



# MONMOUTH EXTENSION

## Connection

Summer 2020

**RUTGERS**  
NEW JERSEY AGRICULTURAL  
EXPERIMENT STATION

### Rutgers Cooperative Extension

#### Of Monmouth County

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### 4-H Youth Development

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**FCHS**

Family & Community  
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### Family & Community Health Sciences

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**T**he public health crisis created by COVID-19 has forced us to adapt how we deliver our programs and services.

In compliance with State and Rutgers University guidelines, all county extension offices are currently closed to the public and in-person cooperative extension events and activities are suspended through August 14, 2020.

However, Rutgers Cooperative Extension remains committed to serving the needs of our state.

How do we continue to serve you?

- Extension faculty and staff remain available for consultation, through phone or email, to answer your questions or identify information you need. Contact information for our extension professionals may be found on our county office websites (<https://njaes.rutgers.edu/county/>) or through our personnel directory (<https://njaes.rutgers.edu/personnel/>).
- We are expanding online educational programming, including webinars and video-meetings, to bring you current science-based information. A calendar of events is available through the NJAES website: <https://events.rutgers.edu/njaes/?d=202005&c=00&u=all>
- A COVID-19 resources webpage contains guidance to help keep you and your family safe: <https://njaes.rutgers.edu/covid-19/>
- Cooperative Extension personnel are limiting in-person contact but continue to make essential field visits to provide critical services to agricultural growers, while adhering to social distancing and public health guidelines.
- A wealth of online resources are available through the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station website:
  - Commercial agriculture
  - Environment and natural resources
  - Fisheries and aquaculture
  - Food, nutrition, and health
  - Home, lawn, and garden
  - Youth and community development

For more than a century, Rutgers Cooperative Extension has served New Jersey—our residents, communities, and businesses. We are committed to helping you navigate through these unprecedented challenges and toward the better days that lie ahead.

Please contact your county office, or call 848-932-5000 for assistance.  
Brian J. Schilling, Ph.D., Director, Rutgers Cooperative Extension



# CEDH Remarks

There is a great deal of uncertainty in the world right now, and as we all go through this together, we should all be so lucky to have friends such as we have to lean on and exchange observations with.

Now as ever, your Monmouth County Rutgers Cooperative Extension Office is here for you. In the pages that follow, your Monmouth RCE office has put together useful information for you and your families. Through our Family and Community Health Sciences Department there is information about staying healthy. Our Agriculture Department has put together the steps to make a successful Victory Garden. And county 4-H Youth Development Department outlined a few steps families can take to keep young people active and engaged.

As you read the following pages, I hope a common theme becomes apparent. All of us at the Monmouth Rutgers Cooperative Extension Office firmly believe we will get through this – I personally have never been more certain of anything in my life!

The struggles we all face, they are very real., and it is healthy and normal to feel and process emotions of loss, uncertainty, and disappointment. There is nothing to compare with these unbelievable events we find ourselves living through. But I take heart – we will get through this. Again, I have never been more convinced of anything in my entire life..., we will get through this.

We will get through this.

And, once we are through this, we will be telling those who come after us what we did and how we responded to this challenge we have before us – this challenge that is of the most grievous kind. Though I draft this message as the County Extension Department Head, as the County 4-H Agent, 4-H is always on my mind, and to those 4-H youth members who look up to us? They will long remember these days. I thus share with Monmouth 4-H families (as I will share with you) that we should make it our goal to make sure we leave our 4-H'ers (and all young people today) with good stories to tell.

And what type of stories should we aim for? I aim to tell a story that is one of hope, one of good humor, and one that will inspire those future generations to do better and to be better. I encourage all to do the same.

All the Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matthew Newman', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Matthew Newman

County Extension Department Head, Monmouth Rutgers Cooperative Extension



# AGRICULTURE and NATURAL RESOURCES

## Creating Your Own Corona Victory Garden

*Dennis McNamara  
Agriculture Program Associate*

The last global pandemic took place just over a hundred years ago and coincided with the outbreak of World War I. In response, Americans were encouraged to grow food in whatever spaces they could. Thus the "Victory Garden" movement began. People grew produce on rooftops, on fire escapes, empty lots, backyards, any available space. These gardens helped put fresh vegetables on the dinner table. Later, they were valuable for struggling families during the Great Depression and the outbreak of World War II as the nation faced potential food shortages. Once again Americans grew their own Victory Gardens. These gardens became so popular that at one point it's estimated there were about twenty million gardens among homes, schools, and places of worship producing close to 40% of the country's fresh vegetables.



When the war concluded lawns took over and vegetable gardens became a relic of wartime scarcity. Today, in response to COVID-19, a return to growing vegetables in one's own available space is a prudent act of self-sufficiency. No matter how small the space, people can grow and harvesting their own produce. What follows are some tips to creating your own edible garden.

The first action is to scout out a proper site. Most vegetables need six to eight hours of sunlight, some leafy greens will grow with less sun but generally having more sun equals having better success growing vegetables. If you are in a hurry and have a sunny plot needing development, first get a soil test. (Information on how to get soil tests is available on the back page of the Monmouth Extension Connection.) Using a trowel, dig out a small sample of soil six to eight inches down from your chosen area then amend the soil with the soil lab recommendations and then start planting. If your sunniest space is taken up with a lawn, a driveway, a deck, or a patio, some decisions need to be made. In the case of the lawn, cover the area you wish to establish as a garden with cardboard or newspapers. Once prepared, then top the area with compost, soil, or mulch to smother the grass and perennial weeds. To be effective this will take several weeks to complete.

In the case of a driveway, deck or patio, container gardening may be your only option. Removing hardscape may not be practical or desired. There are several options for container gardening; the container may be as simple as a milk crate lined with burlap, a bag of growing mix cut open and used as a planter, or it may be an ornate terra cotta container. However, be aware that terra cotta is especially prone to drought and needs daily watering. Whichever container you choose it will always need drainage holes on the bottom. Also, the containers should be filled with a planting mix, not topsoil. The planting mix will allow for aeration in the container. Another option to consider



is a straw bale garden. The bale can be placed wherever you have sun but be aware that it will require watering until it is soggy along with a daily dusting of an all-purpose organic fertilizer for ten days before you begin planting.

