

Horticulture HUB

The Place for Horticulture in Chenango County

December 2015



Let's Talk Horticulture



"Isn't this mild winter fantastic?" I hear frequently while I'm out and about. Well.....it's all a matter of perspective isn't it? When you consider that a heavy snow layer each winter insulates the ground from severe freeze-thaw cycles (which cause heaving and are disruptive and even deadly to plants) and that consistent cold temperatures keep your daffodils and other bulbs from sprouting too early and getting blasted by a frost, a mild winter is not always such a great thing. I grant you, last year's 'old-fashioned' winter was a bit much even for me, but winter serves many valuable purposes:

- Winter kills off insects such as Japanese beetles as they over-winter as grubs in your lawn. Mild winters are often followed by a bumper crop of turf-root eating, rose munching Japanese beetles the following growing season.
- Winter keeps invasive species in check. One of the reasons the widely known Kudzu "the plant that ate the south" is such a big problem is it can grow year round in the south where there are warmer winters. When we have mild winters, it increases the risk of [invasives taking hold](#).
- Winter protects trees from opportunistic pests. Many trees are best pruned when the weather is cold (February or March). Pest pressures in the cold of winter are practically zero. But pests can come in and out of dormancy based on weather, (anyone else have a housefly wake up a week or so ago when it was 60 degrees?) so waiting until the cold is here for good is important for tree pruning and a bit more flexible when we don't have a mild winter!

Some reasons to be grateful for winter! But maybe only if you are a plant geek like me.

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Merry Christmas!
Happy Holidays!



Poinsettia After Care



Poinsettias often suffer an ill fate once the holidays are over. If they are lucky enough to make it until the New Year, they are thrown in the garbage not long afterwards. They can be a lot of trouble to try and keep healthy. Inside most homes the air is very dry in the winter making them very prone to mealy bugs, aphids, thrips and other lovelies. It's really no wonder we throw away millions of them each year. But coddling something along through the cold season indoors is not such a bad idea either. It gives us all something to keep growing. So why not give it a shot?

Here's some tips to get you going:

- **NEW YEAR'S DAY**--Fertilize with an all-purpose houseplant fertilizer at recommended rates. Continue to provide adequate light and water for prolonged bloom for several weeks.
- **VALENTINE'S DAY**--Check your plant for signs of insects such as white fly. If your plant has become long and leggy, cut back to about five inches tall.
- **ST. PATRICK'S DAY**--Remove faded and dried parts of the plant. Add more soil, preferably a commercially available sterile soil mix. Keep the plant in a very bright interior location.
- **MEMORIAL DAY**--Trim off two to three inches of branches to promote side branching. Repot to a larger container using a sterile growing mix.
- **FATHER'S DAY**--Move the plant outside for the summer; place in indirect light.
- **FOURTH OF JULY**--Trim the plant again. Move it into full sun. Continue to water and fertilize but increase the amount to accelerate growth.
- **LABOR DAY**--Move indoors to a spot that gets at least six hours of direct light daily, preferably more. As new growth begins, reduce the amount of fertilizer.
- **AUTUMNAL EQUINOX**--Starting on or near Sept. 21, give the plant 13 hours of uninterrupted darkness (put the plant in a closet, basement, or under a box) and 11 hours of bright light each day. Maintain night temperatures in the low 60 degree F range. Continue to water and fertilize. Rotate the plant daily to give all sides even light.
- **THANKSGIVING**--Discontinue the short day/long night treatment. Put the plant in a sunny area that gets at least six hours of direct light. Reduce water and fertilizer.
- **CHRISTMAS**--Enjoy your "new" poinsettia. Start the cycle all over again.

Taken from: University of Vermont Extension Department of Plant and Soil Science Winter Holiday News Article
CARING FOR YOUR POINSETTIA YEAR ROUND By Dr. Leonard Perry, Extension Professor University of Vermont

Inside Bloomer Report



The month: December

The topic: Hey, what's that plant?

