Greetings Readers,

This combined November/December issue of North Country Gardening comes to you at an especially busy time of year filled with gatherings of family and friends. As we reflect on 2014 and make plans for 2015, we hope we have met your needs and expectations this year and wish you all a joyful holiday season.

Jolene

Inside this issue:

Amy’s tips for Nov/Dec  2
Amy’s Tips cont....  3
CD Hovercraft  4
Thanks for Giving cont.. 5
Autumn Immigration  6
Manure Happens  7
Winter Chickadee  8
Bring Local Food to the Table /recipe  9-10
Autumn cont....  11
Events  11

Thanks for Giving

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

The winter of 1620 nearly wiped out the Pilgrims, who were woefully unprepared for life in the New world. Many historians feel they would all have perished if not for food provided by the Wampanoags, on whose land they settled. The following spring, the Wampanoags provided the Pilgrims with seeds to plant, as well as a tutorial (possibly an App; we can’t be sure) on the production, storage and preservation of food crops such as corn, beans, and squash.

That fall—we’re not even sure if it was October or November—the Pilgrims gave thanks for Native American agriculture, and feasted upon its bounty for three days straight. The Wampanoags probably gave thanks that there weren’t more ships full of Pilgrims on the horizon just then.

If the Pilgrims had only known what a big deal Thanksgiving was going to become in America, they would undoubtedly have taken some pictures, or at least invited the press. As it was, the exact menu is lost to history, but Wampanoag oral history, as well as some brief written firsthand accounts, indicate there was indeed—surprise—corn, beans and squash, in addition to fowl and venison. Beyond that there may have been chestnuts, sun chokes (Jerusalem artichokes), cranberries and seafood.

Barley was the one European-sourced crop that the Pilgrims managed to raise in 1621. Unfortunately, they seemed unaware it could be eaten. The up side of that, though, was that they had plenty of beer that Thanksgiving.

While corn, beans and squash, “The Three Sisters,” were (and are) grown by many Native peoples in the Americas, other indigenous crops will

Continued on page 5.....
Amy’s Tips for November/December

By Amy Ivy

Keep Watering!

We’ve had quite a bit of dry weather this fall. The ground really needs a good soaking rain before winter sets in. Any trees and shrubs that you planted this year, even if it was way last spring, need regular deep watering through the fall until the ground freezes. Even established evergreens, especially those in windy sites, need a good soak before winter sets in. Evergreens continue to lose a little moisture through their needles in winter, so you want to make sure there is plenty around their roots.

Perennials that you planted or divided this fall also need water. Their roots keep growing after their leaves have stopped and dry falls like this can be hard on them. Even newly planted spring flowering bulbs such as daffodils, tulips and crocus all need a good soak now to encourage good root growth this fall.

Put Your Tools to Bed

Take a few minutes on a nice fall day to go through all your garden tools and get them ready for winter. Use a wire brush to remove any caked on mud from shovels and hoes, then sharpen them with a file. Wipe all metal surfaces with an oil rag and hang it up for the winter. If you’ve never sharpened your shovel, spade or hoe, give it a try — you’ll love the difference of working with sharp tools.

Pruning shears can be sharpened now so you’re all ready to go next spring, just be careful to maintain the proper bevel when sharpening them. Many pruners have replaceable blades, if it’s been a while consider treating yourself to a new blade. Sharp tools make clean cuts that heal much more quickly.

Winter Mulch

The purpose of winter mulch is to keep the ground cold. It’s the alternating freezing and thawing that causes so many problems. Wait until the ground freezes before applying winter mulch to established plants— if you apply it too soon, you hold in the warmth which delays the hardening off process and the plants may not be ready when a really cold snap strikes.

Hardening Off

What is hardening off? Water expands when it freezes. If plants didn’t harden off for winter the water in their cells would expand when the plants froze, bursting the cell walls. So during the hardening off process, plants gradually remove water from their cells, making the remaining fluid more concentrated. Some botanists refer to this as the plants making their own anti-freeze. This is a slow process, so those cold snaps we sometimes experience late in the fall can cause more damage than colder temperatures in the middle of winter that occur once the plants have hardened off.

