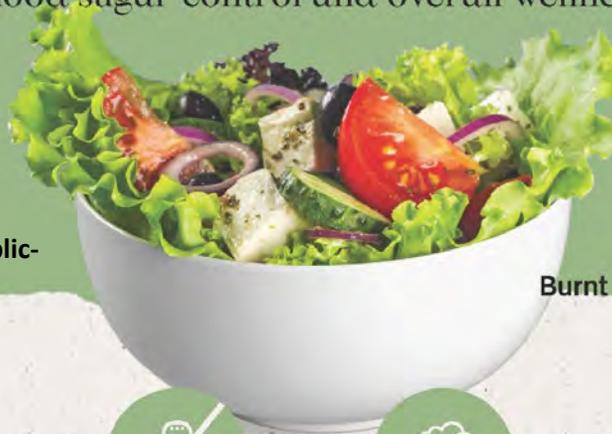


NEWSLETTER

Diabetes Nutrition Workshop

Eat Smart • Feel Better • Take Control

Join us for an engaging, practical nutrition workshop focused on building healthy habits that support blood sugar control and overall wellness.



FREE
-Open to the Public-

March 18th
11:30
Burnt Hills Public Library



 **Building
Balanced Meals**
• Creating meals that help manage blood sugar
• Understanding portions and meal timing



 **Building
Balanced Meals**
• Creating meals that help manage blood sugar
• Understanding portions and meal timing



 **Carbohydrates
& Blood Sugar**
• How carbohydrates affect blood sugar
• Choosing healthier carb options



 **Healthy Simple
Swaps**
• Diabetes-friendly snack ideas
• Easy food swaps for everyday meals

Capital Region Prism is HIRING!

CR-PRISM Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Watercraft Stewards provide public education and outreach at boat launches regarding statewide Clean, Drain, Dry practices in order to help prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species. Watercraft Stewards collect research data daily from interactions with the public using the Survey 123 Watercraft Inspection Steward Program Application (WISPA).

Watercraft Stewards work independently at various boat launch locations throughout the Capital Region PRISM (including Albany, Columbia, Greene, Herkimer, Montgomery, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady, and Washington counties).

Season Employment & Work Schedule

Watercraft Stewards work on a full-time seasonal (temporary) basis from May through September. Work schedules are typically Thursday-Monday, including holidays, from 7:00 am—3:30 pm, though schedules may also vary depending on program needs.

The Watercraft Steward program runs from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day, with several days of required programmatic training on May 14, 15, 18, and 19, 2026.

To learn more and apply to be an AIS Watercraft Steward, visit <https://bit.ly/WatercraftStewards>.

Saratoga 4-H is HIRING!

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Saratoga County is seeking a passionate and motivated 4-H Animal Science Resource Educator to join our dynamic team. This is an exciting opportunity to live and work in beautiful Saratoga County, home to a rich diversity of agriculture, a thriving 4-H community, and strong network of dedicated volunteers. Our county boasts exceptional existing programs - including 4-H Veterinary Science, Dog Obedience, and a vibrant presence at the Saratoga County Fair - proving a solid foundation of continued growth and innovation. As part of a supportive team of educators and administrative professionals, the selected candidate will enjoy a collaborative environment that encourages creativity, professional development, and opportunities for both career and educational advancement. This position is ideal for an educator who is eager to make a meaningful impact on youth, agriculture, and the community through hands-on, research-based 4-H programming.

For more information or to apply [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, March 5 | 4 pm—8 pm
New Country Toyota of Clifton Park
202 Route 146, Mechanicville

To schedule an appointment call 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 **February 25, 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*



The Drainage Survey for Farmers

Farmers are invited to respond to a survey about the tile drainage practices and benefits on farms in New York and Vermont.

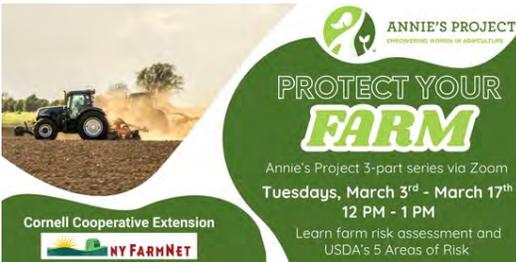
The goal of the survey is to understand the extent of tile drainage on farms, the ways and reasons it is utilized on farms; and the benefits and challenges of this practice to crop production and related field practices. This survey is being conducted by Cornell CALS Pro-DAIRY and Nutrient Management Spear Programs and the William H. Miner Agricultural Research Institute and is partially funded by the Northern NY Agricultural Development Fund, a farmer-driven small grants program funding high priority, cutting-edge research and technical assistance:

https://cornell.ca1.qualtrics.com/.../SV_9nogL2dQ6CXxEeq



CORNELL COOPERATIVE EXTENSION and NY FARMNET

Protect Your Farm



Are you a woman engaged in farming in NYS? Join Cornell Cooperative Extensions of Albany and Broome, and NY FarmNet for a virtual Annie's Project 3-part series as we explore the risks of operating a farm, including the USDA's 5 Areas of Risk, and discuss farm risk mitigation techniques to help you PROTECT YOUR FARM.

The series is free to attend and includes access to all presentations and resources shared. The virtual series will be held on Zoom and take place on Tuesdays, March 3—March 17 from 12 pm—1 pm. Our presenters include: Steve Hadcock, CCE Albany, Greg Mruk, NY FarmNet, and Taylor Petrie, CCE Broome.

