

North Country Gardening



NORTH COUNTRY GARDENING

February 2009

Dear Friends,

Wow! I don't even know where to begin describing the amount of activity going on at the office. Even though it is only February, things are really picking up around the office. I'm busy planning a spring full of workshops, hands-on classes, and much more. In addition, people are already calling to discuss specific garden concerns. It is invigorating to have so many people thinking about the upcoming gardening season!

If you are looking for a fun weekend activity to do until the garden season arrives, consider traveling to the Wild Center (the Natural History Museum

of the Adirondacks located in Tupper Lake) for one of our upcoming workshops. For more information on these workshops, see page 3. If you haven't been there yet, the Wild Center is a great museum, especially for children!

Another exciting opportunity we have is grants to help establish square foot gardens for either educational or community oriented organizations. These gardens are a great teaching tool and a great way to introduce healthy foods to a variety of people. For more information on square foot gardening and how an organization you work with or support can apply for a square foot garden see pages 6 and 7.

You can also visit our webpage for an application or more information.

Finally, please check out Ask Grant if you have ever wanted to be involved in a community garden. There is a dedicated group of individuals gathering in Plattsburgh to start an allotment style community garden. This is an exciting opportunity for many area residents to grow their own cut flowers, veggies, and fruit even if they rent or don't have enough space for a garden!

Until next time—keep gardening,

Anne Lenox Barlow
Horticulture Educator

e-mail: alb326@cornell.edu

January Gardening Tips - Amy Ivy, Executive Director Clinton County

Evergreens Contribute to Winter Interest

I love the winter landscape, especially when it's covered with snow. But if we didn't have some trees and shrubs standing above the snow, the landscape would be pretty boring this time of year. Here are

some evergreen shrubs to consider adding to your yard once spring returns and most require little, if any, pruning.

Globe cedars have a rounded, formal appearance which may or may

not appeal to you. They are very winter hardy and pest-free but they do turn an orange color in winter.

False Cypress

(*Chamaecyparis*) is a shrub that deserves to be more

(cont'd on page 2)

Grant Opportunity
Learn how we can help your organization garden this coming summer on pages 6-7!

Inside this issue:

WILD CENTER EVENTS	3
ASK GRANT	3
GARDEN CATALOGS	4
SQ FT GARDENING	6
WINTER ACTIVITIES	8
HIGH TUNNELS	10
RECIPE	11
PERENNIALS FROM SEED	12
UPCOMING EVENTS	13

North Country Gardening



If you are looking for an evergreen shrub to help enliven your winter landscape, consider a juniper. There are hundreds of varieties!

“DON'T BE SURPRISED TO SEE SOME CHEWING DAMAGE ON THE TRUNKS OF YOUR TREES, ESPECIALLY THE YOUNGER ONES, SOME OF YOUR SHRUBS, AND ANY FRUIT TREES WHEN THE SNOW FINALLY MELTS.”



Salt spray from the road can damage valuable landscape plants. Consider using salt tolerant plants in areas where road salt accumulates.

January Gardening Tips (cont'd)

widely used in the North Country. It's hardy and has beautiful thread-like branchlets giving it a delicate texture. The mature height varies with variety, from 4 feet to 40 feet so read the description carefully before deciding.

Bird's Nest Spruce is another naturally dwarf spruce that needs no pruning. It grows very slowly, wider than tall, to about 2 feet high. The branches tend to curve around giving a nest-like appearance to the plant. It is often used as a focal point in a rock garden or other small space.

No discussion of evergreen shrubs could be complete without mentioning **junipers**. There are hundreds of varieties ranging in height from less than a foot to over 30 feet tall. They tolerate sunny, dry, and/or windy sites with poor soil and are very winter hardy.

Chewing Damage

Snow is an excellent insulator but it also provides excellent cover for all kinds of rodents. Hawks, owls, foxes and even coyotes help keep the vole, mouse and rabbit population in check. But when their prey can hide under deep snow it becomes much harder to catch them.

Don't be surprised to see some chewing damage on

the trunks of your trees, especially the younger ones, some of your shrubs, and any fruit trees when the snow finally melts. If you have some trees with diameters less than 3 or 4 inches that you didn't put hardware cloth or other protection around last fall, you can shovel the snow away from the base of any of these valuable trees exposing about a foot of ground all around the trunk.

