

Saratoga 4-H horse program benefits youth, families and community

By Kris Jarvis, Lancaster Farming Correspondent

While thousands of fans tried to catch a glimpse of Kentucky Derby winner Golden Tempo training at Saratoga Race Course this summer, it was business as usual for the County's 4-H horse clubs.

For Cornell Extension educator Nicolina Foti of Galway, however, the typical pace of the local 4-H horse program is anything but slow.

"Horse racing is a huge economic driver here," Foti said. Saratoga Race Course in Saratoga Springs, New York, is one of the country's oldest sports venues, generating an average of \$371 million in revenue annually. The Thoroughbreds and other equine sport, music and cultural events bring a combined 1 million visitors to the city each year.

Since expansion of the upstate highway system in 1960, Saratoga has been the fastest growing county in New York's capital district, according to U.S. Census Bureau data. In 2020, the reported population was 235,509, a 7.2% increase over 2010. The 2022 Census of Agriculture paints an equally bright picture for Saratoga County's equine industry.

Horse sales were the highest in New York State and 18th in the nation. The county's healthy economy benefits local Extension programming in terms of community's support and available resources.

Extension program participants, for example, have access to a 45-acre training facility out Ballston Spa, with outdoor and covered arenas, garden space, a greenhouse, kitchen and classrooms.



Cornell Cooperative Extension educator Nicolina Foti with her mare, Ginger.



photos by Kris Jarvis

From left to right: Kyle Testo, a former leader of the ponies and horses 4-H Club; Alice Kuntzsch, a former leader of the Rearin' to Go 4-H Club; and Britany Russ, Alice's daughter, who was in 4-H from ages 1 to 19. She is now the human resources director of a Fortune 500 company. Pictured with her Morgan mare, Zena..

The Extension office is also funded at a level where educators can focus on the subject matter for which they are most qualified and the community considers a priority.

Benjamin Woosley, 19, of adjoining Fulton County, knew he wanted to be part of the Saratoga 4-H horse program since he first began riding "because of all the opportunities." His 4-H club, Riding Dreams, held a series of well-attended clinics at the training center this summer with area professionals representing a variety of disciplines.

Woosley first learned to ride saddle seat on his two Morgan horses. In addition to 4-H horse events, he competed at U.S. Equestrian Federation rated shows and discovered how much he enjoyed the entire "process. When his family acquired a Quarter horse mare, who wasn't particularly interested in being ridden, Woosley began a horse training journey that continued through his teen years. He's now working with the mare's offspring and two young Thoroughbreds.

According to Foti, this type of versatility and skill level is achievable for young people who embrace what the program offers and commit to multiple years of participation.

"4-H encourages them to try new things and provides a safe space to

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Local Agriculture Resource Educator - Job Opening

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Saratoga responds to the needs of local residents with unbiased, research-based information, tools and education that people have come to depend on and trust. Our programs are developed in direct response to community input and are based on the most current information available from Cornell and other Land Grant Universities from across the nation.

The Local Agriculture Educator works as part of a collaborative team delivering programs and serving as a subject matter expert for local agriculture programs and initiatives. Responsibilities can vary quite a bit including serving as a subject matter expert on topics like sustainable rural development, agriculture programs in schools (including Farm-to-School), beginner farming and homesteading, young farmers, CCE Equine, supporting the 4-H Horse program, and supporting interns. The Educator fields questions, delivers programs, and helps connect people to other regional or state-wide experts as needed.

Apply By

All applications must be received on-line by 11:59 pm on October 15, 2026. Position closing dates may change based on Association needs.

Required Qualifications

- Master's degree
- Experience relevant to the role of position.
- Ability to meet the regular travel requirements associated with this position. A valid NYS driver's license with the ability to drive and driving record acceptable for agency insurance coverage are required.
- Ability to work flexible hours, which may include evenings and/or weekends, as appropriate.

