Amy Ivy has been making video clips about different gardening topics for Mountain Lake PBS. The current listings include how to dig potatoes, staking tomatoes, zucchini, and replanting veggies in the summer.

If you would like to view these informative videos go to http://mountainlake.org/topics/amy ivy.

New videos are posted every two weeks during the growing season so check back for the latest in gardening news.

Snails and Slugs

By Jolene Wallace

I consider August the half-way mark of our growing season and I find myself taking stock of what I’m happy with and what I’m not. With the wet June we had I don’t think I am the only one who is not ecstatic about the way the garden looks but I keep reminding myself that realistically, it’s not too bad either. The biggest problem I’ve had so far is directly related to the cool, wet weather and cloudy days that resulted in more snails and slugs than I have seen since I moved to the North Country.

High humidity and cool temperatures are perfect conditions for snails and slugs. These gastropods have soft bodies with no bones or legs, and are hermaphrodites (they have both male and female organs). Snails have an external spiral shell that protects them from predators and provides a ‘home’ for relief from warm, dry temperatures. Slugs have a mantle, a slight hump on the upper back near the head. Both have a pneumostrome which is a breathing pore on the right side of their body, and a foot, the flat part of the body that makes contact with a surface. It is the muscular contractions of this foot, along with the mucus it secretes, that allows them to slide across the ground, up trees, and over obstacles. They have two sets of tentacles, one sensory and the other containing eyes. Their mouths contain a file-like radula that allows them to scrape off leaves, flowers, and whatever other tasty morsels you have growing in your garden.

Snails and slugs consume several times their body weight in leaves, stems, flowers, and fruit each day, leaving irregular holes. The greatest damage is often seen on the fruit or plant parts closest to the ground. Fortunately, when the damage is contained to the lower parts of the plant, the plant may continue to grow and produce.

Besides the irregular holes you may find on your plants, a telltale sign of snails and slugs is the shiny silver trail of dried slime that they leave behind. Because the bodies of snails and slugs are largely water, they need to be in contact with

Continued on page 11
August Tips

By Amy Ivy

Tomatoes

Check your plants regularly for leaf diseases. Early blight and septoria leaf spot are quite common and we see them every year to various degrees. Both start on the lower leaves and work their way slowly up the plant. In most years you can still get a reasonable harvest from plants with these diseases.

Late blight is the dreaded disease that can wipe out whole plantings in a matter of days. Luckily, it does not winter over in New York, so each year we watch for its spread north. Late blight flourishes in cool, wet conditions, just like we had for the entire month of June this year. Late blight was identified in western NY in early July but then the weather turned hot and dry which slowed its spread. Gardeners should be on the lookout for it on your tomato and potato plants, those are the only two crops it affects.

Please let us know if you find anything suspicious. You can email a photo to Emily Selleck at our Westport office at els52@cornell.edu or to Jolene Wallace at our Plattsburgh office, jmw442@cornell.edu or bring a sample to either office as well. For more information on late blight, including lots of photos and a map showing where it has been found this year visit http://usablight.org

Slow Start

The cold, wet start to the growing season had a big impact on many vegetable crops this year. Perennial flowers seemed to manage all right, except for maybe being a little more floppy than usual. But annual flowers, vegetable transplants and vegetables and flowers planted from seed had a tough time getting established. The heavy rains washed out many plantings, the soggy soil rotted many seeds, and transplants took a beating from pounding rain and high winds. If you had to replant some of your crops this year, you’re not alone!

Even once plants became established they still struggled. By mid-July warm-loving plants were finally putting on a burst of growth that should have happened in June. Don’t be surprised if your harvests are later and less abundant this year. We still have all of August, and September can be warm in some years, so we may be able to make up some lost time with shorter season crops such as bush beans and zucchini, but sweet corn and pumpkins are going to have a hard time ripening this year. Try to not be too discouraged. Enjoy what does do well, support your local farmers by buying from them, and then make plans for next year’s garden.

Bugs!

The wet start to our season slowed down many insect pests although I’ve never had so much slug damage as I did last June. By August chances are good you’ll find a variety of bugs in your flower and vegetable gardens, and on your landscape plants as well.

