

THE OPTIMISTIC GARDENER



Local Horticulture Newsletter
Chautauqua & Cattaraugus Counties

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October/November 2024



THE OPTIMISTIC GARDENER

Sharon Rinehart

Chautauqua County Master Gardener Volunteer

We are at the end of another growing season, and it is time to evaluate our successes and failures. I certainly had both. Unfortunately, I am not sure why some of the successes happened. My hydrangeas had more blossoms this year that I have ever seen. I didn't do anything different, so I do not know why.

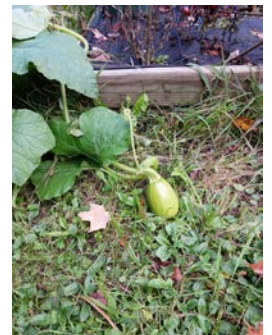
For the second year in a row, my pumpkins only had male flowers. I had one female flower in September. I harvested a very small green pumpkin.

I had a nice crop of zucchini until the squash vine borer destroyed the plants. I dissected each of the vines so I could kill the borer. I was a little desperate but hopefully will save my plants next year. I also tackled the red lily beetle. I would search my lilies every time I walked past them. Fortunately, a bright red beetle on a green plant is fairly easy to see. I managed to kill several. I am looking forward to my beautiful lilies next year.

I grew kohlrabi for first time this year. I will definitely grow it again next year. It is fun to try something new.

What were your successes and failures? Now is the time to research how to replicate the successes and fix the failures.

If you have a topic, you want more information, let us know and we will research best practices for you.



"Dear Master Gardener"

Q: Some of the seeds I have saved need cold stratification. How can this be accomplished?

A: Some seeds need dry stratification for germination. This can be achieved by storing the seeds in a refrigerator for 30 to 120 days. Some of these includes seeds for milkweed, helianthus, lupine, St John's Wort, and Prairie Coneflower.

Do you have a question for our Master Gardeners? Please submit your question here:

chautauquamg@cornell.edu
cattaraugusmg@cornell.edu

Featured Business

Christmas Tree Farms

For this issue's feature business we are listing local businesses that sell live Christmas trees. Even though it may be early, our next issue will be out after you may be looking for a tree. Also check your local greenhouse for holiday plants such as poinsettias. Support your local business whenever possible.

Buy local this holiday season

Chautauqua County



- Yerico Farms 3186 E Main St Dunkirk
Toots Christmas Tree Farm Corner of Hopper & Quarry Rd Forestville
Weatherhill Farm 8884 Hahn Rd Fredonia
Bear Lake Christmas Tree Farm 8021 Bear Lake Rd Stockton
Scott's Farm and Greenhouse 6029 NY-60 Sinclairville
Haff Acres Farm 5065 West Lake Rd Mayville
Krenzer Family Tree Farm 2320 Hanson Road Gerry
Abers Acres 884 NY-394 Kennedy
Coan's Dusty Acres 1199 Frew Run Road Frewsburg
Mike's Nursery 199 East Fairmount Road Lakewood

Cattaraugus County

- Arboretum at Blue Hill 10745 Hilliker Road Delevan
Forevergreens 11398 Bolton Road Springville
Gardens in Thyme 5177 Baker Road Salamanca
Harvest Moon Farms 1 Tug Hill Road Franklinville
J Faulner Farm 990 Olean-Portville Rd Portville
Millers Farm Market 1685 Olean-Portville Road Olean
Peaches 'N Cream 19 Main Street Randolph
Pleasant Valley Greenhouse 2871 Rt.16N Olean
Silver Falls Farm 10295 Jolls Road Perrysburg
Sinn Valley Gardens 6278 Rt 353 Cattaraugus
Weber's Lil' More to Do Greenhouse 4875 Humphrey Road Great Valley
Santa Klahn's 6503 Woodard Road Ellicottville, NY



Benefits of Leaves

Bethany O'Hagan, Master Gardener Volunteer



The autumnal equinox has come and gone. September 22nd officially was the end of this amazing hot summer we've had and will be the beginning of our much beloved fall. The changing of the leaves, the colder brisker weather, darker earlier evenings; so much is about to change in our beautiful spot in the world. Western New York has gorgeous fall foliage and being a Tree City USA for 43 years, it only makes sense to write an article on how beneficial it is to keep your fallen leaves in your yard, and why you shouldn't rake them up!

