WILL THIS BE YOUR LAST ISSUE?
If you have not notified us that you want to continue receiving NCG in the mail, this will be your last issue. Please call us to continue receiving mailed copies, or read us on our website at http://blogs.cornell.edu/cceclintoncounty/gardening/news-2 ....Jolene

DID YOU KNOW?

You might think that things slow down during the winter but Cornell Cooperative Extension of Clinton County has numerous programs that we facilitate year-round. Our 4-H, Nutrition, Agriculture, and Horticulture, educators are available to answer your questions and provide you with useful information.

Our 34 Master Gardener volunteers, whose programming I oversee, volunteered 2696 hours in the past 12 months. They worked with age groups from pre-school to senior, large and small organizations, workplaces and single individuals to bring research based information about gardening, insect pests, pollinators, plant diseases, growing in raised beds, seed starting, and many other topics. In addition they put in over 600 hours of continued training in order to stay current with the changing guidelines and resources available.

We have been fortunate to receive another generous donation from The Chapel Hill Foundation to bring hands-on gardening to children and seniors. If you have a school or organization that you would like to suggest to us, please let me know. We will be planning our spring activities throughout the winter.

To our Master Gardener Volunteers I say—Well Done! It is a privilege to work with you.
By Amy Ivy

It’s time to start gathering boughs and branches, berries and seed pods to decorate your home for winter and the holidays. Be sure to get the landowner’s permission before you start clipping, or you can buy natural materials from garden centers and florists. Whenever we cut our own Christmas tree I try to find one that’s taller than I need so I can use the lower branches for wreaths and swags and still have a nice sized tree to decorate.

If you want fragrance, nothing beats balsam fir, plus it’s native and widely available throughout the Adirondacks. White pine has a nice fragrance too, but much milder than balsam, and many people feel our native white spruce has an objectionable odor when brought indoors. It’s a beautiful tree with lovely boughs, just try to use it outdoors or on your porch. Blue spruce is beautiful and long lasting, but it’s extremely prickly so you’ll need to handle this one with care.

Hemlocks are widespread throughout our region and often grow where balsam firs flourish. They look alike so if you plan to gather your own boughs take a few minutes to learn how to tell them apart. Hemlocks drop their needles quickly which makes them a poor choice for decorations while balsam firs hold on to their wonderfully fragrant needles for weeks after being cut. Every now and then I see wreaths for sale made out of hemlock instead of balsam, which wouldn’t last nearly as long, so it’s good to know what you’re getting.

Both hemlock and balsam have soft needles. The best way to tell them apart is to look at how the needles are attached to the branch. Hemlock needles narrow to a little stem, or petiole, which attaches the needle to the branch. Balsam needles stay the same width all the way to the branch and hold on with a rounded foot that reminds me of a suction cup. When you pull off a couple of balsam needles, the bark feels smooth where they had been attached, but on hemlock you can often feel little bumps on the bark. Another clue is to look for their cones. Hemlocks have pretty little cones that hang downward, all over the older branches and you’ll usually find many on the ground below. These cones are about the size of a penny and are beautiful for craft projects. Fir cones sit upright in the uppermost branches and are firmly attached. The cone crumbles apart when mature, scattering its seeds to the ground, rather than dropping intact cones as do hemlocks, spruce and pines. Balsam firs are usually lusher and darker green than hemlocks. If you want to be sure, crush the tip of a branch in your fingers and see if you can smell that delightful balsam scent. While a full balsam wreath is classic, I often like to add a variety of greens into my wreaths and swags for extra interest. White cedar branches are a yellowish shade of green and their shape is completely different. White pine has long, soft needles in bundles of 5 and red cedar has more spikey, dark blue-green branches. When gathering branches from our woods, I look for the red cedar branches that have their blue-black berries still attached for even more interest. I used to be intimidated by making natural decorations but as long as you use fresh, attractive branches and boughs, you can’t go wrong.

Photo credits:
Know Your Trees
By J. A. Cope and F. E. Winch, Jr.
Revised by E. A. Cope
L. H. Bailey Hortorium
Cornell University
Ithaca, NY 14853

North Country Gardening
For the Birds

By Jolene Wallace

Easy to make bird feeders and suet cakes are a great project to do with kids of all ages. During the winter as food gets scarce and birds need extra calories to keep warm, you can help them out and have fun at the same time.

Homemade bird feeders can save money and the birds don't seem to notice.

Another option is to spread creamy peanut butter on a pine cone and roll it in bird seed. Tie a hanging string to the pinecone first. If you find that peanut butter is too messy for your youngsters, mix some cornmeal into it first. You can also use beef tallow, lard, or shortening. The high calories of the lard, shortening, or peanut butter help our feathered friends to keep warm.

