Things are hopping in the North Country, and I’m not just talking about the rabbits in our yards. Now that we can work the soil many of us are getting our garden plots ready, starting to divide our perennials, and attempting to get ahead of the weeds. Isn’t it nice to be outside again with bundling up and to be able to open our windows to let fresh air in? ......Jolene

What’s not to like about lichens?

By Jolene Wallace

If you go outside for the purpose of looking for lichens, you will not be disappointed. Look at your trees, wooden fences, large rocks, stacks of firewood, and elsewhere. They are everywhere, yet we frequently don’t notice them unless we find them on a tree that is in decline or on the stones along our walkway. Lichens are located in every continent on earth, including both the Arctic and Antarctic.

So, what exactly is a lichen? It’s not a moss or liverwort, but a unique symbiotic pairing between fungi and algae. The alga produces carbohydrates through photosynthesis that serves as food for the fungus. The fungus provides moisture, a substrate which helps in providing the right amount of light to the alga, and protects the alga within its tissues. Lichenologist Trevor Goward once said, “Lichens are a case of fungi that have discovered agriculture.”

Lichens need only three things: undisturbed surfaces, time, and clean air. Specific lichens have specific needs, for instance, lichens you would usually find on tree bark won’t be found on rocks and vice versa. The undisturbed site that lichens occupy is known as the substrate. We get an occasional call about lichens found on trees that are in decline from concerned homeowners who suspect that the lichens are killing the tree. This is not the case. The lichens establish themselves on trees that are not growing much (undisturbed surface) Lichen do not kill trees anymore than they kill rocks on which they reside. Finding lichens on your trees is actually a good sign that your environment is clean enough to support this fascinating organism.

The thallus body is the most recognizable part of a lichen and is composed mostly of the fungal symbiont. There are four basic lichen body types. The foliose lichens (pictured above) produce leaf-like, Continued on page 9...
May is the month for planting seeds and setting out transplants for most of your vegetable and flower crops. If you live at higher elevations where late May frosts are common, I suggest you wait until the first week of June at least to set out or plant the most sensitive crops such as tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, corn, basil, beans, cucumbers, melons, and all of the summer or winter squash.

If you want to try planting any of these a little earlier, just keep some protection close at hand so you can easily cover them up if frost is in the forecast. But even if it’s not cold enough to kill them, those warm season crops will just sit and languish until warm temperatures arrive, so you really don’t gain much by rushing to plant.

But early May is the perfect time to plant the cool season crops such as lettuce, spinach, carrots, beets, broccoli, onions, etc.

Here are some tips to help you be successful:

**Allow plenty of room!**

I am one of the worst offenders of this. It is really hard to remember just how large the various vegetables (and flowering plants too) become. Crowding forces the plants to compete for food, sun and water and the dense foliage can promote leaf diseases. But there is happy medium there. Try to space your plants so the leaves just touch each other when mature. In that way the leaves will shade the ground to inhibit weeds, without being crammed.

I like to plant lettuce, parsley, cilantro, carrots, beets, most of the smaller sized crops, into wide rows. Rather than scattering the seeds across a wide area, I plant in 3-4 mini-rows to make up one wide row, with an aisle in between. The picture above is a large scale example of the general idea. Foot traffic occurs only in the aisles to reduce compaction. In a raised bed where you try not to step at all you can set all your rows close together. The key is to make them close, but not too close! Good luck with that.

To help me be realistic about spacing, I sometimes make a simple jig out of a scrap of wood or a bamboo stake. I use a marker to mark off the various spacings I plan to use that year. I use a hoe or trowel mark out the row, then lay the jig alongside the row. If I’m planting beans that want to be 2” apart, this jig really helps me be realistic. If I’m transplanting lettuce or pepper seedlings, it can help with that, too.

Lettuce and spinach come up very quickly from seed but parsley takes much longer. The easiest way I’ve found to grow parsley is to use a 6-pack cell container from the previous year. Wash it well and fill it with fresh potting mix. I sprinkle 5-6 parsley seeds per cell and let them all grow, just on my windowsill.
since it won’t be for long. Once they are about 2” tall I set them in the ground by sliding out the whole clump, and planting these clumps rather than individual plants. Leave 12” between each clump and clip off leaves as you need them throughout the summer. They may burn out in a hot, dry spell but since they are so cold hardy you can start a second batch for a late summer planting that will flourish well into the fall.

Editors note: Amy will continue to write these great tips for us each month, but as you may have noticed on the front page, she is no longer Executive Director at CCE Clinton. She is following her dreams and is now the Regional Vegetable Specialist for Northern New York. She will be working out of our office when she is not in the field so we will still be seeing her and having the opportunity to pick her brain on all things horticultural.

I would like to introduce Mary Breyette, our new Executive Director. Mary is enthusiastic and high-energy, as you can see from the press release below. Stop by to say hello one day!