Annie's Project is designed for farm women who have been in farming, or agri-business, or part of the food system for three to five years, and want to develop their understanding, interpretation, and opportunities in sustainable agriculture. Annie's Project gives farm women the opportunity to learn from female agricultural professionals and network with other women in similar situations. Annie's Project provides education in production price or market, financial, institutional and legal, and human and personal risk. [Register Here](#)

TAP INTO NEW YORK

Join us at Tap into New York, a two-part event at the Capital Region Welcome Center highlighting and celebrating the best in New York State foods and crafts! This event is hosted by Cornell AgriTech, Cornell Food Venture Center, Cornell Cooperative Extension and Taste NY.

Date: Tuesday, March 10 | 10 am - 4 pm.
Private vendor workshop from 10am -noon.
Public market from 1-4 pm

Location: Capital Region Welcome Center (1-87 Northbound, between exits 21B and 21A), New Baltimore, NY

What's involved:

- Workshops and presentations from Cornell University food science and economic development experts.
- A panel discussion with buyers representing some of the region's largest supermarkets and retailers.
- Public marketplace with sampling and retail sales.
- [Mobile Maple Experience](#), offering attendees a hands-on look at New York's vibrant maple industry.
- **Optional:** Locally sourced lunch for vendors.

The public marketplace is free and open to the public! Food producers interested in sampling and vending at Tap into New York can email coe-foodag@cornell.edu for more information.



Inspired by Annie's: Build a Social Media Strategy for Success

Annie's Project

Annie's Project seeks to empower farm women through education, networks and resources. We welcome, and encourage, learning and sharing amongst farm women as we help you grow as decision-makers and leaders on your farm.

Topics Covered:

- ✓ Social Media 101
- ✓ Cyber-Security & Safety Using AI
- ✓ Identification of Your Target Audience
- ✓ Learn to Use Analytics & Data
- ✓ Learn About Tools & Content Strategies
- ✓ Create a Social Media Plan for 2026!

WEDNESDAYS IN MARCH
3/11, 3/18 & 3/25
11:30AM-1:30PM
ZOOM

**OPTION TO JOIN LIVE AT
SELECT CCE OFFICES**

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Cost: \$25

Register by March 6th

<https://tinyurl.com/mrrr7jw6>



**Cornell
Cooperative
Extension**
ANNIE'S PROJECT
EMPOWERING WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE

Please join us in person at CCE Saratoga County, 50 West High Street, Ballston Spa or on zoom for an Inspired by Annie's: Build a Social Media Strategy for Success! [Cornell Cooperative Extension - Event Registration for Programs](#)

ATHLETES IN OVERALLS: INJURY RISK MANAGEMENT



- **February 24:** Movement Health, Self-Advocacy, and Athletic Performance
- **March 3:** Food, Fluid, Sleep and Stress are Foundations of Injury Risk Management
- **March 10:** Body Mechanics and Movement Patterns: Squats, Hinges, and Carries
- **March 17:** Movement Wellness vs Injury Rehab

For those interested in in-depth conversations of risk avoidance and management of musculoskeletal injuries. Information will include movement self-advocacy and consideration for implementing changes within a farm's strategies.

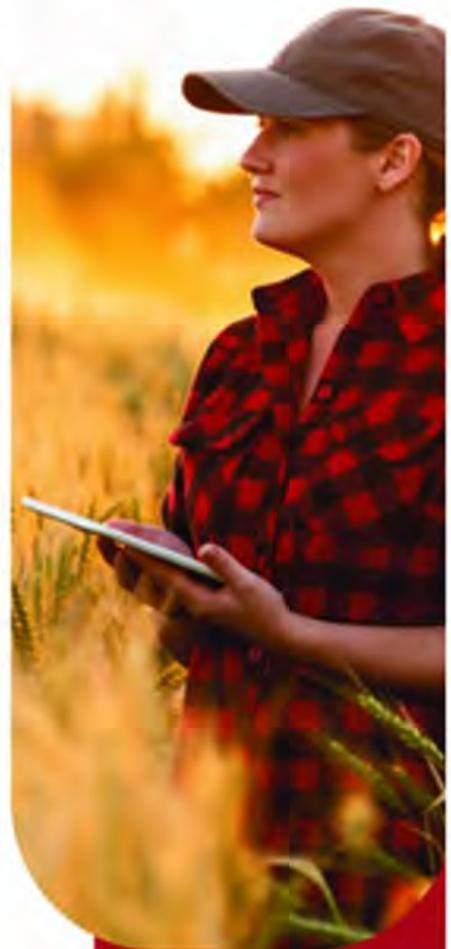
All sessions held 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm via Zoom
Can't make the sessions, register anyway and you can have access to a link with recordings

Scan the QR Code to Register!



Cornell Cooperative Extension | Oneida County

CORNELL COOPERATIVE EXTENSION IS AN EMPLOYER AND EDUCATOR RECOGNIZED FOR PROVIDING EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH APPLICABLE LAWS.



Saratoga County 4-H Announces 2026 Youth Shooting Sports Course

Saratoga County 4-H is pleased to announce the start of its annual 4-H Shooting Sports Course, **beginning March 10, 2026**, and meeting every Tuesday evening through April 14, 2026. This program is open to **all youth ages 12 and older**.



