

Spring's Around the Corner—Let's Get Growing!

Article written by Madison Blodgett, Community Horticulture Educator and Master Gardener Coordinator at CCE Saratoga



Winter has its fun, but have you been aching to see the soil again? As the chilly temperatures begin to loosen their grip, start putting your daydreams to paper and plan your gardens... Perhaps you've always wanted to garden, but just feel so overwhelmed on how to start. Perhaps you want to try growing something new this year but aren't confident you can be successful in it. Don't we all want to succeed the first time we try? I can answer that—yes.

The truth is, even the most seasoned gardeners will run into the unexpected. But aside from pure trial and error, you have another tool in your kit (and hopefully a trowel!) Cornell Cooperative Extension of Saratoga County has a glowing resource for you to access at any time. Horticulture educators are on staff to answer questions you may have, along with our wonderful Master Gardener Volunteers. If you're interested in growing we have the right resources to point you towards. And it doesn't stop there.

Seed Libraries are another new tool in your kit. This year, CCE Horticulture Educator Madison Blodgett, along with the amazing aid of the Master Gardeners, have been setting up these "libraries" around the county. The CCE Seed Libraries are a community resource that gives you access to a variety of free seeds, along with the education on how to be a successful gardener. When you visit one of our seed libraries, literature on gardening topics will be available to take— and if you want to do a deep dive on one of those topics, QR codes at each site will link you up with research-based knowledge of the gardening world.

Our goals are pretty simple: equal access, empowerment, and education. It can be intimidating to start a garden. The rewards for taking that step are far greater. Everyone can, and should, garden. We at CCE and the Master Gardener program have your back, so visit your local Seed Library, get out and grow this spring!

In 2026, you will find us at these locations:

1. Pitney Meadows
223 West Ave, Saratoga Springs
2. 4-H Training Center
556 Middleline Rd., Ballston Spa
3. Wilton Wildlife Preserve & Park
80 Scout Road, Wilton
4. Clifton Park-Halfmoon Library
475 Moe Rd., Clifton Park
5. David R. Meager Malta Community Center
1 Bayberry Dr., Malta
6. Greenfield Community Center
25 Wilton Rd, Greenfield Center
7. Saratoga Farmers' Market
Wilton Mall (winter)
High Rock Park (spring/summer)
8. Ballston Community Public Library
2 Lawmar Ln., Burnt Hills
9. Waterford Public Library
117 Third St., Waterford
10. Blockhouse Museum Park
692 Hudson Ave, Stillwater
11. Galway Public Library
2112 East Street, Galway
12. Clifton Park Senior Community Center
6 Clifton Common Blvd, Clifton Park
13. Saratoga Springs Public Library
40 Henry St., Saratoga Springs
14. Ballston Spa Public Library
21 Milton Ave., Ballston Spa
15. Corinth Free Library
89 Main St., Corinth
16. Stillwater Public Library
712 Hudson Ave., Stillwater
17. Clifton Park Senior Community Center
6 Clifton Common Blvd., Clifton Park



This list of Saratoga County host locations continues to grow, so that each of you can access a Seed Library close to home!

For more information on Saratoga County's Seed Libraries contact Madison at mrb355@cornell.edu or 518-885-8995

CCE SARATOGA HAS A LIMITED SUPPLY 2026 AHC Horse Industry Tax Handbook

The American Horse Council (AHC) announced the release of the 2026 AHC Tax Handbook, the organization's most comprehensive and up-to-date resource on federal tax policy affecting the U.S. equine industry. The handbook is now available to purchase as a PDF download for \$50.

The 2026 edition reflects major federal tax law changes enacted under the One Big Beautiful Big Act (OBBBA) and provides clear, practical guidance for horse owners, breeder, trainers, farm managers, nonprofit organizations, and equine-related businesses navigating today's evolving tax landscape.

The handbook provides an in-depth review of issues including:

- Business vs. hobby rules
- Section 199A pass-through deductions
- Depreciation and expensing for equine assets
- State and local tax impacts
- Charitable contribution rules
- International equine transactions
- Estate and gift tax planning
- U.S. tariff policy affecting the horse industry

"This year's Tax Handbook delivers the clarity, stability, and strategic guidance the equine industry has been asking for," said Julie Broadway, AHC President. "Whether you're managing a family farm, overseeing a breeding operation, or navigating nonprofit compliance, this resource helps ensure your business stays informed, compliant, and positioned for long-term success."