With all container gardening it's important to know the crop you wish to grow. Whether you wish to grow peppers, eggplants, tomatoes or any edible, know the root system. The Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Monmouth County has free fact sheets that can be helpful in this area. For instance, tomatoes have significant root systems that will require at least a ten-gallon capacity container. They also need lots of irrigation, particularly during the hot summer months. Since many of the vegetables are heavy feeders, you will need to plan a weekly fertilizing treatment for your containers. The Rutgers Fact Sheets can help you here. If your crop is a vining plant like an indeterminate tomato cultivar, it will need support as it matures such as a trellis or poles to grow on.

A more permanent option for your garden is to establish a raised bed. This is simply a filled box in a sunny location. The materials for constructing the box may be of a number of options but don't use pressure-treated wood when growing edibles. An inexpensive framing option I've often used is a box made of Douglas fir. This can provide about five years or so of growing before the wood begins to deteriorate and needs replacing. Some more expensive, longer lasting wood choices would be an investment in cedar, redwood or black locust. They will last for decades. An option I've always admired is Monmouth County Park System garden at Deep Cut Park. There the garden beds are framed of blue stone. It may be the most expensive option but likely will last generations.

Regardless of the box choice they all have the same purpose, to grow plants. Each bed is filled with healthy amendments to provide proper drainage and nutrients. Many landscape supply purveyors offer such healthy soils and deliver to your home. After your bed is filled there are the options for irrigation to consider. It may be designed elaborately with drip irrigation on a timer or just easy access to a hose with a watering bucket. Overhead sprinklers are not recommended as it is the roots that should be getting the water instead of the top leaves.

Each bed should have arms-length access to all plants. The beds are never stepped on which would result in soil compaction. The perimeter of the garden bed is the only place the gardener will step. The pathways may be wood chip mulch, pebbles, brick walkways or whatever your garden tastes dictate.

When planning your garden you will also have to consider protecting the garden from local critters such as deer or groundhogs. All the hard work going into establishing the garden could be destroyed in a night if hungry local fauna have access to the garden. Consider surrounding the garden with a fence that has underground chicken wiring down sixteen-eighteen inches to protect from the burrowers and has a height of at least six or seven feet to discourage the deer.

Once all the work and money is invested there is a reward. Your garden is a source of healthy, fresh food, a place of physical exercise, a conversation piece for your family, friends and neighbors, a teaching center for children, and a chance to spread the joy of gardening. Speaking of children, later on in this edition of the Monmouth Extension Connection, 4-H Program Associate Virginia Krzyzanowski shares how young people can stay active and engaged with Victory Gardens.

I have constructed over seventy-five gardens in New Jersey; if at any time you wish free garden construction consulting please call the Rutgers Cooperative Extension in Monmouth County and ask for Agriculture Associate Dennis McNamara. Good luck.



# Successful Tips For Planting Your Garden



*Diane Larson  
Horticulturist, Master Gardener Coordinator*

**D**uring the current COVID-19 crisis many people who have little or no experience growing a vegetable garden are considering doing so to ensure a fresh supply of produce throughout the summer. Once the bed is established (or even large containers of potting soil on a deck or patio are set out), it may seem a little overwhelming to know what to do next. Plant seeds or transplants? When? How far apart? What else needs to be done to ensure success? The answers are easier than you think.

Some vegetable plants are better off started directly in the garden from seed, while others take a longer time to harvest and need warmer growing conditions. These heat lovers are better off purchased as transplants from garden centers. Many garden centers are now offering call ahead, curbside pick up, so check them out to purchase transplants of tomatoes, peppers and eggplant. Be sure to wait until the chance of frost is over (usually around May 10) to plant these warm season crops. Plant them early and you not only risk frost damage, but the plants tend to take longer to get established. When planting transplants from pots or cell packs, first 'tickle the roots,' meaning gently (VERY gently) disturb the root ball with your fingers to encourage the roots to grow out. Set the transplant in a hole so that it is at the same level it was growing in in the container, with the exception of tomatoes. Tomatoes are the only plants that should be planted deeper, right up to the first tuft of leaves, as they will grow roots along the stem and result in a sturdier plant. Be sure to read the ID label so that you know how far to space the plants. Too close and the plants won't grow and produce to their full potential and you run the risk of disease due to poor air circulation. Too far apart and you're wasting valuable growing space!

Seed packets are widely available at garden centers, hardware stores, big box stores, and of course online. The seed packet is your instruction manual for growing that plant. It will tell you everything you need for a successful harvest, including when to sow, how deep to plant the seed (VERY important as some seeds need light to germinate so should just be sprinkled on the surface of the soil), how far to space the rows, the distance needed in between the seeds (and how much to thin the seedlings out), and how many days it will take that seed to germinate and the plant to mature so you will know when to expect to harvest.

Direct seeding in the garden is easy and inexpensive; however, there are some important factors that must be considered, especially the timing of sowing. Cool weather vegetables that are the first to get direct seeded in the garden include dill, leaf lettuce, peas, and radishes. These can get seeded as early as mid-late March, as they will germinate when the soil is as cold as 40F. Beets and carrots can follow about a month later when the soil has



warmed to at least 50F. All of these can be sowed repeatedly throughout the spring and early summer, as some like radish, are quick to mature. Warm season plants that can be direct sown after the danger of frost has past include green beans, summer and winter squash, and cucumbers.

When deciding how to lay the garden out, the basic rule of thumb is to place tall plants such as tomatoes on the north side of the garden so they don't shade out lower growing crops. Cucumbers, winter squash, melons, pole beans, and other vining crops will need some kind of a trellis to climb on. If left to ramble on the ground the fruit can easily rot. Climbing structures can be as simple as tomato cages or bamboo teepees, even a repurposed ladder can make an excellent trellis for vines.

Once planted, the garden will need to be watered. Young seedlings will need more frequent watering until the roots grow deep, so should be watered when the top inch of soil is dry. Depending on temperatures and sunlight this could be daily. Later in the season when the roots are more established, the soil can dry to a depth of 3-4 inches before watering. To avoid foliar diseases like leaf spot and powdery milder, try to water without getting the leaves wet. Drip irrigation is ideal. Mulching the garden with hay, straw, newspaper or compost not only reduces weed growth but also keeps moisture in the soil so you don't have to water as often.