Participants will learn the safe and ethical use of firearms and shooting equipment across multiple disciplines, including Home Firearm Safety, Shotgun, Smallbore Rifle, Muzzleloader, Archery, Air Pistol, and Hunting & Outdoor Skills. Sessions will be **held at the 4-H Training Center, located at 550 Middleline Road, Ballston Spa, NY.**

All equipment, ammunition, and personal protective equipment are provided. Youth must be current Saratoga County 4-H members or enroll prior to participating. The course **fee is \$50, with an additional \$5 enrollment fee for new 4-H members.**

Youth can register online [CLICK HERE](#)

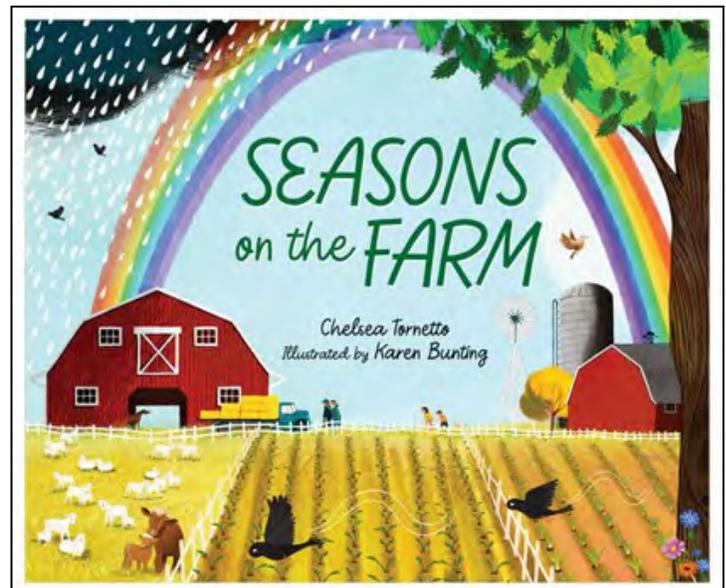
Saratoga County 4-H Seeks Volunteers for Ag Literacy Week March 16 –20

Calling all community champions and agri-enthusiasts! Saratoga County 4-H is rolling out the red carpet for volunteers during Agricultural Literacy Week, happening from March 16-20, 2026! We invite you to dive into the delightful world of “Seasons on the Farm” by Chelsea Tornetto, as you take a journey with second graders through the vibrant seasons of farming.

This is not just a reading session; it’s an opportunity to sow the seeds of agricultural knowledge and nurture a love for farming in young hearts! With each reading session lasting about 30 minutes you’ll share the magic of what farmers do throughout the year, followed by an engaging activity that will make those farming concepts come alive.

Whether you’re an agriculture aficionado or simply a community service superstar, your enthusiasm is the fertilizer we need to help this event bloom! So come on, let’s cultivate some fun and make a meaningful impact together!

To volunteer, please contact Kailey by emailing kek255@cornell.edu or calling the office at 518-885-8995.



25th Annual 4-H Leaders Scholarship Golf Classic

Mark your calendars and get ready for a fantastic day of fun and philanthropy! We’re thrilled to announce the 25th Annual 4-H Leaders Scholarship Golf Classic is now set for **Saturday, May 30** at the beautiful Fairways of Halfmoon, located at **17 Johnson Road, Mechanicville, NY.**

This is your chance to swing into action for a great cause, as the event now boasts a new date and venue, making it even more exciting! Join us in our mission to uplift the incredible youth of Saratoga County and help us create unforgettable experiences that will shape their futures.



4-H GOLF CLASSIC

Your participation is key, and together, we can make a huge impact! If you have any questions, don’t hesitate to reach out to Greg Stevens at the 4-H office at 518-885-8995 or grs9@cornell.edu. To register or for more information: <https://sc4h.org>.

Galway Public Library hosts

GETTING YOUR GARDEN STARTED

class presented by Madison Blodgett,
Community Horticulture Educator at CCE
Saratoga

Learn the basics of what goes into creating a garden, and enter spring prepared!

MARCH 5TH
6:00 PM – 7:00 PM

2112 East Street,
Galway, NY 12074

Topics covered will include:

- Soil
- Layout
- Container, raised bed, and in-ground gardens
- Starting seeds
- Purchasing plants
- Transplanting

Free to the public



Cornell University
Cooperative Extension
Saratoga County



Seed Starting Lesson and Workshop

Tuesday, March 24 | 5:00 pm - 6:30 pm
The Schwerd Building, 556 Middle Line Rd, Ballston Spa

Cost: \$25, pre-payment & registration required

Pre-registration can be made by emailing Jessica Luce at jmh452@cornell.edu. **Registration Deadline is March 13.**

Pre-payments can be made by calling our office at 518-885-8995 or mailing your check to: CCE Saratoga County, 50 West High St., Ballston Spa, NY 12020

Join the enthusiastic and knowledgeable Madison Blodgett for an exciting hands-on workshop where you'll discover the essential skills needed to start seeds indoors! This is your chance to dive into the world of gardening as we explore the ins and outs of soil media, containers, lighting, and optimal planting times.

You won't just be learning, you'll be actively participating! After gaining invaluable insights from our engaging lesson, you'll be thrilled to receive your very own seed starting kit, allowing you to put your newfound knowledge into practice right at home. We'll guide you through planting techniques as you follow along, ensuring you feel confident and empowered in your gardening journey.

Don't miss out on this unique opportunity to cultivate your green thumb while embracing sustainability and environmental stewardship. Join us and become part of a vibrant community of local residents passionate about gardening and healthy living - register today!



24 MARCH 2026
5:00PM - 6:30PM

RSVP by 13 MARCH 2026

STARTING SEEDS

Lesson and Workshop

Join Madison Blodgett as she teaches the basics of how to start seeds indoors. We will start by going over soil media, containers, lights, and planting times. After the lesson, everyone will receive their own seed starting kit. We will demonstrate planting techniques as you follow along at your stations. It will then be yours to take home!

