

THE OPTIMISTIC GARDENER



Local Horticulture Newsletter
Chautauqua & Cattaraugus Counties

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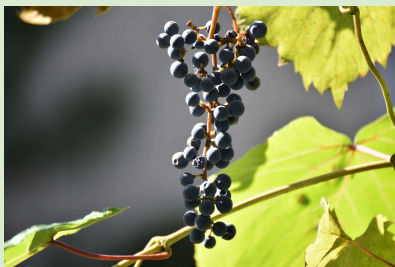
"Dear Master Gardener"

Q:

Are there native vegetables and fruits?

A:

There are native vegetables and fruits to North Eastern America. They include corn, blueberries, squash, beans, strawberries, and wild grapes.



Do you have a question for our Master Gardeners? Please submit your question here:

chautauquamg@cornell.edu
cattaraugusmg@cornell.edu

THE OPTIMISTIC GARDENER

Sharon Rinehart

Chautauqua County Master Gardener Volunteer

We have arrived at that time of year when we can have all four seasons in one week. On the warm sunny days, we fight the urge to plant annuals and tender plants because we know it might be freezing tomorrow. I am sure my daffodils expect snow when they are blooming – it happens every year. It is also the time of year when the rush starts. There is never enough time in the day to accomplish what I want to do.

First is cleaning up from winter damage. As mentioned in a previous issue of TOG, my hydrangea tree had a lot of damage from the heavy, quick-falling snow. After trimming off the broken branches, I now have a hydrangea stick tree. I also lost several of my tulips – lots of voles, mice, and chipmunks ate well. They also “girdled” my oak-leaf hydrangea. I am hoping it will survive. I remain the optimistic gardener.

I had the opportunity to do a seed bomb project with a group of 5th graders. One boy in particular was very knowledgeable about horticulture and had a question that I had to research. The seed bombs were native flower seeds. His question was “Are there native vegetables?” I used the question in our “Ask the Master Gardener” in this issue. Great question especially from someone so young.

Featured Business

Barnes Greenhouses

A Growing Legacy Rooted in Family and Community



Since 1959, Barnes Greenhouse has blossomed from a modest field crop operation into a thriving, multi-generational family business known for its high-quality plants and deep roots in the Chautauqua County community. What began over six decades ago with tomatoes and other field crops has evolved into a flourishing greenhouse operation, with an emphasis on vegetables and flowers—especially their signature geraniums.

Spanning two acres under cover, Barnes Greenhouse is a testament to both tradition and innovation. Now in its third generation of family ownership, the business has continually adapted to the changing agricultural landscape while maintaining a hands-on, personal approach that customers and partners have come to trust.

The growing season begins early at Barnes. By November, the team is already nurturing cuttings, with seed planting starting toward the end of the month. Much of their business today is wholesale, supplying plants to a wide network of retailers, though their own retail space—open until the end of June—remains a favorite seasonal destination for local gardeners. Come fall, customers can return to pick up vibrant, home-grown mums.

As the business has grown, so too has its commitment to efficiency and sustainability. Barnes Greenhouse has embraced automation in several areas of production, including a computerized irrigation system that ensures each plant receives precisely the amount of water it needs. This integration of technology helps maintain the high standards their customers have come to expect, while also streamlining operations for the busy growing season. Barnes Greenhouse: A Growing Legacy Rooted in Family and Community.

But perhaps most impressive is Barnes Greenhouse's dedication to the community. This year, they are generously donating plants for the Master Gardeners' project at the Chautauqua County Fairgrounds—an act that speaks volumes about their values and their long-standing connection to local organizations.

From humble beginnings to high-tech horticulture, Barnes Greenhouse continues to grow—rooted in family, powered by innovation, and committed to community.

Accessible Gardening

By Patricia A. Smith, Master Gardener Volunteer

Gardening is a cherished activity that offers immense physical, mental, and emotional benefits. For many, it is a source of joy, relaxation, and a way to connect with nature.

During my trips to various greenhouses last Spring, I noticed that many of the people perusing the budding flowers and small seedlings were older adults. Gardening is something that people want to enjoy for as long as possible – myself included.

