

From Garden to Table: Learn, Grow & Give Back with CCE Saratoga



This fall, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Saratoga County invites gardeners of all experience levels to celebrate the bounty of the garden while learning new ways to grow, harvest and enjoy homegrown food. Two upcoming programs—**Cooking Using Your Garden Harvest** and **Growing Garlic: Planting to Harvest**—offer practical information, hands-on learning and delicious inspiration, while supporting the revitalization of the CCE Saratoga Unlimited Garden.

Cooking Using Your Garden Harvest

Have you had a plentiful garden harvest and wondered what to do with all that fresh produce? Join Brenna Kavakos for *Cooking Using Your Garden Harvest*, a hands-on cooking demonstration and tasting featuring delicious and creative ways to make the most of your garden bounty.

The program will be held **Tuesday, September 22, from noon to 1 p.m.** at the **Schwerd Building, 556 Middleline Road, Ballston Spa**. Participants will discover practical ways to turn homegrown fruits and vegetables into dishes they can enjoy and share.

The cost is **\$25 per person**, and preregistration is required by **September 18**. All proceeds will benefit the **CCE Saratoga Unlimited Garden Fundraiser**, supporting the continued development and revitalization of this special community garden.

To preregister, email Jessica Luse at jmh452@cornell.edu. Payment may be made by check mailed to Cornell Cooperative Extension of Saratoga County, 50 West High Street, Ballston Spa, NY 12020, or [online through PayPal](#).

Come ready to cook, taste and discover new ways to enjoy the fruits—and vegetables—of your garden!

Growing Garlic: Planting to Harvest

Ready to add garlic to your garden? On **Wednesday, September 30, 2026, from noon to 1 p.m. via Zoom**, join Jen Koval of CCE Saratoga for *Growing Garlic: Planting to Harvest*.

This informative program will explore the many garlic varieties available to home gardeners and provide practical tips for successfully growing, harvesting and enjoying your own garlic. Participants will learn what to consider when selecting varieties, when and how to plant, and what to expect throughout the growing season.

The program is **\$10 per person**, with all proceeds benefiting the **CCE Saratoga Unlimited Garden Fundraiser**. The Unlimited Garden is being revitalized as an inclusive community garden designed to welcome and serve people of all ages and abilities.

Can't attend the live Zoom presentation? Registered participants will receive access to a recording of the program and a copy of the presentation.

Preregistration is required. To register, email Jessica Luse at jmh452@cornell.edu. Prepayment can be made by credit card through the [event payment link](#) or by mailing a check to CCE Saratoga, 50 West High Street, Ballston Spa, NY 12020. Online payment is also available through PayPal.

Whether you're looking for inspiration for your latest harvest or planning next year's garlic crop, these programs offer an opportunity to learn, connect and support a garden built for everyone. Join CCE Saratoga this fall and grow your knowledge while helping the Unlimited Garden flourish!

Free Monthly CCE Business Development Webinar Series

3rd Tuesday monthly | Noon - 1pm

Via Zoom

September 15: Produce Auctions: Are they right for me?

October 20: Business Structures 101 with Coughlin & Gerhart, LLP

November 17: How to Evaluate Market Opportunities

December 15: Overview of Market Channels & Requirements for Participation

[Webinar Registration - Zoom](#)

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

Sponsored: Cornell Cooperative Extension

Questions can be directed to Lindsey Pashow (CCE Harvest NY) at lep67@cornell.edu or 518-569-3073.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND MARKETS

Registration Now Open for 2026 Farm Employer Overtime Tax Credit Advance

New York's Department of Agriculture and Markets announced that registration is open for the 2026 Farm Employer Overtime Tax Credit. There is a new requirement for year-end certificates and links to helpful resources. [Visit the Department's website](#) for more information.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND MARKETS

Self-Paced Farm Transition Planning

The Farm Transition Planning course is designed to provide farmers, agricultural professionals, and anyone involved in farming with the knowledge and skills needed to plan and execute a successful transition of a farm from one generation to the next. Farm transitions are crucial for the sustainability and prosperity of agriculture, and this course will guide you through the essential steps and considerations involved.