The Schwerd Building at 556 Middleline Rd,
Ballston Spa, NY 12020

Cost of event \$25.00, pre-payment & registration required
Pre-registration can be made by emailing
Jessica Luce at jmh452@cornell.edu
Pre-payments can be made by calling our office at 518-885-8995
or mailing your check to CCE-Saratoga County,
50 West High St, Ballston Spa NY 12020

All proceeds benefit the Unlimited Garden Fundraiser!

Cornell Cooperative Extension
Saratoga County

Master Gardener



CORNELL IPM Program

What's Bugging You?

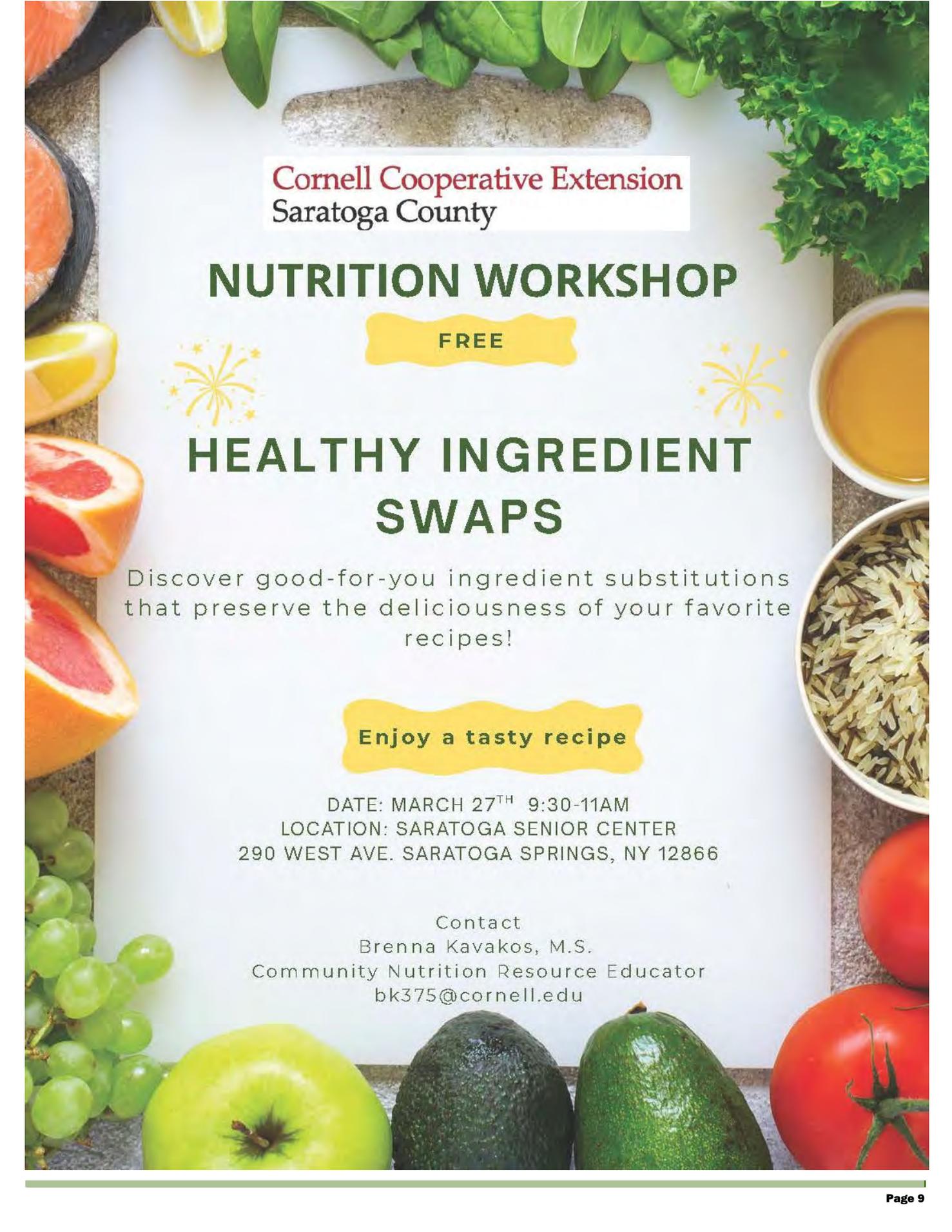
Not all things that buzz, crawl or slither are pests. Figuring out WHAT is bugging you is the first step.

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.**

MARCH 6: Here come the Jorō Spiders! | Lookout for termite swarms

Should you be worried about the Jorō spider invasion? (*spoiler alert: no*) Learn the facts about this new-to-NY spider and relevant IPM strategies. And learn about appropriate IPM responses if you see winged termites inside this spring. [Register here.](#)





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: MARCH 27TH 9:30-11AM
LOCATION: SARATOGA SENIOR CENTER
290 WEST AVE. SARATOGA SPRINGS, NY 12866

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

Healthy Snacking



February is Heart Health Month—a great reminder to show your heart some extra care. One easy step? Trim back on saturated fat and sodium, especially in snacks, where they often hide. Ready to make smarter snack choices? Explore these

heart-healthy ideas to keep your heart strong and beating its best.

Most of us do it. Some of us sneak it. Some of us even have attacks over it. Yes, snacking! If snacking is done in moderation with smart choices, it can fit easily into a healthy dietary pattern.

Crunch the munchies.

- Apple slices lightly schmearred with a tablespoon of no-added salts/low-sodium peanut butter
- Pear wedges dipped in fat-free/low-fat cottage cheese
- Pair [hummus](#) or tzatziki sauce that are low in sodium and fat with raw vegetables such as:
 - Carrot and celery sticks
 - Bell pepper slices
 - Zucchini or cucumber rounds
 - Broccoli and cauliflower florets
 - Cherry or grape tomatoes
- [Roasted chickpeas](#)
- [Popcorn](#) (air-popped or made with a nontropical vegetable oil)
- Whole-grain crackers
- Unsalted nuts and seeds

Rethink your drink.