Healthy plants can withstand quite an infestation, depending on the type of pest. Be sure to correctly identify the culprit to help you decide what action, if any, is necessary. Send us a photo or bring in a sample and we’re glad to help you troubleshoot. Digital pictures sent by email are especially handy.

Everyone has their own level of tolerance, called ‘threshold’ for how much damage they can stand. For many home gardeners, their threshold is lower than it is for their plants! By this I mean that many gardeners can’t stand the sight of holes in the leaves of their plants, while the plants can tolerate that much damage just fine. This is all a matter of degree of course, so there is no hard and fast rule in home garden situations.

Every year the leaves of the sweet potato vine in my porch planters are riddled with perfectly round holes. The culprit is a tortoise beetle, a neat little creature that can be either a dull brown or a bright metallic gold, depending on the species. Sweet potato vines are extremely vigorous and can easily take quite a bit of feeding damage. Morning glories are also susceptible to this bug but are also vigorous enough to tolerate the damage.
It has moved down from Canada and has been seen in the Canton area for several years. It was found in the Burlington area a couple of years ago and is now well established in northern Vermont. I saw the first infestation in Essex County in late July but have not seen any in Clinton County yet. With so much all around us, I would expect to see it here as well. So I’d appreciate your sending pictures of any cupped, curled or distorted growth you see on any members of the broccoli family. Thank you!

For more information about swede midge visit:
http://web.entomology.cornell.edu/shelton/swede-midge/

**From the Swede Midge Website:** Swede midge is a serious insect pest of cruciferous plants such as cabbage, cauliflower and broccoli because the larvae feed on and disfigure or destroy the growing tip of the plant. The first discovery of swede midge in the US was in 2004 on a broccoli farm in Niagara County, NY. The insect is native to Europe and southwestern Asia and has been known in North America only since 2000 when it was identified in Ontario Canada. Swede midge has the potential to spread to most crucifer growing areas in the US and Canada.

**Attention Broccoli Growers:**

Please be on the lookout for distorted growth on your broccoli this summer, and contact our office if you notice anything suspicious. There is a new bug in the area, swede midge, and we are trying to figure out more about exactly where it is. The adult is a midge (a tiny fly) that lays its eggs right in the growing point of broccoli. The larvae feed on the growing point causing cupped leaves and ‘blind heads’ where no regular broccoli heads develop (see photo). This pest damages other brassicas as well including cabbage, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower and kale.
Italian vegetables usually refer to tomatoes, bell peppers, summer squash, and eggplant. I love Italian vegetables throughout the year, but in summer the tomatoes and peppers are so full of flavor and zucchini and summer squash are plentiful.

You can do many things with these vegetables from raw to cooked. Try chopping tomatoes, bell peppers and zucchini and mixing them into cooked pasta with some of your favorite Italian dressing for a crisp pasta salad. For a cooked alternative, toss any combination of these vegetables with olive oil and cook them in a pan at 400°F, stirring occasionally, until the edges begin to blacken. They make a great sandwich filling hot or cold. The recipe included is really low in calories. It would be a great way to make half of your plate vegetables, if you included a small portion of whole wheat pasta or bread, along with some white beans, or low fat sausage, for additional protein.

### Summer Italian Vegetables

#### Ingredients

- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 squash, diced (yellow or zucchini)
- 1 tomato, diced
- 1 sweet green bell pepper, chopped
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 (8-ounce) can tomato sauce

#### Nutrition Facts

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#### Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. Combine onion, squash, tomato and green pepper in a baking dish.
4. Pour the tomato sauce over the vegetables.
5. Bake uncovered at 350°F for 20-30 minutes.
6. Top with cheese and bake another 4 to 5 minutes until cheese is melted.

