By Jolene Wallace

Did you know that some plants can be harmful to your cats and dogs? One of our faithful readers suggested that we print information about perennials and pets. Since many of us will be selecting and planting new perennials this month, I have put together a list of things to be aware of if your cat or dog is curious about plants and likes to “help” you in the garden. The article begins on page 2.....Jolene

Oh No, Mosquitos!

Now that the temperatures are warming up, we are starting to see insects again. Don’t groan! Many of them are beneficial to our yards and gardens. One insect that I think everyone considers a pest is the mosquito. Aside from annoying bites that itch and form red bumps and the buzzing these guys do just as you’re about to doze off, they are capable of transmitting disease. It’s not realistic to think that we can eradicate mosquitos but there are simple things we can do to reduce their population, especially around our properties.

Mosquitos go through four phases during their lifetimes, three of them in the water. Around our lakes, rivers, and streams, dragonfly nymphs and fish do a reasonable job of keeping the mosquito population down by eating the eggs and developing insects. We can reduce the mosquito population around our homes by making sure they do not have a place to lay their eggs.

You may be surprised to learn that it takes only a small amount of standing water for a female mosquito to lay eggs and for those eggs to develop into another pesky insect.

Take a walk around your house and landscape and look for standing water. Have some youngsters accompany you; they can always find water to splash in! Check for rain water in a bucket in the sandbox, an old tire, the plastic cover on your boat, rain gutters, toys, potted plant trays, or low spots in the garden bed. Female mosquitos can even lay eggs in standing water under a plant, and the eggs can stay viable through several months of dry conditions.

Empty and change the water in bird baths, fountains, wading pools, and potted plant trays at least once a week to eliminate potential mosquito breeding grounds. Drain temporary pools of water. Keep swimming pool water treated and circulating. Standing water after a rain is an invitation to the female mosquito.
Projecting Your Pets

By Jolene Wallace

Now that the gardening season is almost upon us, we are making plans to order, purchase, divide, or prepare beds for perennials, annuals, vegetables, shrubs, bulbs, and anything else that catches our eye and that we have room for. One of our faithful readers called and asked me to write an article about choosing perennials and plants with your pets in mind. This is an important issue and one that we may not think about when we are being bedazzled by the vast array of beautiful plants available to us.

The truth is, many of the plants we have in our gardens, or are thinking about putting in our gardens, can be harmful to our pets. Our small children are always outside with someone in attendance and we watch to be sure they don’t put plant parts in their mouths, but our furry family members are frequently out unattended. My dog, Ollie, loves to sniff flowers and has yet to bite into one, but I still need to be careful about what I have growing in my yard.

Your furry feline friends may have access to the outside world on a regular basis and for their safety you should know what kinds of things may be toxic to them. Cats eat vegetation to help with digestion; or to loosen undigested food or hair balls for regurgitation. Grass is a common choice. Cats also eat plants if they have an infection, whether it is viral, bacterial, or parasitic. They have a sense of what is safe to eat, but if they don’t have a choice, may eat whatever is available to them.

Symptoms that your cat or dog has eaten something toxic will depend on what they have eaten, but can include vomiting, diarrhea, pain in the abdomen, drooling, breathing problems, or mouth irritation. Some symptoms can be life threatening.

Not all outdoor plants are poisonous, and not all parts of all poisonous plants are toxic when eaten. According to petmd.com, the most dangerous outdoor plants for cats include buttercup, jasmine, locoweed, lupine, mushrooms, rhubarb, and spinach. Castor beans, crocus, daffodil, hyacinth and foxglove are likely to cause vomiting and diarrhea. Some trees and shrubs, such as cherry, horse chestnut and some stone fruits can cause vomiting, diarrhea, and abdominal pain.

The following list of plants, courtesy of the Pet Poison Helpline, the ASPCA, and Cornell University, will help you to avoid choosing plants that are toxic to your pets.

Lilies—extremely toxic to cats. Even very small amounts can cause severe kidney damage.
Marijuana—depresses the central nervous system of animals and can cause seizures and coma.
Sago Palm—all parts are poisonous but especially the seeds or nuts. Just one or two seeds can cause serious problems, including liver failure.
Tulip and Narcissus bulbs—the bulbs contain toxins that alter the gastrointestinal tract. Bulbs can be mistaken for balls by curious pets.
Azalea and Rhododendron—contain grayantoxins, which produce drooling, gastrointestinal symptoms, abdominal pain, and fever.