The handbook also includes real-world examples, tax preparer checklists, and detailed explanations of new provisions that directly affect operations. With capital investment, depreciation, international trade, and charitable involvement all playing major roles in the horse industry, the 2026 edition arrives at a critical time.

CCE Equine has purchased a few copies of the 2026 American Horse Council Tax Handbook, which are available for members of our local horse community to borrow. If you are interested in reserving a copy, please reach out for details on how to get one.

Email: nvf5@cornell.edu

You may also purchase the handbook for \$50 through the [American Horse Council store](#).



CAR SEAT CHECK

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Saratoga County is partnering with New Country Toyota of Clifton Park for a FREE car seat check to insure your car seat is properly installed. Nationally Certified Child Passenger Safety Technicians and Instructors will be on site.

APRIL (TBD) | 4 pm—8 pm
New Country Toyota of Clifton Park
202 Route 146, Mechanicville

To schedule an appointment call 518-885-8995.

What to bring to your car seat check:

- Your child (if possible)
- Your car seat manual
- Your vehicle owner's manual
- A cleaned-out vehicle (remove other items for easier access)

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

The next Board of Directors Meeting is scheduled for **March 18, 2026 | 7 pm** at the Extension Office.

CCE Saratoga's Board of Directors

John Mancini - *President*
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Keeping Birds Out of Your Greenhouses



Birds in greenhouses cause damage by eating seedlings and seeds, contaminating plants with droppings, and nesting in vents or on rafters. They enter through open doors and vents, often finding the ideal environment for shelter and food. Are there any measures to keep birds out of greenhouses?

There are many avian deterrents on the market. Success with deterrents varies by site and bird species. In most cases, the best results come from a multipronged approach.

Netting:

Covering all vent openings and doors with fine mesh or hardware cloth can be very effective for prevention. Securely stapled or fastened screening/netting materials to prevent gaps. This allows ventilation while blocking entry. Ensure all openings are tightly sealed when unattended. For doors, magnetic bug curtains can be helpful and are not expensive, but you would need Velcro to stick it up tight on the frame.

Visual Deterrents:

Reflective tape, old CDs, wind spinners, shiny tape, and some predator decoys such as fake owls, hawks, or rubber snakes can scare birds away. However, birds are intelligent and may be habituated to visual deterrents after repeated exposure. Visual deterrents are best combined with other tactics and rotated over time to maintain the “scare” value. Lasers are the newest technology

in bird deterrence. Options range from small but powerful hand-held units to fully automated units. A fully automated unit can be a good option for large-scale field production. Hand-held lasers may be better for greenhouse use but require an active operator.

Lasers require extreme caution to avoid damage to the eyesight of birds and humans alike. They should not be combined with reflective visual deterrents to prevent off-target beam reflections. They can be good for getting birds out of the greenhouse. A laser safety training course may be required before purchasing or leasing a laser.

Chemical/Taste:

Methyl anthranilate is the most common chemical deterrent used to control bird feeding activity. It is a contact irritant that affects all bird species. These sprays have a grape-like smell, are made from food-grade products, and are registered pesticides that can be applied by fogging or ground spraying equipment. Like any pesticide, methyl anthranilate must be used according to label directions.

Alternative Habitats:

Providing birdhouses or feeders further away from the greenhouse can lure birds away. Keep birdhouses at least 30 feet away from high-traffic, or sensitive areas, as bird activity can be high during the breeding season. Also, when placing feeders, ensure they are at least 30 feet away from windows to avoid collisions. Last but not least, if you see any nesting materials in the greenhouse, remove and clean them out as soon as you spot them. Use a putty knife to scrape out debris, scrub with a stiff brush, and sanitize with a 1:10 bleach-water solution. Also, make sure there are no food sources left available, making the space less attractive to birds. Sometimes birds get the hint and move on. Sometimes they don't, unfortunately.

CAPITAL AREA AGRICULTURE AND HORTICULTURE PROGRAM

Farm Disaster Preparation Certificate Training

Tuesday, March 24 & Wednesday, March 25, 2026 | 6 pm—9 pm via Zoom



The Farm Disaster Preparation Certificate Training will help farm owners plan for and manage possible disasters. This program focuses on practical pre-disaster and preparedness regarding farm equipment safe-

ty on the road, fire or structure collapse, storm and wind damage, criminal activities, farm chemical risks, and biosecurity. The training is directed to all sizes and all types of products. Farms that complete the training will receive a certificate to provide to their insurer and may be eligible for a credit or discount on the farm's

annual insurance premium. Please contact your insurance agent for clarification on discount eligibility and time frame.

