



December 15, 2025

Cornell Cooperative Extension | Saratoga County

NEWSLETTER



IN THE SPIRIT OF GIVING: Bentley Seed's Gift for the Seed Library Project

On November 21st, CCE staff Madison Blodgett, Jessica Luse, and Bud South arrived at Bentley Seed Company's loading docks in Cambridge, NY to collect a very generous donation...

In 2026, Seed Libraries will be established in many community gathering spots throughout Saratoga County. Currently, Madison has 10 locations (and counting!) that have agreed to host these "libraries". Their maintenance will be a combined effort between the host location's staff, herself, and the wonderful Saratoga County Master Gardener Volunteers.

Seed Libraries are a free community resource that help promote equal access to gardening education and food security. Visitors of the libraries will be welcomed to take home seed packets and printed, research-backed literature on topics such as seed starting, seed saving, and crop harvesting. It is also our hope the community services that CCE Saratoga provides will reach county residents who may not have been aware of them.

Madison began calling businesses back in March to inquire about donations of their leftover stock of seeds to CCE. While several local businesses kindly gifted what they had for this project, Bentley Seed Company truly took the cake with their donation of 9 pallets of seed.

Bentley staff members Jeff and Dana helped wrap and load the pallets into trailers. The seeds were then transported back to the 4-H Training Center, where Bud was able to unload them into their new, temporary home.

Bentley Seed is a family-owned operation in Cambridge, NY that have been selling their seeds nationally for the last 50 years. Thanks to their generosity, we are very confident that the seed libraries we help get established next year will be able to continue serving the community without worry of running dry.



Madison Blodgett stands next to the pallets of donations in the Bentley Seed warehouse.



L to R: Madison, Jeff, Dana, and Jess stand beside one of the trailers packed with donated seeds.



Bud South unloads pallets of seeds off the trailers at the 4-H Training Center.

In addition to our plans for using these seeds at the libraries and for educational programs, CCE Saratoga has passed along a portion of the generous contribution to other county CCE offices and local FFA chapters.

We'd love to thank Bentley Seeds, as well as Healthy Living Market & Café, Hewitt's, and other anonymous donors for their wonderful donations. The seeds CCE Saratoga has received will prove to be impactful for our community members in many ways, and the support from these local businesses is something we're truly grateful for this holiday season!

Inspired by Annie's: How to Be a Strong Woman Farm Manager

The following training is geared toward women who own or operate a farm in New York State. You will receive a zoom link upon registration.

DECEMBER 17 | 12-1 PM

Becoming the New Boss: How to effectively manage your first employees, lessons and tips from seasoned veterans.

During this webinar we will be hearing from women-led farm businesses on how they started hiring employees, keeping employees and helping them reach their full potential on the farm and the lessons the business owners learned along the way.

[Click here to register.](#)

Any questions may be directed to Jacob Maslyn at jlm563@cornell.edu.

CENTRAL NEW YORK DAIRY, LIVESTOCK & FIELD CROPS

2026 Central NY Dairy Day

January 14, 2026 | 9 am—3 pm

William Schwerd Building
Saratoga Co. 4-H Training Center
556 Middle Line Rd., Ballston Spa, NY 12020

Cost: \$55 per attendee (lunch included)

Register: https://cnydfc.cce.cornell.edu/event_preregistration_new.php?id=2681

Contact: Erik Smith—315-219-7786
email Erik Smith



2026 Central NY Dairy Day

Two locations to choose from

\$55 per person
Tuesday and Wednesday
January 13 & 14
9am - 3pm
White Eagle Conference Center & CCE Saratoga County

Register here:
<https://bit.ly/2026DairyDay>

Cornell Cooperative Extension
Central New York Dairy, Livestock and Field Crops

CAR SEAT CHECK

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

Tuesday, January 6 | 4 pm—8 pm
New Country Toyota of Clifton Park
202 Route 146, Mechanicville, NY 12118

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

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 access the inside of your vehicle.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

The next Board of Directors Meeting is scheduled for **January 21, 2025 | 7 pm** at the Extension Office.

CCE Saratoga's Board of Directors

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



New York State Update Point System and Suspension Rules



New York State has announced significant changes to its driver violation point system, license suspension rules, and the impact these violations may have on auto insurance rates. These changes will take effect in **February 2026**. According to the NYS DMV, the goal of the updated regula-

tions is to “identify and take action against high-risk drivers.” The revisions will make it easier for drivers to accumulate points more quickly, increasing the likelihood of license suspensions.

