

Connections

The News Magazine of Cornell Cooperative Extension Schoharie and Otsego Counties

JANUARY-MARCH 2026

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Michelle Leveski Retires

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Warm Enough?

We are in the thick of winter now, and many of us are looking to save energy yet still keep warm this time of year. You probably wouldn't be surprised to learn that heating uses the most energy in your home! Heat is often lost in the home due to the thermal stack effect. The stack effect is the flow of cold air flowing through areas that need air sealing – rim joists, windows, etc, and pushes warm air up and out through an uninsulated or poorly insulated attic. This causes the warm conditioned air you are using in your house to rise and escape through the top of your home. Many older buildings lack proper insulation, and insulation can decay over time. With that in mind, making sure the home and especially the attic is well insulated is a critical factor in keeping your heating bill down this time of year.

There are many different types of insulation that can be used in homes including but not limited to spray foam, fiberglass, blown-in cellulose, and rigid foam board. Each type of insulation has its advantages and disadvantages, with some potentially being easier to install or cheaper to purchase. One factor you should consider is the R-value of insulation. R-Value

Relative R-Values

Material	R-value/inch (ave.)
Cellulose (dense pack)	3.2
Cellulose (loose blown)	3.7
Fiberglass (loose)	2.2 - 2.7
Fiberglass (batt)	3.1 – 4.3
Rock Wool	3.0 - 3.3
Expanded polystyrene board (bead board)	4.00
Extruded polystyrene board	5.00
Polyurethane board	5.00
Polyisocyanurate board (foil faced)	7.20
Open Cell Spray Foam	3.60
Closed Cell Spray Foam	6.50

Source: NYSEDA Build Better A Guide to Energy Efficient Concepts For New Residential Construction

Read more on page 3

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Cornell Cooperative Extension Schoharie and Otsego Counties

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[CCESchoharieMG](#)

4-H: [schohariecounty4H](#); [otsegocounty4H](#)

Ag education and programs:

[AnniesProjectNYS](#); [FamilyFarmDay](#)

Farm to School: [LocalFoodsHealthySchools](#)

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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.

NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIPTION

To subscribe to **Connections**, the e-newsletter of Cornell Cooperative Extension Schoharie and Otsego Counties, visit our website, 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.

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. Thank you!

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bodies, and U.S. Department of Agriculture, cooperating.

Warm Enough?, continued from page 1

is a measure of insulation's ability to resist heat traveling through it. The higher the R-Value, the better the thermal performance of the insulation. The US Environmental Protection Agency's ENERGY STAR® website (https://www.energystar.gov/saveathome/seal_insulate/certified_insulation) has an excellent breakdown to help you determine what type of insulation would be the best fit in your home!

If you think insulating would be a good idea for your home, contact a professional contractor to effectively insulate your home. In New York there are various programs that offer incentives for the weatherization of your home. Depending on your income level, you may be eligible for between \$5,000-



Community Energy Advisor Carlotta Batchelder conducted Weatherization Workshop in Otsego County last fall.

\$10,000 toward weatherization measures! If you would like to explore whether these programs may be right for you, contact Michaela, your resident energy advisor, either by phone or email: 518-234-4304 ext 114, maf396@cornell.edu.

Annual Seed Swap on January 31, 2026

Celebrate National Seed Swap Day with the Master Gardener Volunteers from CCE Schoharie and Otsego Counties (CCESO) on January 31, 2026. This is the perfect time of year to start thinking about spring and honor this great tradition of swapping seeds with neighbors. CCESO's Master Gardener Volunteers will host events in each county featuring FREE seeds generously donated by several local businesses. Attendees are also encouraged (but not required) to bring seeds to swap.

Schoharie County:

Middleburgh Library
323 Main Street,
Middleburgh
10:00 am to 11:00 am

Otsego County:

Oneonta Farmers' Market
24 Market Street, Oneonta
(Foothills Performing Arts
& Civic Center)
9:00 am to noon



Thousands of seeds will be at both locations



Master Gardener Volunteers will be onsite with gardening information, demonstrations, and to answer questions.

SEED SWAP

In celebration of National Seed Swap Day, choose from thousands of free, locally donated seeds and connect with fellow gardeners. CCESO Master Gardener Volunteers will be on-site to provide gardening demonstrations, expert advice, and inspiration for the upcoming growing season.

Saturday, January 31, 2026
Participation is FREE!
www.cceschoharie-otsego.org

In Schoharie County: 10:00 to 11:00 a.m. at the Middleburgh Library, 323 Main St, Middleburgh	In Otsego County: 9:00 to Noon at the Oneonta Farmers' Market 24 Market St, Oneonta (Foothills Performing Arts & Civic Center)
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Master Gardener
Cornell Cooperative Extension
Cornell Cooperative Extension Schoharie and Otsego Counties
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Winter Sowing Workshop



The Otsego Master Gardener Volunteers are holding a Winter Sowing Workshop on Saturday, January 10, 2026, at 1 pm in the Community Room at the Southside Mall, 5006 State Highway 23, Oneonta, NY.

Winter sowing is a method of starting seeds outdoors in winter popularized by Trudi Davidoff and is now practiced around the world. It is recognized by the USDA as, “A propagation method used throughout the winter where temperate climate seeds are sown into protective vented containers and placed outdoors to foster a naturally timed, high percentage germination of climate tolerant seedlings.”

Come sow with workshop presenters, Otsego Master Gardener Volunteers (OMGV), Chris Burrington and Celia Oxley. They will cover the techniques for winter sowing including the materials needed and the various kinds of seeds that can be used, as well as the benefits of this low-cost method of germinating seeds and some of the advantages it has over indoor seed-starting requiring grow lights and the hardening-off of seedlings. In addition, participants will make a mini greenhouse in a container and sow seeds to take home. The workshop will also cover how to handle the seedlings once they germinate. Participants are asked to

bring a one-gallon translucent container (milk or water jug) and scissors. The OMGVs will provide some seeds, but participants are also free to bring their own.