Fee: \$35

Checks payable/ mailed to:

CCE Albany
5435 County Road 48
Belmont, NY 14813

For online payment, additional \$3 fee applied.

Registration Link:

https://pub.cce.cornell.edu/.../main/events_landing.cfm...

Contact: Kelly Torrey klb288@cornell.edu

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

RSVP by 13 MARCH 2026

STARTING SEEDS

Lesson and Workshop

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

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

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

All proceeds benefit the Unlimited Garden Fundraiser!

Cornell Cooperative Extension
Saratoga County



Family and Consumer Science Department Offers Diabetic Nutrition

Get ready to join the Saratoga County Cornell Cooperative Extension's Family and Consumer Science Department for an exciting workshop on Diabetes Nutrition! Mark your calendars for **March 18 at 11:30 am** at the **Ballston Community Public Library**, 2 Lawmar Lane, Burnt Hills.

This engaging and practical nutrition workshop is designed to empower you with knowledge and skills to build healthy habits that promote blood sugar control and enhance your overall wellness!

You'll learn how to create balanced meals that help manage blood sugar, understand portion sizes and meal timing, and discover how carbohydrates impact your health. Plus, we'll share diabetes-friendly snack ideas and simple food swaps to make healthy eating a breeze!

Come be a part of our friendly community and take the first step towards a healthier lifestyle in a welcoming environment. We can't wait to see you there!

For more information, visit Cornell Cooperative Extension or contact Brenna Kavakos, bk375@cornell.edu or 518-885-8995.

**Diabetes Nutrition
Workshop**

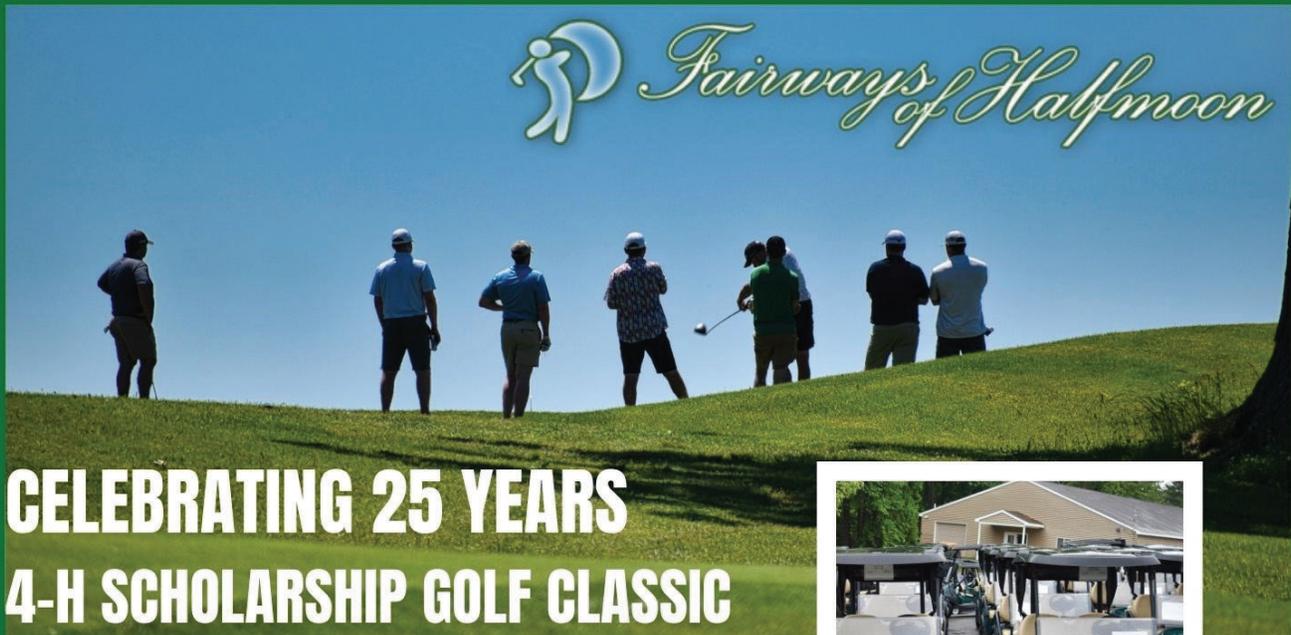
Eat Smart • Feel Better • Take Control

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

**March 18th
11:30
Burnt Hills Public Library**



Fairways of Halfmoon



CELEBRATING 25 YEARS 4-H SCHOLARSHIP GOLF CLASSIC



Join us for a great day of golf in support of Saratoga County 4-H!
MAY 30, 2026



-  7:30 AM – Registration
-  9:00 AM – Shotgun Start
-  Followed by a buffet lunch & awards ceremony

