



January 26, 2026

Cornell Cooperative Extension | Saratoga County

NEWSLETTER

4-H Party For A Cause—Another Huge Success



The 4-H Party For A Cause was held on Saturday, January 17 at The Hideaway, located at Saratoga Lake Golf Club. Despite some challenging weather, more than 120 people came out to show their support for 4-H—once again demonstrating the incredible strength, generosity, and community spirit that surrounds our program. The evening was filled with great energy, delicious food, and fantastic music, making it a truly memorable night for all who joined us.

This year, we are proud to share that over \$5,000 was raised in the name of 4-H. These funds will go directly toward enhancing the William M. Schwerd Building, helping us improve and sustain a space that supports countless youth programs, hands-on learning opportunities, and important community gatherings for years to come.

A sincere and heartfelt thank you goes out to our Signature Sponsor, Harmony Veterinary Clinic, whose generous support played a key role in the success of this event. We are also grateful to Electric Rodeo for providing the music that kept the atmosphere lively throughout the night, and to the Ballston Spa Lions Club for their continued partnership and support. This year, a portion of the funds raised will be paid forward to the Lions Club as a way to give back, further strengthening the spirit of community collaboration. We also extend our appreciation to our many sponsors and donors—your generosity and commitment mean more than words can express, and we are truly fortunate to have your support.

Part of the evening also included the Lions Club presenting 4-H with their annual donation, a moment that highlighted the shared mission of supporting youth and the broader Saratoga County community. As CCE Assistant Director Greg Stevens shared, *“What an amazing night when adults come together to enjoy each other’s company while raising funds for 4-H youth and Saratoga County.”*

To everyone who braved the elements, attended, sponsored, volunteered, and contributed in any way—thank you. Your commitment to 4-H and to giving back truly makes a difference. Events like this are a powerful reminder of what can be accomplished when a community comes together in support of youth, education, and a cause that truly matters.



Growing Resilience: Crop Insurance 101 Webinar Series

American Farmland Trust is hosting the “Growing Resilience Webinar Series” on risk management for specialty crop producers. Join us in February for a deep dive on the basics of crop insurance for small-scale and specialty farms. Our friends at Compeer Financial and Farm Credit will join us to share their expertise. **Webinar #1** will focus on the history on crop insurance, an overview of the Farm Safety Net, and key tips for producers seeking crop insurance for the first time. **Webinar #2** will provide overviews of relevant federal crop insurance programs, like Whole Farm Revenue Protection (WFRP) and Micro-farm coverage and key tips for producers seeking crop insurance for the first time.

Webinar #1: Tuesday, February 2, 2026 | 1:00—2:00 pm EST
Webinar #2: Tuesday, February 10, 2026 | 1:00—2:00 pm EST

Once registered, additional information and Zoom meeting details will be provided.

For questions or concerns, please contact Marlee Giacometti, mgiacometti@farmland.org

Register here for both dates! : <https://forms.office.com/r/HD2HGehpuh>

VARIOUS CORNELL COOPERATIVE EXTENSIONS & EASTERN NEW YORK COMMERCIAL HORTICULTURE

How to Diversify or Scale Up with Confidence for Profitability

Inspired by Annie’s Project

3– sessions: February 4, 11, and 25 | 11 am—2 pm
by Zoom and also at CCE locations statewide
(Allegany, Broome, Madison, Onondaga, Niagara, and Tioga)

Do you have an idea for a new enterprise to add value to your farm? Maybe you’re considering scaling up for a potential market opportunity but just aren’t sure if it’s a good fit for your business. Those that

complete the series will learn how to identify resources available at the farm level to support diversification or scaling up opportunities, as well as how to evaluate the business potential of opportunities. Each session will be offered with a virtual option, as well as coming into listed CCE offices for group discussion and learning from your peers.

To learn more click [here](#).

EASTERN NEW YORK COMMERCIAL HORTICULTURE

Eastern New York Fruit and Vegetable Conference

February 25—February 26, 2026
8:00 am—4:00 pm
The Crowne Plaza Desmond Hotel & Conference Center, Albany

Join us for our Annual Eastern NY Fruit and Vegetable Conference with two days filled with informative sessions on Tree Fruit, Vegetables, Small Fruit, Grapes, Greenhouse and a special Food Safety Wash and Pack session! To learn more and register ([click here](#))

CAR SEAT CHECK

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Saratoga County is partnering with New Country Toyota of Clifton Park for a FREE car seat check to insure your car seat is properly installed. Nationally Certified Child Passenger Safety Technicians and Instructors will be on site.

Thursday, February 5 | 4:00 pm—8:00 pm
New Country Toyota of Clifton Park
202 Route 146, Mechanicville

You can schedule an appointment by calling 518-885-8995.