Key Changes to the Point System

1. **Lower Threshold for Suspension:**
Currently, a driver faces possible suspension after accumulating 11 points within 18 months. Under the new system, a suspension may occur once 10 points are accumulated within 24 months.
2. **School Bus Violation:**
Passing or overtaking a stopped school bus will increase 5 points to **8 points**.
3. **High-Risk Driving Behavior:**
Reckless driving, speed contests, speeding in a work zone, and operating a vehicle that exceeds height restrictions on highways, bridges, or highway structures will each carry **8 points**.
4. **Speeding Violations:**
Speeding up to 10 mph over the posted limit will increase from 3 points to **4 points**.
5. **Electronic Device Use:**
Talking, texting, holding, or otherwise interacting with an

electronic device while driving will increase from 5 points to **6 points**.

6. **Alcohol/Drug-Related Convictions:**
 - * First offense: from 5 to 8 points
 - * Second offense: from 8 to 11 points
 - * Third offense: from 11 to 14 points
 - * Fourth conviction within 25 years could lead to permanent license suspension
7. **Traffic Obstruction and Illegal U-Turns:**
These violations will now carry **2 points**.
8. **Move Over Law Violations:**
Failure to obey the Move Over Law will result in **3 points**.
9. **Equipment Violations:** will carry a 1 point violation, ex. missing taillight, headlight. There will no longer be “fix-it” tickets.

These behaviors pose significant risks to drivers and the public. While many motorists currently choose to pay higher fines in exchange for 0-point plea deals, the increased point values will make it far more difficult to avoid long-term consequences. Accumulating points more quickly may result in license suspension, increased insurance premiums, or even policy cancellation.

The expanded review period—from 18 to 24 months—gives the DMV a broader timeframe to evaluate driving behavior. This change is expected to increase by approximately 40% the number of drivers classified as persistent violators. The longer lookback period is intended to align with legislative efforts to hold repeat offenders accountable and encourage meaningful improvements in driver behaviors.

LURVEY—*know & grow*

Repurposing Christmas Trees and Holiday Greens

There are many useful ways to repurpose your Christmas tree and holiday greens instead of placing them on the curb for disposal. If you live in an apartment, many cities offer tree recycling programs that turn trees into mulch. If you have a backyard or garden, here are some practical ideas to put your greens to good use.

Protect Plants Through Winter

Cut branches from the tree and lay them over perennials, ornamental grasses, newly planted shrubs, or roses. This adds insulation during fluctuating winter temperatures and protects plant roots from repeated freezing and thawing. The branches also help hold snow in place, providing valuable winter moisture. As the needles decompose, they become pH neutral rather than acidic. Be sure to remove the branches in spring as temperatures warm.

You can also cover container plantings or spread greens across the vegetable garden to slow soil warming and help prevent early spring weed growth.

Create Wildlife Habitat

Place the entire tree in your yard—either upright or on its side—provide shelter for birds and small animals during cold weather. You can also cut branches and lean them against a sunny wall to create a warm, sheltered spot. Another option is to place cut greens in a tree

and cover them with peanut butter and birdseed to attract wildlife.

If you have a pond, sinking a few branches into the water creates habitat and protection for fish.

Make Compost or Mulch

Cut the branches into smaller pieces and add them to your compost pile or use them as natural mulch throughout your landscape.

Use the Trunk for Stakes and Trellises

After removing the branches, save the trunk to use as a natural garden pole. If you save a trunk each year, you can create a sturdy tripod for climbing plants such as beans, cucumbers, and peas.

Get Creative with Crafts

Cut wood slices from the trunk to make coasters or to turn into ornaments for next year’s holiday season. Branch stems can be wrapped along a fence or fashioned into a simple garden trellis. Small pieces of dried greenery can even be used for future fire starters.

Enjoy an Outdoor Fire

Cut the trunk and branches into lengths that fit your fire pit and enjoy a cozy outdoor fire on a cool winter night. Afterward, you can use the cooled ash in your garden.

What types of Christmas trees are available?

There's still time to get your tree if you haven't already done so. There are many species of trees available as cut Christmas trees in both local tree farms and commercial lots. The species you select will depend on attributes like color, shape, needle retention, aroma, and branch stiffness (to hold up heavy ornaments).

Below is a list of Christmas tree species and their attributes.