The troublesome rodents know the danger of exposing themselves to their predators and are disinclined to venture across this shoveled area to get to the juicy tissue under the bark of young trees. This clearing isn't guaranteed to work but it may help discourage some of the damage you might suffer.

De-icing Salt

Deicing salt helps keep our roads and walks safe but at the same time it can cause major damage to valuable landscape plants. Unfortunately, there's no real solution to this dilemma. When it's icy you can either slip on the ice, use a chemical melting product that can damage plants and the environment, or use traction products such as sand or ashes that are messy and need to be cleaned up in spring. Each suggestion has its drawbacks but here are some

approaches to consider.

- Physically remove as much snow as possible in icy areas as soon as it falls to reduce the amount of ice it turns into. On sunny days spend some time chipping away at the ice as it begins to melt or soften.
- Pile the snow you shovel into areas with good drainage and no sensitive plants.
- Replace salt sensitive plants areas exposed to salt with more salt tolerant plants
- Relocate plants away from salty areas and replace them with mulch or a fence.
- Rather than blocking salt spray with a living hedge, put up a wooden grape-stake type of fence to block the spray and locate your plants inside the fence. Observe how far the spray flies for a season in order to determine the height and distance the fence needs to be in order to be effective.

Since each of the above suggestions has a drawback, don't put down that snow shovel yet. Physically removing the snow will allow the least amount of ice to develop (except for ice storms) and will give you a good workout at the same time. Just be careful of your back and heart and don't over do it. Even shoveling has a drawback!

Gardening Series at the Wild Center

If you're new to vegetable or berry gardening, join the experts from Cornell Cooperative Extension at The Wild Center in Tupper Lake on select Saturdays this winter from 1-3:00.

This series will include practical ways to get started growing vegetables, berries and/or herbs in your own backyard. The workshops will be interactive and packed with information you can take home and put to use. Veteran gardeners are welcome to join in and share their knowledge. Cost is free with admission to the Wild Center.

February 7

What to grow. Make a wish list then get realistic to ensure success. Amy Ivy and Master Gardener Volunteers will help you whittle that list down to the vegetables, berries and herbs most likely to work best for you.

March 7

Extending the season. No question, our cold climate and short summers are a challenge. Richard Gast and Master Gardener Volunteers will discuss and demonstrate some techniques to give your crops a few more weeks and a bit more warmth to the season.

March 31

Preventing problems. What can you do to discourage some of the more common pest problems in your garden this summer? Emily Selleck and Master Gardener Volunteers will offer tips on reducing your critter, weed and pest problems before they get out of hand, in environmentally sensitive ways.

For more information call 359-7800 or visit the Wild Center Web site: www.wildcenter.org

E-mail your questions to Grant the Garden Gnome at alb326@cornell.edu to have your gardening questions answered by an expert!

Ask Grant!



Dear Grant,

I would love to have a garden, but I live in a townhouse and have no yard. How can I garden with no space?

Sincerely,
Longing for Plants

Dear Longing,

Just because you do not have a large yard, does not mean that you cannot enjoy the many benefits of caring for plants. One way to start is by growing flowers and/or vegetables in containers by your front door, on your balconies, or on your patio. There are hundreds of flowers and vegetables that are well adapted to containers. And, there are endless possibilities for containers—you could use pots or you could recycle items around your house. Anything will work as long as it can hold soil-less potting mix and can have a drainage hole put into the container. For more information on container gardening you can request information from the office or download the container gardening fact sheet at <http://ecgardening.ccce.cornell.edu>.

Another alternative is to get involved in a community garden. Most community gardens are allotment style. For a small fee, you rent a garden plot where you can grow your own cut flowers, fruit, and vegetables. Community gardens are gaining popularity and a new group is trying to start a garden in Plattsburgh for the 2009 growing season. More information about the Plattsburgh Community Garden can be found at www.plattsburghcommunitygarden.org.

Good luck with your gardening adventure! With a little creativity, you can grow beautiful plants in the smallest of spaces (and in turn create the perfect habitat for your own garden gnomes).

Thanks for Asking,

Grant

North Country Gardening



The purpose of a garden catalog is to sell you a plant, so do your research before buying a plant based on its photo.

“I SHALL LONG FOR THE RIOT OF REDS AND ORANGES AND YELLOWS OF PERENNIAL FLOWERS; FOR THE GREEN CRINKLINESS OF KALE; THE DELICATE WHITES OF GARDEN PEA”



Remember that cold puddles in low areas. You may live in zone 4 but have areas on your property that get cold sooner and remain cold longer than other areas.

