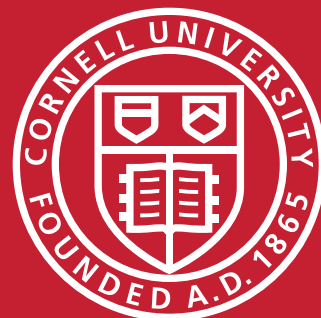




Cornell Cooperative Extension | **Columbia and Greene Counties**

Community Update

September 2, 2020





**Agroforestry Resource Center
Acra, NY**



**Extension Education Center
Hudson, NY**

2020 has and continues to be a year like no other experienced in our lifetime, and perhaps in the 104- year existence of Columbia and Greene Counties Extension Associations! COVID-19 and its ensuing impacts on community health and economic vitality have challenged the way we function and conduct our business.

We have had to adapt to ever-changing threats; impose stringent guidelines on our community engagements; and develop alternate strategies for doing business and serving the needs of our community. This is an evolving process. While our offices are opened under a hybrid return-to-work plan, we are not currently providing in-person public presentations and events. Hopefully, this will change in the near future!

COVID-19 has served to heighten our awareness of the tremendous support network we are so privileged to have. We are immensely grateful to our board of directors, many community volunteers and funding partners for the support and encouragement provided during this volatile and uncertain time. We are also profoundly grateful to the many first-responders and essential workers who have put their lives on the line to tend to our needs and keep us safe. Lastly, a hearty thank you to our dedicated staff, who have shown unwavering commitment, adaptability and creativity to meet the needs of our community and advance the mission of Cornell Cooperative Extension of Columbia and Greene Counties.

This report provides some of the ways in which we have adapted to a COVID-19 environment and highlights some of our accomplishments. We hope you will find the information interesting and useful. We are always open to ideas on how we can serve needs in our community. Thank you for your interest and continued support. I look forward to working with you in 2021.

Sincerely,

Evon Antonio
Executive Director



While it has been challenging for the **4-H Youth Development program** to provide youth opportunities to “learn by doing” – the 4-H motto and utilize “hands-on learning” – our methodology, we feel that the COVID-19 safety constraints have encouraged us to be creative and think out-of-the-box. These photos illustrate some of the ways we have been able to reach out to youth throughout Columbia and Greene Counties in the last several months.



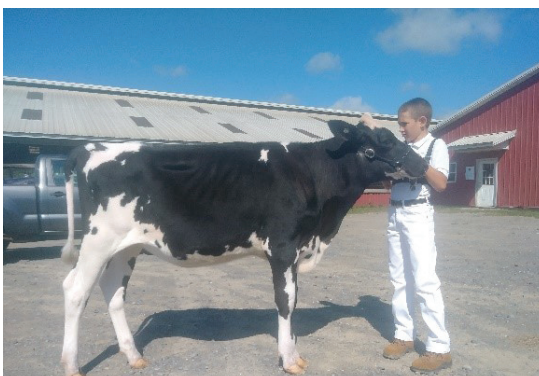
Above: These 4-H siblings pose with their entries to the at-home **4-H Pumpkin Growing Contest**.

Left: Fifteen Columbia and Greene teens gained skills by attending one of the **Safe Sitter Programs**.

Right: Harriet caught a sunfish during the **Summit Lake Explorers Program** held August 10-14 at the Philmont Community Center.



Above: Wyatt completes his **4-H Public Presentation** at home by demonstrating how to make a no sew mask.



Above: Brayden and his 4-H heifer are videotaped for the virtual **4-H Dairy Cattle Show**. Right: A participant in the **Hudson Youth Summer Program “Gardening & Urban Nature Walks”** plants seeds in his container garden.



Agriculture & Natural Resources

Climate Change & the Environment

COVID-19 has created many challenges to our traditional operations. However, many residents found multiple reasons to reach out to CCE. With increased time at home, many landowners were interested in improving their property. Community members contacted CCE to share their exciting projects and request information. Staff helped with the identification of wildlife, trees and plants. We also provided resources on agroforestry, ponds, pollinators and road construction. Updates on ongoing projects can be found in the following pages. We are proud to support residents in their quest to learn about their environment and achieve their goals during an unprecedented time.

AVID- Assessing Vegetation Impacts from Deer- In partnership with Cornell University and the NYS DEC, this project offers trainings statewide to landowners and land managers to become citizen scientists, collecting deer browse data. We have shifted our focus from in-person trainings to improve online resources and virtual trainings.

Logger Training- CCE has worked with the NYC Watershed Agricultural Council to adapt the voluntary **Trained Logger Certification program** so that loggers can receive and maintain their certification. The program that helps improve their safety and productivity in the woods while implementing Best Management Practices to maintain water quality and forest health has include in-person workshops outside

with low participant numbers. We have also transitioned classroom workshops to virtual offerings. Our team has also created a Catskills regional field guide that helps loggers and forest professionals identify wet soils using native plants which will improve their ability to recognize and avoid wet soils.

