

# Connections

The News Magazine of Cornell Cooperative Extension Schoharie and Otsego Counties

## APRIL-JUNE 2024

Climate and Planting Dates	1
Soil Testing for Community Gardens	1
Upcoming Programs: Ticks, Native Plants and Biological Controls	4
Master Gardener Volunteers Are Growing for you! Save the Date for the Plant Sale!	5
The 4-H Afterschool Newspaper Club Report	6
Schoharie and Otsego County 4-H Happenings	8
FTS Program Bearing Fruit	12
New USDA Plant Hardiness Map Updated: What Does it Mean in Otsego County?	13
Updates from CCESO's Agriculture Program	14
PHENOLOGY: Gardening by Nature's Indicators	15
Building Healthy Habits: Food and Community Nutrition	16
Get More Healthy Recipes: Popcorn Seasoning	17
Program Events	18

## Climate and Planting Dates

BY **STEVE REINERS**, PROFESSOR, SCHOOL OF INTEGRATIVE PLANT SCIENCE HORTICULTURE SECTION, CORNELL AGRITECH

It's been a warm winter, one of the warmest on record. The USDA Plant Hardiness zone was modified last year, raising the average winter low temperature by 5°F. This has gardeners asking if they can plant their vegetables earlier than usual. I'm not sure we can make that recommendation quite yet, at least not for all our vegetables. Although our climate is warming, that doesn't mean we can't have a late spring frost.

There are cool and warm-season vegetables. A cool-season vegetable is one that can withstand frost and cool soil temperatures—crops like spinach, peas, lettuce, and broccoli. For these crops, feel free to plant them a week earlier. Frost won't kill them. In fact, giving them an earlier start allows them to mature before the heat of summer comes on.

Warm-season crops include tomatoes, peppers, squash, cucumbers, and beans. These crops will be killed by a frost. And as we saw last year, despite a warming climate, there is no guarantee that we won't have a late freeze. Don't take the chance and plant warm-season crops earlier than normal. But if you do, make sure you provide frost protection on cold nights.

## Soil Testing for Community Gardens

The 2024 New York State Community Gardens Soil Testing Program has officially rolled out! This includes no cost soil testing, including nutrients and heavy metals, for community gardens! This program is available to food-producing community gardens, including schools and other organizations.

The community garden is responsible for taking the soil sample and shipping costs, but there is no charge for the testing, and once your application has been approved, there is an approximately six-week turnaround time for results from the Cornell Soil Health Lab. The URL below has a fillable PDF application that can be submitted by email, and a recording of a webinar where more details are explained at the bottom of the webpage. Apply here: <https://agriculture.ny.gov/rfa-0324-new-york-state-community-gardens-soil-testing-program>.

Harvest NY specialists across the state will be copied in on results based on region and will be available if community garden stakeholders need assistance with result interpretation or ideas for next steps. For-profit farms, strictly ornamental and flower gardens, and individual gardens (like backyard gardens) are not eligible.

## EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

Cornell Cooperative Extension actively supports equal educational and employment opportunities. No person shall be denied admission to any educational program or activity or be denied employment on the basis of any legally prohibited discrimination involving, but not limited to, such factors as race, color, religion, political beliefs, national or ethnic origin, sex, gender/gender identity, transgender status, sexual orientation, age, marital or family status, protected veterans, or individuals with disabilities. Cornell Cooperative Extension is committed to the maintenance of affirmative action programs that will assure the continuation of such equality of opportunity.

## PRODUCT ENDORSEMENT

Cornell Cooperative Extension and its employees assume no liability for the effectiveness or result of any product. Any reference to consumer or commercial products or trade names is made with the understanding that no discrimination is intended and no endorsement by Cooperative Extension is implied.



173 South Grand Street, Suite 1  
Cobleskill, NY 12043  
518-234-4303  
e-mail: schoharie@cornell.edu

123 Lake Street  
Cooperstown, NY 13326  
607-547-2536  
e-mail: otsego@cornell.edu

[www.cceschoharie-otsego.org](http://www.cceschoharie-otsego.org)

## NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIPTION

To subscribe to **Connections**, the e-newsletter of Cornell Cooperative Extension Schoharie and Otsego Counties, visit our website, [www.cceschoharie-otsego.org](http://www.cceschoharie-otsego.org). Click on the red "Subscribe to Connections" button in the right-hand column, and fill out and submit your subscription. It's free, and by subscribing you are assured of receiving future issues, without missing any news or programs of the Association. Printed copies are also available at the Association offices in Cobleskill, Cooperstown, and Oneonta. Cornell Cooperative Extension Schoharie and Otsego Counties does not share readers' personal information with third parties. Our emails are to keep you up to date with current events. If you do not wish to receive our notices, you can unsubscribe at any time.

Subscribe to CCESO's "Connections EXTRA!" email bulletin and follow CCESO's agriculture-focused social media profiles to receive timely news about agricultural events and opportunities. CCESO's agricultural social media pages include a general agriculture profile on Facebook @CCESchoharieandOtsegoAG as well as Family Farm Day-specific Facebook and Instagram profiles @FamilyFarmDay. Contact us at schoharie-otsego@cornell.edu or 518-234-4303 x111 to learn more about CCESO's agriculture program, or to sign up to receive the **Connections EXTRA!** email bulletin.

## FIND US ONLINE

Visit us at [cceschoharie-otsego.org](http://cceschoharie-otsego.org)

Like us on **Facebook**:

**Main association news:** CCEschoharieOtsego  
**Nutrition education:** EFNEPCCESchoharieOtsego;  
HeathyConnectionsCCESchoharieOtsego  
**Master Gardeners:** CCEOtsegoMG; CCEschoharieMG  
**4-H:** schohariecounty4H; otsegocounty4H  
**Ag education and programs:**  
CCESchoharieandOtsegoAG; AnniesProjectNYS;  
FamilyFarmDay  
**Farm to School:** LocalFoodsHealthySchools

Follow us on **Instagram**:

**Master Gardeners:** otsegomastergardener  
**Family Farm Day:** familyfarmday

Follow our **blog**:

**Nutrition education:** Life's Solutions:  
[blogs.cornell.edu/efnep-schoharie-otsego](http://blogs.cornell.edu/efnep-schoharie-otsego)



## OUR MISSION

Cornell Cooperative Extension puts knowledge to work in pursuit of economic vitality, ecological sustainability, and social well-being. We bring local experience and research-based solutions together, helping New York State families and communities thrive in our rapidly changing world.