What to bring to your car seat check:

- Your child (if possible)
- Your car seat manual
- Your vehicle owner’s manual
- A cleaned-out vehicle (remove other items for easier access)

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*
Tom Venditti
Alex Guilmette
Ian Murray—*Board of Supervisors Representative*
Danielle Hautaniemi - *Cornell Representative*



Your 3 Step Guide to ENERGY SAVINGS

Concerned about high energy bills, drafty rooms, or your carbon footprint?

Interested in heat pumps and renewable energy?

As a NYSERDA Regional Clean Energy Hub, we offer free energy education and guidance on home energy upgrades. We help homeowners and eligible tenants access incentives to make your home more energy efficient.

STEP 1: WEATHERIZE

Most homes have air leaks that let in cold air during the winter. By sealing these leaks and adding insulation, you can heat (and cool!) your home using less energy. This lowers your energy costs and makes your home more comfortable.

Free or low-cost state and federal programs help pay for home energy homeowners. There are financing incentives no matter what your income.

These programs may cover improvements in insulation air-sealing, lighting, heating and cooling, and more for those whose incomes and homes qualify.



Get started with a free home energy assessment. To learn more, contact the Saratoga, Warren & Washington Co. Community Energy Advisor - Tyler Folts: tdf42@cornell.edu/518-941-4041

STEP 2: GO SOLAR

Solar power is clean and produced locally. It can often supply most or all of the electricity for your home and usually costs less than electricity from a utility company. Renters and homeowners can take advantage of solar power.

Residential Onsite Solar

The state and federal governments have incentives to help cover the cost of buying and installing solar panels on your roof or property. If you take out a loan to cover the remaining cost, your monthly payment may be less than your current electric bill.

Community Solar Subscription

Enrolling in Community Solar provides credit from regional solar farms on your electric bill at no extra charge. This happens without you owning panels. This can be a great choice for renters or people who can't buy panels for their home for other reasons.



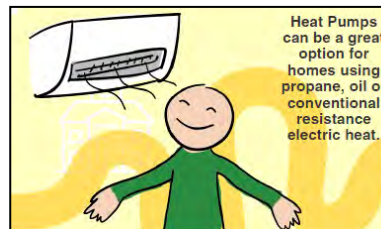
STEP 3: CONSIDER HEAT PUMPS

Heat pumps come in several varieties to meet your home's needs:

Air Source Heat Pumps draw heat from the air, even when the outside temperatures are below freezing.

Ground Source Heat Pumps draw heat from the ground and are often referred to as "geothermal" heat pumps.

Heat Pump Water Heaters draw heat from the air and can be two to three times more energy efficient than standard or on-demand water heaters.



There are incentives for the installation of high-efficiency air source and ground source systems that work well in our cold weather.

We can walk you through these options and help you understand what might work best for you and your space. For more information on heat pumps specifically visit: HeatSmartCapitalRegion.com

Explore the many programs that NYSERDA offers to help you pay for energy improvements. The amount of assistance depends on your income.

- Empower+ helps HEAP eligible households receive up to \$10,000 toward air sealing and insulation measures.
- More moderate-income households (80% of area medium income by county) receive up to \$5,000.
- The Comfort Home program is available to all NY homeowners, offering varying levels of assistance to incentivize weatherization.
- Financing with rates as low as 4% is an option to pay for improvements.
- Federal IRA Tax Credits and some rebates are now available. Visit www.Energy.gov/save to learn more.



Annuals 101

The Basics

When you think about it, we expect a lot out of annuals in a short period of time: To germinate, grow to full-sized plants, and flower their heads off for as long as possible is a tall order. Home gardeners can help annuals fill this order by providing them with a few, very basic things:

Get the annuals in the ground whether directly in the garden or in a container as soon as spring weather has really come to stay. If you plant annuals too early in spring, they may just sit and sulk in the soil, never fully recovering or, worse yet, being killed by a late spring frost. Conversely, if you plant annuals too late in the season, you're not giving them enough time to do what they want to do, namely mature and provide a brilliant display of flowers.

Be sure to match the needs of a particular annual with the right location in your garden. Although there are notable exceptions, in the main, annuals love a full sun location. You may be able to get a sun-loving annual to put on an adequate show with only four hours of direct sun a day, but you're doomed to disappointment if you plant a sun-lover in the shade, or a shade-lover in the sun.

Although some annuals are remarkably tolerant of a wide variety of soils, you'll always get better results if you plant them in a well-drained, loose, loamy soil. If your soil is heavy (or exceptionally sandy), before planting add two or three inches of organic soil amendment (such as compost, ground bark, or peat moss) and cultivate the soil to a depth of six inches or more, incorporating the organic amendment as you turn the soil.