No previous gardening experience is needed. The program fee is \$5 to cover materials. Space is limited; registration is required by Thursday, January 8, 2026



Use recycled materials to winter sow!

by going to www.cceschoharie-otsego.org. For more information call 607-547-2536 ext. 235.



Master Gardener Volunteers Chris Burrington and Celia Oxley will lead the winter sowing workshop.

Winter Checklist

- Prune fruit trees and berries
- Create habitat for beneficial insects and birds
- Observe and reflect to plan for ecosystem health
- Extend the season using cloches and cold frames

Beneficial Insects

GET HEALTHY, ABUNDANT GARDENS WITH STRONG POLLINATOR + NATURAL ENEMY POPULATIONS

- Leave hollow stems of late blooming perennials as a winter home for insects.
- Rocks, sticks, and piles of leaves create important overwintering habitat.

Hardy Winter Succulents

BY MARK BOSHACK, OTSEGO MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEER

With snow on the ground and several months of winter ahead, it may seem like a strange time to talk about planting a cactus and succulent garden in upstate New York—but what better time to think about what are traditionally warm weather plants.

In researching the issues, I have learned a lot and hope to encourage other gardeners to think of the possibilities for a year-round outdoor garden.

The options include many varieties of sedum and sempervivum (hen and chickens), agave, yucca, cactus and more. Varieties of all have been shown to grow in the 5b hardiness zone that we live in, some colder.

There are several varieties of *Opuntia* cactus that are native as far north as Canada, that I will focus on for choices that can spend the winter in local gardens.

Such cactus can survive cold weather by producing a natural antifreeze, reducing cell water content, becoming dormant or developing protective features such as wooly coverings or dense spines.

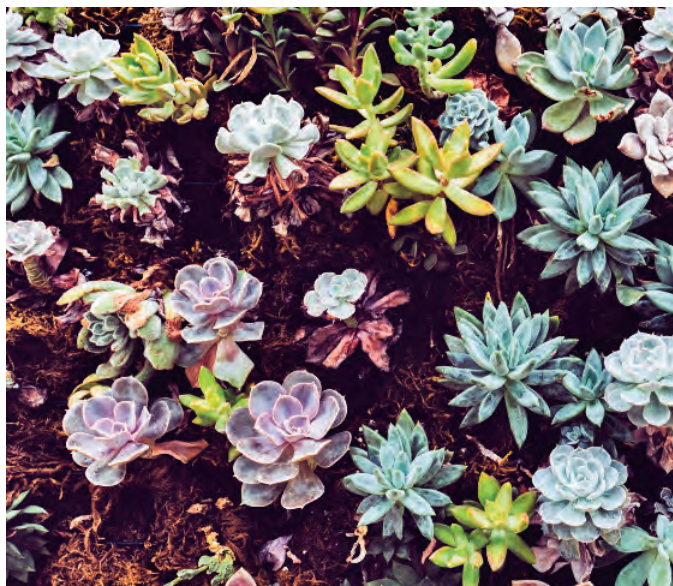
It shouldn't come as a surprise that such cactus do well in rocky, well-drained soil. That is an important feature to recreate in a local garden.

Opuntia fragilis is a popular cold hardy cactus that is able to withstand temperatures down to -30 degrees. It has flat, paddle-like stems, covered in spines and has yellow flowers that bloom in the Spring. The name has nothing to do with being fragile to the weather. It refers to the ease with which the pads, or cladodes, break off. These are easily rooted, either by placing the broken end in the ground, or even just laying it on the dirt. Also known by such names as brittle prickly pear. The cactus forms mat-like growths and is typically 2-8 inches tall.

Opuntia humifusa, or eastern prickly pear, can be grown in hardiness zones as low as 4. It also can be found in most states and Canada. It also can be easily propagated from detached pads. It has large, bright yellow flowers with red centers and blooms from late spring to early summer.

Other cactus varieties that are suitable for this area include *Opuntia Desert Ace*. It grows 3-6 inches tall and has hot pink flowers.

There are many more examples of cold weather cactus, in a variety of genus and species, as well as succulents. An online search for cold weather cactus and succulents for hardiness zone 5b will lead the interested gardener to many more. Some may need some form of protection, but many do not.



There is a variety of succulents that can be grown in our region, including Hens and Chicks (below)



Winter Birds

SUPPORT NATURAL INSECT PREDATORS + SEED DISPERSERS

- Leave behind seed heads as food.
- Plant varying heights of evergreen and deciduous shrubs to provide diverse habitats.



Pruning

REDUCE PESTS AND DISEASES, MAXIMIZE FRUIT PRODUCTION

- Prune fruit trees and cane berries in late fall or before buds swell in early spring.
- Remove fallen fruit and prunings and compost away from plants.



SIGN UP FOR A FREE CLASS TO LEARN ABOUT PREPARING FOR EMERGENCIES

The NY Citizen Preparedness Training Program teaches residents to prepare for any type of disaster such as an extreme weather event. This training course will provide an introduction to responding to disasters, including developing an emergency plan and stocking up on supplies. Each family that attends will receive one preparedness kit.

When:
February 10
9:00-11:00am

Where:
CCE Albany
24 Martin Rd
Voorheesville, NY 12186

Registration is required to attend this event. To register, visit www.prepare.ny.gov or scan the QR code.