Learn more: <https://www.mgic-professional.org/course/farm-transition-planning>



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, September 17 | 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 and Annual Dinner is scheduled for **October 22, 2026 | 6 pm**

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*



Interested in attending? Reach out to Wendy at wlm8@cornell.edu.

Discover the Thrill of Birding with the NYS Birding Trail



Whether you are a lifelong birder or simply curious about the birds in your backyard, the New York State Birding Trail offers endless opportunities to connect with nature. This unique network of birding hotspots spans New York State, providing opportunities to marvel at owls in quiet woodlands, track shorebirds along scenic coastlines, and catch glimpses of majestic eagles along peaceful rivers.

Designed for people of all ages, abilities, identities, and backgrounds, the Birding Trail provides an inviting starting point for exploring New York's diverse wildlife and enjoying safe, inclusive outdoor recreation. Many sites are accessible by car or public transportation, making it easier than ever to get outside and join the birding community. The trail also continues to grow, with new locations added regularly through a nomination and vetting process.

The NYS Birding Trail recently expanded to include three additional sites in the Central-Finger Lakes and Capital Regions: Al Lorenz Park, Parslow Preserve Conservation Area, and Fort Hardy Park & Old Champlain Canal Towpath. Each site offers unique opportuni-

ties for families and individuals to explore the outdoors while discovering local birdlife.

Al Lorenz Park is an 80-acre park managed by Livingston County. The property features a small pond, wooded trails, restrooms, tables, and other amenities that support a variety of outdoor activities, including birding.

Parslow Preserve Conservation Area, managed by Otsego Land Trust, encompasses 86 acres along Oaks Creek. Its diverse ecosystem includes wetlands, hemlock groves, and bogs that provide habitat for a thriving bird population.

Fort Hardy Park & Old Champlain Canal Towpath, managed by the Village of Schuylerville and Friends of Fort Hardy Park, combines the amenities of a community park with excellent access to the Hudson River and the historic Old Champlain Canal Towpath.

These three sites are among more than 400 locations that make up the NYS Birding Trail, including properties managed by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, New York State Parks, and community partners across the state.

Ready to explore? Find a Birding Trail location near you and discover the birds and natural areas waiting to be explored. View the [NYS Birding Trail Map of Trails](#) to start planning your next outdoor adventure.

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.**

OCTOBER 2: Fall clean-up for your flower and vegetable beds | Leaf piles and ticks

Removing plant material from vegetable beds can reduce future pest issues, but leaving plants in flower beds can help beneficial insects. Learn best management practices for both types of beds, and what you should do to reduce your risk of encountering ticks when managing leaves. [Register here.](#)

CORNELL INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT

Hover Flies



If it feels like you've been surrounded by small bees while enjoying time outside recently, don't panic! You've likely attracted the attention of hover flies.

Sometimes mistakenly called "sweat bees," hover flies are extremely active this time of year. These harmless insects don't sting or bite and are beneficial to the environment, with adults serving as important pollinators and young feeding on aphids in farms and gardens. If one lands on you and gives you a little tickle with its tongue, don't worry! It's just for water and salt in your sweat.

Learn more about hover flies at: <https://cals.cornell.edu/.../hover-fly-biocontrol-fact-sheet>

Saratoga County 4-H
FALL CLASSIC
OPEN HORSE SHOW
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2026
9 A.M.