Having received a garden kneeling bench from one of my grandsons, who evidently thought it was time that “GP” had some assistance in the gardening department, I found it very helpful. As I navigate through my eighth decade, I am still able to get down on my knees to plant and weed, but getting back up is difficult and not a pretty sight! The bench was such an awesome gardening accessory that I began researching what else might be out there that could help me continue to enjoy this enriching part of my life. A friend recommended a book entitled Accessible Gardening Tips and Techniques for Seniors and the Disabled by Joann Woy. The book was informative but had been published in 1997 so many of the references and sources were obsolete. A lot of the focus was on gardening from a wheelchair, which is not the focus of this article. My research also led me to Toni Gattone’s book, The Lifelong Gardener, which covered many of the same topics but had beautiful photos and more current resources.

The focus of this article is tips, tools and techniques for the aging gardener, who may have some mobility challenges, declining strength and range of motion, but still has a passion for gardening and enjoys the physical and psychological benefits it provides.

Assessment

Before delving into the tools and tips, it is important to be honest with yourself. Do you have any current physical limitations? How much time and money do you have to spend on gardening? What is the availability of assistance if it is needed. After assessing yourself, you should assess your garden(s) Are there changes that need to be made so it is more functional and adaptable? Is it too large and unsustainable? Is it in a convenient location with easy access and water source? Is it time for raised beds, an irrigation system and accessible pathways? Are there comfortable and shaded rest areas? Finally, do you have the right tools?

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Adaptative tools

Kneeling benches and pads provide support and comfort when working close to the ground. These tools can make it easier to kneel and stand, reducing strain on the knees and providing a stable base. Most benches are lightweight, fold for storage and can be used as a seat or flipped over for use as a kneeler. Most also have a pocket for tools. Ergonomic gardening tools are designed to reduce strain on the hands and wrists. Look for tools with cushioned handles, extended lengths, and lightweight materials. These tools help maintain a comfortable grip and reduce the effort required for tasks like digging, pruning, and weeding.

Adaptive gardening tools are specifically designed for individuals with mobility issues. These tools include long-handled pruners, lightweight hoses, and automatic watering systems. They help reduce physical effort and make gardening tasks more manageable.



Ergonomic Tools – catalog picture

Raised Garden Beds or Table Planters

Raised garden beds are an excellent option for those who have difficulty bending or kneeling. These beds can be built at a height that allows gardeners to work while standing or sitting, reducing strain on the back and knees. Table planters make it possible to garden from a standing position, or accommodate a wheelchair under the table. Raised beds often mean improved soil quality as you can use a custom-mixed, high-quality soil free from issues like compaction. Visually, raised beds bring the plants closer to eye level for enjoyment.

Containers and Vertical Gardens

Containers and vertical gardens are ideal for small spaces and can be placed at accessible heights. They offer flexibility and can be moved as needed to accommodate changing mobility levels. In one of the high end catalogs I even found a “pot mover.” It was pricey but would certainly make it easy to move filled planters!

Plan and Pace

Planning and pacing are essential for enjoyable and sustainable gardening. Break tasks into smaller, manageable steps and take frequent breaks to avoid overexertion. Set achievable goals for each gardening session to maintain motivation and avoid frustration. It's fine to work for shorter lengths of time. Garden survival also means wearing light, loose fitting clothing, hat, sunscreen and staying hydrated.

Incorporate Seating

Incorporating seating into the garden can provide a comfortable resting place during gardening activities. Garden stools, benches, and chairs with armrests offer support and can help prevent fatigue.

Benefits of Accessible Gardening

Gardening offers numerous benefits, particularly for seniors. It promotes physical activity, which is essential for maintaining strength, flexibility, and overall health. The act of gardening also provides a sense of accomplishment and purpose, enhancing mental and emotional well-being. Additionally, spending time outdoors and engaging with nature can reduce stress, improve mood, and foster a sense of connection to the environment.

Conclusion

Accessible gardening is about finding ways to continue enjoying this fulfilling activity despite physical limitations. By utilizing the right tools, techniques, and adaptive strategies, aging gardeners can maintain their passion for gardening and reap its many benefits. Remember, the goal is not to push beyond limits but to embrace a more comfortable and sustainable approach to gardening. With thoughtful adaptations, gardening can remain a source of joy and enrichment for years to come.