## SEND YOUR COMMENTS

CCE Schoharie Otsego offers unbiased, research-based education and outreach to improve the lives of all residents of both counties. We want to hear how CCESO's resources have helped you, and we welcome feedback about how we can improve. Please send your comments to the CCESO offices in either county, or contact Executive Director Liz Callahan at [eac283@cornell.edu](mailto:eac283@cornell.edu). Thank you!

**Vol. 7, No. 2, April-June 2024**

**Published regularly by Cornell Cooperative Extension  
Schoharie and Otsego Counties**

*Elizabeth Callahan, Editor*

*Cathleen Berry, Associate Editor, Design, and Layout*

*Madelyn Sanchez Taylor, Proofreader*

173 South Grand Street, Suite 1 123 Lake Street  
Cobleskill, NY 12043 Cooperstown, NY 13326  
518-234-4303 or 518-296-8310 607-547-2536  
[schoharie@cornell.edu](mailto:schoharie@cornell.edu) [otsego@cornell.edu](mailto:otsego@cornell.edu)  
[www.cceschoharie-otsego.org](http://www.cceschoharie-otsego.org)

Office hours both locations:

8:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m. Monday–Friday

New York State College of Agriculture and Life Sciences,  
New York State College of Human Ecology, and New York  
State College of Veterinary Medicine at Cornell University,  
Cooperative Extension Associations, county governing bod-  
ies, and U.S. Department of Agriculture, cooperating.

# PHENOLOGY: Gardening by Nature's Indicators

MARY ELLEN CALTA, OTSEGO MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEER

You may have heard the saying ‘plant corn when the oak leaves are as big as squirrels’ ears” or sow Morning Glories when Maple trees have full-sized leaves” These are phenological signs.

Phenology is the study of periodic plant and animal life cycles and how these influence, and are influenced by, variations in climate and seasonal changes. These changes can act as indicators of when to sow certain seed, when you can expect a certain insect species to hatch, or when it is time to prune a particular shrub or tree. In today’s ever-changing climate environment, phenology may be the way to go when looking for the right time to take garden action.

We can no longer count on the calendar to tell us when to plant a particular crop. Past weather indicators are no longer reliable as indicators. Every year the weather is different, so we must pay attention to what’s happening NOW. Farmers and gardeners need to know when to plant to avoid frosts, the timing of plant and insect development to decide when to apply fertilizer and organic pesticides, without having to depend on the calendar. Plants and animals react to weather patterns, and they don’t necessarily react at the same time every year. This means we must pay attention to what’s going on around us and react based on observations of nature.

Please send us your observations! Otsego and Schoharie Counties are geographically large, and growing conditions across the counties are very different. We would like to hear from you and what you observe in your garden.

Some common phenological indicators are:

- Prune roses and fertilize lawns when yellow forsythia and crocus start blooming.
- Plant pansies, snapdragons, and hardy annuals after the aspen and chokeberries leaf out.
- Plant peas when daffodils and forsythia bloom.
- Plant lettuce and other cool weather crops when lilacs have leafed out.
- Plant beans and squash when lilacs are in full bloom.
- Plant cucumbers when lilac flowers fade.
- Plant tomatoes, early corn and peppers when Apple blossoms begin to fall, and flowering dogwoods are in peak and when day lilies start to bloom.



- Plant peppers and eggplants outside when bearded iris are in bloom.
- Plant beets, lettuce, spinach, and carrots when dandelions are blooming.
- Plant potatoes when serviceberry or juneberries flower.
- Sow cabbage and broccoli seeds when catalpa and mock orange bloom.
- If daisies appear there is no calcium near.

## *Insect Phenology*

- Grasshopper eggs hatch when lilacs bloom.
- Eastern Tent Caterpillar eggs hatch when crabapple and wild plum flowers open.
- Mexican bean beetle larvae appear when fox-glove flowers open.
- Squash vine borers appear when chicory is in flower.

This list by no means account for every phenological indicator but should give you a place to start thinking about gardening outside the calendar. Take time to observe and engage with nature, and you will find more answers.

For more information, or to participate in the phenology program: USA National Phenology Network. This is the National website that has information sheets to record YOUR observations. [https://www.usanpn.org/files/npn/documentation/How\\_to\\_Observe\\_Field\\_Handbook\\_7-28-10.pdf](https://www.usanpn.org/files/npn/documentation/How_to_Observe_Field_Handbook_7-28-10.pdf).

Please send us, [mastergardener-otsego@cornell.edu](mailto:mastergardener-otsego@cornell.edu), any unique phenological information you can give us.

We have very diverse growing conditions in Otsego and Schoharie counties, and we would love to hear from you.

# Upcoming Programs: Ticks, Native Plants and Biological Controls

## *Ticks: Don't Let Them Keep You Inside!*

Ticks are here to stay, but don't let them keep you from enjoying being outside! Join Otsego Master Gardener Volunteer, Celia Oxley for a program on tick identification, bite presentation, and tick-borne diseases.

The workshop will be held on Saturday, April 20th at 11:30 am in coordination with Otsego County Conservation Association's (OCCA) Earth Festival at Milford Central School (42 W. Main Street, Milford, NY). The annual Earth Festival features a variety of activities, vendors, and programs for all ages. More information about Earth Festival can be found at [www.occainfo.org](http://www.occainfo.org).

Please register for the program in advance by visiting [www.cceschoharie-otsego.org](http://www.cceschoharie-otsego.org) or by calling 607-547-2536 ext. 235. The program is free and open to the public.

## *Why Native Plants: Birds, Bees, Butterflies*

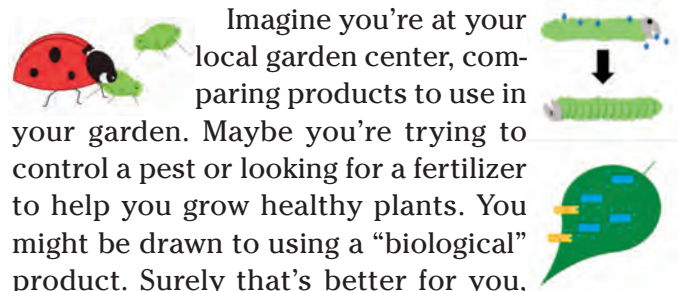
Growing native plants in your lawns and outdoor space is a great way to help our pollinators and wildlife. Join Otsego Master Gardener Volunteers, Celia Oxley and Mary Ellen Calta at Earth Festival on Saturday, April 20, 2024 at 1:30 p.m. to learn about the benefits of growing native plants in your own backyard!