If you're planting annuals from seed, the back of the seed packet will provide you with specific instructions concerning planting depth and spacing. If you're planting annuals from already-started transplants, remove each plant gently from its growing container, keeping its rootball intact. Plant the transplants at the same depth as they were in their nursery containers, pressing the soil gently around them with the palms of your hands. If possible, plant transplants on a cloudy day, or in the early evening, to keep wilting to a minimum. And always give newly planted annuals a good drink of water to settle the soil and refresh their spirits.

Some of the newer varieties of annuals are "self-branching" and don't require that you pinch the growing tip out of the young plant. While you're at the nursery or garden center, be sure to ask whether or not the plants you've selected require pinching. It's amazing what this one small step can do. With it, your plants will likely mature into well-branched, bushy specimens that don't require staking. Without pinching, tall plants may simply fall over and struggle to mature, never really amounting to much.

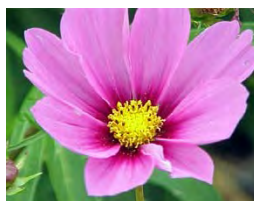
Although a few annuals are remarkably drought-tolerant, you'll get the most from them if you provide water on a consistent basis. The soil can be allowed to dry out slightly between water-

ings, but it should never be overly wet. And to keep diseases to a minimum, water the soil without wetting the foliage.

Because so much is expected of annuals over a short period of time, good gardeners provide them with monthly applications of a complete fertilizer (such as a 10-10-10 formulation). Whether it's liquid or dry makes little difference. Just make sure these willing performers receive the nutrients they need, right through late summer or early fall.

To keep annuals blooming at the peak of their ability, deadhead regularly. By "deadheading," we mean removing (either with shears or by pinching) all spent flowers. Once a flower head has reached the point where its seeds are mature, the plant will usually stop producing flowers. If you want plenty of flowers, be vigilant about removing the dead and dying blossoms from the plant.

If you're out in your garden of annuals on a daily basis, it's easy to keep a sharp eye out for any potential damagers, like pests and diseases. Bear in mind that the most valuable phrase regarding healthy plants is "at the first sign of attack." If you apply a control in the earliest stages of infection, the amount and strength of any insecticide or fungicide needed will be minimal. Once a pest or disease has really taken hold, stronger methods and controls will be needed. So get out there in your garden every day, inspecting and enjoying your plants, and don't let any pest rob you of a single flower!



Although there are some annuals that produce foliage only, for most gardeners the word "annual" is synonymous with colorful garden flowers that bloom from early spring right up through the first fall frost. For the record, an annual is defined as a plant whose life cycle is complete in a year's time, sometimes slightly less. Most annuals are planted in the garden from seed or transplants in spring, flower throughout the warm months, and are then killed with the first frost in autumn.

To put it indelicately, home gardeners get "a lot of bang for their buck" with annuals. Sure, they are temporary, but what a temporary show they put on! Of all the types of plants available (trees, shrubs, vines, perennials, bulbs), annuals are usually the least expensive of the lot. And if you decide to grow them from seed (as opposed to already started plants), they're positively cheap.

The diversity within the group of plants known as annuals is staggering, with everything from 10-foot-tall sunflowers to the ground-hugging sweet alyssum to the rampant, vining morning glory. From landscape displays to containers and hanging baskets, there is truly an annual for every occasion and situation. And when it comes to cut flowers, it's hard to beat annuals for their sheer production and ease of growing.

What About Suet Feeders?



Not so long ago, feeding birds was a winter-only activity. The thinking was that during the coldest time of the year (in snowbelt regions at least), we need to provide birds with extra energy in order for them to survive. While there is some truth to that, mostly we feed birds -- summer or

winter -- because it's fun. Bird feeding of any kind is less an act of charity than a garden indulgence, like raising a particularly fine perennial flower.

Suet, in particular, has traditionally been a winter-only bird food. The use of suet -- the hard fat around the kidneys and loins of cattle and sheep -- was limited to cold weather because it quickly turned rancid at temperatures above 70° F. Enter the ready-to-use suet cake. The suet in suet cakes is rendered, or cooked, so it becomes less prone to melting and spoiling, and then is made into pressed cakes. They come shaped to fit most suet cages, in various "flavors" so you can determine which ones birds in your area prefer, and in ingenious packages that are not messy to handle.

Suet is a good addition to garden feeding stations because it attracts several bird species that rarely visit a seed feeder. For instance, most species of woodpeckers -- downy, hairy, red-bellied, even the occasional pileated, the largest of the North American woodpeckers -- rarely visit seed feeders but are regular suet diners. Lucky suet providers might also host creepers, kinglets, warblers, and wrens, none of which typically visit seed feeders. Some species -- including chickadees, jays, nuthatches, and titmice -- will take advantage of both kinds.