Popular Christmas Tree Species

Name	Color	Needle Length	Aroma*	Needle Retention	Notes
Fraser Fir	Dark blue-green w/ silver undersides	0.5 to 1 inch	Very Good	Excellent	Stiff branches. One of the most popular species.
Balsam Fir	Dark green	0.75 to 1.5 inches	Excellent	Excellent	The dense dark needles make it one of the most popular species.
White Pine	Bluish-green	2.5 to 5 inches	Little	Excellent	Long flexible soft needles. Not recommended for heavy ornaments.
Scotch Pine	Bright green	1 inch	Good	Excellent	Very popular species. Needles remain on tree even when dead.
Colorado Spruce	Blue	1 to 1.5 inches	Good to Fair	Very Good	Needles are very sharp
Douglas Fir	Dark to medium green	1 to 1.5 inches	Very Good	Very Good	Branches not as stiff and can bend with heavy ornaments.
Concolor Fir (White Fir)	Dull bluish-green	1 to 1.5 inches	Very Good	Excellent	Softer needles than Colorado spruce with similar color
Canaan Fir	Dark green, silvery underside	0.75 to 1.5 inches	Excellent	Excellent	Very similar to the Balsam and Fraser firs.
White Spruce	Green to bluish-green	0.5 to 0.75 inches	Not pleasant	Average	Short stiff needles. Great for heavy ornaments.
Nobel Fir	Dark green, silvery underside	1 inch	Very good	Excellent	Known for its beauty. Also used as greenery for wreaths and garlands.





SARATOGA COUNTY HOLIDAY

FOOD DRIVE

LET'S FEED THE HUNGRY THIS HOLIDAY SEASON



ITEMS MOST IN NEED:

Food items such as (tuna, chicken, spam, etc),
canned soups (especially the chunky style),
canned beefaroni, spaghetti and meatballs, ravioli,
peanut butter, canned fruits, canned vegetables,
and packaged side dishes such as instant mashed
potatoes, scalloped or au gratin potatoes, rice-a-
roni or past-roni style side dishes, stuffing mix,
instant oatmeal, pancake mix, and cereal.

Condiments and hygiene items such as coffee,
cookies, ketchup, vegetable oil, pudding, laundry
and dish detergent, shampoo, body wash, and
toilet paper.

NOW THROUGH DECEMBER 29TH
4-H STAFF WILL DELIVER ON DECEMBER 30TH

DONATION DROP OFF LOCATION:
CCE SARATOGA COUNTY
50 WEST HIGH STREET
BALLSTON SPA NY. 12020

OR AT ANY CLUB MEETING OR 4-H EVENT.

Christ Cupboard
Food Pantry



First Baptist Church
202 Milton Avenue
Ballston Spa, NY 12020
518-885-8361

DONATIONS TO BENEFIT:

Spread Warmth This Winter with the 4-H Holiday Mitten Tree!



Each year, our Mitten Trees are decorated with donated cold-weather items to help local families in need during the winter season. This year, we're collecting:

- New socks
- Hats
- Mittens & gloves
- Scarves
- Gently used coats

These items will be available at both libraries throughout the holiday season for anyone in need. After the holidays, any remaining items will be distributed to local organizations to continue supporting our community.

Donation Drop-Off Locations

Starting in mid to late November, you can drop off donations at any of the following locations:

- Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) Office
50 West High Street, Ballston Spa
- Saratoga Springs Public Library
49 Henry Street, Saratoga Springs
- Ballston Spa Public Library
21 Milton Ave, Ballston Spa

For questions or to get involved, please contact the CCE Office (518-885-8995) or email Leland at glb76@cornell.edu.

NORTH CAROLINA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

What is Mistletoe?



With the Christmas season upon us, it is time to finish decorating homes and continue traditions that have been passed from generation to generation. One tradition that is very popular during the Christmas season is that of kissing underneath the mistletoe. Mistletoe is a symbol of life, love, and even fertility. However, have you ever stopped to think what a mistletoe is and where it comes from?

Mistletoe is an evergreen that grows out of tree limbs. It is hidden by tree leaves for most of the year but balls of mistletoe become very apparent after leaves have fallen in late fall. Mistletoe is a hemi-parasitic plant that grows out of many tree species. Unlike fully parasitic plants, mistletoe has the ability to make its own energy stores which it takes up through photosynthesis. Mistletoe does, however, rely on its tree host for water and other nutrients. To get the nutrients it needs from its tree host, and to cling to the tree, mistletoe uses specialized roots called haustoria which penetrate the tree tissues and hold it in place.

As mistletoe is hemi-parasitic, it can weaken trees by siphoning off water and other nutrients. Most trees can withstand these mistletoe freeloaders without any negative effects. However, trees that have large numbers of mistletoe plants within them, or trees that are stressed from other factors, will weaken over time. If your tree is weak and you are afraid that mistletoe will be the straw that breaks the camel's back, it may be time to remove mistletoe. To properly remove mistletoe, you must prune out the branch that it has been colonized to the point where you remove all visible shoots and the largely invisible mistletoe roots. Simply removing mistletoe

shoots from the tree branch will leave the roots which can re-sprout, just like weeds in the garden. It is, however, unnecessary to remove mistletoe from every tree in sight as that mistletoe is an important part of the ecosystem.