If you applied fertilizer and/or compost when the garden was prepared in the spring you shouldn't need to apply more at planting. A soil test will tell you if you need to apply lime and how much, as well as what specific fertilizer to use. A midseason application should be applied as well, in many cases when the plants begin to produce fruit.

Whether this is your first time planting a vegetable garden or you're a seasoned Victory Gardener, be sure to enjoy the process. Grow some extra plants to share the harvest with your neighbors or to donate to a food pantry. Don't forget to stick some flowers in amongst the vegetable plants to attract bees and other pollinators. And if you have any problems along the way, the Rutgers Master Gardeners of Monmouth County are now only an email away. Send your questions and photos to [mgarden@co.monmouth.nj.us](mailto:mgarden@co.monmouth.nj.us)

For help in making this year's vegetable garden victorious, please check out the following resources:

Rutgers Publications on Vegetable and Herb Gardening:

<https://njaes.rutgers.edu/pubs/subcategory.php?cat=5&sub=42>

All Rutgers Publications on Gardening and Landscaping:

<https://njaes.rutgers.edu/pubs/subcategory.php?cat=5&sub=1001>

## **Elderberry: A Native Medicinal Plant For The Home Garden And Commercial Orchard**

*Bill Errickson*

*Agricultural Agent*

*Dennis McNamara*

*Agricultural Associate*

**T**he elderberry is a flowering woody perennial native to both North America (*Sambucus canadensis*) and Europe (*Sambucus nigra*) that is valued for its aesthetic, medicinal, and nutritional qualities. Its health benefits, commercial potential, and ornamental qualities might be just the right combination for these trying times. Elderberries are rich in vitamins A and C, phosphorous, potassium and iron. They have demonstrated antiviral properties, making them especially effective in reducing the severity and duration of colds and flu. Berries from *S. nigra* have been found to help regulate immune response and contain anthocyanins with high antioxidant activity. The flowers are used to promote sweating, and elderflower tea is often taken to reduce fevers from cold and flu. Elderberry wine and cordials are gaining in popularity and can serve as an excellent addition to New Jersey's growing wine industry. Elderberries are also deer resistant while providing habitat for pollinators and other wildlife.



The North American elderberry can be found growing from as far south as Florida to as far north as Quebec. The North American elderberry has traditionally been harvested from the wild, though cultivars such as Adams, York, and Nova are providing growers with higher yields and greater productivity, while ornamental cultivars such as 'Black Lace' and 'Black Beauty' have striking dark red foliage and pink flowers. The roots of elderberry are shallow and mat-like. They will compete poorly with more aggressive plants but if planted in sites with good drainage and access to sunlight, they can produce significant crop yields and bear fruit for many years. Elderberries will tolerate a wide range of soil textures and fertility, but



*American Elderberry. Photo: University of Maryland*

growers will obtain the best yields from plants grown in well-drained, moderately acidic soils (pH 5.5 – 6.5). Elderberries will yield best in open areas with full sun. Situating plantings away from forest edges may reduce predation by birds and will assist with pollination and disease prevention through good air circulation. Elderberry flowers appear to be primarily windpollinated and it is recommended to plant at least two different cultivars within 60 feet of one another to ensure cross-pollination and adequate fruit set.



*'Black Beauty' Elderberry' Photo: Oregon State University*

Growers can start with either potted plants or bare root stock from nurseries or propagate your own stock from cuttings. Potted elderberries typically have a higher survival rate and come into full production sooner than rooted cuttings. One-year old rooted cuttings can produce a sizable crop as early as the second year after planting. Initial soil fertility should be adjusted based on a soil test, with no nitrogen applied at planting. A light N application of 10 lbs/A can be applied 4 to 8 weeks after planting. Mature elderberry plants will benefit from 60 to 80 lbs of N per acre each year, applied in late March or early April.

After planting the elderberries, the rows should be mulched with three to four inches of woodchips or straw. The alleys or middles between the beds should be sown with a cover crop of a mix of slowgrowing grasses, such as hard fescue and dwarf perennial rye grass, or white clover. Monitor weeds closely and be careful not to damage the elderberries' shallow root system when cultivating. Plants should receive 1- 2 inches of water per week while getting established in their first growing season. During the first establishment year, remove the flowering heads to prevent the plant from putting energy into fruit development and to encourage the development of a good root system.

Spacing can range from 3 to 12 feet between plants. More space allows the plants room to grow and yield more and provides better air-circulation to help prevent the spread of fungal diseases. Elderberry takes three to five years to establish and achieve mature harvest yields. Partial harvests can begin as early as the second year.



Flowering should occur for most cultivars from mid-June to mid-July with the berries ripening in mid-August to mid-September, depending on the cultivar. Fresh berries must be refrigerated within four hours of harvesting, and frozen or dried within five days of refrigerating to prevent degradation in quality.

There is an increasing demand for elderberry-based products and that is likely to continue for the foreseeable future. Elderberries offer medicinal and nutritious berries on an ornamental native plant with minimal pest and disease problems. Furthermore, elderberries are easy to propagate, making expansion or nursery sales another viable opportunity. If you are interested in growing elderberries or have experiences that you would like to share, contact your Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Monmouth County Office for more information.

Growing Elderberries Production Manual:

<https://www.uvm.edu/sites/default/files/media/ElderberryGuideComplete.pdf>

## Creative Marketing During COVID-19

Bill Errickson  
Agricultural Agent

**T**he COVID-19 pandemic has posed some new challenges for farmers in New Jersey. With a reduction in restaurant sales and social distancing regulations affecting how markets can operate, many growers are finding new and creative ways to provide their products to customers. On a positive note, many customers are showing an increased enthusiasm for purchasing from local producers. Whether it is fresh vegetables, eggs, meat, plants, or garden supplies, customers want to purchase these goods from their local businesses and support their agricultural community.