Mary P. Breyette has been appointed executive director of the Cornell Cooperative Extension of Clinton County (CCE Clinton), effective April 27, 2015. Breyette joined CCE Essex in 2005, and has held progressively more responsible positions in her 10 years with the association and served as an extension educator and state 4-H camping specialist in Massachusetts for 6 years prior to joining the staff of CCE Essex. She has in-depth knowledge of programs in 4-H youth development, nutrition and obesity; workforce development; and family, youth and community development.

She has also overseen National Institute of Food and Agriculture mandates; management and staff development; fund and grant development; government, community and Cornell relations; marketing; and strategic planning.

“Mary brings a wealth of hands-on programming experience to her position and a dedication to CCE Clinton,” said Matthew Douthat, president of the CCE Clinton Board of Directors. “Her leadership over the past 10 months in Essex County was clearly demonstrated during the search process.”

“My vision for CCE of Clinton County is to create strong connections between CCE and the communities in the county through the support of healthy living, youth development and agriculture programming,” Breyette said.

Breyette earned her Bachelors of Science Degree with a concentration in physical education (K-12) and her master’s degree in education from Salisbury State University, MD. She was awarded the Community Champion Award in 2008 from the Adirondack Tobacco Free Network.
Easy Maple Syrup Salad Dressing

Yield: Serves 4

Ingredients:

- 2 Tbsp Pure NY Maple Syrup
- 2 Tbsp Apple Cider Vinegar
- 1 Tsp Maple Mustard
- 1/3 Cup good quality Olive Oil
- 2 Tbsp finely chopped fresh herbs (whatever you have in the garden - basil is a good option)
- Pinch of Garlic Salt

Directions:

In a small bowl, combine maple syrup, vinegar, and maple mustard. Slowly whisk in the olive oil. Add herbs and garlic salt.

Serving suggestions:

For dinner, divide 6 cups of fresh baby spinach leaves on four plates, crumble on bleu cheese, add sliced grilled chicken, and drizzle with this dressing.

For a nice side salad, toss with mixed greens, goat cheese, sliced red onion or shallot, and maple roasted pecans.

Recipe Source: New York Maple website
http://www.nysmaple.com/maple-recipes/Maple-Vinaigrette-Salad-Dressing
One thing about snow is that it hides a multitude of sins, making one property look as immaculate as the next. By early April, though, most of us felt like pristine was overrated, and we were prepared to settle for muck and grime if only Mother Nature would peel back her wintry shroud.

But as backyard glaciers receded, some homeowners were dismayed to find that an army of moles had apparently spent the winter detonating explosives. The star-nosed mole and the hairy-tail mole are the two species that live in our area, and as their soil mounds indicate, they’re active all winter. If they’ve turned your once-flat lawn into a relief map of the Adirondacks, don’t panic—it’s not as bad as it seems.

It may not change your opinion about them, but moles consume lawn-decimating grubs. In addition to the Japanese beetle, we have four other beetle species whose larval, or grub, stages eat grass roots. Grubs weaken grass and create dead patches, and the moles are, well, grubbing them out for you. A five-ounce mole can eat about 50 pounds of grubs and worms a year.

Moles also contribute to healthier soils. Their activities help blend material throughout the soil profile, which improves aeration and drainage. If mole damage becomes severe you may have to implement control measures. Fortunately, as rodents go, moles have a low reproductive rate. While the extent of damage may suggest your yard is teeming with moles, it’s likely there are just two or three. This means is you only have to eliminate a few animals to vastly reduce or stop the carnage.

Moles have two kinds of tunnels, permanent ones 6-24 inches deep and temporary ones just below the surface. They’re able to dig new surface tunnels at nearly 20 feet per hour, and can scuttle through their deep runs at about 80 feet a minute. In spring and fall they feed closer to the surface in their shallow runs, and this is the best time to control them.

Mole repellants sometimes work in the short term. Cat feces, coyote or fox urine, and castor oil mixed with dish soap may help drive them off your property for a while. Studies have shown that ultrasonic and vibratory devices meant to repel

Continued on page 9...
CORNELL COOPERATIVE EXTENSION AND THE MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEERS PRESENT

**Perennial Plant Sale**

Saturday, May 30th, 2015

6064 State Route 22, Suite 5 in Plattsburgh

9:00 am until plants are gone!

As always, our plants are divided from, or grown by, Master Gardener Volunteers and are priced at $5 each or 5 for $20. Master Gardeners will be on hand to answer questions and to help you choose plants for your landscape.

For more information, call us at 561-7450

Cornell Cooperative Extension is an employer and educator recognized for valuing AA/EEO, Protected Veterans, and Individuals with Disabilities and provides equal program and employment opportunities.