How to Read a Garden Catalog

- Emily Selleck, Horticulture Educator Essex Co.

You know, I love all this fluffy white snow mounded up on the hemlocks and pillowed on the hillsides. But, I know that all too soon I shall tire of the whites and blacks and browns and tans that are the inevitable aftermath of a pretty winter snowfall. I shall long for the riot of reds and oranges and yellows of perennial flowers; for the green crinkliness of kale; the delicate whites of garden pea blooms; the rampage of rugosa roses... Ok, I know I get carried away. But, that's what happens as winter drags its feet and, well, face it - we all get itchy to get out in the gardens and glut ourselves with color.

And then the garden catalogs arrive...pages and pages of colors and sizes and shapes of every imaginable plant to tempt us into thinking we can grow it all! As my dear friend and past Clinton County Horticulture Program Assistant Pat Macomber was wont to say, “BUYER BEWARE”! Continuing to quote Pat, “Purveyors of garden catalogs are no different than any other enterprise selling a product. Using attractive photos/drawings and text which may or may not be really factual, you (the gardener), are lured into buying this or that easy or beautiful plant.”

So here are some of the ABCs of how to read a garden catalog and know you are getting the proper information you need to make an intelligent decision *before* purchasing flowers, shrubs, trees, and vegetables for your landscape.

The botanical name of the plant.

For example, *Heuchera sanguinea* ‘Palace Purple’ is the botanical name for coral bells (the common name) where the genus is *Heuchera*, the species is *sanguinea*, and the cultivar (cultivated variety) is ‘Palace Purple’. Common names often vary from region to region, and thus are not specific. Certain cultivars may be superior to others for certain qualities such as *Phlox* ‘David’ is resistant to powdery mildew whereas the genus in general is prone to this problem.

Hardiness Zone.

If you live along Lake Champlain, you are considered to be in Zone 4. If you live in the mountains west to Saranac Lake, you are in Zone 3. Of course, each property has its microclimates – those special areas that can be distinctly different from the general climate. For example, cold air tends to “puddle” like water, so it tends to move

down hill and settle in “cold pockets”. On the other hand, a sheltered terrace with a generally southern exposure may be almost a zone warmer than the surrounding area. It's good to know your property so you can plant accordingly!

Site Requirements. Reading about Hardy Tall Phlox (*Phlox paniculata*) in one of the better gardening catalogs: “Plant about 18”-20” apart in rich, well-drained soil in full sun or light shade.” The catalog also has symbols for whether the plant is deer resistant (*Phlox* is). This is an important consideration in most landscapes!

Mature plant height and spread; Rate of growth for woody plants:

Whether you're planning a perennial garden, a vegetable garden, or a mixed planting of flowers, trees and shrubs, all these factors are important. Who among us has not been intrigued – dare I say charmed! – by the “cute little plant” in the nursery. Knowing its mature size often keeps us from planting it and later finding out that it has grown from a “foundation planting” to a behemoth towering over the front door!

Garden Catalog (cont'd)

Flower color and bloom time.

This is an individual preference. If you want season-long bloom and colors that are compatible in your garden, this information is very helpful. You may want an early blast of color; or you may be looking to spread the “show” over the spring and summer seasons.

Specific cultural requirements.

For example, *Echinacea* (cone flower). Again, from the catalog: “Should be grown in sunny gardens with lean soil. Insect, disease, and drought-tolerant. Withstands rain, wind, and is very tolerant of heat, humidity, and drought.” Wow. That sounds easy! (Even if it doesn’t sound too good to be true, I always look it up in a gardening reference book. My favorite happens to be Tracy DiSabato-Aust’s The Well-Tended Perennial Garden. I want to make sure I’m not missing anything. This is a step I recommend for whatever perennial you choose to put in your garden.) Sure enough: you can manipulate bloom time of *Echinacea* with certain pruning techniques; and, seedlings are best removed in spring to control spread.

Wildflowers.

I have to quote Pat on this: “In the case of wildflowers,

it is imperative that the catalog company indicates that the plants are nursery propagated and grown. If this piece of information is missing, chances are that the plants were dug from the wild and then grown on in the nursery. With so many native wild flower populations becoming threatened by over-collecting, reputable nurseries are doing their own propagating of these plants.”

For Vegetable and Herb Seeds.