**Refrigerate leftovers.**

**Yields about 6 servings**

**Source:** Adapted from *Eating Smart, Being Active*, California EFNEP and Colorado EFNEP
Buckets Needed

By Jolene Wallace

One of our most popular teaching programs for children each year is making a bucket garden. A bucket garden is just what it sounds like. A clean five-gallon bucket has drainage holes drilled into the bottom and then is filled with potting mix, and planted with a variety of plants. This season alone, our Master Gardener Volunteers have helped several hundred children in our community make their very own bucket garden. We provide the materials at no cost to the participants. The kids plant their buckets with tomatoes, onions, and a flower or two, review the care instructions with the Master Gardener Volunteers and take them home to nurture with the help of their families.

The kids learn the importance of good drainage, soil, and what the plant needs from it. They learn about roots and the function they serve. They learn how plants grow and how to take care of them. Most importantly, they gain a clear understanding of where food comes from.

This program has been a huge success. It is a hands-on program we provide to enrich the lives of children. We have gotten very positive feedback from this program and want to continue, or even expand it next year and beyond.

For the past several years we have been fortunate to have a steady supply of 5-gallon buckets, but now need to find additional sources. If you have, or have access to, 5-gallon buckets that you would be willing to donate to the Master Gardener Volunteer Program, please call me at 561-7450 or email me at jmw442@cornell.edu.
Ask any gardener to name their favorite crop and chances are good they’ll say tomatoes. Even people without a yard will often have a pot of tomatoes growing on their deck or patio. Cherry, paste, patio, determinate, indeterminate, heirloom, hybrid, yellow, red, purple, slicer and salad tomatoes, there is a type of tomato to suit every taste.

But tomatoes can be challenging to grow. They often start off pretty well then suffer from one or more diseases. In a good year the diseases will be mild enough that your plants may not win a beauty contest but will still produce plenty of tomatoes for your home use. Some gardens remain trouble-free, growing beautiful plants almost every year. It’s always worth planting tomatoes, just realize that some years will be better than others.

This year got off to a very slow start. All crops were affected by week after week of chilly, rainy weather from mid May through early July. Most tomatoes I saw throughout June, in both home gardens and commercial farms, looked pretty pathetic unless they were protected by a tunnel or hoophouse.

But everything changed in mid-July this year when the sun appeared, temperatures hit the 90’s and the puddles finally evaporated. Tomatoes (and all heat loving crops: corn, squash, cucumbers, etc) put on a burst of growth, and by the end of July many plants look quite promising. Few will win prizes for earliest harvest but if your plants made it through June, chances are good you’ll have a decent crop by late August. Unless a disease strikes hard, that is.

Potential Disease Problems

There are three main diseases that hit tomatoes. Two, early blight and septoria leaf spot, overwinter here and are common and appear to some degree every year. The third, late blight, is devastating but does not overwinter here so it is not a continuous threat.

Gardeners and growers were very nervous in late June. The cool, wet conditions were perfect for the dreaded disease, late blight, that wiped out everyone’s tomatoes and potatoes in 2009. This particular disease does not overwinter here so we watch each year to see when and if it arrives. Since 2009 we have had a few summers without late blight here in Clinton and Essex counties and in 2012 it didn’t arrive until late summer and then did not hit every garden. Phew!

So far this year we’ve seen early blight and septoria leaf spot, as expected. The website http://usablight.org tracks confirmed cases of late blight across the country and as of the end of July it had only been confirmed in 3 counties in western and central New York but most recently near Burlington, Vermont. So gardeners need to stay vigilant as it moves closer. The spores can move on storm fronts and when weather conditions are ideal, cool and moist, it can spread quickly from garden to garden.

Those who want to try to protect their plants or deal with the two common diseases have two choices, copper and chlorothalonil. Copper is approved for organic use and is sold under a variety of trade names. Be sure to handle them carefully. They can be caustic to your skin and especially your eyes. Chlorothalonil is sold under various trade names as well including Fungonil and Daconil. Read the label carefully and check the list of active ingredients that will be on the front of the container to make sure you’re getting what you want, in this case either copper or chlorothalonil. Follow the label directions exactly. These products will help protect your plants as spores land on their leaves and can slow the spread of early blight and septoria leaf spot. Late blight is virtually impossible to stop once it arrives in your garden. Remember that it only affects tomatoes and potatoes.