Common Chickweed
Stellaria media



Common
Chickweed

Mouse-eared
Chickweed

Alright, I might be cheating a little bit here but not by much. Technically, the chickweeds out there in your garden or yard are not flowering, but they sure are not dying! They are the original cold-loving plant and you will normally see them in the spring and fall in to winter but typically by now, they have succumbed to the numerous hard freezes we've gotten and croaked.

Not so this year!

Chickweed is alive and well in many soils. It spreads out like a mat and produces small white flowers in the spring and fall. In the 'pink' family (names so because their flower petals are all 'pinked' as if with pinking shears) and related to carnations, [chickweeds are also edible](#).



Learn a Thing or Two

February 24th from 4-7pm at CCE Chenango 99 North Broad St. Norwich, NY

Pruning Workshop Series Part 1: Fruit trees and soft fruits

Learn how to get the best out of your fruit trees and soft fruits! This class will teach you how to properly prune your fruit trees, soft fruits and a few other odds and ends. If you've never pruned before, come learn about the basic pruning cuts and why pruning is so important. Dress for the weather as some of the workshop will be outside. Bring pruners if you have them. \$10 per person. Register by Tuesday February 23rd by calling 607-334-5841 x 11

Beekeeping for Beginners

Wednesday, January 20, 2016, 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM. Interested in raising bees and producing honey? Come learn about essential equipment, terminology and where to source bees and supplies. Current owner and operator of Leo's Honey House, Cathy Halm is a retired veterinary technician and has more than 16 years of beekeeping experience. She manages 40 colonies in Campbell, NY. Discover what your first year will entail. Find sources for continuing education. Fee is \$20 and if you take Beekeeping for Beginners and Advanced Beekeeping on Feb 17 2016, pay only \$35 for both! Please call 535-7161 or email Roger at rlo28@cornell



Master Gardener Volunteer Training Available in 2016 in Cortland, NY.



If you've ever wondered what it would be like to learn more about gardening, to help others learn more about gardening and to join a great group of community minded people in Chenango County, your chance is right around the corner. Becoming a Master Gardener Volunteer is an opportunity that doesn't come every year. Training programs only occur when funding is available to pay for the numerous resources required for this intensive 10 week program. Speakers come from Cornell University, from other Master Gardener's and **Cornell Educators** throughout the region. Topics include: Perennials, Basic Botany, IPM, Weeds, Woodies, Vegetables, Introduction to Plant Diseases, Entomology, Composting and much more! Classes will take place at the Cortland County CCE located at 60 Central Ave. #105 in Cortland, NY. Chenango County attendees will do their entire training there but will then report to Patty Catalano, the **Chenango County CCE**. Classes begin January 16th and run nearly every Saturday until April 2nd. The cost for the training is only \$100, which is lower than in previous years. Enrollment in classes, application, interview, background check and at least 50 hours of volunteer work in Chenango County are all required if you wish to become a Master Gardener Volunteer. If you do not want to become a MGV, the general public is invited to attend classes as well, for a fee. If you are interested in attending any or all of these classes or in becoming a MGV please contact **Patty Catalano, Horticulture Educator for Cornell Cooperative Extension of Chenango County at 607-334-5841 x 16.**

Plant Rant

Good or bad, this is where a plant gets their due!

Christmas Rose or *Helleborus niger* is a true oddity in the plant world but very worth growing. It can flower anywhere from December through April depending on the region where they are planted. Their flowers are white but they fade to a rosy hue as they age. They are tolerant of dry soils under trees and though they may take a few years to establish and flourish, if the soils are rich, they will spread and create a spectacular display. They are evergreen, often looking tidy straight through the winter.



NAME: Christmas Rose or *Helleborus niger*

GROWING ZONE: Hardy from zone 3 to 8

HEIGHT: Max 8-12 inches tall

EXPOSURE/SOIL: part to full shade

FACTS: They will often bloom in the snow. Deer won't eat them and all parts of the plant are poisonous

OF interest

Websites (CTRL + click to go to site)

On Christmas Rose: <http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder/PlantFinderDetails.aspx?kempercode=c990>

On invasive species:

<http://www.nyis.info/index.php>

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