It’s been a long winter but I think we may have finally put it behind us. Here at the Extension office we are busy putting together programs for the community that will get us all geared up for the coming growing season. We believe that if you are going to put your time, energy, and dollars into a project you want to get the most favorable outcome possible. We hope to see you at some of these programs…Jolene

April Chores

By Jolene Wallace

There are a couple of things I do in April that I think make a big difference in my yard and garden. As soon as the snow has melted to a level that I can maneuver through, I hang a suet feeder. As our feathered friends return from their winter retreats they find the suet and tend to stay nearby. Once I have them hooked, I leave out nest building materials: dryer lint, pieces cut from an old straw broom, bits of yarn, hair (yes, hair. If you have a dog or cat, that will do), and tiny twigs from branches left on the lawn by old man winter. I enjoy watching the birds at the feeder but I admit I also have ulterior motives. Birds like suet and seed, but they need more than that, especially when they have young in the nest. The young require protein, and if you’re a bird, what could have more protein than a nice juicy insect?

I am letting you in on one of my best pest control secrets. A healthy bird population can mean a noticeable reduction in the insect population. Granted, the birds don’t care if the insects are pests or beneficials, but that’s okay with me. There are plenty to go around at my house and I don’t mind sharing.

I will add that a drawback to hanging a suet or seed feeder is that some seed ends up on the ground. If the ground happens to be your flower bed or vegetable garden you will have extra weeding to do. The seeds may also attract other critters you would rather not have paying you a call, so don’t put out more than the birds will eat in a day or two and use a product that doesn’t have a lot of filler which the birds won’t eat. Clean the feeder often and don’t forget a source of fresh water.
WOULD YOU LIKE TO BECOME A MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEER?

We are currently seeking volunteers to train for our Master Gardener Programs in Clinton and Essex Counties. There is a considerable time commitment to the program but the rewards are many. You can feel good about teaching and helping others, and learn a lot about your favorite subject, gardening, in the process. A practical, hands-on style of presentation will be used, with emphasis on trouble shooting, prevention, using environmentally-friendly methods of plant health care, and Integrated Pest Management to protect soil, plants and the environment.

MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEER RESPONSIBILITIES...
A minimum of 50 hours of approved volunteer activities.
Regular attendance at monthly Master Gardener meetings during the year (2nd Thursdays in Plattsburgh, 2nd Fridays in Westport).
Continuing education is critical and will be provided at monthly meetings and periodic training sessions.
Represent Cornell Cooperative Extension in providing reliable, unbiased information to the public.

EXAMPLES OF MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEER PROJECTS...
Answering individual gardening questions
Creating educational exhibits
Staffing exhibits at local events and farmers’ markets, etc
Assisting 4-H clubs or schools with gardening projects
Advising community members and groups on gardening projects
Teaching and/or helping with horticultural workshops
Approved special projects of interest

THE APPLICATION PROCESS
If you are interested or have questions, please contact your county Cornell Cooperative Extension office

Clinton County
6064 State Route 22
Plattsburgh, NY 12901
518-561-7450
Jolene Wallace, jmw442@cornell.edu

Essex County
P.O. Box 388
Westport, NY 12993
518-962-4810
Linda Gilliland, lg46@cornell.edu

Cornell Cooperative Extension provides equal program and employment opportunities
Amy’s Tips for April

By Amy Ivy

Easter Lilies

I usually recommend that Easter lilies be considered a short-lived gift. Enjoy them while they’re in bloom and discard them once they lose their good looks. They are marginally hardy in our area but may survive less severe winters than we just had. I wouldn’t recommend buying Easter lily bulbs as a perennial for your flower garden, but if you find yourself in late April with a pot of them, you might want to give them a chance. Prune back the tips after the flowers have faded and keep the plant well watered in a sunny location indoors. Wait until early May to plant them outdoors in a flower garden and protect them from any late spring frosts. They are finished flowering this year, but if they survive next winter you may be rewarded with flowers next summer. No guarantees but if you’ve got the space it might be fun to try.