Cornell Cooperative Extension
Albany County

NEW YORK STATE
Homeland Security
and Emergency Services



FOR SALE

SIX (6) NEW MARVIN ELEVATE AWNING WINDOWS CN4923

SPECS: R0 size = 49" x 23 5/8"; Stone White exterior, white interior; low E2 with argon; stainless perimeter and spacer bar; 7/8" SDL with space bar 10 light 5W2H; white hardware, screen with white surround; 4-9/16" jamba. BRAND NEW (still in packaging). Retail value: \$8,000.

Asking \$4,000 (a fair offer will be considered).

Contact Marcie Foster by emailing mkf48@cornell.edu or calling 607-547-2536 ext. 235.



Expanding Farm Sales Workshop Series Offered This January

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Schoharie and Otsego Counties will offer Expanding Farm Sales, a four-session workshop series this January. The program is designed to support farms as they explore sales opportunities, strengthen pricing and marketing skills, and prepare for a successful year ahead.

The series was developed in response to ongoing conversations with farmers, buyers, and agricultural partners about the challenges and opportunities farms face when diversifying markets. This fall, the program educator participated in a statewide cohort of Extension educators focused on food systems, and the structure of this workshop series reflects key themes and practical approaches explored through that work. The sessions were intentionally designed to connect food system concepts with on-the-ground decision-making for farms.

Each session focuses on a key component of farm sales and business readiness. Topics include

evaluating market options, selling to wholesale and Farm to School buyers, pricing and profitability tools, and marketing and relationship building. Sessions will include practical activities, worksheets, and pricing tools, as well as guest speakers, panels, and opportunities for discussion and peer learning.

This series is intended for both new and experienced producers who are refining current sales strategies or exploring new markets. By combining education, hands-on tools, and farmer perspectives, the program aims to help participants make informed decisions that align with their farm's capacity, goals, and values.

Dates, locations, and registration details are available in the flyer below, at cceschoharie-otsego.org, or call 518-243-4303, ext. 119. Farmers, agricultural service providers, and partners are encouraged to attend and share this opportunity with others who may benefit.



BERRY PRUNING
METHODS FOR STRONGER PLANTS AND BETTER YIELDS

Cornell Cooperative Extension
Schoharie and Otsego Counties

MARCH 7, 2026
10:00AM - 12:00PM

MIDDLEFIELD ORCHARD
2274 STATE HWY 166
COOPERSTOWN, NY 13326

WORKSHOP HIGHLIGHTS:

- ✓ LEARN PRUNING TECHNIQUES
- ✓ UNDERSTAND HOW PRUNING AFFECTS GROWTH, FRUIT QUALITY, AND YIELD
- ✓ REVIEW PROPER TIMING, TOOLS, AND METHODS FOR COMMON BERRY CROPS
- ✓ GAIN INSIGHTS FROM A REGIONAL BERRY SPECIALIST
- ✓ HANDS-ON PRUNING DEMONSTRATIONS

QUESTIONS? CONTACT KELLEY DOOLIN
518-234-4303 X119
KMD322@CORNELL.EDU

REGISTRATION REQUESTED
SPACE IS LIMITED!

reg.cce.cornell.edu/berryprun_schots_243



Cornell Cooperative Extension
Schoharie and Otsego Counties

EXPANDING FARM SALES
MARKETS, PROFITS, & BRANDING

READY TO GROW YOUR FARM'S SALES?

This workshop series explores direct-to-consumer, wholesale, and institutional markets.

Learn more about meeting buyer expectations, pricing for profitability, and telling your farm's story.

Connect with experts and peers to discover the right path for your farm and expand your market reach!

SATURDAYS IN JANUARY
1/10, 1/17, 1/24 & 1/31
10:00AM - 12:00PM

SESSION TOPICS:

- ✓ UNDERSTANDING YOUR FARM'S MARKET CHANNELS
- ✓ SELLING TO SCHOOLS & WHOLESALE BUYERS
- ✓ PRICING FOR PROFIT: TOOLS & STRATEGIES
- ✓ MARKETING STRATEGIES FOR FARM SALES GROWTH

LOCATIONS:

- SCHOHARIE EXTENSION CENTER
- OTSEGO EDUCATION CENTER
- ZOOM

QUESTIONS? CONTACT KELLEY DOOLIN
518-234-4303 X119
KMD322@CORNELL.EDU

REGISTRATION FEE
WORKSHOP SERIES: \$25
INDIVIDUAL SESSIONS: \$10 EACH
SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

reg.cce.cornell.edu/farm_sales_243

Upcoming Agricultural Workshops

This winter, we're offering a series of in-person programs designed to support farmers at every stage. Whether you're thinking about the future of your farm business or looking to sharpen your pruning techniques, these upcoming workshops offer practical tools, expert guidance, and opportunities to learn alongside other farmers.