If you drink juice, look at the amount of added sugar on the Nutrition Facts label. Instead of sugary drinks, try:

- Plain or sparkling water. Add citrus or cucumber slices, mint or other herbs for flavor.
- Fat-free/low-fat dairy milk, plain soy milk or unsweetened oat or nut milk
- Unsweetened tea or coffee
- 100% fruit juice without added sugar
- Low-sodium tomato or mixed-vegetable juice

Snack on healthy options.

- Whole-grain toast with peanut butter or other nut butter without added salt or sugar
- Fat-free/low-fat yogurt with fruit
- Fruit and veggie smoothie without added sugar or syrup
- Whole-grain crackers with very low sodium canned tuna or low-sodium salmon
- Canned fruit (packed in 100% juice, water)
- Baked or raw apples sprinkled with cinnamon
- Raisins, dates, figs and other unsweetened dried fruits
- Frozen banana slices without added sugar
- Frozen grapes without added sugar
- Fresh fruit salad flavored with fresh herbs, such as mint or fresh gingerroot.
- For packaged snacks, be sure to read the [Nutrition Facts Label](#). Look at the serving size to determine how many calories, [added sugars](#) and sodium are included.

Aim for a Healthy Weight

A healthy weight for adults is generally a body mass index (BMI) between 18.5 and 24.9. The online [BMI calculator](#) will help you measure your BMI. Download the BMI calculator app for [iPhone](#).

BMI CATEGORIES	
BMI Category	BMI Range
Underweight	Below 18.5
Healthy	18.5—24.9
Overweight	25.0—29.9

Always talk to your healthcare provider about what your BMI means to you. Talk to your child’s provider to determine if they have a healthy weight, because their BMI should be compared to growth charts specific to age and sex.

Following a [heart-healthy eating](#) plan and being [physically active](#) are some ways to help you achieve and maintain a healthy weight.

Health risks of overweight or obesity

The more body fat that you have and the more you weigh, the more likely you are to develop heart disease, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, breathing problems, and certain cancers.

Learn more about impacts of [overweight and obesity](#) on your heart health.

Measuring waist circumference

If most of your fat is around your waist rather than your hips, you are at a higher risk for heart disease and type 2 diabetes. A waist circumference of more than 35 inches for women or more than 40 inches for men increases your risk.

To correctly measure your waist circumference, stand and place a tape measure around your middle, just above your hipbones. Measure your waist just after you breathe out.

Benefits of maintaining a healthy weight

If you have been diagnosed with overweight or obesity, it’s important to follow your provider’s recommendations for losing weight. Health professionals recommend losing 5% to 10% of your initial weight over the course of about 6 months. Even before you reach this goal of just 3% to 5% of your current weight can lower triglycerides and glucose levels in your blood, as well as your risk of developing type 2 diabetes. Losing more than 3% to 5% of your weight can improve blood pressure readings, lower “bad” LDL cholesterol, and increase “good” HDL cholesterol.



Homesteading



THE NATIONAL GARDENING ASSOCIATION, By Charlie Nardozi, Senior Horticulturist

Soil Testing

If you've heard it once, you've heard it a hundred times: every garden should have its soil tested. Testing is the easy part, but interpreting the results can be confusing. To help sort out the confusion, this article discusses the reasons for testing, explains the various numbers on the report, considers the advantages and disadvantages of home test kits, and describes a few alternative tests being used by some organic growers.

Why test the soil?

If your garden is growing well, an argument could be made not to bother testing at all. However, if your plants aren't growing as well as you'd like or you're wondering if you're using the right amount of fertilizer, a soil test is the place to start. But a word of caution: a soil test won't solve all your garden problems or tell you everything about your soil. It will give you a periodic snapshot of your soil's mineral health. Tests are most useful when done regularly (every three to four years), at the same time of year (spring is fine, but fall is best because that's when fertility is lowest), and with the same lab (different labs use different tests, and results can vary). This way, you're comparing apples to apples with each set of results.

A sample test

The most accurate tests are conducted by university and private soil laboratories. Contact your cooperative extension service to find a lab in your area. These labs have had years of experience testing the soils in your state and giving specific fertilizer recommendations based on the soil types and crops grown. The basic tests usually cost less than \$20 but can be more if you include tests for specific minor nutrients such as zinc or contaminants such as lead.

Results often come as a number and a graph for relative levels of each nutrient (see sample test report below). The graph is more helpful in understanding nutrient levels. This sample describes some of the common results found on soil test forms. I've also included information on deficiency symptoms and some suggested fertilizers high in those nutrients. Symptoms of excessive fertilization tend to manifest themselves as deficiency symptoms of other nutrients. For example, high calcium levels interfere with the uptake of potassium.

1. Type of sample. Laboratories will ask what kind of plants are growing in your test site (vegetables, flowers, lawn, orchard). Each type of planting needs a separate soil test.

2. Soil pH. This is measured on a scale of 1 (acid) to 14 (alkaline). Most garden crops grow well at a pH of 6 to 7, but specific crops such as blueberries and azaleas may need a lower (more acidic) pH. Soils tend to be more acidic in high-rainfall areas (the Southeast and Pacific Northwest), while drier climates (Southwest deserts) can have more alkaline soils. In general, lime is used to raise pH, while sulfur is recommended to lower it. If your soil also lacks magnesium, dolomitic

limestone (which contains magnesium along with calcium) is recommended. Apply lime and sulfur in summer when the soils are warm and microorganism activity is high.