Winter Damage

We have been getting lots of questions from people wondering how much, if any damage this crazy winter weather has done to their outdoor plants. Until now we’ve been saying that you just have to wait. Well, the month of reckoning is finally upon us. Sometime in April, probably not until the last half, spring-like weather will arrive in the North Country. As plants come out of winter dormancy any winter damage will become obvious. This is true for deciduous trees and shrubs that drop their leaves in winter as well as for evergreens. The evergreens may look okay in late winter, then suddenly turn brown as they try to push out new growth.

Spring flowering shrubs form their flower buds the previous fall so they’ll be ready to bloom the following April-May, and those flower buds have to survive the winter exposed to the elements. Perennial flowers die to the ground and are usually protected by a blanket of leaves and snow but the flowering stems of your forsythia, rhododendron and lilac rise above any protective covering. Leaf buds are smaller and tougher but flower buds are larger and more prone to winter injury.

Forsythia is a classic example. I won’t be surprised if a lot of local forsythia looks like this photo when it comes into

Continued on page 6...
Elephant Toothpaste

By Chelsea Baxter, 4-H and Nutrition Educator

Spring is in the air and everyone is itching to get outside! This activity is definitely one for outside use (if possible) because of its explosive characteristics. Elephant toothpaste is an exciting scientific experiment for youth and adults. This experiment is called Elephant Toothpaste because when the foam comes out of the bottle it looks like toothpaste coming out of the tube, but do not get the foam in your mouth!

What you need:
- 1 clean 16 oz. soda bottle
- ½ cup of 20-30% hydrogen peroxide (salon quality, you can find at Sally’s Beauty Supply)
- 1 tablespoon (one individual packet) of dry yeast
- 3 tablespoons of warm water
- Liquid dish washing soap
- Food coloring
- Small cup
- Safety goggles

Caution: Hydrogen peroxide can irritate skin and eyes so safety goggles are suggested. If an adult can pour this into the bottle it is strongly recommended.

Directions:
1. Pour the hydrogen peroxide into the bottle
2. Add 5-8 drops of your desired choice of food coloring into the bottle
3. Add about 1 tablespoon of the liquid dish soap into the bottle and swish it around the bottle to mix it up
4. Inside the small cup combine the warm water and the yeast together and mix for about 30 seconds

Now the fun starts!
5. Pour the yeast water mixture into the bottle (a funnel can be helpful) and watch as the foam begins!

Background Information
The foam created by this experiment is very special because each tiny bubble of foam is filled with oxygen.

The yeast is used as a catalyst (or helper) to remove the oxygen from the hydrogen peroxide. Because this reaction occurs quickly it creates a lot of bubbles!

The bottle will become warm once the foam begins to form – this reaction is called an Exothermic Reaction – this means it is not only creating foamy bubbles but also heat!

Questions:
Why do you think the hydrogen peroxide causes the soap and yeast to explode into foam?
What happens when the yeast is added to the hydrogen peroxide and warm water?

What other experiments have you done that causes a chemical reaction?

You can find this experiment & others just like it at:
www.sciencebob.com
Introduction to Fruit Tree Grafting

Explore the history and science of grafting fruit trees and why grafting is necessary to propagate mainstream cultivars.

Learn to graft onto rootstock or established trees, repair fruit trees that have been “girdled” by animals or damaged by weather, and take home a newly grafted apple tree!

This hands-on workshop, taught by orchardist Dillon Klepetar, is geared for beginners; offering tools, tips, and a variety of techniques for grafting apple trees. The successful graft takes a bit of art, science, and a touch of love. It’s also very fun.

Time: Sunday, May 4
10:00 am to noon

Place: The CCE Office at
6064 State Rte 22, Suite #5
Plattsburgh

Space is extremely limited! Reserve yours by calling 561-7450 or email Jolene at jmw442@cornell.edu

Registration fee of $20 includes a young apple tree that you will take home. Bring a sharp knife, a plastic bag, and wear work clothes. Proceeds benefit Adirondack Harvest.