Continued on page 5....

North Country Gardening
By Amy Ivy

With all the interest in vegetable gardening, this month I’m going to review some on tips for cool season vegetable crops. For lots more details on growing vegetables, check out Cornell’s Vegetable Growing Guides at: http://www.gardening.cornell.edu/homegardening/scene0391.html

**Peas**

There are 3 main types of peas: the traditional type you have to shell before eating because the pods are tough, and two edible podded types: snap peas and snow peas. Peas thrive in cool weather and shut down when it gets hot, so you want to plant them as soon as possible in spring. Some gardeners try planting some in late April but early May is a more reliable time. You can make a second planting 2 weeks later but don’t bother planting after May 20 or so, they just won’t have time to mature before the hot weather arrives.

If you had a problem with powdery mildew on your peas last year (a white powdery fungus on the leaves) look for disease or mildew resistant varieties like Super Sugar Snap (instead of Sugar Snap). Read the description on the package, if it’s resistant, it will say so.

Unless the variety you’ve chosen says that it’s dwarf, you’ll want to provide a simple trellis for your peas at least four feet tall; six feet is better. They’ll grab on to any kind of structure you provide so you don’t have to worry about training or tying them. You can be creative here, or just use 6 foot metal fence posts every 3-4 feet, with mesh fence wire stretched between them. Or use 6’ wooden fence posts and tie cross pieces of bamboo stakes or long branches in between. The vines can get rather heavy at full production so you’ll want to provide enough support to hold them up.

**Onions**

Growing onions from sets (little onions) is the easiest and quickest way to get going but you may have mixed results. If they start to push up a flower stalk, harvest them right away and use them fresh. Choose the smallest sets if you have a choice, they are less likely to flower.

More and more onion transplants are available now, and this Continued on page 6...
Spring is finally here, at least according to the calendar and that means it’s time to get outside and explore nature! After spending my Easter watching my niece look for candy filled eggs it inspired me to look around outside and create my own nature scavenger hunt. Since the weather is changing and the snow has melted this is the perfect time to get outside and become more active!

The North Country is filled with tons of beautiful hidden treasures just waiting for you and your family to find them. A scavenger hunt can be fun for anyone regardless of age and activity level and is something that can be created easily. You can do a scavenger hunt anywhere and it can be something that you do in the spur of the moment. You do not have to take advantage of the beautiful scenic locations around the area, such as Point Au Roche a personal favorite of mine. You can do a scavenger hunt anywhere such as a park or playground, while you are walking down the street or even in your backyard. There are plenty of things to find all over and they do not have to be strategically placed items, they can be as simple as a pinecone or a cardinal.

The key to enjoying physical activity is by choosing something that you like to do. You and your children or grandchildren will benefit from the fresh air and physical activity and you will not even realize that you are doing it. You can make your scavenger hunt last for 15 minutes or an hour, the length is up to you. I would suggest creating a list of things that you can find easily, and a few things that may be harder to spot, and run with it. Since the area in which we live is full of variety, creating a list should be simple.

For those with older children or grandchildren you can also take part in Geocaching. Geocaching is an outdoor recreational activity in which the participants use a Global Positioning System (GPS) to hide and seek hidden containers all around the world. Geocaching is becoming very popular in our area and it provides many great opportunities to take part in this new trend. All you need is a smartphone or some type of GPS device and some coordinates and you can make a day of it. I have found several online websites that provide a wealth of geocaching locations, [http://www.geocaching.com/](http://www.geocaching.com/) is a great place to start. You can create an online account and get to “caching” in no time. A friend of mine introduced me to this and I have loved doing it ever since. It’s an exciting way to get outside and explore the area while learning how to use GPS coordinates with a bonus of sharpening your observation skills. Some “caches” or hidden items, may be referred to as micro meaning they are very small. Others may be large and easily noticeable. Once you find the cache you are looking for there are usually a few items in which others have left behind and a notepad you can sign your name and the date in which you found it. Once you have discovered the cache you can go back onto your online account and check it off the list.

Quality time with family and loved ones is hard to come by these days and many people are not taking the time to explore the world around them. These two scavenger hunt activities can be easy, inexpensive and exciting for the whole family. Incorporating physical activity into your daily routine does not have to mean spending hours at the gym. It can be as simple as going outside for a walk and when you can do this with the people around you it is a winning combination.