Mistletoe relies on birds and mammals to spread from one location to another. Animals eat the white berries of mistletoe and later excrete those seeds while they are up in trees. While birds are the most common animal taking advantage of the berries, there are many other animals and insects that use mistletoe. Birds will nest within the mistletoe, bees use nectar from mistletoe flowers, and the great purple hairstreak butterfly relies on mistletoe for its larvae's sole food source. Most mistletoe is found high in trees where birds rest or roost after eating mistletoe berries. Getting this mistletoe out of trees can be very challenging and has become a tradition in itself.

There are many species of mistletoe that live on different species of trees and inhabit varied regions of the United States and world. While there are many species, North American mistletoe is broken down into two main groups. Dwarf mistletoe is in the genus *Aurceuthobium* and is generally not used for our holiday tradition. The leafy American mistletoe species are within the genus *Phoradendron* and tend to colonize many deciduous tree species such as oaks, maples, ash, hickory, and elms. *Phoradendron leucarpum* is the mistletoe species found in the southeast and can make beautiful Christmas decorations.

Similar to poinsettia, mistletoe leaves and berries are mildly toxic if ingested. Mistletoe clippings from the yard and mistletoe decorations should be kept away from curious children and pets. If ingestion occurs, contact a poison center helpline immediately.

Poinsettia—How to Select and Care for a Healthy Poinsettia



The poinsettia (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*) is the most popular Christmas season plant. It was introduced into the United States in the late 1820's from its native Mexico by our first ambassador to that country, Joel Robert Poinsett. The plant was first known and probably is still best known for the bright red leaves or bracts that surround the inconspicuous, small, yellow, true flowers. Poinsettias may be purchased in colors ranging from white and cream through the various shades of pink and red. The following hints will help you choose a healthy poinsettia plant and how to care for it.

Choose a plant that hasn't shed pollen yet. To check, look for yellow pollen showing on the petal-like red and green bracts. Poinsettias showing pollen grains don't stay nice as long as those that haven't yet released pollen. Pay attention to the conditions where poinsettias are being sold. Poinsettias offered in stores during the holidays have been raised in a greenhouse at 60 to 70 degrees, in high humidity and maximum sunlight or growing lights. Store displays that mimic these growing conditions closely may contain healthier poinsettias than those for sale in hot, dry, and low-light conditions.

Choose poinsettias with deep green, not yellowish, leaves. Yellowing of foliage may indicate insufficient light, over-watering or lack of nitrogen. Look for brilliant red bracts. Once you choose a healthy plant you will need to do the following to keep it in good health:

- Put your poinsettia plant in a sunny window.
- Water regularly and thoroughly, but never allow a plant to stand in water.
- Fertilize once a week with a complete (20-20-20 or 20-5-10) fertilizer.
- Keep hot or cold drafts away from the plant. The leaves may wilt if the plant is too dry, too wet or exposed to a draft.

Yellowing of foliage may indicate insufficient light, over-watering or lack of nitrogen. Try improving the poinsettia's environment if any of these symptoms occur. After blooming, the mature bracts and leaves of your poinsettia will begin to fall naturally. Discontinue fertilizing and reduce watering. Cut the plant back to six inches and store in a cool dark area. Water only enough to prevent the stem from shriveling. In the spring, the plant can be set outdoors or maintained as a houseplant. Water it regularly and fertilize monthly. If grown outdoors, be sure to check for insect pests and treat if needed.

CORNELL COOPERATIVE EXTENSION—T OMPKINS COUNTY

What to do with wrapping paper



There are several things you can do with used wrapping paper. One thing you should never do with it is burn it. Burning glossy or waxy paper, especially if it is brightly colored or has a metallic finish, can release highly toxic chemicals into the air. Below, we

have put together a guide for the best ways to dispose of wrapping paper and packaging.

The best thing you can do with wrapping paper is remove it carefully and put it away to reuse it on another package. That may be difficult in many cases, especially if kids are the unwrappers, so your next best option is to recycle it. Unless it's the kind that has foil or some kind of waxy lining, most paper, including wrapping paper and tissue paper, is recyclable.

The third option is to compost it. If you have an active compost bin, you can compost many kinds of paper. If it is not glossy, does not have a plastic, waxy, or metallic coating, and is not shockingly bright (officially known as Astro bright), it can probably be composted safely. Generally, if it tears easily, it's okay to compost it. In fact, in order to compost it, it is best to shred it as small as possible. Also, the paper

rolls the wrapping paper is packaged with can be composted if torn into small bits.