Cornell Cooperative Extension Saratoga County

- Ability to assess, develop, deliver, and evaluate programs.
- Ability to identify and secure funding and grants.
- Ability to communicate effectively with various audiences.
- Technology Skills - A Microsoft Office Suite, virtual meetings, and program related software.
- Work Environment - In addition to the Working Conditions, the work environment characteristics described here are representative of those an employee encounters while performing the essential function of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals to perform the essential functions. This position works in a typical office environment. In addition, the position regularly lifts, moves, or transports program related materials, and equipment. The position regularly works in agricultural and outdoor weather conditions - especially during growing and fair seasons.

Preferred Qualification

- Degree or coursework in agriculture or related fields.

For more information on this position and to apply:

[CCE of Saratoga County Local Agriculture Resource Educator – Ballston Spa, NY](#)

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, October 15 | 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 | 6:00 pm**

CCE Saratoga's Board of Directors

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



4-H alum Abigail Testo washes her horse, Lucky. Her mother, Kyle Testo, who was a 4-H member herself, insisted Lucky was clean when he went to shows and other activities. "It stuck," Abigail said.



Hannah Scranton of the Pony Pals Club warms up her horse, Zoey, before a ride.

Photos by Kris Jarvis

learn at their own rate without undue judgement," she said.

Many 4-H members begin working in the surrounding equine community by age 16 and continue to balance their employment with high school and college. Working at a local breeding farm for several years enabled Foti to recently provide both her 4-H and adult program learners with the unique experience of observing a foal necropsy.

Saratoga 4-H alumni have become equine veterinarians, farriers, horse trainers, stable managers and equine insurance brokers.

Abigail Testo, 31, a 4-H peer of Foti's from Galway, gave a presentation on the horse's brain as a part of her 4-H project work. She later earned a doctorate in neuroscience from the University of Vermont, where she is currently employed as a postdoctoral researcher and instructor.

"4-H gave me the time, space and freedom to figure out how my horse and I learn best, individually and as a team," Testo said. Her horse, Lucky, a Quarter horse gelding had survived a serious neck injury prior to her family owning him.

The gelding's old injury required Testo to rely heavily on seat and leg cues. She said she applies that experience of making accommodations and finding alternatives to her teaching, where she gives students the space to "figure things out on their own first."

Foti, now 31, had such a positive experience as a 4-h member, she wanted to involve as many young equestrians as possible when she took on the role of Extension educator in Saratoga in 2021.

Although the overall 4-H enrollment remained steady, the horse program had declined from her childhood, from approximately 15 to 35 horse-owning members.

Her fellow Rearing to Go 4-H Club alum Ginger Williams Cummings was serving as a leader of two horse clubs. With help from additional 4-H alumni, they revitalized many of the activities they enjoyed as 4-H'ers, such as Horse Bowl, which requires equine knowledge and speed. The number of active riders has rebounded to 20.

At its core, Extension educators and adult volunteers strive to provide 4-h members with the knowledge and skills necessary to safely partici-

pate in the annual county fair's horse show held in July. 4-H'ers and their mounts must have their basic performance and safety skills evaluated prior to the event.

Saratoga County 4-H horse show exhibitors are awarded both Danish ribbons and placed chronologically. Depending on the outcome, exhibitors age 9 and above and their mounts may qualify for the state show in specific events. Cloverbuds, children 5 to 8 years old, can show in leadline, walk and walk-trot class.

For Hannah Scranton, 12, of Charleton, the policy change that enabled Cloverbuds to show large animals was enacted in tie to benefit her younger sisters, but she was limited to chickens and rabbits when she first showed at the county fair.

Hannah takes an English (Hunt Seat) riding lesson each week and works with her own horse at her grandparents' stable in Clifton Park. Her grandmother, Cathy Ochrym, leads the Pony Pals 4-H Club for younger members. According to Hannah's mother, Stephanie Ochrym, the club makes horse crafts, takes field trips and attends clinics.