Early blight is characterized by small to medium sized lesions, usually surrounded by a yellow halo and a series of concentric rings is usually visible inside the lesion.
Leaf Diseases continued...

**Septoria leaf spot** is characterized by small, distinct dots, which usually have a light tan center. Even when many spots coalesce, the original individual spots are still visible.

![Septoria leaf spot image]

**Late Blight** produces large, purplish lesions on leaves and stems, that expand rapidly in size. Lesions can be on fruits, too.

![Late Blight image]

Vermiculture, also called worm composting, is simply allowing worms to do what worms do best; break down decomposing and organic material and enrich the soil via the castings, or excrement, they leave behind. In vermiculture, you provide the worms with a home, bedding, and food scraps and harvest the vermicompost for your garden.

Worms require moisture, food, air, darkness, and warmth. To start a worm bin you begin with a waterproof box. Plastic storage bins are perfect. With holes for ventilation, moist newspaper strips for bedding and raw fruit and vegetable peels to eat, you are ready for the worms. Red wigglers are a good choice for worm bins. They are easy to care for and reproduce quickly.

Most folks who keep worm bins do so in a basement, under the kitchen sink, or anywhere the temperature stays between 55 and 80 degrees. When done correctly your worm bin will not smell bad, draw house flies or fruit flies. Your friends won’t even know you have a worm bin unless you tell them when they ask why your plants are looking so lush and healthy!

Vermiculture is an easy, inexpensive way to turn kitchen scraps into a rich, nutritious, soil amendment. Kids love these worms and vermiculture makes a fun family project. If you would like to give it a try, one of our Master Gardener Volunteers has 5 starter sets of red wigglers to give away. If you are interested, give me a call at 561-7450
Day after soggy, cool day this past June I trudged out to our vegetable garden to see what if anything had happened. If watching could make plants grow, ours would be a match for Jack’s beanstalk!

If a plant – vegetable, flower, shrub, vine, tree or grass – gets what it needs, it will grow. Plants themselves can actually “tell you” about how they’re doing: either they are robust and mature fully, or they’re weak or spindly or pale or - simply put - fail to thrive. They are “telling you” something is missing - too little sun, not enough heat, overly wet soils...I’ll bet almost everyone’s plants have “shouted” about something this year!

I had every intention of making this a scholarly article but somehow another story wants to be heard...

When I was a little girl, I loved to weed my mother’s flower gardens. When I got older, I couldn’t believe she would even pay me to weed! Perhaps it’s the neatnik in me, or perhaps I just loved being outside in the garden, smelling the earth, examining all those marvelous creatures like toads, ground beetles, earthworms, and a host of others that inhabit our gardens. The weeds kept my hands busy but my eyes and mind were free to watch and wonder and learn.

I helped my dad with his vegetable garden, too. At least I thought I was helping! I’m sure I ate more than I picked for the table, and sometimes I left the garden gate ajar so the bunnies would hop in and take my place in the “lunch line”. But Dad never discouraged my interest in gardens.

It wasn’t until I was married that I had a vegetable garden of my own. A number of years ago, I began my first perennial beds as well as a small herb garden near the kitchen. Some years were good, others were not. Many were in between. But THIS year, oh my...

I love my herb garden. It’s what I see when I am standing at my kitchen sink. It sits along a retaining wall that skirts the western side of our terrace. Our house makes an el around this stone terrace, and because this area faces west it gets positively Saharan during most summer afternoons when the thermometer outside the kitchen achieves temperatures well over 100 degrees Fahrenheit. The herbs love it, especially the lavender. This year, I thought I would add some zinnias to the mix. My mother always had zinnias in picking garden so they are one my sentimental favorites. I suppose that’s why I was so upset when I realized something was eating them! I had expected they’d grow quickly in the herb garden, and when they didn’t, I went out to look closely. Sure enough, the leaves were obviously being chewed – big time. But no sign of the culprit! I found myself sneaking up on the flowers during the day to see if I could catch the zinnia-chomper, but to no avail. What I did see, though, was a slug lounging near the Microbiota (Russian arborvitae) just to the north of the bed. How odd, I thought. This usually hot, dry microclimate was the last place I thought I’d find a slug! Lo and behold, the next day I saw the tell-tale slime trail around the base and stem of one of the zinnias! So I did the beer-in-tuna-can thing, and what do you know? An entire party of slugs had succumbed to the brew!! The zinnias most affected by the slugs were at the end of the garden next to the short row...
of Microbiota that had been heavily mulched. From under the spreading Microbiota and under the mulch these nocturnal diners had come!