Agroforestry- during COVID-19, we have been identifying opportunities to engage landowners interested in working with their woods. Our **Annual Shiitake Inoculation Workshop** was adapted into a 2 hour virtual workshop utilizing photos and footage from the shiitake demonstration at our Siuslaw Model Forest. Our first in-person event was the very popular **Mushroom Foray**. Even with a smaller group, it was an exciting day with many learning opportunities shared.



Left: an instructor helps a student perform wedge cut to a log. Above Middle: The Mushroom Foray discovers and identifies a deadly mushroom, the appropriately named “destroying angel”. Above Right: A deer enclosure demonstrates the effect of deer browsing on forest vegetation.



Above left: Step by step photos were used in the online Shiitake Inoculation workshop. Above right: No volunteers meant that CCE staff had to work extra hard to maintain eel monitoring sites. Bottom right: CCE staff handed out over 940 gallons of hand sanitizer to local farmers.



Woodland Stewardship: Each month, staff write and share an issue of *In These Woods*. This is a woodland stewardship publication that covers many forestry topics that landowners can use to educate themselves and engage with the woods. We send these to all registered participants and make them available on our website.

Additionally, in partnership with The Nature Conservancy and CCE Onondaga, staff hosted a **Keep Your Forests Healthy webinar** that focused on the Forest Health and Resilience Scorecard that helps landowners and forest professionals assess and improve forest health conditions to mitigate potential impacts from invasive species and climate change all in support of adaptive and biodiverse forests.

Hand Sanitizer Distribution to Farmers: On two occasions, CCE partnered with the Department of Ag and Markets to supply free hand sanitizer and personal protective equipment to farmers in Columbia and Greene Counties. Overall we distributed over 940 gallons of hand sanitizer and 2055 face masks to 104 local farms and producers.

Hudson River Eel Project: This project experienced unique challenges this year. Many sites were closed to monitoring and no volunteer participation was allowed. Fortunately, staff worked with NYS DEC to maintain the Hannacroix Creek site. Staff coordinated and conducted all monitoring this year while keeping volunteers engaged. Volunteers were understanding and supportive and the data collected will contribute to the ongoing project.

Watershed Resilience and Culverts: In partnership with Trout Unlimited and the Housatonic Valley

Association, staff have continued to develop **Stream Crossing Management Plans** for the Towns of New Baltimore, Taghkanic, Ghent and Austerlitz. This process includes town-wide culvert assessments that are compiled into a comprehensive inventory document. The management plans consist of the inventory and describes priority replacement projects with supporting resource information.

Climate Resiliency: As part of the ongoing partnership with the Hudson River Estuary Program, the Water Resources Institute and 5 different county CCE associations, staff have been successful in continuing the **2020 Climate Smart Community projects**. Staff have worked closely with partners in the Village of Athens and City of Hudson to bring these forward virtually along with many engaged community members.

In the Village of Athens, the Climate Smart Communities Assessment has been completed and the task force has begun submitting documentation for Climate Smart Community certification. This process includes integrating climate resiliency and sustainability into the Comprehensive Plan public survey and working to gather public input for the Resilience Vision. Staff were also able to attend and present to the recently formed CAC, which is an exciting step for the village.

In the City of Hudson, staff have worked closely with the Climate Smart Community task force and Mayor's office to complete the Climate Smart Communities Assessment and begin submitting documentation for CSC certification. Staff met with the DPW virtually to begin discussions about a city-wide culverts assessment and Flood Guide for residents.

Family and Consumer Sciences



From setting up socially distant parenting home visits to creating online resources of food pantries in the two counties the Cornell Cooperative Extension of Columbia and Greene Counties Family and Consumer Sciences program has been hard at work during the pandemic. Below you can find updates on our ongoing projects.

Dual County Programming

Parenting with Confidence Program

Funded through a grant from the Dyson Foundation, this program provides 6-10 parenting education lessons to participants in Columbia and Greene Counties, targeting populations considered at-risk for child abuse and/or neglect. Classes are available through group lessons at community organizations In-home lessons available to those who cannot participate in group lessons.

Covid-19 response: Parenting education is being offered through socially-distant home visits, as well as through tele-health and zoom classes. We have created videos on relevant parenting topics and curated online resources available on our website and social media platforms.

Anger Management

A 12 week class series taught three times a year that ends with a certificate. Cost to participants is \$50.00 for all 12 weeks; fee is waived for referrals from Greene County DSS. Taught by Rebecca Polmateer, Certified Anger Management Specialist-I.

Covid-19 response: Anger Management is being offered via telehealth and zoom classes. Anger management videos can be found on our Youtube channel.