Hannah looks forward to progressing in the hunter-jumper discipline like her mother did. Her horse, Zoey, is out of the mare her mother showed in 4-h. One of Stephanie Ochrym's fondest 4-H memories is riding on the Saratoga 4-H drill team and winning first and second place at the state fair in 2003 and 2004. For the Ochrym family, 4-H has become an inter-generational experience that further bonds them to their animals and each other.

The Ochryms live in the most densely populated part of Saratoga County, its eastern edge parallel to the Adirondack Northway. Small farms are interspersed with housing developments. Foti recognizes that families with horses in the backyard are becoming fewer. Extension educators have responded by working on new access points and delivery methods for their programs.

As a community of horse enthusiasts, Saratoga 4-H people remain optimistic. Woosley will be finishing his 4-H career and building his training business this year. "There's (still) a lot of people out there who are interested in horses," he said. "Our region is horse rich. It's a strategic place to get started."

Restoration is a key aspect of long-term success for invasive species management

Invasive species management doesn't end once you've pulled all the plants, restoration is a key aspect of long-term success!

The terrestrial crew has been managing the invasive species shrubby bush clover (*Lespedeza bicolor*) at Daketown State Forest for several years now, and we've shifted from the removal phase to the restoration phase. Restoration is the active process of repairing the damage done to an ecosystem, and one way is by the selective replanting of beneficial native species.

At Daketown, the team has been following their invasive species treatments with native restoration plantings of swamp white oak (*Quercus bicolor*), white oak (*Quercus alba*), and American hazelnut (*Corylus American*), which were sourced from local Soil & Water Conservation Districts. The process involves clearing the planting area of competing vegetation, digging a hole of the appropriate depth and width, carefully planting the sapling, backfilling the hole, and maybe most importantly, installing something to prevent deer browse from destroying the sapling (like a tree tube or deer exclosures).

Every tree that the team plants counts toward New York State's goal of planting 25 million trees by 2033. Tree planting is a key strategy to help slow climate change and make our communities more resilient to challenges such as extreme heat, air pollution, and severe weather. Trees capture and store carbon in their leaves, roots, and trunks and offer ecological benefits such as providing wildlife habitat and naturally filtering air and water.

Any trees that you plant can count too! Any trees planted since January 1, 2024, count towards the goal. You can learn more about the program, where trees have been planted, best planting/care practices, and how you can record your planting by visiting the NYS DEC's webpage on the program here: <https://dec.ny.gov/.../climate-change/25-million-trees>





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OCTOBER 20TH
5-6pm

Cornell Cooperative Extension
Saratoga County

Cornell Food Connections Workshop

October 21, 2026 | 9:00 am - 2:00 pm

Capital Roots

594 River Street, Troy, NY

Are you an aspiring or early-stage food and beverage entrepreneur looking to grow your business and bring new products to market? Cornell Food Connections, a partnership among Cornell AgriTech, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Taste NY and the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, is a series of workshops that will equip food producers with the expertise they need to develop products for retail and institutional sale.

Food scientists Bruno Xavier, Ph.D. '08, Associate Director of the Cornell Food Venture Center, and Cynthia James, M.S., Extension Support Specialist with the Institute for Food Safety @ Cornell University and Cornell Food Venture Center, will lead the workshops.

This program is designed to train food entrepreneurs and producers, as well as current food educators, such as Cornell Cooperative Extension staff and other food development partners. Please note that registrants must live and/or be growing or producing in New York state to be eligible to participate in the workshop.



The **\$25** program fee includes lunch and all the supplies needed for the workshop.

To register for the Troy Workshop:

<https://airtable.com/appKTY6LHueAvny04/pagSp8VwUD4hLU7i/form>



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Winter Festival

*Admission includes: grazing and hot cocoa bar, make your own
swag, plus favor bag!*




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From tricks to treats: Experts share pumpkin care tips

As autumn sets in, orange and gold leaves paint the landscape and pumpkins arrive on front doorsteps. As a quintessential symbol for the season, pumpkins not only add charm but also require proper care to last. Virginia Cooperative Extension agriculture extension agents Ashley Edwards and Sarah Sharpe share their expert advice on choosing, preserving, and repurposing pumpkins this fall.