Check out our upcoming events on Page 11!
bloom in early May. Forsythia are famous for their vivid show of bright yellow flowers from top to bottom just before their leaves come out. In this picture, only the bottom of the plant is in flower, which is snow level when the temperatures dropped to their lowest. The buds under the snow were protected while those above the snow line were not. The plant will be fine, the leaf buds are plenty hardy and the whole plant will be lush and green in no time.

There are hardier varieties of forsythia on the market now so this is becoming less of a problem. But the older plants often have this characteristic damage after the colder winters.

The stems of other shrubs may die back from their tips from winter injury. If you’re not sure where the dieback begins and ends just wait until the leaves emerge and it will be obvious. You can then cut out the dead ends of these branches. Make your pruning cuts into the living tissue so the plant will be able to seal off the cut, rather than leaving dead stubs at the ends of the branches.

Roses, especially the hybrid tea types and many of the climbing types, are likely to have suffered some winter injury. They respond well to pruning and should regrow with little problem after you prune out any dead sections. If your rose is grafted be sure to remove any shoots that form below the graft. You don’t want to let the rootstock take over as it will crowd out the flowering top section with leafy, non-flowering shoots.

Girdling Damage

The nearly constant snow and ice cover this winter provided ideal protection for voles who easily tunnel underneath. Check your shrubs and young trees after the snow melts to see if voles or rabbits did any chewing damage. If the bark is chewed off all the way around the stem, that’s called girdling, and the part above the damaged area eventually dies. I’m sorry to say there is really nothing you can do about it once the damage is done. Do not use black pruning paint in an effort to cover the wound, that tar-based product actually slows the healing process. It is better to do nothing and just wait and see. If a dry spell comes, give the damaged plants a good soaking so they are not stressed, and in some cases they may recover. Burning bush and young apple trees are two of these critters’ favorite winter foods.

Snow Melt and Spring Rain

As spring rains come and the accumulated snow and ice melt, your yard and garden may experience some temporary flooding. Standing water isn’t good for perennial flowers, berries or most any plant in your yard. Keep an eye on where water is accumulating and try to drain it away if possible. I have a section in my perennial garden where large puddles often form in spring. I can usually make a narrow temporary channel with a shovel to let the water drain away.

Tips from Amy, continued...
By Jolene Wallace

By the time you read this, I hope that the snow and ice are distant memories and the mud has begun to dry. I know that most of us are more than ready to get outside even if it’s just to clean out the remains of last year’s garden or pick up debris that blew into our yards over the winter. We are anxious to get our flower and vegetable gardens ready for the growing season. My advice? Slow down!

I know that’s not what you want to hear but something I learned and remember well from my training as a Master Gardener comes to mind every year at this time. Before working your soil it should have the consistency of chocolate cake. Take a handful of soil and squeeze it into a ball. Is mud or liquid oozing between your fingers? Your soil is too wet. Does it hold the shape of the ball? You’re getting closer. If you push on the ball with your thumb does it break into particles that look like chocolate cake crumbs? Your soil is just right! You can work your soil without damaging its structure. Do try to avoid walking on it any more than necessary. If your soil is too wet, you should wait until it dries out to cake crumb consistency. This could take a while but your patience will pay off. Until it dries out some, you could teach the kids or grandkids how to make a mud pie, or you could bake a cake while you wait! If we get rain, you may have time to hold a bake sale!

The green, green grass of home. It’s tempting, but when you see your lawn greening up, don’t run for the fertilizer. Spring feeding encourages top growth, and more mowing, at the expense of root growth. Let your roots get a good start in the spring, which can make for more drought tolerant, disease resistant lawns in the summer. If you have bare spots in your lawn that you want to fill in with grass before the weeds get there, mix grass seed with some good soil, sprinkle on the bare spots and press down with your foot. Until the new growth is visible, water these areas daily.