Last year, over 100 golfers helped us reach our goal. In 2026, we're aiming even higher—125+ golfers and \$15,000 raised—and with your support, we know we can do it!

All proceeds benefit Saratoga County 4-H, providing scholarships, educational programs, and hands-on learning opportunities for 4-H volunteer leaders. Get involved!

We welcome golfers, sponsors, donors, raffle items, and goodies for participant bags—or simply come out and enjoy a fun day on the course for a great cause.

📞 Questions? Call Greg at the 4-H Office: 518-885-8995 or grs9@cornell.edu



CONTACT US

518-885-8995

www.sc4H.org

CCE Saratoga

50 West High Street
Ballston Spa, NY 12020

Kick Off Maple Season at the 2026 Maple Tapping Ceremony

March 13 at Wild Hogs Sugar Shack

The public is invited to attend the 2026 Maple Tapping Ceremony on Friday, **March 13, 2026**, at **12:00 pm** at **Wild Hogs Sugar Shack at Maple Milk Farm, located at 1359 Shunpike Road, Cambridge, NY**. This special event marks the official kickoff of New York’s Maple Weekends and celebrates the start of maple season.

Visitors will enjoy the ceremonial tapping of a maple tree, sugarhouse tours, light refreshments, and the chance to learn how sap become syrup while meeting local producers and agricultural leaders. Wild Hogs Sugar Shack, once featured on National Geographic’s *Building Wild*, now operates in a newly expanded sugarhouse.

The ceremony also launches New York’s Maple Weekends, March 21-22 and 28-29, when sugarhouses statewide open for tours, demonstrations, and maple treats.

This free, family-friendly event is open to all and offers a chance to celebrate one of the New York’s most treasured agricultural traditions.



(Photo: Fort Drum & 10th Mountain Division (LI), Public domain)

Maple Open House Weekends

March 21-22 & March 28-29



Maple Open House Weekends are a chance for the public to come to the farm to learn about New York’s maple sugarmaking processes and traditions and to taste pure maple syrup in its many forms - right from the source. **Come on out on March 21-22 and 28-29 when the sap will be running!**



MAPLE WEEKEND!

MARCH 21-22 & MARCH 28-29, 2026
10 AM - 4 PM

MAPLE TOURS • TASTINGS • TREATS • CREPES • NO ADMISSION

SPECIAL GUESTS:

- DICKINSON'S DELIGHTS
- DANCING GRAIN FARM BREWERY
- SARATOGA WILD ROOTS

PART OF NYS MAPLE WEEKEND
www.hopcitymaple.com




NYS MAPLE WEEKEND 2026

March 21-22 & 28-29
10 am - 4 pm

Erich & Paul Ruger
50 Atkins Road, Malta

See firsthand how maple syrup is made—from tree to table.

- 12 pm—Tapping Demonstration
- 1 pm—Sawmill Demonstration
- 2 pm—Sugarbush Walk

FRESH MAPLE COFFEE—PRODUCTS AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE—FREE MAPLE SYRUP SAMPLES

New York State Maple Weekend

MAPLE VALLEY FARM
84 Harris Rd, Corinth

March 21 - 22, 2026
March 28 - 29, 2026
10 AM - 4 PM



Pancake Breakfast
Pony Rides
Local vendors
Live Music



MARCH 21 & 22
9 AM - 2 PM

NY STATE MAPLE WEEKEND

200 HYPOT RD, GREENFIELD CENTER, NY



- LOCAL VENDORS & LIVE MUSIC
- FARM TOUR & DEMONSTRATIONS
- \$5 PANCAKE BREAKFAST

Annual Tree and Shrub Program



Each spring, the Saratoga County Soil and Water Conservation District offers a tree and shrub seedling sale in April to interested landowners throughout Saratoga County. They coordinate this program so landowners can take advantage of their bulk buying to reduce erosion, support wildlife and improve the landscape around their property.