Resources:

<http://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/design/types-of-gardens/accessible-gardents/>

The Lifelong Gardener by Toni Gattone

Accessible Gardening Tips and Techniques for Seniors and the Disabled by Joann Woy

ArthritisSupplies.com

SeniorSelectseal.com

Also – ergonomic tools – QVC, Amazon, Home Depot

Peta Easi-Grip Garden Tools

Meet The Master Gardener

Janet Forbes

How did I become a gardener? I grew up near Falconer, NY on a dairy farm. We always had a large vegetable garden and from the time I was big enough to help, I was a working part of the family garden - planting, weeding (oh, the weeding!), harvesting, and preserving. My parents taught me how to garden. My Dad plowed the acre garden, added cow manure, and we grew lots of vegetables that were frozen, canned, eaten fresh, and kept us fed throughout the year. Mom enjoyed growing some flowers - zinnias, sweet peas, and she kept a fragrant, beautiful patch of Lily of the Valley. I remember my Grandma Forbes growing nasturtiums each year, and I continue to love growing them for their cheery beauty and now as an edible flower

I have gardened throughout my life, growing gardens of varying sizes and types depending on available space, time, and energy while working full-time, raising my son, and living life.

In my professional career, I was a registered nurse and worked over 30 years in hospitals in intensive care and medical-surgical units as a staff nurse, nurse manager, and case manager. In 2001, I resigned from my career in healthcare, enjoyed a Midlife Sabbatical for several months, and then pivoted into community health, family literacy, and workforce development for another 13 years to experience other professional growth opportunities.

Why did I become a Master Gardener? I had been vaguely aware of the Master Gardener program over the years, yet the training had not been offered in Chautauqua County for many years until it was restarted in 2009. This next stage of my life, after my son was grown and launched in his personal, professional, and family life, was a great time for me to take on the studying, learning, volunteering, and teaching that being a Master Gardener requires. I was eager to learn more about horticulture, love being outdoors and growing plants, enjoy being around gardeners, and I have always loved providing adult education, teaching children informally, and am a life-long learner. Becoming a Master Gardener seemed to tick all of these boxes. I completed my Master Gardener training in 2011 and became a certified Chautauqua County Master Gardener in 2012 after fulfilling my initial volunteer hours requirement.



ACNC Kitchen Garden late summer

Professionally this was a busy and interesting time in my career as I was part of the work to establish the Jamestown community gardens, expand the Farmers Market, and improve public parks and walkability in Jamestown. My last professional job, Project Coordinator for Creating Healthy Places to Live, Work, and Play project, seemed a perfect bookend to a long career in healthcare - helping my community eat better, move more, and prevent chronic illness.

Gardening magic continues to show up and delight me. I still feel the same joy and excitement each year when I see the first green sprout when our garlic poke its nose through the soil in the early spring, blossoms appear on the tomato, bean, and pea plants, a seed I planted sprouts and grows, watching bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds enjoying the flowers and blossoms and the sunflowers move to follow the sun, all the while knowing I have the skills to grow food and flowers and teach others , and am amazed by it all. I am forever grateful to be a gardener.

As I moved into a healthy retirement, my Master Gardener volunteer work is at the center of my community work. My knowledge, skill, and interest is focused on growing vegetables and herbs and teaching others the skills and joy of growing and eating your own food. I savor the time and energy to volunteer at the Audubon Community Nature Center's Kitchen Teaching Garden where we demonstrate growing vegetables, herbs, and edible flowers in raised beds, trellising, and composting. I serve as the co-lead in this garden and for several years served as the ACNC Garden Team Chair. I love doing informal teaching with adults and families visiting the garden, children on school field trips and at summer day camps as they come into the garden to learn, taste, smell, and sample vegetables, herbs, and flowers on the stem and vine - some for the first time. The joy and surprise when a child tastes a warm, red, ripe cherry tomato right off the vine or a Dragon Tongue bush bean, crisp and tasty, and their eyes light up! Priceless! I savor the teamwork with my fellow Garden Team volunteers and ACNC staff. We all continue to learn from one another, share and try new plants, and become friends.

