I believe that we in the North Country are fortunate to have snow at the beginning of 2014. Right now, our landscape is covered in a thick blanket of white. It looks so clean and new, sparkling when the sun hits it, and muffling the sounds we might hear if it were not present. I think of it as a blank canvas, waiting for us to pull out our brushes and palettes, and paint whatever we want in whichever colors appeal to us. A perfect beginning to the new year……. Jolene

Getting a Fresh Start in the New Year

By Jordy Kivett, Nutrition Educator

Though New Year’s Resolutions are probably not a very effective way to change oneself (I can’t even remember if I made any a year ago), starting a new year can be a good time to get a fresh start. I like the idea of a fresh start better than a resolution because it is less focused on what you have been doing and more focused on the present. Dwelling on what you don’t like about your current habits is usually not a great way to change them. So if a new calendar year can help you to forget the past and start anew, now is as good a time as ever to make some changes.

Of course my suggestions will be related to food and activity, but I think I have some ideas for everyone who is looking for a fresh start. When it comes to food, the best way for me to envision a fresh start is a new or clean plate. For a fresh start consider filling this clean plate differently. The USDA’s recommended My Plate shows how to divide your plate into each food group and is a good starting point. Some people may have different goals though, so my biggest endorsement is that you fill half of that clean plate with fruits and veggies, hopefully at most meals and snacks. For a fresh start, eat fruits and vegetables with every meal and snack.

Another way to start with a clean plate is to actually get a new plate, a smaller plate. If portion control is difficult for you, using a small plate is a great way to curb your portions with no measuring or extra steps. I do this for ice cream. My favorite coffee mug is smaller than my other mugs, I usually only use it for coffee on mornings that need a little boost for whatever reason. But that same mug is great to use for ice cream and it seems special, so I am excited to use it. This does not have to be a whole set, or match your kitchen décor, just whatever appeals to you. So if you can, buy yourself a cute dish, bowl or mug, but in a petite size.

Continued on page 5...
Winterize the *Smart Way*

By Peter Hagar, Ag and Energy Educator

Winter’s here and it’s going to be cold. Snow will fall and icy winds will blow, hopefully not through your house. If your home is drafty and your heating bills are too high, you can do something about it.

The best things you can do...

- **Air Sealing.** Air sealing windows and doors with weather stripping and caulk is always a good idea; the worst leaks are often found in unlikely places like crawlspaces, garages and attics. Air leaks are also common where porches, overhangs, soffits and other architectural features meet the main structure of a house.

- **Insulation.** Many homes – especially older ones – lack proper insulation. You should have insulation blown in wherever it is needed, but the attic is often the best place to start. Improving the insulation of exterior walls can also have a dramatic effect.

- **Equipment.** ENERGY STAR®-rated furnaces, boilers, hot water heaters and other equipment can save you considerable money on energy bills. You may be able to upgrade your existing inefficient heating equipment with smaller, more efficient equipment if you complete the insulation and air sealing work first. It’s like saving twice!

You can also take action today, for little or no money

Large-scale winterization projects are best left to professionals, but try these low-or no-cost suggestions for homeowners or renters interested in staying warm and cutting heating bills this winter.

⇒ **Use your programmable thermostat.** You can save a lot of energy and money by using your programmable thermostat to lower the temperature of your home significantly when you’re out or asleep. Just set it to return to a temperature you are comfortable with an hour before you return from work or wake up. You’ll hardly feel the difference until you see your heat bill.

⇒ **Make sure your windows are tight.** Before turning on your heat, remove all air conditioning units and close all storm windows. Sometimes a storm window may look closed when it really isn’t, so be sure to check.

⇒ **Give single-pane windows a little help.** Thermal plastic sheeting is affordable, easy to install and can help insulate single-pane windows.

⇒ **Put your drapes to work.** Drapes have the power to help insulate. During the day, drapes should be kept open to let the sunlight shine in and create warmth. When it gets dark, pull them closed to keep the heat in.

For more information about energy saving in your home, contact Peter Hagar at 561-7450 or email phh7@cornell.edu.

**Free energy saving workshop offered on January 22. See Events on page 11 for details.**

*North Country Gardening*
Amy’s Tips for January

By Amy Ivy

Holiday Plant Guilt

Here’s my annual message for January: don’t feel bad about tossing out (or better yet, composting) any gift plants you received last month that are now looking poorly. Poinsettias can linger for weeks, dropping their leaves but hanging on to their showy bracts (the colored part). Keep them as long as you enjoy them, but as soon as they start to look miserable, give them the heave-ho and don’t look back. They were raised as a short term crop, there will be plenty more next year!