Several farms and garden centers have implemented call ahead or online purchasing options with curb side pickup. This reduces direct person to person contact and creates an easy purchasing process. Some growers are also teaming up and working together to provide boxes containing staple foods to customers. These boxes may contain produce from several different farms, eggs from another farm, meat and dairy from another producer, and fresh bread from a local baker. This collaborative effort strengthens the local food system, builds a dedicated customer base, and provides customers with fresh, high quality products all while limiting the spread of COVID-19.

Some growers are also offering home delivery to retail customers. Home delivery options are available from both food producers and nursery/garden centers for plants and garden supplies. This allows customers to support local agricultural businesses while adhering to the stay-at-home directive. As a result, markets and garden centers are less crowded with customers, but are still able to maintain or even increase sales.



*Pre-boxed vegetables available for pickup or delivery reduce contact and limit the spread of COVID-19.*



If you are a New Jersey resident looking to support your local agricultural businesses, give your local farm or garden center a call or check their website online to find out about their pick-up and delivery options. Additional information from Rutgers Cooperative Extension regarding COVID-19 can be found at: <https://njaes.rutgers.edu/covid-19/> and <https://onfarmfoodsafety.rutgers.edu/>

For up to date information on the status of Farmers Markets, Farm Stands, and Garden Centers visit <https://www.growninmonmouth.com/Directory.aspx> or contact Grown in Monmouth at 732-431-7470.



## Ask The Agent Weekly Online/Call-In Forum

**A**sk the Ag Agent was created when COVID-19 forced a new normal in communications nationwide. Rutgers Cooperative Extension Agricultural Agents working with “Ask the Ag Agent” education and outreach are committed to the agriculture industry and all interested in growing plants, raising livestock and essential resources related to agriculture. The program now features a new Ask the Ag Agent website with more information.

Farmers and others are welcome to join a weekly teleconference each Wednesday night from 7:00pm-8:00pm. Weekly events are hosted by Rutgers Cooperative Extension Agricultural Agents working with the farming industry.

This call-in/WebEx event features updates on farm management, crop conditions, farm industry observations, agricultural agency programs and other topics discussed by farmers, agricultural agents and other agricultural service providers.

Hosted by Bill Bamka, Stephen Komar, Michelle Infante-Casella and Meredith Melendez, this weekly communication provides a forum for discussion for farmers and all involved in NJ agriculture. Agricultural agency personnel, non-profit organizations and others have participated and added additional discussion with farmers.

This event and other events hosted by Rutgers Cooperative Extension can be found on the Rutgers NJAES Events website: <https://events.rutgers.edu/njaes/>

To join the “Ask the Ag Agent” forum each week on a computer/tablet/smartphone via the WebEx Videoconference:

Use the URL: <https://go.rutgers.edu/rc9n3kxt>

To join the “Ask the Ag Agent” each week on the Phone:

Call: (650)-429-3300

Access Code: 799-743-872 # followed by #



# Dealing With Stress, Food And Your Mood During Times Of Crisis

*Rachel Tansey, MA, Senior FCHS Extension Associate*



**A**s many of us might be planning a victory garden and possibly even expanding this year, I am sure you are aware, maintaining a healthy diet is important for good nutrition. However, did you know that food can in fact boost your mood as well? During times of crisis we tend to stress our bodies even more than usual. These are times when it is critical that we keep ourselves well. At times, stress can become unmanageable, draining you of time and energy. Finding simple ways to bring your daily work or life stress into balance can make a difference in your day, week, and life!

Taking some time for “self-care” including mood boosting foods can have an impact on your brain health and mood. A diet rich in colorful fruits & vegetables can elevate your mood and make for a great day. On the other hand, a diet filled with saturated animal fats can increase stress, anxiety and lead to depression. A few simple changes in your diet can make the difference by serving as mood-boosters. A colorful snack while you work can help make the day better.

Managing stress is identifying the cause. Being attentive to stress can help improve your overall health and quality of sleep. The key will be practicing a few simple strategies that you can use in stressful times. To start with, focus on eating a healthy diet and drink plenty of water!

A diet rich in plant foods, which are high in antioxidants, can help neutralize types of stress in our bodies thus lessening anxiety levels as well. All of the natural colors of fruits and vegetables provide the nutrients your brain needs to elevate your mood. Something as simple as a colorful plate of fruit and veggies with whole grains can do wonders and boost your mood!

1. Eat your veggies – vegetables as focal point of the diet, provide your body a variety of important vitamins and minerals. The more colorful your diet – the better!
2. Choose whole grains – whole grains are nutrient-dense and help to keep you feeling fuller longer.
3. Use healthy fats – include sources of healthy fats in meals such as extra-virgin olive oil, nuts, peanuts, sunflower seeds, olives and avocados.
4. Eat more seafood/fish– seafood is a great protein source filled with healthy fats and other important nutrients. Try to consume fish such as tuna, salmon and shellfish at least twice per week.





5. Enjoy dairy products in moderation – when choosing dairy products, aim to consume low-fat and fat-free products. Try low-fat Greek yogurt along with low-fat milk and cheeses.
6. Meatless Mondays –A good way to start including more veggies in your diet is by participating in Meatless Mondays. Instead of animal protein, build meals around beans, whole grains and vegetables.

Incorporating a healthy diet into your daily life is an essential step to keeping yourself well!

## Grilled Sugar Snap Peas

As an early seasonal homegrown legume...have you ever tried to grill them? They are delicious!

<https://player.vimeo.com/video/166838067>

### Ingredients

- 2 cups fresh sugar snap peas, rinsed & pat dry
- 2 Tablespoons olive oil
- Sprinkle of salt and pepper

### Preparation Steps

1. Toss sugar snap peas with 2 Tablespoons olive oil and a sprinkle of salt and pepper. Toss to coat.
2. Heat a grill pan over medium heat. Cook the peas for one minute on each side, or until lightly blistered.
3. Serve Grilled Sugar Snap Peas as a side dish!