Did you know that putting your raked up leaves in the garbage only adds to the 33 million tons of yard waste that ends up in landfills annually. Putting any organic material, such as leaves or food into your garbage, is one of the biggest contributions to methane exhaust from landfills - which in turn is one the biggest contributors to climate change. Not only do leaves, yard waste, and food not break down and decompose correctly in a landfill -because they are airtight- it just sits there in a limbo state releasing methane.

Now that we know why we shouldn't put leaves in the garbage, let's talk about how great it is for you to not rake those leaves up! "Leaves are nature's natural mulch and fertilizer" says David Mizejewski, a Naturalist at the Wildlife Federation. Leaves are a natural habitat for butterflies, salamanders, chipmunks, box turtles, toads, shrews, earthworms, and many others. They lay eggs in the leaves and feed on and under the leaf layer. "Over winter months, a lot of butterflies and moths such as pupas or caterpillar are in the leaf litter, and when you rake it up you are removing the whole population of butterflies you would otherwise see in your yard," he says. By providing this habitat for beneficial insects and other critters, you increase the population of beneficial insects for when the gardening season returns.

Leaving the leaves also increases the soil health of your lawn. Decomposing leaves help regulate soil moisture. Leaves are a natural mulch that you don't even have to buy! If you want to create an even better mulch for your yard than just leaving them lay, and if you are the get stuff done type, you can always mow the leaves without an attachment to mulch the leaves, which in turn breaks them into smaller pieces which will actually enhance the lawns fertility. If you have to rake, because you need that green, green lawn as long as you can, try raking the leaves into your garden, or flower beds, or under trees. As we now know, leaves make an amazing mulch that will help fertilize and leave your yard or gardens looking so much healthier in the spring and summer. And if you have to just rid yourself of the leaves, Clearwater Compost allows anyone to drop off their leaves, and any yard debris for free at their site on the corner of Willard Street Ext and County Touring Road 380.

Hope this article helps you decide to leave those leaves in your yard and start thinking about the entire ecosystem that is your yard, and small steps you can accomplish to help that ecosystem thrive.

SAGE ADVICE

Sara Slagle
Master Gardener Volunteer Apprentice

GOLDENROD
Solidago spp. Asteraceae



Image Source: Botany in a Day, Thomas J. Elpel

You've seen it growing in larger-than-life brushstrokes across meadows, roadsides, and abandoned lots. While it made the dentist office wallpaper of wildflowers to where you may not even notice it, there is plenty of good reason to start growing it in your garden. For starters, it's an amazing pollinator. While most might think they are "allergic" or sensitive to goldenrod, chances are... you're not. Goldenrod is insect pollinated and doesn't release its pollen into the air. It's the sneaky neighbor, Ragweed (*Ambrosia* spp.), that is the one to blame. Ragweed has mostly greenish flowers and growing right alongside goldenrod making it somewhat unnoticeable. It's wind pollinated making it the true culprit for the wheezy, sneezing fits in the late summertime.

There are over a hundred species of goldenrod native to North America, so be sure to research the ones in your area. Some species may be stronger than others, but they can cure one in the same. One of the reasons why herbalists like to grow this miracle herb in their gardens is because goldenrod has a couple of deadly look-alikes when it comes for foraging. If you're foraging for goldenrod, always remember the cardinal rule: when in doubt, leave it. Ragwort and Groundsel (from the *Senecio* genus) are notorious for being the most common look-alike species and they happen to be the most toxic. They also tend to grow in the very same areas and conditions as goldenrod while having almost indistinguishable flowers. Get to know these plants very well as you don't want to confuse them with goldenrod. One of the true characteristics of goldenrod is its astringent, piney-smell when you crush the flowers or leaves. Some species may also have a sweeter-pine smell to them. Get your hands on a local field guide if this is a flower you're interested in foraging. Goldenrod may be hard to spot in a field before it blooms, which is typically late summer to early fall. When harvesting, it's important to get them just before the buds fully open for them to keep their golden hue. Once the buds are fully open, they tend to turn brown which is their fluffy seed heads, and this makes them less suitable for medicinal preparations.