The workshop will be held in coordination with OCCA's Earth Festival at Milford Central School on Saturday, April 20th (42 W. Main Street, Milford, NY). This annual event features a variety of activities, vendors, and programs for all ages. More information about Earth Festival can be found at [www.occainfo.org](http://www.occainfo.org).

Please register for the program in advance by visiting [www.cceschoharie-otsego.org](http://www.cceschoharie-otsego.org) or by calling 607-547-2536 ext. 235. The program is free and open to the public.

## *Biological Controls: Partners in the Garden*

Imagine you're at your local garden center, comparing products to use in your garden. Maybe you're trying to control a pest or looking for a fertilizer to help you grow healthy plants. You might be drawn to using a "biological" product. Surely that's better for you, your family, your pets, and the environment...right?



For centuries people have used biological controls such as beneficial insects and/or pathogens to control unwanted insects, weeds, and diseases in the garden. Join CCESO on May 11th to learn more about the "three B's"—biocontrol, biostimulants, and biopesticides. Learn what these products are, how they can help you grow strong and healthy plants, and how to use them as safely as possible.

Senior Extension Associate Dr. Amara Dunn-Silver, a Biocontrol Specialist with the New York State Integrated Pest Management Program at Cornell AgriTech, will provide an interactive presentation on the use of various Biocontrols to both control pests and help our gardens grow on May 11th at 11 am at the Clark Sports Center, 124 County Highway 52, Cooperstown, NY 13326.

Dr. Dunn-Silver's work supports the effective use of biological control across New York as part of an integrated management strategy. She works with stakeholders in all agricultural crops and commodities, as well as community settings—where people live, work, play, and learn.

Join us for this informative and practical presentation. More information and registration will be posted in April at <https://cceschoharie-otsego.org/> or <https://www.facebook.com/CCEOtsegoMG>.

# Master Gardener Volunteers Are Growing for you! Save the Date for the Plant Sale!



*Schoharie Master Gardener Volunteers (Liz Brown, Scott Mills, Paula Sinatra) transplant plant sale plugs*



*Plugs will be cared for until the plant sale by Master Gardener Volunteers.*

Every spring, gardeners are counting down the minutes until they can get their hands in some dirt. CCE Schoharie Otsego's Master Gardener Volunteers (MGV) have already started growing for their upcoming plant sales. In Schoharie County, it will be held on Saturday, May 4, 2024 from 8 a.m.-2 p.m. in collaboration with SUNY Cobleskill. In Otsego County, the plant sale will be held on May 25 from 9-2 p.m.

The MGV plant sales are fun annual events that raised money to promote garden-based programs and outreach in Schoharie and Otsego Counties. This important funding will allow CCE to host low-cost programs on gardening for children and adults, and maintain demonstration gardens at both CCE facilities. This year MGVs have carefully selected a variety of plants including perennials, natives, annuals, vegetables and fruits. Master Gardener Volunteers will be available to give gardening advice at both sales. Learn more about each sale below:

**May 4th**  
**Schoharie County Master Gardener Volunteers Plant Sale**  
**8 a.m.-2 p.m.**  
**SUNY Cobleskill, Route 7, Cobleskill**

**May 25th**  
**Otsego County Master Gardener Volunteers Plant Sale**  
**9 a.m.-2 p.m.**  
**123 Lake Street, Cooperstown**

The Schoharie Master Gardener Volunteers have chosen a nice variety of perennials (plants that come back every year) to add to your gardens.

Want something easy to care for in full sun? Try Black Eyed Susie. We have "Rudbeckia Deami," which is a typical yellow blossom with a dark center. This particular variety was chosen not just because it is drought tolerant and the deer and rabbits tend to avoid it, but also strongly disease resistant. Have you heard of Tiarella? It is commonly called Foam Flower and does great in shade. The graceful, pale pink blossoms of the variety "Angel Wings" are on upright stalks and can bloom



*Black Eyed Susan*



*Tiarella Angel Wings*

in springtime and again in the fall. It is also deer resistant as well as attractive to butterflies and hummingbirds.

These and several other plants will be available for purchase. These are not the typical varieties that you find in the big box stores. Come see the unique plants we've chosen that will grow in your garden!

The Otsego Master Gardener Volunteers are proudly featuring a wide variety of vegetables, annual flowers, herbs, and perennials at the plant sale that are known to grow well in Otsego County. From blight-resistant and heirloom tomatoes to zinnias, and peppers, you will not want to miss this sale!



A complete list of varieties you can expect to see at the sale will be available on the CCESO website in the weeks before the sale.

*The Otsego County Plant Sale brings plant lovers near and far for the diverse plants, and MGV guidance on planting!*

# The 4-H Afterschool Newspaper Club Report



I like Mrs. Valentina's birthday because  
she was so fun. She is the  
best.

Translation,  
The children had a  
Surprise Party for  
Mrs. Valentina's birthday



here the children are learning sign language with Mrs. Savannah  
 Not many people know sign language and we believe it is good to  
 be able to communicate with those who can't



This is a student doing  
 the pledge. Sometimes we change  
 people for the pledge. After the  
 pledge we go outside. That is  
 what we do in 4H.

~ Caleb

# Schoharie and Otsego County 4-H Happenings



This winter has been packed with 4-H opportunities for youth in both Schoharie and Otsego county 4-H programs. Between virtual opportunities, in-person workshops, club meetings, and county events, youth have been busy learning and working toward their 4-H interests and project areas.

Beginning in January, youth were invited to attend a five-part 4-H Livestock Summit virtual series which focused on a variety of topics including AgVocating for your market animal, where that steak is coming from, swine health, and animal first aid. The NYS 4-H Livestock Summit is an annual program that gives New York State 4-H members the opportunity to learn about market animal projects of different species.

Another virtual education opportunity for 4-H youth this winter was a four-part series called 'What's Bugging You?' that focused on teaching youth about the insects and critters of New York State. This series was brought to NYS 4-H members by the Youth Nature and Outdoor Environmental Program Work Team, with help from Cornell University experts, Albany Pine Bush Preserve & 4-H educators. Insects are the most diverse animal on the planet with an estimated 5.5 million species, of which only one million are known and identified. They outnumber humans in every way and affect our daily lives in many ways for good and for bad. 4-H members from Schoharie and Otsego Counties attended this virtual series to unravel the mysteries behind these NYS insects and critters.