Choosing the right pumpkin

“The best pumpkin to purchase is one that has a firm, dark attached stem,” says Edwards. “The fruit will be a deep, solid color appropriate for its variety. The rind of a mature pumpkin should be hard and difficult to puncture with your finger.”

When selecting pumpkins, Edwards advises against ones with bruises, rot, mold, or pest damage, as they won’t last long. “Weak stems can accelerate decay and often fall off entirely. Be sure to avoid carrying pumpkins by the stem, as it can break easily.”

Expanding your pumpkin’s shelf life

If you are looking to store your pumpkin in an attempt to extend its shelf life after harvesting, you should “wash your pumpkin with cool, soapy water and rinse in a 10% bleach solution (9 parts water - 1 part chlorine bleach),” Edwards emphasizes. If properly stored in a well-ventilated, dry area away from rain or frost, your pumpkin can last for several weeks, or even up to a few months.

Sharpe adds that keeping the pumpkin out of direct sunlight and ensuring it’s dry is key to extending its shelf life. “I recommend wiping pumpkins down with disinfecting wipes or spray once per week,” she says, as this helps prevent bacterial growth.

Preventing rot after carving

Carved pumpkins often spoil quickly, but that can be avoided with a simple step. “After carving, submerge the pumpkin in a 10% bleach solution or spray it onto the cut surfaces and inside the pumpkin,” says Edwards. “The bleach kills bacteria that lead to mold and decay, helping your carved pumpkin last longer.”

Sharpe adds another tip: “You can try putting petroleum jelly or a sealant on the cut parts to slow down evaporation and help the pumpkin last longer.” She also recommends waiting until as close



Photo courtesy Pexels

to Halloween as possible to carve since “as soon as you cut into that pumpkin, the water in the cells starts to evaporate, weakening the pumpkins.”

What to do with pumpkin scraps

Once your pumpkin’s time is up, don’t let it go to waste. Both Edwards and Sharpe emphasize the usefulness of pumpkin seeds, which can be roasted for a tasty snack or saved for next year’s garden. Sharpe notes that “pumpkin seeds are a very healthy and nutritious snack” and suggests also using air-dried or roasted seeds in bird feeders. For the rest of the pumpkin, Edwards encourages composting, as rotting pumpkins make a great nitrogen source for your garden.

Local farms and animal resources are also great places to donate your pumpkin scraps. That being said, Sharpe warns, “If you’ve used any substances like oils or paints to preserve the pumpkin, they shouldn’t be fed to animals.”

Pumpkin treats

Can’t get enough pumpkin in your life? “Pumpkin treats are a fall favorite. When selecting pumpkins for baking, choose a smaller ‘sugar pumpkin’ or ‘pie pumpkin.’ They are sweeter, less stringy, and better for baking,” Edwards emphasizes.

martha stewart

How to Carve a Pumpkin Like a Pro Using a Tried and True Method



Over the years, Martha Stewart editors have detailed dozens of designs for at-home pumpkin carving, offering [templates and easy instructions](#) that let you replicate each look. Now, you can follow the same steps our editors use to create dynamic, eye-catching carvings for your front porch, Halloween party, or fall movie festival.

Learn how to carve pumpkins using this technique developed by professional carvers and perfected by our team. Whether you tackle an elaborate design or put your own spin on a classic, you’ll create pretty, playful—and sometimes spooky—scenes to add an eerie element to your autumn aesthetic.

Read [full article](#).

Pumpkin Leaves

By Rodney Swan, Traditional Gardening

There is so much that can be done with pumpkins. You can make a pumpkin pie, turn it into a soup, and even cut spooky faces into them! But many people turn a blind eye at pumpkin leaves. Are these made to be thrown away, or is there a way to make good use out of them?