(Con't on next page)

(Con't Sage Advise - Goldenrod)

If you're looking to add goldenrod to your garden, be sure to give it a spot where it can thrive in full sun and keep it at bay. Try sweet goldenrod (*S. odora*), a clumping variety, if you want to fill a small space in the garden. Goldenrod can spread aggressively by runners, so if you're looking to fill a small lot or field consider planting fast-spreading species, such as rough-stemmed goldenrod (*S. rugosa*), showy goldenrod (*S. speciosa*), tall goldenrod (*S. altissima*), and Canadian goldenrod (*S. canadensis*). As mentioned, this garden-must-have is a stellar pollinator. Goldenrod supports over one hundred species of caterpillars, making it a useful plant for calling in local butterfly populations. It also attracts garden beneficials, such as praying mantises, ladybugs, assassin bugs, damsel bugs, syrphid flies, and parasitic wasps.

Traditionally, Goldenrod is one of the go-to medicinal remedies for the digestive, respiratory, and urinary tract systems. It can be prepared as a tea, tincture, vinegar, infused honey, elixir, mead or cordial. Much of what we know about goldenrod's medicinal uses comes from Native American peoples, who traditionally used various goldenrod species for a number of ailments, both topically and internally. Goldenrod is a premier decongestant, effectively alleviating upper respiratory congestion stemming from allergies, sinusitis, flu, or the common cold. It can be taken as a tea, syrup, or tincture. It's known for being one of the strongest herbs for drying the sinuses. Combine goldenrod with sage (*Salvia officinalis*) in a strong infusion for a gargle that can be used for sore throats, thrush, and laryngitis. In herbal folklore, it's also been known to be used as a wash or poultice to help heal wounds, burns, open sores, and cuts. The vulnerary uses of the plant inspired the scientific name *Solidago*, which means "to make whole."

Once you dive into the world of herbs, it's easy to discover so many herbs and flowers that you may have never even thought of as medicinal before. That's what makes the herbal journey worth discovering. In these current days of uncertainty, one thing that will (hopefully) always be a constant is the magic realm of nature. As long as we continue to take care of it and preserve what we can, it will always be there to aid us and help us remember that the best cures and remedies just might be right in our own back yards.

Parts used: leaves and flowers

How to Grow: Zone 3-9, full to partial shade; August-November

Energetics: warming & drying

Medicinal properties: anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial, diuretic, astringent, carminative, decongestant

Medicinal preparations: tea, tincture, vinegar, infused honey & syrup, mead, elixir

Medicinal uses: (topical): sores, wounds, burns and infections, (internal): urinary, respiratory and digestive ailments,

,,, GOLDENROD Con't

HOME REMEDIES AND PREPARATIONS



GOLDENROD TEA

Goldenrod, Rose Petals, Anise Hyssop (works best using fresh herbs). Infuse to taste and enjoy with a local wildflower honey. Good for a much-needed pick-me-up in the dog days of summer.

GOLDENROD FABRIC DYE

Check out this wonderful step-by-step guide to dyeing with fresh goldenrod from saltinmycoffee.com



GOLDENROD HONEY

2 cups raw honey (local if you can get it)
1/4 cup dried goldenrod flowers & leaves*

Submerge the goldenrod into jarred honey and store in a warm place for 4 weeks, flipping the jar every other day to insure even coverage. Strain in a fine mesh strainer and re-jar. Keep it in the fridge for up to three months; discard any molded honey.

*using dried herbs is essential when making herb infused honey. The water content in the flowers & leaves can leach into the honey and cause it to spoil more rapidly.

Precautions and Contraindications: Goldenrod can be overly drying for people with a dry constitution, as it is diuretic, astringent, and decongestant. Do not use during pregnancy. Although rare, goldenrod has caused allergic contact dermatitis after both handling and oral administration. Those with Asteraceae allergies should exercise caution with goldenrod. Be sure you are harvesting a true *Solidago* species because there are deadly look-alikes.

Sources: Chestnut School of Herbal Medicine

“Fall”ing For The Perfect Garden

by Mimi Joint - Master Gardener Apprentice

This time last year I had just moved to a new house and left behind my beloved garden of 5 years. The soil wasn't great and I learned a lot of hard lessons about mulching, weeding, water, soil quality, and was always disappointed by my crop turnout. Moving to a new space offered me the opportunity to start from scratch, and I was convinced that fall was the perfect time to build a new garden. Turns out, I was right.

