The first day of spring is March 20 and while some of us think that winter went by quickly this year others were afraid it would never end. As we pass into this new season we look forward to the sights, sounds, and scents of spring.

Jolene Wallace
Horticulture Educator

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What Is Dormancy?

By Jolene Wallace

As we get closer to spring we will be anxiously awaiting the day that our plants, shrubs, and trees break dormancy. Have you ever thought about what dormancy actually is? What is it that triggers a plant to go dormant and what triggers it to break dormancy? Here in the North Country we think of plants going dormant because of the extreme cold, but our lawns go dormant in the summer when it’s hot and dry too. So what is dormancy?

Dormancy is defined as a recurring period, such as every winter, in the life cycle of an organism when growth, development, and reproduction are suppressed. This temporary state of inactivity enables the plant to conserve energy until better growing conditions occur.

Plants interact with their environment. The biology of the plant species determines when it grows and when it produces flowers, fruit, or seeds. It stores an amount of energy for the time that unfavorable conditions exist; when there is a reduction in sunlight and temperatures and it can not produce the food it needs. At this point the focus becomes survival instead of growth and seed production.

Abscisic acid (ABA) is a hormone found in plants that is necessary for the onset of dormancy. It is triggered when temperatures drop and works to stop the growth of foliage. The cold temperatures of winter gradually break down the ABA, again changing the hormonal balance of the plant, and growth resumes. This chilling period is necessary for the future growth and seed production of a wide range of perennials, bulbs, woody shrubs, and trees that go dormant during our winters.

Bulbs are the earliest plants to grow and bloom in our North Country spring. The snowdrops are followed by beautiful yellow winter aconites, then crocuses, scillas (squill)) with their lovely blue flowers, chionodoxas (glory of the snow), hyacinths, daffodils and tulips. These bursts of color herald the arrival of warmer temperatures, longer daylight hours, and bright colors in our landscape. It will be a welcome sight for us all.
By Laurie Davis

A good reason to celebrate this time of year is the impending arrival of a real local food treasure: maple syrup. New York is the world’s third largest producer of maple syrup and the industry is expanding. It’s a tremendous natural resource for the North Country and a delicious local sweetener. Michael Farrell, the director of the Cornell University Uihlein Maple Forest and Extension Center at Lake Placid, explains that we have the potential to nearly double our production.

Most of our current producers have tapped all the trees they own and need to expand into other properties. Landowners may gain agricultural tax relief if they lease their trees to a maple producer—or perhaps get into the business themselves. Find more information online at www.nnyagdev.org/maple.htm.

And did you know that maple syrup has nutritious qualities? Some producers are known to drink the watery sap from the tree and tout the health benefits. Trees take up plenty of minerals, including calcium, and these are present in the sap along with antioxidants. While the more concentrated syrup is at least 66% sugar, the other nutrients are still there. And because growing and processing conditions vary from place to place, syrups may have slightly different flavors from fruity to woody to caramel. Substitute maple syrup into recipes that call for sugar. Experiment with recipes by reducing a couple of tablespoons of other liquid while adding maple syrup in place of sugar.

Maple Weekends are coming up and it’s a wonderful chance to visit your local producers. March 16, 17, 23, and 24 from 10am to 4pm you can find at least 15 sites producing maple syrup in Essex, Clinton and Franklin counties. Try everything: maple cream, candy, brittle, jam, creemees, syrup, funnel cakes, cotton candy, and sugar on snow. To find all the locations visit www.mapleweekend.com and search by county, or check out their Facebook page, www.facebook.com/mapleweekend. Visit www.adirondackharvest.com and use the search engine to find local foods.

Laurie Davis is an Educator with Cornell Cooperative Extension in Essex County and is the Coordinator for Adirondack Harvest. Office phone number: 962-4810x404. Email lsd22@cornell.edu

By Jolene Wallace

“March comes in like a lion and out like a lamb.”

According to the Farmer’s Almanac, although March typically brings changeable weather, from spring-like temperatures to late-season snowstorms, the saying is more wishful thinking than fact. In early centuries people believed that evil spirits affected the weather adversely and that the balance between life and weather meant that poor behavior resulted in poor weather. If they placated the spirits with good behavior, harsh weather would soon turn favorable.

So, if the weather gets nasty this month let’s all be on our best behavior. It certainly couldn’t hurt!
Name That Household Bug! A Quiz

By Amy Ivy

As the days get longer and warmer, all kinds of bugs that have been hibernating inside your cozy, warm house wake up and start wandering around, trying to find their way out. Yes, they are a nuisance, but try to keep in mind that they are not breeding in your house or causing damage.