Master Gardener opportunities in school and community gardens have come my way, in part because of the connections made during my Creating Healthy Places work. I am a garden volunteer at the Persell Middle School Garden - the Persell Produce Patch - since its beginning. I was even gifted one of the official Persell Produce Patch t-shirts! I am now serving as a Master Gardener volunteer at Washington Middle School Garden. I'm working with the Garden Club students and advisor to begin a composting demonstration project as well as plant and care for the vegetable/herb garden. It is joyful to work with the Garden Club members as they eagerly learn basic gardening concepts and look forward to cooking and eating the harvest.

What keeps me enthusiastic about gardening? There is always something new to learn, another plant to try to grow, new experiments with propagation, endless opportunities to make mistakes, and try again, and teach someone else what you have learned. Lifelong learning at its best.

Celebrating Growth: Horticulture and Agriculture at the Chautauqua County Fair

Sharon Rinehart, Chautauqua County Master Gardener Volunteer

Each summer, the Chautauqua County Fair in Dunkirk, New York, blossoms with the vibrant colors of homegrown vegetables, handpicked flowers, and farm-raised crops, proudly presented by residents from across the region. The fair's horticulture and agriculture exhibitions are more than contests—they are a celebration of community pride, rural heritage, and the ongoing commitment to growing and creating with care.

Floral Hall: A Tradition in Bloom


At the heart of the fair stands Floral Hall, one of the county's oldest and most beloved exhibition spaces. This historic building has hosted a dazzling array of entries, from cut flower arrangements and potted plants to fresh produce, homemade crafts, beer and wine, photography, antiques, and more.


Celebrate Your Harvest and Win!


Enter the Chautauqua County Fair for a Chance at Master Gardener Premiums and other awards

Are you proud of what you are growing this year? it's time to share your hard work with the community – and get rewarded for it! This year, the Chautauqua County Master Gardeners are proud to sponsor three special premiums at the Chautauqua County Fair, encouraging local growers of all ages and experience levels to showcase their best.

What's Being Offered?

 **Horticulture - Adult Division Premium** – Show off your flowers, herbs, houseplants, or floral designs. If it grows and glows with your care, it belongs in this category!

 **Agriculture – Adult Division Premium** – For the seasoned growers and dedicated hobbyists. From field crops to specialty vegetables to preserving, this is your moment to shine.

 **Agriculture – Youth Division Premium** – Young growers, your hard work matters too! Whether it's a class project, 4-H endeavor, or backyard experiment, enter and be recognized.

These along with other premiums from the fair and other groups, are more than prizes – These awards recognize excellence in cultivation and encourage continued participation in local agriculture and horticulture.

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Why Enter?

Be part of a local tradition that celebrates talent and dedication.


Inspire others to start growing their own food, flowers, and plants.

Support agricultural education in your community.

Enjoy the fun and fellowship of the fair – from exhibits to entertainment.

Plan on Joining the Fun!

Whether you're a first-time exhibitor or a returning champion, now is the time to prepare your entries. It's not just about winning – it's about connecting with others who share your passion, learning new things, and showing your community what's possible when you put your heart (and hands) into the soil.

 Mark your calendar, prep your plants, and enter your best at this year's Chautauqua County Fair!

The fair is July 15-20. See the fair's website for more information. The 2025 issue is not posted yet but when it is, you will find it under Fair Exhibit Handbooks – Floral Hall.

Let's grow together – and celebrate what we cultivate.



