife, and even people. Foam Bans are an effective way to reduce plastic pollution from foam and encourage options that are recyclable, reusable, or compostable.

Visit DEC's Foam Ban page for more info: <https://dec.ny.gov/environmental-protection/recycling-composting/go-foam-free>

**NEW Cold Storage Container Ban:** Beginning January 1, 2026, no covered food service provider, manufacturer or store is allowed to sell, offer for sale, or distribute expanded polystyrene containers that are not wholly encapsulated or encased within a more durable container and are designed or intended to be used for cold storage, including but not limited to coolers and ice chests.

# SARATOGA COUNTY ANIMAL RABIES CLINIC

**DOGS, CATS, AND FERRETS WELCOME.**



**SEPTEMBER 23, 2025**

**Location:**

4-H Training Center  
556 Middleline Road, Ballston Spa

FOR QUESTIONS CALL  
**(518) 885-4113**

**Times:**

- **Cats** | 5:30 - 6:30 PM  
(Must be in a carrier)
- **Ferrets** | 5:30 - 6:30 PM  
(Must be in a cage or carrier)
- **Dogs** | 6:30—7:30 PM  
(Must be on a leash)

*Times are strictly enforced for the safety of all animals.*



# Homesteading



By Charlie Nardozzi, THE NATIONAL GARDENING ASSOCIATION

## Fall Soil-Building



Fall is a great time of year to tune up your soil. The year's harvest is winding down, the cool weather makes gardening enjoyable, and many of the soil amendments you add now will have all winter to break down before your next planting. Vegetables, herbs, and

fruits all take nutrients from the soil as they grow. Each year you need to replace those nutrients to insure a healthy harvest. It all begins and ends with the soil. The healthier the soil, the better your vegetables will grow and the fewer problems you'll have. There are many ways to improve your soil, including adjusting the pH, adding fertilizer and soil amendments, and planting cover crops. By doing a little work now, you'll save time and energy in spring, when you have so many other tasks calling you.

### Testing Your Soil

The first step is to test the soil to see if any nutrients are significantly out of whack. You can take a soil sample and send it to your state Extension Service for testing. They will give you a complete write-up of the pH level and levels of vital nutrients. You can also order specific tests for individual crops or nutrients. For a simpler evaluation of your soil, try the do-it-yourself soil-testing kits. One of the easiest to use is the soil analyzer. These battery-powdered meters show the pH and fertilizer levels. Though not as accurate as lab tests, they give a quick glimpse of your soil's health.

### Fertilizer and pH

Once you have your results, you may need to adjust the soil pH. The pH is the measure of the soil's acidity/alkalinity. Most vegetables grow best in soils that are slightly acid, falling between the 6.0 and 7.0 range on the pH scale. Add lime to raise the pH and sulfur to lower it to within these levels.

Another amendment critical to soil health is organic matter. Organic matter breaks down in the soil into humus, which is essential for soil health. Add aged manure or compost to the garden this fall, working in a 1- to 2-inch-thick layer. The organic matter will feed the soil microorganisms, creating better soil structure, tilth, and water drainage on clay soil; and improving water retention on sandy soils. Fall is also a good time to apply organic fertilizers, such as rock phosphate and greensand, based on your soil test. These fertilizers break down slowly over time, so by spring the nutrients should be available for plant growth.

### To Till or Not To Till

Traditionally gardeners till their gardens in fall to expose overwintering insects, bury plant parts, and mix in soil amendments. It may be healthier for the soil, however, to be left untilled. Tilling injects air into the soil, which speeds the breakdown of beneficial organic matter. It also disrupts the air and water channels in the soil, leaving it susceptible to erosion. Tilling also can kill earthworms. So, what to do? If you have a small or raised-bed garden, consider digging by hand. Remove weeds, old plants, and debris from the beds. Add compost and soil amendments, and lightly turning the soil with an iron fork to mix the amendments. If you have a large garden, tilling may be the best option. Just be sure to add organic matter before tilling, and consider mulching the whole garden to prevent soil erosion afterwards.