That said, some folks like the challenge of keeping them going. Bear in mind that in their native Mexico they are a shrub that grows over six feet tall. They need warm temperatures, sun and room to grow. Cut them back hard to keep them bushy and feed them with a liquid fertilizer. I don’t have room for them so I don’t even try, but a few dedicated gardeners have reported some luck.

Snow Banks

This is a good time of year to notice where your snow banks form. Natural drifts of snow are fine but the icy, often salt-laden, packed snow banks created by snow plows or shovels can be hard on the dormant plants underneath. If you always struggle trying to revive the plants that get buried under your driveway snowbanks, it will probably be easier in the long run to relocate the plants. Snow plows have a system to where they pile the snow the most efficiently, so there’s no point in trying to locate a perennial flower garden or shrub border there. It’s easy to forget in summer when you have some new plants to locate, just where those snowbanks form. So take note now, take some pictures too, to remind you so you can rearrange things next spring and summer.

Catalogs

Seed and nursery catalogs have replaced the greeting cards in my mailbox. Even if I don’t plan to order anything I still enjoy looking through the range of catalogs to get ideas. There are a few companies whose catalogs have a lot of good growing information in them so I always save the current edition to use as a reference. But use catalogs cautiously, read them with a skeptical eye. Remember they are in the business to sell you something so they are prone to making everything sound good. Remember the old adage, if it sounds too good to be true it probably is. That is great advice! Be on the lookout for euphemisms. Catalogs will sometimes say ‘vigorous growth’ when they really mean aggressive growth when describing a vine that will climb 20 feet by July. When looking for continued on page 6...
Heavy-Lifting Activity

By Chelsea Baxter, 4-H and Nutrition Educator

Last week I attended an in-house field trip for the fifth grade classes at Oak Street Elementary School. Cornell Cooperative Extension in Clinton County, the Champlain Valley Transportation Museum and the Astronomy Department at Plattsburgh State University have collaborated on a project called The North Country STEM Mobile Museum, funded by NASA that teaches youth about a variety of different space related topics. After seeing the excitement on the fifth graders faces, I want to share my activity with all of you in hopes of getting your children, grandchildren or other youth members of your family or friends involved in exploring space.

Materials:
(1) 3 oz. paper cup (like the ones you use in the bathroom)
(3) Long balloons (the ones used to make balloon animals) Extras will be needed in case of holes or popped balloons
(1) Balloon pump (these balloons are particularly hard to blow up by mouth)
(1) Large binder clip
Fishing line (long enough to reach from the ceiling to the floor)
(2) Plastic drinking straws
(50) Paper clips
Masking tape

Remember, this activity is experiential so let the youth try to create a rocket that will carry the heaviest payload (paperclips) into orbit by themselves before giving them instructions. You will be surprised at what they come up with on their own!

Building the Launch Pad

If you have a drop ceiling: Tie the fishing line to the large paper clip (make extra tight knots so it does not come undone) then attach the binder clip to the metal part of the ceiling securely

If you do not have a drop ceiling: Attach the fishing line to the ceiling with the masking tape (make sure to put enough tape on the ceiling so the fishing line does not come undone and fall)

The straw will be fished through the line and used as the rocket’s stabilization. This is how the rocket will go from the floor to the ceiling (the straw aids in the movement up and down the line). Make sure the fish line is held tight to the floor when launching the rocket, if the straw gets caught on the slack of the line it will not go straight up and will skew the results.

Rocket’s use jet fuel to launch into space. The pressure from their powerful engines push down on the ground while the ground pushes back on the rocket (every action has an equal and opposite reaction, Newton’s third law of motion) sending the rocket into orbit. The key to making the rocket fly is by creating pressure that will push down on the ground (i.e. having the pressure (air) from the balloon send the rocket upward)

You can find this activity and others just like it at:

http://www.nasa.gov/pdf/153418main_Rockets_Heavy_Lifting.pdf
Getting a Fresh Start, continued...

A truly fresh start is to drink water, regularly, and almost exclusively. You can leave other unsweetened beverages in your diet, milk, milk substitutes, tea, coffee, etc., but cutting out sweetened beverages seems to be a good path to better health. Again, getting a special glass or a new reusable water bottle may be a motivator in helping you drink more water.