The boxes those gifts come packaged in can also be recycled. And if they are very plain, some people will use them for sheet mulching in their gardens. But, again, boxes should also never be burned, because of the inks used to decorate them and the glues they contain.

Below is a quick reference chart to help guide you.

PAPER TYPE	REUSE	RECYCLE	COMPOST	GARBAGE
Glossy	X	X		
Metallic	X			X
Wax-Coated	X			X
Plain/Non-Glossy, Non-AstroBright	X	X	X	
Tissue	X	X	X	
Paper Tube	X	X	X	
Paper Boxes	X	X	(some)	

AVOID EATING Raw Dough



If you are baking delicious holiday creations in your kitchen, it's tempting to try a bit of raw dough...but you may want to reconsider.

Did you know that both raw eggs and raw flour could make us sick? Flour is a raw commodity, and some outbreaks have occurred due to Salmonella and E. coli bacteria in uncooked food containing flour. Raw eggs can also contain Salmonella.

Before licking the spoon, consider facts about flour and oatmeal

Many people assume that raw eggs are the only safety concern in cookie dough, but flour can also cause illness. Flour is a raw agricultural commodity, and several outbreaks of Salmonella and E. coli have been linked to uncooked foods containing contaminated flour. For this reason, eating raw cookie dough is not advised.

A notable exception is the cookie dough found in commercially produced cookie-dough ice cream. In that product, the dough is made with pasteurized eggs and heat-treated flour, making it safe to eat without baking. Ready-to-bake cookie products typically carry food-safety labels indicating that they should not be eaten straight from the package unless specifically labeled as “edible cookie dough.”

Oatmeal, by contrast, is handled differently from flour. Oats are cleaned, dehulled, and then toasted or steamed before being rolled or cut. This built-in heating step improves shelf life, prevents spoilage, and destroys harmful bacteria. As a result, oatmeal containers do not carry warnings about consuming the product without cooking, and oats can safely be used in no-bake snacks.

A recent discussion about flour and oatmeal brought these differences into focus, prompting immediate questions about ingredient safety and proper handling.

FLOUR

In 2023, 14 illnesses with three hospitalizations in 13 states were linked to eating undercooked or uncooked products containing wheat flour. Most were associated with consuming raw dough, cake mix or batter.

Wheat is cleaned to remove stones, soil and other contaminants. It is tempered (or moistened) to toughen the bran, then it goes through roller mills or stone mills.

The flour is separated by sifting out the white starchy part (endosperm) that we buy as flour. The bran (outer layer) and germ (fat-containing part) are removed and can be sold as animal feed or as individual ingredients.

If the grain is ground to include all parts of the grain, then it is whole-wheat flour. The components can be blended to meet the needs of the end user, such as a baker.

Flour is not heated during the milling process, so it is “raw.”

A tested method for heat-treating flour at home has not been developed. If flour or other foods are recalled due to safety issues, throw them away or request a refund.

Be sure to wash your hands before and after handling raw flour. A food as powdery as flour can contaminate other surfaces in your kitchen. Avoid cross-contamination by cleaning work surfaces and utensils.

Do not taste raw dough or batter. Do not make raw play doughs containing flour for children's crafts.

OATS

Like wheat, oats are grown in fields, but the processing of oats is a little different. Oat kernels are cleaned and dehulled, and then the product is “aspirated” to separate any remaining hulls.

The groats (whole kernels without the hull) are then heated to extend their shelf life. The toasting process inactivates enzymes and reduces moisture that can cause off-flavors or spoiling. The heating process also makes the oats safe to use for uncooked products such as overnight oats (made in the refrigerator) and energy bites that are not baked.

Next, the oats are rolled or cut. Quick oats, which cook in one to three minutes, are steamed as well as cut. Steel-cut oats are cut, while old-fashioned oats are cut and rolled.

Oats are good for you. They provide a soluble fiber called beta-glucans that are heart-healthy. This fiber type may help reduce our blood cholesterol. You might see a heart health claim on some oat-based foods.

If you're craving something sweet with the same chewy texture as cookie dough, here's a safe and simple option you can make at home.

Peanut Butter Oat Bites

- ¾ cup peanut butter (or other nut butter)
- 1½ cups oats (quick or old-fashioned)
- 1/3 cup honey
- 1/3 cup mini chocolate chips
- 2 Tbsp. ground flax seed*



*Substitute coconut, dried cranberries, raisins or chia seeds if desired for the flax seed.

Place peanut butter in a microwave-safe bowl and microwave for about 20 seconds until soft. Add remaining ingredients and mix well. Use a 1-tablespoon measuring scoop or spoon to measure portions. Roll into balls. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator.

Makes 16 bites. Each bite has 100 calories, 5.5g fat, 2.5g protein, 10.5g carbohydrates and 35mg sodium.

