



Dear ##[Name | First]##,

The first snow fell in Kentucky this past week, and the OAK team is ready to settle into cozy cold-weather cooking this season. In today's newsletter, we're excited to bring you a look into Lexington nonprofit farm Seedleaf, share a way to reduce Thanksgiving food waste with homemade turkey stock and talk about the different kinds of corn you can consider for your 2025 garden plan. But first, we want to tell you about a special opportunity to support the work we do.

Next week, from December 3-6, we're participating in the Blue Grass Community Fund's [Good Giving Challenge](#)—and we need your help! OAK is committed to growing a more sustainable Kentucky. From offering on-the-ground support to local farmers to connecting Kentuckians to local seasonal foods in their area, we are working every day to cultivate Kentucky's food system. We can't do it without your support.

The Good Giving Challenge is our biggest fundraiser of the year. If you share our vision of growing healthier communities, we ask that you consider a donation of any size. Your support will directly help us continue to provide the tools, resources, and education to farmers and consumers to create lasting change. **Please visit our [Good Giving Challenge profile](#) to learn more and make your donation.**

Wishing you a joyful holiday season,
The OAK Team

Kentucky Farmer Feature...

Creating Opportunity for New Farmers to Strengthen Communities with Seedleaf

In 2017, the Lexington nonprofit [Seedleaf](#) took a bold step by leasing two acres of land in Fayette County. Their goal was simple: offer aspiring farmers access to land where they could grow nutritious food without the financial barrier of land ownership. This initiative became a launching pad for many new growers, offering not just space to cultivate but the support and education needed to thrive.



Seedleaf expanded this vision in 2023 and acquired a new farm property called Headwater Farm. This 30-acre piece of land has allowed Seedleaf to reach more new farmers—especially those from underrepresented backgrounds—such as the Refugee Farmers Cooperative (Empucate) and the Nepalese farming organization, Anka.

Seedleaf's mission is grounded in the belief that local food economies thrive when communities invest in their own agricultural systems. Through its programs, Seedleaf offers education and resources to small-scale farmers, equipping them with horticultural skills, food safety knowledge, and business planning expertise on the farm.

In their year-long Market Garden Program, participants learn the basics of farming and entrepreneurship, then receive their own ½-acre plots at Headwater Farm. This land is theirs to use, with all profits from the sale of produce going directly to the growers.

This unique approach reduces the financial risks often associated with starting a farm. New farmers—many of whom are first-generation growers or New Americans—can focus on their craft without worrying about expensive land leases or isolation. Seedleaf's collaborative model fosters a community of learning and support, where new farmers share resources, exchange ideas, and build sustainable businesses together.

By adopting soil-building practices, such as using cover crops and sustainable crop rotations, Market Gardeners not only improve the land's health but also contribute to the preservation of the local ecosystem. They participate in group decisions regarding land stewardship and conservation, ensuring that their farming methods are both environmentally sound and economically viable. These practices are part of a broader vision for Headwater Farm—a farm that provides food, fosters learning, and strengthens the community.



Seasonal Recipes...

Thanksgiving Turkey Stock

Don't let that leftover turkey carcass go to waste after your dinner this Thursday! Transform it into a rich, flavorful turkey broth that can be the base for soups, gravies, or sauces for days to come. If you're done with cooking by the end of Thanksgiving dinner, don't fret! You can bag up the carcass and store it in the freezer until you're ready to make stock. But don't wait too long - there's nothing better than day-after-Thanksgiving turkey noodle soup.



[View Recipe](#)

In the Garden...

A-maize-ing Corn to Consider for your Garden

Staple grains play a fundamental role in shaping cultures worldwide, influencing the landscape, diets, and annual rhythms of life. If you've driven through much of Kentucky, you can probably picture rolling cornfields as far as the eye can see. However, only about [1% of the corn grown in the United States is sweet corn](#). The most commonly grown corn type is a hybrid yellow dent corn, also called field corn, cultivated for livestock feed and ethanol.

You can't understate the importance of maize in indigenous American cultures. There were [thousands of varieties traded across vast networks](#). Generations of indigenous plant domestication and stewardship still permeates our American food culture. Today, [3 out of every 4 items in the supermarket contain some form of corn](#), albeit much of it in a highly-processed form. Growing your own corn opens up a whole new world of corn options, flavors and recipes. Let's look at three cool corn types you can include in your 2025 garden planning to reconnect with America's a-maize-ing corn culture!



Popcorn (or Flint Corn)

What could be better than growing your own movie snacks? Popcorn is technically a type of flint corn with the special ability to pop when exposed to heat. There is a huge variety of colors and sizes available, from [jet black](#) to [buttery yellow](#) to [rainbow](#).

Popcorn typically takes 95-120 days to mature, so it's important to plant shortly after your last frost in early May. Additionally, this corn won't "pop" unless the kernels are sufficiently dried. This means you may have to hang them to dry inside for a month or two after harvest before it is ready for movie night.

Drying corn is a beautiful decoration, and many people buy ornamental corn as seasonal [home decor](#)!

Dent (Field) Corn

Most large-scale farms in Kentucky grow yellow hybrid dent corn, named for the characteristic "dent" mark in each kernel.

However, these mass-produced varieties are only a small part of what this variety of corn offers. Its hard exterior and high starch content make dent corn perfect for grinding into cornmeal and polenta or [nixtamalizing](#) for homemade hominy and tortillas. Have fun exploring all the amazing varieties available. You might be surprised at how much the different types vary in look and flavor!



This heirloom [Kentucky Rainbow Dent Corn](#) from Salamander Springs Farm in Berea, Kentucky is especially suited for Kentucky's climate. If you're interested in other kinds of corn that work for grinding and home processing, check out flour/milling corn varieties like [painted mountain](#).

Sweet Corn

This dinner plate staple actually originated from genetic mutations of other harder corn varieties that prevented the conversion of sugars to starch. This mutation yields a deliciously sweet result. While you don't typically harvest other corn types until they've had a chance to dry down a little bit on the stalk, sweet corn is harvested at the "milk stage" where the kernels are still juicy. If you grow this in your garden, be sure to de-cob and [freeze](#) some extra to enjoy all winter long!

Corn Growing Tips and Tricks

- [Huitlacoche](#) or corn smut is a fungus that grows on corn. Don't panic if you see it on your corn! In fact, it's a highly prized culinary ingredient all around the world. If it looks fresh (not slimy), take it inside and cook it up like you would other mushrooms. It also makes a great [taco ingredient](#).
- Corn is pollinated by the wind carrying pollen between the male (flowers) and female (silks) parts of a corn plant. Because of this, you need to be careful not to plant multiple varieties of corn too close together in a garden plot. Make sure to [do your research](#) if you want to plant more than one kind of corn this year.
- It's easy to [save your own corn seeds](#) to plant year after year. You can even try selecting seeds from your favorite ears to encourage those traits the next year. This selection process is a great

way to reconnect with the ancient corn growers of the past who were doing the same thing over generations from their own gardens.

OAK Community Resources

Good Giving Challenge

The Blue Grass Community Foundation's Good Giving Challenge is next week with early giving opportunities already open! By supporting OAK, you're investing in a resilient food and farming network that ensures access to healthy, local food for generations by building a healthier, more sustainable Kentucky. Visit [OAK's profile](#) to make your gift and stay tuned on our social media for match opportunities!

Donate Today!



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Donate to OAK. Your tax-deductible gift helps germinate, cultivate, and activate Kentucky's resilient food and farming network.

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Join us! The organic farming network in Kentucky is growing. Together we are creating a more regenerative, organic food system.

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