Days to maturity, length of growing season, and day length.

For example, onion bulb formation is a function of day length, so we in the North Country should buy onion seeds/sets which are specific for long days. As for days to maturity, melons require a long time on the vine so it’s really important in our short season to look for the number of days to maturity.

‘Heirloom Variety’

is frequently encountered in garden catalogs. The term ‘heirloom’ refers to the variety being an open-pollinated one. This simply means that if you save seed from this year’s crop, that seed will produce plants next year which are genetically the same. So the plants will be the same. Hybrid varieties sometimes

do not produce seed, but if they do, that seed will produce plants that are genetically *not* the same as the parent plant and thus will produce plants looking nothing like the parent plants! (Check out your compost pile where you may have hummed some old hybrid summer squash, and you might find some “sports” of quite astonishing appearance!)

As good as any plant looks in a catalog, remember, it’s in a catalog, not in your garden! It’s fun to experiment, but if you are interested in spending your time and your dollars wisely, know your site conditions well. Take the extra time to match the right (for you) plant with the right (for the plant) place!



When purchasing vegetable seeds, look for days to maturity, day length requirements, and disease resistance.

“THE TERM

‘HEIRLOOM’ REFERS TO THE VARIETY BEING AN OPEN-POLLINATED ONE. THIS SIMPLY MEANS THAT IF YOU SAVE SEED FROM THIS YEAR’S CROP, THAT SEED WILL PRODUCE PLANTS NEXT YEAR.”



Always remember to match the right plant to the right place!

North Country Gardening

Square Foot Gardening Opportunities



Growing your own food can be very rewarding, but does require basic garden knowledge.

“SQUARE FOOT GARDENING IS A METHOD OF GARDENING THAT CAN BE USED FOR FLOWERS, VEGETABLES, AND SMALL FRUITS.”



Looking for a way to grow all your salad veggies for one summer, consider growing a square foot salad garden!

If you read any of my writings in this newsletter or elsewhere, you know that I promote both buying foods grown and produced locally and growing your own food. But, I know that growing fruits and vegetables can be a daunting task to a novice gardener. This spring, I will be offering beginner gardeners the opportunity to learn a simple gardening method, known as square foot gardening, through hands-on classes. In addition, we were awarded the opportunity to help install, through a hands-on class, at least ten square foot gardens in Clinton County.

Square Foot Gardening Basics

So, what is square foot gardening? Square foot gardening is a method of gardening that can be used for flowers, vegetables, and small fruits. This gardening method uses 4'x4' raised beds. The size of the bed is based on accessibility. Most individuals should have no difficulties reaching into the middle of a 4'x4' bed to plant, weed, or harvest. The beds are filled with a mixture of compost, vermiculite, and peat moss. This mixture is chosen to provide the proper ratio of water holding capacity and air while also providing nutrients. The garden is then divided,

by use of twine, sticks, or slats, into 16 one square foot areas.

The plants are planted close together. The number of plants in each square depends on the mature size of the crop. Large crops, such as tomatoes, are planted one per square. Medium sized crops, such as basil, can be planted four per square, and small crops such as radishes or carrots can be planted sixteen per square! Plants that normally take up yards of space as runners, such as squash or cucumbers, are grown vertically on sturdy frames that are hung with netting or string to support the developing crops.

Benefits of Square Foot Gardening

While there is the initial cost of the raised beds and soil, benefits of square foot gardening include:

Much less work. Conventional gardening requires heavy tools to loosen the soil, whereas in this method, the soil is never compacted and it remains loose and loamy. Weeding takes only seconds to minutes, due to the light soil, raised beds, and easily accessed plants. Harvests per foot of garden are increased due to the rich soil mixture, well-spaced plants, and decrease in

weeds.

Water Savings. The soil mixture that is advised has water-holding capacities, so that the garden needs water less frequently, and in much smaller quantities than when using other gardening methods. Water is also spared by hand-watering directly at the plant roots, so that there is very little waste and tender young plants and seedlings are preserved.

Very little weeding. One benefit of this close planting is that the vegetables form a living mulch, and shade out many weed seeds before they have a chance to germinate.

Accessibility. A plywood bottom can be attached to the bottom of a box, which can then be placed on a tabletop or raised platform for those who wish to garden without bending or squatting, or to make gardening easy for wheelchair, cane or walker users.