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North Country Gardening
By Paul Hetzler, Cornell Cooperative Extension of St. Lawrence County

“One if by land; two if by sea.” This famous quote is as relevant today as it was on the eve of the American Revolution. Except now it’s relevant to the fate of organic waste generated in our kitchens (presumably using Revere Ware). Is land disposal the first choice for an apple core, or should we send it down the drain? Inquiring minds and bookies want to know.

It’s no surprise landfills aren’t the greenest option. Trucked many miles, buried and compacted by heavy equipment—apple core interments require fuel. And because there’s no oxygen within a landfill, organic waste emits methane as it decomposes. It’s an excellent fuel, but when released into the air, methane is 25 times more effective than carbon dioxide at trapping greenhouse heat.

However, the EPA requires landfills to capture methane and burn it (usually to generate electricity), or tie into a pipeline and sell it to a utility. This positive outcome doesn’t get us off the hook. On the balance, it still uses energy to landfill kitchen waste.

Let’s try sending organic matter down the drain via a food-disposal unit. This would be costly for anyone on a septic system. Food waste is higher in carbon than sewage, resulting in more residual solids and thus the need for more frequent pump-outs. But sewage treatment plants are well-suited to handle kitchen scraps. So the village or city dweller should use the down-drain option—right?

Everything washed down the drain takes additional energy to treat. The process used in this area is called “activated sludge” (I prefer passive sludge, which is less apt to make sudden moves). The activated sludge process requires constant aeration and agitation, consuming lots of electricity.

Treatment plants produce methane, which in large cities is trapped and used. Unfortunately, most small communities in our region don’t have the capital to invest in the equipment necessary for methane capture. In St. Lawrence County, only Ogdensburg’s treatment facility collects methane. At the 22 other municipal plants, this potent greenhouse gas wafts into the air.

Because wastewater treatment can’t remove all pollutants, a few oxygen-robbing nutrients from my apple core will end up in the river where they can contribute to algae blooms. Because of these and other issues like increased water usage, many US jurisdictions and several EU countries have banned in-sink garbage disposal units.

Some of my apple core becomes methane, some washes down the river, and a fraction winds up as dried sewage sludge, a treatment byproduct. Even if used in a garden, it’s organic matter with a big carbon footprint.

Composting yields rich humus, generates no methane or odors, and you don’t need a big back yard—or any back yard—to successfully compost. Many systems, such as the NatureMill home composter, are suitable for even the smallest living space. Worm composting is an easy, odorless and inexpensive choice, and can be especially fun for kids to get involved with. Call your Extension office for information on how to set up a “worm farm” or other composting system.

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It’s hard to choose between two undesirable options, but unless your wastewater treatment plant traps and uses methane, it may be marginally “better” to throw kitchen waste in the trash and keep it out of the water. Composting, which may be the only option that actually takes place on land (garbage in a landfill is always under something), is hands-down the best choice. The battle to responsibly deal with food waste, you see, will be won if by land.

This newsletter is also available on our website: http://blogs.cornell.edu/cceclintoncounty/
Green Salads

By Jordy Kivett, Nutrition Educator

To me there is no easier side, or even main dish, than a green salad. A little rinsing, a little chopping and you are ready to eat. You can top greens with almost anything, allowing you to match them to any meal.

However, in our culture they sometimes seem inferior when compared with foods that must be cooked. Rarely on food shows does a green salad get much attention. And while that may be because they are so easy, isn’t that the very reason they should be included there; you’ve just made this meal and here is an easy and quick way to add veggies as your side.

I admit, I am pretty lazy usually when it comes to side salads. Since everyone in my household enjoys them, they are on the menu more often than not, but it is usually greens and a handful of chopped tomatoes. While there is nothing wrong with that, as it is a great low calorie, nutrition packed side dish, so much more can be done.