My other idea for a fresh start with food is to try a new food. Whether you are wondering what quinoa is, how good coconut water tastes to command 3 dollars per single serving, or what that lumpy fruit looks like under its peel, go out on a limb and give it a try. A twist on this for gardeners is to try growing a new vegetable or berry. If you grow flowers, try a pot of tomatoes alongside your annuals, or if you are seasoned vegetable gardener, try growing a vegetable you are frequently buying at the store if there is one hardy enough for your climate.

The New Year is a good time to think about being active too. Snow shoveling does count as activity and shivering must burn calories, so don’t sell yourself short on what you are already doing. But just being more active feels good. So find ways to do that. A physically active fresh start may involve a gym membership or new exercise equipment, which are often discounted this time of year. It may also involve something simpler, like not being that parking lot shark, circling the lot, waiting for a space to open up near the door. Just park and walk already! If you have kids, do you spend the whole day indoors on days you are all off? A good fresh start may be to spend at least a little time outdoors, every day.

Whatever your fresh start may be, find things you enjoy doing and that make you feel good, because they are likely to become your new habits.

Have a great New Year!

The staff at Cornell Cooperative Extension Clinton County wishes you a healthy, happy 2014.

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North Country Gardening
disease resistance, the catalogs will usually point out the varieties that are resistant, so if it says nothing it probably isn’t. You also want to know what disease it is resistant to. If you struggled with powdery mildew on your phlox or squash last summer, be sure to look for PM or powdery mildew resistance.

Catalogs will often use abbreviations to save space so you need to hunt around to find the key to what those initials or symbols stand for. Usually they will include the key at the bottom of each page but sometimes it’s only at the front or back of the catalog. If the catalog is too confusing, skip it and try another company.

We have to be careful not to show a preference for one company over another, so I can’t list my personal favorites here. But check with your gardening friends to see which catalogs and companies they like and have had good interactions with. A mid-winter gathering of your friends with something hot to drink is an ideal way to share tips and ideas with each other.

Buying local is always preferable of course, so you can also use the catalogs to gather ideas, then see how much you can find close to home before placing your order. The greatest cost with a catalog order is the shipping. See if you can group your orders with your friends. If you’re ordering seeds, there are usually many more seeds per packet than you can use so these are easy to share. You might also consider a bulk purchase of row cover, potting mix, starter trays, labels, soaker hoses or drip tape and such to really bring your cost down. And by comparing notes with your friends’ experiences you may avoid an inferior brand, model or variety.

This recipe is from allrecipes.com, but chosen because I love this style of salsa in the cold months. Try using less sugar (½ to 2/3 cup) or even a sugar substitute if you would like. You could also substitute a milder pepper, though this is not a particularly hot recipe.

### Cranberry Salsa

**INGREDIENTS:**
- 1 (12 ounce) bag cranberries, fresh or frozen
- 1 bunch cilantro, chopped
- 1 jalapeno pepper, seeded and minced
- 2 limes, juiced
- 3/4 cup white sugar
- 1 pinch salt

**DIRECTIONS:**
Combine cranberries, cilantro, green onions, jalapeño pepper, lime juice, sugar, and salt in the bowl of a food processor fitted with a medium blade. Chop to medium consistency. Refrigerate if not using immediately. Serve at room temperature.
Not long ago you could see thousands of Snow or Canada geese in the fields, lake, and in flight. Now you see nary a one. Have you seen any robins, hummingbirds, or bluebirds? Where have they all gone? Most of us know that these are some of the many birds in the North Country that migrate each fall or early winter. Have you ever wondered where they go or how they get there?

Human “snowbirds”, travel to warmer climates during the coldest months for comfort reasons, and you might think that our feathered friends migrate to enjoy the warmer temperatures too. In a roundabout way they do, but it’s not about comfort, it’s about the food supply. The insects, fruits, and seeds that make up a bird’s diet are in short supply once winter arrives so the birds need to go where they can find the food they need to survive; and that means warmer temperatures. They also need water and shelter, and in cold climates, those may be in short supply too. Birds know it’s time to migrate when the hours of daylight begin to change. They become hyperphagic, meaning they begin to consume larger quantities of food. They put on weight, mostly in the form of fat, to sustain them through the rigorous journey that awaits them.

The Ruby-throated hummingbird, which weighs about 4.8 grams, (0.17 ounce, slightly more than a penny) may double its weight before beginning its migration. It uses stored fat for a non-stop 24-hours flight 600 miles across open water from US Gulf coast to Mexico’s Yucatan Peninsula.