Gardening Opportunities

This year, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Clinton County received funding to help construct square foot gardens at several sites throughout the county from Chapel Hill Foundation. We are very excited about this opportunity. The Mas-

Square Foot Gardening Opportunities

ter Gardener Volunteers and myself have been working on a plan so that we can reach the greatest number of interested gardeners and have created an application process. The application, on this page, can be filled out by anyone interested in having a square foot garden for educational purposes or for growing food for the community. Daycares, schools, churches, community centers, nursing homes, senior

housing, and similar facilities are encouraged to apply. The application process is not open to private home owners. Instead, private home owners are encouraged to take our classes this spring. (The schedule for classes should be finalized by the March newsletter.) Applications are due by February 28th and finalist will be notified by the end of March.

Groups who have been selected will receive materials for the raised bed (including the soil mix), hands-on educational training on square foot gardening, help constructing the bed, and will be paired with a Master Gardener Volunteer for season-long advice. . All garden care will also be the responsibility of the garden owner.



Senior housing, nursing homes, community centers, daycares, schools, and similar groups are encouraged to apply for square foot gardens.

Square Foot Garden Application

On a separate sheet of paper, please list the following:

Name of Organization/Group:

Contact:

Phone Number:

E-mail Address:

Mailing Address:

On the same page, please answer the following questions:

1. In two or three sentences, please describe your organization.
2. Why do you wish to have a garden?
3. Who will benefit from the garden?
4. How will this group of people benefit from the garden?
5. No matter what style of garden, garden require maintenance. How to plan on maintaining your garden?
6. How will the vegetables planted in your garden be used?

Mail all applications to:

Anne Lenox Barlow, Cornell Cooperative Extension Clinton County, 6064 State Route 22, Suite #5, Plattsburgh NY 12901.

All applications must be postmarked by February 28, 2009.

“ALL

APPLICATIONS

MUST BE

POSTMARKED BY

FEBRUARY 28,

2009.”



School gardens are a great way to teach children about gardening, but require a year round commitment.

North Country Gardening

Kids in the Garden

- Anne Lenox Barlow, Horticulture Educator Clinton Co.



Children benefit, in many ways, from being outside.

“A 2004 STUDY REVEALED THAT CHILDREN AND TEENS ARE SPENDING, ON AVERAGE, ALMOST TWO HOURS LESS A WEEK ON SPORTS AND OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES.”



Growing vegetables with children is an excellent way to introduce healthy eating habits.

When I think about my childhood, it is filled with memories of playing outside. My siblings and the other children in my neighborhood spent hours engaged in activities outside like riding our bikes, digging holes in the backyard, playing chase, stealing a snack out of the garden, and just hanging out in the shade of a tree. Yes, we had technology when I was a child. I saw the birth of MTV, video games, VCRs, and much more, but we still spent ample time outside. Since the days of my childhood, times have changed.

A study conducted by the University of Michigan in 2004 revealed that children and teens are spending, on average, almost two hours less a week on sports and outdoor activities, while they are spending more time on sedentary activities including television, home computers, reading and just doing nothing than they did 20 years ago. In addition, other studies are also showing a decline in outdoors related interests. There is lower enrollment in college undergraduate conservation programs, a drop in sales for entry-level camping gear, and (this one surprised me) according to the Bicycle Industry and Retailer News a 21% decrease in children's bicycle sales

between 2000 and 2004.

At the same time, numerous studies are showing the importance of spending time outdoors (whether you are a child or adult). Studies have shown that adults that have access to natural settings have lower stress levels and the amount of time it takes to heal from an illness or injury decreases. Children also benefit from being outside. A 2005 study by the California Department of Education found that students in schools with nature immersion programs performed 27 percent better in science testing than kids in traditional class settings. Other studies show that children who garden are more likely to try new fruits and vegetables and consistently eat them both as children and adults. And still other studies show that by being outside and gardening children increase life skills by increasing self-esteem, developing a sense of ownership and responsibility, and helping foster relationships with family members!

While its great to see how important it is to keep kids active outdoors and have them in the garden, you may be wondering exactly how to go about fostering positive outdoor and garden-based experiences,

especially this time of the year. Fortunately, there are a lot of great family-based indoor and outdoor activities you can do. Here are a few examples:

Garbage Can Gardening

Up here in the North Country, sometimes it is just too cold to take the children outside in the winter. So, why not bring the garden inside? Garbage-can gardening is when you grow plants from items you'd normally throw in the garbage can or compost bucket. Kids love this idea and it's a great way to reinforce sustainable living concepts such as recycling, reusing, and composting. Plus, no matter what your age it's just plain fun to grow new plants from old plant parts.