Please let us know of any special needs that we should be aware of.
Baby Greens

By Jordy Kivett, Nutrition Educator

When deciding what to write about this month, I had a free association of early crops, along with Mother’s Day and Month of the Young Child, so finally the spinner in my brain landed on baby greens, which kind of round up all of these things linguistically, though baby greens would make my mother happy. Baby greens is really a fancy term for young or immature leaves or plants that we eat. If you call them immature plants you surely cannot charge as much for them at the grocery store. The cool thing about baby greens is they are relatively easy to grow and you can buy them locally and early if you are not so inclined to grow them yourself.

Leaf lettuces, like arugula, heartier greens, like beet greens or collard greens, as well as pea shoots can all be harvested early and enjoyed. Typically you can snip the tops off of young plants, leaving about an inch above the soil and not only enjoy a fresh tasting tender salad, but also your crop will recover and give you more greens in the future, baby or otherwise.

Another thing I like about baby greens is they are tender, so a food like kale which becomes sort of tough in its large leaf form, as we typically eat it, is much more palatable raw when it is harvested as a baby green. Though I like greens cooked (and you can cook baby greens) I like the simplicity of a green salad. Rinse greens, fill your plate, dress and you are done.

Find a variety of baby greens that is right for your tastes, some greens are relatively spicy or bitter, while others are mild. Ask the grower to get a good idea of the flavor profile if you are unsure of a particular type of green. No matter which type of greens you choose, you are sure to add a very nutrient dense food to your diet. Greens are loaded with antioxidants, Vitamins A and C and are even a good source of iron. The best part is that 2 cups have less than 20 calories, so if they are filling half of your plate, it gives you room for higher calorie foods and tasty dressings.
Eye Candy and Cough Syrup

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

I haven’t checked with an optometrist, but I may have a winter-related vision problem. When five or six months of winter-white finally give way to a mostly brown world each early spring, my eyeballs ache for something bright in the landscape. That’s probably why I plant a few additional crocus bulbs in the yard each fall, and why I search out early-blooming native wildflowers like bloodroot and spring beauty.

But what thrills me most is how clumps of bright yellow coltsfoot flowers emerge, long before their leaves come out, from muddy roadside ditches and rail embankments. Coltsfoot is native to Europe and Asia, but has naturalized throughout North America. Coltsfoot flowers look a bit like small dandelions, but without leaves. You tend to see them in places where soil has been disturbed. Maybe it’s the contrast in color or their audacity at blooming so early, but these flowers do a great deal to dispel my winter fatigue.

Many non-native plants came here accidentally, but coltsfoot was likely planted by early settlers because of its history as a medicinal plant. We don’t know if coltsfoot cheered up European settlers at winter’s end, but we do know that they used it to treat coughs and cold during winter’s icy grip. Its botanical species name is Tussilago, derived from the Latin word for cough. Its common name comes from the fact that its leaves, which emerge as the flowers die back, have a shape similar to a horse’s hoof.

Roman naturalist and philosopher Pliny the Elder (think Socrates, but slightly less ancient) treated his asthma by inhaling the smoke of dried coltsfoot leaves and flowers. In an ironic and tragic twist, Pliny died of smoke inhalation during the eruption of Mount Vesuvius. There was a period of time in Europe when the coltsfoot flower was the symbol for an apothecary. And following a tradition that dates back thousands of years, modern Chinese still use coltsfoot in commercial cough syrups.

It’s important to note that no herbal remedy should be used without first consulting a licensed medical professional. In fact there is concern about the safety of coltsfoot in some quarters. In a 1999 study at the University of Iowa, researchers documented an increase in liver cancer among rats ingesting large doses of coltsfoot. However, because the Iowa study concluded coltsfoot’s health risk was due to one particular compound it (the plant, not the study) contained, some German researchers are trying to develop a strain free of that chemical.

Making cough syrup from coltsfoot requires supervision, but using it as a tonic for the spirit need not involve doctors. I encourage everyone to check out these splashy early-blooming flowers. You can’t overdose on eye candy.

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

flattened surfaces which grow in layers. Fruticose lichens grow erect and are three dimensional.

**Fruticose Lichen**

Crustose lichen form a crust over the surface of rocks, trees, or sidewalks, can be quite colorful, and have a thick, rough texture.

**Crustose Lichen**

Squamulose lichen appear as a combination of the foliose and crustose forms. They have a scale-like appearance and attach to a surface like tiny shingles.

**Squamulose Lichen**

Lichens play an important part in our ecosystem and are used by wildlife in a number of ways. More about the fascinating topic of lichens coming next month!

Mountains and Molehills cont...

moles or mice do not work. Remedies such as placing broken glass or mothballs in their tunnels are also useless.

