North Country Gardening

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Temptations

Paul Hetzler, Cornell Cooperative Extension of St. Lawrence County

It’s mid-winter, and the more observant among us have probably noticed it’s “cold,” and that the days are still pretty short and the nights long. With no bare earth or major holidays on the horizon, it’s only natural to look for something with which to distract ourselves.

It’s a time when some of us give in to the temptation of those types of publications. You know the ones I mean. Those glossy full-color pictures that make our hearts beat faster. Oh, the heartbreaking seduction of seed catalogs!

It isn’t fair, really. They flaunt those orange cauliflower, purple carrots, yellow, green and red peppers under our noses. It makes us want to buy just about every variety despite the fact our produce has never been as voluptuous, as brilliant of color, as the catalog pictures. This year it will be different, we tell ourselves.

The 2015 growing season could in fact be different. Each year brings new vegetable varieties that are resistant to certain viral, fungal or bacterial diseases, or tolerant of adverse site conditions. Hypothetically this means we do have an increased chance of success this year.

Every winter, Cornell updates its Selected List of Vegetable Varieties for Gardeners in New York State, available at www.gardening.cornell.edu or at your Cornell Cooperative Extension

Continued on page 8....
Amy’s Tips for February 2015

By Amy Ivy

Houseplants

There’s nothing like a living plant to make a room feel more welcoming. Even a good looking artificial plant can make a difference. I like to have at least one plant in my office but many offices aren’t conducive to houseplants. At home, while I would like to have more plants around the house, I find it works better to keep my plants in the rooms I occupy the most and that have the best light. That way I can check on them regularly and enjoy them more. Also, those rooms are a warmer in winter than the less-used rooms that we keep quite chilly, and most houseplants like the same comfortable conditions that we humans do.

Here are some plants to try if you want to add a few this winter. For low light areas: spathiphyllum or peace lily (has a pretty white flower once a year then nice, long leaves the rest of the year), pothos (the easiest and prettiest). For medium light: peperomia (there are many types in this group), goldfish plant (with little orange flowers that look like fish), jade tree (I like to keep it pinched so it stays dense and bushy), Christmas cactus (remember this is a jungle cactus, not a desert cactus so keep it watered and out of full sun). For bright light: croton (the more light, the more colors in the leaves), geranium (just pot up one from the summer).

Grocery Store Primroses

Anyone can use a spot of color in their homes this time of year. There are several flowering houseplants you can try but one of my favorites this time of year is the simple little primroses for sale at many of the larger supermarkets. They come in small, 4-inch pots already in full bloom, with bright, cheery blossoms. They usually cost no more than $5 and most years I’ve been able to keep them in bloom for months. This type of hardy primrose likes cool temperatures so it’s an ideal windowsill plant for chilly North Country homes. They come in red, purple, yellow, white and maybe even a few more colors, usually with a yellow eye. Pick off the flowers and lower leaves as they fade and don’t panic if they take a brief rest. In past years the ones I’ve bought in January or February have rebloomed over and over until spring. For an added bonus I plant them in my perennial garden in May and most of them have survived a couple of winters so far. Even if they don’t survive the winter, I definitely get much more than $5 of enjoyment out of these little beauties!

Landscaping with Shrubs

North Country Gardening
Amy’s tips continued

Ask any realtor, landscaping has a significant impact on the value of your home. But not only does it improve your property value it also makes your yard aesthetically pleasing to you. In the dead of winter I get a lot of enjoyment from the shrubs in our yard. The snow piles up on them nicely, and even their bare branches add interest and texture out there when things are looking rather bleak. Landscaping can be expensive but there are many ways to add some interest to your yard without breaking your pocketbook. One of the best ways to get a lot of interest for the least amount of money and labor is to add shrubs.

Like all landscape plants, the size when you buy it dictates the price. You can save a lot of money if you are willing to start with smaller plants. The key here is to be realistic about how large this ‘baby’ plant will eventually grow so you can give it enough room. This will save you a lot of headaches later on. Shrubs are easy to plant when small but once they become established they’re a lot harder to dig up and move around.

The easiest and best way to work shrubs into your yard is to plant them in groups in a mulched bed. The hardest way is to plant single shrubs scattered across your yard because you’ll have to mow around each one. A grouping of shrubs in a bed is not only attractive but quite easy to mow around. Use a 3-inch layer of bark mulch between the plants to keep the weeds down until the plants can fill in.
Painting Using Ice Cubes

By Chelsea Baxter, 4-H & Nutrition Program Educator

Ice is something that we are abundant in up here in the North Country! This activity will help you and your little family members learn to embrace the freezing cold weather by creating paint using ice cubes found right in your home freezer. The youngsters will love to swirl the melting paint over the paper, while learning how to recognize colors and also improve their counting skills while they observe their paint go from a liquid to solid state, then transform back to a liquid state right before their eyes!