Can You Eat Pumpkin Leaves?

When you think about pumpkins we think about that big orange squash, however plenty of us don't think about the pumpkin leaves. What if we were to say that pumpkin leaves are edible after all.

To all you who have left those leaves behind, it is a shame to say that you have been wasting potential meals. Pumpkin leaves are completely edible and delicious too!

How to Eat Pumpkin Leaves

Preparation

Before delving into the cooking method, it is important to know how to prepare your pumpkin leaves. Although it may seem like the easy option, it is very important to not just cook straight after picking.

Consider where this leaf has come from, the dirt and the bugs which have crawled on it. Because of this, preparation is key.

When you first have your leaves you will notice the thick spine and spiked outer layer - to people unfamiliar with the pumpkin leaf, this can be enough to turn people off or believe it is inedible. Luckily, the spikes and spine are something which can easily be dealt with.

Clean Your Leaves

The first rule of thumb is to clean your leaves. To do this, place your leaves in a bowl and rinse under some cold water, making sure to thoroughly wash. By doing this, you are getting rid of any pests which may still be lurking.

Remove Spiked Outer Layer and Stem

The next step of preparation is to remove the spiky outer layer of the leaf and the thick stem holding it together.

Turn the leaf upside down being sure to have your hand on the stem. Then use your nail to puncture the top of the stem to start peeling back the outer layer until it is removed entirely.

This step requires some patience but is easy enough to do. Listen to music or watch your favorite television series whilst you do this to pass the time.

Cooking

Now that your pumpkin leaves have been peeled, it is now time to cook. Pumpkin leaves are very popular in places such as Africa and this is something of an everyday dish for other cultures. But despite this, pumpkin leaves are much more familiar to us than you think.



Stripping pumpkin stems.
Photo credit: Eunice Mashao.

The best way to compare the leaf when it comes to cooking is spinach. Spinach is a green vegetable which shrinks upon being cooked and because of this you need to add plenty to attain a decent sized portion.

Pumpkin leaves work the exact same way. If you were to boil these leaves then they would shrink down in size so it is essential that you add in more leaves than you think is needed.

Just like the spinach too, pumpkin leaves can be cooked in a variety of different ways - they can be boiled, steamed or just used as a garnish on top of dishes.

What Do Pumpkin Leaves Taste Like?

So, what should you be expecting when eating pumpkin leaves? To all those picky eaters out there, be assured that when it comes to these leaves there is nothing to worry about.

Pumpkin leaves are not bitter (not compared to other green vegetables) and hold a mild taste.

This taste is similar to the taste of spinach and green beans. Its mild taste makes for an easy way to sneak those greens into your kid's lunch - they won't even notice they're consuming one of their five a day!

Pumpkin Leaves Recipes

Pumpkin leaves can be eaten in a variety of ways. The great thing about these leaves is how you have the freedom to make them how you want and are super easy to master.

Whether you choose to simply use them as a topping for a dish or you choose to incorporate them into your food, the choice is yours!

Muboora

Source: [Princess Tafadzwa](#)

Ingredients

- 30 pumpkin leaves
- 1 chopped onion
- 1 diced onion
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 Tbsp vegetable oil
- 2 Tbsp fresh cream



Directions

1. Cut the prepared leaves into ribbons.
2. Boil salted water and add the pumpkin leaves. (You may add a quarter teaspoon of baking soda if the leaves are hard to touch.) Simmer for about 5 minutes or until the leaves are tender.
3. Remove from heat and drain. Place the leaves in a bowl.
4. Sauté the onion in the oil and the tomato. Add salt and pepper to taste. Add back the pumpkin leaves, blend well.
5. Serve with sadza or rice.

Transplanting and dividing: when to move a plant, how to dig it, and how to help it settle

Timing, hole size, root balls, whether to cut the top back, and what to do about the wilting, reddening, and yellowing that follow a move, with specifics for trees, shrubs, perennials, brambles, bulbs, and vines.