Wherever you live, late winter into early spring is a great time to try suet cakes in your garden. While you're enjoying the spring bulbs in bloom, add to the action in your garden by including a suet feeder. Many birds become very active at this time, establishing territories and building nests, and in many areas natural food supplies may still be low.

Animal fat is an important source of extra calories for the birds. It can be set out as is or rendered into cakes to include other goodies such as seeds and nuts. Though beef fat is most common, the term suet has come to mean any fat trimmings from livestock, including lard (rendered pig fat).

Homemade Suet Cakes

Prepared suet cakes are popular for their convenience, but if you make your own (see recipe below), you're not limited to a purchased feeder to dispense the food. For instance, you can smear a homemade mixture into the opened scales of a pinecone, then hang the cone from a tree branch. Or drill numerous 3/4-inch-wide, 1-inch-deep holes into a small log. Attach a screw-eye to one end of the log for hanging, and fill the holes with the suet mixture.

The basic ingredients will be familiar, though the specific propor-

tions can vary. All suet feed for birds combines fats, flour, and usually a sweetener. Experiment by adding raisins, sunflower seeds, nuts, or other ingredients.

- 1 cup lard (no substitutions)
- 1 cup crunchy peanut butter
- 2 cups quick-cooking oats
- 2 cups cornmeal
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- ¼ cup sugar

In a 2-quart pan, melt the lard and peanut butter over medium heat, then stir in the oats, cornmeal, flour, and sugar. Press the mixture into square freezer containers about 1 ½ inches deep. Refrigerate until cool, then cut into cakes, seal in plastic wrap, and store in the freezer.

Ready-Made Suet Cakes

Many kinds of ready-made mixtures are available. One company, C&S Products of Dodge, Iowa, markets 31 different kinds with names like Almond Treat and Woodpecker Delight; the "treats" include proportionately more suet and the "delights" more grain. But in either case, the suet cakes are safe to use in summer temperatures as high as 100° F. Because ingredients vary, prices span a range, but most cakes cost \$2 to \$3.

Don't confuse suet cakes with similarly shaped seed blocks. These are seed mixes in which the seed is essentially glued together with gelatin, rendering the seed somewhat less messy and, in some cases, more convenient to dispense than when loose. To provide easy access to protein, and to attract suet-loving birds, be sure the product you put out is in fact suet.

Suet Dispensers

A great variety of suet dispensers is available, not including the kinds like pinecones or logs you fashion yourself. Most common are simple wire cages sized and shaped to fit one commercial suet cake. But all types work well and discourage squirrels and what some people consider less-desirable bird species (blackbirds, grackles, and starlings) from invading.

If these or other suet thieves (raccoons and possums, even dogs, cats, and bears) appear and take over, your dispenser needs to be a little more creative. For instance, Duncraft offers Suet Haven (\$22). It allows smaller woodpeckers and nuthatches to reach in but thwarts larger birds and most animals. Another approach is to shield the suet cake from all sides but the bottom, thus excluding birds that typically don't feed while upside down, such as starlings and grackles (Lyric's Selective Suet Holder, \$17).

While you might place some seed feeders in full sun in an open location, suet dispensers are best in or near a tree and out of full sun to help prevent the suet from melting.

Slow Cookers and Food Safety

At any time of year, a slow cooker can make a life a little more convenient because by planning ahead, you save time later. Opening the front door on a cold winter evening and being greeted by the inviting smells of beef stew or chicken noodle soup wafting from a slow cooker can be a diner's dream come true. But winter is not the only time a slow cooker is useful. In the summer, using this small electrical appliance can avoid introducing heat from a hot oven. And it takes less electricity to use a slow cooker rather than an oven.

Is a slow cooker safe?

Yes, the slow cooker, a countertop electrical appliance, cooks food slowly at a low temperature—generally between 170°F and 280°F. The low heat helps less expensive, leaner cuts of meat become tender and shrink less.

The direct heat from the pot, lengthy cooking and steam created within the tightly-covered container combine to destroy bacteria and make the slow cooker a safe process for cooking foods.

Safe Beginnings

Begin with a clean cooker, clean utensils and a clean work area. Wash hands before and during food preparation.

Keep perishable food refrigerated until preparation time. If you cut up meat and vegetables in advance, store them separately in the refrigerator. The slow cooker may take several hours to reach a safe, bacteria-killing temperature. Constant refrigeration assures that bacteria, which multiply rapidly at room temperature, won't get a "head start" during the first few hours of cooking.

Thaw Ingredients

Always thaw meat or poultry before putting it into a slow cooker. Choose to make foods with a high moisture content such as chili, soup, stew or spaghetti sauce. If using a commercially frozen slow cooker meal, prepare according to manufacturer's instructions.

Use the right amount of food.

Vegetables cook slower than meat and poultry in a slow cooker so if using them, put the vegetables in first.