### Cover Crops

Another way to add organic matter to the soil and prevent erosion is to grow cover crops. These are crops, such as winter wheat, winter rye, and annual ryegrass, that grow during the warm days of fall and early spring. Cover crops are seeded in fall about six weeks before the first expected frost date. To plant cover crops, clean up old plants from the garden and till the soil. Use a garden spreader to broadcast the seed, lightly cover it with soil, and water. Let the cover crop grow until early spring, then till it under. Wait a few weeks after tilling before planting. The cover crop will break down and add vital nutrients and organic matter to your soil.



## Molting: All You Need to Know

### What is molting and what happens during it?



In late summer/ early fall, your coop is full of feathers, and your birds are half-naked. First, if you don't know what is happening, you might panic and wonder if they have a parasite or something attacking them but that is not the case, they are just molting. When the summer daylight shortens and winter approaches, birds shed their old feathers and grow new ones. Males and females are both affected by this

entirely natural process.

The feathers start to shed at the bird's head, then progress down the bird's back, sides, and thighs, and end with the tail feathers. The process is completely normal, and you shouldn't be concerned.

### How to tell if they are molting or infested with parasites?

Generally, parasites can be seen on the chicken when you pick it up and inspect the bottom of its feathers. There is nothing visible at the bottom except for some feathers regrowing, which means the chicken is molting.

Consider these tips if you are still unsure:

- If you do not see parasites, look in the coop for any hiding places for red mites, which feed during the night and hide during the day.
- A loss of feathers throughout your flock could also be a sign of parasites. Parasites will begin to spread very rapidly from chicken to chicken.
- It is a good indication that there are parasites if you see bite marks or scratches on a chicken's skin.
- Check your flock's behavior for excessive aggression, which can cause feather loss.
- Despite your best efforts, if you only notice that the bird is pale and has stopped laying eggs, she may be sick. A bird's paleness can sometimes indicate a respiratory illness, and all birds showing any sign of illness should be isolated from the flock.

If none of the above are true in regards to your flock or feather loss, your flock is probably going through a molt.

### Hard and soft molting

Backyard chickens can undergo either a hard or a soft molt.

A hard molt occurs when the hen (or rooster - both are susceptible) looks seriously ill. She will lose almost all of her feathers very quickly, so she will look almost bald and have large patches of skin showing.

The chicken loses only a small amount of plumage during a soft molt. Even though they'll look a little ragged and their tail may be missing, they won't look like a chicken going through a hard molt.

### What causes the molt?

Plumage renewal - During the course of a year, the plumage becomes dull and shabby. The feathers of chickens break frequently, which may not be a big deal during the summer, but when winter

comes, the feathers can't adequately shield the chicken from the cold. Thus, molting is a natural process that sheds old feathers and grows a new coat. A chicken's reproductive system also rests during molting.

Keeping chickens happy and healthy during this time is important since this can be a stressful process for them.

### What is the average age and frequency at which chickens molt?

A chicken's first molt, also known as the juvenile molt, occurs during the first 4-12 weeks of its life. During this time, they are constantly losing and growing feathers. The chicken will experience its annual molt around the age of 16-18 months, which occurs once a year in autumn/fall. The shorter daylight hours of fall signal to the chicken that it's time to re-grow their feathers for the coming winter. Lack of nutrition, insufficient water, and bullying/stress can, however, also cause molting at any time of the year.

### What is the duration of molting?

Molting does not take place simultaneously in all chickens. If you have a large flock, the whole process can take up to three months, since each bird will have a slightly different starting and ending time. Molting takes longer in older chickens than in younger ones. You shouldn't be concerned if some of your hens undergo a molt in three weeks and others in twice as long.

### Is molting painful for chickens?

The birds do not feel pain when they lose their plumage. A feather falls out the same way a human's hair does. In the early stages of re-growth, though, it's best to minimize handling of your chickens so they won't suffer injuries. Handle them gently if you must.

### What to do if your chicken bleeds during molting.

They can bleed profusely if they are handled roughly, or if their pin feathers are damaged in any way.



If your chicken bleeds during molting, it's essential to handle the situation carefully, as new pin feathers (blood feathers) can be sensitive and prone to bleeding.