3. Nitrogen (N). Though nitrogen is one of the key nutrients needed for plant growth, many labs won't test for it because of its high mobility. Nitrogen leaches out of the soil easily, and levels can fluctuate through the growing season. Deficiency usually appears as pale yellow leaves (often the older leaves first) and stunted growth. Since organic matter can hold and then slowly release nitrogen as it breaks down, some labs link the organic matter content to the nitrogen level in the soil. However, organic matter may tie up more nitrogen than it releases (see "Percent organic matter"). Alfalfa meal, cottonseed meal, urea, and fish meal are some fertilizer sources of nitrogen.

4. Phosphorus (P). Phosphorus levels are often reported as either available or reserve. Available phosphorus can be used now, while reserve is tied up due to pH or nutrient imbalance. Often, just raising or lowering the pH to the ideal 6.5 will free up phosphorus for plant use. It isn't used up quickly, and adding too much will build excessive levels that run off, causing pollution. Deficiencies are indicated by purple leaves, brittle roots, skinny stems, and late fruit set and maturity. In early spring, deficiency symptoms on seedlings may disappear with warmer temperatures and increased microbial activity. Superphosphate, rock phosphate, and bonemeal are good sources of phosphorus.

5. Potassium (K). Potassium is vital for stem strength, root growth, and disease resistance. Many soils are naturally high in potassium, and it is readily available to plants. However, sandy and highly weathered soils can be deficient. Signs are irregular yellowing of lower leaves and poor root growth. Muriate of potash, greensand, and wood ash are good sources.

6. Calcium (Ca). Calcium is important for cell-wall integrity and root and leaf growth. If you're liming your soil regularly to keep the pH above 6, calcium deficiency would be unlikely. However, on alkaline soils (pH above 7) add gypsum (calcium sulfate) instead of lime. Low levels of calcium show as deformed new leaves and branches, and weak stems and roots.

7. Magnesium (Mg). Magnesium is essential for chlorophyll and green leaf development. Pale leaves with green veins are a sign of deficiency. Adding dolomitic lime to raise the pH often corrects deficiency symptoms; on alkaline soils, add Epsom salts (magnesium sulfate).

8. Cation exchange capacity (CEC). CEC measures the ability of soil particles to hold and release specific nutrients. In general, sandy soils tend to have a lower CEC than most clay soils. Adding well-

Continued on next page



Soil Test...con't from previous page

rotted compost raises the CEC. High CEC usually means a more fertile soil. If your soil has a low CEC, add small amounts of fertilizer throughout the growing season to prevent runoff and waste. Most labs report CEC levels in milliequivalents per 100 grams of soil (meq/100g). A rating of 5 is considered low, while 25 is high.

9. Percent organic matter. Organic matter is essential for nitrogen absorption and release, and as a food for microorganisms that help make other nutrients available. A level of 3 to 5 percent organic matter is considered ideal. But it's the quality, not the amount, that can make the difference. Soils high in undecomposed organic matter, such as wood chips or sawdust, can tie up nitrogen and create a deficiency. The best-quality organic matter to apply, especially right before planting, is well-rotted compost.

10. Percent base saturation. Some experts consider the relationship between four key elements (calcium, potassium, magnesium, and sodium) an indication of soil health. The ideal ratio is approximately 60 to 80 percent calcium, 10 to 15 percent magnesium, 5 to 7 percent potassium, and less than 3 percent sodium. Adding these figures gives a number called the base saturation. In general, the higher the number, within the given ratios, the more fertile the soil. Labs that test for base saturation believe that the optimum levels of specific nutrients aren't as important as the relationship among these nutrients.

11. Recommendations. Most labs give recommendations for adding specific nutrients to bring them to their optimum levels. Recommendations are often given in pounds of that element per 1,000 square feet of garden.

Calculate the amount of fertilizer to apply to reach that recommended amount. For example, our sample test recommends applying 3.5 pounds of phosphorus. If you're using bonemeal (12 percent phosphorus, as indicated on the bag), calculate how much actual phosphorus is in the bag by multiplying the percentage of P in the fertilizer (0.12) by the total weight of the bag (say, 20 pounds) to get 2.4 pounds. To add the recommended 3.5 pounds of phosphorus, you'd apply about 1-1/2

bags (30 pounds) of bonemeal per 1,000 square feet.

If you're adding bulk organic fertilizers such as manure, you can reduce the amount of other fertilizers by a fourth to a third by applying 15 bushels of well-rotted cow or horse manure or 7 to 8 bushels of poultry, sheep, or goat manure.

Do-it-yourself soil tests

A laboratory soil test has definite advantages, but it takes time to get the results. For a quick look at your soil, many home tests are available. These rely on color charts to match the nutrient levels in a soil solution. Unless you buy an expensive test kit, the specific nutrient tests aren't, in general, as accurate as in a professional soil test. Their usefulness is limited to a basic guide of the pH and nutrients that are immediately available, and they're best for gardeners who are knowledgeable and inquisitive about soil chemistry.

Alternative soil tests

Some private labs are responding to the need of organic gardeners and farmers to go beyond testing the mineral content of the soil to offer tests for biological content (fungi and bacteria). These labs, such as Soil Food Web Laboratory in Oregon, believe that the soil's biological life is just as important as the mineral content in determining soil and plant health.