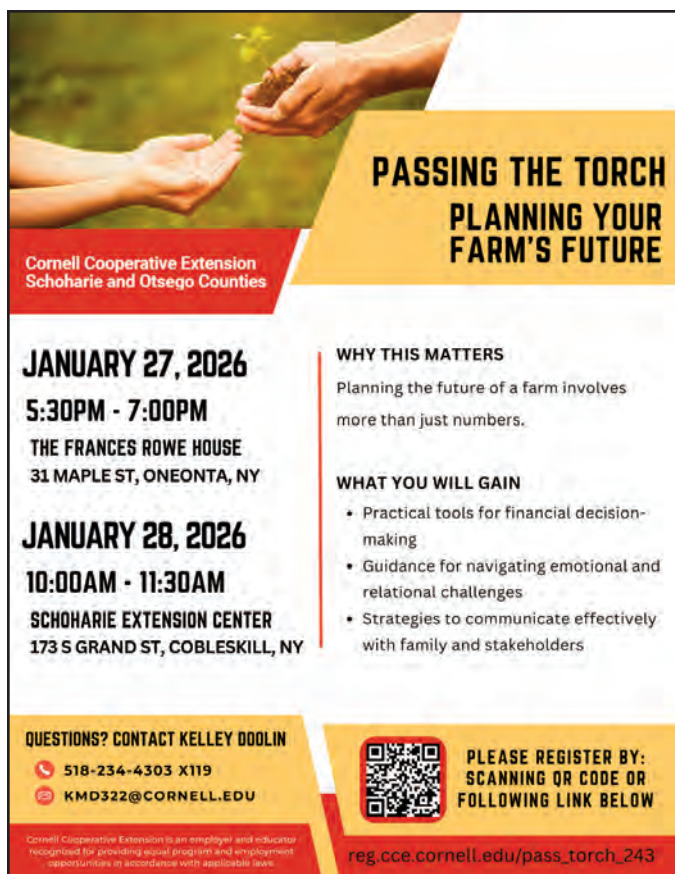
We'll kick things off with **Passing the Torch: Planning Your Farm's Future**, offered at two locations on January 27 in Oneonta and January 28 in Cobleskill. This program aims to address the financial, emotional, and relational aspects of farm succession and transition planning. NY FarmNet consultants Andy Gilbert and Jan Kirshenbaum will share tools and strategies to help families and farm partners communicate effectively and plan for a sustainable future.

In late winter, the focus turns to hands-on skill building in the orchard. **Tree Fruit Pruning: Tech-**

niques for Health and Productivity will take place on February 28 at Middlefield Orchard in Cooperstown. Led by tree fruit specialist Michael Basedow, this interactive workshop will cover pruning fundamentals before heading out to the orchard for live demonstrations and practice on real trees.

The pruning series continues on March 7 with **Berry Pruning: Methods for Stronger Plants and Better Yields**, also at Middlefield Orchard. Regional berry specialist Heather Case will guide participants through pruning basics for common berry crops, followed by hands-on demonstrations in the planting to help growers build confidence and improve plant health and harvests.

Pre-registration is requested for all programs. Additional winter programs are also in the works and will be announced soon, so watch for details in the *Ag Connections Extra* emails, at cceschoharie-otsego.org or call 518-243-4303 ext. 119.



**PASSING THE TORCH
PLANNING YOUR
FARM'S FUTURE**

Cornell Cooperative Extension
Schoharie and Otsego Counties

JANUARY 27, 2026
5:30PM - 7:00PM
THE FRANCES ROWE HOUSE
31 MAPLE ST, ONEONTA, NY

JANUARY 28, 2026
10:00AM - 11:30AM
SCHOHARIE EXTENSION CENTER
173 S GRAND ST, COBLESKILL, NY

WHY THIS MATTERS
Planning the future of a farm involves more than just numbers.

WHAT YOU WILL GAIN

- Practical tools for financial decision-making
- Guidance for navigating emotional and relational challenges
- Strategies to communicate effectively with family and stakeholders

QUESTIONS? CONTACT KELLEY DOOLIN
518-234-4303 X119
KMD322@CORNELL.EDU

**PLEASE REGISTER BY:
SCANNING QR CODE OR
FOLLOWING LINK BELOW**

reg.cce.cornell.edu/pass_torch_243

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**TREE FRUIT PRUNING
TECHNIQUES FOR
HEALTH & PRODUCTIVITY**

Cornell Cooperative Extension
Schoharie and Otsego Counties

FEBRUARY 28, 2026
12:00PM - 2:00PM
MIDDLEFIELD ORCHARD
2274 STATE HWY 166
COOPERSTOWN, NY 13326

WORKSHOP HIGHLIGHTS:

- ✓ LEARN ABOUT TREE FRUIT PRUNING
- ✓ REVIEW PRUNING TIMING AND TOOLS, AND COMMON MISTAKES TO AVOID
- ✓ GUIDANCE FROM A TREE FRUIT SPECIALIST
- ✓ HANDS-ON PRUNING DEMONSTRATIONS
- ✓ LEARN HOW TO ADAPT TECHNIQUES TO YOUR OWN ORCHARD

QUESTIONS? CONTACT KELLEY DOOLIN
518-234-4303 X119
KMD322@CORNELL.EDU

**REGISTRATION REQUESTED
SPACE IS LIMITED!**

reg.cce.cornell.edu/treeprun_schots_243

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Ag Solutions & Networking Expo

Tuesday, March 3, 2026

8:00 AM - 3:30 PM

Bouck Hall Ballroom, SUNY Cobleskill

Lunch provided

Join farmers, agribusinesses and ag partners from across the Mohawk Valley for a day of workshops on ag topics and networking at the second annual

Ag Solutions & Networking Expo!

Farmers: Registration is FREE

All other Attendees: \$10

REGISTER HERE

<https://www.eventleaf.com/e/Agolutions26>



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New York State Energy Research
and Development Authority

CCE
Schoharie & Otsego
Counties

SCHOHARIE
COUNTY

Schoharie and Otsego County 4-H Happenings



With the start of the new 4-H year, member enrollment has been in full swing with the addition of new youth members, adult volunteers, and 4-H clubs. National 4-H Week (October 5–11), highlighted the importance of 4-H programs across the country and in our own communities, and gave us a chance to show our 4-H pride. Since then, 4-H staff have been busy enrolling members, conducting club leader meetings, volunteer trainings, and holding informational meetings for new 4-H families.

The annual New York State 4-H Agri Business Career Conference was held in October in collaboration with the State University of New York (SUNY) at Cobleskill and co-sponsored by the New York State Farm Bureau Foundation for Education. 4-H youth from across New York State gathered at SUNY Cobleskill to learn more about career opportunities within agriculture and the academic requirements for these degrees. This year's 2-day conference featured mini-tours to farms and businesses in the local area as well as seminars, guest speakers and guided tours of the SUNY Cobleskill agriculture facilities.