REMINDERS:

- Always thaw meat or poultry before putting into a slow cooker.
- Make sure the cooker is plugged in and turned on.
- Keep the lid in place.

Large cuts of meat and poultry may be cooked safely in a slow cooker, however since slow cookers are available in several sizes, consult the instruction booklet for suggested sizes of meat and poultry to cook in your slow cooker.

Then add the meat and desired amount of liquid suggested in the recipe, such as broth, water or barbecue sauce. Keep the lid in place, removing only to stir the food or check for doneness.



Settings

Most cookers have two or more settings. Foods take different times to cook depending upon the setting used. Certainly, food will cook faster on high than on low. However, for all-day cooking or less-tender cuts, you may want to use the low setting.

If possible, turn the cooker on the highest setting for the first hour of cooking time and then to low or the setting called for in your recipe. However, it's safe to cook foods on low the entire time—if you're leaving for work, for example, and preparation time is limited.

While food is cooking and once it's done, food will stay as long as the cooker is operating.

Power Out

If you are not home during the entire slow-cooking process and the power goes out, throw away the food even if it looks done.

If you are at home, finish cooking the ingredients immediately by some other means: on a gas stove, on the outdoor grill or at a house where the power is on.

When you are at home, and if the food was completely cooked before the power went out, the food should remain safe up to two hours in the cooker with the power off.

Handling Leftovers

Store leftovers in shallow covered containers and refrigerate within two hours after cooking is finished. Reheating leftovers in a slow cooker is not recommended. Cooked food should be reheated on the stove, in a microwave, or in a conventional oven until it reaches 165°F. Then the hot food can be placed in a preheated slow cooker to keep it hot for serving—at least 140°F as measured with a food thermometer.



Oatmeal—Whole Grain Goodness

January is National Oatmeal Month! Oatmeal is a whole grain that can be a delicious, warm way to add whole grains to your eating patterns during the cold winter season. Oats are full of important nutrients like vitamins B and E, calcium, magnesium, and zinc. This grain contains beta-glucan, a special kind of fiber, found to be especially effective in lowering cholesterol and insoluble dietary fiber, which has anticancer properties. Best of all, oats, like most other whole grains, can help us maintain a healthy weight.

There are several types of oatmeal such as rolled oats, quick cooking oats, instant oats, oat flour, and steel-cut oats. All these types have similar nutritional values, but many times instant oatmeal has other ingredients added such as sugar. The only way to know if there are “extra” ingredients is to read the ingredient label of the product.

Ideas to boost nutrition and flavor include:

- Make oatmeal with calcium-rich milk instead of water.
- Toss in raisins or dried cranberries and chopped nuts like walnuts or pecans.
- Add fresh or frozen berries or other fruits like apples or bananas.
- Mix in ¼ cup unsweetened applesauce.
- Sprinkle with cinnamon, for sweetness, it adds flavor without calories. With a dusting of cinnamon, a smaller amount of sweetener, or perhaps none at all, may be needed.

If eating a bowl of oatmeal isn't something you even want to consider, try using rolled oats in baked products like cookies, muffins or breads. Oatmeal can be used in place of bread crumbs in meat loaf or patties. Couple a goal of eating more servings of whole grains with a regular exercise program for a healthier you.

Applesauce Oatmeal Muffins with Blueberries

Yield: Makes 12 muffins

Ingredients:

- ½ cup whole wheat flour
- ½ cup all-purpose flour
- 1 cup quick-cooking oatmeal
- ½ tsp cinnamon
- ¼ tsp salt
- 1 large egg
- 1/3 cup vegetable oil
- 1 cup applesauce, unsweetened
- ½ cup brown sugar, lightly packed
- ½ cup blueberries, fresh or frozen



Photo provided by Kayla Colgrove

Directions:

1. Wash hands with soap and water.
2. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a muffin pan with 12 baking cups.
3. In a large bowl, combine dry ingredients (flours, oatmeal, cinnamon, baking powder, baking soda and salt); mix well.
4. Break egg into a small bowl. Wash hands with soap and water after cracking raw eggs. Add the oil, applesauce, and brown sugar. Mix well.
5. Add wet ingredients to dry ingredients and just enough to moisten the ingredients. Batter should still be lumpy.
6. Gently stir in blueberries.
7. Divide the mixture between 12 muffin cups.
8. Bake for 25-30 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean.
9. Store muffins in an airtight container at room temperature for two to three days or freeze for up to three months.

Notes:

- It is important to not overmix the batter. Only 10-15 strokes are needed to moisten the ingredients.
- When using frozen blueberries, do not thaw them. Keep blueberries frozen so they do not cause the batter to turn a bluish color.
- Try these variations. Enjoy the muffins plain by not adding blueberries or add dark chocolate chips instead of blueberries.