Some birds are short-distance migrants. They may only move from higher to lower elevations. Others are medium-distance migrators and usually move a distance equivalent to one to several states. The long-distance migrants typically leave the United States and Canada, their breeding grounds where they spend the summer, and travel to Mexico, or even further south, their non-breeding, or winter grounds. The dividing line between breeding and non-breeding areas is the Tropic of Cancer, 23° latitude north of the equator.

Continued on page 10...
Each year we get a half-dozen or more freezing rain events, and every few years we might see an actual ice storm (technically at least 0.25 inches ice accumulation). But the storm that froze the North Country in up to two inches of glaze between December 21st and 23rd was exceptional. It didn’t have quite the punch of “The Great Ice Storm” of 1998 in which freezing rain tumbled for 80 solid hours, but in some locations damage was extensive.

Ice storms happen when a warm, moisture-laden front slides up and over a cold air mass, and then lets loose the water works. Cumulus clouds billow up (occasionally spawning winter lightning), and when cloud air temperature is between 25 and 30F, the resulting subcooled rain freezes to cold surfaces. Warmer than 30, it rains; colder than 25, it sleets. If the warm front is slow-moving—or worse yet, stalls—the ice really builds up.

Sadly, this recent storm caused many hardships, from extended power outages to injuries. Coming as it did during the holidays meant that some travel plans were canceled; some family connections not made.

While it doesn’t compare to more serious privations, many people are concerned about trees and shrubs that are broken or bent over. I can’t make the lights come on sooner, but I can tell you the best way to deal with iced-over landscapes.

The first order of business is of course safety. Broken, hanging limbs and split trunks can pose a risk to you or others. Glazed branches are surprisingly heavy, though, and it’s hard to get good footing on the icy crust. If you don’t feel confident doing the work, then please cajole, coerce or pay someone to remove hazards.

Avoid trying to shake or break ice from branches, because there’s a good chance of causing further damage. Right now there’s no good way to tell if a bent tree will right itself. Many of them will, though a bit of judicious pruning in early spring can go a long way to assist them. It doesn’t hurt to prop up a bent-over trunk or low-hanging branch with a

This newsletter is also available on our website:  
http://blogs.cornell.edu/cceclintoncounty/
two-by-four or similar, which can help prevent further damage should we get snow before the ice melts.

Where breakage has left a jagged stub, you can assist the tree by making a clean cut. The cuts at (A) and (B) will keep the limb from tearing away and damaging the trunk. Final cut (C) should be close to, but not flush with, the parent stem. Those tar-like wound coatings may help us feel better, but it turns out they work against the tree, and are no longer recommended.

In cases where a tree has lost 30% or more of its crown, it’s a good idea to get a professional’s opinion. Hiring a Certified Arborist is the best way to be sure the person doling out advice has demonstrated basic competence in all aspects of tree care. Unfortunately they’re few and far between.

If a company has no Certified Arborist on staff, at least see that they belong to one or more professional organizations. Membership in the ISA (International Society of Arboriculture) is most significant, and there’s also the TCIA (Tree Care Industry Association). As in all professions, most tree care practitioners are honest and knowledgeable. But all the same, get quotes in writing, and get their insurance certificate directly from their insurer. Here’s hoping for a quick thaw.

By Jolene Wallace

Vulpes vulpes is not a misprint. It is the scientific name for the Red Fox, in my mind one of the most beautiful mammals I have seen, especially in the winter when its red coat and black legs and ear tips are in sharp contrast to the snow.

The red fox lives in almost every county in New York and is one of the most widely distributed carnivores in the world. The North Country provides a perfect habitat for the red fox, providing a countryside with farmland, fields, and forested areas; all the things the red fox needs to forage for food and find shelter for protection from predators and a place to raise its young.

An adult red fox weighs 8-12 pounds and is 48-57 inches long, including its tail, which accounts for almost half that length. This large bushy tail not only helps with balance but also can be draped over the fox for warmth and is used to communicate with other foxes.

A fox’s den is usually an abandoned burrow made wider by the fox to consist of a chamber leading into a larger chamber lined with grasses. It may be in the root system of an old tree or in, or under, a hollow log, and may have more than one entrance.