It's believed that the more diverse the microorganism population in the soil, the better the soil structure, the more nutrients available to plants, and the less disease on the plants. Some labs, such as Woods End Laboratory in Maine, have a home test kit (Solvita) that tests biological and textural components in the soil, with a special emphasis on organic matter management. These tests, though more expensive than traditional university tests, give gardeners and farmers valuable information about their soil's microbial life. Since these tests are relatively new, cropping and fertilizer recommendations based on them don't have a long history of experience.



VIRGINIA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

Small-scale Poultry Housing

Live chicks usually arrive at local agricultural supply stores in the spring - typically between February and early May – just in time for coop season! Will you be ready? Read on to learn what you'll need to house a small backyard flock.

Small-scale poultry coops seem to be built in almost every possible shape and size. Those building a new coop may find a range of plans on the internet. Rather than building a new coop, existing buildings can easily be adapted to accommodate poultry. Poultry housing can be as crude or elaborate as you wish.

Protection

A good poultry house protects the birds from the weather, predators, injury, and possibly even disease.

Weather

Poultry require a dry, draft-free house. This can be accomplished by

building or using a house with windows and/or doors which can be opened for ventilation when necessary. Place the coop on high, well-drained areas. This prevents prolonged dampness and water saturation of the floor of the coop and outside runs. Face the front of the coop, the windows, and the outside run to the south, this will allow the sun to warm and dry the coop and soil. Ensuring adequate space per bird also helps to keep the humidity level in the coop to a minimum.

A nearby or in-coop electrical outlet may be useful to provide additional heat in the coop during cold months (for instance by using a poultry heat lamp) and additional light if egg laying rates are lower than preferred (hens need about 14-16 of lighting to keep producing eggs at a high rate; read more” [“Why Have My Hens Stopped Laying? 5 Factors that Impact Egg Production”](https://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/2902/2902-1097/2902-1097) (<https://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/2902/2902-1097/2902-1097>).

[Read full article here.](#)



What's Your Composting Personality?



When it comes to gardening style, there really isn't any right or wrong, just what works for you. From avant-garde to traditional, bold (orange and red annual borders) to subdued (textured shades of green around a pond), anything goes.

Composting is the same. Since the 1980s, when "ecologically correct" became a gardening byword, gardeners have tried to find the perfect way to make compost. But don't get too serious about your technique. Remember no matter what style you use, everything eventually rots. Here we offer a few suggestions to help speed the process. First, find your composing personality by taking our fun quiz.

To determine your score, add up the numbers after each answer, then read on to find your profile. We've simplified the styles, so most gardeners will find aspects of themselves in each type. Read through all the profiles to get the best sense of what it will take to complete your composting personality.

The Quiz: What's Your Composting Personality?

1. When choosing a bin for composting, do you:

- build one based on an architectural design? (1)
- buy the latest Cadillac model? (2)
- buy a mid-priced version from a chain store? (3)
- slap one together from scavenged materials? (4)

2. Is your bin:

- covered and aerated, with sides and a bottom to keep out varmints? (1)
- sealed up tighter than a drum? (2)
- aerated, with sides and a top but no protection against small varmints? (3)
- topless, more aerated than a wind tunnel, a haven for critters?(4)

3. When making a compost pile, do you:

- measure amounts of carbon and nitrogen materials to add? (1)
- layer roughly equal amounts of carbon and nitrogen materials? (2)
- toss in carbon and nitrogen materials willy-nilly? (3)
- know what carbon and nitrogen are? (4)

4. Before adding material to the compost pile, do you:

- clean out rocks, sticks, and debris, then shred piles of the different ingredients? (1)
- chop up some materials with a lawn mower and remove debris? (2)
- resist shredding or chopping, but do clean out debris? (3)
- just throw everything without shredding, chopping, or cleaning? (4)

5. When given a choice of garden chores, do you:

- run to the compost pile to check and turn it? (1)
- check the pile after a few other chores? (2)
- check the pile last on your list of things to do? (3)
- wonder where the pile is? (4)

6. How often do you turn your compost pile?

- weekly (1)
- monthly (2)

- every six months (3)
- I never touch the stuff (4)

7. How often do you take your compost's temperature?

- daily (1)
- weekly (2)
- monthly (3)
- never (4)

8. How warm does your compost get?

- above 130°F
- above 100°F
- it never warms up (3)
- I never check it (4)

9. When checking to see if compost is finished, do you:

- pick it up to feel and smell it? (1)
- generally go by the color and look (black, without large chunks? (2)
- never touch the stuff, just poke at it with a long stick? (3)
- wait until the pile has shrunk to a fourth of its original size? (4)

10. Typically, you use your compost:

- sifted to use as a potting mix, as mulch around plants, or on the lawn. (1)
- as mulch around plants and tilled into the garden. (2)
- just tilled into the garden. (3)
- left as ballast in the bin. (4)

Add up your score and find your style below.

Score: Above 25 -- Au Natural Composter

You're the heart and soul of the composting school whose motto is "Compost Happens." You tend to be passionate about the idea of composting but don't spend a lot of time designing your pile or layering and turning it. Extreme Au Naturel composter (Decomposters) just pile up garden debris in a corner and, after about two years of ignoring the pile, get usable compost. The advantages of this type of composting are that it's inexpensive and takes little time. However, the finished compost will seldom rate-A-plus for quality.

To better your chances, try following some basic rules of composting. Build the pile on level, well-drained ground at least 2 feet away from trees and buildings, in the shade, and away from the garden so slugs and other pests can't use it as a refuge. To aid aeration, place a 6-inch layer of twigs at the bottom. As organic matter becomes available, add equal amounts of materials rich in carbon (straw, dried leaves, wood chips) and nitrogen (fresh weeds and grass clippings, kitchen scraps). Don't add meat and fish scraps, oil or fats, charcoal ash, plastic trash, kitty litter, diseased plants, or pernicious weeds.)