For information on these and many other bugs, inside and outside your house, visit Cornell’s Insect Diagnostic Lab website: http://entomology.cornell.edu/cals/entomology/extension/idl/idlfactsheetlist.cfm or call our office!

How many of these bugs below have you seen? How many can you name?

Answers are on page 5.

A. (actual size ½” long)

B. (actual size ½” long)

C. (actual size 1/8” long, not including claws)

D. (actual size ¾” long)

E. (actual size 1/16” long, red)
March can be pretty dreary around here, especially once any snow cover is gone. The trees are gray, the grass is brown, the rocks are gray and brown, and often the sky is gray as well. March is a trying month in the North Country; some days feel like spring when it’s not and other days feel like winter will never end.

I try to make myself wait until late March to begin anticipating the arrival of spring weather; if I start any earlier I just get discouraged. By mid March I entertain myself this time of year by looking for the most subtle signs of color that are sure clues that spring is beginning.

With so much gray and brown scenery, a little color is not that hard to spot, if you pay attention. Look for the bright yellow branches on tall weeping willows, usually planted near farm houses, and the brilliant red branches on our native red-stemmed dogwoods that appear as short tufts of color in swampy and low-lying areas along most roadides. The youngest stems on both of these plants show color throughout the year, but this color really intensifies in late spring just before the leaves emerge. Neither of these plants has showy spring flowers, but their stem color is so bright when other plants are so dull that they provide some interest just when we need it most.

We have native pussy willows in most of the abandoned pastures and hedgerows along hayfields but their attractive fuzzy white buds are quite subtle. I have just one cultivated pussy willow in my yard and it provides us with plenty of stocky stems with large, fat, fuzzy buds this time of year. The rest of the year pussy willows don’t have much to offer in your landscape so one plant should be plenty for most yards. If you want the fuzzy buds to last after you cut them, don’t put them in water. They’ll last for months in a dry vase.

Corkscrew willows are another plant that is fun to have, but one is enough. Their curly young stems are beautiful in flower arrangements if you cut them before their leaves emerge. They are very easy to root, just stick a 12 inch stem in your flower garden, keep it watered and it should be rooted and ready to transplant by late summer. The curliest growth is on the youngest stems, so cut this plant back hard every now and then to encourage new growth.

Another spot of color, and I do mean spot of color, that I love to look for are the bright scarlet patches on the wings of the aptly-named red-winged blackbirds. Only the males have the red patches; like most birds, the males are much showier than the females. I know it’s not as breathtaking as a shrub in full bloom, but this time of year you have to be happy with what you can get! These subtle spots of beauty are fun to look for.

Our native red maple trees, not the red-leaved Norway maple you see in people’s yards but our native red, or swamp, or soft maple tree, put on a nice show of color each spring right about now. Scan

North Country Gardening
the wooded hillsides as you drive this week and look for a change from drab brown and gray to large swaths of red in the trees. Like the color intensities of the willow and dogwood I mentioned earlier, the young stems of red maples turn bright red before their buds open. These trees also flower, producing thousands of small red flowers throughout their canopies, and these flowers are among the first of the season. Individually, these flowers aren’t much, but when seen as a mass on the hillside, they give a beautiful red glow for a week or more, just before their bright green leaves appear.

All of these spots of color I mentioned are subtle, I know, but during this drab period between the bright snow cover of winter and the emerald green of spring, these hints of color are fun to seek out and appreciate.

Photos: corkscrew willow branches in winter
And our native red maple (Acer rubrum) in bloom

Answers to ‘Name That Bug’ quiz on page 3

A. Boxelder Bug – This bug does minor damage to boxelder trees outdoors, then comes indoors to sleep. It does not breed indoors or cause damage. Sweep up and toss outside. http://entomology.cornell.edu/cals/entomology/extension/idl/loader.cfm?csModule=security/getfile&PageID=858394

B. Cluster Fly - These rather large, bumbling flies emerge from hibernating in your house and ‘cluster’ in sunny windows. At night they buzz around lit lamps and are quite noisy. Crack your windows on sunny days to let them out, or vacuum regularly. http://www.uri.edu/ce/factsheets/sheets/clusterfly.html

C. Pseudoscorpion – This tiny guy looks scary but is harmless. It feeds on small insects and mites and cause no harm. They usually appear singly and are easy to sweep up. http://entomology.cornell.edu/cals/entomology/extension/idl/loader.cfm?csModule=security/getfile&PageID=859271