When you are topping a green salad, think of all of the colors you can include. Here are some ideas:

**Red**: tomatoes, peppers, radishes, apples, grapes, radicchio, cranberries, pickled beets, strawberries, Raspberries.

**Orange**: carrots, oranges, peppers, cantaloupe, mango, tomatoes

**Yellow**: peppers, tomatoes, corn, pineapple, yellow beets, egg yolks

**Green**: broccoli, beans, peas, cucumbers, apples, celery, edamame

**Blue/Purple**: cabbage, onions, black beans, grapes, raisins, purple cauliflower

**White**: cauliflower, chick peas and other beans, egg whites, cheese, artichokes

Get creative and eat colorful meals. Not only are colorful meals more appealing to our senses, they also contain a wider array of nutrients.

Recipe on next page...

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/
5-A-Day Salad

**Ingredients**

4 cups spinach (fresh)
4 cups romaine lettuce
2 cups green pepper (chopped, or use red, yellow, or orange)
2 cups cherry tomatoes
1 cup broccoli (chopped)
1 cup cauliflower (chopped)
1 cup yellow squash (sliced)
2 cups cucumber (sliced)
2 cups carrot (chopped)
1 cup zucchini (sliced)

**Instructions**

1. Wash all of the vegetables and mix them together in a large mixing bowl. Top this colorful meal with the nonfat or low-fat dressing of your choice.

Yields: 4 large servings

**Cost**

Per recipe: $5.91
Per serving: $1.48

Source: Centers for Disease Control, 5 A Day for Better Health Program.

**Notes:** The dressing is not included in the nutritional analysis.

   Each serving = 5 cups of vegetables (Eight 5-A-Day servings).
### Events and Happenings

#### Master Gardener Recruitment and Training

If you think that being a Master Gardener Volunteer sounds like it’s right up your alley, check out the information on page 2. We are recruiting for Master Gardener trainees in Clinton and Essex County. Call for more information or to have an application sent to you. Jolene Wallace at 561-7450 or jmw442@cornell.edu

#### Don’t treat your soil like dirt!

The Ellenburg Depot Sarah A Munsil Free Library is hosting a FREE program on soil presented by Master Gardener Volunteers of Clinton County.

**Time**
Saturday, April 26
10:00-11:30 am

**Location:**
5139 State Rte 11
Ellenburg Depot

This is a **free** program and is open to everyone.

Register by calling 561-7450 or contact Jolene at jmw442@cornell.edu

#### Perennial Plant Sale—May 31

The Master Gardener Volunteers will be holding their yearly perennial plant sale on Saturday, May 31 at the Extension office located at 6064 State Route 22 in Plattsburgh. Sales will begin at 9:00 am and continue until all the plants are gone. This popular event features perennial divisions taken from the gardens of Master Gardener volunteers or grown in their greenhouses. As always, plants are $5 each or 5 for $20 and Master Gardeners will be on hand to help you choose plants that will fit your light conditions or answer any questions you may have.

#### Fruit Tree Grafting Workshop—May 4

On Sunday, May 4 we will be holding a fruit tree grafting workshop for beginners, led by orchardist Dillon Klepetar. This hands-on class will teach you the basics and you will go home with a young apple tree! See page 5 for all the details.

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### Let us Hear from You

Do you have ideas for articles you would like to see in North Country Gardening or topics that you would like to know more about? This newsletter is to help you, so your thoughts and interests are important to us. Contact Jolene at 561-7450 or jmw442@cornell.edu if you have any suggestions.

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### Program Outreach

One of my goals for 2014 is to make horticulture programming more available to some of the outlying areas of Clinton County and to many of our senior citizens who have a love of, or an interest in, gardening. I recognize that at the end of the day, with dinner to prepare and evening activities, it’s not easy to travel to a presentation, workshop, or program, even if it is of interest to you. The Master Gardener volunteers are more than happy to make things easier by bringing programs to you. If you provide the audience, we can manage the rest. We have put together a “menu” of programs you may be interested in. **For you seniors out there,** we want to help make it easier for you as well. Senior centers, living facilities, or organizations are encouraged to contact me to explore the possibilities of getting back to gardening. I look forward to working with you. Jolene 561-7450, jmw442@cornell.edu

_North Country Gardening_
North Country Gardening
April 2014

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