Winter Protection

Evergreens, especially yews, hemlocks and rhododendrons suffer from winter wind. To protect these plants, erect a wall of burlap or snow fence on their windward side. You don’t need to wrap up the whole plant, just block the wind. If you’re not ready to undertake this project yet, at least get the stakes pounded into the ground before it freezes.

Rhododendrons may need more protection than this. If you live in one of the colder regions of the North Country, consider encircling the plant with burlap, then filling the spaces with loose straw. If your site is protected you may not need this extra step. The worst location for rhododendrons in on the south side of a building. The winter sun can heat up plants on a clear day, which are then shocked when the temperature plummets at sundown. Remember, your goal in winter protection is to keep your plants consistently cold and to avoid these temperature fluctuations whenever possible.
Amy’s Tips continued...

Another popular landscape plant that benefits from winter protection is the dwarf Alberta spruce. This is that little shrub that looks like perfectly pruned miniature Christmas tree. It grows slowly and keeps its nice shape with no pruning necessary. It is completely hardy to cold temperatures but it is NOT tolerant of winter winds. Plants set in windy location will often turn orange on the side facing the wind come spring when the new growth begins. To avoid this, set up a protective wall of burlap to block the wind, or relocate the plant to somewhere out of the wind.

Pruning Raspberries

Aside from cutting down the canes that bore fruit this year, the rest of your raspberry/blackberry pruning is better left until spring. It’s a complicated process, so call our office for a fact sheet on pruning raspberries so you have the winter to study it and ask any questions before pruning time late next spring.

Winter Greens, indoors and out

I love greenery and lights this time of year and it doesn’t take much to make a difference. I’m in awe of the super creative folks but as long as I can see some deep green and lights, I’m content. If you feel daunted at the thought of making your own wreath, consider a simple swag for your door. Gather a handful of nice looking greens, wrap them together with green wire, add a ribbon and you’re done.

I recently discovered one of the easiest ways to decorate. I use the planters on our porch that were full of flowers all summer, and fill them with greenery. You can use a variety of greens to provide different textures and color. Cut the greens in varying lengths but mostly about twice as long as the pot is high and stuff them into the potting mix to hold them in place. If your pot or planter is empty of soil you can still add greens, but I find the soil or potting mix holds them in place better. If the soil has frozen, bring the pots into the house to thaw out to make them easier to work with. Shove the stems a good 6 to 8 inches into the potting mix and keep adding them until it looks nice and full. This would work well for window boxes as well.

The greens I like to use for these winter planters include balsam fir, white pine, white cedar, red cedar, and yew. Hemlock is abundant but doesn’t hold its needles well after being cut. You can add whatever else you like and have available including pine cones, interesting bare stems, artificial berries, a bow, you name it. I also like to add a string of mini lights once the arrangement is all set and I set these pots near our front door and porch steps.

(photo credits: Pinterest.com)
CD Hovercraft Activity

By Chelsea Baxter, 4-H & Nutrition Program Educator

In this day in age CD’s have become something of the past. If you are still hanging on to old CD’s that you do not mind repurposing, this activity will do just that and it can give you an opportunity to teach the kids in your life about what a CD is!

What you’ll need:
- An old CD or a DVD disc
- A 9” balloon (deflated)
- A pop-top cap from a liquid soap or water bottle
- A hot glue gun
- Push pin
- Tape

The Activity:
1. Using the cap from a water bottle, cover the center hole of the CD with a piece of tape and poke 5-6 holes in the tape with a push pin or small nail. *This will slow down the flow of air and allow your hovercraft to hover for a longer period of time
2. Using the hot glue gun, glue the cap to the center of the CD or DVD disc. Make sure you create a good seal so that it keeps the air from escaping.
3. Inflate the balloon with air all the way, then pinch the neck of it (but do not tie it)
4. With the pop-top cap closed, fit the neck of the balloon over the pop-up portion of the cap *You may need two people for this part of the activity
5. Get ready to start hovering! Place the craft on a smooth surface and pop the top open.

Exploring how it works:

The air flow that is created by the balloon will cause a cushion of moving air between the disc and the surface. This airflow lifts the CD and will reduce the friction thus creating the disc to hover freely. Large scale hovercrafts can travel over land, snow and water using the same method.