D. Western Conifer Seed Bug – This bug is a minor pest of pine trees and causes no harm or damage to humans. It gives off a strong odor when crushed and is often called a stink bug, but this is not the stink bug that damages fruits and vegetables in gardens. Sweep up and toss outdoors if found. http://entomology.cornell.edu/cals/entomology/extension/idl/loader.cfm?csModule=security/getfile&PageID=859278

E. Clover mites – These tiny mites leave a reddish stain on your wall if crushed so wipe them up carefully with a wet paper towel. The stains are not blood, these are not blood feeding mites. They feed on clover and grass and die quickly after appearing indoors, usually coming in through windows or doors. http://www.ca.uky.edu/entomology/entfacts/ef627.asp

- Amy Ivy
Last week at 7:00 in the morning I saw an Eastern coyote trotting across the frozen lake. I think it was making the rounds of ice-fishing holes seeking a tasty breakfast of fish parts that had been left behind. Until the last 100 years, there were no coyotes in the Northeast. As the wolf population diminished, western coyotes extended their range east and have been present in New York since the early 1900’s. It is estimated that there are 20,000 to 30,000 coyotes in our state.

Coyotes are related to wolves but are smaller and have a more pointed muzzle and ears and a smaller head. From a distance one may be mistaken for a German shepherd. They can be blonde or reddish blonde but are more often a grizzled gray or tan washed with black. They are about 4 -5 feet long, including the tail, and weigh 35 to 50 pounds with some males weighing 60 pounds or more. Their tails are usually carried horizontally or down between their back legs.

As opportunistic feeders, coyotes eat what is most readily available and easy to catch. In the summer they may eat berries, insects, and rodents. Grasshoppers and small mammals are the food of choice during the fall. Carrion is always a desirable food source and if food is scarce coyotes may hunt healthy deer. An interesting thing about coyotes is that when the population is low or when the food sources are abundant, they have larger litters of pups.

In California I worked for a homeowner’s association on 400 acres of natural woods. Each of the homes on the “ranch” was a minimum of 2 acres and aside from the homes the entire area was left natural. Wildlife roamed freely. The coyote population became quite large and it was not unusual for our office to get phone calls from residents telling us they were sitting in their car in the driveway and that 3 coyotes were on their front porch. Unfortunately we also got calls that a coyote just walked by with someone’s cat in its teeth or that one was following behind as a resident walked their dog. The problem was abundant food sources. Many of the residents had bird feeders, which attracted mice, which attracted coyotes. They were asked to take them down or hang them on a top deck.

The Eastern coyote has adapted very well to living near humans. As our cities and towns expand and/or their populations near us increase, it’s important that we do our part to help maintain their natural fear of humans. Keep your garbage in closed containers. Keep your pets and their food indoors, or in inaccessible areas outdoors. If coyotes come close to your property scare them off by making noise. Beating pans together or shouting are effective deterrents. It’s not just in your best interest, but also in the coyote’s.

Did You Know?
- The coyote’s howl and short, high-pitched yelps can be heard from as far away as 3 miles.
- Coyotes don’t form true packs like wolves do. They live in ‘family units’ consisting of one adult pair and the young from the current year.
- A family unit may defend a territory of 6 to 15 square miles.
- Coyotes are excellent swimmers.
- The gestation period for coyotes is about 63 days and they have litters averaging 5-6 pups, although they may have as few as 2 or as many as 10.
- Coyotes are more active at night but can also be seen during the day, especially during breeding season in February or when they have pups to tend to.
If you have been thinking about adding some more living color to your yard and garden, Spring is the ideal time to think about chickens. With the growing interest in eating local foods, what is more local than harvesting eggs from your own chickens. For a small family, 3 to 4 chickens can furnish plenty of eggs. Housing can be kept relatively simple, feeding and watering equipment is widely available and chickens can be purchased as chicks or even as adult hens ready to lay.

If you are interested in raising chickens for pleasure or profit, eggs or meat, Cooperative Extension will be holding a workshop on Monday, March 25th from 7-8:30 pm at the Extension office. We will cover the basics of chicken husbandry, housing, nutrition, and related topics.

The workshop has a $5.00 registration fee. Contact Peter Hagar, Agriculture Educator at 561-7450 or phh7@cornell.edu

FREE Energy saving items will be provided. Fun, Free and Open to the Public. Bring a Friend!

Please be sure to register so we can notify you of any changes due to weather, etc.

Call Cornell Cooperative Extension at 561-7450 See you then!
In our 4-H after school program, we have been working with a team of Stafford Middle School students, preparing to compete in the first ever North Country Jr. Iron Chef Competition. The challenge is to create a school lunch dish, factoring in health, cost, ease of preparing and serving it in a school cafeteria, and use of both local and USDA Commodity ingredients, or “entitlement” foods that are made available to schools participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP).