What you will need:

- Liquid tempera paint in various colors (you can find this at most craft stores)
- Ice cube tray
- Craft sticks
- Paper
- Plastic wrap (optional)

How to get started:

1. Start by helping your child pour the paint into the plastic ice cube tray. You can have he/she count out how many cubes of each color they want.
2. Place the craft sticks into the middle of each liquid cube. The sticks should be able to stand up on their own, however, if you’re having trouble with this try covering the tray with plastic wrap then poke the sticks through the plastic wrap to make it more stable.
3. Carefully place the ice cube tray into the freezer and allow the paint to freeze until it is solid.
4. Once the paint cubes are fully frozen it is time to paint! Choose the color you want to start with and pop the paint cube out of the tray (try to keep the craft stick attached to the cube)
5. Hold onto the craft stick (this will act as your ‘brush’) and swirl the paint cube around the paper. While it melts it will leave a trail of paint behind it (similar to water colors).
6. While he/she is painting talk about the freezing process.

Questions for discussion:

- What’s happening to the paint while it is exposed to the warm air and paper?
- What does the paint feel like as it melts?
- What colors can you create by mixing the colors together?

To learn more about this activity and others like it go to:
www.education.com/activity/article/paint-with-ice/
 Seems odd to put National Invasive Species Awareness Week smack in the middle of winter—whose idea was that anyway? This year it’s February 22nd through the 28th. Wouldn’t it be better to move it to summer when more invasive nasties are around? Of course, summer’s a busy time, and maybe all the good time slots were reserved for Hamster Appreciation Week, National Lawn Edging Week and the like.

One of the invasive species that deserves our attention is the emerald ash borer (EAB). Having eaten its way through the Great Lakes states and portions of the upper Midwest, the EAB is on a fast track to northern NY State. Since its discovery in 2002, the emerald ash borer has stripped cities and villages of many ash trees.

The EAB is a very small (3/8” to ½”) bullet-shaped beetle that would be easy to overlook if not for its bright, metallic, emerald-green “paint job” with copper highlights. The beetles themselves do little harm, but their immature stage (larvae) feed on cambium tissue of ash trees, girdling and thus killing them. Aside from the relatively few ash that will be treated with insecticides through the estimated 15-year duration of an EAB infestation, NYS stand to lose many of its 900 million ash trees.

With EAB closing in from the west, south and north, there’s no way to keep it from reaching northern NY. In fact, given that it’s been found in southern Ontario just across the St. Lawrence River, its arrival will be sooner rather than later. They’re quite capable of flying over the river and into our woods, and you can bet they won’t check in with the Border Patrol.

While many signs of EAB damage manifest during summer, there are a couple of things to look for in winter time. Extensive but shallow woodpecker feeding in late winter, especially on the south and west sides of the trunk, may indicate an EAB infestation. Report all suspected cases of EAB activity to the NYSDEC or your Extension office.

Note from Jolene... We will be holding several workshops to help you identify ash trees and Emerald Ash Borer damage. You don’t need to have ash trees to be aware of what to look for. You just need to be concerned enough about our street trees and our forests to help with this effort. If your group or organization would like an hour long presentation, please contact me. Watch for announcements of free programs coming soon.
Food from the Farm:
Eating Local in the North Country

Saturday March 7, 2015
2:00 to 5:00 pm
Plattsburgh City Gym
52 U.S. Oval

Meet the farmers and sample tasty dishes
prepared with local food by Chef David Allen of Latitude 44 Bistro

Admission price is all inclusive:
• Lots to sample, even more food this year
• Door prizes
• Meet your farmers
• Farm products for sale, CSA sign-ups
• Information on gardening and nutrition
• Family friendly fun, kid’s table
• Recipes for cooking with local products
• Mingle with local food enthusiasts
• Support our local food economy!

Admission: $5/adult, ages 5 & under free, $20 maximum per family

Tickets available in advance on-line, at our office, or at the door
http://cce.cornell.edu/clinton
For more information contact Cornell Cooperative Extension
561-7450 or email Amy Ivy at adi2@cornell.edu

North Country Gardening
Changes for 2015

By Jolene Wallace

If you have been to our extension office lately you might have noticed that things are a bit different. Yes, some of the furniture has been rearranged and we are trying hard to purge files and give away or recycle things that we no longer have use for. The biggest change though is in staff. We have not given anyone away but two of our knowledgeable staff members have left our office—and NOT because we had no use for them!

Alexa King Maille, our 4-H Educator, moved to the State 4-H Office on the Cornell campus this fall to become the State Specialist in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) programing. We are sorry to have her leave us but she is following her dream and we are happy and excited for her. In addition, we will be collaborating with her on exciting opportunities for our youth.

