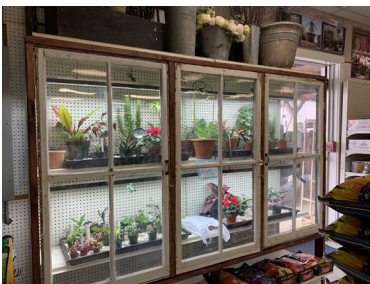




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Hours:
 Monday to Friday:
 8:30 am to 5:30 pm
 Saturday:
 8:30 am to 4:00 pm
 Sunday:
 closed



Welcome March!! And it is coming in like a lion... Everyone who loves snow sports is finally happy – and the rest of us??? We’re dreaming of the spring that’s coming just around the corner! People are picking up seeds and seeding supplies, repotting a few houseplants, ordering baby chicks for their new laying flocks (5+ months after you take them home!), preparing for all kinds of baby livestock (baby goats in our little section of the world – a month away now...) all kinds of life everywhere... and that made me think that it might be interesting to discuss a bit of a complex subject that applies to every living creature.

YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT!!! We’ve all heard this old bromide – but it really is a much bigger hook of information than you might think. It’s time for a mental stretch... This information hook has a really cool name... What might that, be you ask? It’s the incredible concept of epigenetics.

Epigenetics - what a word, huh! Here’s the concept. An individual is more than the sum of its DNA. This sounds really technical – and it sure is at the level of university enquiry (we’re not going there!! ☺), but it is the biggest kick at the practical level of every-day life of growing plants, animals and people. We’ve been conditioned through recent history to think that our genes – or the genes of our pets and our plants – are the final arbiter of the quality of life. “My mother had “it” so I will have “it” too.” The interesting thing is that this is only partly true. We all know cases where the expected genetic outcome (good or bad) did NOT materialize. DNA does pass on a huge package of information for every individual, but it’s not just the package itself that’s the only critical piece - it’s the environment where the DNA package is opened up that determines as much of the final realities for that individual as the DNA itself. It really is nature AND nurture... You are what you eat – or what your food eats (plant or animal). This has HUGE implications for all kinds of life forms.

Look at this formula:

Genetic potential (genotype) PLUS stress in combination with resources (of many kinds – range determined by specie) EQUALS the potential of the individual (phenotype)

I’m going to give you a brief story from the plant world, but I can tell you this applies to animals as well – ask us about how we manage our goat herd – now in its 10+generation of both genetic selection and environmental support.

The plant in all of its many guises is THE backbone of any ecosystem...they’re very cool creatures once you get to know them so it seems appropriate to start with them...

In the plant world there are natural stressors like floods, drought, hail and high winds. These may be impacted by human behavior, but are much larger than any one garden, yard or farm. The best we can do with these stressors is to condition our soil and plants to limit their impact.

Then there is the basic stressor of selecting the plant species and variety. You need to pick plants that are appropriate for your space – sun plants for the sun, shade tolerant plants for shade, shorter season plants since we live in Zone 5 – that kind of thing. This is the fun part of looking through catalogs, nurseries and botanical gardens. Do your research, and you’re fine with this one.

The next steps include looking at some of my favorite topics: soil compaction & aeration, microbial diversity & health, mineral availability, and soil depth (my absolute favorites ☺), plant spacing, plant depth, chemical use (use the absolute least amount that you can). The more you can minimize the stress at this point, the better your plants will do. The flip side, of course, is that the more you manage your resources to maximize a plant's genetic potential the healthier it will be and the better the food that comes from that plant.

Start with a basic soil test, amend the soil as much as you can afford in a given year and work the amendments in – give those soil microbes a VERY good meal! This does take more work than the previous step, because I have yet to discover a way to work with soil that doesn't include actually working with the soil – and soil is heavy!!!! Still – a little work here makes a huge change in the long-term potential for the plant. Think of the soil work as a functional training session at the gym – and you get a better yard for it!

If this all sounds a little too overwhelming – you're not alone!!! And if you're not too interested in plants, but have a dog, cat, want to raise chickens ... that information is available as well. And, if you want to see pictures that demonstrate this, there are copies up on the bulletin board in the classroom at the back of the store (the library has several books on these subjects as well – one of my favorite topics to research!).

To make it easier to get started, we're running a series of workshops in March. Check these out:

Sat March 11 10:00-11:30am Developing Healthy Soils (\$15)

This is the most important step and everyone needs some basic information. We'll look at soil tests, soil amendments, composts, cover crops – what goes on when and why. Developing healthy soils grows healthy plants, healthy animals and healthy people too!! This is the workshop that frames the rest of the discussions. (limit – 10)

1:00-2:30pm Food Options for Healthy Dogs and Cats (\$15)

Functional Nutrition looks at the physiological make up of the individual pet. Big word!! The goal is to work with the almost overwhelming level of choices available and work to make the best selections for YOUR pal - one size does not fit all! The goal is a healthy, mentally balanced and delightful member of the family. Jennifer Baum is an integrative certified small animal nutritionist / nutrition consultant and has been working professionally with animals for over 20 years <https://www.nutritionk9.com>. (limit – 10)

Sat March 18 10:00-11:30am Getting Chicks Started Right! (\$15)

You've decided to grow your own chickens and get your own eggs. EXCELLENT! Homesteader dreams most often start with fresh home-grown eggs - and they can't be beat - but let's do it right! Nyki Clark loves working with her chickens and is happy to provide the necessary details that you'll need to be successful with your new chicks and help them get off to a healthy start. (limit – 10)

Sat March 18 1:00 – 2:30pm Growing Quality Dahlias (\$15)

Dahlias are hard to beat for mid-late summer drama both in the garden and in a vase. Join us as we walk through how to bring the best out of a simple dahlia tuber. I've used Dahlias for years to keep color going in the garden into October. (limit – 10)

Sat March 25 1:00-2:30pm Making Raised Beds Really Work (\$15)

Raised beds (and LARGE containers!) are a boon to anyone who can't (or won't) get down on the ground and can be placed anywhere regardless of soil quality (or no soil at all) below the bed...But...a lot of raised beds don't thrive and produce, especially after the first year. Raised beds are different from in-ground garden beds and there are techniques that will assure your success once you put them into practice. (limit – 10)

So, you can see that there are several different ways you can work with this kind of information. You can also stop in the store and ask questions. We'll be bringing in more supports for both plants and animals as we expand what we're offering. If there's something specific that you're looking for, be sure to let us know. We'll try and find it and bring it in to the store if we can.