What is the best time to move a plant?

Cool weather with reliable moisture is what you are after, because roots can grow into new soil before the plant is asked to support a full canopy in heat. For most trees and shrubs in most of the country that means the dormant season: fall after leaf drop, winter where the ground does not freeze hard, or very early spring before growth starts. In the warm South, late fall through early winter, once a deciduous tree has dropped its leaves, is the easiest window of the year. In colder regions, very early spring and early fall both work well for shrubs.

Summer is the risky one. A five foot juniper or a ten foot crape myrtle loses a large share of its root system when it is dug, and it then has to run a full canopy through the hottest weeks of the year on whatever roots came along. November gives that same plant several months to push new roots before it faces heat. If you can wait, wait.

Two situations bend the rule. A plant that went in the ground only a year ago usually has roots that have barely left the original planting hole, so you can move it in either spring or fall and expect to bring nearly all of them with you. And a plant already in trouble, such as a crowded pot of seedlings browning at the edges, is often better off moved now than left where it is.

How big should the hole be, and what should I put in it?

The new hole should be no deeper than the height of the root ball, and it should be wider. Depth is the part people get wrong: a hole dug deeper and backfilled loosens under the weight of the plant, the plant settles, and the crown or root flare ends up buried. Width is where the benefit is, because loosened soil to the sides is where new roots will travel.

Backfill with the soil you dug out. Native soil, even mediocre native soil, is what roots have to live in eventually, and a hole filled with something much richer or much fluffier behaves like a buried container: roots circle inside the good stuff instead of moving out, and water differently across the boundary, so the root ball either stays soggy or dries while the surrounding ground is damp. Amending the whole bed is a different matter and is fine. Amending one hole is not.

Keep fertilizer out of the planting hole. A freshly moved plant is trying to build roots, not foliage, and fertilizer salts against damaged root tissue make that harder. Wait until the plant is established and, if you feed at all, feed lightly. With a badly root damaged tree, hold off entirely through the first season, then mulch with compost or well rotted manure the following winter to feed the soil gradually. Store any fertilizer product out of reach of children and pets, and follow the label on the container you actually have.



Should I cut the top back when I move something?

This one is genuinely contested and you will find experienced people on both sides. Reducing the top by roughly a third when you move a large shrub or small tree is a reasonable middle position: it brings the canopy closer to the root system that survived the dig, without the hard stubbing that

ruins a plant's shape for years. Do it with clean cuts back to a branch or bud, not by shearing.

Vines are the exception where cutting back is clearly worth it. A Carolina jessamine growing through a fence, with its stems twisted around each other and through the wire, cannot be untangled intact. Take it down by half or more. Move it, and give it steady water through the following summer. Accept that you are trading a season of flowers for a successful move, because that vine blooms in very early spring on the previous year's wood, so a hard cut at the wrong moment removes the buds. In an ordinary year, prune it immediately after it finishes blooming.

How do I dig and move a big, heavy plant?

Start the trench farther from the trunk than feels necessary, and take as much root as you can physically handle. The tradeoff is weight: soil is heavy, and a root ball you cannot lift is a root ball that will break apart when you try.

For anything large, do not lift it at all. Dig all the way around, tip the plant to one side, slide a tarp or a heavy sheet of plastic underneath, tip it the other way to pull the tarp through, then drag the plant and its ball to the new spot. Two or three people on a tarp beat one person on a shovel and a sore back. Have the new hole dug before you start digging the old one, so the roots spend minutes out of the ground rather than an afternoon. Keep the ball shaded and damp while it is out; sun and wind on exposed roots do real damage quickly.

Know when to stop. If the root ball needs equipment, if there are overhead wires or structures in the way, or if the specimen is valuable enough that you would be sick to lose it, hire an arborist with the gear to do it properly. Watch your footing and your back on any plant you are dragging or tipping.