Buying young bare root seedlings is a small investment that can:

- Provide beneficial habitat for wildlife
- Encourage pollinators such as hummingbirds, butterflies, bees and more!
- Help stabilize and reduce soil erosion
- Improve water quality in Saratoga County
- Beautify areas in the community and much more!

Saratoga County Soil and Water are now accepting orders for their Annual Spring Tree & Shrub Program. **Pre-orders will be taken until Tuesday, March 31, 2026 and pick-up (located at the 4-H Training Center) date for all orders will be Friday, April 17, 2026 from 8 am—Noon.**

ALL orders will be taken through the [SWCD Online Shop](#), *paper orders are no longer accepted.*

Please note that ALL items are sold in bundles. Be sure to read each item description carefully before selecting the quantity you wish to purchase. After completing your purchase, you will receive both a receipt and a confirmation email.

Beyond the tree and shrub seedlings; bluebird and bat boxes, wildflower seed mixes and conservation grass seed mixes are also made available for purchase.

Spring Burn Ban in Effect—March 16 to May 14

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation is reminding New Yorkers of the upcoming burn ban that will take effect March 16 and remain in place until May 14.

For more information on the burn ban: [Open Burning - NYSDEC](#)



What's Bugging You?

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

Each month at New York State Integrated Pest Management's "What's Bugging You? First Friday" events, experts share practical information and answer questions on using integrated pest management (IPM) to avoid pest problems and promote a health environment where you live, work, learn and play. We end with an IPM Minute, and cover a specific action you can take in the next few days to help you avoid pest problems. **Events take place online from 12:00 pm to 12:30 pm.**

APRIL 3: Mole Control | Feeding Friendly Insects: Delay Garden Cleanup

Learn how the professionals manage moles, and stay tuned to hear about creating habitat for beneficial insects in the garde. [Register here.](#)



Planting a Pollinator

Pollinators and Their Favorite Flowers

Ants—Although ants like pollen and nectar, they aren't good pollinators, so many flowers have sticky hairs or other mechanisms to keep them out.

Bats—Large, light-colored, night-blooming flowers with strong fruity odor (e.g., many cactus flowers). Bats don't see well, but have a keen sense of smell.

Bees—Yellow, blue, purple flowers. There are hundreds of types of bees, and they have a range of flower preferences.

Beetles—White or dull-colored, fragrant flowers since they can't see colors (e.g., potatoes, roses)

Butterflies—Red, orange, yellow, pink, blue. Because they need to land before feeding, they like flat-topped clusters (e.g., zinnias, calendulas, butterfly weeds) in a sunny location.

Carion-eating flies—Maroon, brown flowers with foul odors (e.g., wild ginger).

Flies—Green, white, cream flowers. Many like simple bowl-shaped flowers or clusters.

Hummingbirds—Red, orange, purple/red tubular flowers with lots of nectar, since they live exclusively on flower (e.g., sages, fuchsias, honeysuckles, nasturtiums, columbines, bee balms). They need no landing areas since they hover while feeding.

Moths—Light-colored flowers that open at dusk (e.g., evening primroses).



Planting a Pollinator Garden

By creating a garden that attracts a range of pollinators, you can provide vital oases amidst seas of buildings and concrete. Kids can play a role in digging shallow pools and mud puddles and providing piles of twigs and animal hair for nesting materials.

1. Include a variety of flowers that bloom throughout the season(s) so there's always some food for pollinators.
2. Use as many native plants as possible. Local plants and pollinators are more likely to adapt to one another. Although hybrid flowers are bred to look and/or smell nice for humans, they often don't provide much or accessible nectar or pollen.
3. Grow host plants that are known to attract certain pollinators, such as milkweed for monarch butterfly larvae, (See the list above of pollinators' favorites.)
4. Provide shallow pools and mud puddles that nourish butterflies and offer home-building materials for bees and wasps.
5. Include tall plants and trellised vines—especially those with yellow blossoms—to attract passing pollinators to your gardens. Sunflowers, sweet peas, nasturtiums, morning glories, and scarlet runner beans are good choices.
6. Provide nesting sites and materials. Leave cut plant stems exposed, turn flowerpots with bottom holes upside down, leave twigs and brush in small piles, and leave out pieces of string or other light fibers.
7. Avoid using pesticides and herbicides. By tolerating some pest damage and weeds, you'll promote a healthier garden for pollinators and your family. There are many organic choices for pest control that work well for home gardeners.
8. Turn part of your lawn into a wildflower meadow, or at least leave some wild areas nearby to provide habitat and food for pollinators.

