North Country Gardening

This year in lieu of publishing a December/January issue of our newsletter we will be publishing a combined November/December issue and a combined January/February issue as well. As always, we are available by phone or email for any of your questions or concerns. I would love to hear what topics you would like to see covered in future editions as well. 

..... Jolene

Dear Readers....

we need to hear from you!

SECOND NOTICE

Every few years we update our records and our mailing list for North Country Gardening. Some of our readers have moved or are no longer interested in receiving it. Some would prefer to read it online. We would like to know what your preferences are. Please take a few moments to fill out and return the slip below letting us know if you wish to continue receiving a mailed copy or prefer to switch to an online copy. We will need your name and address as well as any email address you may have. If we don't hear from you within a reasonable amount of time, we will remove you from our mailing list. We don't want to lose a single one of our faithful readers, so please, get back to us soon. Questions or comments? Call us at 561-7450.

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By Amy Ivy

It’s hard to believe that after the record-breaking wet start to summer we had this year, we would find ourselves in a drought in September, but here we are. The lack of regular rain since late July, combined with the steady, intense heat of August and the first 3 weeks of September created stressful conditions for many plants. Gardeners and growers can water their remaining crops and gardens but the hillsides and foothills are really showing their stress. I’m not sure if this is true in the High Peaks region, but all along the Champlain Valley hillsides there are large swaths of solid reddish-brown where the trees have shut down for the year. In many cases these trees are sitting on ledges where the soil is much thinner than surrounding areas so they feel the drought much more severely than areas with deeper soils. These trees aren’t turning color and gradually going dormant, they are simply shutting down to save their resources. I am hopeful and expect their roots will revive and recover once we finally get some soaking rain.

It’s confusing this year since in many areas the grass and fields are still quite green, greener than you’d expect during an extended period of dry weather. But the dew is heavy this time of year and the leaf blades of grass are efficient at absorbing moisture from the few light rains we have had. Trees have a lot more tissue to support so a light rain or heavy dew has little effect on them. They are really suffering now.

In your own yard, give any shrubs and trees you care about a good, slow soak. Even if the leaves have shut down, the roots keep growing until the ground freezes. This is especially important for any that you have planted or moved in the past year or two since they are still getting established.

Garlic – Be Choosy

October is garlic planting month. Garlic used to be known as a relatively trouble-free crop, with few insect and disease problems. But unfortunately a variety of diseases and problems are becoming more common. Whether you are planting garlic you grew yourself or some you bought, check it carefully before planting and don’t plant anything that looks funky. By this I mean anything with streaks or staining, soft spots, brown patches, shriveled up parts, anything that looks abnormal. This won’t guarantee you won’t have problems next year, but it can at least avoid some potential problems.

Wait until at least October 15 to plant your garlic and then mulch it with a few inches of straw or chopped leaves to insulate it for the winter. You want the cloves to begin root growth this fall, but not top growth. If you plant too early and we get a late warm spell the tops may begin to grow. While this isn’t a disaster it is less desirable and may affect the ability of the young plants to survive the winter. When in doubt, wait a bit longer. Many gardeners don’t plant their garlic until early November and have good results. I suggest grabbing the first nice day after October 15th that you have enough time to get the job done.

Raised Beds

Raised beds are ideal for sites with poor soil quality and/or poor drainage. Rather than trying to fix what lies below you can simply build your beds above the existing conditions. The more challenging the situation is, the higher the beds need to be. In most cases, a bed made of 2x8” or better yet 2x10” lumber will be high enough to make a difference.
A lot of gardeners start with 1 or 2 raised beds and then add more, in different dimensions, as they get their own system of using them worked out.

Fill the raised beds with a mixture of your native garden soil, compost, rotted manure, fine sawdust, chopped leaves, pine needles, peat moss, as many different materials as you can gather. By using a variety of sources you should be able to provide plenty of organic matter and nutrients to get your garden off to a good start next year.

I’ve found it really helps to maintain a 10 inch zone of mulch around the outside of each raised bed to keep grass at bay. It still creeps in any chance it gets but this mulched zone gives me a fighting chance. If you want to set up a series of raised beds in your existing garden, keep the pathways between the beds well mulched and don’t give grass a chance to get started.

Amy Ivy is a regional vegetable specialist with the Eastern NY Commercial Horticulture Program of Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE). Home gardening questions are handled by each county’s CCE office. Office numbers are: Clinton Co 561-7450, Essex Co 962-4810, Franklin Co 483-7403.