OPEN TO YOUTH & ADULTS (4-H and Non 4-H Members)
PRE-ENTRIES CLOSE MONDAY, NOVEMBER 2nd
SHOW JUDGE: CONNER BRYANT

4-H Training Center, 556 Middleline Road, Ballston Spa, NY 12020

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. English In Hand | 18. English Equitation (18 & over) |
| 2. Western In Hand | 19. English Pleasure (17 & under) |
| 3. Adult Showmanship (18 & over) | 20. English Pleasure (18 & over) |
| 4. Jr. Exhibitor Showmanship (12-17) | 21. Western/English Pleasure Championship
(Must have shown in Class 13, 14, 19 or 20) |
| 5. Jr. Exhibitor Showmanship (11 & under) | 22. Walk/Trot/Jog Pleasure Championship
(Must have shown in Class 15 or 16) |
| 6. Leadline Showmanship (7 & under) | 23. Equitation Championship (pattern)
(Must have shown in Class 11, 12, 17, or 18) |
| 10 Minute Break | 24. Walk/Trot/Jog Equitation Championship
(Must have shown in Class 9, 10) |
| 7. Leadline Equitation (7 & under) | 25. Walk/ Trot/ Jog Disciplined Rail (All ages) |
| 8. Leadline Pleasure (7 & under) | 26. Disciplined Rail 3 Gait (All ages) |
| 9. Walk /Trot /Jog Equitation (11 & under) | 27. 2 Gait Don't Spill the Cider |
| 10. Walk/Trot/Jog Equitation (12 & over) | 28. 2 Gait Sit a Buck (saddles stay on) |
| 11. Western Seat Equitation (17 & under) | 29. 3 Gait Sit a Buck (saddles stay on) |
| 12. Western Seat Equitation (18 & over) | 30. Egg Scramble |
| 13. Western Pleasure (17 & under) | 31. Dangling Donuts (no horses) |
| 14. Western Pleasure (18 & over) | |
| Lunch Break - no more than 30 minutes | |
| 15. Walk/Trot/Jog Pleasure (11 & under) | |
| 16. Walk/Trot/Jog Pleasure (12 & over) | |
| 17. English Equitation (17 & under) | |



Saratoga County 4H Fall Classic Open Horse Show Entry Form:

Rider Name _____

Horse Name _____

(Show Office Only) Back Number _____

Rider If Youth: Age _____

Are you a 4H Member? (Circle one)..... Yes or No

4-H Member of what County : _____ (4-H membership and current
evaluation required for youth)

Mailing Address: _____

Email : _____

Phone Number: _____

Class Numbers _____

Regular classes (1-19) \$10

Championship classes(10-23) \$15

Fun Classes (25-30) \$5

Office Fee \$7 / horse

Total Owed _____

For office use Day of Event— Paid - Cash _____ Check _____ Coggins _____

Rabies _____

Pre Enter by November 2nd to guarantee your spot Mail registration forms to Jillian Peek, 50 west
High St Ballston spa NY 12020 Or email them to jsp327@cornell.edu

With Questions or concerns call the CCE office 518-885-8995 or email jsp327@cornell.edu .

Rider/Guardian Signature _____

Date _____



Back-to-School Stains: Be Ready for the Mess!

As children head back to school, their clothes are bound to come home with a few extra reminders of the day! Between art projects, coloring activities, science experiments, lunch spills, recess, and sports practices, stains are an inevitable part of the school year. Instead of worrying about every spot or splatter, keep a few simple stain-removal strategies in your back pocket. From grass and paint to food and ink, knowing how to treat stains properly can help keep kids' clothes looking their best and extend the life of their favorite outfits. Here are some helpful tips for tackling common back-to-school stains.

STEP 1: Create a Stain-Removal Kit

It's easier to treat stains if supplies are ready to use. Keep your kit in a labeled box or basket near your laundry area. Include

- **Absorbent white materials** - paper towels or cotton cloths
- **Bleaches**
 - All-fabric, color-safe bleach (look for hydrogen peroxide or sodium percarbonate on the label)
 - Liquid chlorine bleach (for whites only)
- **Household basics** - hydrogen peroxide, white vinegar, baking soda, and dish soap (Dawn®)
- **Pretreatment products**
 - Enzyme-based presoak (OxiClean®)
 - Commercial spot-treat products (Amodex®) or stain sticks/sprays (Tide®)
- **Laundry detergent** - choose an enzyme-based liquid detergent
- **Specialty removers**
 - Chemical cleaner (Goof Off®) or adhesive remover (Goo Gone®)
 - Rust remover (Whink®)
 - Color remover (Rit®)
- **Tools** - cotton balls, cotton swabs, and a small, soft brush

STEP 2: Act Fast

Treat stains as soon as possible.