All Things Green for St. Patrick's Day

St. Patrick's Day is a holiday known for parades, shamrocks and all things Irish. From leprechauns to wearing Kelly green, thousands of Irish Americans gather with their loved ones on St. Patrick's Day to share a traditional meal of corned beef and cabbage. In Ireland, lamb is in season, so lamb dishes including stew are often enjoyed. According to a recent National St. Patrick's Day survey, approximately 65% of Americans enjoy some form of corned beef and cabbage while celebrating the Holiday! Twenty-five percent of the corned beef and cabbage lovers follow it up with fish and chips. Also in traditional Ireland, beef is not always that plentiful, so they more often celebrate the Holiday with Bacon and Cabbage.

Whatever menu you choose, enjoy the Holiday!

Soda Bread is enjoyed with your main course and its thought to aid in the absorption of the Guinness that you are to drink in between each course of the meal. Soda Bread is often used as a hostess gift when dining with friends.

*With quick soda breads, baking soda allows for the rise with no rest/rise time. The oven should be fully heated by the time the bread is ready to bake because the acid from the buttermilk starts reacting with the baking soda as soon as they mix, creating little air bubbles that need the heat of the oven to expand and make the bread rise.**

Mo's Irish Soda Bread*

- 4 cups whole grain white flour, such as Ultragrain **OR** 2 cups whole wheat flour and 2 cups all-purpose flour
 - 2 tsp baking powder
 - 2 tsp baking soda
 - 1 tsp salt
 - ¼ cup butter (4 Tbsp)
 - 1¼ cups raisins or 1¼ currants
 - 1 Tbsp caraway seeds (optional)
 - 1¾ cups low-fat buttermilk
 - 1 Tbsp honey
1. Preheat to 375°F. In a bowl, combine flour, baking powder, soda, and salt.
 2. Cut in butter until it reaches a coarse meal consistency. Start with two knives, then finished with your hands.
 3. Add raisins.
 4. Combine liquids separately. Add liquids to dry ingredients.
 5. Use your hands to mix the dough to keep it light and airy. Mix and knead gently right in the bowl until a soft dough forms and it is smooth (about 3 minutes).
 6. Shape the dough into two balls and place them on a greased baking sheet. Flatten each to about 1½" thick in the center and cut an X about ¾" deep in the top of each loaf.
 7. Bake for 35 minutes. Makes 2 loaves, or about 16-24 servings.

Tip: If you want plain soda bread you can leave out the raisins, caraway seeds, and honey.

Traditional Soda Bread*

- 3½ cups all-purpose flour
 - ½ tsp fine sea salt
 - ¾ tsp baking soda
 - 1½ cups buttermilk
1. Preheat oven to 450°F. In a large bowl, sift together the flour, salt and baking soda. Make a well in the center and add the milk. Use your hand to mix the dough until soft.
 2. Turn the dough out onto a well-floured work surface. Knead the dough lightly for a few seconds, then pat the dough into a round about 1½" thick. Place it on a buttered baking sheet and using a sharp knife, cut a deep cross in the center of the dough reaching out all the way to the sides.
 3. Bake 15 minutes, then lower the oven to 400°F, and bake until the top is golden brown and the bottom sounds hollow when tapped, about 30 minutes. Serve warm with butter.

* Recipes and paragraph from [CCE Seneca's Bread Baking Workshop](#)



Photo from Recipe Girl

More recipes on next page

Recipes—cont'd from previous page

Corned Beef Sandwiches with Irish Cheese and Pickles

(This is a favorite recipe from Star and Shamrock Restaurant, NYC)

For the Pickles

- 4 Tbsp sugar
- 4 Tbsp apple cider vinegar
- ½ tsp salt
- 1 small shallot, thinly sliced
- 1 cucumber, thinly sliced

For the Sandwiches

- 8 slices best quality rye bread
 - ½ stick butter, at room temperature
 - English mustard
 - 1½ lbs. cooked corned beef, thinly sliced
 - 8 oz. Irish cheddar, grated (This is easier to find than you would think)
1. For the pickles: In a bowl mix together the sugar and vinegar until the sugar has dissolved.
 2. Mix in the salt and shallot and add the thin slices of cucumber. Cover leave in fridge for at least 2 hours or overnight.
 3. For the sandwiches: Butter both sides of the rye bread, and spread generous amounts of mustard on one side of each slice.
 4. Divide the corned beef slices amongst 4 of the bread slices. Top with cheese and sandwich together with the remaining bread slices.
 5. Heat in a large non-stick frying pan over medium-high heat and fry each sandwich with butter until golden brown on both sides and the cheese is melted.
 6. Slice each sandwich in half and serve with pickle slices on the side.

