The 2013-2014 Guide to Local Food, Where to find locally grown food in Clinton, Essex and Franklin Counties in New York is now available. Farms, farm stands, and Farmers Markets are listed so you can eat healthy and support our local farmers wherever you happen to be in the tri-county area. Pick one up in our office, or take several and pass them out to your friends!

Jolene

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North Country Gardening

July 2013

Garden Diversity

By Emily Selleck

“Greedy Gardeners”. This arresting title of a piece by Marielle Anzelone, an urban conservation biologist, on the Opinion page of yesterday’s (6/15/2013) New York Times caught my eye - and my attention. Its concern is with a new brand of urban agricultural activists who want to incorporate fruit trees into the limited green spaces in some cities to make urban orchards. Their intent is to provide access to healthy food to folks living in underserved neighborhoods. A noble goal - albeit a short-sighted one.

Unfortunately, narrowly defining useful landscapes in this manner ignores the utility of plants like wildflowers and native ornamentals in favor of a monoculture of imported fruit trees. Indeed, all around us are natural processes at work that we depend on – “ecosystem services” – critical to our well-being. Plants that have been here for thousands of years are in constant communication with insects, birds, and other wild denizens of a particular chunk of land, whether it be the “untouched” areas in cities, or suburban landscapes. These native plants provide a steady supply of pollen and nectar throughout the growing season, from the earliest wildflowers in spring to the last blooms of asters in fall. In contrast, orchards provide similar bounty only during a narrow window of time when the trees are in bloom. One could say the same for acres and acres of commercial (dare I say Factory Farms?) vegetables, small fruits and grains.

Pollination is a major part of those “ecosystem services” rendered to us by a host of insects and small animals such as honeybees, bumble bees, butterflies and bats. Most of us are aware that populations of both bees and bats are in serious decline – for a number of reasons (and loss of variety Continued on page 3....
Strawberry Spinach Salad

By Jordy Kivett, Nutrition Educator

Local strawberries are in season! Like many foods, fresh, in season strawberries taste so much better than the grocery store variety. You can find them at the local farmer’s market, farm stands, and at some u-pick operations. If you haven’t tried picking your own, you should. In just a short amount of time you can pick more berries than you can possibly eat fresh and they are easy to freeze. They are also a great addition to any garden, providing fruit each year. I have been lucky enough to find a few wild strawberries, but they are so tiny we just enjoy them on the spot. One cup of strawberries has less than 50 calories, but over 100% daily value of Vitamin C. Their sweetness is great in smoothies or of course short cake, but can also be incorporated into savory dishes.

Strawberry Spinach Salad

Ingredients:
- 1 tablespoon poppy seeds
- 2 tablespoons sesame seeds
- 3/4 cup slivered almonds
- 1 pound spinach, washed, dried and torn into bite-size pieces
- 1 pint strawberries, sliced
- Non-stick cooking spray

Strawberry Dressing:
- 1 1/4 cups strawberries
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 3 tablespoons orange juice
- 1 tablespoon white wine vinegar
- 1 tablespoon canola oil

Directions:

Make Strawberry dressing: Combine all ingredients in a blender and mix until smooth. Refrigerate until serving.

1. Spray cooking spray on nonstick skillet over medium heat. Add almonds; cook and stir until lightly toasted, 2-3 minutes. Remove from heat and set aside to cool.
2. Combine spinach, strawberries, poppy seeds, sesame seeds and almonds in serving bowl.
3. Pour half of dressing over and toss. Add more dressing as desired. Serve at once.

Yields about 8 servings

Source: Adapted from Farm Fresh Recipes

Nutrition Facts

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* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.

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27.3% calories from fat
and availability of flowering plants is most likely one of them). In many instances, the transformation from flower to fruit requires an intermediary in the form of insects, birds, and bats who provide that service free of charge. We are deeply in their debt.

Diversity, diversity, diversity.

By encouraging a number of “wild” (native) plants to grow on your property, and by planting flowers and ornamental shrubs that have staggered bloom times (some may also bear fruit and/or berries), you will encourage pollinators to help you in your garden as well as for them to multiply and seek out other gardens and bountiful landscapes. And, in their travels, perhaps provide services to local orchards as well. Diversity in landscapes mixes up the insect and animal pests and often keeps diseases at a dull roar. Diversity in plants encourages diversity in animal “garden helpers”, too! Toads, salamanders, snakes and frogs will frequent gardens rich in a variety of flowers, herbs, vegetables and small fruits.