Fresh stains are much easier to remove than ones that have dried or set.

STEP 3: Check the Care Label

All clothing and fabric items must have a care label. Follow the directions for washing, drying, and ironing.

- If the label says "Dry Clean Only," take the item to a dry cleaner within 24-48 hours.
- Do not try to treat these items at home. Leather, suede, and fur also require professional cleaning.

TIP: keep a copy of the [laundry care symbol chart](#) (see last page) near your washer for quick reference.

STEP 4: Know Your Fiber Content

Fabrics are made from natural fibers (cotton, linen, or wool) or synthetic fibers (polyester, nylon, or spandex).

- Synthetic fibers attract oily stains because they are "oil-loving." These stains may require repeated treatment.
- Some finishes (wrinkle-free or permanent press) can resist stain removers.

STEP 5: Pretreat Before Washing

Apply a stain remover or detergent directly to the stain before washing. Let it sit for the time recommended on the product label.

- Avoid heat. Heat sets stains permanently. Air-dry and check before using a dryer or iron.
- Blot, don't rub. Rubbing can spread stains and damage fibers.
- Be patient. Some stains need more than one treatment.
- Test first. Test on a small, hidden area of the garment to ensure it does not damage the fabric or cause discoloration.

FINAL TIPS:

- Always air-dry first to make sure the stain is gone before adding heat.
- Work from the back of the fabric when rinsing to push the stain out, not in.
- Read product directions carefully and never mix cleaners unless the label says it's safe.
- Patience pays off. Some stains may need a second or third treatment.

[Download](#) our helpful PDF for a guide to common stain types and effective treatments. Learn how to tackle protein, oil-based, dye and pigment, tannin, and combination stains, as well as more difficult or unusual stains such as permanent ink, mildew, latex paint, sunscreen with Avobenzone, rust, tree sap, tar, sticker residue, dry transfer, and underarm or deodorant stains.



Houseplants Move Back Indoors

After moving houseplants outdoors in late spring for the warm summer months, once fall sets in it will be time to move houseplants back indoors.



When to Move:

Temperature

It's best to move houseplants back indoors between mid-October and early November, before nighttime temperatures are consistently below 50° F. Before taking them inside, however, you'll have some prep-work. Allow time for a few important steps so your plants can make a smooth transition.

Where to Move:

Indoor Space

First, ready your indoor spaces, shelves, tables, windowsills, and plant stands where your houseplants will overwinter. Select spaces with adequate sunlight. Sun-loving plants are best placed near south or west facing windows; plants requiring lower light levels can be put in east facing windows. Place plants away from HVAC vents; they don't tolerate drafts. Take into consideration that plants have grown over the summer and will need more space once back inside. In addition to making room for my plants, I ready my mid-century pottery to receive the plants housed in plastic pots. These decorative containers enhance the plants' appearance. Finally, take advantage of the beauty that houseplants bring to your home. Put them where you will enjoy them.

Preparing the Plants:

Step-by-Step

Inspect each plant carefully. Look for damaged leaves and stems, spindly growth, plants that are pot-bound, that is, having extensive root growth out of the pot's drainage holes, and most importantly pests. I have over 30 plants to move indoors, so I set up an assembly line for these tasks.

- First, trim off spindly and damaged growth. Spindly growth can be pruned and cuttings propagated or composted. Place damaged growth in the trash.
- Second, repot pot-bound plants. Use a container approximately 1" larger in size for repotting or divide the plant into several

smaller plants and pot in individual containers. Use a good quality potting mix. For plants requiring repotting, you'll be able to visually check for pests.

- Third, before creating new houseplants through propagation or division, consider the number of plants your home can accommodate. Having just readied your indoor space, you'll know the available space. Houseplants make nice gifts to share with family and friends, so this may be an option for newly created plants.
- Fourth, inspect each plant's leaves, stems, and soil surface for pests. Remove large insects by hand. Check the drainage holes of each container, removing slugs or large insects. If you find extensive pest infiltration, dispose of the plant in the trash.
- Finally, wash the plants to remove debris and get rid of pests on the plants and in the soil. Be sure to brush debris off the outside of each plant container during the cleaning process. You'll want to undertake this task on a calm, non-windy day.