The one type of fruit we all eat during the long winter months is citrus, making orange, lemon, grapefruit, and lime seeds plentiful. To grow a citrus tree, simply fill a 4-inch-diameter pot with moistened potting soil. Remove the seeds from the fruit and plant them one inch deep in the pot. Keep the soil moist. In two to four weeks the seeds should sprout and your kids will have a mini citrus orchard right in the house!

While it will be quite a while (years) before you

Kids in the Garden (cont'd)

see citrus flowers, you and the children in your life can enjoy smelling the leaves. Reportedly, they smell just like whatever citrus you're growing.

Speaking of plants with a "scratch and sniff" factor, ginger is another kitchen scrap that does well as a houseplant. Simply suspend a 2-3 inch piece of ginger root in water. Keep the ginger on a warm, sunny window. Once roots and a shoot emerge, plant the ginger in a pot with potting soil. Soon you will be enjoying a new glossy-leaved houseplant.

This same method can be used with sweet potatoes, potatoes, avocado pits, and even mangos. Sweet potatoes and potatoes will sprout before your avocado, which can take a month or two before you see any roots appear.

Snow Tales

If the weather is warm enough for you to get outside, take the opportunity to explore for animals. While it may seem that every living animal (except us) hibernates or heads south for the winter, you would be amazed by the number of animals and birds that continue to forage for food. And a fresh blanket of snow helps us "see" a tale about the daily activities of these animals

because of the tracks the animals leave.

Spend some time exploring your landscape (it can be your yard, the local playground, or a near-by field). Can you locate any tracks? Are they from paws or claws? Also note where they are located – out in the open, near the base of a tree, around a woodpile, or near a bird feeder?

After exploring the tracks of your local wildlife, why not make some of your own. Hop. Make a snow angel. Walk by placing one foot in front of the other, making a straight line. Use a sled to make wide tracks. I used to entertain myself as a child, by using my foot to make large "bird tracks" throughout the yard. Get creative and try to find your own way to make tracks and trails through the snow!

Bare Naked Trees

Each year, deciduous trees drop their leaves in the fall as the days grow shorter and colder. During the winter the trees "sleep" by shutting down some of their functions. And as the days warm up the trees will begin to sprout new leaves. Observing the differences between trees when they are bare naked is great fun.

You can explore all of the various shapes trees make with their branches, how the trees dress the horizon, and how the sky looks through the bare branches. You can pick a bare tree and sketch it, making note of the tree's many branches. Or, you can hold a nest scavenger hunt, looking through trees' branches to find all the nests hiding in the nooks and crannies!

Whether you have children of your own, grandchildren, or borrow your friends' children, gardening and exploring nature with them is beneficial for both you and the children! Just because it is cold outside, does not mean we have to stop gardening or getting out and exploring nature. You'll be surprised how quickly activities like these can cure cabin fever! Once you've tried these activities and are looking for more fun gardening and outdoor ideas you can do with children visit <http://www.hort.cornell.edu/gbl/> and <http://www.kidsgardening.com>.



While it will take a long time, many citrus trees can be grown from seed and even produce fruit if properly cared for indoors.

“WHILE IT MAY SEEM THAT EVERY LIVING ANIMAL HIBERNATES, YOU WOULD BE AMAZED BY THE NUMBER OF ANIMALS AND BIRDS THAT CONTINUE TO FORAGE FOR FOOD.”



Ginger plants can be grown as houseplants, by placing a 2-3 inch piece of ginger root in water.

North Country Gardening



February is American Heart Month. Watching your diet is one way to help keep your heart healthy.

Healthy Hearts—Healthy Kids!

- Jenna Jones, Nutrition Educator Clinton County

Did you know that February is American Heart Month as well as Bake for Family Fun Month? How exciting! So trying to incorporate both themes into this month's newsletter, I have included some Healthy Heart tips that you can use as a way to help kids (and yourself) eat better, along with a fun and an easy recipe that you can share with any kids that you might come across.

Why is too much fat bad for children? Because it can lead to:

Overweight – high fat foods can add up to a lot of extra calories.

Fussy Eaters – some children prefer the taste of high fat foods, which is why some kids refuse to eat their fruits and vegetables.