Build the pile 3 to 5 feet high and wide, wet it, and cover it with plastic tarp. If the pile starts to smell of ammonia and drips water when you squeeze a handful, turn it and add more carbon-rich materials. If it just sits there like a cold lump, add more nitrogen materials and check the moisture. If the pile isn't as wet as a wrung out sponge, add water, loosening the pile first to allow the water to penetrate it. If the pile heats up, you're doing great. Once it is cool to the touch, turn it, moving the outside layer to the middle and vice versa. The pile should reheat. Continue this turning process until the pile stops heating up. In

Continued on next page



Composting...con't from previous page

a few months you should have finished compost (mostly black soil with only a little undecomposed debris, which you can add a new pile).

Score 20 -24 --White Glove Composter

You love the idea of composting but are a relative newcomer and want the process to be attractive and fairly odor - and stain-free. You'll buy a completely enclosed commercial bin so the compost pile doesn't spill into the rest of the garden. You just add materials in the top, and weeks later the finished compost comes out the bottom. The advantage of this style is tidiness: there's a little fussing over the pile's makeup and the turning or monitoring of it. Varmints aren't likely to get in, and it doesn't dry out as fast as an open bin. The disadvantages are that commercial bins tend to be small, and the compost quality won't be great unless you do pay close attention to the materials added, moisture levels, turning, and aeration.

For better while glove composting, choose bins with a capacity of at least 9 cubic feet (small bins tend not to heat up as well). A barrel or tumbler-type bin can hold more material and can compost faster (as quickly as three weeks) due to more aeration.

With stationary bins, it's hard to turn the pile once everything's in it, so alternate 3-to 6-inch layers of carbon and nitrogen materials; watering each layer. If the pile seems too wet or is not decomposing after a few weeks, stir the material from the top with an aerating tool or spading fork.

Score: 16 to 20 -- High-Tech Composter

You are a tool and gadget lover. You adore compost accessories almost as much as compost itself. You go for the latest, highest-tech innovations, such as composting orbs or rolling bins. The advantage of being a techie is that many of these cool tools and gadgets do help make a great pile of compost. The disadvantage is that you may not get a lot of compost because many bins are small; you may be spending a lot of money better spent elsewhere in the garden.

Let's look at some of the accessories to determine their best uses. Making compost doesn't require any of these tools and equipment, but they can make the task easier. A compost thermometer has a 1- to 3-foot-long metal probe that you stick into the middle of the pile; it

registers when the pile heats up to the ideal 130°F and when it's cooling and needs to be turned. Compost activators range from chemical fertilizer to microorganisms that speed up the composting process. Although of questionable benefit, adding these when building the pile may help jump-start the composting process. Kits measure the pH of the finished compost. As long as the compost is completely decomposed, the pH should be around 7 (neutral), no matter what the pH of the original materials was. Hydrometers are metal probes that measure the pile's moisture level. A level of 60 percent is ideal for heating up the pile. Sifters can remove rocks, large chunks of soil, or undecomposed debris from finished compost. Sift the pile only if the compost will go into a potting mix or onto lawns. Chippers and shredders chop organic matter into pieces small enough to add to the pile. Generally, chopped materials decompose faster than larger pieces, so if you have lots of sunflower stalks, cornstalks, oak leaves, or tree branches, chip and shred them before adding them to the pile.

Score: Less Than 16 -- Maniacal Composter

You live and breathe compost, and will construct three beautifully designed and functional bins so you can move the compost from bin to bin instead of just turning it in a single one. You compost everything, bring in manures, steal your neighbor's leaf bags--even think of dinner in terms of the leftovers' carbon-nitrogen ratio. You check the pile daily, turn it weekly, concoct special recipes of various kinds of organic matter, and may use special tools. You spend more time with the compost pile than with the garden, family pet, car, or even your partner. Of course, the payoff is rich, beautiful compost and lots of it. The disadvantage is you don't have much of a life away from your compost piles.

Although you're already covering the bases, the following suggestion might incite you to spend even more time babying your piles. If the goal is not only quicker composting but to kill all weed seeds, roots, and plant disease organisms, you'll need to heat the pile to 150°F. To do this, the carbon-nitrogen ratio should be 30:1. You can calculate the ratio of your pile by adding the C:N ratios of the individual ingredients multiplied by the percent of each material in the pile. For example, if you have 5 pounds of leaves (C:N ratio = 40:1) and 5 pounds of grass clippings (C:N ratio = 20:1), that's (50 percent leaves x 40:1) + (50 percent grass x 20:1) = 20 + 10 = 30:1, the perfect ratio.



PURDUE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION Preserve Smart

Purdue Extension Mastering Home Food Preservation instructors are hosting Preserve Smart, a live, online series focused on evidence-based techniques for preserving food safely on Monday evenings in March. Topics include water bath canning, pressure canning, dehydrating, and more. All sessions will be recorded and shared with registered participants.

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- Monday 3/2 – *Preserve Smart: What's Right for You?*
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- Monday 3/16 – *Preserve Smart: Dehydration 101*
- Monday 3/23 – *Preserve Smart: Pressure Canning*
- Monday 3/30 – *Preserve Smart: Freeze-Drying*

Register for all 5 sessions, for only \$20

Register online at: <https://cvent.me/kdwYYK>

Registration includes access to all 5 LIVE sessions and links to all recorded sessions - active through 12/31/26. Recordings will be provided via an email, at the end of the series AND submission of a Series Evaluation via Qualtrics link.



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