Watershed Notes: Trails

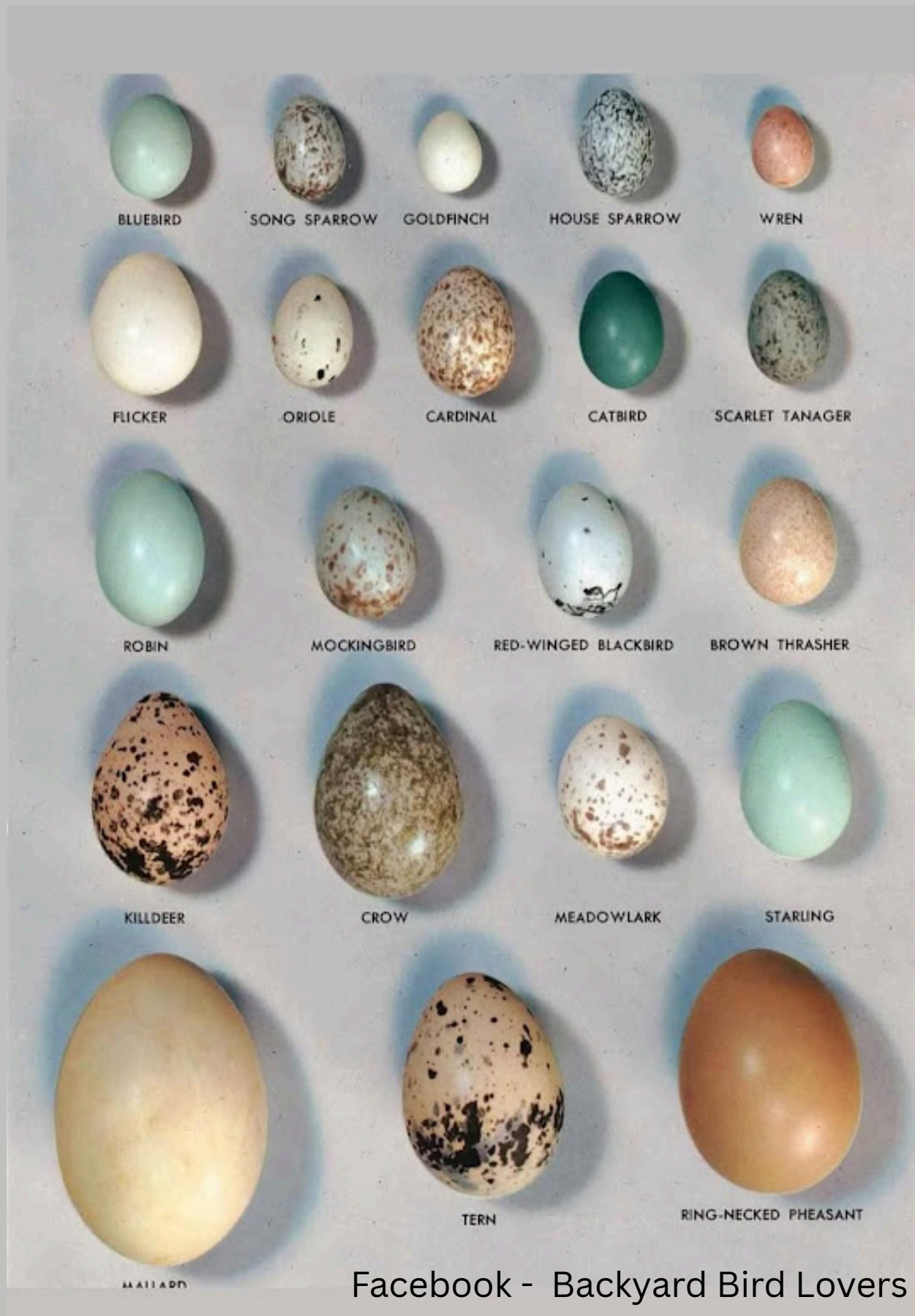
Bethany O'Hagan, Master Gardener Volunteer

As humans, we have created a complex system of needing currency to sustain our very existence. We can't eat without money; and we can't live in our homes without it. So, we have to have jobs in order to gain this thing we call money. We all have jobs; It is a part of our lives. But, when we are not working, we have the option to disconnect from the hustle and bustle of our overly connected and excruciating busy lives to get out into nature. The data research on how beneficial getting into nature is for our mental and physical health, as well as longevity for our lives is undeniable. Being in nature helps lower anxiety, helps you feel better about yourself, and reduces stress, cortisol levels, muscle tension, and heart rate. It also helps you sleep better! "The physiological response to being outside in nature is real, and it's measurable," says Michelle Kondo, a research social scientist with the USDA Forest Service's Northern Research Station. "There are many physical and psychological benefits of nature that scientists have observed, which can better help us understand how nature supports wellness in the body, mind and community." (fs.usda.gov)