Schoharie and Otsego County 4-H programs offered a Dog Agility workshop in January, hosted by Hessian Hill Farm in collaboration with 4-H volunteers. Youth participants who attended the beginner class learned about the foundations of agility to be able to successfully advance to sequencing obstacles. Youth participants in the experienced class learned about safely advancing to contact and other obstacles. Experienced youth and dog teams who demonstrated basic agility sequences of tunnels, jumps, A frame, and table obstacles, also had the opportunity to be evaluated for their AKC ACT 1 Title. A second round of Dog Agility classes is planned for Schoharie and Otsego County 4-H members in early April!



4-H Dairy and Horse Quiz Bowl is underway and teams are forming together for the district competitions. Quiz bowl participants are eager to showcase their knowledge of the dairy and horse industries, nutrition, health, food safety, crops, and other relevant fields in this Jeopardy style team competition!

Otsego and Schoharie County 4-H programs held their annual Public Presentations Day event on February 24th and March 2nd. In preparation for these events, youth worked toward choosing a presentation topic, organizing their thoughts, and creating posters and visual aids. Each county program held a public speaking workshop where youth learned about the parts of a presentation, how to organize their thoughts, and gained some practice speaking in front of others. When presentation day arrived, youth gave their presentations in front of an audience including a panel of evaluators.

Why are 4-H Public Presentations so important? Public speaking is one of the most important life skills that you learn in 4-H. To most people, the thought of preparing a speech and delivering it to an audience is terrifying. However, 4-H youth members throughout NYS, and across the country, have an advantage in public speaking. Through the 4-H Public Presentations program, youth learn how to plan, organize, and structure an effective presentation. They express themselves clearly, with confidence, creativity and poise in a variety of speaking situations. Alumni of 4-H will tell you that this experience allowed them to stand head and shoulders above their colleagues in every realm – school, career and personal life. The 4-H “learn by doing” motto is the focus of the Public Presentation program’s educational approach. Schoharie and Otsego Counties 4-H are certainly continuing “to make the best better” as they continue to foster youth in their development of life-long skills.

### **Schoharie 4-H Happenings**

In February, Schoharie County 4-H held a Textiles and Sewing Workshop at the Cobleskill Extension Center. Throughout this workshop, Jeanette from She-Shed Services and her volunteers taught 4-H members parts of the sewing machine, basic sewing skills and tools, and how to use a pattern. Based on the 4-H model of “Learn by Doing,” the members dove right in with a simple pattern and created Pin Banners, which can be used to display

their 4-H member project achievement pins. Participants even had time to sew a draw string bag as a second activity. These sewing projects will also make nice 4-H entries for display at the upcoming Sunshine Fair.



*Continues on page 10*

## 4-H Happenings continued from page 9

Schoharie County Master Gardener Volunteers (SMGVs) in collaboration with Hessian Hill Farm presented the first class in the five-part 4-H Sow, Grow & Show gardening series. The first workshop, which was held in February, connected MGVs and local 4-H youth with this year's 4-H garden-based learning project (see previous page for photos). Alongside MGVs, youth began the process of planning for the 4-H Garden on the grounds of the Sunshine Fair. This first class featured multiple break-out educational sessions surrounding garden design, seed selection, soils, garden budget, supplies, and tools. At the end of class, 4-H youth were guided through a winter sewing project that they could take home with them. With the four sessions of this series that remain, youth will learn about seed starting and planting and have the opportunity to grow various plants, experiment with garden practices, and grow food and flowers in the 4-H garden. Participants will also be able to exhibit their produce and flowers in the Junior Department at the Sunshine Fair.

## Otsego 4-H Happenings

### 4-H Club News



At the January club meeting, with the help of Brian Manchester, the Otsego Firecracker kids built wooden toolboxes. Through this they utilized measuring and construction skills. 4-H is a big promoter of hands-on learning. This was a great way for them to get experience with power tools and building. They left the meeting looking forward to taking their toolboxes home to paint, personalize, and then put to work. Maybe even enter in Martin Hall at the 2024 Otsego County Fair! Submitted by Maddie Schultz.



The Ewes and Friends 4-H club met in January and made butter from heavy cream using multiple tools: a jar, a hand crank butter churn, a mixer, a blender, and an immersion blender. The immersion blender was by far the winning method!





The Kids and Critters Club learned about the parts of a chicken, while 4-H Club No Goats No Glory learned about taking care of goats, the Goat Bowl (Scorecard, record keeping) and made friendship bracelets by Cole Baker.



4-H Members of the Springfield High Meadows 4-H Club meeting was held to learn about Dairy Judging.



*Continues on page 12*

#### 4-H Happenings continued from page 11

### Getting ready for Dairy Quiz Bowl

Youth practice their skills to get ready for the Dairy Quiz Bowl which will be taking place in March (see previous page). Hands-on experiences, as well as practicing questions from previous years, assist them in gaining knowledge needed for the contest.

### Congratulations Evelyn Kersmanc

On Saturday, February 24, 2024, Evelyn Kersmanc from Otsego County was named the 2024-2025 New York State Dairy Ambassador during a ceremony at the Embassy Suites by Hilton Syracuse Destiny USA in Syracuse, N.Y. Evelyn formerly served as the Otsego County Dairy Ambassador since spring of 2023. As New York State Dairy Ambassador, she will serve as a spokesperson and advocate for dairy farmers by attending special events to en-

gage with and educate consumers on the nutritional benefits of milk and dairy foods, how farmers care for their cows and their land to produce a sustainable product, and the importance of the dairy industry to the New York State economy.



The 2024 New York State Dairy Ambassador Team was selected on February 24. From left to right are: First Associate New York State Dairy Ambassador Olivia Maslyn from Ontario County; New York State Dairy Ambassador Evelyn Kersmanc from Otsego County; and Second Associate New York State Dairy Ambassador Justin Mesch from Erie County. (Courtesy photo)

## FTS Program Bearing Fruit



As spring swiftly approaches, the Farm to School Program in Schoharie and Otsego counties is in full force! Having successfully supported numerous Harvest of the Month events throughout the past two years, the component schools are successfully executing their versions of the NYS Harvest of the Month program. This is also the time of year that SFAs (School Food Authorities) start assessing local products that they can source into their menus to prepare themselves to start off strong for the fall harvest season. SFAs are also starting the process of determining whether they are audit-ready for the NYS 30% initiative. Cherry Valley School District and Milford Central School District are currently working with a regional Farm to School Coordinator from Ulster County Cooperative Extension to determine their eligibility for application. We should know more in the weeks to come!