Another staffer who has chosen to make a change is Peter Hagar. Pete, our local Ag Educator, left us on January 15 to work next door at Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) as district manager. We hate to see him go but he has lots of ideas of how we will continue to work closely together.

For the past 10 years Amy Ivy has had a dual role here at CCE, half Executive Director and half Horticulture Educator. But her heart is in horticulture and in early 2015 she will be stepping down from her Executive Director role to devote all her time to horticulture; specifically working with our vegetable and berry growers as part of the Eastern NY Commercial Horticulture Program. Says Amy, “This was my choice and I am thankful to our board and staff for supporting me in this decision. I will remain employed by CCE Clinton County and work out of the same office in Plattsburgh.”

Where else but Extension can folks move up to other positions but still give us the benefit of their knowledge? Congratulations to the three of you!

Cook and Gardener

Gardener Open Daily
Mon-Sat 9 AM - 6 PM & Sun 10 AM - 5 PM

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North Country Gardening
office. The list includes tried-and-true varieties along with new offerings, and it notes which varieties are resistant to what diseases.

Buying novelty veggies helps keep gardening fun. Disease-resistant types, though, generally translate to more produce for your buck. Another money-saving tip is to consolidate seed-buying. If a group shares a half-ounce of carrot seeds, for example, instead of each buying two packets, the price difference is amazing.

Many common plant diseases are seed-borne. I once heard a Cornell vegetable expert say that of the four aspects of disease prevention, the first is getting disease-free seeds. The other factors are sanitation, sanitation and sanitation, if you’re wondering. These measures help minimize common soil-borne vegetable diseases such as tomato Septoria leaf spot and early blight.

Since infected seeds look identical to healthy seeds, the only way to be safe is to ensure they’ve been treated, either with a sanitizing solution or hot water immersion. Seed companies have found the Goldilocks-perfect temperature hot enough to kill diseases but not the living plant embryo inside the seed.

Some diseases like powdery mildew and late blight are wind-borne, and no amount of seed treatment or garden sanitation can keep those off your plants. This is why it’s important to plant disease-resistant varieties. Along with sexy purple snap beans and black tomatoes, buy some disease-resistant tomatoes like ‘Iron Lady’ or ‘Defiant.’ Powdery mildew-resistant winter squash include ‘Bugle’ butternut and ‘Royal Ace’ acorn squash. Also, buy treated seeds from a reputable source. Order early, because many popular disease-resistant varieties sell out fast.

Of seed catalogs, Cornell Cooperative Extension Horticulturist Amy Ivy says “Rule number one – if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is! Watch out for the hype. Some catalogs make every entry sound like the perfect choice for you. Look for catalogs that have more realistic descriptions and helpful, not color-enhanced or exaggerated, photographs or claims.”

So don’t compare—those pictures may be Photoshopped. And please try not to drool excessively on them; someone else might want a look at those catalogs after you. Let’s make use of these long nights to dream about this summer’s lush gardens. Here’s to a banner season in 2015!

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

North Country Gardening
You Say Potatoes...

By Jordy Kivett, Nutrition Educator

As a nutrition educator, I cannot tell you how many times someone has said to me, “potatoes aren’t really vegetables.” I assume these people are trying to say potatoes are bad for you and are not referencing the scientific classification of plant parts (unlike those “tomatoes are actually a fruit” propagandizers). I know where this ugly rumor that potatoes are not good for you stems from, but that is all that it is, a rumor. Potatoes have many redeeming nutritional qualities and are versatile and easy to prepare to boot.

Like most other vegetables, potatoes have negligible fat or sodium content and are a good source of fiber. Potatoes are also a good source of potassium; a 100 calorie serving of potato (a medium potato) has 21% of your daily value of potassium, which is actually more than a banana. They are also a good source of vitamin C, with almost half of your daily requirements.

So where does the bad rap come from? Well, there are couple of reasons potatoes have earned a bad reputation. The most obvious reason is that while a baked or boiled potato is a healthy food, we tend to eat a lot of potato products that have been heavily modified, French fries or potato chips anyone? Of course frying food is not a good choice, though I do love the taste of French fries. The processing and cooking methods used to make those products reduces the nutrient density and increases the calorie count. But since fries and chips are so common in our society, they taint the potatoes reputation.

The other, more complicated reason potatoes are frequently considered unhealthy would be that they are a starchy vegetable. They are not the only vegetable in this category, but they are the most commonly eaten in the category. The main concern with a starchy vegetable is the carbohydrate count, which is especially important for diabetics, but most of us should reasonably limit the amount of carbohydrates we eat each meal. A medium potato has about 26 grams of carbohydrates. If you are having a baked potato with dinner, it would make sense to have that in place of a grain. Carbohydrates, in moderation, are part of a healthy diet. A potato would provide carbohydrates with fiber and vitamins and minerals (eat the skin!),

Continued on page 10...