Meanwhile, on the East side of the house we have 3 raised beds for vegetables. For years, we had a twenty-four foot diameter (round) vegetable garden up in back of the shed. It used to be reasonably sunny there, but, as we live in a forest on the side of a small mountain, trees grow and shade happens. A few years ago, I decided to put in two Square Foot Gardens just beyond my perennial beds where they get at least eight hours of direct sun a day. These gardens are close to the house so they get visited often and water is readily available. Last year I added another 4’ X 8’ raised bed for warm season crops.

Last fall I had heavily amended all the beds with copious amounts of a variety of organic materials. In raised beds it’s easy for the soil to become depleted so I was determined to build them up again. I had purchased my seeds in early spring and was ready to go...until the cool wet weather began its shenanigans in May. The rains came and came and came...on what seems now like the first decent day well into June I finally planted the cool season vegetable seeds – all but the spinach that I had forgotten to order. I knew I was late for the cool season vegetables but I thought I’d just see what happened. A couple of weeks later, I planted the warm season vegetable seeds as well as some of last year’s spinach seeds I found looking for something else.

What happened was things got off to a slow start and barely seemed to push along. And still the rains came, and the high humidity, and the warm, sticky nights. On a couple of occasions, during a “dry spell”, I added some fish emulsion. I was concerned that all my good added materials had washed away. I guess the leaves seemed a little greener, but the plants still languished.

That was June. Much of July was HOT, humid, and sunny. Towards the middle of the month, my squash, cucumbers, and beans were going gangbusters – even flowering profusely (and even without more fish emulsion – all they really needed was SUN). As for my poor peas, they managed to blossom some and make some pods but it took FOREVER for the pods to plump up and give us a handful of peas. The lettuces did well as did the chard and kale. The carrots “topped up” well and I’m wishing I had been more diligent thinning. The spinach germinated and grew a bit before it gave up and bolted.

Proper timing of planting, proper soil and air temperatures for germination and best growth, sufficient sunlight, adequate but not an overabundance of water – these were all out of whack this year. I’m very glad my gardens are small because I can find time to get out and tend them without becoming totally overwhelmed. And I’m glad I didn’t just give up! Perhaps I have my childhood gardening experiences to thank. Perhaps the small scale of my gardens is helpful. I’m sure looking back in my notes to the 2009 gardening season which was quite similar to this one was very helpful. Perhaps I still find gardening an opportunity to witness the unexpected, to marvel at how much I can still learn from experience, and to share my joy with others. Perhaps I’m just a gardener like those of you who are reading this article and shaking your heads and hopefully smiling and thinking of your own gardens...

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**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!

**North Country Gardening**

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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.ccecc4hce.blogspot.com/](http://www.ccecc4hce.blogspot.com/)
Have you ever been asked, “What’s inside of an apple?” or thought about it? Most often people answer with describing words for the physical characteristics such as “seeds” or the “pocket for seeds” before they think about the more abstract concept of nutrients. This experiment gives children an opportunity to separate components and physically experience the various textures, shapes and sizes of similar fruits.

Background:

Fruits come from plants that originated as seeds and they may also contain seeds within them. Seeds can be found on the outside (strawberry) or the inside (apple) they can be edible (kiwi) or inedible (plum) and sometimes they may even be poisonous (kernel inside the pit of a peach). Some vegetables like tomatoes, peppers, pumpkins, and squash are scientifically classified as fruits because they have seeds.