Meanwhile, connections have been made between Cherry Valley, Milford CSD, and Palmer Foods (for-

merly known as Smith Packing out of Utica, NY) for the potential introduction of NYS beef products into their lunch programs. Palmer Foods has supplied Cobleskill-Richmondville CSD, Sharon Springs CSD, Schoharie, and Berne CSD with NYS beef in previous years, as well as several surrounding school districts throughout upstate New York. Data pulled from the past five years of research on those SFAs that have achieved the NY 30% Initiative have shown that the addition of a center of the plate protein can provide a strong boost for many districts to help push them over the 30% procurement threshold.



As we wind down with the NYS Agriculture and Markets grant here at CCE Schoharie and Otsego, our hopes are to solidify connections and foster relationships for future growth between each of the school districts and local produc-

ers. With the help of surrounding Cornell Cooperative Farm to School Regional Coordinators, we are optimistic that the school districts that we have had the pleasure of working with these past couple of years will continue to thrive and source nutrient-dense, local products for their students.

# New USDA Plant Hardiness Map Updated: What Does it Mean in Otsego County?

BY MARK BOSHACK, OTSEGO MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEER

The new USDA Plant Hardiness Zone will have a small impact, if any, on most Otsego County gardeners, as most locations are at most slightly changed from the previous map.

For example, Oneonta remains in Zone 5B, the average annual extreme minimum temperature increasing 1 degree. Cooperstown, Cooperstown, Morris, and Schenevus have been moved from 5A to 5B, with temperatures slightly increasing.

Two area educators said it remains a valuable resource for growers.

The 2023 map, shows the average annual minimum winter temperature, during a 30-year period. It divides the United States into 13 Zones (each of which is then divided into two subzones labeled "a" and "b"). Each Zone is 10°F warmer (or colder) in an average winter than the adjacent Zone. The lower the Zone number, the colder the region. The two subzones in each Zone represent 5°F increments.

The map is the standard by which gardeners and growers can determine which perennial plants are most likely to thrive at a location, according to the USDA. The map is available at <https://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov>. A user can enter their zip code to determine their zone and see how much it's changed.

More information about the specific zone for plants and seeds should be available on an accompanying tag, or on the packet.

As compared to previous maps it provides a more granular picture with more reporting sites, said Cornell University Professor of Horticulture William Miller. Microclimates and factors such as snow cover, quality of soil, and soil drainage need to be considered as well, when deciding what to plant he said.

However, "It's important to remember that plants can't read," he said. So, if a gardener can give a

plant such assistance as extra mulch or protection of the elements, they may want to try a plant outside the zone. They should be aware of the danger to their investment, but the map will give them a tool. It won't account for the possibility of a sudden frost, like that which affected the apple trees last year in the area, he said.

Besides the hardiness zones, Carla Crim, Cornell Cooperative Extension Delaware County's Horticulture & Natural Resources Subject Educator, said growers should also be aware of the last frost dates in selecting plants that will survive the winter. That information is available at <https://www.almanac.com/gardening/frostdates>.

The map will become more important as the climate changes, she said. While that can bring more problems with insects and fungal diseases, it can also result in longer growing seasons.

Gardeners need to keep that in mind and understand that past weather records cannot provide a guaranteed forecast for future variations in weather, according to the USDA.

Temperature updates to plant hardiness zones are not necessarily reflective of global climate change because of the highly variable nature of the extreme minimum temperature of the year, as well as the use of increasingly sophisticated mapping methods and the inclusion of data from more weather stations. Furthermore, gardeners should recognize that many other environmental factors, in addition to hardiness zones, contribute to the success or failure of plants. Wind, soil type, soil moisture, humidity, pollution, snow, and winter sunshine can greatly affect the survival of plants. Warm season heat and moisture balance are particularly important in this regard. The way plants are placed in the landscape, how they are planted, and their size and health can also influence their survival, according to the USDA.

# Updates from CCESO's Agriculture Program

## Family Farm Day

CCESO's 2024 Family Farm Day will be held on Saturday, August 24th. This signature educational community event is in its 12th year and offers visitors opportunities to learn about local agriculture via farm tours, demonstrations, product samples, and other fun and engaging activities. Participating farms also benefit from increased sales and expanded customer bases. If you would like information, or to register your farm to participate in the 2024 Family Farm Day, contact us at [schoharie-otsego@cornell.edu](mailto:schoharie-otsego@cornell.edu) or 518-234-4303 x111.



## Tree/Small Fruit Pruning Workshop with ENYCH

On March 9th CCESO hosted its annual Tree and Small Fruit Pruning workshop at Middlefield Orchard. Content covered included proper equipment, effective techniques, and important information about fruit tree and bush pruning. The workshop was open to farmers and homeowners alike, and interest in the program was particularly high this year.

The enthusiastic participants had numerous questions for ENYCH Team Lead and Senior Extension Associate, Laura MacDermott, who presented the program and demonstrations on the orchard's apple trees and blueberry, raspberry, and blackberry bushes. She has led the workshop for several years and her dedication to the annual workshop has always been very much appreciated by event attendees and CCESO staff.

## FARM Dairy Animal Care Training at SUNY Cobleskill

The CNYDLFC team organized a National Dairy FARM (Farmers Assuring Responsible Management) Program Animal Care Training event. The training took place on March 15th at SUNY Cobleskill's Dairy Barn. Three groups consisting of eight attendees each were led by CNYDLFC Team Dairy Management Specialist Daniela Gonzalez Carranza, SWNYDLFC Team Dairy Management Specialist Camila Lage, and Cornell PRO-DAIRY Dairy Herd Health and Management Specialist Robert Lynch, DVM. The three speakers communicated critical information and provided demonstrations regarding FARM Program updates, calf health and care, heifer stockmanship, down cow management, and euthanasia techniques and safety.

## Managing Weeds in Field Crops Workshop

On February 28th the CNYDLFC team hosted a workshop at CCESO's Cobleskill Extension Center about the many challenging weeds affecting corn and other field crops. Workshop presenters CNYDLFC Area Field Crop Specialist Erik Smith, CAAHP Soils and Field Crops Specialist Aaron Gabriel, and Cornell University Associate Professor Dr. Vipin Kumar covered effective smartphone apps for weed identification, major summer annual weeds, challenging perennial weeds, new and emerging troublesome weed species, and techniques for weed control, including pre- and post-harvest herbicide programs.