### References:

<https://njaes.rutgers.edu/fchs/>

<https://www.nof.org/patients/treatment/nutrition/>

<http://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015/guidelines/>

<https://oldwayspt.org/traditional-diets/mediterranean-diet>



## Healthy Eating in the Times of COVID

*Carol Byrd-Bredbenner, PhD, RD, FAND, Kaitlyn Eck, PhD, RD, Jaclyn Maurer Abbot, PhD, RD, Nutritional Sciences Department Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey*

**T**here is little doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting every aspect of our lives—from virtual classrooms to telecommuting to early restaurant closing times to outright quarantines. Observing public health measures and reducing exposure to the virus are required to slow the spread of this disease. No one knows how long these virus safety measures will need to stay in place, but it presents a perfect time to protect and improve your health while practicing social distancing. Healthy eating is especially important for keeping your immune system in top condition. Here are some steps you can take to eat healthy in the times of COVID

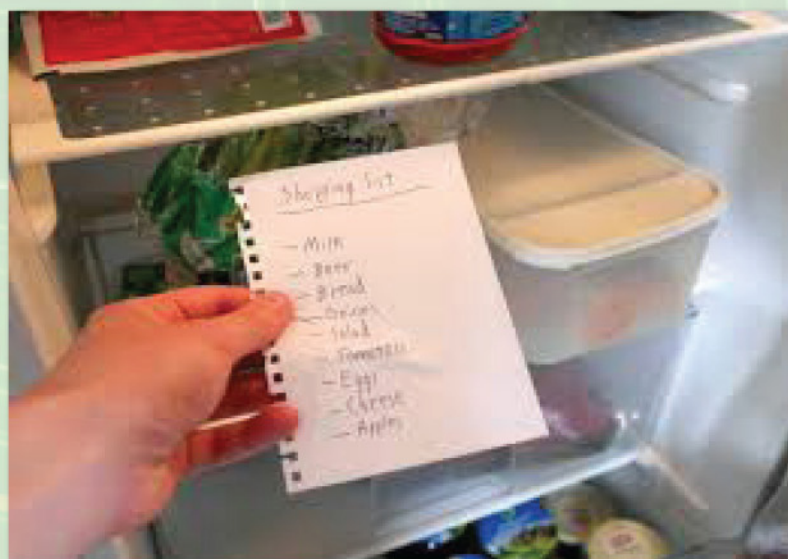
### Minimize trips to the supermarket and eat healthy

#### *Before you go...*

- **Plan ahead.** Visualize breakfast, lunch, and dinner for at least 5 days. What will you serve? What do you need? Consider the foods your family likes, your food preparations interests and skills, and the time and energy you will have for preparing meals. Working from home may not mean there is more time to cook—especially if you are now responsible for teaching your kids and doing the work your employer expects.



- **Have children at home?** Include children in meal planning, preparation, and clean up while teaching them writing, math, reading, and science.
  - **Reading/Writing:** Ask your kids make a list of what's in the pantry and refrigerator. Then, have them look through cookbooks or online recipes sites to find meals and snacks that use up what is on hand. Have them share their breakfast, lunch, or dinner meal ideas.
  - **Math:** Find math in measuring spoons and cups, counting out numbers of ingredients, taking stock of pantry items, or planning the time it will take to prepare, cook, eat, and clean up a meal.
  - **Science:** Get kids involved in baking bread, cooking an egg, or creating a homemade salad dressing—then, search the internet to discover the science behind why ingredients change when they are combined, heated, or blended
- **Think nutrition.** The healthiest meals emphasize whole grains, vegetables, and fruits—serve them in the greatest amounts. Meat portions should be smaller—this will save \$\$ and help keep dietary saturated fat in check.
- **Make a shopping list—and use it!** You'll be less like to forget items or buy impulse items.
- **Stock up on nutrition-packed foods that will stay fresh for a week or longer.**
  1. **Breads**—corn tortillas, whole grain English muffins, bagels, breads, wraps, frozen whole wheat waffles
  2. **Grains**—instant oatmeal, quick cooking pasta, frozen brown rice, couscous, refrigerated pizza crust
  3. **Fruits**—sturdy fresh fruit (apples, citrus), dried, plain frozen, canned in juice or water
  4. **Vegetables**—sturdy fresh veggies (celery, broccoli, onions, potatoes), plain frozen, low sodium canned, sun-dried
  5. **Sauces**—tomato pasta sauce, salsa
  6. **Soups & Broths**—canned, frozen, shelf-stable cartons
  7. **100% Juice**—refrigerated, frozen, canned, boxed
  8. **Milk**—fresh, canned, shelf-stable packages
  9. **Eggs**—fresh eggs, egg whites in cartons
  10. **Cheese**—sliced, cubed, shredded, crumbled, grated hard cheese
  11. **Beans/Legumes**—canned beans (black beans, chickpeas), dry beans
  12. **Nuts and seeds**—bagged, canned, nut butters
  13. **Chicken**—frozen or canned
  14. **Seafood**—frozen ready-to-cook fish fillets, frozen shrimp, canned tuna, salmon, and sardines
  15. **Beef**—pre-made frozen lean ground patties or meatballs
  16. **Flavorings**—add zing with dried herbs & spices, vinegars, mustard, hot/steak sauces, lemon/lime juice, light dressings, honey, Greek yogurt
- **Go easy on the frozen dinners**—most are high in sodium, fat, and calories
- **Limit purchases of tempting foods** like chips, sodas, cookies, and ice cream. They are high in empty calories and run up your grocery bill
- **Keep costs down**—consider low cost alternatives. Instead of buying ready-made hummus, pureed a drained can of chickpeas to make your own. Try a meatless meal, like chili with beans instead of beef. If fresh fruits and veggies are too costly—remember, canned and frozen fruits and vegetables provide the same nutrients as fresh. Best bets are plain frozen veggies and fruits. Go for low sodium canned veggies and fruits canned in





juice or water—if these are in short supply, buy regular canned fruits and veggies—drain and rinse before use.

- **Think about friends and neighbors, especially older adults or those with health conditions.** Could you save them a trip to the grocery store?
- **Try online shopping**—it will save you time and let you keep your social distance. Be sure to play ahead, many stores need a day or two from order to delivery or pickup

#### *While at the supermarket...*

- **Use a disinfecting wipe**—wipe your hands and grocery cart handle, then put the wipe in the trash.
- **Prepared for the unexpected**—supermarkets are running low on many items. Be sure to take your own bags. Be ready with a back-up plan if an ingredient you need is unavailable.
- **Keep the less fortunate in mind**—contribute to local pantries and soup kitchens now. Then, when it is all over—donate extra food you stocked up on that is still fresh and safe to eat.
- **Use contactless payment or credit cards.** If you use the payment keypad, tap the buttons and screen with your knuckle—then use hand sanitizer after completing your payment.