Poor Nutrition – most high fat foods contain little or no nutritional value. These extra calories are referred to as “empty calories.” High fat foods provide calories but nothing else which leads to excess weight gain. This is the primary the reason why you don't want your kid filling up on junk food.

How to limit high fat foods:

Skip the French fries – or share an order with your child.

Limit potato chips and corn chips – choose pretzels and low fat chips instead.

Choose skim or 1% milk for your family.

Eat less bacon, sausage and other high fat meats.

“HIGH TUNNELS ARE BECOMING POPULAR WITH MARKET PRODUCERS ACROSS OUR REGION TO GROW HIGHER QUALITY PRODUCE IN LESS SPACE.”



Tomatoes are a popular high tunnel crop, because the tunnel's protection produces high quality fruits.

Upcoming High Tunnels Conference

High tunnels are simple greenhouses, even just hoop houses, used over a crop grown in the ground to offer season-long protection from weather, enhance growing conditions to speed up and increase a crop, and extend the season from late spring through mid fall. They are becoming popular with large and small market producers across our region to grow higher quality produce in less space.

We're holding a two day conference in Saranac Lake on February 26-27 that will cover many aspects of using high tunnels to produce crops. The program will be of interest to

both experienced growers and those considering getting started.

Our conference brochure contains more details so call our office or visit our website (<http://counties.cce.cornell.edu/clinton>) for a copy. The location is North Country Community College from 9:00-5:00 on Thursday, February 26 and 8:00-2:00 on Friday February 27. You can attend both days for \$75 or individual days at \$50 each. Costs include meals, snacks and resource materials.

Speakers will include Cornell faculty and State Extension specialists as well

as several growers from around the state with experience using high tunnels. There will be breakout sessions for beginning and experienced growers as well as time for questions and discussion.

Topics to be covered include considerations for growing vegetables and berries, soil preparation, crop timing and layout, the pros and cons of various types of structures, fertility management, record keeping, and much more. Registration is due by February 20. For more information call our office at 561-7450 or email adi2@cornell.edu

Monthly Recipe

Here's a great recipe, provided by our nutrition program (East Smart New York) to help you cook a lower fat dinner during American Heart Month. Eat Smart New York (ESNY) is a nutrition education program designed to help low-income New Yorkers improve their daily diets. For more information about ESNY visit <http://counties.cce.cornell.edu/clinton/website/ESNY/fnec.html> or call our office at 561-7450.

Chicken Ham Roll-ups

Serve Chicken Ham Roll-ups with flavored rice and cooked broccoli spears.

Ingredients

- 2 skinless, boneless chicken breasts
- 2 ounces Monterey jack cheese, cut into 2 slices
- 4 large slices ham
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- Salt and pepper to taste

Directions:

1. Cut a pocket in the thickest part of each chicken breast. Insert a slice of cheese into each pocket.
2. Wrap each chicken breast with 2 slices of ham. Secure with toothpicks if needed.
3. Heat a large skillet over medium heat. Add oil to skillet. Add chicken to skillet. Cover and cook for 10 minutes. Add a small amount of water to skillet if pan is too hot.
4. Uncover, turn chicken breasts over and cook for 5 more minutes or until chicken is no longer pink.

Nutritional Information:

- 4 servings (1/2 roll-up) – 276 calories,
- 9.5 grams fat, 31% calories from fat.



This recipe is a fast, healthy recipe for you and your family.

“HIGH FAT FOODS PROVIDE CALORIES BUT NOTHING ELSE WHICH LEADS TO EXCESS WEIGHT GAIN.”



North Country Gardening

Starting Perennials From Seed

- Amy Ivy, Executive Director,
Clinton County



Poppies are an example of a perennial that is easy to start from seed.

“ YOU CAN START THE SEEDS IN MARCH UNDER LIGHTS TO BE TRANSPLANTED OUTDOORS IN EARLY SUMMER, OR YOU CAN PLANT THE SEEDS OUTDOORS IN JUNE.”



If you are gardening on a budget, starting perennials from seed is a great way to maximize your money.

Perennial flower gardening is very popular these days. One reason may be because there are hundreds of different plants from which to choose. There is certainly no excuse for a boring garden! But perennial plants can be very expensive to buy, so what is an eager gardener to do?