Toxic baits are of limited value, because unless they’re pretty confident it’s a live insect, moles will rarely eat it. The only effective way to remove moles from your yard is by trapping. It’s fairly simple, although it requires a time investment.

Scissor or harpoon-type traps work, but must be set in active surface tunnels. Jab a stick into surface runs every few yards. If the holes are repaired the following day, the tunnel is active and you can set a trap there. Mole traps can be found at most hardware stores or purchased online.

Regardless of how you deal with moles, it’s easy to get rid of their soil piles. Once the ground dries out enough, rake the molehills into the surrounding grass. After a few warm days and a spring shower or two, the lawn will take off and you’d never know the place had suffered an outbreak of tiny volcanoes. But a strategy of tolerance is cheaper and leaves you more free time if you can live with a little seasonal mess. After all, we’re talking about molehills, not mountains.

Information and quotes used in this article appear in the Ohio State University Bulletin Special Circular 195.

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/
Spring is in the air! April is a time to start our spring cleaning and get into the swing of ‘potentially’ nice weather. This month promises many fun adventures and the start of fresh air and fun.

In celebration I thought I would share an activity that incorporates fun and science, my two favorite things. I mean, who wouldn’t like to know how to make their very own bouncy ball?

**What you’ll need:**

- ½ cup of warm water
- 1 tablespoon of borax solution (sold in the laundry detergent aisles of stores)
- 1 tablespoon of cornstarch
- 2 tablespoons of white liquid glue
- Food coloring
- Disposable rubber gloves (optional but very helpful)

**What to do:**

1. In a cup, mix the warm water and borax solution together
2. In a separate cup, mix the glue, cornstarch and food coloring
3. Add the glue mixture to the borax and water solution
4. Soon the glue mixture will harden (this takes about 10 seconds) once it has hardened take a fork and remove it from the water – if your glue mixture is still sticky squish it around with your hands then dip it back in the water.
5. Roll the mixture in your hands until it forms a ball shape – the more you handle the mixture the firmer it will become
6. Let it sit until it hardens and enjoy your very own homemade bouncy ball!

**Things to consider**

After the balls sit for a while they will flatten out a bit so be sure to store them in a plastic container or zip lock bag. If they flatten out just roll it between your hands again until you form the ball.

*To see this activity & others like it please go to:*
*http://www.the36thavenue.com/how-to-make-a-bouncy-ball/*

*Editors Note:* When I was growing up 4-H was just learning about and working with farm animals. That’s no longer the case, and these young people do an amazing number of things. If you would like information about becoming a 4-H family, contact Chelsea at our office, 561-7450.
**Perennial Plant Sale**

MARK YOUR CALENDARS...The yearly Master Gardener perennial plant sale will be held on Saturday, May 30 beginning at 9:00. Get more information about this popular event that supports our programs on page 6.

**Friends of Point Au Roche** and the Master Gardener volunteers will be teaming up again this year on Sunday, June 7 helping youngsters to make their very own bucket gardens. We will begin at noon and go until the buckets are gone. There is no charge for this popular event.

**Farmers’ and Crafters’ Market**

Master Gardeners will be on hand every Saturday from 9:00am to noon to answer your questions and provide you with information on topical issues about your home and garden. We can also accept samples for identification or diagnosis if you can’t get them to our office during the week. The Market is located downtown Plattsburgh on Durkee Street.

**Kids in the Kitchen: Spring Edition**

Join us at the Child Care Coordinating Council for a workshop on adding spring vegetables to your family’s diet. Learn where to get local vegetables and what to expect this season.

May 19th 10 am to 11 am

May 26th 5:00 pm to 6:30 pm

For more information call or email Jordy at 561-7450 or bw47@cornell.edu

**Also of Interest**

**A PEONIES WORKSHOP @ 1 pm**

**Saturday, June 27** at **ENTAYANT GARDENS** on Rainbow Lake. All you ever wanted to know about peonies taught amongst 250 beautiful plants. This workshop will also touch on begonias, dahlias, nasturtiums & gladiolus.

Go home fully informed about growing and handling peonies and with A BOUQUET OF PEONIES from Don's 250 plants. $24 fee. Hand-made peony plant supports available for sale. For information and to register contact Don at Dons2dy4@gmail.com or 518 891-3690

**AN AFTERNOON TASTE OF ENTAYANT GARDENS**

**SUNDAY AUG.30** Tour ENTAYANT GARDENS featuring several thousand new plants, an over 13,000 gallon water course, fountains, water falls & lily pond, a rebuilt 170-foot boardwalk with addition of seating areas over the new pond. Visit a store full of Christmas garden art gifts from paintings to black fly houses & Adirondack chairs. Plus garden movies, musical entertainment, & of course, Yvonne's, Taste of Entayant. For info, E-mail or call: Dons2dy4@gmail.com or 518 891 3690.
North Country Gardening

May 2015

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