## 2024 Corn Day at the Otesaga

The CNYDLFC team's annual Corn Day event took place on February 21st at the Otesaga Resort in Cooperstown. Presentations covered pertinent information on emerging crop pests and diseases and included talks delivered by CCE's Mike Hunter on biological control nematodes for Corn Rootworm, Cornell University's Dr. Vipin Kumar on herbicide resistance screening, and an update from Cornell's Dr. Gary Bergstrom regarding tar spot, a corn disease expected to greatly impact our area of NYS in the next few years. Research of seed treatment options for Seedcorn Maggot, as well as corn silage variety trial results, were also discussed.

## CCE Ag Energy NY Program Updates

CCE's Ag Energy NY Program develops educational content and conducts outreach to support farmers with farm energy efficiency. This includes the recently released orchards and vineyards fact-sheets that address ventilation and refrigeration energy efficiencies and are now available at <https://agenergyny.org>. Additionally, factsheets for the grains and poultry/eggs sectors will be released soon.

Ag Energy NY also promotes energy efficiency-related programs such as the REAP (Rural Energy for America Program) Technical Assistance Program. This new NYSERDA program is funded through a grant from USDA Rural Development to assist farmers with their REAP applications. The application assistance is open to all farms. Farms requesting \$20,000 or less in REAP grant funding (\$40,000 project) and are located in disadvantaged or distressed communities as defined by the USDA Rural Development Innovation Center are especially encouraged to apply. Although the NYSERDA technical assistance program does not support renewable energy projects, it does support other farm upgrades. REAP is available for renewable energy projects. Find information on the NYSERDA REAP Technical Assistance Program, visit <https://www.nyserda.ny.gov/All-Programs/Agriculture-Energy-Assistance/REAP-Technical-Assistance-Program>.

## Cornell Agricultural Workforce Development Resources

Cornell Agricultural Workforce Development (AWD) program works to educate and support farm employers in creating great places to work and rewarding experiences for employees. Progressive farm employers know that employees are critical to

business success, and they are taking steps to find, hire, develop, and retain the very best workforce possible. Subscribers to the AWD program's quarterly e-newsletter will receive timely and pertinent news about agricultural workforce and human resource management, including regulatory, research, housing, and apprenticeship updates and resources; as well as news, events, learning opportunities, and a Spanish resources section. To learn more about subscribing to the newsletter, and view the March 2024 edition, visit <https://agworkforce.cals.cornell.edu/2024/03/27/new-the-ag-workforce-quarterly-e-newsletter-is-live/>.

## USDA 2022 Census of Agriculture Data Now Available

The results of the USDA's 2022 Census of Agriculture were released on February 13th and are available at <https://nass.usda.gov/AgCensus>. The Census includes the reports of state and county data on farms and farmland, market value of products sold, farm expenses and income, sector-specific production, producer demographics. Rankings and state and county profiles were released in late March. The census is conducted and published once every 5 years and is a reliable source for use in understanding national, state, and county agricultural trends.



## MeatSuite.com

Through MeatSuite.com, a free resource provided by Cornell University, New York state meat farmers can list their bulk and bundled meat products, and consumers can browse available meat products on the site and contact farmers directly to purchase them. Using MeatSuite.com is free, easy, and connects meat farmers with local customers.

MeatSuite.com farms are also featured in spotlights on social media, which bring attention and purchases to farms through highlights and giveaways. NY meat farmers can visit <https://www.meatsuite.com/farmers/> to create a free farm profile and join MeatSuite. Contact Matt LeRoux at [mnl28@cornell.edu](mailto:mnl28@cornell.edu) if you have questions or need assistance.

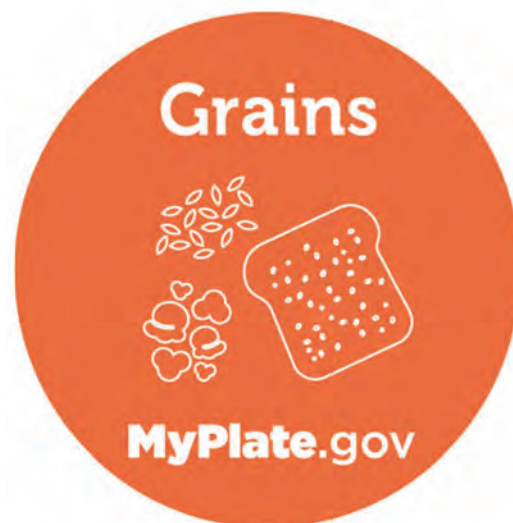
*Nourishing*  
**QUICK  
TIPS**

## Building Healthy Habits: Food and Community Nutrition



## Make Half Your Grains Whole Grains

Foods in the grain group include bread, pasta, rice, quinoa, cereal, grits, tortillas, barley, cornmeal, oats, and popcorn. The grain group includes whole and refined grains. Whole grain foods are the healthier choice because they keep the whole grain kernel—the germ, endosperm, and bran. Whole grain foods include whole wheat bread, brown rice, whole wheat tortillas, quinoa, oats, whole wheat pasta, and popcorn.



Refined grains are grains where the bran and germ are removed while milling the grain into flour. Removing the bran and germ removes the fiber, iron, and many B vitamins. Makers of refined grain goods like white bread, pasta, white rice, and crackers often add iron and B vitamins back into the product. Try to make half your grain choices whole grain foods.

**Cornell Cooperative Extension** | Schoharie and Otsego Counties

Cornell Cooperative Extension is an employer and educator recognized for valuing AA/EEO, Protected Veterans, and Individuals with Disabilities and provides equal program and employment opportunities.



## Popcorn Seasoning

*Serving size: 1 seasoning recipe for 1 batch of popcorn.  
Seasoning mix adds minimal calories and fat.*

### Olive Oil

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 teaspoon salt

### Garlic Parmesan

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 tablespoon grated parmesan cheese
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder

### Cinnamon & Brown Sugar

- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon

### Southwest

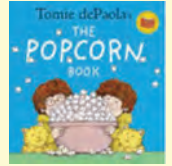
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- 1 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1 teaspoon salt

**DIRECTIONS:** For each seasoning mix, in a bowl, stir together all ingredients. Pour on top of a bowl of popped popcorn, and stir until well combined.