Family and Community Resiliency

Workshops are offered to organizations in Columbia and Greene Counties for a small fee. Topics include basic budgeting, organizing household records, identity theft prevention, supermarket smarts, buttoning up your home for winter, reducing food waste, greening your holidays and adopting a zero-waste lifestyle. Members of the community can call or stop in our offices to receive information on energy conservation, water quality, waste management, indoor air quality, aging in place, emergency preparedness, fair housing and tenant's rights.

Covid-19 response: Family and Community Resiliency classes on personal financial management and consumer topics are being offered via zoom. Videos and online resources have been developed for our website and social media platforms.

Greene County Programming

Home-Based Parenting Program

Funded through a contract with Greene County DSS, this free home-based parenting program delivers in-home parenting

lessons to families referred by Greene County DSS.

Covid-19 response: Parenting education is being offered through socially-distant home visits, as well as through tele-health and zoom classes. We have created Youtube videos on relevant parenting topics and curated online resources available on our website and social media platforms.

Parenting Skills Class

Funded through a contract with Greene County DSS, CCE provides 16 weeks of classes twice per year. Classes are either Tuesdays at 1:30-2:30 or Wednesdays at 5:30-6:30 at Greene County DSS. They are open to the public and no cost to participants.

Covid-19 response: Participants can now receive the class series in-home via socially-distant home visits when referred by Greene County DSS.

Columbia County Programming

Healthy Schools and Communities Partnership

Funded through a contract with St. Peter's Health Partners, CCE is responsible for the community aspects by mobilizing nutrition and physical activity efforts in the Hudson.

Covid-19 response: A virtual training on Complete Streets was offered to municipal officials in the city of Hudson as part of our Creating Healthy Schools and Communities grant. In addition, three crosswalks and a bike fix-it station were installed in Hudson as part of the grant.

In addition, phone consultation is being provided in the areas of nutrition, food safety, and home food preservation. As well as online resources being developed for the website.



The Complete Streets project has provided new crosswalks at several intersections in Hudson.



Right: Taste NY, Employee Samantha Henion, shows off masks made in Columbia County.

Above: The Taste NY Market at the Capital Region Welcome Center.

The Capital Region Welcome Center has remained open during the entirety of the COVID-19 shut down. We saw a decrease in sales beginning in Mid-March and have only recently started seeing business pick back up. August was our highest grossing month in 2019 and we hoped to surpass those numbers this year; however, despite the current economic situation in the country we will not see that happen in 2020.

Month	Net Sales 2020	Net Sales 2019
January	\$46,745.18	\$32,824.52
February	\$51,509.97	\$36,401.74
March	\$30,032.75	\$41,094.96
April	\$5,549.30	\$46,089.30
May	\$13,648.28	\$58,951.33
June	\$33,413.63	\$64,746.77
July	\$58,260.42	\$85,372.89
August	\$77,151.71	\$105,630.91

We were on a trajectory to have greater sales this year, the first half of our first quarter alone was a good indication. Along with fewer people traveling this season, we have implemented new health safety protocols, masks are required for service, we have done away

with self-serve coffee bar and have the clerks serving it from behind the counter, in June we brought back hot food service, and in August we re-introduced the bake case. We are no longer offering samples of products and are having a difficult time getting vendors to commit to coming in and tabling. Our employees have been an enormous foundation to the operation during this time, they have gone above and beyond to keep Taste NY open during this time.

Master Gardener

Cornell Cooperative Extension



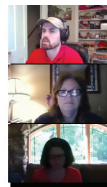
The Master Gardener Volunteers reached over 1,000 community members from January through July 2020. Even though COVID has closed the offices to the public, over half of the 34 active Master Gardeners have helped answer calls or emails. Programing has included virtual webinars and YouTube videos on invasive species, vegetable gardening native plants.

Cornell Cooperative Extension
Columbia and Greene Counties



Guarding the Garden
From Deer and Other Wildlife

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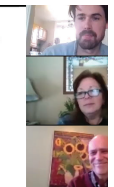


Cornell Cooperative Extension
Columbia and Greene Counties



**Supporting Wildlife and Adding Beauty with
Native Trees and Shrubs**

By Tim Kennelly
Master Gardener



CCE at a Glance

CCE connects communities with Cornell research and expertise to enrich and empower New York State neighbors, local businesses, towns, and cities.

In neighborhoods, homes, workplaces, and schools, CCE educators work to empower individuals and families with raising children, saving energy and money, growing and preparing food, starting, sustaining businesses, and protecting the environment.

Each CCE office relies on county, state, and federal funds to solve local problems and strengthen communities.

CCE Columbia and Greene Counties is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit.

Connect

Agroforestry Resource Center
6055 Route 23, Acra, NY 12405
(518) 622-9820

Extension Education Center
479 Route 66, Hudson, NY 12354
(518) 828-3346

Website: ccecolumbiagreene.org
Email: columbiagreene@cornell.edu

Facebook: @CCEColumbiaGreene
Instagram: @CCECGC

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