Over the previous summer, I had read a book by Toby Hemenway titled “Gaia’s Garden: A Guide to Home-Scale Permaculture”. It laid out a method which they described as sheet mulching. It is also known by some as “lasagna gardening”. This method helped me build over a 600 square foot garden which had the best soil I had ever seen, for almost free. The hardest part of this method can be for some, gathering the materials which I will outline and provide suggestions for finding for little to no cost. The beauty in this is that it can be customized to any garden size and style, and individuals can use a variety of materials based on what they have or can readily find.

The first step in prepping a new bed for planting in the spring is to mow down existing vegetation as low as possible. I used my lawnmower on the lowest setting and drove over the area a few times. No tilling or hand weeding necessary! A soil pH test can be done on the existing soil at this point and amendments can be added to achieve the desired pH for growing (somewhere in the 6.0-7.0 range for most vegetables). This step is not necessary, but if you choose to, right at the start of building your garden is a great time.

A good first layer is considered “green” in the compost making world. The materials in this layer are nitrogen-rich and include but are not limited to, grass clippings, manure, chopped kitchen vegetable or fruit waste, coffee grounds. If you struggle to find these materials, ask friends, family, or local restaurants or farmers. For this layer, you should aim for at least 1 inch thickness. This rich layer will attract many worms and burrowing beetles upwards which will help aerate soil.

Next, you will need something to smother the mowed vegetation and prevent weeds from poking up. Plain uncoated cardboard with tape removed should be overlapped over the space. Newspaper also works if you have it, just use several layers and avoid glossy sections. To help it stay in place, water well and frequently after applying. Locally, you can find cardboard for free from most stores, businesses, transfer stations, and even schools. Many people would be happy to pass it on and it's worth it to ask around your neighborhood or community to find enough for your desired space.

("Fall"ing... con't)

Top the cardboard with another thin green layer of either manure, grass clippings, or kitchen scraps. This will further attract worms upward. On top of this layer comes the bulk of material in the form of "brown" materials. These are carbon-rich and include, but not limited to: straw, hay, fallen leaves, or sawdust. You will need 8-12 inches of this and you could use a blend of several. Straw can be sometimes more difficult to find than hay and come at a higher price so here's where Facebook marketplace or farmer friends can come in handy. Ask around and see if they have any old hay from last year, or some that got spoiled by rain. In my garden, I used 1-2 year-old hay because it was free, and did not have issues with weeds or seeds sprouting the following year.

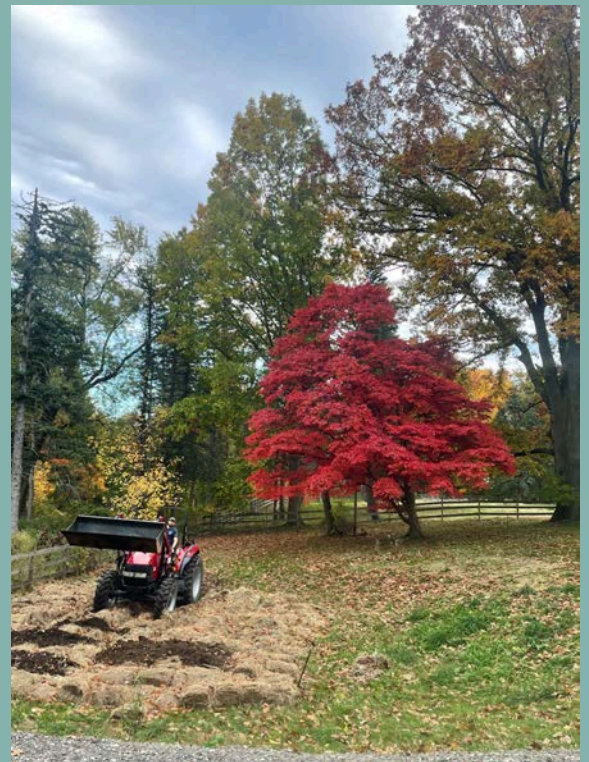
To aid decomposition, keep this layer well-watered while building to maintain a "wrung out sponge" water level and also add some more "green" on top. An ideal carbon-nitrogen ratio is somewhere from 100:1 to 30:1. I did not calculate ratios but tables are easily found online for many common materials.