Homemade Holiday Gift for the Bird Lover.

Searching for a homemade holiday gift for the bird lover in your life? This simple, family-friendly craft supports local wildlife and gives the recipient the joy of watching visiting birds.

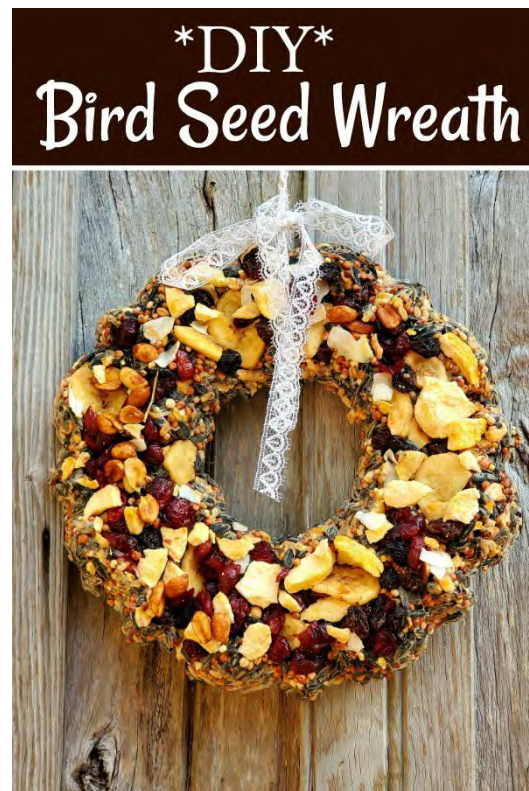
Ingredients:

- 1 package gelatin
- ½ cup warm water
- 3 Tablespoons corn syrup
- ¾ cups flour
- 4 cups birdseed
- Cooking spray
- Dried Fruit (optional: raisins, trail mix, peanuts)

Also needed: Bundt pan and ribbon

Directions:

1. In large bowl, mix the gelatin with the water until dissolved.
2. Whisk in the syrup and flour until lumps are gone. (It's going to look thick and pasty)
3. Slowly add 4 cups of birdseed, stirring as you go. It may take a little while to get all the birdseed coated.
4. Once mixed well, spray your bundt pan REALLY well with cooking spray to help your wreath slide right out when it is dry.
5. Add your optional ingredients to the bottom of the bundt pan: dried fruit, raisins, peanuts, trail mix etc.
6. Scoop your bird seed mixture into the wreath and pat it down firmly. REALY pack it down.
7. Let it set for about 24 hours. It will feel very firm when it is dry.
8. Carefully remove the wreath from the bundt pan and loop ribbon through to hang it up.



THE UNIVERSITY OF MAINE COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

Homemade Gift from the Kitchen

Peach Crisp in a Mug

Makes 1 serving / Serving size: 1 mug

Creating the Mix:

Ingredients

- 2 Tbsp. quick oats
- 1 Tbsp brown sugar
- 1 Tbsp whole wheat flour
- 1 Tbsp finely chopped pecans
- 1 (4 oz.) container peaches I natural juice

Directions

1. Use one mug
2. Place dry ingredients inside a snack-sized re-closable bag and place bag in bottom of mug.
3. Place the container of peaches on top of the dry ingredients.
4. Attach gift tag instructions or the final product.
Note: Store in refrigerator and use with 1 month.

Peach Crisp in a Mug Printable Gift Tag (PDF)

Recommend printing at actual size (4.25 x 5.5 inches)



Cooking the Recipe:

Ingredients

- Peach Crisp dry ingredients
- 1½ tsp. butter
- 1 (4-oz) container of peaches

Directions

1. Place butter into a plain coffee cup (no metallic designs). Microwave for 45 seconds to melt butter.
2. Add dry ingredients, stir to moisten. Mixture will be crumbly.
3. Add the peaches, undrained, and stir well.
4. Microwave 2 more minutes.



How to Prevent Ice and Snow Damage on Trees and Shrubs

Heavy snow and ice on the branches of trees and shrubs can cause considerable damage. Multi-stemmed evergreens, such as junipers and arborvitae, and weak-wooded deciduous trees, such as Siberian elm and silver maple, are most susceptible to branch breakage. Improper removal of ice and snow can increase the amount of damage to trees and shrubs.

Managing Ice



During the winter months, the serious damage to trees and shrubs generally occurs during ice storms. Large branches or entire trees can be lost due to the tremendous weight of the ice. When the weight of ice causes a small tree to bend sharply, it may be possible to prop it up to prevent breakage. Don't attempt to remove the ice by beating the branches with a broom or rake. This will only cause greater damage.