Source: SNAP Ed NY

## KIDS CORNER

Visit your local library and with your child, check out Tomie DePaola's *The Popcorn Book* (40th Anniversary Edition). Together, read the book, then tell each other about your favorite part of the book. Now it's time to make popcorn together! Popcorn made without butter is a healthy snack and can be packed and taken with you.



## MEET YOUR EDUCATOR:

Michelle Leveski  
518-234-4303 ext. 115  
mml39@cornell.edu

## Sign up for a FREE class!

All Schoharie and Otsego County residents are eligible for our fun, interactive, supportive nutrition education classes. REACH OUT TODAY TO SIGN UP!



This material is funded by the USDA's Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program.

# Join Cornell Cooperative Extension's Nutrition Programs

## EFNEP and Healthy Connections



- ✓ Build habits of healthy eating and activity for a lifetime
- ✓ Learn to make meals that save time and money
- ✓ Try out new dishes and skills
- ✓ Practice food safety and reduce food waste when selecting, prepping, and storing food

*Where adults and youth learn by doing!*



Whether participating in a group class, one-on-one lesson, or a nutrition event, either online or in person, these programs can make a difference for your family and you!

**To learn more about these programs or to sign up, contact our Nutrition Program Educators:**



**Michelle Leveski**  
EFNEP Nutrition Program  
Educator  
**518-234-4303 Ext. 115**  
mml39@cornell.edu



**Kimberly Ferstler**  
Healthy Connections Nutrition Program  
Educator  
**518-234-4303 Ext. 120**  
kmf239@cornell.edu

# PROGRAM EVENTS

Go to our website [cceschoharie-otsego.org](http://cceschoharie-otsego.org) to see the most up-to-date listings offered.

## Schoharie County 4-H Dog Agility Workshop

Thursday, April 4

Hessian Hill Farm, Berne, NY

Pre-registration required, for information, contact the CCESO 4-H Office: email [nb622@cornell.edu](mailto:nb622@cornell.edu) or call 518-234-4303 x117.

- 9 am-noon, Beginners (Training Jumps & Tunnels) Teach your dog how to properly commit to jumps, charge tunnels, stride between obstacles, and work with you.
- 12:30 p.m.-3:30 p.m., Experienced (Jumping Sequences & Coursework) Put your dog's jumping to the test. Try two rounds of AKC Act 1 Jumpers (introductory courses featuring minimal handling & running). Practice time in the ring; feedback will be provided ahead of competition runs.

## Schoharie County Agricultural Issues Networking Gathering

Saturday, April 6, 1 p.m.

Carlisle Town Hall, 541 Crommie Rd, Carlisle

An opportunity for Schoharie County's agricultural stakeholders and residents to share the issues impacting Schoharie County's farms and agricultural communities. For information email [eac283@cornell.edu](mailto:eac283@cornell.edu) or call 607-437-1934.

## Schoharie County 4-H Sow, Grow & Show (Garden Series)

Thursday, April 18, 6 p.m.

Hessian Hill Farm, Berne, NY

Master Gardener Volunteers work with 4-H'ers to provide youth with an opportunity to grow various plants, experiment with garden practices and show their produce and flowers at the county fair. Clinics will cover garden design, seed selection, seed starting, planting, and growing food and flowers in the 4-H Garden at the Sunshine Fairgrounds. Pre-registration required, contact the CCESO 4-H Office: email [nb622@cornell.edu](mailto:nb622@cornell.edu) or call 518-234-4303 x117.

## Earth Festival

Saturday, April 20

Milford Central School, 42 W. Main Street, Milford, NY

This event features a variety of activities, vendors, and programs for all ages. <http://www.occainfo.org/>

- Ticks: Don't Let Them Keep You Inside! April 20, 11:30 a.m., Earth Festival, Milford Central School, West Main St, Milford, NY. Free program presented by Otsego Master Gardener Volunteers. Pre-registration is required by April 19, 2024, by visiting [www.cceschoharie-otsego.org](http://www.cceschoharie-otsego.org) or by calling 607-547-2536 ext. 235.
- Birds, Butterflies, Bees and Beauty: Why Choose Native Plants, April 20, 1:30 p.m., Earth Festival, Milford Central School, West Main St, Milford, NY. Free program presented by Otsego Master Gardener Volunteers at Earth Festival on growing native plants to help pollinators and wildlife. Pre-registration required. Visit [www.cceschoharie-otsego.org](http://www.cceschoharie-otsego.org) or call 607-547-2536 ext. 235.

## Schoharie County 4-H Shooting Sports Archery Clinic

Sunday, April 21, 10 a.m.-noon

Middleburgh Rod & Gun Club

For enrolled 4-H members ages 8 and older. Youth will learn basic rules of safety, proper equipment selection and care, and beginning shooting techniques. Pre-registration required by April 12, for more information contact the CCESO 4-H Office: email [nb622@cornell.edu](mailto:nb622@cornell.edu) or call 518-234-4303 x117.

## NYS 4-H STAR (State Teen Action Retreat)

May 3-5, 5:30 p.m.-1:30 p.m. (Sunday)

4-H Camp Shankitunk, Delhi, NY

STAR is an annual weekend for 4-H teens from across New York State to gather and build leadership skills as well as network with peers and adults from across the state. STAR is open to 4-H teens 13-19 years of age, and their adult chaperone. Pre-registration required by April 12, for more information visit [www.nys4-h.org/star](http://www.nys4-h.org/star).

## Schoharie Master Gardener Volunteers Plant Sale

May 3 & 4, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

SUNY Cobleskill, Route 7, Cobleskill

Featuring a nice variety of perennials, disease resistant, drought tolerant and disliked by deer and rabbits, and attractive to butterflies and hummingbirds. These are not the typical varieties that you find in the big box stores. Come see the unique plants we've chosen that will grow in your garden! For more information, visit [www.cceschoharie-otsego.org](http://www.cceschoharie-otsego.org) or call 518-234-4305 ext. 129.

## Animal Crackers @ Cornell

May 4, 8:30-9:00 a.m. check-in; program starts promptly at 9 a.m.

Cornell University, Ithaca, NY

"All Creatures Great and Small" provides New York youth with fun, hands-on, science-oriented learning experiences utilizing the unique facilities of Cornell University. This year, horse, swine, beef and dogs will be featured. Pre-registration required, for more information contact the CCESO 4-H Office: email [nb622@cornell.edu](mailto:nb622@cornell.edu) or call 518-234-4303 x117.