#### *Eat out safely with restaurant curfews*

If you want to have take-out meals, take the food home right away and eat it while it is hot. Store leftovers safely—wrap tightly and refrigerate any dishes with meat, fish, poultry, or dairy products—be sure to reheat these leftovers thoroughly before eating.

#### *Make eating together at home a positive experience*

Whether it is homemade or takeout, eating more meals at home is a new routine for many families. Keep the stress down by making mealtime fun.



- **Get the family involved**—kids can help set the table, pour the water, make the salad, or grate the cheese. Make mealtimes a family affair.
- **Try some new recipes**—if you have never made homemade pizza, roasted a whole chicken, or cooked meatballs from scratch—now is a good time to try! There are lots of great recipes on the internet! Look for those that call for only a few ingredients and use common kitchen tools.
- **Reconnect with the family**—eat together at the table or spread a blanket on the floor and have an indoor picnic. Be sure to separate mealtime and TV time—watching while eating makes it too easy to pay attention to TV and not your food, so you are likely to overeat. Wonder what to talk about at mealtime? Chat about things you will do this summer, tell jokes—just keep the conversation upbeat and fun.

#### *Think positive!*

Mindset is vital to getting through this pandemic physically and mentally healthy.

- **Practice positive stress management strategies.** Walk the dog, call a friend, soak in the tub, or cuddle your kids. Skip the alcohol, tobacco, and drugs.
- **Stick with your routine as much as you can.** Go to bed and get up in the morning on your usual schedule. Eat meals at regular times. Find ways to exercise away from the gym—do yoga in the living room, trim the hedge, have a scavenger hunt in the backyard with your kids, or just toss a ball or play tag as a family.
- **Manage boredom.** Stay busy and engaged—resist hanging around the fridge or mindlessly watching TV. Enjoy your hobbies, read, cook, make videos with your kids, start a scrapbook, help your kids with their virtual schoolwork, and stay in touch with family, friends, and colleagues.

**When you do go out,** wash your hands before you leave home and as soon as you return.

**Have a dry cough? Feeling feverish? Hard time breathing?** Don't hesitate to reach out to your health care provider for further instructions.

**We are all facing this together.** Let's make the most of it to come out stronger and wiser and ready to enjoy all the wonderful times to come!



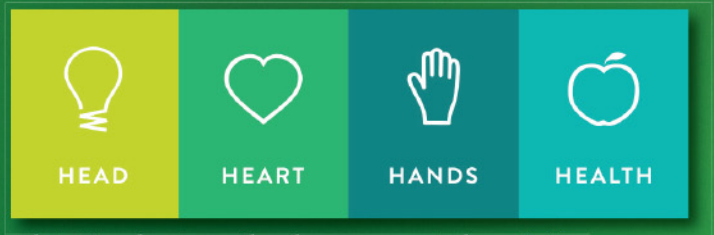


# 4-H

## Youth Well-Being During Tumultuous Times

Matthew Newman  
4-H Agent

Being a youth even in the best of times can be stressful, but it can be difficult to wrap our heads around what growing up in the middle of a global pandemic is like for our young people today. In response to COVID-19, families are sheltering in place and in-class instruction is disrupted. What are the effects are these measures having on schoolchildren? Additionally, how can parents and 4-H volunteers/leaders support them? For over a hundred years, 4-H has employed the “Head, Heart, Hands, and Health” approach to positive youth development, and perhaps especially in times like these, 4-H is here to help!



First, let us look at the research. Because of the sudden and dramatic shift that took place in mid-March, the research is ongoing. It is difficult at this point to have a solid body of evidence to understand what is happening to the mental health and well-being of young people, but one thing that is very clear is that this is a very unusual situation. Though there are some parallels that can be drawn from other large scale traumas – such as hurricanes and earthquakes – this is different in the sense of both the scale (global) as well as the timeframe (at this point, indefinite).

We are all cognizant that our young people are going through trauma amid these disruptions to their routine. And, beyond the routine, there are also disruptions to certain life benchmarks (getting a driver's license, proms, graduations, etc.). Additionally, many youth are losing a half year of in-class instruction and, in addition to the lessons learned, are also losing the in-person interactions with their peers and the relationship building that goes along with that.

There are thus holes not only in education for youth today, but also in social development. Whatever age young people are, kids are designed to play. Play is defined as “engaging in activity for enjoyment and recreation rather than a serious or practical purpose.” As incredible as smartphones and computers are, “play” is best defined as real interaction with peers.

For the first time in generations, we are experiencing the limitations of technology. Never before have we been more connected, but, as incredible as these resources are, this technology does not replace the real-time, face-to-face interactions children thrive on.

Understanding the issue and the stakes, there are some practical steps parents and 4-H volunteers/leaders can take to help young people through this global pandemic.

The single most important thing any of us can do – you have got to take care of yourself.

In order to provide a safe, caring environment for our young people, we first have to make sure we ourselves are in a good and healthy headspace. This is, of course, easier said than done because the cold hard truth is that these are some difficult times, but here are a few recommendations to help adults create a space in which young people can thrive:

1. **Stressed Out Parents = Stressed Out Kids** – try to create a space of self-awareness, determine what it is that is stressing you (the adult), understand the stress, and then work to respond to that stress before interacting with and talking to children.