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Kim LaReau, AmeriCorps Volunteer writing in the notepad on our first Geocaching find right in downtown Plattsburgh!
Protecting your pets continued....

weakness, and depression of the central nervous system. Also toxic to horses, sheep, and goats.

Oleander—all parts are toxic to dogs, cats, and horses, and cause serious health effects, even death.

Castor Bean—poisonous principle is ricin, a highly toxic protein.

Cyclamen—the highest concentration of cyclamine is typically in the root portion of the plants. Causes severe gastrointestinal symptoms which can lead to death.

Kalanchoe—usually used as a houseplant, has components which can produce gastrointestinal irritation, as well as being toxic to the heart.

Yew—Contain the toxic component taxine, which affects the central nervous system, gastrointestinal irritation, and cardiac failure.

Amaryllis—contains toxins that can cause vomiting, diarrhea, hypersalivation, abdominal pain and tremors.

Autumn Crocus—not to be confused with spring-blooming crocus, autumn crocus ingestion can cause oral irritation, bloody vomiting, shock, multi-organ damage and bone marrow suppression.

Chrysanthemum—part of the Compositae family, which contains pyrethrins, a pesticide used in many gardens.

English Ivy—also called branching ivy, glacier ivy, needlepoint ivy, sweetheart ivy and California ivy, contains triterpenoid saponins, which can cause vomiting, abdominal pain, hypersalivation and diarrhea.

Hosta—toxic to both dogs and cats, can cause vomiting, diarrhea, and depression.

Morning Glory—can cause numerous symptoms including hallucinations in your pets.

Begonias—toxic to both dogs and cats, the tubers are the most toxic part.

Tomato plants—probably not lethal, but can cause severe gastrointestinal upset, slow heart rate, and a number of other undesirable and uncomfortable symptoms.

Continued on page 7....
is a nice alternative to sets. They come either planted closely in a square pot or if through mail order, bundled without soil.

Either way, separate the plants before placing them 2-4” apart in the row. Sweet onions don’t store well but are delicious when used fresh. Onions good for storage will usually say so in the variety description. The most common type of onion set, Stuttgarter, stores well if it didn’t start to flower.

**Lettuce and Spinach**

Both of these leafy crops love cool weather and become bitter when the weather turns warm. So plant them as soon as you can work the soil. Plant a few short rows from seed every couple of weeks through May to ensure a steady supply. Many gardeners find these crops do better when planted from seed directly into the garden rather than using transplants.

I find it easier to plant a separate row of each variety since each has its own growth habit. Some are bigger and crowd out the others. If you’re growing the heading type of lettuce and want the heads, plant these in a separate row. We usually harvest the outer leaves every few days of the leaf-types. You can treat the heading types this way too, if you don’t want a head.

**Broccoli, Cauliflower, Brussels Sprouts and Cabbage**

This tip comes from Nora Teter, Master Gardener Volunteer in Clinton County. Many gardeners have had poor results from planting this particular group of vegetables from transplants. They don’t like being cramped in the containers as seedlings and they usually end up bolting (starting to flower), or being stunted instead of growing to their full potential. These are cool season crops and they also don’t like having to mature during the heat of summer.

Nora has good luck with planting these crops from seeds directly into her garden soil in early to mid May. This delays the crops until fall so they can mature under the cooler conditions they love. Brussels sprouts actually need a frost to sweeten up, so you should be in no rush to harvest them in September anyway. And broccoli and cauliflower really suffer during the summer heat, so letting them do the bulk of their sizing up after the hot summer makes a lot of sense.

And here’s one last tip that Nora has recently discovered. Brussels sprouts don’t like to be transplanted, so she spaces out the seeds while planting them so she can thin them to 36” between plants. This gives them plenty of room to grow all season without crowding.
Peace Lily, Pothos, Dieffenbachia, and Schefflera—all popular house plants which may be moved outside during the summer, can cause difficulty swallowing, swelling of the oral tissues, intense burning of the mouth, lips, tongue, and gastrointestinal tract.

This list, as imposing as it may seem, is not intended to make you pull up your plants and replace them with silk or plastic flowers. Because we love our pets, we need to be mindful of what they are doing and what they may be eating. If you have a pet that may munch on plants, avoid growing ones that may be toxic to them. Whether it is an outdoor plant, a houseplant, or a vase of flowers, keep an eye on your pets when they are around plants that may prove to be too attractive to resist nibbling on.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, AND A MORE COMPLETE LIST, GO TO WWW.ASPCA.ORG/PET-CARE/ANIMAL-POISON

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They might all be right: for Hindus and Buddhists, the cause of suffering is desire, while Christians believe the origin of all evil is the love of money. And as far as trees are concerned, root damage is the root of all problems. Well, most of them, anyway. Whether it’s early fall color (a sign of stress), twig and branch dieback, pale foliage, slow growth, or even some diseases and insect infestations, the problem is usually below ground.