When we first began the program, we asked how many students ate the school’s lunch. The majority said they chose to bring their own because the school’s lunch was ‘gross’. When asked if they would like to change that, they jumped at the opportunity and took the challenge with open arms.

Over the past month and a half, the students have brainstormed and experimented with numerous recipes—some more successfully than others! We have taste-tested different foods that they had never had, such as beets and parsnips. And the students have learned food preparation skills, such as how to cut garlic, the difference between a teaspoon and a tablespoon, how to use the stove safely, what it means to sauté vegetables, and that chopping onions can make you cry! We even had a local professional chef come in and give us tips on the best ways to cook and how to make our recipe better.

The students now know what local is and can name some foods that are unique to our North Country area, something they struggled with at the start. They even composed a letter to local farmers about their competition. The team has a 4-H educator working with them but they have made the decisions along way, choosing which ingredients to keep, which to leave out, how to present it, and which recipes would be best in a cafeteria and most likely to be eaten.

Every day, the first question the students ask is, “Are we cooking today?!” They are incredibly enthusiastic when they are in the kitchen and are given the opportunity to work with food. A lot of our youth today are missing the link between what is on their plate and how it got there.

Involving these students in the kitchen has given them a hands-on project to enjoy and a way to learn about systems of food, where their food comes from, how different foods grow in different climates or seasons, how to create healthy meals, and how factors such as cost play into what we eat.

Our team will be competing March 9th at St. Lawrence University in Canton, NY with our Maple Mountain Melt Wrap recipe. If you would like to learn more about the competition, visit www.ncjrironchef.org.

North Country Gardening
Maple Mountain Melt Wrap Recipe

By Stafford Middles School Jr. Iron Chef Team

Ingredients:

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<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Olive Oil</td>
<td>2 Tbsp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onion, Chopped*</td>
<td>½</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garlic Cloves, Minced*</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomatoes, Diced, Canned, **</td>
<td>½ cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corn, Frozen**</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Pepper, Chopped</td>
<td>½</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Pepper, Chopped</td>
<td>½</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apple Cider Vinegar</td>
<td>1/8 cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apple, Peeled &amp; Chopped*</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maple Syrup*</td>
<td>2 Tbsp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheddar Cheese, Light, Shredded*</td>
<td>4 oz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spinach, Fresh*</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumin</td>
<td>1 tsp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chili Powder</td>
<td>1 tsp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole Wheat Tortillas/Wraps**</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
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Directions:

1. In a medium pan, heat 1 tablespoon of your oil on medium heat.
2. Add your onions, tomatoes, and garlic and stir for a few minutes, until veggies are softer.
3. Add in your red and green peppers, corn, and your apple. Cook another minute.
4. Add in your apple cider vinegar, maple syrup, and spices.
5. Turn your heat to high and cook your vegetables for ten minutes, stirring frequently.
6. In another pan (or you can set your vegetable mix to the side if you do not have a lot of space), add ½ teaspoon of olive oil and coat the pan evenly. Turn to low-medium heat.
7. Put one wrap in your pan. Add a thin layer of shredded cheese in the center, in a strip.
8. Heat until wrap is warm and cheese is melting.
9. Remove your wrap from the pan and transfer to a plate. Add your vegetables. Top with spinach (1/4 cup loose).

Are you curious about all that’s going in our 4-H program? Check out the Clover Express at the link below! Call our office if you’d like to find out more about how you can get involved.

http://www.ccee4hce.blogspot.com/

North Country Gardening
North Country Gardening

By Jolene Wallace

We have a great assortment of classes for you to choose from for our biennial Spring Garden Day being held on April 20 at Clinton Community College from 8:30 am till 2:30 pm. As always, your registration fee includes pastries and coffee in the morning, a full lunch, and a resource binder with handouts from all the classes. Registration forms will be going out shortly and are also available in the office. The early-bird registration fee is $45 and must be postmarked by March 28. After the 28th the fee is $50.

**Planting Fun in the Garden**
In this class we’ll explore ways to get youngsters into the garden with kid-friendly plants and fun activities that teach kids about the environment, gives them a sense of accomplishment, and encourages them to try new foods.

**Creating a Water Garden**  
*For experienced gardeners*
Designing, constructing, and maintaining various types of water gardens will be covered including liners, pumps, filters, waterfalls and/or fountains, plants, fish, and frogs.