2. **Sleep Hygiene** – with disruptions in routines and schedules, it is very easy for both youth and adults to let sleep suffer. It is important to create a sleep space that is “sacred”. Avoid screens, disruptions, and distractions in the sleep space. If in thirty minutes time sleep does not come, leave. Read a chapter from a book. Fold laundry. Do something that takes you away from the sleep space, and then try again. Avoid slipping into a random sleep schedule. Set your alarm for a specific time each morning, and stick to the routine.
3. **Physical Activity** – study after study has shown that staying physically active has a positive correlation with mental well-being. Both youth and adults should engage in daily physical exercise (while, of course, maintaining social distancing with individuals outside of the family unit). Approximately thirty minutes of exercise five times a week is recommended, but do what you can with what you got.
4. **Conversations About COVID-19** – try to figure out what it is that you, as the adult, are worried about and then, when talking with children about COVID-19, let the children guide the conversation. Listen to the children. The brains of young people work very differently from the minds of adults, and often the concerns of young people are coming from a different place than the concerns of adults.
5. **Being Socially Distant Does Not Mean Being Emotionally Distant** – Although, as mentioned above, there are limits to technology, there are still ways technology can help young people remain engaged and connected to peers. Monmouth County 4-H offers virtual learning programs for youth of all ages. In addition to our weekly “Monmouth 4-H from Home” designed for youth of all ages, there is also a weekly “Teen Check-In” for 4-H teens to connect with each other.
6. **Come Out Of This Better Than You Came Into It** – with no real end in sight, it is easy to think that all we can do is watch and wait. What can start as a break from life can turn into something far worse. Youth and adults should not just wait – there are things to do and when we all collectively get back to whatever the “new normal” will be, our skills will all be needed. Now is the time for self-improvement. Create things humans value - through study, research, knowledge, or skills. Continue learning and expanding knowledge, create something, pursue new skills.

Each person is different, and figuring out what works best for each individual is a series of trial and error. There is little to compare to the task before us as we all go through COVID-19. The stress and anxiety we all feel is very real, perhaps especially for young people. As adults, understanding and addressing our own stresses better equip us for helping young people handle their own emotions and anxiety. We will all come out of this, and we will all have a story to tell. As parents of 4-H youth members and as 4-H leaders/volunteers, the goal should be to leave these young people with good stories to tell future generations – stories full of hope, kindness, and good humor.

## Victory Gardens And 4-H

*Virginia Krzyzanowski*  
4-H Program Associate

**I**n the name of patriotism, Victory Gardens have played an important part of our country's history to combat war and supplement rationing. Did you know that in 1944, 40% of the produce grown in the U.S. came from Victory Gardens? Today, as we fight the war against COVID-19, Victory Gardens are cropping up all over this great nation. While we spend more days at home, now is a perfect time to make a family Victory Garden and enjoy a bountiful crop of fresh fruit and vegetables from your own backyard. So let's put the “garden” back in the Garden State!

In an earlier article in this edition of the Monmouth Extension Connection, step by step instructions were given on how to prepare your own Victory Garden. During uncertain times, children tend to feel helpless.



What follows are ways parents can get their 4-H'ers involved in the creation of their own Victory Garden.

Physical activity is a great way for children to release bad feelings; it offers a sense of control and responsibility, while helping them to focus on the present. It increases happiness and contentment. Scientific research has shown that exercise increases “feel good hormones” such as dopamine and serotonin which reduce tension and boost your mood. In addition, gardening is one way children can keep connected to nature and nurture living things. Youth can have fun with plant science, entomology, and so much more through the 4-H's hands-on learning approach. Gardening is a project the entire family can work on together. It also promotes healthier eating habits and makes meal time way more fun.

Never planted a garden before? Don't have the land or a good location? No problem. It can be as simple as an indoor windowsill herb garden, a patio tomato in a pot, a small raised bed, or the ultimate back acre (or, given the physical demands, a “back-acher”). Rutgers Cooperative Extension is here to teach you the simple step-by-step process to a delicious summer. All of the information you need is right here at your fingertips. 4-H offers project books for children to use while learning the basics of gardening. Registered 4-H youth members can visit 4HOnline (<https://www.4honline.com/>) to check out these resources. Not in 4-H? Join the club! Contact us at the Monmouth RCE Extension Office to learn how to join.



For adults looking for more agricultural related materials, the Monmouth RCE Agricultural Department offers fact sheets on all aspects of gardening. Also, Master Gardeners are only an email away to provide answers to any questions you may have. Additionally, the Monmouth RCE Family and Community Health Sciences Department has a number of healthy recipes to transform your home grown produce into tasty dishes, many of which are also included in this very newsletter. We're in this together!

So what are you waiting for? As we say in 4-H: Get Growing, Get Healthy. Everyone knows “4-H'ers are GREEN”. Now let's see if we can give you a green thumb, too. Who knows, you may be sharing your bumper crop with those in need. Be kind and share the love!

## **Staying Connected When We Are Apart - 4-H from Home**

**T**uesday and Thursday afternoons starting at 3:00 PM EST, New Jersey 4-H conducts 4H from Home Interactive Webinars. During each webinar, youth have the opportunity to participate in interactive hands-on activities, where they learn about healthy living, science, technology, service, the arts and more. Each interactive webinar focuses on a different topic. Most webinars are geared to youth in grades 4–8. Youth do not need to be 4H members to participate. Monmouth 4-H's own Agent, Matthew Newman, hosts these interactive sessions.





Said Newman, "It is difficult to replace the experience of in-person programs, but seeing kids from all over New Jersey and beyond participating in activities together is incredible. I love it when I see Monmouth 4-H'ers in these programs!"

In addition to the interactive webinars, there are also resources available for 4-H leaders/volunteers and parents to keep young people engaged and connected when we are all apart.

For more information on the interactive webinars and resources available to keep kids connected, go to: <http://nj4h.rutgers.edu/4h-from-home/>

## Monmouth 4-H Horse Project Member Selected for the New Jersey 4-H Round Up Team

Recently, Olive Scaff, member of the Stars and Strides 4-H Horse Club, was selected as a representative to The New Jersey 4-H Round Up Team. This is one of the highest honors a 4-H horse project member can achieve. This is an elite group of 4-H youth member from all over New Jersey who work together to form a team that study, among other things, Horse Bowl, Hippology, Horse Judging, and Equine Presentations

Because of COVID-19, the future of how Round Up 2020 will look is uncertain. As 4-H Agent Carol Ward, coordinator of the Round Up team, put it "This year, it may be different, we are still not sure if Round Up will happen. If it does, we still don't know if it will be in person or virtual."

Regardless how Round Up 2020 will look, all in Monmouth 4-H are proud of Olive for this achievement.



4-H member Olive Scaff pictured with Freeholder Lillian Burry at the 2019 Monmouth County Fair.