Questions for furthering investigation:
- Does the size of the balloon affect the CD’s ability to hover over the surface area?
- Do you think a helium inflated balloon would work better than an air filled balloon?
- Do larger discs make better hovercrafts (plastic picnic plates, old record albums, etc.)?

To find this experiment and others like this go to:
grace our Thanksgiving tables this year. Maybe you'll have appetizers out for company before dinner. Mixed nuts, anyone? Peanuts are a big-time Native American crop. Pecans and sunflower seeds, too. And everyone likes corn chips with dip, right?

Those hot (and sweet) peppers and tomatoes in the salsa are Native American foods. Prefer dip made with avocado? Yep, another native food.

Of course turkeys are indigenous to the New World, but so are a lot of the “fixings.” Pass the (New World) cranberry sauce, please. How about some mashed potatoes to go with that gravy? It wouldn’t be Thanksgiving without potatoes. White (“Irish”) potatoes are a New World crop, as are sweet potatoes. We can thank Native American agronomists for green beans, and Lima beans too. Pass the squash—Native peoples developed many varieties, including Hubbard squash and pumpkins, which are technically a winter squash.

Which brings us to dessert. Specifically to the iconic Thanksgiving pumpkin pie—I think just about everyone is thankful for that treat. But wait; there's more. Let's have ice cream with our pie (provided we don't have serious cholesterol issues). Maple-walnut, perhaps? Those two indigenous flavors go well together. Vanilla is from the Americas, and so is chocolate. If you add some toppings like strawberry, pineapple or blueberry sauce, you'll be having more native American foods for dessert.

Hope you have a happy and healthy Thanksgiving, filled with family and gratitude. Among other things, we can be grateful to Native peoples and their crops. But please, don't blame them if you eat a little more than you had intended.

Many thanks to our business sponsors:

Campbell’s Greenhouse
Cook & Gardener
Duprey’s Feed & Supplies
Flowering Meadow Nursery
Garrant’s Vegetables
Giroux Poultry
Northern Orchards
Stonehouse Vineyard

North Country Gardening
What can cruise at an altitude of 29,000 feet, is a beloved icon of the great outdoors, and yet can be the bane of lawn lovers? It’s the honking harbinger of advancing autumn and coming cold (and sometimes, bad alliteration), the Canada goose.

The familiar autumn voices of Canada geese overhead can at once evoke the melancholy of a passing summer and the anticipation of a bracing new season of color and activity. Kids return to school, hunters take to the woods, and farmers work past dusk and into darkness, all to the cacophonous cries and the heartbeat of wings of migrating geese.

Through the end of November and even beyond, waves of airborne athletes—hundreds of thousands in number—will pass through our area en route from their northern breeding sites to their winter feeding grounds. Canada geese nest in northern Quebec, Ontario, Labrador and Newfoundland, and winter over in southern NY State, Pennsylvania and other regions more hospitable than their arctic nests. Depending on how far north they travel, the migrants may cover nearly 1,000 miles, typically flying at about 3,000 feet up.

On average, the Canada geese that wing by us this fall measure between 30-40 inches long, with a wingspan of 50-70 inches and weigh 8.5 pounds.

The largest wild Canada goose ever recorded weighed 24 lbs. and had an 88-inch wingspan, a record among all goose species worldwide. No one claims to completely understand how geese navigate, but being able to sense the Earth’s magnetic field seems to be critical. Visual cues, star positioning and even smell may play a role as well.

Among the things that endear Canada geese to us is the fact that they mate for life. From the time they begin breeding at 2 or 3 years old until they succumb to old age 20 or 25 years later, these birds will remain loyal to their mates. Should one member of the pair die, the other usually selects a new partner.

According to the Cornell Ornithology Lab, there are eleven subspecies of Branta canadensis, the Canada goose, although some authorities only recognize seven. (All experts agree, however, that no Canada goose has ever owned a valid Canadian passport even though the species is mistakenly called the “Canadian goose” fairly often.) The finer points of subspecies squabbling aside, a more important distinction is the one between migrant and resident Canada geese. While there’s evidence that geese no longer fly as far south as they once did due to a changing climate, the journey is still an impressive one. As far as anyone knows, Canada geese have been migrating between their arctic nurseries and temperate wintering grounds for millennia. In contrast, it appears that resident geese are a more recent phenomenon.