A layer of finished compost or local topsoil will secure the bulk material down and give the bed its final thickness. This all will fall significantly come springtime. Many gardeners will tell you to care for your soil, always keep it covered. A final dressing of fallen leaves, seed free straw, or finely mulched wood chips should go atop your bed to tuck it in for winter.

After the hard work of building this bed, and as the cold weather sets in, it's the perfect time to turn in your garden tools, go inside and pull out your notebook and favorite seed catalog. Have fun dreaming of the possibilities and potential that you created with this new space and enjoy it come springtime. By the time it came around for me in my new garden, I pushed back the fallen leaves I had laid on top and uncovered dark, rich, worm and insect filled soil. My fruit filled 10-foot tomato plants, stunning flowers, and lush greenery this growing season was something I had never experienced in a garden before. I often told friends "I didn't know plants could get this big!".

This fall, I am trying this method on some older raised beds at a local school with a high school Environmental Club. The sheet mulching process we use may look a little different than my method last fall, but our plan includes the key components of: cardboard, a balance of green and brown materials, and a final tuck in with mulch. All completely free. I am certainly an "optimistic gardner" in that we will build some beautiful soil for school children to plant in, learn alongside, develop their love for gardening, and an appreciation for freshly grown food.

Construction of Mimi Joint's “lasagna garden”



“lasagna garden” con’t



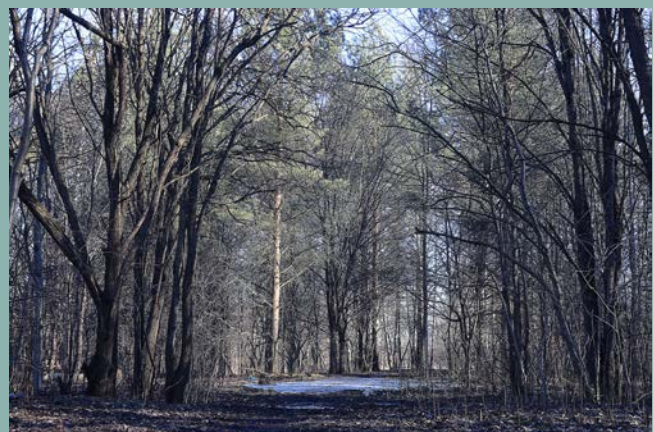
Community Workshops

- **LEAF: Honeybee Pests and Diseases** - Tuesday, November 12, 2024, 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM
Join Chautauqua County beekeepers as they discuss major diseases and pests that a beekeeper must be on the lookout for. They will spend time talking about American Foulbrood (AFB), which is a bacterial disease that kills honeybee brood.--
Join in-person at the JCC Carnahan Center (241 James Ave, Jamestown) or watch virtually on Zoom.
Register online at https://reg.cce.cornell.edu/LEAF2024F_206 or call 716-664-9502.
Cost: \$5 per household



“Love the trees until their leaves fall off, then encourage them to try again next year”

-Chad Sugg



Meet The Master Gardener

Mimi Joint

Chautauqua County Master Gardener Apprentice

One of our new master gardener apprentices from the 2024 cohort is Fredonia resident Mimi Joint. This summer, you may have met her at the Fredonia Farmers Market where she sold homegrown produce, flowers, crafts, baked goods, and her family's Herb Salt. At her home-based farm regeneratively raises animals for meat, gardens, and is working on planting a permaculture inspired food forest. This spring, she joined the CCE master gardener program because of her passion for both gardening, education, and lifelong learning. Born and raised in the Elmwood Village of Buffalo, NY she developed her love of plants and gardening from her Mom, who had given her small plot of soil in the city is known by her neighbors for having a luscious and beautiful flower garden. She came to



the area to study at SUNY Fredonia and after graduating in 2011, she met her current spouse, and they began to set roots in the village. Not long after graduation she was hired at Brocton High School where she worked as a Math and Science teacher and served as Student Council Advisor. In 2022, herself and fellow master gardener apprentice Laurie Skinner started a volunteer-based gardening club. With a small group of students they learned about starting seeds, caring for young plants in both soil and hydroponic systems, and hosted plant swaps in May where they distributed plants, they started for free to community members. Last year, she made the decision with her young family in mind to begin teaching at Fredonia High School. There she currently teaches Computer Applications courses as well as AP Statistics. She also has partnered with their established and well attended Environmental Club and they have spent the start of this school year pulling weeds and amending soil in pre-existing gardening beds. Her hope is to support the schools pre-existing classrooms that use gardens as a mode of learning. In the future, she hopes to be a part of building a larger community garden on campus by partnering with other teachers, school staff, parents, community members, and most importantly, students.