Companion Planting.

Popularized through biodynamic gardening and the 1920s European lectures of Rudolf Steiner, Companion Planting has withstood the test of time, and there is some scientific evidence to back up what were once considered “flaky” claims. There are three main reasons for “felicitous companionship” aka Companion Planting: Substances released by certain plant roots stimulate mutual growth or protection from diseases and insects; Companion plants make complementary nutritional demands upon the soil; and Intercropped gardens with a variety of scents, colors, and shapes confuse insect pests as well as create interesting visual effects.

A given plant’s need for sun, space and water must also be taken into consideration as should the timing of planting. For example, beans and corn may grow well together (beans fix nitrogen in the soil and corn is a heavy nitrogen feeder) but vigorous bean vines could smother emerging corn seedlings.

There are many books written on companion planting – Sally Cunningham’s Great Garden Companions, a Rodale Press publication is one, and this link will take you to an excellent Cornell Cooperative Extension Fact Sheet: http://counties.cce.cornell.edu/chemung/agriculture/publications/companion-planting.pdf

As our friend and mentor, Amy Ivy, likes to say, “The gardener’s shadow is the best fertilizer”, I would add to that: “The best garden companion is the gardener.”
Plant a Row Drop Off Locations

How Do I Contribute to Plattsburgh PAR?
RESPECT the food you have grown and the people who will eat it by creating a “market quality” product:
Choose ripe but not overripe produce;
If appropriate, wash (and bag) your produce for a family of four;
Use shallow cardboard boxes for larger items.

Where Should I Take My Extra Garden Produce?

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Interfaith Food Shelf
United Methodist Church
127 Beekman St.

JCEO Food Pantry
29 Durkee St. (Back door next to Maui North)

Salvation Army Soup Kitchen
Senior Citizen’s Council of Clinton County
(Senior Center)
4804 South Catherine St.
5139 North Catherine St.

St. Peter’s Church Soup Kitchen
St. Alexander and St. Joseph’s Church Soup Kitchen
23 St. Charles St.
1349 Military Turnpike
(Behind Seton Academy)

For more information about Plattsburgh PAR: [http://www.plattsburghcommunitygarden.org/Home](http://www.plattsburghcommunitygarden.org/Home)

North Country Gardening
Native Versus Exotic

By Jolene Wallace

I recently overheard a conversation while waiting in line at the market. A couple was planning to stop at a local nursery to buy plants and was discussing the difference between native and non-native plants. One of the two was of the opinion that a non-native plant was invasive. Since we are all seeing and hearing a lot about invasive plants right now I want to take this opportunity to clear up any confusion.

An ecosystem is a localized group of interdependent organisms together with the environment they inhabit and depend on. By definition, different countries, states, even counties will have different ecosystems.

A native plant is one that occurs naturally in the ecosystem. It is indigenous to the area; originated there, is growing and living naturally. A non-native, or exotic, plant is one that does not occur naturally in the ecosystem. It has been introduced, either intentionally or unintentionally. An invasive species is one that grows aggressively in an area and stifles the growth of existing plants. It establishes itself at the expense of the native species, but non-native, or exotic, does not signify invasive.

Most exotic species introduced into the ecosystem do not become invasive. They are simply living outside their native range of distribution. Most have no effect at all on the ecosystem and others can be beneficial. Only if an exotic species spreads widely and creates significant problems is it considered invasive. When they out-compete natives or non-invasive exotics they have the potential to alter the ecosystem in their favor and crowd out other species of plants.

Keep in mind that an ecosystem depends on a great number of factors to remain in balance. Predators, parasites, herbivores, diseases, and other organisms competing for the same resources limit the number of organisms that are able to survive in a given area. A non-native plant may not be subject to the same limiting factors. Perhaps it is not affected by the same diseases, or there are no predators or parasites that menace it. The potential exists for the non-native to out-compete the native for limited resources, and impair the growth of the existing plants.

Many non-natives have become part of our environment, diet, and culture. It is thought that

Continued on page 11
Vertical Gardening

Using tomato cages is probably the most popular way to train tomatoes, but it’s really not the best. Moisture favors diseases like early blight on tomatoes, so to discourage them it helps to increase air circulation around the leaves so they dry quickly. Plants grown in cages have way too many leaves packed inside the cage, with very poor air circulation. If you want to use cages, prune a lot of the excess growth from the center of the plant, especially those extra, leafy shoots they produce, called suckers.