A small population of resident Canada geese was documented in New York State in the early 1900s. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) says these were descended from captive birds released downstate by private landowners. As the original population grew and spread, NYSDEC released captive-bred geese in the
Manure Happens

By Peter Hagar, Agriculture Educator

If you live in a rural area of Clinton County, chances are you are familiar with the smell of manure. While you may or may not like the odor of cow or chicken manure, to a farmer it smells like money in the bank. Since farmers in the North Country are primarily dairy farmers, manure is a surprisingly valuable resource. The main nutrients in manure are Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Potassium. While these are all available in commercial fertilizers, when managed properly, manure can offset a substantial amount of purchased fertilizer. And just like compost that a gardener would use in the garden, farmers use the manure to replenish organic matter in the soil, improve tilth and water holding capacity.

What you might not realize is that manure application timing and rate of application is highly regulated and monitored on the area’s larger farms. Regulations of the EPA and NYS DEC require larger farms to maintain a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP) written and overseen by an environmental professional. These plans can cost many thousands of dollars a year to develop and are designed to prevent pollution and over application of manure nutrients. They can be, and are audited regularly by the above agencies to account for every pound or gallon of manure produced.

For more information on manure management or if you have questions about how manure is being used in your neighborhood, please contact me at the Extension Office at 561-7450 or email phh7@cornell.edu.
Winter Chickadees

By Jolene Wallace, Horticulture Program Educator

I received an email from a resident last week asking whether it was too soon to start feeding the birds for the winter. The thought was that once it snows would be the best time. I use a suet feeder in the spring, winter, and fall, usually keeping it empty in the summer when insects are plentiful. I find that in the spring it draws many birds to my yard and once they have young they feed on insects, saving me the trouble of hand-picking some the most troublesome pests. In the fall, I keep the suet feeder full in order to feed any birds that are passing through on their way to wintering grounds. The extra calories and nutrients are much appreciated I’m sure.

I think it’s fair to say that most of the migratory birds in our area, with the exception of the Canada and snow geese, have already left town but there are a number of birds that stay in the North County throughout the winter. Some, like the black capped chickadees, forage for food even in the worst of storms. How welcome the sight of a seed feeder or suet cake must be to them. I have been watching these quick little birds land on the spent sunflowers in my flowerbed and pick the seeds out. They often fly to the suet feeder with the sunflower in their beak, crack it open, letting the shells fly, and follow it up with a nibble on the suet. A sunflower seed tower has been added to my shopping list! If you are planning to feed birds through the winter do try to make fresh water available. There are inexpensive heating elements that you can add to a birdbath or tray of water to keep it from freezing. Don’t forget to keep the feeders clean too.

I didn’t know much about birds until I started visiting the Cornell Lab of Ornithology website at www.allaboutbirds.org. The amount of information available is astounding and the live webcams are a wonderful way to observe birds in the privacy of their “home”. It’s a super site for any and all members of the family. They have information for 592 species in their bird guides and songs of many that you can hear to aid in identifying birds that you may see or hear in your yard year round. I advise you to check it out. The feeder webcams at Cornell and in Ontario, Canada are awesome. You won’t be disappointed.

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

North Country Gardening
Bring Local Food to Your Holiday Table

By Jordy Kivett, Nutrition Educator

Have you been to the Plattsburgh Winter Farmer’s Market? It is great way to enjoy local food year round. There is an amazing variety of local products and you can preorder on-line to boot! The market is open Saturdays, 10-1, October 18th through December 20th at the City Recreation Center Gym, located on the oval. You can preorder your delicious local produce through the website: http://www.plattsburghfarmersmarket.com/

When I think about Thanksgiving and the spirit of the holiday, I think about harvest time and enjoying the company of friends and neighbors. Though harvest time certainly does not mean nearly as much to me as it would have to our ancestors or their agricultural contemporaries, I still think including local food, especially to celebrate Thanksgiving, is important.

When you enjoy food that was produced by your neighbor, it is much easier to envision the work involved and conditions that were endured to grow it. Unlike food that’s grown in a far off place, likely a spot of the globe you’ve never experienced first hand. That is why Thanksgiving, a holiday about reminiscing and being grateful, is a wonderful time to incorporate local food.