If you have the lard and want to get fancier, melt it, mix in the bird seed, add oatmeal and cranberries, and as it hardens press it into a cookie cutter or muffin pan. Push a pencil in one side to make a hole for hanging. After they harden, remove from the cookie cutter or muffin pans and store your suet cakes in the freezer until ready to use. If you leave the cookie cutter in place, these make nice little gifts for family, friends, and neighbors.

Photo by Steve Byland via Birdshare.
North Country Gardening

By Jim Cayea, Master Gardener Volunteer Clinton County

Many canid (the dog family) biologists have a wide range of opinions concerning the eastern coyote genetics; however, all agree that this animal is here to stay. (Several websites I read for this article called the eastern coyote a modern species.) The eastern coyote are wolf-coyote hybrids according DNA research conducted by Canadian and American scientists. This crossbreeding which involved the western coyote and the Algonquin red wolf most likely took place in Ontario in the early 1900s. Some of us may remember when the Defenders of Wildlife tried to convince Northern New Yorkers to accept the reintroduced grey wolf in the Adirondacks. The vocal dispute only ended when the New York State Museum of Natural History DNA tested last wolf shot in the Adirondacks. It was only then we learned the last Adirondack wolf was the Algonquin wolf. Geneticists categorized the Algonquin wolf as being a member of the red wolf of eastern United States. The red wolf is the only known wolf to breed with coyotes.

Eastern coyotes occupy all of New York with the exception of Long Island. New York City residents have notified authorities that they have seen these canids in Central Park, Brooklyn, and Queens. NYSDEC estimates that there are 20,000 to 30,000 eastern coyotes in New York State. I have seen eastern coyotes that looked like a black German Shepard and even seen three at the same time that varied from reddish-brown to an almost black on the Plank Road. One of the few times that I was frightened in the woods was when I was trying to get into my tree stand in early morning darkness while accompanied by several coyotes hunting and howling near me. Later that morning I checked the ground for tracks and learned the coyotes were hunting the same deer bedding areas that I was hunting. I did not see any deer that day.

Eastern coyotes are about four-feet long and weigh between 20 to 40 pounds. This canid can kill deer or smaller domestic animals; however, their diet is usually rabbits, rodents, carrion, fruit, birds, or insects. Biologists from different areas and states vary in their opinions that eastern coyotes hunt domestic cats. Connecticut and New York State warn cat owners that cats are a coyote favorite, while North Carolina state coyotes do not eat many cats because domestic cats generally avoid the coyotes. What makes the eastern coyote a standout hunter is its flexibility in hunting styles. Generally, this coyote hunts alone for its prey during the spring, summer, and early fall. This hunting style changes once snow is on the ground. The eastern coyotes form a loose family pack to hunt deer in a general area. This improves the pack’s ability to detect deer. Ice and deep snow hinder deer movement and reduce the deer’s access to good feed. This allows eastern coyotes to hunt deer successfully since the canid generally can run on the snow surface, have better footing on ice, and the pack allows the coyotes to take down sick and/or starving deer.

In November – December, the juvenile eastern coyotes leave their mother’s home range to establish their own. There are reports of spring born individuals, generally female, hunting with their parents in the fall. NYSDEC noted that one of the eastern coyotes it was tracking went 120 miles to establish its home range! Eastern coyotes patrol their home ranges and mark the boundaries with urine. The eastern coyote becomes aggressive to other canids if the individual coyote feels its home range is being infringed upon.

Remember that the eastern coyote is a wild animal, and you need to RESPECT them. There have been cases of human fatalities and injuries, livestock...
losses, and losses of domestic animals. To minimize contact, the NYSDEC recommends:

- Do not feed coyotes and discourage others from doing so (also see "Feeding Wildlife: a wrong choice").
- Unintentional food sources attract coyotes and other wildlife and increase risks to people and pets. To reduce risks:
  - Do not feed pets outside.
  - Make any garbage inaccessible to coyotes and other animals.
  - Eliminate availability of bird seed. Concentrations of birds and rodents that come to feeders can attract coyotes. If you see a coyote near your birdfeeder, clean up waste seed and spillage to remove the attractant.
- Do not allow coyotes to approach people or pets.
- Teach children to appreciate coyotes from a distance.
- If you see a coyote, be aggressive in your behavior - stand tall and hold arms out to look large. If a coyote lingers for too long, then make loud noises, wave your arms, throw sticks and stones.
- Do not allow pets to run free. Supervise all outdoor pets to keep them safe from coyotes and other wildlife, especially at sunset and at night.
- Regulated hunting and trapping increases the "fear" coyotes have towards people.
- Fencing your yard may deter coyotes. The fence should be tight to the ground, preferably extending six inches below ground level, and taller than 4 feet.
- Remove brush and tall grass from around your property to reduce protective cover for coyotes. Coyotes are typically secretive and like areas where they can hide. See "Tips to Eliminate Wildlife Conflicts" for more information.
- Contact your local police department and NYSDEC regional office for assistance if you notice that coyotes are exhibiting "bold" behaviors and have little or no fear of people.
- Ask your neighbors to follow these same steps.