**Container and Small Space Gardens**
If you think you have no place for a garden, this is the class for you. You will learn about growing an abundance of food in raised beds, square foot gardens, pots, and containers.

**The Fragrance Garden**
If you enjoy the scent of flowers wafting through your open windows you will want to learn how to plan your flower beds to enjoy the sights and scents of various flowers all season long.

**Science-Based Organic Gardening**
Confused about what “Organic” means? This class explains the concepts and practices required for something to be certified ‘organic’ with emphasis on home gardens, soil amendments, pesticides, and fungicides.

**Pruning Shrubs**
Well timed pruning can enhance shrub growth, flowering and overall appearance. Topics covered will include the basics of pruning - tools, timing and where to make the proper cuts.

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<td><strong>The ABC’s of Vegetable Gardening</strong></td>
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<td>The what, where, when, and why of planting a vegetable garden will cover site selection, vegetable varieties, maintenance, common issues and solutions, and tips to make your garden a success.</td>
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**Growing Vegetables Under Tunnels**  
*For experienced gardeners*
Simple low tunnels can extend your growing season by giving you a head start, and can also protect your plants even when temps are above freezing. We will cover setting up and using these tunnels for a variety of vegetable and herb crops.

**Storing and Preserving your Harvest**
This workshop will cover the basics of food preservation, including dehydrating and root cellaring so you can make the most of your bountiful harvest and the local Farmer’s Markets.

**Turning your Spoils into Soils**
This is composting simplified! Whether you are new to composting or want to improve your technique, this class will help you choose a system that fits your needs. We will give you tips to build it, add to it, and maintain it so you are rewarded with “black gold” to nurture your garden.

**Shade Gardening**
Don’t let the shady spots in your landscape frustrate you. This session introduces perennials, flowering shrubs, and annuals for spring, summer, and fall that do well in the shady garden. Landscape design and maintenance tips will be included.

**Increasing Your Vegetable Yields**
Increase production in your existing space by using everyday items to garden vertically. Plan ahead to grow successive crops in the same area and learn about area-appropriate varieties to increase your overall yield.

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*North Country Gardening*
March Tips

**By Amy Ivy**

**Start Small!**
New gardeners often make the same mistake; I know I sure did. You start the season full of enthusiasm and end up planting far more than you can manage. By the end of the season you’re asking yourself, what is so much fun about gardening anyway? This happens to vegetable gardeners, flower gardeners, new homeowners with a big empty yard to fill.

If you’re just getting started please take my advice and start small. It’s much better to end the season wishing you had planted more than vowing to never plant again! You can always plant more next year but if your enthusiasm is ruined by an out of control garden, you may never try again.

**Temptations**
Seed catalogs are so enticing. I’ve written lots of articles about how useful they can be when planning but they can also lead you astray. Force yourself to make a list of what you’d like to order then wait a day and take another look at it to see if you can bring yourself to shorten it up.

If you’re a perennial flower gardener, nursery catalogs can be even more alluring. But the prices are higher so the subtotal of your order ought to sober you up before you place it. To stretch your garden budget you can start with just a few plants then fill in with annual seeds as you add a couple more plants each year.

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Events and Happenings

**March**

**Planning Your Spring Garden (West Chazy)**
Saturday, March 16th, 12:30 pm to 2:30 pm
Dodge Library in West Chazy 9 Fiske Rd.
Increase your yield by making the best use of the space you have available. **Free** program but please let us know you are planning to attend. 561-7450 or email Jolene at jmw442@cornell.edu

**Planning your Spring Garden (Peru)**
Join us for the first in a series of free gardening programs at the Peru Free Library, 3024 Main Street in Peru. Thursday, March 21, at 6:00pm
Please RSVP to Jolene at jmw442@cornell.edu or call 561-7450

**Coming in April!**
Saturday, April 6th  **Cook and Gardener Tour and workshop.**  1:00 pm to 4:00 pm
See behind the scenes and learn about new and underutilized perennials and shrubs, soil choices, amendments, dividing your perennials, and care of your plants. Space is limited. Fee is $10. **Pre-registration is required.** Call Jolene at 561-7450 or email jmw442@cornell.edu

Sunday, April 14th  **Master Gardeners at the Imaginarium Children’s Museum—Theme: Earth Day. Introduction to composting and recycling**

**SPRING GARDEN DAY** Saturday, April 20
8:30 to 2:30 at Clinton Community College. See previous page for details. Contact us at 561-7450 or come in to our office for registration forms.

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This newsletter is also available on our website:  
http://blogs.cornell.edu/cceclintoncounty/ under Gardening: News

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North Country Gardening
North Country Gardening

March 2013

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