4-H Agri Business Career Conference's Agricultural Engineering & Technology Campus Study Session

Paper Clover Sale (November 28th through December 14th) donations collected at Tractor Supply Company stores in Cobleskill & Oneonta will provide program scholarships for youth enrolled in Schoharie and Otsego County 4-H. Scholarships will be available to youth who are interested in attending 4-H camps and other leadership events throughout the year.

Looking forward to the start of 2026, the 4-H programs in Otsego and Schoharie Counties will be re-starting the Earn-An-Animal and Livestock Auction programs, holding workshops, as well as beginning to prepare for 4-H Quiz-Bowl competitions and the 4-H Public Presentations program.

Schoharie 4-H Happenings

Schoharie County 4-H Achievement Night, held in November, gave CCESO the opportunity to recognize the youth enrolled in our 4-H program. Celebrating youth achievements is an important part of positive youth development, as it helps youth stay motivated, build self-esteem and confidence, and encourages positive behavior. Recognizing the hard work of our youth allows them to create lasting memories while also showing them that their efforts truly matter. 4-H extension staff collected 4-H records from youth participants at the end of the 2024-2025 year in the form of portfolios, project completion sheets, and achievement books. 4-H members received 4-H year-end participation or completion recognition based on their efforts.

Exceptional youth efforts were recognized with Outstanding 4-H Member certificates, as well as Individual Awards. Even though not all of the youth enrolled in Schoharie County 4-H were able to attend the Achievement Night celebration, they will all be acknowledged with year-end certificates. It is our hope that by having an in-person celebration for 4-H participants, youth will feel proud of their accomplishments and be invested in continuing to participate in 4-H projects and club events on a regular basis.



Schoharie County 4-H Achievement Night



Schoharie County 4-H Achievement Night

Also in November, Schoharie County 4-H held a Shooting Sports Archery Workshop in collaboration with Middleburgh Rod and Gun Club. This clinic focused on teaching youth ages 8 and older the basic rules of safety, proper equipment selection and care, as well as beginning shooting techniques.



Volunteers from the Middleburgh Rod & Gun Club teaching 4-H youth archery safety and beginning shooting techniques



Under adult supervision, youth take their aim and practice their archery skills at the 4-H Shooting Sports Archery Workshop

Continues on page 12

4-H Happenings, continued from page 7

In December Schoharie County 4-H held an Arts and Crafts Workshop under the direction of volunteer, Nancy Brumaghim, which provided 4-H youth of all ages with crafting materials, supplies and tools to create four different winter craft projects including a button wreath, holiday ornament, winter wall hanging, and mini canvas snowman.



Schoharie County 4-H Fine Arts & Crafts Workshop



As we move into the new year, 4-H youth will continue to be provided opportunities within their club settings, and through 4-H county, district and state-wide programming.

Otsego County 4-H Happenings

Otsego County 4-H Clubs; Fields & Flats, Garrattsville Graywolves, Ewes & Friends, and The Gilbertsville Dairy Club celebrated National 4-H Week with outdoor displays throughout the county.



Fields & Flats 4-H Club celebrating National 4-H Week



Garrattsville Graywolves 4-H Club celebrating National 4-H Week



Ewes & Friends 4-H Club celebrating National 4-H Week



The Gilbertsville Dairy 4-H Club celebrating National 4-H Week

Veterans and family members received artfully created cards from the Springfield High Meadows 4-H youth. 4-H members of the No Goats No Glory 4-H Club enjoyed the autumn weather with a horse drawn carriage ride in Brookfield State Park. The Crafty Chipmunks members met in September to work on a fun woodworking project creating bulletin boards. After carving pumpkins grown from seed during last year's gardening activity, the Ewes and Friends 4-H youth do-



The Springfield High Meadows 4-H Club making cards for veterans and family members



No Goats No Glory 4-H club horse drawn carriage ride at Brookfield State Park



The Crafty Chipmunks 4-H Club made bulletin boards

nated 20 pumpkins to their local Head Start program. 4-H members from the Gilbertsville Dairy Club met in October to learn about dreamcatchers and made some of their own, and in November they met at a farm to learn how to plant garlic and took some home to grow themselves.

Otsego County 4-H members and families also gathered to decorate the 4-H buildings at the Otsego County Fairgrounds to participate in the Holiday of Lights.



The Gilbertsville Dairy 4-H Club learning to plant garlic



Building
Healthy Habits

Winter Quick Tips

Cornell
Cooperative
Extension



Cultural Corner

Celebrate Black History in February! Learn about contributions and achievements Black Americans made to society and how they shape our world today. Check locally to find Black History Month activities to attend with your family.



Pump up Your Heart Health!

Having a healthy heart can help prevent heart disease, including high blood pressure, high cholesterol, stroke, and heart attack. Heart disease is a goal for everyone because heart disease can start early in life. A heart-healthy diet includes a variety of colored vegetables and fruit, whole grains and products made from whole grains, low-fat milk and cheese, and lean, unprocessed protein, like chicken, eggs, beans, and fish. When buying groceries, check the Nutrition Facts Label and choose foods with little or no added sugars. Look for ways to move your body more, such as housework, walking the dog, pushing the baby stroller, or shoveling snow. These activities all help to keep your heart healthy.

What's in Season

In February, look for different citrus fruits like oranges and tangerines; or produce that stores well like apples, cabbage, sweet potatoes, winter squash, carrots, and pineapples.

This material was funded by Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program.