Foxes maintain a family unit, with lifelong couples both tending the pups. A litter generally consists of three to six pups although a litter of twelve is not

Continued on page 11....
There are four major flyways in North America; the Atlantic Flyway, Mississippi Flyway, Central Flyway, and Pacific Flyway.

Some birds are daytime migrants, flying in flocks during daylight hours. Raptors and other soaring birds are daytime migrants. A soaring bird is one that travels on updrafts of warm air called thermals, which are produced when the wind blows over hills and mountain ridges Thus they are able to save on energy by flying without flapping their wings. Most daytime migrants are insectivores and eat on the fly. Flocking birds like geese, duck, and waterfowl are also daytime migrants.

Most songbirds are night migrants, flying in flocks at night and finding stopover, or staging, areas during the day to rest and find food and water. The cooler temperatures, calmer air, and the fact that they are less visible to predators at night are all factors in songbirds being night migrants.

One of the few birds that fly alone on the migration flyway is the hummingbird. It is thought that this is due to their small size, which makes them inconspicuous to predators, but if traveling in a flock, would make them more of a target.

There are four major North American flyways; the Atlantic flyway, Mississippi Flyway, Central Flyway, and Pacific flyway. Loss of habitat along these flyways presents a real danger to migrating birds. Without food and water sources and safe places to rest, birds have to alter their flight path in order to meet their survival needs. This takes time that some birds don’t have. Migration is fraught with hazards; physical stress, weather events, predators, and flying into things are some of the obstacles which must be overcome. Using landmarks like waterways and geographic formations, stars and changes in earth’s magnetic field, as well as methods that we don’t understand, birds set off in late fall or early winter. Not all will make it back in the spring, but we will welcome those that do.

Did You Know?
- The arctic tern travels 12,000 miles one-way on its migration from the Arctic Circle (its breeding ground) to the edge of the ice pack in the Antarctic Ocean. The arctic tern spends much of its 20 years of life flying.
- Birds are not the only animals that migrate. The gray whale migrates a distance of 12,500 miles each way.
- Monarch butterflies migrate 2000 miles each way. It takes several generations of monarchs to complete this trip.
- The Sooty Shearwater travels from its nesting colony in New Zealand to the Monterey Bay in California and back again; a distance of 40,000 miles.
- The hummingbird is one of the few birds that migrate solo instead of in a flock.
Events and Happenings

January 22: Cornell Cooperative Extension invites you to a **FREE** workshop: “Save Energy, Save Dollars” on Wednesday, January 22, 6:00 pm, at the Clinton County Cooperative Extension Office located at 6064 Rte. 22, Suite #5 in Plattsburgh. Instructor, Peter Hagar from Cornell Cooperative Extension, will explore the many ways to reduce your energy bills through no-cost/low-cost energy actions. **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!

Save these dates in March:

**Saturday, March 2** we will be holding our annual Food From the Farm event. This popular event gives you and your family a chance to meet the farmers and local food producers in our region and sample some of their great products. Look for details in the February edition of North Country Gardening and on our website.

**Saturday, March 9 and Sunday March 10** the Master Gardener Volunteers will be at the Annual Builders Association Home Show with a great display on “What’s Bugging You”. Learning about invasive species (the Emerald Ash Borer and Asian Longhorned Beetle), pest insects, and beneficial insects will get your gardening season off to a great start.

**Saturday, March 22** we will be holding our semi-annual Gardeners March Madness. This year’s theme is Designing the Garden You Always Wanted. Details coming soon.

New Website from Cornell

Cornell University has launched a new website billed as a ‘one-stop shop’ for climate change information. This informative site geared to farmers, gardeners, and students is called Cornell Climate Change; Research, Education, and Public Engagement Resources.

You can find it at: http://climatechange.cornell.edu/

Office Hours

Our office is open from 9:00 am to 4:30 pm Monday through Friday. The office will be closed on Monday January 20th in honor of Martin Luther King Day.

Vulpes continued....

unheard of. Both parents feed the pups until they learn to hunt at 12 weeks of age.

The hunting fox is a sight to see! The fox moves erratically until prey is detected, then the fox freezes. Suddenly, it jumps into the air and pounces down on the unsuspecting critter which is about to become a meal. This could be a rabbit, squirrel, mouse, or other small mammal. Foxes choose their prey by what is available, and may eat birds and eggs when they have the chance.

The greatest predators of the red fox are dogs, coyotes and humans. Although mostly nocturnal, if you are lucky you will see a red fox this winter and it may change how you look at our animal world.

North Country Gardening
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