Back Indoors:

What to Expect

Moving houseplants back inside requires the plants to acclimate to their new environment. Keep in mind that each time you move plants they will experience an acclimatization period. For the first few weeks indoors, plants are likely to change little in appearance. This is a good time to enjoy the beauty of your houseplants as they are lush and colorful. After this initial period, they may develop some leaf yellowing and experience minor defoliation as they adjust to lower light, lower humidity, and temperature change. Plants should stabilize within another 10-12 days.

Indoor Care:

Fertilizing and Watering

Once indoors, plants require fertilizing and watering less often than when they were outdoors. During the winter months, most plants have reduced growth rates. You may want to lightly fertilize plants when you first move them inside to provide nutrients to the soil and for overall plant health. Be sure to read and follow fertilizer label instructions. Plants need not be fertilized throughout the winter months.

Overwatering leads to root rot and is the number one reason houseplants die. Check the pots regularly for moisture levels. Twice each week is probably a good starting point. In deciding when to water, try to allow most of the soil to dry out like a freshly wrung out dish cloth. Not bone dry, but not too moist. Feel the soil by pushing a finger an inch or so below the surface. If the soil is still moist, no further water is needed. Water devices or water meters also simplify watering.

Successful Overwintering

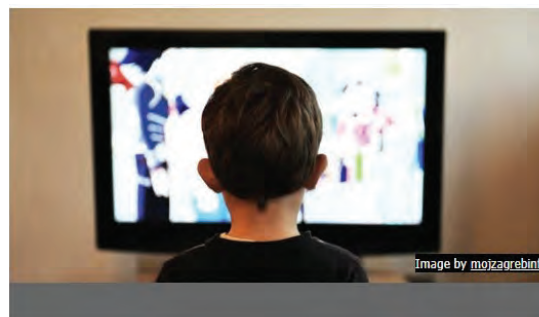
Monitoring is key to caring for your houseplants. While most plants aren't actively growing during the winter, they should maintain a healthy appearance. Ensure the plant is receiving adequate light, don't overwater, remove yellowed or dried leaves, prune spindly stems, and check leaves, stems, and soil for signs of pests. Houseplants can brighten our indoors space. With a little care, you can enjoy indoor greenery throughout the winter months.

When Can Children Be Left Home Alone?

No one can know for sure when children can be left safely at home alone. Unfortunately, age is not an accurate predictor of maturity, common sense or good judgment. A few children may be able to manage on their own around age 10, while many others need supervision well into their teens.

Occasionally, adults make inappropriate, even dangerous decisions about leaving children to care for themselves, as we have seen in the widely publicized case of parents on vacation while their 9 and 4-year-old daughters were home alone. For the most part, however, parents struggle to be caring and responsible, even when under great stress. The following questions help parents make sensible decisions about their children's welfare and whereabouts when school is not in session.

1. Do the children want to be left alone?
2. Are they capable of caring for themselves?
3. Do you live in a safe, friendly neighborhood?
4. Is there an adult (neighbor, friend or relative) available in case of an emergency?
5. Have you checked your home for hazards and made necessary household repairs?
6. Have you and the children discussed and practiced what to do if:
 - A smoke detector goes off
 - They suspect fire
 - Someone comes to the door
 - The phone rings
 - There is a power outage
 - The furnace goes off
 - There is a plumbing leak
 - They get hurt or become ill?
7. Will the children have a telephone available, know how to use it and have emergency numbers posted by every phone? Do they know how to contact you when you are not at home?
8. Have you established clear rules about safety, television use, chores, homework, snacks, and visits by friends and visits to friends?
9. Do you feel confident that children will abide by these rules even when you are not there to enforce them.
10. If you have more than one child, are you sure siblings will not tease, frighten or hurt each other?
11. Will children be able to play safely outside around the house?
12. Have you researched community programs like school-age



- child care programs or afterschool activities in community centers and found no options available to you?
13. Are you completely comfortable about leaving your children alone after you consider their maturity and judgment, their ability to take care of and protect themselves, and the safety of your home and neighborhood?