Editors Note: There are many on-line sites you can access for directions on making a raised bed. Here at the office we have free handouts that can give you ideas for making one that will meet your needs, last for many years, and get you started on the right track. Call or come by and we would be happy to help you.
In the world of forestry (urban and otherwise), ugliness is not pathological. Arborists live with it, and so do trees. Tar spot, for example, which can make your tree look like a roofing contractor has vandalized its leaves in the night, is a benign affliction.

Across the region this year, leafcutter moth larvae have excised near-perfect circles of tissue from maple leaves, making it seem as though someone went berserk with a hole-punch. Even though maple leaves end up brown and bedraggled, leafcutter damage occurs late enough in the season that it does no real harm. Trees may be embarrassed by their looks now but they'll be fine come spring.

Beauty, on the other hand, can be beastly. Take the practice of piling up mulch against the trunks of trees to make tidy and color-coordinated perimeters. Apparently in some quarters these “mulch volcanoes” are considered attractive, and I have to admit they go well with white-painted rock borders and pink plastic flamingos. Sadly, this volcanic loveliness comes at a cost to trees, leading to insect infestations, diseases, and root problems.

But the worst kind of beauty-related damage affects only young trees. The trouble with young landscape trees is that they’re planted. What I mean is, they’re stuck in the location we choose for them, and can’t run away from hazards such as dogs, drought and deicing salt. Even if they could just flinch they might be able to dodge certain lethal beauty marks.

“Lawn mower blight” can occur any time the obsession with a perfect lawn meets up with powerful equipment in the vicinity of a young tree. Contributing factors are zero-turn mowers that can hit Mach 2 in half a block, and youthful operators. If an MP3 player and ear buds are in the picture, lawn mower blight is almost certain.

Injury to the lower trunk reduces the vigor of a young tree, slowing its growth and making it more susceptible to disease and insect damage. Most landscape trees are grafted cultivars, and damage to bark near the graft union can cause the graft to fail. Many times, repeated hits by lawn mowers will cause enough decay that a tree will snap off at ground level even though it still has a live crown.

The most virulent strain of this beauty-related disease is “string-trimmer blight.” A string trimmer, or “weed eater,” is deadly because the string will reach around the trunk, girdling it entirely. When this happens the tree is doomed because the cambium tissue just beneath...
the bark is removed. Sugars produced through photosynthesis flow down through the cambium to the roots.

A girdled tree may actually leaf out for one or two years following a lethal injury because water and nutrients are pulled up the xylem tissue, or sap wood, which is below the cambium.

There is still plenty of time left in the season to be thinking about lawn mower blight. You can help prevent it by replacing sod around your tree with a ring (not a volcano) of mulch 4” deep and extending to the drip line. You’ll keep the mower away and make your tree happier in the process because it won’t have to compete as much with the grass. Installing plastic trunk guards around the lower 12-16 inches of trunk should keep string trimmers at bay.

Of course you can always just leave some long grass near the trunk to clip by hand later on. That might not look perfect, but beauty isn’t all it’s cracked up to be.

By Jolene Wallace

This is the time of year to keep an eye out for pods, pinecones, nuts, and other bounty that plants, shrubs, and trees supply to us in all shapes and sizes. Not only are they interesting to look at, but with a few simple items that you may already have at home, they make lovely decorations.

I like to paint some in both muted and vibrant colors (after they have dried) or leave them natural, with just a spray of clear acrylic or even hairspray, to make them shine and use them for everything from wreaths, centerpieces, ornaments, package tie-ons, and whatever the size and shape suggest to me.

Incorporating walnuts, Brazil nuts, and others that are available in the market now, you and your family could have a pleasant weekend making things for yourselves and others to decorate your home for fall and winter. In the next edition of North Country Gardening I will give you directions for some projects that I especially like. In the meantime, start collecting what you find. Please don’t take bark off trees, and remember to leave plenty of nuts and pods for the squirrels!

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North Country Gardening

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Tuesday, October 20th
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6:00 p.m.- 8:30 p.m.

Recognition of this year’s Friends of Extension

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The cost is $35.00 per person which includes a buffet prepared by Irises Café
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Buffet includes:
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RSVP and payment due by Tuesday, October 13th
6064 State Rte. 22, Suite #5, Plattsburgh NY 12901 Questions? Call 561-7450

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Clinton County provides equal program and employment opportunities. Please contact Cornell Cooperative Extension Association if you need special accommodations.