If the temperature is above freezing, spraying the ice-coated branches with cold water help melt the ice. Do this with caution, as the cold water may also add weight to the tree, causing further breakage. Hot or boiling water, may actually injure the trees and shrubs. In most cases, it's best to let the ice melt naturally. The radiant heat from the sun on a warm winter day can melt ice relatively quickly.

Individuals should stay away from large, ice-laden trees. Nothing can be done to prevent damage to large trees. Individuals, however, can be severely injured or killed if a large tree or branch were to suddenly crash to the ground while underneath it.

Managing Heavy Snow



The weight of ice can cause a small tree to bend. Do not attempt to remove the ice. This will only cause greater damage.

Accumulations of heavy, wet snow on evergreens can also cause severe branch breakage. Damage from heavy snow is best managed with prevention. Tie up vulnerable plants (such as arborvitae) before a snow or ice storm to help support branches and create a cone shape that will shed snow more easily. Use sturdy strips of fabric, nylon hose, or flexible cords (like

bungee cords) instead of materials that could cut into the bark and cause additional damage. Remove these protective materials after the risk of heavy snowfalls passes for the season—*typically early February for New York*.

When heavy, wet snow accumulates on evergreens, gently shake the snow from the branches or carefully brush off the snow with a

broom by sweeping upward. Never brush downward—you risk breaking already bent and stressed branches.

Snow can slide from steep roofs onto plants. Construct a temporary wooden structure in the fall to protect the plants.

Don't throw heavy, wet snow or ice onto shrubs or small trees when shoveling driveways and sidewalks. The weight of the heavy, wet snow and ice can cause considerable damage.

Addressing Ice and Snow Damage

If branch breakage occurs on a tree, prune back the damaged limb to the main branch or trunk in late winter when you can access the branch safely. Damaged shrubs may need to be pruned in the spring to restore their attractive natural shape.



Sometimes, trees and shrubs maintain a drooping, bent, or distorted form even after the snow and ice melts. Be patient with these misshapen trees and shrubs. Branches are remarkably flexible. As long as they are not broken, branches will move back into their original position. This may take several weeks or even months, depending on the weather. Resist the urge to "help" out by propping or tying up branches. You risk breaking branches in the process.

Occasionally, bent branches do not return to their original position. If branches remain bent or distorted into early summer, a few options exist to improve appearance. Some plants may be so disfigured that it is better to remove and replant. In many cases, the branches can be trained back into position. Use broad flexible straps to reposition branches to their desired form utilizing bamboo stakes or other items to brace them. Be sure that any ties or straps used for training are not left in place for more than two growing seasons. These materials will eventually girdle branches and kill them if forgotten or left on the plant.

More Information

- [Protecting Trees and Shrubs in Winter](#)
- [How to Protect Trees and Shrubs from Animal Damage Over Winter](#)
- [Winter Damage on Trees](#)
- [Using Deicing Salts in the Home Landscape](#)
- [How to Protect Plants from Frost and Freeze](#)
- [Cold and Freeze Damage to Garden Plants](#)

Don't Be Salty, New York!

Reducing Rock Salt for a Cleaner Environment While Maintaining Safety



New York State is known for its harsh winters, with frequent snow and ice storms, making travel treacherous at times. To combat the slippery snow and ice, road salt (or rock salt as it is also known) is often used to keep roads and walkways clear to ensure easy and safe navigation. Unfortunately, the impacts of excessive rock salt applications pose significant impacts to public health and the environment through contamination of surface water (lakes, ponds, river, streams), and groundwater used for recreation and as sources of drinking water, as well as infrastructure failure because of excessive corrosion. It takes only one teaspoon of salt to permanently pollute five gallons of water.

In 2020, the [Adirondack Road Salt Reduction Task Force](#) was established to complete a comprehensive review of road salt contamination and road salt application practices within the Adirondack Park. The Task Force released a [Final Report \(PDF\)](#) with recommendations that identify training and public outreach practices to support road salt reduction targets and reduce the overall application of road salt through various best management practices. Today, New York State is expanding on these efforts and encourages all [New Yorkers to manage rock salt use effectively and safely](#). Don't be salty, New York!

How You Can Reduce Salt Spreading for a Healthy Environment

- Shovel what you can first. Removing snow and ice first helps reduce the amount of rock salt you'll need.
- Think twice before you start spreading rock salt. You only need 12 ounces to effectively melt snow and ice on a 20-foot driveway.