Nutrition Information:

Serving Size (1 muffin): Calories: 170, Total Fat: 7g, Saturated Fat: 1g, Cholesterol: 15 mg, Sodium: 150mg, Total Carbohydrates: 25g, Fiber: 2g, includes 9g Added Sugars, Protein: 3g Calcium: 4%, Iron: 6%, Potassium: 2%

The following are some oatmeal recipes to try:

1. Zoats—[zoats-nep.pdf](#)
2. Banana Oatmeal Coffee Cake—[Banana Oatmeal Coffee Cake | UNL Food | Nebraska](#)
3. Blueberry Oat Bread—[Blueberry Oat Bread | UNL Food | Nebraska](#)
4. Cowboy Cookies—[Cowboy Cookies | UNL Food | Nebraska](#)
5. Crunchy Whole Grain Granola—[Crunchy Whole Grain Granola | UNL Food | Nebraska](#)
6. Berry Good Overnight Oatmeal—[Berry Good Overnight Oatmeal | UNL Food | Nebraska](#)
7. No Bake Cereal Treats - [No Bake Cereal Treats | UNL Food | Nebraska](#)

Partners in Parenting
Support Group is Hosting A

COOKING & NUTRITION CLASS

Focusing on Family Meal Planning
and Child Nutrition

TUESDAY FEBRUARY
26TH, 2026
9:30am- 11am

Bag of produce will be provided to each attendee
Walk Ins Welcome, Registration is Preferred

Presented by:

Cornell Cooperative Extension
Saratoga County

Contact Lisa to register
Lisay@macscinc.org
518-335-9016 (call or text)

MACSC
6 South Main St.
Mechanicville, NY 12118



Cornell Cooperative Extension
Saratoga County

NUTRITION WORKSHOP

FREE

HEALTHY INGREDIENT SWAPS

Discover good-for-you ingredient substitutions
that preserve the deliciousness of your favorite
recipes!

Enjoy a tasty recipe

DATE: FEBRUARY 10TH 11:30AM
LOCATION: BALLSTON COMMUNITY PUBLIC LIBRARY
2 LAWMAR LN, BURNT HILLS, NY 12027

Contact
Brenna Kavakos, M.S.
Community Nutrition Resource Educator
bk375@cornell.edu

Be Your Own Heart-Health Valentine

While there is still a mystery as to why we celebrate Valentine's Day, one legend tells the story of an imprisoned Saint Valentine writing the first "valentine" letter introducing himself after he fell in love. Real reason unbeknownst to us, it can be said that people are enamored with celebrating Valentine's day. A day to not just say but show how you love those nearest to you and we know people are pulling out all the bells and whistles because it is projected that \$25.9 Billion dollars will be spent by US Consumers in preparation for this celebration.

In addition to Valentine's being celebrated in February, we must also remember the other heart celebration taking place, American Heart Month. This celebration brings together many organizations such as The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, American Heart Association, the CDC, and other locally-based health agencies to bring awareness to heart disease and promote healthy lifestyle changes that can influence the quality of life you live. Cardiovascular disease is still the leading cause of death worldwide and is the reason why heart month was established back in 1964 by President Lyndon B. Johnson.

With a prevention mindset, it is important leading into Heart Month to know your heart numbers. We encourage you to have established care with a health professional to record your numbers for blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugar, and body weight. Tracking these numbers with a healthcare team to keep these levels in the normal range can greatly reduce the risk of heart disease. There are lifestyle changes you can start to make now that can improve your heart health. We suggest talking first with your healthcare team to discuss any changes to your lifestyle.

It requires effort to create a heart-healthy lifestyle but we recognize that it can be new, uncharted territory in getting to a starting point of health. The American Heart Association has created a road map with stopping points along the way to help you reach your destination of heart health. Life's Essential 8 are key measures selected for improving and maintaining cardiovascular disease. Laid out in this roadmap are health behaviors and health factors that determine your heart score:

1. Eat Better
2. Be More Active
3. Quit Tobacco
4. Get Healthy Sleep
5. Manage Weight
6. Control Cholesterol
7. Manage Blood Sugar
8. Manage Blood Pressure



It may be time to take a page of Saint Valentine's love book and write a heart-health valentine to yourself. Write down all the reasons why you want to start loving your own heart health with defined personal goals and the ways you are going to start showing your love!

You can explore this resource further to learn more about the lifestyle aims.

Assess your heart health starting point online with the American Heart Association Life Check tool or [Central Carolina Hospital's Heart Health Assessment](#).



CORNELL 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.