Michelle Leveski Retires



For 22 years Michelle Leveski helped adults, children and families in Schoharie and Otsego Counties learn about nutrition, grocery shopping on a budget, and healthy food preparation. As the Nutrition Educator for the Expanded Food and Nutrition Program (EFNEP), Michelle also contributed to the development and implementation of innovative programs like “Cooking with Kids”—a parent-child cooking program that is now being adapted for use throughout New York State. In addition to supervising the Association’s Healthy Connections and SNAP-Ed staff, Michelle’s hard work, thoughtful leadership by example, and commitment to the success of EFNEP, the Association’s Family and Consumer Science Program, and the Association overall, has shown in everything she has done.

Michelle is looking forward to traveling and spending more time with her growing, extended family. We thank Michelle for all that she has done on behalf of CCESO, and we wish her many happy miles and moments in her next chapter!

What’s Your Move?

One of the top 5 New Years resolutions is to improve health, whether it’s through eating healthier or incorporating more exercise. If you are looking to exercise more, here is some inspiration. Physical activity can be fun and doesn’t have to cost you money. You can get moving for free anytime, anywhere. You probably know that you need to stay physically active to stay healthy, but it can help you in other ways. Exercise can:

- Boost your mood
- Sharpen your focus
- Reduce your stress
- Improve your sleep
- Strengthens bones and muscle

Adults should get at least 2.5 hours of exercise each week. If that sounds overwhelming, start small by adding 10 minutes of movement to each day. Focus on moderate intensity aerobic activities (anything that gets your heart beating faster) and muscle strengthening activities. Be sure to talk with your physician before making drastic lifestyle changes. They can lead you in the right direction towards a safe and effective plan for you.



Over time, regular physical activity can help you live a longer and healthier life. Some of the amazing effects of regular exercise are reduced risk of diseases like type 2 diabetes, heart disease, some cancers, control of your blood pressure and maintaining a healthy weight.

Start today! Park further from the store entrance, take the stairs, go for a family walk. Use cans for weights or follow along with a youtube video like Leslie Sansone Heart Healthy - 1 Mile Walk | Walk at Home.

Just get moving!

Farm to School Features an Abundance of Harvest of the Month Tastings

The last few months have been busy with Farm to School programming! Several schools have been participating in our Harvest of the Month program and tastings where the students get to try the selected harvest in new ways. So far, we've done tomatoes, apples, winter squash, and potatoes. Coming up, we'll be featuring pears, beets, maple, honey, and dairy!

The goal of this program is to educate students about locally produced foods, how they can be prepared, and to encourage the consumption of healthier foods. One of the ways we've been able to do this is to show how versatile some of these foods can be. If kids say they don't like a certain food, it could be that they just don't like how it was prepared, so trying a new recipe and using that same food to make something they haven't had before can make a huge difference. It can also be really fun!

In October students tried different varieties of apples and decided which was their favorite. November's winter squash tastings included mashed Hubbard squash, butternut squash roasted with a maple cinnamon glaze, pumpkin parfaits, and even butternut squash brownies! During a tasting in December students tried a loaded potato salad with bacon, more than once a student said to me, "I don't usually like potato salad, but that was really good!" I get this reaction from students all the time during tastings. They are surprised by what they like, they are learning just how many ways you can cook a fruit or vegetable, and how to use them to make healthier versions of sweet treats.

It's been a great start to the school year and we're looking forward to expanding program activities and getting more schools involved through the spring!



Hubbard squash mashed with butter, brown sugar, and maple syrup



Butternut squash brownies



Loaded potato salad with bacon

Schoharie County 4-H to Offer Tractor Safety in Spring 2026

CCESO's Schoharie County 4-H Program will collaborate with SUNY Cobleskill to offer the National Safety Tractor & Machinery Operation Program (NSTMOP) Certification. This safety training program teaches youth (ages 14 and 15 or older) how to safely operate farm tractors and powered machinery. Contact Catherine Roberts for more information by emailing cmr336@cornell.edu or calling 518-234-4303 ext. 113.

Recipe

Skillet Mac and Cheese

Makes 4 servings, one serving is 1 cup

Ingredients

- 2 cups of water
- 1 1/2 cups of uncooked macaroni
- 1 teaspoon of margarine or butter
- 2 tablespoons of all-purpose flour
- 1/4 teaspoon of salt
- 1/4 teaspoon of dry mustard OR 1
teaspoon of prepared mustard
- 1 1/4 cups of non-fat or 1% milk
- 1 1/4 cups of grated cheddar cheese
(5 ounces)



Directions

1. Wash your hands with soap and water.
2. In a 10-inch skillet or saucepan, bring water to a boil.
3. Add the macaroni and margarine or butter, stir a few times to prevent sticking.
4. Cover the pan and reduce heat to low, simmer for 5 minutes, do not drain the water.
5. Meanwhile, mix the flour, salt, and mustard in a small bowl. Add 1/4 cup of milk and stir until smooth. Add remaining milk and set aside.
6. Take the lid off the skillet and cook the macaroni until most of the water is gone.
7. Add the milk mixture and cheese while stirring. Cook and stir until the cheese is melted and the sauce is bubbly and thick.
8. Refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours.

Nutrition Facts: Serving Size: 1 cup Calories: 340, total fat: 14g, saturated fat: 7g, 36% calories from fat, sodium 420mg, carbohydrate: 37g, protein: 16g, Calcium: 358mg, Iron: 2mg, Potassium: 240mg

Source: foodhero.org



Kids' Book Nook

With your child, visit your local library and borrow "Soul Food Sunday" by Winsome Bingham. After reading it together, talk about what foods they are excited to try! You can also read along on YouTube by using this link: https://youtu.be/gZNdKv43BXY?si=1Rg8TH3g6_HJ1h6O



Sign up for a FREE class today!

All Schoharie and Otsego County residents are eligible for our fun, interactive, supportive, nutrition classes.