What else is even more amazing than how beneficial being outdoors is for us as humans, the fact that we live in an area of the vast world that has such beautiful, well protected, and accessible places to get out into nature. Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy has over 30 nature preserves in Chautauqua County with over nine preserves with dedicated trails to travers you and your loved ones around. In case you didn't already know, there is actually a National Trails Day! A day where being outside, hiking on trails is celebrated. What day is this, you ask? Well, I am glad that you did. National Trails Day is June 3rd -which is coming up fast! So, grab your binoculars if you like birding, grab your kids and doggies and their leashes, (hopefully you're not leashing your kids) and your water bottles, and get on out there! If you are also interested in something a little more challenging, there is an ultimate adventure challenge that Infinity hosts each year. You can find all the details at infinityperformingarts.org/adventurechallenge. It is a challenge that runs from May 1st until December 2025 and has a cost associated with participating. Please also check out the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy's website, which has great interactive maps and directions and details about our preserves where you can hike: chautauquawatershed.org. So what are you waiting for? Put on some sunblock, grab your friends and get on out there!



Which bird eggs have you seen?



Facebook - Backyard Bird Lovers

Invasive Plant

A new column

LESSER CELANDINE Impostor Invader

This bright yellow flower blooms in spring before much else is growing, and outcompetes precious native woodland plants. It can spread via root AND aerial bulbils (aka top sets). Removal is difficult, usually performed by digging out, bagging, and trashing all of the roots and bulbils. It is a look-a-like to several natives, including Marsh Marigold and Wood Poppy.

Native Range: Eurasia & North Africa



NATIVE ALTERNATIVES:



Ref: Facebook Scioto Gardens

GARDEN TIPS & TRICKS



Test the soil around your perennials. Now is a good time to fertilize them, if needed.

Hostas will benefit from Osmocote fertilizer in the spring



"LITTLE TOGS"

(The Optimistic Gardener)

**KID'S
CORNER**

Sunflower Fort

Lay a garden hose on ground in a circle – whatever size you want for your fort. Along the hose, prepare the ground to plant seeds. Using seeds for large sunflower such as Mammoth, plant seeds 8 to 12 inches apart. Leave part of the circle open for an entry. Keep the soil moist. You can also plant morning glories between the sunflowers. They will climb the sunflower and fill in the spaces.



Community Resources

Seed Libraries

Many local libraries have opened free seed libraries to encourage community members to garden and grow some of their own food!

The list is growing, below are a few libraries that are participating. Feel free to donate any seeds to help their seed library grow.

Ashville Free Library (Ashville NY) ashvillelibrary.com

Meyers Memorial (Frewsburg, NY) meyerslibrary.org

Anderson-Lee (Silver Creek, NY) andersonleelibrary.org

Mayville Library (Mayville, NY) mayvillelibrary.com

Seneca Nation Library (Salamanca NY)

James Prendergast Library (Jamestown, NY)
prendergastlibrary.org

Alexander Findley Community Library (Findley Lake, NY)
findleylibrary.org

Darwin Barker Library (Fredonia, NY) barkerlibrary.org

Blount Library (Franklinville)

<https://www.franklinvillelibrary.org/>

SWARM REMOVAL NEED HELP REMOVING A HONEY BEE SWARM?

The beekeepers listed below have indicated that they provide bee removal services. The following contact information is provided as a public service and is not an endorsement of any of the beekeepers listed. AGM does not license or issue permits to remove honey bees. In addition, AGM does not have any information regarding a beekeeper's qualifications or training to remove honey bees.

View the list
agriculture.ny.gov/swarm-catcher-list



NEW YORK STATE
Agriculture and Markets

Free Pressure Canner Testing

Do you have a pressure canner with a dial gauge? It is recommended that gauges be tested annually.

CCE-Chautauqua and CCE
Cattaraugus offer free testing!

Contact the office for an
appointment today.

Master Gardener Help Desk Is Open during the growing season April-Sept

Now Open Wednesday

Chau Co 12:00-2:00 Catt Co 1:00-3:00

Our master gardeners are ready to help with your garden question, identification or issue. Our garden experts will review your request and set you in the right direction. Also, as an extra bonus if you bring in a soil sample, our garden team will test for pH. pH is important for the adsorption of nutrients in your soil.