If you have answered "yes" to these questions, then your children may be ready to be home alone. Test the situation before making a long-time arrangement. For example, leave the children for short periods while you visit a neighbor or go to the store. It's easier to move children from supervision to independence than to let them try to be on their own, find it doesn't work, then insist on supervision.

If you are uneasy or have doubts try to arrange for supervision in your home or in an established after-school program. If there are no existing programs, you may want to get together with other parents to start one. Perhaps you can hire a responsible teenager to take your child to the library, park or community events for part of every afternoon or several time per week.

Being "home alone" inevitably creates some stress for families. Adults have a difficult time deciding when their children are ready for self-care - or when they, as responsible parents, must insist that the children attend a child care program or be supervised by an older person. The only sure rule is that age is only one factor to be considered when making this decision.

Source: Jennifer Birckmayer, Department of Human Development and Family Studies, NYS College of Human Ecology, Cornell University. Parent Pages was developed by Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County. HD 7

Homesteading



Grow Your Own Luffa Sponges!



Amy Dabbs, ©2018 Clemson Extension

Luffa sponges may seem like something you would find only in a specialty bath shop, but these useful sponges can easily be grown in your own garden. Also known as dishcloth gourds or vegetable sponges, luffas are actually warm-season annual vines in the cucumber family. The most common variety grown for sponges is the smooth luffa (*Luffa aegyptiaca*).

Growing Luffas

Luffas are fast-growing plants that can spread 10 to 15 feet, so give them plenty of space and provide a sturdy trellis to keep the vines and developing fruit off the ground. Start seeds in warm soil in late spring. Seeds are readily available from many garden catalogs and seed companies. Luffas need plenty of sunshine and water and require care similar to winter squash.

The vines produce pale-yellow flowers, followed by small, squash-like fruits. Luffa fruits grow remarkably fast—about 1 to 1½ inches per day! When harvested young, the tender fruits can be eaten raw or cooked like squash or eggplant. If left to mature, however, the fruits develop a tough network of inner fibers that can be used as natural sponges.

Harvesting and Processing

Allow luffas to mature on the vine until the skin becomes loose

and brittle and the fibers inside have hardened. Carefully peel away the outer skin to reveal the fibrous sponge. Shake out the seeds and save some for next year's garden. Allow the sponges to dry thoroughly in the sun for about a week.

If desired, the dried sponges can be cleaned and lightened by soaking them in a mild bleach solution. One recommended method is 10 parts water to 1 part bleach for about an hour. Rinse thoroughly and allow the sponges to dry completely. Always use caution when handling bleach and follow the product label directions.

Luffa sponges can be used for bathing, cleaning dishes, making luffa soaps, and other household projects. They can even be used as chew toys for small pets such as rabbits and hamsters.

A Fun Family Garden Project

Luffas have a special appeal for children because they transform from a fast-growing garden vine into a useful household sponge. Growing them can be a fun family or classroom gardening project, providing an opportunity to explore plant growth, harvesting, and the many ways plants can be used.

Resources:

[Growing Luffa](#), By Amy Dabbs, Clemson Cooperative Extension

[Grow Your Own Luffa](#), By National Gardening Association Editors, The National Gardening Association Learning Library



CCE Saratoga

Preserving Your Harvest

Wednesday, September 16 | 6-8 p.m.

Brookside Museum, 21 Fairgrounds Ave, Ballston Spa

Cost: \$20

Green beans in January? Strawberries in February? Yes, you can! You put in the work to grow a garden full of fresh, delicious food this summer. Now, learn how to make that harvest last! Join Diane Whitten and Ann Haden, Cornell Cooperative Extension Certified Master Food Preservers, for an evening of tips, techniques, and practical information on safe food preservation.