Please contact:
Nelta Miller
nbm53@cornell.edu
518-234-4303 x115

Building Healthy Habits BHH



fnec.cornell.edu

NUTRITION PROGRAMS

AT CORNELL COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

Hands-on Learning For Healthier Living

Our EFNEP, Healthy Connections, and SNAP-Ed programs help adults and youth learn by doing. Through hands-on activities, practical lessons, and real-life skill building, participants gain tools that support a healthier lifestyle.

Learn in the way that works for you:

Group Class
One-on-one lesson
Nutrition event
Online or in person

What You'll Learn

- ✓ Prepare meals that save time and money
- ✓ Try new recipes and build confident cooking skills
- ✓ Practice food safety at home
- ✓ Reduce food waste with smart shopping, prepping, and storing tips
- ✓ Build lifelong healthy habits through interactive activities

Contact our Nutrition Program Educators to learn more about these programs or to sign up!



Nelta Miller
EFNEP
Nutrition Program Educator

☎ 518-234-4303 x115
✉ nbm53@cornell.edu



Maegan Freeman
SNAP-Ed
Nutrition Program Educator

☎ 716-816-6019
✉ mef265@cornell.edu



PROGRAM EVENTS

Visit cceschoharie-otsego.org to see the most up-to-date listings offered.

Weatherization Workshop, January 8, 6 to 8 p.m. Schoharie Extension Center, 173 S Grand St., Cobleskill
Designed to help families learn practical ways to save energy and lower utility costs, Cornell Cooperative Extension Smart Energy Choices-Mohawk Valley is offering a workshop that includes a FREE meal and a FREE weatherization kit for all attendees. To receive this incentive, please plan to arrive on time and stay for the full workshop. Registration is capped at 20 participants. https://pub.cce.cornell.edu/event_registration/main/events_landing.cfm?event=weatherization26-1-8_243.

Expanding Farm Sales: Markets, Profits, and Branding, Saturdays in January: January 10, 17, 24 and 31, 10 a.m. to noon, Schoharie Extension Center (Cobleskill), Otsego Education Center (Cooperstown) or via Zoom
Four-part workshop series to help farmers explore new opportunities in direct-to-consumer, wholesale, and institutional markets. \$25 registration fee, scholarships are available. For more information or to register contact Kelley Doolin at 518-234-4303 ext. 119 or register online at https://reg.cce.cornell.edu/farm_sales_243.

Otsego County 4-H Livestock Auction Information Event, Saturday, January 10, 10 am, Southside Mall Community Room, 5006 State Hwy 23, Oneonta
An information meeting for the 4-H Livestock Auction program for Otsego County 4-H members interested in selling an animal in the 2026 4-H Livestock Auction at the Otsego County Fair. To register contact Teresa Adell tl447@cornell.edu or 607-546-2536 x225.

Winter Sowing Workshop, Saturday, January 10, 1 p.m., Southside Mall Community Room, 5006 State Hwy 23, Oneonta
Make a mini greenhouse in a container and sow seeds to take home, and learn how to handle the seedlings when they germinate. Participants are asked to bring a one-gallon translucent container (milk or water jug) and scissors. \$5 program fee. Space is limited, and pre-registration is required by Thursday, January 8, 2026 by going to www.cceschoharie-otsego.org. For more information call 607-547-2536 ext. 228 or ext. 235.

Martin Luther King Day (offices closed), Monday, January 19

Schoharie County 4-H Earn-An-Animal (EAA) Program Information Night, Wednesday, January 21, 6 p.m., Extension Center, 173 South Grand St., Cobleskill. Applications due by Tuesday, February 17th.
The 4-H Earn-An-Animal (EAA) program allows Schoharie County youth ages 8-18 (as of January 1, 2026) to earn funding toward a project animal to raise and show. EAA Information Night for 4-H youth and parents will cover the guidelines and requirements of the program and address questions. Contact Catherine at cmr336@cornell.edu or 518-234-4303 ext. 113 for more information, to register, or for an application.

Otsego County 4-H Public Presentation Workshop, Saturday, January 24, 10:00 a.m., The Rowe House, 31 Maple Street, Oneonta
4-H Members will learn new skills and practice doing a Public Presentation. To register contact Teresa Adell tl447@cornell.edu or 607-547-2536 ext. 225.

Board of Directors Meeting, Tuesday, January 27, 6 pm
Meetings of CCESO's Board of Directors are open to the public and are held synchronously at the Extension Center (Cobleskill) and the Education Center (Cooperstown).

Passing the Torch: Planning Your Farm's Future
OFFERED ON TWO DATES/ONCE IN EACH COUNTY:
Tuesday, January 27, 5:30 to 7 p.m., The Frances Rowe House, 31 Maple St., Oneonta AND Wednesday, January 28, 10 to 11:30 a.m., Schoharie Extension Center, 173 S Grand St., Cobleskill
Planning the future of a farm will benefit from this program's practical tools for financial decision-making, guidance for navigating emotional and relational challenges, and strategies for communicating effectively with family members and other key stakeholders. Presenters Andy Gilbert, NY FarmNet Financial Consultant, and Jan Kirshenbaum, NY FarmNet Family Consultant, bring expertise in both the business and human sides of farm planning. To register contact Kelley Doolin at 518-234-4303 ext. 119 or register online at https://reg.cce.cornell.edu/pass_torch_243.

Annual Seed Swap! Saturday, January 31, in two locations
Schoharie County: Middleburgh Library, 323 Main Street, Middleburgh, 10 to 11:00 a.m.
Otsego County: Oneonta Farmers' Market at the Foothills Performing Arts & Civic Center, 24 Market Street, Oneonta, 9 a.m. to noon
Participating in National Seed Swap Day by honoring the tradition of swapping seeds with neighbors. Attendees are encouraged - but not required - to bring seeds to swap, and all participants can choose FREE seeds. No registration is necessary. For more information go to www.cceschoharie-otsego.org or call 607-547-2536 ext. 235 (Otsego County) or 518-234-4303 ext. 124 (Schoharie County).