Supplies:

- Selection of different fruits
- Paper or plastic plate
- Plastic serrated knife
- Paring knife (for adults)
- Magnifying lens
- Ruler
- Measuring cup
- Notebook Paper

Let’s get started:

1. Choose a fruit. Before examining the fruit, make some predictions about the seeds. How would you describe the seeds?
2. Tear a sheet of notebook paper in half. Then fold each piece in half. Use one piece to hold the seeds, the other for any non-seed parts of the fruit.
3. Separate at least one seed from the rest of the fruit. Use a knife, if necessary, to find and isolate the seed. Keep the seed and non-seed samples close together.
4. Repeat steps 1-3 for each fruit. Compare predictions and observations, continuing with the following examinations.
5. Use a magnifying lens to examine a seed more closely. Describe what the seed looks like with and without the magnifying lens. How do different seeds compare?
6. Use a ruler to draw a 1-inch line on a piece of paper. Choose one fruit and estimate how many seeds will fit on the line. How can you check your estimation? How do different seeds compare?
7. Fill a clear measuring cup half full of water. Put the seeds of one fruit in the water. What do you observe? Remove the seeds (or pour out the seeds and water). Try the seeds of another fruit and compare the results.

Exploring together:

- Where are the seeds located in the fruit?
- How many seeds are there?
- How would you describe the color of the seeds?
- How would you describe the shape of the seeds?
- How do the seeds feel? Soft? Hard?
- How are the seeds of different fruits similar? Different?
- What other foods do you think have seeds?

For more information look for:

*Kitchen Science for Kids*

By Patricia F. Thonney & Tracey J. Farrell
moist surfaces to keep from drying out.

During the day they remain under cover of plant debris, under the rim of pots, under logs, in rock piles, in crevices in the soil, or any place where it is cool, damp, and dark. Besides the irregular holes you may find on your plants, a telltale sign of snails and slugs is the shiny silver trail of dried slime that they leave behind. Because the bodies of snails and slugs are largely water, they need to be in contact with moist surfaces to keep from drying out. During the day they remain under cover of plant debris, under the rim of pots, under logs, in rock piles, in crevices in the soil, or any place where it is cool, damp, and dark.

Slugs can lay 20-80 eggs at a time, several times a year. The eggs are round or oval, one-quarter inch in diameter, and have a gel-like consistency. If temperatures are warm and conditions are dry they can remain dormant until the weather is favorable for hatching. Slugs can have a lifespan of one to five years. Adults and eggs winter over in areas protected from freezing and become active again in the spring. Look for and destroy eggs. They will sometimes be found in your potting mix and container plantings.

There are various ways to protect your gardens from snails and slugs. Keep plant debris cleaned up. Trapping them by leaving boards at least 6 inches by 6 inches out in the evening and then gathering up the snails and slugs underneath in the morning is effective. Melon rinds turned flesh side down is another way to get them into one place for disposal in the morning. They are attracted to beer so a container full left flush with the ground near the plants they are feasting on should reward you with drowned ones the next day. Yeast dissolved in water will yield the same results.

Each slug you eliminate means up to 300 slugs you won’t have to deal with next spring. In days gone by salt was used to kill snails and slugs. The damage that salt can do to your plants once it is in the soil makes it less than ideal for management of gastropods. There are a number of commercial products available to kill slugs and snails but I suggest you try these cultural methods first. If you choose to use a commercial product, follow the directions carefully and remember that some of them are toxic to pets and other animals. There are ‘pet-friendly’ products available, so, as with any pesticide, read the label before purchasing.

My thanks to the University of Vermont and University of Maryland Extensions for some of the information used in this article.

That’s Some Slug!
The largest slug in the world is the Limax cinereoniger which can grow up to 12 inches long and is native to Europe. How would you like to have this guy in your garden?

The second largest slug in the world is the banana slug, which can grow to 9.8 inches long and weigh more than 4 ounces. I am familiar with this yellow fellow because they are native to the Pacific Coast. They prefer forested areas and are common where redwoods grow. The banana slug is the mascot of University of California Santa Cruz, which is situated in a forested area overlooking the ocean. My daughter graduated from UC Santa Cruz so is officially a banana slug.

GO SLUGS!!!

 Slug Damage

North Country Gardening