If you are throwing a St. Patrick's Day Party, here are some easy appetizers you can share.

Cucumber Feta Dip

- ½ English cucumber
- ¼ tsp salt
- 1 cup plain low Greek yogurt
- ½ cup sour cream
- ½ cup feta cheese crumbles
- ¼ cup parsley
- 1 Tbsp fresh lemon juice

1. Slice the ½ English cucumber in half, remove seeds. Grate the cucumber into a sieve over a bowl. Toss with ¼ tsp salt and let sit for 10 minutes.
2. Use a small food processor to combine Greek yogurt, sour cream, feta crumbles, parsley and lemon juice.
3. Right before serving squeeze the water out of the grated cucumber with a clean towel then mix the cucumber into the dip.
4. Serve with green veggies such as broccoli, celery, green beans, snap peas, and other dipping vegetables .

Yields 32 servings, each serving contains: Calories 610, Carbs 2g, Protein 1g, Fat 1g, Fiber 0g, Sodium 43mg.

Guacamole Cups

- Wonton wrappers
 - Guacamole, homemade or store bought
 - 3 ripe avocados, peeled and pitted
 - 1 jalapeno, cored and finely diced, add more or less to taste
 - ½ cup finely diced red onion
 - 1 Tbsp fresh lime juice
 - 1/3 cup fresh cilantro leaves, finely chopped
 - ½ tsp sea salt
 - ¼ tsp ground cumin
 - 1 Roma tomato, cored and chopped
1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
 2. For the cups: Press your wonton papers into a mini muffin baking pan to form the cups. Making sure that the corners do not fold down after the pan sits a minute.
 3. Bake the cups for 10-15 minutes, remove and let cool for at least 5 minutes.
 4. For the guacamole: In a medium mixing bowl, use a fork or a potato masher to mash the avocados to your desired consistency. Stir in the jalapeno, onion, lime juice, cilantro, salt and cumin until well-mixed. (If adding tomatoes, stir them in at the very end.
 5. Taste and season with extra salt (plus extra lime juice, jalapeno and/or cilantro) if needed.
 6. Scoop guacamole into the cups. Serve.





Homesteading



THE NATIONAL GARDENING ASSOCIATION What are Seed Leaves?

When a seed first germinates, the first two leaves that appear aren't "real" leaves at all—they're seed leaves, also called cotyledons. And even though they're small and short-lived, they play a big role in the beginning of the plant's life.

Seed Leaves

Here's what the first leaves tell you:

- 1. Germination is finished.**
Before seed leaves emerge, the seed is still living off internal moisture and stored energy underground. Once cotyledons break the surface, the seedling has successfully transitioned from seed to plant.
- 2. The plant can now capture light.**
When they open, the seedling can start making its own food via photosynthesis instead of solely on the stored energy of the seed. That means it can handle light exposure, airflow, and gentle environmental changes.
- 3. Roots are being established.**
By the time seed leaves appear, the root system is just beginning. The plant is still a bit fragile. Now is a good time to thin, but not to transplant.



True Leaves

- 1. True leaves show the plant is established.**
True leaves, are the plant's first permanent leaves. When they appear, the seedling has successfully shifted from survival mode to active growth.
- 2. The root system can support stress.**
By the time true leaves form, roots are deeper, and more branched. That's why this stage is tied to actions like

transplanting, fertilizing, or additional thinning—things that would overwhelm a seedling earlier.

- 3. The plant can use nutrients effectively.**
Seed leaves don't need fertilizers, but true leaves signal that the plant can actually take up and use nutrient from the soil.
- 4. Much more sturdy plant.**
If seed leaves are damaged early on, the plant may fail completely. Once true leaves are growing, minor stress or leaf loss is usually recoverable.

Once your plant has its true leaves, you can breathe a little sigh of relief knowing that you are one step closer to a fruit or flower producing plant!