North Country Gardening
A surprising gardener—hunters and food plots

By Jim Cayea, Master Gardener Volunteer

We, gardeners, are enjoying the fruits (berries, vegetables, tubers, squashes, et cetera) of our labor. Autumn is our “final” hoorah. Interestingly, another gardener readies for her/his harvest – whitetail deer hunters. These gardeners grow specialty crops specifically to attract whitetail deer (deer) and during the various deer seasons, these gardeners will hunt over their garden for the chance to shoot one of these marvelous animals.

I need to tell you about the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (usually referred to by the acronym DEC) hunting regulations. DEC forbids New York hunters from using bait or hunting over a baited area for big game, upland game birds (ruffed grouse e.g.), turkey or waterfowl. Also, forbidden is using a salt block or mineral lick on lands that deer inhabit anytime of the year. If fact, DEC does not allow attractants to have ANY amount of salt. Hunters cannot use liquid or dissolving powders marketed for deer consumption that entice deer to feed on the material that absorbed the attractant. (An example of this would be putting molasses on a rotting tree stump so the deer would have to eat the stump to get the molasses.)

There are exceptions to the above. The exception this article will cover is for wildlife food plots that are considered agricultural crops. The hunter-gardener uses this exception to grow different crops legally to attract the deer to her/his wildlife food lot. Some of the more common plants to grow are brassicas, clovers, sugar beets, canola, turnips, and chicory. These seeds are available from the producers for prepared or unprepared ground, shade or sunny environments, dry or wet ground and for other conditions.

There are many companies selling equipment for ATVs or tractors to prepare soil, plant seeds, fertilizing, and whatever to hunters for wildlife food lots. Go to a hunting website like Cabela’s or Bass Pro and learn how serious these people are.

My sources for this article are the DEC website concerning baiting, hunting and feeding of deer and other animals, and the Cabela’s website concerning wildlife food plots, seeding, and equipment. Any legal questions that this article brings up, contact DEC for their interpretation.

http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/7197.html

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Clinton County Eats—Cooking Spaghetti Squash

Though it’s been around for a while, this winter squash is becoming more popular, especially with many people needing or choosing to avoid eating as much pasta. Its mild nutty flavor makes it a great addition to any meal.

1. Clean the outside of the squash under running water. Do not use soap!
2. Cut the squash in half and scoop out the seeds. It will be hard. To make it easier to cut you can microwave it for a few minutes to slightly soften the flesh.
3. Proceed to cook the cut and seeded squash in the microwave or the oven.

A. **The oven**: Heat the oven to 400 degrees, add a little water to the bottom of a baking sheet, put the squash on it, skin up and bake until the squash is soft, about 45 minutes. This is forgiving, if you are cooking anything else, feel free to adjust the temperature, just check for softness.

B. **The microwave**: Place the squash cut side down on a plate or microwave safe dish with a little water added to it. Microwave on high for 5 minutes at a time, until soft (10-15 minutes).

4. It’s cooked! Now you can scoop out the spaghetti like flesh with a fork. There are so many ways to enjoy it now. Here are a few ideas:
   - Simply add a pat of butter or grate a little parmesan and enjoy.
   - Top it with marinara or mix in a spoonful of pesto.
   - Add it to a stir fry.
   - Add fresh chopped tomato and basil with a little olive oil.
Fall Foods

By Jordy Kivett, Nutrition Educator

The transition of summer to fall seems to be punctuated with food, both on a larger cultural scale: Pumpkin Spice reemerges, and on a local scale: apples, squash and root vegetables pop up everywhere. So as the tastes of summer like warm tomatoes, truly fresh strawberries, and corn on the cob retreat from our plates, other wonderful tastes will take their place.

Winter squash is a great fall and winter food to get locally as they are a hardy crop that does well in our climate and stores well to enjoy throughout the fall and winter. There are so many varieties, but don’t be intimidated. Most varieties have a similar taste and are cooked via similar methods. That said, if you don’t love acorn squash, try butternut or delicata to get a different flavor or texture that may suit you better. The exception in taste and texture for winter squash is spaghetti squash, which I will address in the recipe portion this month!

Root vegetables are also great for growing in our climate and store well. Check out fall and winter farmer’s markets for carrots, beets, parsnips, potatoes, turnips and onions. While we avoid using the oven over the summer, fall is a great time for roasting, warming your kitchen and filling your belly. Chop root vegetables into uniform pieces (peeling if needed), place on a large baking sheet, spread out in a single layer, drizzle with oil and bake at 400 degrees until fork tender, checking and rotating every 15 to 20 minutes. The end result is fabulous and it is so easy.