A much more effective method is to trellis your tomatoes along a heavy gauge wire fence or lattice. I use concrete reinforcing wire because its 5 inch square mesh lets me reach through easily, and it is heavy enough to hold up the weight of a mature tomato plant. This heavy material means I only have to use a 6’ metal fence stake about every 6’ of length. Chicken wire and dog fence wire are too lightweight and will sag when loaded with ripe tomatoes.

Trellising and staking will also benefit any of your tall perennial or annual flowers that tend to flop over after a heavy rain. If you can get the job done soon, before the plants begin to sag, they will grow up and cover the support, giving a much more natural look. Once a plant has flopped over, it never looks quite the same after it has been propped back up.

Watering Your Garden

One of the biggest challenges to watering is knowing when you’ve applied enough water, and deciding when you need to water again. The only way to know if your soil needs water is to dig a small hole and take a look. As plants become established they send out roots horizontally as well as downward. You often hear writers refer to roots as ‘seeking out water’ but this is misleading since roots don’t have brains to help them seek! They won’t grow through a dry zone to get to the wet zone beyond.

Roots grow where there is water. If you want them to grow deeply you need to soak the root zone thoroughly enough that water seeps from there into the surrounding soil. Roots will then grow from where they are into those moist areas. If those areas are waterlogged from poor drainage or overwatering, roots won’t grow there. In waterlogged soil the air pockets are filled with water and roots can actually drown. You goal in watering is to soak the soil thoroughly, then give it time to drain away. Let the soil dry out somewhat before soaking it again. The most common mistake gardeners make is not letting the hose run long enough to provide enough water to expand the rooting zone. Once in a while I talk to someone who waters too much by keeping the soil constantly soggy, but not very often.

Edge Your Beds

There are all kinds of edging materials available for sale to help you keep your lawn from growing into your gardens or shrub borders. But after trying out a quite a few over the years my all-time favorite is to...
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- Flowering Meadow Nursery
- Garrant’s Vegetables
- Giroux Poultry
- Northern Orchards
- Stonehouse Vineyard

North Country Gardening

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use nothing. Most materials look great for a few weeks, but before long your lawn grass works its way through.

One of the best but most expensive approaches I’ve seen is to dig a trench a foot wide and deep, fill it with gravel then set flat paving stones on top, level with your lawn. This gives you a nice place to run the wheel of your lawn mower so you can mow right up to the edge without having to come back later and string-trim it.

If you don’t want to make that kind of an investment, my method is cheap and gives you a good workout. Once or twice a year I do a thorough job of cutting a new edge along my gardens with a round-pointed shovel. The half-circle shaped edging tools do an even better job cutting a straight edge, if you prefer. I then lift each chunk out and shake as much soil as I can back into my garden. To finish, I use a hand trowel to dig a trench along this cut edge and my garden, tapering the soil back up to my garden. In this way, the grass roots hit this void which they can’t cross. Over time this trench fills back up and the grass happily moves back in, but at least I’ve bought myself a little time.

Don’t Touch!

Watch out for a wildflower that is continuing to spread around our region, the wild parsnip. This plant looks a lot like Queen Anne’s lace, except it has coarser leaves and its flowers are greenish-yellow, not white. It reaches full bloom around mid-July in ditches, meadows, and roadsides.

Wild parsnip causes a severe skin reaction in many people, not as itchy as poison ivy but miserable with huge, watery blisters that leave scars that can last for years. Watch out for this plant!
You may have heard that honey bees have been disappearing and that the Department of Agriculture still doesn’t quite know why. The conclusions of a recent USDA report pointed to a multitude of causes of Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) including the Varroa Mite, pesticide residues, several viruses and a bacterial disease called foulbrood. Since CCD is a combination of symptoms, it is difficult to put the blame on any one cause. One of the problems with determining a cause is that the main symptom of CCD is finding few or no adult honey bees present in the hive. There is often a live queen, honey in the combs and immature bees in the hive, but no dead honey bee bodies to be found. Varroa mites, a virus-transmitting parasite of honey bees, have frequently been found in hives hit by CCD.