[Read further](#) to find out how to divide big clumps of perennials, biennials, move black raspberries out of a wild patch, move lily bulbs, etc.



Homesteading



Edited from article by Martha Zepp, Former Program Assistant, Pennsylvania State University

Freezing Herbs



Fresh parsley. Tografik on www.pixabay.com

Some herbs retain their flavor better when frozen than dried. Good choices include parsley, dill, basil, chives, lemon balm, mint and tarragon. Frozen herbs can generally be substituted for fresh herbs in the same amount, but they will become limp when thawed, making them best suited for cooked dishes rather than garnishes.

Harvesting Herbs

- Harvest in mid-morning after the dew has dried but before the sun reduces the flavorful oils.
- For the best flavor, harvest just before plants flower. Young leaves near the tips often have most concentrated flavor.
- Cut stems just above a leaf or pair of leaves, leaving 4-6 inches for continued growth.
- Rinse gently, then pat or spin dry. Avoid crushing the leaves.

Easy Ways To Freeze Herbs

Ice Cube Trays: Strip and chop herbs. Place about 1 tablespoon in each ice cube compartment and cover with water. Freeze until solid, then top off with additional water and refreeze. Transfer cubes to labeled, dated freezer bags. Add frozen cubes directly to soups, sauces and stews.

In Oil: Combine 2 cups chopped herbs with 1/3 - 1/2 cup oil. Freeze in ice cube trays or small freezer-safe jars. Canola oil provides a neutral flavor, while olive oil works well when its flavor complements the herb. This method works particularly well for basil. Herbs mixed with oil must be frozen - never store herbs in oil at room temperature.

Frozen Flat: For sauces and cooked dishes, spread a thin layer of chopped herbs mixed with oil in a freezer bag. Remove excess air, seal and freeze flat on a baking sheet. Once frozen, break off the amount needed and return the remainder to the freezer.

Individual Leaves: Spread leaves in a single layer on a cookie sheet and freeze. Once frozen, transfer to a freezer bag. Work quickly to prevent thawing and refreezing, which can cause the leaves to stick together. Chives and lemongrass should be chopped before freezing.

Stems: Dill, rosemary and thyme can be frozen on the stem. Wrap dill stems in plastic wrap, then foil, and freeze. Frozen dill may become limp and dark but will still provide flavor, especially for pickling.

Freezer Tip: Herbs can transfer strong odors to other foods. Wrap them well in foil or store them in airtight freezer containers.

Use frozen herbs directly from the freezer - there is no need to thaw them before adding them to cooked dishes.



By Diane Whitten, CCE SARATOGA

Make Your Own Fresh Mozzarella & Ricotta Cheese



Making your own cheese can be easier than you may think, especially these two un-aged cheeses. The easiest and fastest to make is Ricotta, requiring no special ingredients or equipment, other than cheesecloth which can be purchased in any grocery

store. To make Mozzarella cheese, the specialty ingredient rennet is required which is available through cheese making supply stores.

Instructions for making both of these cheeses can be found in

these Cooperative Extension fact sheets:

Cheese Recipes, University of California Cooperative Extension, Master Food Preserver Program, March 2020. Includes both Ricotta and Mozzarella. Accessed on 5-5-21 at:

<https://ucanr.edu/sites/HumboldtDelNorte/files/329613.pdf>.

Making Fresh Mozzarella, Julie Casio, University of Alaska Fairbanks Cooperative Extension Service, August 2015. Accessed on 5-5-21 at <https://ucanr.edu/sites/solanomfp/files/346632.pdf>
Recommended Reading: Carroll, Ricki. 2002. Home Cheesemaking, 3rd edition. North Adams, MA: Storey Publishing, LLC.



Caring for chickens in cold weather

Cold stress

Most poultry can maintain their body temperatures when the environmental temperature is between 60 and 75 degrees Fahrenheit. Within this range, poultry produce and lose body heat in balance. Proper care during cold weather is key to keeping your chickens happy and healthy.