Community Resources

Seed Libraries

Many local libraries have opened free seed libraries to encourage community members to garden and grow some of their own food!

The list is growing, below are a few libraries that are participating. Feel free to donate any seeds to help their seed library grow.

Ashville Free Library (Ashville NY) ashvillelibrary.com

Meyers Memorial (Frewsburg, NY) meyerslibrary.org

Anderson-Lee (Silver Creek, NY) andersonleelibrary.org

Mayville Library (Mayville, NY) mayvillelibrary.com

Seneca Nation Library (Salamanca NY)

James Prendergast Library (Jamestown, NY)
prendergastlibrary.org

Alexander Findley Community Library (Findley Lake, NY) findleylibrary.org

Darwin Barker Library (Fredonia, NY) barkerlibrary.org

Blount Library (Franklinville)

<https://www.franklinvillelibrary.org/>



SWARM REMOVAL
NEED HELP REMOVING A HONEY BEE SWARM?

The beekeepers listed below have indicated that they provide bee removal services. The following contact information is provided as a public service and is not an endorsement of any of the beekeepers listed. AGM does not license or issue permits to remove honey bees. In addition, AGM does not have any information regarding a beekeeper's qualifications or training to remove honey bees.

View the list
agriculture.ny.gov/swarm-catcher-list



 NEW YORK STATE Agriculture and Markets

Free Pressure Canner Testing

Do you have a pressure canner with a dial gauge? It is recommended that gauges be tested annually.

CCE-Chautauqua and CCE Cattaraugus offer free testing!

Contact the office for an appointment today.

Master Gardener Help Desk Is Open during the growing season April-Sept

Questions can be asked during “off-season” by staff

Our master gardeners are ready to help with your garden question, identification or issue. Our garden experts will review your request and set you in the right direction. Also, as an extra bonus if you bring in a soil sample, our garden team will test for pH. pH is important for the adsorption of nutrients in your soil.



Cattaraugus County

Contact us at 716-699-2377
e-mail us at cattaraugusmg@cornell.edu

Helpline hours: Wednesday, 1:00pm-3:00pm

visit us at 28 Parkside Drive Ellicottville, NY 14731

Chautauqua County

Contact us at 716-664-9502 extension 224
e-mail us at chautauquamg@cornell.edu

visit us at the JCC Carnahan Center
525 Falconer Street

Helpline hours: Wednesdays noon-2pm

GPS address: 241 James Ave, Jamestown, NY

Garden in October Plants that don't quit



GARDEN TIPS & TRICKS

Our garden tip for this issue is to try “lasagna gardening” as described in the article by Mimi Joint, Fall”ing” for the Perfect Garden. It is a great way to start a new bed, and have nutrients your plants will need when you plant in the spring.



"LITTLE TOGS"

(The Optimistic Gardener)

KID'S
CORNER

Garden Cleanup

Children can help with fall garden task. Raking leaves is an great task - although they may be tempted to jump in the pile. They can also help move potted plants to winter storage areas and sort empty pots for spring plantings. This is a great time to teach about seeds and show children how to collect some from your favorite plants to start next spring





Cornell Cooperative Extension of Chautauqua County is your resource for information on soils, site improvement, plant selection, proper plant care, eco-friendly practices, integrated pest management, composting and so much more! We offer free or low-cost gardening classes and tours all year long, and opportunities to share your love of gardening as a volunteer!



Interested in Agricultural Resources?

Checkout Agriculture Program Subscription

Access to Chautauqua or Cattaraugus County Cornell Cooperative Extension **Agriculture** Program services are granted upon program subscription. All subscriptions cost \$65, this includes the "Extension Connection" and other general mailings, Newsletters as well as the opportunity receive services from our regional teams, Lake Erie Regional Grape Program, Cornell Vegetable Program and Southwest NY Dairy, Livestock and Field Crops Program.

Additional fees may be necessary for print mailings of regional newsletters.

Please contact the below CCE locations if you are interested in subscribing to the Agriculture Program Subscription.

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Cornell Cooperative Extension

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