Gardening friends can be an important source of divisions if you happen to stop by just after they've finished dividing their plants, but seldom are we so lucky. Fortunately, many perennials are easy to start from seed and seed catalogs are full of possibilities. You can either start the seeds in March under lights to be transplanted outdoors in early summer, or if you want less fussing and are not in a big rush, you can plant the seeds outdoors in June in a nursery bed to be transplanted either in the early fall or the following spring.

Not all perennials do well from seed however, and some are possible but so slow that it makes more sense to purchase young plants. Perennials in this group include: astilbe, bleeding heart, daylily, hosta, iris and pulmonaria or lungwort.

This leaves plenty of per-

ennials that are actually quite easy to grow from seed. This group includes: columbine, coreopsis, delphinium, dianthus, foxglove, liatris, mallow, poppy, balloonflower, Echinacea, lupine and rudbeckia to name a few.

Check the seed packet or catalog for any special requirements each type of seed might have. Some, such as delphinium, need darkness to sprout and others, like columbine need light so be sure to not cover these seed with soil. Lupines do best if you soak them for a day or nick the hard seed coat with a file before planting. An excellent reference book for anyone interested in starting all kinds of seeds is *The New Seed Starters Handbook* by Nancy Bubel.

If the seed packet contains a mixture of colors be sure you keep seedlings of various sizes and not just the biggest and heartiest. It's surprising, but seedlings of different colors often grow with different vigor. If you choose only the biggest seedlings you'll probably end up with only one or two colors from a mix that originally contained several colors.

If you'd rather not bother with starting seeds indoors, or if your grow lights are

already full of vegetables and annuals, you can still be very successful planting the seeds directly outdoors. The easiest way to handle this is to designate a separate area for your perennial nursery, such as one end of your vegetable garden. Work up the soil well before planting and label each row or section. As the seedlings emerge, thin them to an appropriate distance but realize they probably won't grow to their full size their first year. By keeping the young plants separate it will be easier to give them a little extra attention to watering and weeding.

Depending on how much growth they put on and how much room is left in your perennial garden at the end of the summer, these seedlings can either be planted into their final location in early September or the following May.

Starting perennial from seed lets you increase your supply and diversify what you grow with a minimum outlay of cash on your part. It's also a good way to make friends. Chances are you'll end up with many more seedlings that you can use but you can be sure there's a gardener out there who would be happy to take them off your hands!

Perennials from Seed (Cont'd)

Some perennials easy to start from seed	Some perennials usually difficult to grow from seed
Aquilegia – columbine	Anemone
Campanula – bellflower and foxglove	Astilbe
Coreopsis – tickseed	Clematis
Delphinium	Dicentra – bleeding heart
Dianthus – sometimes called pinks	Dictamnus – gas plant
Echinacea - coneflower	Hemerocallis – daylily
Echinops – globe thistle	Hosta
Liatris – gayfeather	Iris – German bearded and Siberian
Lupinus – lupine	Lilium – lily, tiger lily, Asiatic lily
Malva – mallow and hollyhock	Phlox – garden phlox
Papaver – poppy	
Rudbeckia – black-eyed Susan	

Upcoming Workshops

Starting Seeds Indoors, March 4

Want to get a jump start on the gardening season? Interested in growing flower or vegetable varieties that you can't find at the local greenhouse? Then come learn seed starting basics with Anne Lenox Barlow on Wednesday, March 4 from 6:30pm—8:30pm. The hands-on class will cover how to use grow-lights, how to start seeds indoors, what to look for when purchasing seeds, and creative ways to use common household items as seed starting containers. The workshop is being held at the Cooperative Extension Office in Plattsburgh. To sign-up or for more information call the office at 561-7450. Program cost is \$10, which includes all materials.

Turtle Sprouts, March 28

Do your children love crafts? Or, are you looking for a fun way to introduce your children to gardening? Then come learn how to make and care for turtle sprouts on March 28 from 9:30am—11:00am with Anne Lenox Barlow. This fun hands-on class is \$10 for the first child and \$5 each additional child. Cost include all materials. All children must be accompanied by an adult. The workshop is being held at the Cooperative Extension Office in Plattsburgh. To sign-up or for more information call the office at 561-7450. Space is limited, so register today!

“COME, WITH YOUR CHILDREN, TO LEARN HOW TO MAKE AND CARE FOR TURTLE SPROUTS ON MARCH 28 FROM 9:30AM— 11:00AM.”

For more information on our upcoming event visit us on the web at <http://counties.cce.cornell.edu/clinton> or call the office at 518-561-7450.

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