Puffing its feathers may mean your chicken is cold.

- The average body temperature of a chicken is 106°F.
- Low environmental temperatures can lead to cold stress in poultry. A chicken's body temperature lowers when it loses more heat than it can produce.
- Huddling together, holding a foot up to their breast, or puffing their feathers are all signs that your chickens may be cold.
- Prolonged cold stress can reduce performance and lead to death.

Select winter-hardy breeds

Not all breeds of chickens will handle cold weather the same. Heavier breeds such as Plymouth Rock, Wyandotte, Ameraucana and Orpington over-winter well. Smaller breeds have less feathering, or have large combs and wattles and may need extra care to stay warm, maintain body weight and keep healthy during cold weather.

If you have a mix of breeds in your flock, consider separating them by size or dominance during the winter. Heavier or more dominant breeds may peck on others and keep them away from the feed, water or roost. As a result, chickens of lighter or less dominant breeds may not get what they need to maintain body weight, health or warmth. Before winter, spend some time watching the behavior of your birds to decide if you will need to separate your flock.

Prepare your coop

A coop is essential to protect your chickens from precipitation, wind and predators year-round. There are several steps you can take to make your coop ready for winter.

Provide roosts

Roosts offer an elevated space for chickens to rest overnight, which keeps them off the cold floor. While roosting, chickens can comfortably lay on their feet to warm them. Roosts should provide enough space for the chickens to fluff their feathers and lay together for warmth without overcrowding.

Generally, roosts should start at least 12 inches above the floor of the coop and provide 9 inches of room per chicken. The exact height and dimension of the roost will depend on the size of your coop.

Avoid using metal, plastic, or other materials that retain the cold and may cause frostbite. Wooden 2 by 4— or 2 by 2-inch boards work well.

Manage drafts and insulate your coop

Inspect your coop for holes and cracks that may allow air to flow freely into the coop. Sealing these spots will prevent cold drafts and rodents from entering your coop over winter.

If your coop is unfinished, consider insulating the interior to help retain heat. Make sure the insulation is closed off to prevent chickens from pecking or scratching it, but also to keep rodents out.

Provide supplemental heat

When temperatures fall below 35 degrees F, provide supplemental heat at the height of the nest boxes or lower rung of the roost. Placing a thermometer on the wall at each of these heights can help you track coop temperature.

Radiant heat sources heat the birds but not the surrounding air space. Radiant heaters include brooder plates, panels, and hanging heaters.

Be sure that the product you select is approved for use around chickens and livestock. Always read fire risk warnings and follow installation instructions when using heaters. Thermostats in heaters or bought separately can help you better manage their use and reduce electricity costs.

Another option is an approved heat lamp with a heat bulb. Use heat lamps with safety in mind. Always read fire risk warning and follow installation instruction. Never hang a heat lamp by the cord. Lamps with a cage around the bulb can help prevent the bulb from contacting the bedding if the lamp were to fall.

Keep all wires away from poultry, water, and flammable litter to prevent damage, shocks or fires. Only use extension cords short term. Do not use them to run power to your coop. Always work with a professional electrician when installing electricity in your coop.

Keep coops ventilated

Air exchange within a coop is key to preventing moisture build-up and poor air quality due to ammonia. High moisture in a coop, combined with cold temperature can lead to condensation, which can cause frostbite.

The amount of ventilation you need depends on the size of your coop and flock. You can achieve ventilation in a few ways.

- Partially open a south-facing window.
- Install roof vents to allow moisture and stale air to naturally leave the coop.
- Place burlap over opened or partially opened windows to encourage air movement.
- Open a small door or window on warmer winter days.

If you smell ammonia or notice moisture collecting on objects or windows within the coop, you need to increase ventilation and clean up manure to help remove moisture.

[Continue reading the article](#) to learn more about preparing your coop, Feeding, Watering, Managing nest boxes and egg laying, Culling Chickens, and Frostbite.

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