Enough fluffy stuff... Here are some ideas to include local food on your table this holiday season:

**Appetizers:**
- Try roasting beets and serving with fresh chevre and crostini for a beautiful and tasty appetizer.
- Add carrots, broccoli, and cauliflower to a veggie platter set out for guest to snack on.
- Serve a cheese and cracker platter, with local cheeses and some chutney or savory jam as a spread for an appetizer sure to please everyone.
- Kale chips could be a different but fun way to nibble before the main course.

**At the table:**
- Consider serving local poultry instead of the supermarket turkey.
- Use local potatoes in your favorite mashed or sweet potato recipe.
- There are many varieties of local squash to include, either mashed or in other dishes. Try adding local maple syrup to finish the dish.
- Try incorporating Brussels sprouts or other greens into your holiday meal; they are tasty and a little lighter than heavier dishes like mashed potatoes and casseroles.

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/
Use local herbs to season your dishes.

For dessert:

Apple pie anyone?

Pumpkins and squash are easy to roast and use in pies, a must try if you usually use canned puree.

There are so many varieties of maple products to sweeten your favorite desserts and impart that delicious flavor into your dish. I love a little in my after dinner coffee!

What about caramels or maple candies at each place setting? Festive and delicious!

Baked Squash with Sugar and Spice

Ingredients:

Vegetable cooking spray
1 acorn squash, 4” diameter
Pinch of salt
2 tablespoons tub margarine
3 tablespoons brown sugar
1 teaspoon cinnamon
¼ teaspoon nutmeg
¼ teaspoon ground ginger

Directions:

• Preheat oven to 400. Cover baking sheet with foil and coat foil with vegetable cooking spray.

• Wash squash and cut in half lengthwise. Remove seeds and cut into ½ inch slices. Place squash on baking sheet. Sprinkle with salt.

• Melt margarine. Add brown sugar, cinnamon, nutmeg, and ginger.

• Spread margarine mixture on squash.

• Bake 20 to 25 minutes, or until tender.

Yields about 5 servings

Source: Adapted from GET FRESH! Division of Nutritional Sciences, Cornell University and Cornell Cooperative Extension, 2001.

North Country Gardening
Autumn Immigrants continued...

xAlbany area in the 1950s and 60s, increasing the resident NYS geese population. NYSDEC reports we now have about 200,000 resident Canada geese in the state.

Unfortunately, geese—especially residents—have become pests in community parks, and on golf courses and home lawns. Being vegetarians, they are happy to take advantage of all sorts of feed, including grass. Their droppings elicit complaints on aesthetic grounds, and because they may be a source of fecal coliform bacteria. And when geese pass overhead, there’s a whole new meaning to the phrase “duck, duck, goose.”

Also, male geese can sometimes be aggressive as they seek to protect their young. Balancing the public desire for wildlife in their environment with complaints about nuisances and potential health risks is a challenge for public officials.

No matter how much of a problem resident waterfowl may become, I will always thrill to the cries of migrating geese in autumn and spring. The poet Mary Oliver sums it up for me in her poem “Wild Geese.”

“Whoever you are, no matter how lonely, the world offers itself to your imagination, calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting, over and over announcing your place in the family of things.”

Events

Join CCE at the Plattsburgh Winter Farmer’s Market, November 22nd and December 13th to find new ways to incorporate local food into your holidays. There will be tips and free samples of dishes made with local food.

Holiday 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 on Thursday, November 27 and Friday, November 28 for Thanksgiving.

In December we will be closed on the 24th, 25th, and 26th, and at noon on the 31st.

The office will also be closed on New Year’s Day.

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT

Government funding makes up just over a half of our budget. We need to raise the rest through grants, fees, and donations. If we’ve helped you in any way this year, or you just realize the value of our services to the community, please consider making a donation. We are trying to raise $4000 by the end of the year.

Checks can be made out to Cornell Cooperative Extension and mailed to 6064 State Route 22 #5, Plattsburgh, NY 12901.
This issue made possible thanks to donations from:

**Our Business Sponsors**

**Readers Like You**

and

**The Chapel Hill Foundation**

Thank You!!