Cattaraugus County

Contact us at 716-699-2377
e-mail us at cattaraugusmg@cornell.edu

Helpline hours: Wednesday, 1:00pm-3:00pm

visit us at 28 Parkside Drive Ellicottville, NY 14731

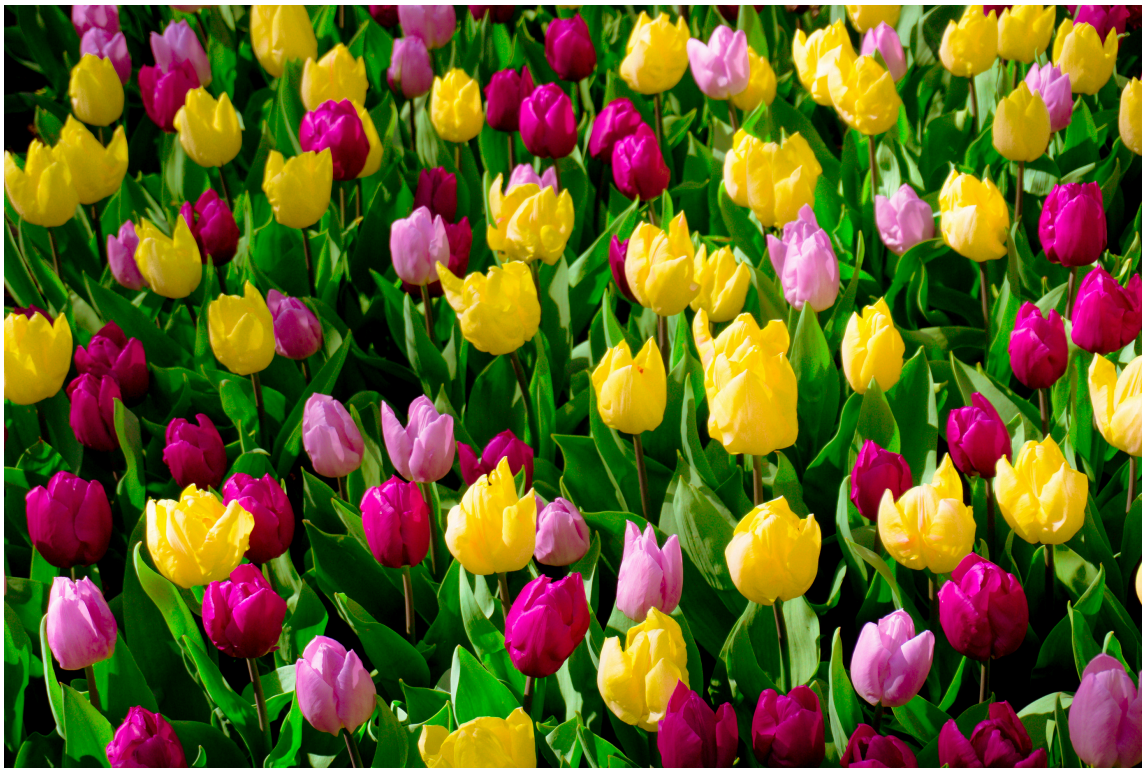
Chautauqua County

Contact us at 716-664-9502 extension 224
e-mail us at chautauquamg@cornell.edu

visit us at the JCC Carnahan Center
525 Falconer Street

Helpline hours: Wednesdays noon-2pm

GPS address: 241 James Ave, Jamestown, NY



Cornell Cooperative Extension of Chautauqua County is your resource for information on soils, site improvement, plant selection, proper plant care, eco-friendly practices, integrated pest management, composting and so much more! We offer free or low-cost gardening classes and tours all year long, and opportunities to share your love of gardening as a volunteer!



Cornell Cooperative Extension
Cattaraugus County

28 Parkside Drive
Ellicottville, New York 14731
TEL: (716) 699-2377

<https://cattaraugus.cce.cornell.edu/gardening>

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Jamestown, New York 14702
TEL: (716) 664-9502

<https://chautauqua.cce.cornell.edu/gardening>