SEED LEAVES VS TRUE LEAVES

Seed Leaves		True Leaves
		
Germination is finished	GROWTH	Roots are established
Photosynthesis can occur	ENERGY	The plant can use nutrients effectively
Fragile Plant	STABILITY	Sturdy Plant





Spring is a busy season on the farm, bringing longer days, warmer weather, and the promise of a productive year ahead. To ensure success, now is the time to prepare your fields, care for your livestock, and maintain your equipment. Here are some essential tips to help you get your farm ready for spring.

1. PREPARING YOUR FIELDS

Healthy soil is the foundation of a successful growing season. Start by testing your soil to determine nutrient levels and pH balance. Based on the results, apply the necessary fertilizers or amendments to promote optimal crop growth.

When selecting crops, consider rotating fields to improve soil health and reduce the risks of pests and diseases. Early spring is also the perfect time to till your fields and ensure they're ready for planting. If you're overseeding pastures, choose hardy, fast-growing grasses that can handle grazing pressure throughout the season.

2. LIVESTOCK CARE FOR WARMER WEATHER

Spring brings a rise in parasites like flies, ticks, and worms, which can stress livestock and reduce productivity. Protect your animals by implementing a parasite control program that includes routine deworming and using fly control solutions like sprays, traps, or fly tags.

Regular hoof care is also essential as animals transition from muddy conditions to dry pastures. Check hooves for signs of thrush or injury, and trim them as needed. Ensure your livestock has access to clean, fresh water and shade, especially as temperatures climb.

For those raising spring chicks, make sure your brooder is set up with proper bedding, heat, and a high-quality starter feed to give them a healthy start.

3. SPRING EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE

Before the season gets into full swing, take time to inspect and maintain your equipment. Check your tractors, mowers, and tillers for signs of wear and tear, and replace any damaged parts. Change the oil, inspect tires, and ensure belts and blades are in good working order.

For smaller tools like shovels, rakes, and sprayers, clean off any rust or debris and sharpen blades where needed. Proper maintenance now can save you from costly breakdowns during the busy season.

4. PASTURE MANAGEMENT

Spring pastures require careful management to encourage healthy growth and grazing. Assess your pastures for any bare or overgrazed areas, and reseed them with high-quality forage grasses. Implement rotational grazing to prevent overgrazing and allow pastures to recover.

Also, check fencing and gates for any damage that may have occurred over winter and make repairs as needed to ensure your livestock stays safe and secure.

Spring is a time of renewal and hard work on the farm, but a little preparation goes a long way in settling the stage for a successful year. By caring for your soil, livestock, and equipment, you'll be ready to tackle whatever the season brings.

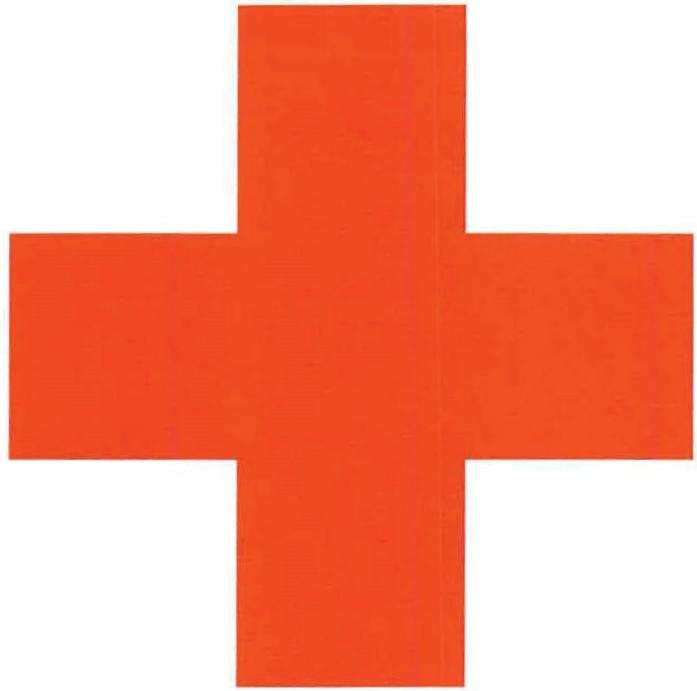


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CCE

50 West High Street, Ballston Spa
 (518) 885-8995
Saratoga@cornell.edu
www.ccesaratoga.org

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