Otsego County 4-H International Day, Sunday, February 1, 1 p.m.
Southside Mall Community Room, 5006 State Hwy 23, Oneonta
4-H Clubs will offer information on the cultures of many countries. To register contact Teresa Adell tl447@cornell.edu or 607-547-2536 ext. 225.

Schoharie County 4-H Public Speaking Workshop, Tuesday, February 3, 6 p.m., Extension Center, 173 South Grand St., Cobleskill
To register, contact Catherine Roberts at cmr336@cornell.edu or 518-234-4303 ext. 113

The 4-H Public Presentation Day training workshop for 4-H youth will feature some tips about selecting a topic and creating visual aids. Participants will learn the parts of a presentation and how to organize their thoughts, and can practice speaking in front of others.

Presidents' Day (offices closed), Monday, February 16

Otsego County 4-H Public Presentations, Saturday, February 28, starting at 9 a.m., Morris Central School, Morris
4-H Members will give demonstrations, illustrated talks, recitations or speeches. Pre-registration is required by contacting Teresa Adell tl447@cornell.edu or 607-547-2536 x225.

Tree Fruit Pruning: Techniques for Health and Productivity, Saturday, February 28, noon to 2 p.m., Middlefield Orchard, 2274 NY-166, Cooperstown
Interactive workshop focusing on practical tree fruit pruning techniques to improve tree health, structure, and productivity. Participants will learn key pruning principles, review proper timing and tools, and discuss common mistakes to avoid with guidance from regional tree fruit specialist Michael Basedow. Participants will also spend time in the orchard for hands-on demonstrations and discussion, giving participants the opportunity to ask questions and adapt techniques to their own orchards/trees. To register contact Kelley Doolin at 518-234-4303 x119 or register online at https://reg.cce.cornell.edu/treepun_schots_243.

Capital District 4-H Dairy Quiz Bowl Competition, Saturday, February 28 (Time & Location TBD)

4-H Dairy Quiz Bowl is a competitive event that allows 4-H members to demonstrate their knowledge by answering questions about the dairy industry, ruminant nutrition, calf health, food safety, crops, and other relevant fields. Quiz bowl team practices will be held January through February. Contact Catherine at cmr336@cornell.edu or 518-234-4303 ext. 113 for more information.

Schoharie County 4-H Public Presentations Day, Saturday, March 7, starting at 9 a.m., Extension Center, Cobleskill
County-wide event where youth deliver the presentations they've created in front of an audience and a panel of evaluators. To register, contact Catherine at cmr336@cornell.edu or 518-234-4303 ext. 113.

Berry Pruning: Methods for Stronger Plants and Better Yields, Saturday, March 7, 10 a.m. to noon, Middlefield Orchard, 2274 NY-166, Cooperstown
Hands-on workshop focusing on techniques to improve plant health, fruit quality, and overall productivity. Participants will learn how pruning affects growth and yield, review proper timing, tools, and methods for common berry crops, and gain practical insights from regional berry specialist Heather Case. The session will include field-based demonstrations and help growers build skills they can apply. To register contact Kelley Doolin at 518-234-4303 ext. 119 or register online at https://reg.cce.cornell.edu/berryprun_schots_243

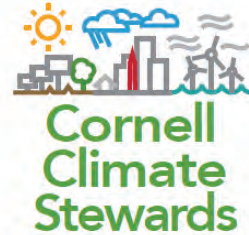
New Farm Manager Skills Day - Get the Tools You Need to Grow Your People, Tuesday, March 17, 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Extension Center, 173 S. Grand St., Cobleskill
Moving from being an individual contributor to overseeing and directing the work of other people can be a big change. Join Liz Higgins of the Eastern NY Commercial Horticulture Team, Raevyn Saunders of the CNY Dairy, Livestock and Field Crops Team and Kelley Doolin of CCE Schoharie-Otsego for a one-day program to practice skills and make connections that can help you in your role as a supervisory farm manager. \$50 per attendee. To register contact Liz Higgins at 518-949-3722 or register online at <https://enych.cce.cornell.edu/event.php?id=2142>

Capital District 4-H Horse Quiz Bowl Competition, Saturday, March 21 (Time & Location TBD)

4-H Horse Quiz Bowl is a competitive event that allows 4-H members to demonstrate their knowledge by answering questions about horses, including general equine terms, the horse industry, feed and care, and anatomy. Quiz bowl team practices will be held January through March. Please contact Catherine at cmr336@cornell.edu or 518-234-4303 ext. 113 for more information.

Board of Directors Meeting, Tuesday, March 24, 6:30 p.m.
Meetings of CCESO's Board of Directors are open to the public and are held synchronously at the Extension Center (Cobleskill) and the Education Center (Cooperstown).

CCE in Action!



Expanded Food & Nutrition Education Program – Nelta Miller, nbm53@cornell.edu

Healthy Connections Nutrition Education – for information contact kc2299@cornell.edu

SNAP-Ed – Maegan Freeman, mef265@cornell.edu

4-H Youth Development Program – Catherine Roberts, cmr336@cornell.edu; Teresa Adell, tla47@cornell.edu

Horticulture & Natural Resource Educator – Marcie Foster, mkf48@cornell.edu

Agriculture & Food Systems Educator – Kelley Doolin, kmd322@cornell.edu

Community Energy Educator – Michaela Fisher, maf396@cornell.edu; Carlotta Batchelder, cmb529@cornell.edu

Farm to School – Mariah Goodman, mog27@cornell.edu