Here's what you can do:

1. Isolate the injured chicken: If other chickens are pecking at the injured one, isolate it to prevent further injury, as chickens tend to peck at blood.
2. Stop the bleeding: Use cornstarch, flour, or a styptic powder to apply pressure and stop the bleeding. Hold the feather gently, applying the powder to the base.
3. Avoid pulling the feather: Only remove the feather if it's completely broken and bleeding heavily, as this can cause more harm. If needed, you may consider asking a vet to assist.
4. Clean the wound: Once the bleeding has stopped, clean the area with saline or an antiseptic solution to prevent infection.

*Article continued on next page*



## Molting Chickens - continued from previous page

5. Monitor for infection: Keep an eye on the injured area for signs of infection, such as swelling, redness, or pus. If the injury worsens, consult a vet.
6. Provide a stress-free environment: Ensure your chicken has a quiet, safe space to recover during the molt. Reducing stress aids the healing process.

Be carefully managing the bleeding and monitoring the chicken, it should recover well during its molt.

### During molting, do chickens lay eggs?

No! Egg production will slow down at best, but for most hens, it will stop altogether. Around 85%-90% of chicken feathers are composed of the protein Keratin. An egg contains about 13% protein. To develop a full coat of feathers, chickens must prioritize their new plumage by eating all the protein they can get. Therefore, their bodies divert the protein they extract from food from egg-laying to feather-growing, so they stop laying eggs.

### When chickens molt, what should they be fed?

The feathers are composed of 85% protein, and since they are being lost, there is an extreme need for extra protein. Besides the usual chicken feed, you should also provide foods rich in protein, such as:

- Sunflower seeds
- Mealworms
- Scrambled or hard-boiled eggs
- For an excellent, surprisingly cheap, high-protein snack, sprout your own seeds as well!

Make sure not to overdo it with these items and to feed them in moderation!

### Is there another way to assist our chickens with molting?

When you see your flock looking a little ragged, don't worry - they will brighten up once molting is complete.

- When they are molting, avoid handling them. They may feel pain, which increases their stress.
- Try to avoid other stressful situations as well, such as adding new birds to the flock or moving them to a new coop. Adding more stress will simply slow down the feathering process - or make your flock unwell.
- Watch out for hens who are often lower on the pecking order, so that they won't be pecked or bullied during this vulnerable time.
- During molting, the chicken's immune system can be depleted as it uses all its energy to make feathers. Watch for any other signs of illness.
- You should not add extra light to your coop in order to encourage egg production when your chickens are molting. The depletion of their systems will be dangerous if they are forced to lay.
- You shouldn't dress your chickens in sweaters! This is going to hurt them! It's not necessary for them - they must be able to grow their pin feathers without interference.

Molting can cause stress to birds. The feeling of vulnerability may make them avoid going outside. You can ensure your chickens' molting is painless and hassle-free by understanding what it is, how to handle it, and what you need to do.



CAAHP

## Are You Raising a Backyard Flock? - This Survey Is For You!

Since March 2024, seventy cases of avian influenza A(H5) (H5 bird flu) have occurred in humans in the United States, mostly among workers exposed to infected dairy cows and commercial poultry farms. However, cases have also occurred among people exposed to birds kept in noncommercial, backyard flocks. CDC is interested in learning more about backyard flock owners and their flocks. The anonymous survey asks about:

- Characteristics of backyard flock owners, their families, and their flocks.
- Knowledge of H5 bird flu and signs and symptoms of H5 bird flu in birds and humans.
- Perceived risk of and concern about H5 bird flu to their backyard flock and themselves/families.
- Attitudes towards reporting sick or dead birds and protective measures like vaccination of their flock.
- Practices they use to protect their flock and themselves from H5 bird flu.



### To Take the Survey

### Scan the QR Code or visit:

<https://airc.cdc.gov/surveys/?s=NRPKTT7RCDRJEP8F>

CDC will use the survey results to improve H5 bird flu prevention activities.

Questions can be sent to [h5flustudy@cdc.gov](mailto:h5flustudy@cdc.gov)

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