



Merrimack County Newsletter

Spring 2026

The (603) Challenge!

Join us from **April 7 - 10** as we come together to support Extension. Your contributions provide essential programs and opportunities that empower our communities to learn, grow, and thrive.

How Your Gift Helps:

- **Expanding Programs:** Developing and delivering innovative programs that address the unique needs of our communities.
- **Providing Resources:** Ensuring individuals and families have the tools they need to succeed.
- **Building Community:** Creating a supportive environment where people can thrive, build connections, and develop a sense of purpose.

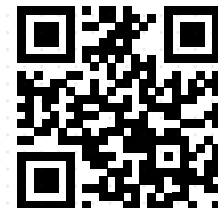


Learn More!

To learn more about the stories in this newsletter, visit:

unh.how/news

or scan the QR code below





UNH Extension Yard and Garden Infoline

Ask UNH Extension

Ask Questions, Explore Opportunities, Get Ideas. Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., Education Center volunteers are ready and available to help with topics including gardening, lawns, pests, fruits and vegetables, food safety, and much more. For research-based information you can trust, Ask UNH Extension.

1-877-EXT-GROW (398-4769)

@askUNHExtension



The Nutrition Pantry Program (NPP): Healthy Pantries, Healthy Communities

Imagine walking into a pantry for the first time and being met with warm greetings, friendly conversation, colorful posters, recipes and an array of healthy options to choose from. This is what the Nutrition Pantry Program (NPP) helps pantries to cultivate.

Guided by a trauma-informed lens, NPP provides a structured process for implementing neighbor-centered strategies for a health-focused environment in all types of food distribution. The program centers around six key areas of focus: Cultural and Dietary Accommodations, Community Connections, Inventory: Food Sourcing and Waste Reduction, Pantry Policies and Procedures, Nutrition Education and Environment.

→ Visit our website to continue reading

Native Plant Spotlight - Bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*)

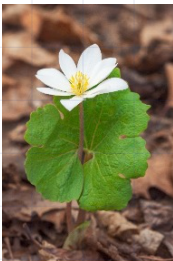


Habit- This groundcover can be found in floodplains (river or stream floodplains), forests, talus and rocky slopes, or woodlands. Bright white, 1.5-3” flowers consisting of 8-12 petals emerge in early Spring.

Sun requirements- Deep shade to part shade.

Water Requirements- Moist soil with good drainage.

Bloom time- March or April for flowers. Seeds occur in April or May.



Hardiness- Grow in USDA 3-8

What makes it special- It is one of the first blooms in Spring and attracts bees and songbirds. No serious pests or diseases. The blood red sap has been used as a dye for clothing, as war paint, and as an insect repellent, however it is now known to be extremely toxic.

Special thanks to Master Gardener and Education Center volunteer Debi Green for her contributions to this Native Plant Spotlight!

→ Visit our website for more information

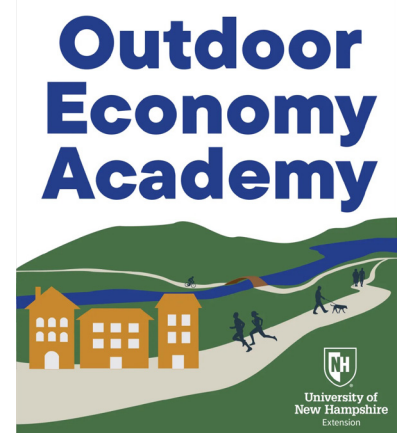
Outdoor Economy Academy - Save the Dates!

The Community and Economic Development team is thrilled to announce that we will be piloting an Outdoor Economy Academy this Spring. The dates are set and applications will start on March 16. Aimed at supporting local municipal leadership and staff, businesses and volunteers, the Academy will focus on place-based learning. We are excited to announce that Penacook, located right here in Merrimack County, is one of the three communities chosen to host the academy. Space will be limited to a cohort of participants who can commit to all three sessions - May 14, May 21, and June 4.

- **Session 1** will take place in Nashua, NH on May 14 and will focus on access to trails and open spaces, with a tour of the new riverwalk.
- **Session 2** will take place on May 21 in Penacook, NH with a focus on downtowns, rivers, and redevelopment/reclamation and a tour of a new riverside park and development.
- **Session 3** will be held in Plymouth, NH on June 4 focusing on hazard mitigation and a downtown and riverside tour.