Apples are back! We grow wonderful apples right here in the Champlain Valley. Be sure to get to your local orchard and pick up a few bags. Apples make the perfect snack food, great for on the go and hands of all sizes. If you happen to have extra consider making your own apple sauce, by simply chopping the apples up (peeling first optional), adding to a pot with a little water to prevent scorching, cover and cook over low heat, until the apples have reduced to apple sauce. Try seasoning with just cinnamon and nutmeg and avoid adding sugar. If you keep the peels on you’ll get a nice pink sauce and you can use a hand blender to get a smoother result without losing the fiber and other nutrients in the peel.

Enjoy fall! It is a beautiful time to be in the North Country!
October 2015

In From the Cold

By Jolene Wallace

Now that fall is officially upon us, we are being revisited by the sights, sounds, and smells of this season of change. We’re seeing and hearing geese in the sky, colored leaves crackling under our feet or swirling as the breeze sets them to dancing, Wooly bear caterpillars (which don’t really predict the severity of the coming winter), the cooler temperatures and the shorter hours of daylight.

There are many things that make fall one of our favorite seasons but there are a couple of things that might cause us dread. Many of you have experienced the invasion of boxelder bugs or ladybugs that occur in the fall.

Some of you poor souls have experienced both!

The boxelder bug, pictured here, is about ½ inch long. They feed on seeds of boxelder and other maple species. As the temperatures cool in the fall they begin to look for dry, sheltered places to spend the winter. This may be the base of their host tree but sometimes they choose firewood piles, barns, or the side of your house. They may congregate wherever they find warmth, usually on the south side of structures. A few boxelder bugs are not a big deal but we get calls at this time of year reporting hundreds of them. To make matters worse if they are able to find a way in, you may find them in too—in your house.

Another insect that will be looking for a place to spend the winter is the Multicolored Asian Lady Beetle. These little guys are “good guys” for our gardens as they consume large numbers of aphids but it’s hard to appreciate them when they congregate by the hundreds or thousands in our attics, walls, or rafters and invade our living spaces to enjoy the same warmth we do. If that wasn’t bad enough, when they are startled they release a defensive chemical which stains walls, fabrics, and carpeting and has a bad odor. These guys can be any color from yellow to red and have more spots that a ladybug, or sometimes none at all. They are sometimes called Halloween lady beetles because that’s about when you start seeing them. They don’t eat anything in your home and don’t do any damage but having them inside is no treat.

So what can you do to avoid having to deal with the creepy consequences of an insect invasion? Common sense tells us that keeping them out is the best solution. If you find either of these two on your patio, walls, driveway, garage, etc. hose them off. That’s just as effective as using an insecticidal spray, which is not recommended. Seal any cracks around doorjambs, windows, and siding with a good silicone or silicone-latex caulk. Don’t forget about checking where your utility pipes come into the building.

If you do find yourself with these uninvited guests, gently sweep them up and deposit them outside. You can vacuum them up as well, but empty the bag afterwards. Try to find where they are entering and eliminate that opening. Hopefully, none of you will experience these home invaders after taking due precautions.

North Country Gardening
**Did You Know?** Our Master Gardener Volunteers are available to make presentations to your organization. If you would like to schedule an event, please contact Jolene at jmw442@cornell.edu or call 561-7450. We work with all age groups and tailor programs to meet your needs. Topics that may be of interest include Monarch butterflies, putting your garden to bed, creating raised bed gardens, and composting. If you have an idea, or would like to hear about ours, contact me. We do programs year-round.

Come Spring, we will be working with schools, senior housing facilities, and organizations in Clinton County to bring the joy of gardening to those who are interested. If you are aware of groups that would like to schedule a program, please let me know.

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### Events

**2015 Annual Meeting—Tuesday, Oct 20 @ 6:00pm**

Cornell Cooperative Extension is having its Annual Meeting on October 20th at 6:00pm and you are invited to join us. See page 6 for details.

**Last Day of this year’s Farmers’ Market**

Saturday, October 10 will be the last day of this growing season for the Plattsburgh Farmers and Crafters Market. It’s been a treat to see what all the vendors brought and to visit with them. A big thank you to the Master Gardener volunteers who manned our table on Saturday mornings. I heard many complimentary things about the fine job you did.

I know we will all be looking forward to the beginning of the **Winter Farmers Market** being held indoors at the City Recreation Center on the Oval. Check the website at plattsburghfarmersmarket.com for days and times.

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**Our office, located at 6064 State Route 22, Suite 5, is open from 9:00 am to 4:30 pm Monday through Friday. 561-7450. We will be closed Monday, October 11 to observe Columbus Day**

**JOIN US!**

The Cornell Cooperative Extension Annual Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 20, 2015
North Country Gardening

October 2015

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