Each month at New York State Integrated Pest Management's "What's Bugging You? First Friday" events, experts share practical information and answer questions on using integrated pest management (IPM) to avoid pest problems and promote a health environment where you live, work, learn and play. We end with an IPM Minute, and cover a specific action you can take in the next few days to help you avoid pest problems. **Events take place online from 12:00 pm to 12:30 pm.**

FEBRAURY 6: The value of insects | Feeding Friendly Insects: cut stems

Insects have a profound impact on our planet, from ecological benefits to intrinsic value. Learn how you can help insects including a technique to use in your garden. [Register here](#).



Homesteading



MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION

Preserving the Harvest 2026

Join the MSU Extension Food Safety Team to learn how to preserve food safely at home using current preservation methods and research-based resources. Let us help you fill your pantry and freezer by preserving food at home. Join online via Zoom using your laptop, tablet, smartphone, or any device with internet access. Classes are free and we invite you to register for any sessions you are interested in.

Classes are offered on Thursdays, February 5 - June 11, 2026 from 1 pm - 2 pm or 6 pm - 7 pm EST. Sessions include:

February 5 - Planning for Preservation

Plan for food preservation with us. Topics will include garden planning tips and seed selection as well as timing and management of your seedlings and an overview to prepare for preservation.

February 12 - Beyond the Bean: Tips, Tricks, and Tasty Recipes

Love beans? Learn how to safely home-can dry beans from start to finish using a pressure canner! Plus get tips on preparing your canned beans for delicious meals.

FOR MORE INFORMATION & TO REGISTER

THE NATIONAL GARDENING ASSOCIATION

Starting Tomato Seeds

Starting tomato seeds is quite easy. Follow these basic steps for growing healthy transplants.

1. Start with a bagged seed starting medium or fluffy potting mixture. (Heavy potting mixes may stay too moist and reduce germination rates.) Moisten the mix to the dampness of a well-rung sponge, fill your seedling tray or individual containers, and firm the surface.
2. Sprinkle the seeds on top of the soil, about ½ inch apart in flats (where they can be scattered over the surface or placed in rows), or sow two to three seeds per individual container.
3. Firm the seeds into the soil with a small piece of wood or other flat object. Then put a thin layer—about ¼ inch—of moist soil mix over the seeds and then firm it again. This brings the seeds into good contact with the soil, which is important for germination.
4. Place the container inside a plastic bag or cover it with a sheet of plastic or a plastic tray lid to keep the soil mix from drying out.
5. Put the container in a place where the temperature remains steadily around 70°F. Warm soil is more important than warm air for optimum germination, so providing heat from below really helps. Many gardeners find that the top of the refrigerator is an ideal spot for germinating.
6. The seedlings will begin to emerge in a few days. Check daily and remove the plastic at the first sign of green, then move the container to a well-lit location. A sunny window will work, but fluorescent light is better. If you use lights, set the plants an inch or two below the tubes and maintain that distance as the plants grow. If the distance is too great, the plants will stretch toward the lights and develop thin, weak stems. Keep the lights on 14 to 16 hours a day, but turn them off for the night. Plants need a rest, too!
7. Provide your seedlings with daytime temperatures in the range of 60°F to 70°F, and night temperatures in the range of 60°F to 65°F to encourage sturdy, stocky plants. Too much heat can encourage leggy, weak growth. Even fluorescent lights can create quite a bit of heat, so check daily to make sure temperatures don't get too extreme for seedling health. If you need to cool things down, set a fan on low speed near seedlings. (The "wind" also helps seedlings to grow stockier.)
8. Keep the soil moist, but not wet. Water gently so you don't disturb the soil and expose seedlings' roots. Use room-temperature water if possible.
9. Don't worry about fertilizing the seedlings right away. Some commercial seed-starting mixes have fertilizer mixed in that will take care of the seedlings' nutritional needs until after they've put on their second set of true leaves. Wait at least a week (or even until after the first repotting) before feeding seedlings. Then apply a fertilizer diluted to label directions.

Many gardeners transplant their tomato seedlings to larger containers at least once while they continue to nurture them indoors. This makes for larger and stronger root systems.





What is Winter Seed Sowing?

Winter seed sowing is becoming a popular way to get a head start on your spring garden. It involves using old plastic jugs such as milk jugs which act like a mini greenhouse, protecting seeds while still exposing them to natural winter conditions.

This method is particularly helpful for native and other seeds that require cold, moist conditions (known as stratification) in order to germinate, but it can be used for almost any type of seed. It is a simple, low-cost way to start seeds outdoors during winter. All you need are recycled milk jugs, seeds, potting mix and a few tools such as a utility knife or scissors, a drill or screwdriver, duct tape, and a marker for labeling.