If the next “Google Glass” offers ground-penetrating radar, it’ll be a lot easier to find buried treasure. And we’d be able see that about 90 percent of tree roots reside in the top ten inches of soil, and that they extend (unless there’s a barrier) two to three times the branch length. In profile, the root system of any tree—even “deep-rooted” ones like oaks—is pretty flat. It’s no coincidence that arborists refer to root systems as root plates.

Because we can’t see into the ground, treasure-hunting is out and we have to keep our day jobs. And also, we’re likely to assume that tree roots are generally deep and that they like it that way. So it’s not surprising we don’t think twice when it’s time for trenching, excavating, adding fill, building, or even driving within a tree’s root zone.

Damage is obvious when an excavator cuts tree roots, but many other events cause compaction, a less visible problem. For roots to survive they need oxygen, which they get from soil pores. (Vessels in wood that transport water, sugars, and nutrients don’t carry oxygen.) When soil gets compacted, pores disappear and roots suffocate. Adding fill has the same effect; it excludes air. Such damage may kill a tree within a few years, but more often there will be a prolonged decline. In these cases, opportunistic diseases and insects may be the proverbial last straw.

Trees have complex and effective defenses, but for them to work well, trees need to be happy, with all systems in good working order. A strong tree can respond to insect feeding by making chemicals known to scientists as “bad-tasting stuff” to repel them (insects, that is, not scientists). It will endure some loss from insects, but will keep the balance in its favor. A crabby tree with damaged roots, though, won’t be able to make sufficient antifungal chemicals at a wound site, or create enough insect-repelling compounds the way a healthy one can.

So the problem you see may not be the real problem. Let’s say you look out the window one day and to your horror, notice a torrent of sawdust raining down from your favorite white pine. Umbrella in hand, you rush outside and find a swarm of Jig Sawflies (cordless, naturally), their carbide blades freshly sharpened, chewing your pine to bits.

As you rifle the phone book for an exterminator, you think how you’ll miss sitting in the tree’s shade, enjoying its yellow foliage. Wait—yellow foliage? How long had it been like that?

Let’s think back on that pine. Wasn’t that the one that you worked so hard not to hit with the backhoe when the septic went in five years ago? The one the gas company trenched near ten years ago? Human activity can compromise a tree’s root system, resulting in its demise much later. An event that damages roots may take 5 to 10 years to show symptoms. Because insects are attracted to a declining/dying tree, they’re often assumed to be the culprits.

Right now you may be wondering, “What’s on TV?” or, “Will this guy get to the point?” or maybe, “How do

Continued on page 11...
Spice it Up!

By Jordy Kivett, Nutrition Educator

Using fresh herbs is a great way to enhance your meals, without much effort at all. Unlike cooking techniques that may enhance flavor, but take valuable time or concentration (have you ever scorched the top of a casserole you were trying to brown to perfection under the broiler?) using fresh herbs is as easy as tossing a small handful into a dish. Better yet, many herbs are relatively easy to grow and require little space, but bring big flavor into your kitchen.

For the most part, to use fresh herbs you simply add the leaves to whatever foods you would like. You may want to chop the leaves first or even puree them, in the case of a pesto. Since they are delicate, when using fresh herbs try to harvest them as close to use as possible. If you are storing them in your refrigerator for a few days, leave them on the stems and wrap with a slightly damp paper towel. To preserve them, they can be dried with very little or no heat or chopped, added to ice cube trays and covered with water, giving you frozen flavor cubes for your cooking.

Basil—There are many varieties of basil, yielding many flavors. Commonly basil is used in pesto, though you can make pesto with other herbs for an interesting change. Try adding chopped basil leaves to both tomato and cream sauces, as well as whole basil leaves to salads.

Dill—Of course pickles commonly use dill, but dill can be added to many dishes. Dill is great in an egg salad, pasta salad, and in dressings and dips. You could also add a different flavor to tomato or potato soup with some chopped dill.

Oregano—This is an herb which may actually become more flavorful when dried, but you can still enjoy it fresh. Like basil, this is often used in Italian cuisine, but it is actually prevalent in many cultures. Try adding oregano to tomato sauce, a pizza, or a Greek salad.