## Family Farm Day 2024 Registrations and Sponsorships due

Friday, May 17

## NYS 4-H Capital Days

May 19-21

Albany, NY

Get acquainted with NYS state government and connect with other teens from across the state! 4-H Capital Days allows youth an opportunity to meet and interact with legislators and tell their 4-H story and a better understanding of state government; and creates awareness of career opportunities in the New York State Government. Open to enrolled 4-H youth ages 14-18 as of January 1, 2024. Pre-registration required, for more information contact the CCESO 4-H Office: email [nb622@cornell.edu](mailto:nb622@cornell.edu) or call 518-234-4303 x117, or visit [www.nys4-h.org/capital-days](http://www.nys4-h.org/capital-days).

## Family Farm Day 2024

Registration is available online this year and will be mailed to farms that participated in the past. Please reach out to the CCESO office for information on registration and with questions. 518-234-4303 x111; [schoharie-otsego@cornell.edu](mailto:schoharie-otsego@cornell.edu).

**Deadline to register or become a sponsor is Friday, May 17th.**

# PROGRAM EVENTS

## **Schoharie County 4-H Sow, Grow & Show (Garden Series)**

May 9, 6 p.m.  
Hessian Hill Farm, Berne, NY  
(see April 18th entry)

## **Biological Controls: Partners in the Garden**

May 11, 11 a.m.  
Clark Sports Center, 124 County Highway 52, Cooperstown.  
FREE program presented by Otsego Master Gardener Volunteers: Dr. Amara Dunn-Silver will talk about using biocontrols, bio-stimulants, and biopesticides safely.

## **Otsego Master Gardener Volunteers Plant Sale**

May 25, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.  
123 Lake St., Cooperstown  
A wide variety of vegetables, annual flowers, herbs, and perennials at reasonable prices. Perennials started from seed or propagation to prevent the spread of jumping worms; blight-resistant and heirloom tomatoes; varieties known to grow well in Otsego County. or more information, visit [www.cceschoharie-otsego.org](http://www.cceschoharie-otsego.org) or call 607-547-2536 ext. 235.

## **Memorial Day (CCESO offices closed)**

May 27

## **Board of Directors Meeting**

May 28, 6:30 p.m.  
Synchronous meeting at CCE in Cobleskill & Cooperstown.

## **Schoharie County 4-H Sow, Grow & Show (Garden Series)**

May 30, 6 p.m.  
Hessian Hill Farm, Berne  
(see April 18th entry)

## **Schoharie County 4-H Sow, Grow & Show (Garden Series)**

June 5, 6 p.m.  
Schoharie County Sunshine Fairgrounds  
(see April 18th entry)

## **4-H Pullorum Clinic**

June 11, 3:00.-5:00 p.m.  
Martin Hall 4-H Building, Otsego County Fairgrounds, 48 Lake Street, Morris.  
For more information contact the CCESO 4-H Office: email [nb622@cornell.edu](mailto:nb622@cornell.edu) or call 518-234-4303 x117.

## **4-H Pullorum Clinic**

June 18, 2:30-5:00 p.m. Progressland Building, Schoharie County Sunshine Fairgrounds, 113 Sunshine Drive, Cobleskill.  
For more information contact the CCESO 4-H Office: email [nb622@cornell.edu](mailto:nb622@cornell.edu) or call 518-234-4303 x117.

## **Juneteenth (CCESO offices closed)**

June 19

## **NYS 4-H Career Explorations**

June 26-28, 10 a.m.-noon arrival; ends 1 p.m. Friday  
Cornell University, Ithaca, NY

Youth connect with Cornell University to explore and expand their future possibilities by discovering careers and career pathways related to their interests and sparks. Pre-registration required by May 15, for more information contact CCESO 4-H Office 518-234-4303 x117, or visit [www.nys4-h.org/career-explorations-2024](http://www.nys4-h.org/career-explorations-2024)

## **Sunshine Fair Junior Department Entries DUE**

July 6  
Junior Department entry forms for 4-H animal and 4-H non-animal exhibits are due to the Schoharie County Sunshine Fair Office, Cobleskill Agricultural Society, PO Box 249, Sunshine Drive, Cobleskill, NY 12043. Please visit [www.sunshinefair.org](http://www.sunshinefair.org) for online entry submissions.

## **Cooking With Kids**

This series is offered regularly both in person and via Zoom; contact Michelle for specific dates.  
Join us after school for a six-week series of interactive, hands-on fun. Bring the kids and come prepare a dish with us while learning practical nutrition information you can use at home. This series is free for income-eligible families. Each family will receive a kid's knife set and cookbook upon completing six classes. Registration is required. If interested in upcoming classes, please contact Michelle Leveski at 518-234-4303, ext. 115 or [mml39@cornell.edu](mailto:mml39@cornell.edu).

## **What's For Dinner?**

This series is offered regularly both in person and via Zoom; contact Kimberly for specific dates.  
Join us for a 6-week, in-person series of classes to learn about both the "why" of eating healthy and the "how." One hour a week includes a nutrition lesson and time for participants to create a dish—together in person, which they can then sample or have for dinner if at home via Zoom. All ages are welcome (basic reading skills and the ability to help create the dish will make it a more satisfying event for the participating children). The classes are free for all participants. Registration required. Please let us know in advance if you have any food allergies. If interested, contact Kimberly Ferstler at [kmf239@cornell.edu](mailto:kmf239@cornell.edu) or 518-234-4303, ext. 120.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### **Program Advisory Committee Meetings**

Please check the website or call 518-234-4303.

### **The Farmers' Museum Junior Livestock Show**

July 7-9

### **Otsego County Fair**

July 30–August 4

### **Schoharie County Sunshine Fair**

Aug 6–11

### **Family Farm Day**

August 24

*Visit our website, [cceschoharie-otsego.org](http://cceschoharie-otsego.org), to see additional events not listed.*

# CCE in Action!



**ANNIE'S PROJECT**  
EMPOWERING WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE



**Here is how you can support CCE outreach:**

Making a donation is as simple as going to [www.cceschoharie-otsego.org](http://www.cceschoharie-otsego.org) and clicking this button:



Cornell Cooperative Extension Schoharie and Otsego Counties is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Your contribution is tax deductible to the extent provided by law.

**Cornell Cooperative Extension** | Schoharie and Otsego Counties