Why is this of such concern? Honey bees and other pollinators are essential to farmers for the production of agricultural crops from apples to zucchini. The USDA estimates that honey bees help pollinate crops worth over $200 billion per year. Just the value of honey alone had a value of $261 million in 2011. According to the USDA’s National Agricultural Statistics Service, in 2011, New York had about 49,000 colonies which produced 56 pounds of honey each with a value of $5.378 million. Honey prices climbed to record highs in 2012 making for an even bigger impact.

Even with such a demand for bees as pollinators and record high honey prices, CCD has made it extremely difficult for commercial beekeepers to stay in business. Before CCD was first noticed in 2006, beekeepers experienced normal annual losses of 10 to 15% of their hives in but in recent years that number has been 28% to 38% of all commercial hives. On average, US beekeepers lost 45% of their colonies this past year with local reports of losses of up to 65% of all colonies being affected by CCD. With an average value of $200 per hive, these losses are adding up into the millions of dollars.

While the USDA’s report was careful not to jump to conclusions, some environmental groups believe that pesticides, particularly a new class of pesticides called neonicotinoids, are suspected as a contributor to colony collapse disorder. These nicotine-like insecticides are particularly problematic because they are "systemic" pesticides that get into all tissues of the plant – including the nectar and pollen that bees collect. So far there has been no clear evidence that any pesticide is causing colony collapse disorder, but it is possible that pesticide exposure, combined with diseases or other factors, is contributing to the collapse of colonies.

Farmers dependent upon bees for pollination are always careful about pesticide use during critical blossom periods. To become certified to apply pesticides, farmers must attend a 30 hour course,

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

North Country Gardening
Pollinators in Peril continued......

pass a test and continue to take refresher classes to maintain their permit. One of the biggest concerns of local beekeepers is that pesticide use around lawns and gardens is far less regulated. Common garden pesticides such as Sevin™ are extremely toxic to honeybees and are often used at times when the bees are actively pollinating.

What can we do to help? If you have a home garden, try to limit the pesticides used to control insects, especially when they begin to flower. Bees and other pollinators can be killed outright by many common garden insecticides right along with pest insects. Plant a bee garden or allow bee friendly lawn weeds to flower before mowing. While dandelions and clover are often seen as unwanted weeds in a lawn, they are some of the best flowers for bees to harvest nectar and pollen.

Another great way to help bees locally is to support local beekeepers by buying your honey direct from a local producer or farmer’s market. Many roadside vegetable stands and orchards will sell honey from a beekeeper with hives on the farm. With beekeepers struggling to cope with the losses of their bees from CCD, you will be supporting your local bees and the local agricultural economy. For more information and the latest research about CCD and bee health, visit www.extension.org/bee_health.

We are looking for folks to judge some of the projects that our local 4-H clubs will have on display at the County Fair. The entries include crafts, science projects, cooking, artwork and an assortment of other things the 4-Hers have worked hard to prepare for the fair. If you would be willing to help with this on Saturday, July 13 or Monday, July 15 please contact Darlene at 561-7450 or dbm6@cornell.edu.

Baby Animals

Many of the critters who populate the Northeast have young ones to tend to these days. As you enjoy the sight of these new lives, you may at times see one or more that seem to be abandoned. According to the Humane Society, there are precautions to take when attempting to rescue an animal that you think may be too young to be on its own.

First, don’t assume the animal has been abandoned unless you find the adults dead or injured and unable to care for their young. The folks may be out hunting for food. Observe the young ones from a safe distance to see if an adult returns to care for it. If the youngsters seem healthy and lively, they should be left alone. If they seem weak they may need help. Contact a wildlife rehabilitator.

Did you Know...

That Cornell Cooperative Extension Clinton County consists of Agriculture, 4-H, Eat Smart New York Nutrition Program, Commercial horticulture, and Consumer horticulture? We are here to help you!
In this activity children can examine the impact erosion has on bare soil, compared with an area containing plants that have a dense, fibrous root system. When wind blows across bare soil, or when water flows down a hill, the wind or water slowly wears away the land, just as erasing rubs away the markings from a pencil. Barriers of different types can prevent, or somewhat reduce, erosion. The thick, root systems of some plants are particularly effective. The roots act like a net, holding the soil tightly in place. Roots can be very proficient anchors.