Basic Steps Include:

- | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Gather your materials | 5. Close and label the container |
| 2. Prepare the container | 6. Provide airflow |
| 3. Add potting soil | 7. Place outdoors |
| 4. Plant the seeds | 8. Water and monitor |

Check out the following links for detailed steps:

- Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Ocean County Guide to Winter Sowing—<https://ocean.njaes.rutgers.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Winter-Seed-Sowing-Handout-Final.pdf>
- Penn State Extension Starting Seeds in Winter—<https://extension.psu.edu/starting-seeds-in-winter>
- University of Illinois Winter Sowing Handout—<https://extension.illinois.edu/sites/default/files/ilriverhortwintersowing.pdf>
- University of Missouri Winter Sowing Seeds—<https://extension.missouri.edu/publications/ym105>



Herb B.'s Monthly Advice for JANUARY



I've just finished placing my seed order, and after talking with my sales representative, I was glad to hear that their phone has been ringing off the hook. It's encouraging to know so many people are planning ahead and getting ready for the growing season.

Sometimes I find myself wondering what life was like before 24/7 media and nonstop news. What we now call *homesteading* was simply everyday living back then, and it often involved shared experiences and common challenges that many people went through.

I've put together a short list of those common themes and wondered if others have had similar experiences. Take a look and see if they ring true for you. If you'd like to suggest additional items, please write to me at MLfarmer@aol.com. I'll include reader contributions in the February issue.

"Have You Ever" Homestead Questions

1. Plucked a chicken
2. Chased an escaped chicken
3. Realized you are out of animal food and the store is closed
4. Forgot where you put seeds to start for fall planting
5. Wished you planted less tomato plants
6. Wished you planted earlier/later
7. Wondered if the full moon/frost is true

8. Watched the news to see if frost is forecasted
9. Gone to Google Earth to see your homestead from above
10. Had pigs nibble on your boots while trying to feed them
11. Thought how warm you will be while splitting oak
12. Observed a zucchini at 6" only to see it baseball size the next day
13. Patrolled potato rows looking for potato beetles and larva with a coffee can with soapy water
14. Marveled at the size of a tomato horn worm
15. Been lectured not to kill a tomato horn worm with white larva on their back
16. Watched yellow jacket wasps arrive at the nest with insect larva in their mouths
17. Watched a humming bird grab flies in midair
18. Checked beans on one day only to see they are too big the next
19. Developed a "special system" to grow something only to find it in a gardening book the next day
20. Had a special variety and found it has been removed from your "go to" seed company
21. Taught your dog not to go after the layer hens
22. Been amazed at a double yolk egg
23. Reported to your partner how many eggs Every Day!
24. Picked a raspberry row in one direction only to find as many going back to your starting point
25. Watched a crow take off by just looking at it, even while in the house
26. Sat next to a fireplace/stove looking at a seed catalog in December

Okay.....Your turn. Email Herb at MLfarmer@aol.com



Pantry Dry Mix Workshop

9:30 am - 11 am

CCE Training Center
377 Schroom River Road
Warrensburg, NY



Cornell Cooperative Extension of Warren County will be holding a Dry Mix Workshop on Saturday 21 at 9:30 am to 11:00 am at the Cornell Cooperative Training Center on 377 Schroom River Road, Warrensburg, NY.

Culinary dry mixes are used in cooking and baking to create a variety of goods, including cakes, cookies, and sauces. We will be making mixes to take home, and each participant will receive a recipe booklet

with more options for your home kitchen. Save time, money, and avoid preservatives and additives by stocking homemade dry mixes in your pantry.

The program fee is \$10 per person, pre-registration, and pre-payment is required by calling 518-668-4881. For more information, email Alyssa Hayes at ash297@cornell.edu.

Piglet Health 101: CCE Albany

When February 14, 2026
9:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Location Cornell Cooperative
Extension Albany
County, 24 Martin Rd,
Vorheesville, NY

Spaces left 24

REGISTRATION

- Attendee

REGISTER



PIGLET HEALTH 101



Join New York Pork Producers for Piglet Health 101, a hands-on educational program designed to support pork producers at every stage of experience.

Whether you are brand new to piglet care and farrowing or a seasoned producer, this program offers practical takeaways and best practices you can apply on your farm. Participants will gain hands-on experience in key areas of piglet health and processing, including:

- Vaccination protocols
- Castration
- Needle teeth clipping
- Tail docking
- Ear notching
- Scour prevention
- Splay leg correction
- And more

*Participation is **FREE**, and each farm will go home with a complete piglet processing kit.*

Please plan to arrive **at least 15 minutes prior to the start of the event** to allow time for check-in and a timely start.

SPACES ARE LIMITED, SO PLEASE ENSURE THAT WHEN YOU RSVP YOU ARE ABLE TO ATTEND.

The session is led by DVMs Stephen and Matthew Patterson of Passion for Pigs, who bring industry-leading, swine-specific expertise and real-world insight applicable across a wide range of production styles.

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Click the photos to be navigated to each of our Facebook accounts:



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Building Strong and Vibrant New York Communities