Sources: Adirondack Almanac – A Guide to the Natural Year by Tom Kalinowski
NYSDEC and Pennsylvania game Commission
http://www.nationaltrappers.com/coyote.html
Defenders of Wildlife
High Tunnels

Making the Most Of Your High Tunnel

Wednesday, December 9     5:30-8:30pm
Elks Lodge, 511 Fulton St. Carthage, NY

-or-
Thursday, December 10     5:30-8:30 pm
CCE Office, 3 Sisco St. Westport, NY

$10/person includes light refreshments and materials.

New, experienced or prospective high tunnel growers are invited to join the discussion, focused on choosing and growing crops that pay. Speakers include Judson Reid from the Cornell Vegetable Program, and Amy Ivy and Crystal Steward from the Eastern NY Commercial Horticulture Program.

For more information contact Amy Ivy at 518-570-5991 or adi2@cornell.edu

Registration is due by December 4, 2015.
To register and pay online visit:
https://reg.cce.cornell.edu/HighTunnelSchool15_10511
or call 518-561-7450

The program is sponsored by Cornell Cooperative Extension with funding from the Northern New York Agricultural Development Program which is supported by the New York State Senate and administered through the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets.

North Country Gardening
Natural Décor

By Jolene Wallace

One of my favorite projects at this time of year is to make decorations for my home with things that I have found in my yard, in parks, or in the market. Pinecones, apples, nuts, cinnamon sticks, milkweed pods, seed heads and weeds can become lovely homemade decorations or gifts with a little imagination, some craft or spray paint, and glue.

Dried milkweed pods with the seeds removed are an interesting shape that conjure up the idea of angels wings, Santa heads, and flower petals to me. I also like to paint the inside with pearlized paint and use them on wreaths and centerpieces.

Pinecones in many sizes and shapes and the tiny clusters of pods from cedars add wonderful touches to most any room of the house. A bowl of pinecones on a bedroom dresser or on a shelf in the bathroom bring winter indoors and are beautiful in their own right. Spray painting them adds an elegance and makes the tiny cedar pods last longer.

This is the time of year to find nuts in the market. Walnuts, pecans, almonds, and filberts are readily available for baking, eating out of the shell, or decorating. A bowl of nuts on the dining room table with a nutcracker on top is an invitation to snack on these tasty and nutritious treats. My mother bought pounds and pounds of walnuts every fall and we spent many an hour cracking them and storing them for baking throughout the year. I like to use them on wreaths, natural or painted. An almond painted red with half of a maple tree samaras (also called helicopters, whirllybirds, or polynoses) painted to match, combine to make a charming little cardinal, adding a touch of whimsy to your decorations.

Cinnamon sticks tied in a bundle with colorful ribbon can be used as a package tie-on, ornament, or be added to that bowl of nuts to add interest.

Apples or oranges sliced thin and dried (I use my oven) make interesting additions to your wreath. You will notice that when sliced horizontally there will be a design in the center at the core.

Continued on page 9...
Magic Growing Tree

By Chelsea Baxter, Youth Development / Health & Wellness Educator

The holidays are full swing ahead! Halloween is over, Thanksgiving is coming and then all of the true holiday bliss is soon to follow. This holiday season why not engage your little ones in a fun science experiment that allows them to literally grow their own tree!

What you’ll need:
- Cardboard (you can use the back of a paper pad also)
- 1 small dish
- 3 tablespoons of water
- 1.5 tablespoons of ammonia
- 3 tablespoons of liquid bluing (you can purchase this in the laundry aisle, or on amazon)
- Green food coloring

1. First, you will cut out TWO triangle shapes out of the cardboard. You want these to be a fairly good size, roughly over half of the size of an 8” x 11” piece of paper. Cut a slit halfway up one tree, and halfway from the bottom of the other. Cut some grooves in the sides to make branches.
2. Combine all of the ingredients into the dish and place the tree into the center.
3. Add green food coloring to the tips of the branches to add a more real life look.
4. Wait for it to grow! This will take several days before you begin to see the affects but it’s very magical!

Questions for further experimenting:
- How do these ingredients work together?
- Are the crystals that grow on the tree similar to any crystals you have ever seen before? If yes, what kind? Where did you see them?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of Observation</th>
<th>Color Changes</th>
<th>Growth Changes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

http://we-made-that.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/IMG_86021.jpg

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

North Country Gardening
Natural décor continued...