Discover the best ways to preserve your garden bounty so you can enjoy the taste of summer - even in the middle of winter. From freezing and canning to other preservation methods, you'll leave ready to put your harvest to good use.



[Register Here!](#)

Sponsored by the Milton Grange #685



Picking Produce at Peak Quality

Once gardens reach their peak, home gardeners face an important task: harvesting vegetables at the right stage of maturity. Proper time not only improves flavor and texture, but also encourages many crops to keep producing.

“Harvesting vegetables at the right stage of maturity ensures the best taste and quality,” said Aaron Steil, consumer horticulture specialist with Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. “Many vegetables should be picked throughout the summer to maintain plant productivity.”

Knowing what to look for can help gardeners enjoy the highest quality harvest from tomatoes, peppers, melons, squash and other popular garden crops.

Tomatoes: let color be your guide

Tomatoes are among the most anticipated harvest of the season. Steil encourages gardeners to allow fruit to ripen on the vine whenever possible.

“Pick tomatoes when the entire fruit develops a uniform color and feels slightly soft to the touch,” he said. “Fully ripened fruit delivers the best flavor and eating quality.” Red-fruited varieties may appear more yellow-orange during periods of hot weather, but should still be harvested once they reach their mature color and soften slightly.

Peppers: green or fully colored

Both sweet and hot peppers offer gardeners flexibility at harvest. Pick peppers that are firm and the appropriate size for the variety.

“Peppers can be harvested when immature and green or allowed to fully ripen on the plant,” Steil said. “Fully ripe peppers are often sweeter, more colorful, and contain higher levels of vitamins but take several weeks longer to develop.” Frequent harvesting keeps plants productive throughout the season.

Eggplant: harvest while fruit is glossy

Eggplant quality declines quickly when fruit remains on the plant too long. “The best indicator is appearance,” Steil said. “Harvest eggplant when fruit is firm and shiny.”

The skin should leave a slight dent and bounce back when you press your thumb against it. Dull, seedy, or tough fruit are over-mature. Use a knife or hand shears and leave about an inch of stem attached.

Okra: pick early and often

Okra can go from tender to tough in just a few days. “It is easy to let the pods get too large,” Steil said. “Harvest pods when they are 2 to 4 inches long, usually five to six days after flowering. Once harvest begins, gardeners often need to pick every other day.”

Pods longer than 5 inches typically become tough and stringy. Removing oversized pods promptly helps maintain flowering and continued production.



Melons: watch for signs of ripeness

Melons require careful observation because harvest quality does not improve after picking. For muskmelons and cantaloupes, Steil recommends looking for the “slip” stage. “A ripe muskmelon separates easily from the vine,” he said. “The fruit should have a pleasant aroma, slight softness on the blossom end and a yellow background color beneath the netting.”

Watermelon harvest requires different indicators. “Look for the underside of the melon to change from greenish white to creamy yellow,” Steil said. “The fruit also loses its glossy appearance and becomes duller as it ripens.” Leaving a short section of stem attached helps maintain quality after harvest.

Squash: harvest at the right stage

Summer and winter squash require very different harvest approaches. “Summer squash should be harvested young and small for the best texture and flavor,” Steil said.

Zucchini and other elongated summer squash are best harvested at about 6 to 12 inches long and around 2 inches in diameter. Scallop types should be harvested when 3 to 5 inches across. At this stage, the rind remains soft, and the seeds are tender.

Winter squash should remain on the vine until fully mature. “Mature winter squash have hard rinds that cannot be punctured with a thumbnail,” Steil said. “The fruit surface also develops a dull appearance.” Harvest squash with about 1 inch of stem attached.

WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA

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



CCE Saratoga



4-H



CCE Equine



Agriculture
Economic
Development



Capital Region
PRISM



TASTE NY

WHO WE ARE

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CENTRAL NY DAIRY, LIVESTOCK AND FIELD CROPS

Ashley McFarland	Heer Patel
Erik Smith	Raevyn Saunders
Alanna Homan	Alanna Homan



Building Strong and Vibrant New York Communities

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