Rosemary—This is a woody evergreen. Its needles add a strong flavor to dishes and are great with roasted potatoes. You can also use the stem as a skewer for grilling, allowing the rosemary flavor to get inside of the food.

Sage—This is a perennial herb with a potent scent. It can be used in meat seasonings and rubs and also can be steeped as a tea. I also like to keep a couple sprigs in my house and car for a pleasant aroma.

Thyme—This is another very aromatic herb. There are many varieties which have different flavors. Its taste goes well with fish or bean dishes and is a nice addition to stocks.

There are many other herbs you can grow and enjoy. If you do not have a garden, consider a small container of herbs, many of which can grow right on your kitchen windowsill, or look for them at the farmer’s market. Fresh herbs are a great way to add some flare to your meals.

Recipe on next page...
Spinach Pesto Pasta

Servings: 4  
Time: 25 minutes

Pesto sauce and cannellini beans are popular in many Italian dishes. No one will know that this pesto sauce has two cups of spinach.

Ingredients:
8 ounces of fettuccine  
1 tbsp olive oil  
1 garlic clove, minced  
2 cups fresh spinach, stems removed  
1 cup fresh basil leaves, stems removed  
½ cup chicken broth, low-fat, low sodium  
¼ cup grated parmesan cheese  
1 15-oz can of cannellini (white beans), rinsed and drained  
1 cup red bell pepper, chopped  
1 tsp black pepper

Directions:
• Cook pasta as directed on package. Drain and place in large mixing bowl.  
• Add olive oil, garlic, spinach, basil, parmesan cheese, and chicken broth to a blender. Mix well until leaves are blended.  
• Pour sauce over pasta. Mix until pasta is well coated.  
• Add beans and red bell pepper. Lightly toss and serve.

Nutrition info per serving:
Calories: 360kcal; Fat 6g; Sodium 400mg; Carb 61g; Fiber 8g; Protein 16g; Vit A 60%; Vit C 90%; Calcium 15%; Iron 25% (Percentages based on a 2000 calorie diet)

Recipe from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

North Country Gardening
Events and Happenings

Master Gardener Recruitment and Training

Both Clinton County and Essex County are actively recruiting applicants for the Master Gardener Volunteer program. Time is getting short to apply. Training begins in the fall, but applications must be submitted by June 1. Both counties are holding information meetings on Thursday, May 15 at 10:00 am. In Clinton County the meeting will be held at the Extension office at 6064 State Route 22, Suite 5 in Plattsburgh. Contact Jolene at 561-7450 or jmw442@cornell.edu for more information. In Essex County the meeting will be held at 67 Sisco Street (on the Essex County Fairgrounds) in Westport. Contact Linda Gilliland at 962-4810 Ext 416 or llg46@cornell.edu.

Perennial Plant Sale—Date Change

Due to the late spring and the wet weather we have experienced, the Master Gardener perennial plant sale in Plattsburgh scheduled for May 31 has been changed to Saturday, June 14. This change will enable us to offer you the quality of plants you have come to expect from us. The Essex County Master Gardeners are also having their plant sale on June 14th. The Clinton County sale will be held at our office located at 6064 State Route 22 in Plattsburgh. The Essex County sale will be held in Lake Placid at The Carpet Store. Both 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.

More Gardening News

The Kent-Delord Garden Club Bloomin’ Raffle Fundraiser and Plant Exchange will be held on May 17 at the Kent-Delord Museum Barn, 17 Cumberland Ave in Plattsburgh. Bring plants to share and trade from 9:00-10:30 am or from 10:30-11:00 when plants are available (donations appreciated)

Office Hours

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 May 26 in honor of Memorial Day.

Root of the problem continued...

trees in little concrete tree pits in the sidewalk survive, then?” Those trees were put there when young and have adapted to available root space. In technical parlance, they’re “unhappy.” Trees grown in the open that suddenly have their roots cut or damaged to the size of tree pits are considered “dead.”

We all know trees have environmental benefits, but they have social and economic value as well. There’s a positive correlation between access to trees in one’s life and a reduction in stress symptoms. Planting trees in a neighborhood leads to a reduction in crime. Trees add substantially to property values. So let’s help them thrive. Don’t drive, park, or add soil within the root zone. Mulch the area about four inches deep, and water during dry spells. Keep those trees happy, and they’ll keep you healthy.

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