This wreath is made from the stems of my morning glory plant, which twists upon itself like a braid once it has run out of room on its trellis. After shaping it into a circle, I secured it with wire (string would do) and added cedar seed-pods which I had spray painted gold, a gathering of dried weeds painted bronze, and velvetleaf seed pods painted red. I included pieces of birch bark which I had handy. Please remember not to remove bark from any living tree!

DRIYING APPLE SLICES
(Works for Oranges Too)

1. Wash and dry apples
2. Slice horizontally into 1/8 inch slices.
3. Dip in lemon juice, then set on paper towel to absorb excess juice.
4. Cover cookie sheet with parchment paper and lay apple slices flat, not touching each other.
5. Dry in 200 degree oven for about 4 hours.
6. If slices begin to curl on edges, press flat and continue drying process.

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

North Country Gardening
It’s that time of year again, whether you are singing along to the never ending holiday tunes or are just trying to survive the holiday “cheer”, you likely are buying gifts. Consumerism is a downer on the season, for sure, but I know I feel a little better when I either find a gift I know the recipient will really enjoy or spend my money in a way that benefits the community.

Here are some ideas for locally produced or sold gifts that will help cross a name or two off of your shopping list...

**Local food:**

There are a lot of ways to tackle food as a gift. I really like this idea because everyone eats, the gift can be easily tailored, and there are options at all price points. A simple hostess gift could be a standard bottle of wine or hard cider, but could also be more creative, like a bottle of maple syrup, especially if you are going for brunch or staying overnight with family or a gorgeous squash that could double as a centerpiece.

For a bit larger of a gift, try a gift basket or box. You can mix and match to tailor a gift set. Some ideas are local cheese, preserves, and honey, with some high quality crackers, or local dried herbs, winter squash, and some dried beans and a nice soup bowl. Really the possibilities are endless, but if you are feeling short on creativity, let someone else do the dirty work. Some local farms and orchards are assembling these types of gifts; picking one up at the farmer’s market or orchard would be a quick and easy way to get that name crossed off of your list. You can also get gift cards to restaurants featuring local food.

For a big gift this holiday season for a big food fan in your life, consider a CSA membership. My first CSA membership was a Christmas gift! CSA stands for community supported agriculture, which in essence is membership to a farm. The consumer pays an amount up front and then throughout the season receives a specific share of what the farm produces. A few things to consider if giving this as a gift: pick up locations (be sure the farm or designated pick up sites are convenient) and your recipient’s enthusiasm for vegetables. You may opt for a small share if the farm you are considering has one to allow someone new to CSA membership a little menu freedom, as a small share will frequently provide a lot of produce, but you may need to supplement it.

**Inedible Ideas:**

Even you are not giving food as a gift, you can still give local. For a local gift that promotes good health, just think about all of the physical activity options available in the North Country. Try checking out local ski and bike shops for gear or gift cards. Day passes to mountains, gyms, or pools could be a fun group activity over the holidays. For big gifts, consider gym memberships, passes to mountains, or even state park memberships. Check out craft fairs and business that feature local artists to for anything from a breathtaking piece of pottery or woodwork or a cozy pair of mittens.

Even if “going local” is not your thing, I hope you found at least one good idea in this list. If you are not gift giving, consider these gifts for yourself. Spending your money locally has been shown to strengthen communities and local economies.

Happy holidays!

*North Country Gardening*
Mark Your Calendars
We are already scheduling some popular events for next Spring:

Saturday, March 5
Local Food From the Farm event at the Rec Center on the Oval. Planning is underway to make this the best event yet!

Saturday, March 12-Sunday, March 13
Northern Adirondack Home and Lifestyle Expo
Once again the Master Gardeners will be participating with an informative and interesting display.

Saturday, March 19
Gardeners March Madness—a daylong series of presentations and workshops put on by the Cornell Cooperative Extension Master Gardener Volunteers. This event, held every other year, will take place at the Plattsburgh Town Hall. Registration details will be in our Jan/Feb 2016 issue.

STAY TUNED for upcoming winter cooking workshops! For January, February, and March each month will have a topic and the class will be offered in a variety of locations. Subscribe to the Clinton County Eats webpage to get emails highlighting these classes and how to use local food at blogs.cornell.edu/clintoncountyeats or call Jordy at 561-7450.

The entire staff of Cornell Cooperative Extension Clinton County wishes you and yours a joyous, healthy, and safe holiday season.

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 Nov. 26-27 in observance of Thanksgiving and Dec. 24-25 and Dec. 31-Jan 1 for the holidays.

North Country Gardening
North Country Gardening

Nov/Dec 2015

Current Resident Or:

This issue made possible thanks to donations from:

Our Business Sponsors
Readers Like You
and
The Chapel Hill Foundation

Thank You!!