- Know the temperature. Rock salt will not melt snow or ice below 15 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Salt brine isn't just for Thanksgiving turkeys! You can use a combination of rock salt and water and apply it to your driveway and walkways to keep it ice free.
 - * Combine 3.5 cups of rock salt per gallon of hot tap water.
 - * Stir until all salt is dissolved. Let any gravel settle to the bottom.
 - * Pour the brine into a regular garden sprayer and spray in a zig-zag pattern over desired area.
 - * Save extra brine to use later.
- Make informed decisions about the impacts of your deicers. Check out [Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's properties of deicing agents](#) before you make a purchase.



NYS DOT uses liquid salt brine to fight snow and ice during winter storms. Watch the [video](#) as Highway Maintenance Supervisor Jim DeLong explains the process.



Homesteading



NYS DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

Place to Hunt Waterfowl

DEC has developed an [interactive map](#) for waterfowl hunters showing Zone boundaries, public properties, and public boat launches across the state. There are many more places to hunt waterfowl than the ones listed here, but these are properties that have a history of waterfowl hunting and/or access to public waterbodies for hunting. This mapper is intended to be a starting point for newer waterfowl hunters and any hunter looking for new places to visit.

Things to remember when using this mapper.

- Not every unit of a property may be open for waterfowl or open for the whole season.
- Always visit the property webpage or contact the land manager for details and current rules.
- You can toggle different information layers and change the background to show the information you are most interested in.

- Be aware of property lines, discharge ordinances, and surrounding landowners when choosing a place to hunt.
- This mapper is updated annually, prior to the start of the regular duck seasons, and may not include mid-season changes to rules or access.



NYS DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

PREVENT CWD: Don't Bring Back the Whole Carcass

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) is a fatal disease found in deer, elk, and moose that poses a serious threat to wild populations. CWD is always fatal to deer. When introduced into wild deer, it can spread rapidly, is nearly impossible to eliminate, and threatens future deer populations and hunting opportunities. Hunters can help prevent the introduction of CWD into New York's wild deer population by taking the following precautions.

- If you harvest any type of deer, elk, moose, or caribou while hunting outside of New York, debone the venison before bringing it back into New York. DEC will confiscate and destroy illegally imported deer carcasses and parts.
- If you harvest a deer from an area outside of New York known to have CWD, submit samples to that state's Department of Natural Resources for CWD testing before consuming the venison.
- Avoid using deer urine-based lures or attractant scents, as these could contain CWD. Use synthetic products instead.
- Dispose of deer carcass waste in a landfill, not on the landscape.



Alexander Vladislavovitch Sinani | Flickr

- Hunt only wild deer and support fair chase hunting principles.
- Do not consume venison from deer that appeared sick or diseased.

Herb B.'s Monthly Advice for DECEMBER



Does it ever feel like some weeks pass in a blink, while others seem to stretch on forever? Last month, I noticed my calendar reflecting that exact feeling—one week nearly empty, the next packed from morning to evening.

As we look ahead, I'm hopeful that prices will start to ease. Seed costs have climbed significantly. While seed margins are generally strong, it would be nice to either see counts increase or return to something closer to 2019 pricing. To manage rising costs, I've begun purchasing the next size up in seed packets. The savings have been worthwhile, and germination has remained reliable. In fact, ordering in bulk helped me secure a variety that wasn't otherwise available this year.

When I moved to Saratoga County in 1981, winter brought stretches of -20°F—and even -35°F. Snow was so routine that when we got a three-inch snowfall in April, we barely thought to plow. It certainly feels like we may be living through a warming trend.

After our first snowfall on November 25, I found myself welcoming it. I call it "the perfect snow": white grass, black roads. If only it

stayed that way all season. Each year, once the roads finally do turn white, it seems many drivers forget how to handle winter conditions. And nothing compares to what I witnessed once in Maryland after just one inch of snow. The motel manager where I was staying advised me to wait until 10 a.m. for the roads to melt. So we sat with our coffee and watched. Cars spun, slid, and bumped into each other—no one badly hurt, thankfully, as most never made it above 20 mph. If you ever find yourself with a free day and a winter forecast, a drive to Maryland may offer quite a show.

Seed catalogs arrived early this year—before Thanksgiving. I've been stacking them aside while we prepare for holiday festivities. I did peek to make sure my favorite paste tomato returned after last year's crop failure. Thankfully, it's back.

As we close out the year, it's a natural time to take stock of our blessings. My family has been healthy, and the grandkids are growing like weeds. Our harvest is nearly complete, with beef going to freezer camp at the end of the month. I'm looking forward to 2026—embracing new experiences, smiling at the familiar, and being pleasantly surprised by what comes our way. I hope we'll share the journey together.

—Herb



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Scan the QR code to visit our website or click the link [Cornell Cooperative Extension | Gardening & Landscape](https://www.ccesaratoga.org)

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