Each of the three sessions will be in person and place-based with a local walking field trip, guest panel discussion, activity, discussion, and lunch.

→ [Visit our website to learn more](#)



Pruning Demonstrations



Did you know that UNH Extension offers pruning demonstrations tailored for backyard fruit growers each spring throughout New Hampshire? These events are held at various locations where fruits are grown, providing an opportunity for UNH Extension staff to teach the principles of

good pruning practices, and then demonstrate those practices in real time for participants to observe. Our goal with these demonstrations is to instill confidence in participants so that they can all go home to properly prune their own orchards. For a list of demonstrations offered in 2026, visit the link below. Bookmark this link to check back in future years for our schedule and host locations.

→ [Visit our website for event details](#)

Sign up for our UNH IPM Text Updates



By signing up you will receive

- One text per week directing you to the latest fruit and vegetable IPM reports from UNH Extension during the season
- Timely pest alerts (i.e., first seasonal SWD trap captures, first confirmed downy mildew samples)
- Occasional event reminders for twilight meetings and other educational opportunities

Sign up!

Text UNHIPM to 866-645-7010

or scan the QR code



Meet Merrimack County Advisory Council member, Julie Dewdney!

I enjoy working on the Extension Advisory Council because it gives me the opportunity to connect UNH Extension with our local towns and fits with my passion for building community engagement.

For over 15 years, I have been the market manager for the Canterbury Community Farmers Market, a market run entirely by volunteers that will be celebrating its 20th season this year! As a direct-to-consumer market, we play a small but significant role in a thriving local food economy. We are also a place of vibrant community connection. Vendors and consumers have taken advantage of UNH Extension programs on food safety, market management, agricultural marketing and sales, and Master Gardeners.

As a former physical therapist and a partner at Foothills Physical Therapy for 21 years, I am actively supportive of Extension's Health and Well-Being programs, both professionally and personally. I can certainly say that healthy aging is a priority for me now!

My enthusiasm for UNH Extension has deep roots for me. Growing up in NH, I was involved in the NH 4-H sheep program. It taught me the value of hard work and taking responsibility for my project. I look forward to continuing the work of connecting research and practical knowledge with concrete community needs.



We are actively seeking members who live or work in Merrimack County. For more information about the role of the council and membership, please visit our website.

Healthy Rhythms at Home: Sleep, Nutrition and Family Mealtimes

Building healthy habits throughout the day is the start to building and maintaining a healthy life. Two ways we can build healthy habits are to create routines that support our sleep and nutrition.



→ Visit our website to learn more

Mental Health First Aid®

Mental Health First Aid USA® is an 8-hour training to teach participants how to help someone who is developing a mental health challenge or experiencing a mental health crisis. The evidence behind the program demonstrates that it helps participants identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance use disorders. The course can be delivered online, in-person, or hybrid. Courses specific to rural communities, Fire, and EMS, military members, veterans and their families are also available. The program is also available in Spanish. All courses are

free and available to participants who live or work in New Hampshire.



→ Visit our website to register and confirm event details

EVENT

New Hampshire Farm, Forest & Garden Expo

Friday, May 1: 9am - 5pm
Saturday, May 2: 9am - 4pm
Deerfield Fairgrounds

There are far too many vendors, exhibitors, and presentations to list here but check out nhfarmandforestexpo.org for a complete list and be sure to drop by the UNH Extension booth in Building A (up on the hill) to say hello!

Bonus Event!

The UNH Yard & Garden Infoline will be hosting the spring **Infoline Live** panel on Saturday morning from 10:30 a.m. to noon in Building A. Bring your garden questions to be answered by a group of Extension staff and experienced Education Center volunteers.