Supplies:

- Piece of grass sod, cut to fit a cake plan
- Cake pan about 9” x 13”
- Newspapers or plastic tablecloth to catch the runoff soil
- Large plastic sheet, shower curtain or plastic tablecloth
- Soil to fill the pan
- Bowl of water
- 2 flower pots: one filled with soil, the other with a plant (of any type)

Preparation:

1. Cut and remove a piece of sod from the lawn. Even if the grass is brown and this activity takes place in the winter, spring or fall, the fibrous roots of the grass will be visible.  
   *Be sure that this piece of sod fits very snugly in one of the pans and that there are no air spaces between the edges and the piece of sod.
2. Place the pan with grass sod on the table. Ask, “Do you think the grass in this pan will have an effect on the soil underneath it, if we wet it down? Let’s find out”

Activity:

1. Fill the other cake pan with soil.
2. Lay the newspapers or tablecloth on a surface that you don’t mind getting dirty (outside is perfect)
3. Rest one end of each pan on a book, pudding box, or other object of the same height; so that the pans are on a slight incline of roughly 30 degrees. If you use a book you may want to cover it with plastic to prevent it from getting wet.
4. Beginning with the pan that contains just the soil, have the children slowly pour water – one cupful at a time- into the high end of the pan. Count how many cups it takes before the soil begins to move visibly and run out of the pan.
5. Repeat the activity with the pan that contains the sod. Be sure the children pour the water over the surface of the sod from the high end of the pan. Count how many cups it takes to make the soil run out of the pan.
6. Remove the individual grass plants from the sod and examine their root systems. How would you describe the root systems?
7. Place 2 flower pots – the one that contains a plant and the one that is filled with only soil- on the plastic sheet
8. Stand above the potted plant, with a cup of water held at about head height, slowly pour water down over the plant.
9. Repeat pouring the water into the pot that contains only soil. Compare the impact of the water droplets on the surfaces of the 2 pots. Does the plant help to cushion the impact of the “rain”?

For additional information refer to:
In Touch Science: Chemistry & Environment
By Nancy Trautmann & John Terry
North Country Gardening

It’s Fair Time!

The 66th annual Clinton County Fair runs from Tuesday, July 16 through Sunday, July 21

Support our local farmers and 4-Hers by attending the fair. With fewer and fewer people involved in agriculture, it is more important than ever to see the hard work and dedication of those who provide us with the food & fiber that we consume every day.

Tuesday 6 pm- Open Meat Goat Show
Wednesday 9 am—4-H Dairy Show
Thursday 9 am - FFA Dairy Show
Friday 9 am— Open Dairy Show
Friday 6 pm- 4-H Beef Show
Saturday 9am– FFA/4-H Dairy Judging

Events and Happenings

Thursday, July 18 from 6:00 to 7:30 PM Master Gardener Volunteers will be at the Peru Free Library to talk with you about maintaining your garden. Topics will include weeds, insect pests, diseases, and you are encouraged to bring questions and take home answers. There is a free program and everyone is welcome to attend. RSVP to 561-7450 or jmw442@cornell.edu.

If your group or organization is interested in scheduling a garden-oriented program contact Jolene at 561-7450 or jmw442@cornell.edu

Natives Versus Exotics continued...

98% of the food we raise in the United States attributable to non-native crops and livestock.

Ornamental landscape plants, shrubs, and trees have been introduced over 100’s of years either for their beauty, connection to one’s homeland, or for economic reasons. Some escape cultivated control and are able to thrive and reproduce on their own. Purple loosestrife, an attractive, brightly colored plant that blooms from late June through August, was introduced to eastern North America in the early to mid-1800s and was available in nurseries in the not too distant past. It is now altering our wetlands. It can tolerate most any moist site, a wide range of environmental conditions, likes all kinds of soil, and has no natural predators, be they disease or insect, on this continent. It clearly can out-compete native vegetation.

As an invasive species it replaces native plants, eliminating food, nesting, and shelter areas for wildlife and providing nothing that wildlife needs to survive. If wildlife populations are displaced, some may be lost to lack of habitat. Loss of habitat affects fish spawning and waterfowl which affect recreational values of wetlands, which hurts the economy. This cascade effect is the real danger of an invasive species. It stopped being about a purple flower in moist soil when it began to spread on its own.

To the couple I told you about in the first paragraph I say, Non-native is not the same as invasive. It is estimated that there are about 50,000 non-native species in the United States and only 4,300 are considered invasive. The food in your shopping cart comes to you compliments of exotic species.
North Country Gardening

July 2013

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