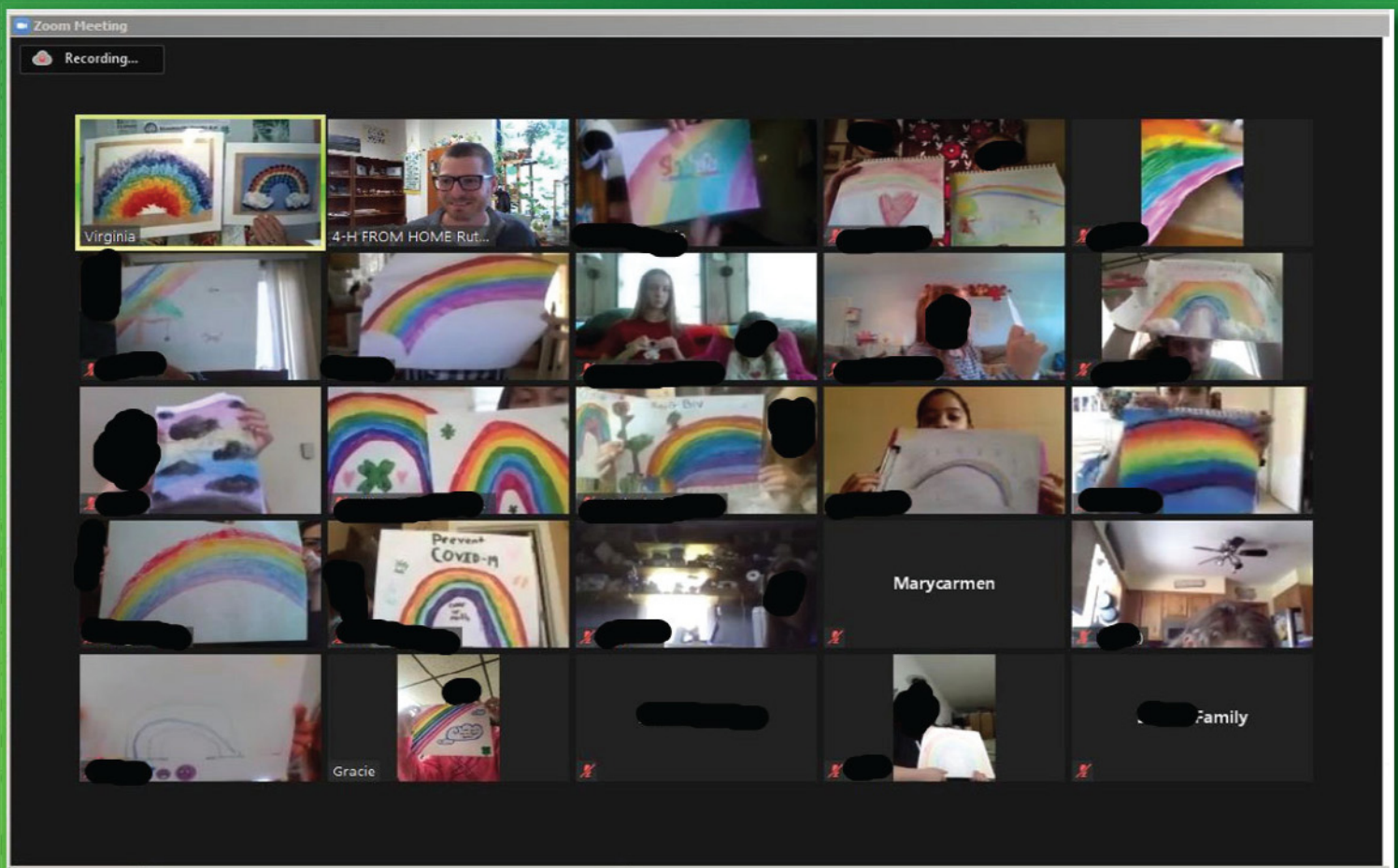
# Monmouth 4-H Interactive Webinars – Monmouth 4-H from Home

In addition to interactive webinars for youth offered at the state level, Monmouth 4-H has taken leadership in providing youth of Monmouth County the chance to participate in educational, interactive online programs.

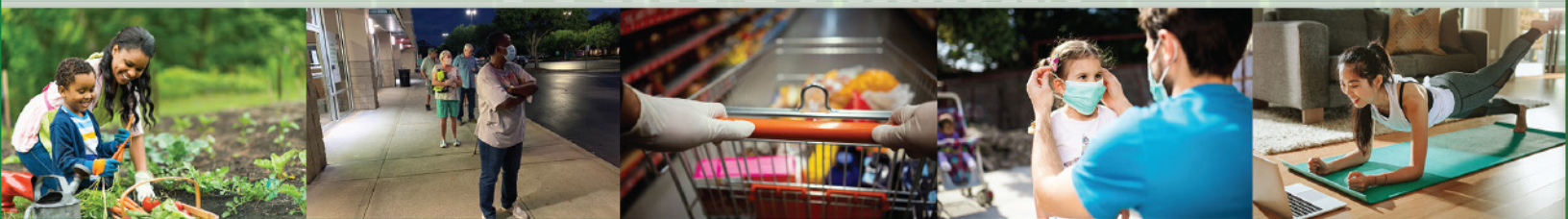
Every Monday, youth from all over Monmouth County are invited to participate in “Monmouth 4-H from Home”. These one hour zoom meetings are designed to provide Monmouth youth the chance to interact in real time with peers and youth development professionals all while learning a new skill. The sessions so far have included journal writing, drawing Rainbow of Hope, and home gardening tips for young people.

These sessions are offered to ALL Monmouth youth regardless of their involvement in 4-H. As 4-H Program Associate Virginia Krzyzanowski put it, “this is a great time to share with all young people the different things we do in 4-H. I always being able to share that 4-H is for all youth.”

There is no cost to participate in these programs, but parents are required to register their youth. For more information on Monmouth 4-H from Home, including upcoming sessions and registration, contact Claudia Lammers at: [Claudia.lammers@co.monmouth.nj.us](mailto:Claudia.lammers@co.monmouth.nj.us).







WE **R** HERE WHEN YOU NEED **US**

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