→ [Visit our website to learn more](#)

UPCOMING 4-H EVENTS

NH 4-H Club Showcase at Farm, Forest, and Garden Expo 2026

Dates: May 1 & 2
Location: Deerfield Fairgrounds

Merrimack County 4-H Sewing Showcase - 2026

Dates: April 18 & May 8
Location: Epsom Central School

Discover Your Future at the Grit to Grow Summit

Dates: June 22 - 24
Location: Lakes Region Community College & the Inn at Mills Falls

The Community and Economic Development Team is Looking Forward to Spring

As the snow and ice recede, the ground begins to thaw, and the sap flows through the maples, the Community and Economic Development team is looking ahead to spring. Across the county, many of our communities have held town meetings and have been working hard crafting municipal budgets for the upcoming fiscal year. I look forward to reconnecting with communities as we look forward to the coming year to share updates and plan for what lies ahead. I'll be reaching out in the coming months, but please don't hesitate to get in touch sooner. Whether you're already considering community engagement strategies for next year's zoning amendments or looking for a new approach to economic development, we're ready to begin our next conversation.

Contact: John Christ - John.Christ@unh.edu

EVENT

Introduction to Food Preservation: Online

April 22, 2026 | 6pm - 7pm
Online

Join UNH Extension Home Horticulture Educator Sean O'Brien for an introduction to food preservation



techniques. We will talk about the proper and safe ways to preserve food at home and touch on the topics of freezing, drying, lacto-fermentation, refrigerator pickling, water-bath canning, and pressure canning. You will learn where and how to find trustworthy recipes, the equipment needed for different methods of home preservation, and how to gain confidence in your skills to make your harvest last.

→ [Visit our website to register and confirm event details](#)

A.I.D. (Awareness.Interaction.Direction) Mental Health Awareness Training.

Supporting other's mental health

A.I.D. (Awareness, Interaction, Direction) is an evidence-based 60 or 90-minute mental health awareness training.

Participants learn how to:

- recognize signs that someone is experiencing distress
- have a supportive conversation
- locate and direct them to the appropriate resources

Participants will engage in discussions about mental health, terminology and stigma. A key component is practice using the A.I.D. action plan through scenarios. The 90-minute training contains an additional module on self-care.



→ Visit our website to learn more and register

RECIPE

Enjoy!

Ramen Noodle Skillet

Ingredients

- 2 tsp. canola oil
- 1 cup chopped onion
(about 1 medium onion)
- 1 carrot
- 2 cups frozen broccoli stir-fry
vegetable mixture
- 2 cups cooked meat or poultry,
cut into bite-size pieces
- 1 cup water
- 1 3-oz. package instant ramen
noodles (seasoning packet not
used in this recipe)

Directions

1. Wash hands with soap and water.
2. Scrub onion and carrot with a clean vegetable brush under running water.
3. Chop the onion and carrot.
4. Heat oil in a large skillet. Add onion, carrot, and sauté until soft (about 5 minutes.)
5. Thaw the broccoli mixture in the microwave and drain.
6. Add the broccoli and cooked meat to the skillet. Stir and heat (about 1-2 minutes.)
7. Stir water into pan.
8. Break apart the ramen noodles. Add to the skillet while the water simmers. Stir to moisten the noodles. Cover the skillet and cook until done (about 2 minutes.)

Tips

Seasoning packets have high amounts of sodium. Easily cut back on your sodium by using half of the seasoning packet or none of it.

Discover more recipes on the
Health & Well-Being website!

extension.unh.edu





Subscribe to our Merrimack County Update

extension.unh.edu/about/newsletters

Insider info
to your
inbox!

UNH Extension is committed to reducing barriers to learning and expanding reach to all people regardless of their backgrounds.

Mission

To strengthen people and communities in New Hampshire by providing trusted knowledge, practical education and collaborative solutions.

Vision

A New Hampshire that is knowledgeable, inclusive, equitable, healthy, resilient and prosperous.

The University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension is an equal opportunity educator and employer. UNH, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture (USDA), and New Hampshire counties cooperating. Our programs and policies are consistent with pertinent federal and state laws and regulations prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, veteran status, family/parental status, genetic information, pregnancy, income derived from a public assistance program, political orientation, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact UNH Extension's main office at (603) 862-1520 or USDA through the Telecommunications Relay Service at 711 (voice and TTY). Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a UNH or UNHCE discriminatory harassment complaint, use the UNH Incident Report Form at <https://unh.how/incident> or call 603-862-2930. To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at <https://unh.how/discrimination> and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Mail Stop 9410, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; fax: (202) 690-7442; or email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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