Have a garden or agriculture related business? This space is available for your business card! Contact us at 561-7450

North Country Gardening

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/
Potatoes continued...

which would make potatoes a wise carbohydrate choice. For a diabetic it would be recommended to limit the amount of potato you ate to roughly a quarter of your plate and fill the other half with non-starchy vegetables.

So yes, potatoes are a vegetable and a healthy food. They should not be the only vegetable you eat, but no vegetable should be the only vegetable you eat.

We have a wide variety of potatoes grown locally, available in these cold months. There are standard yellow potatoes that are waxier and starchier white potatoes, but there are also beautiful blue and purple potatoes. Since potatoes vary on the starchy to waxy scale, you may want to ask about a particular variety if you are using them for anything other than baking or roasting, but for the most part they will taste similar. Keep in mind that a purple fleshed potatoes look great roasted, but will be sort of gray in a creamy potato soup (that tip comes from experience...)
And do try to keep the skin on in most of your potato dishes, the skin is a major source of the potatoes fiber and minerals.

Potatoes can be made into so many dishes I cannot list them all, but I will give a few ideas for working potatoes into your menu. Turn baked potatoes into a main dish by topping them with broccoli and cheese or chili. Roast potatoes with other root vegetables for a great side dish. Fry some chopped potatoes, once they are nearly done add some chopped green and top with an egg for a hearty breakfast. Lastly, potatoes are great in soup. Their starchiness helps to thicken soup and since they take a while to cook, they are ok to simmer for a while.

Check out how to use potato peels and other food scraps to make broth at Cornell Cooperative Extension’s Local Food Event, Saturday March 7th. Visit our website for details!

4-H Cheese for Sale

If the thought of cheese melted on your baked potato makes your mouth water, please know that our 4-H teams still have cheese for sale.

The annual cheese sale is one of the ways our 4-H teams raise money to support their programs. The cheese is made with milk from our local farmers and I can tell you from experience, is delicious.

In the fridge at our office we currently have 8-ounce bars for the excellent price of $3.00 each, 3-pound blocks for $13.50, 8-ounce tubs of Habanero spread for $3.00 and 8-ounce Shakers of cheese (perfect on veggies, popcorn, soup, pasta etc.) for the bargain price of $3.25.

Call us at 561-7450 and get it while you can!

North Country Gardening
Portuguese Kale Soup

Nutrition Facts

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Vitamin A: 570%, Vitamin C: 110%

Calories: 2,000 2,500

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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.

25% calories from fat

cook 10 minutes.

Yields about 6 servings

Source:

Ingredients:
1 large onion (1 cup chopped)
1 clove garlic
1 carrot (1/2 cup sliced)
1 tablespoon vegetable oil
8 cups water
1 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon hot pepper flakes
1 pound potatoes (3 cups cubed)
1/2 bunch kale (4 cups chopped)
1/2 pound reduced-fat turkey kielbasa sausage (1 cup sliced)
1/4 teaspoon pepper

Modifications:
Eat local: Try using local sausage in place of the turkey kielbasa and get locally grown vegetables.
Make this vegan: Omit the sausage and add 2 cups of beans (chick peas, navy beans, etc.) for protein.

Directions:
Chop onion. Mince garlic. Peel and slice carrot.
Heat oil in large pot on medium. Add onion, garlic, and carrots. Sauté 10 minutes.
Add water, salt, and hot pepper flakes. Cover and bring to a boil.
Wash and peel potatoes. Cut into 1/2 inch cubes.
Add potatoes to boiling water. Cover and
Wash kale, remove tough stems, and chop finely. Slice sausage.
Add kale and sausage to soup. Cook uncovered 5 minutes. Add pepper to taste.

Special Events

Join us for food, fun, farmers, and frivolity on Saturday, March 7 from 2:00 to 5:00 pm for our annual Adirondack Harvest Food From the Farm event. See page 6 for details or call us at 561-7450 for more information.

Spring Garden Day: Our Master Gardener Volunteers are preparing for Spring Garden Day, to be held on Saturday, April 18th at CVTech. In addition to an exciting variety of classes to choose from, our Special Guest will be Christian Oest from Cook and Gardener who will share ideas with us for some of the new and underutilized perennials, shrubs, and trees for our gardens. Watch for sign-up sheets coming soon.

North Country Gardening

Our office, located at 6064 State Route 22, Suite 5, is open from 9:00 am to 4:30 pm Monday through Friday. We will be closed on Monday, February 16th in observance of Presidents’ Day.
North Country Gardening
February 2015

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