

Horticulture HUB

The Place for Horticulture in Chenango County

February 25th, 2015

Let's Talk Horticulture



I saw a bluebird this morning. On the wing it was a cheerful sight. Did you know that bluebirds often stick around in the winter? I used to know a volunteer who was called the Bluebird Man. He would monitor the bluebird houses at my former job, check for eggs and chicks, keep count of the number of fledglings hatched out and clean out the nests of the other more aggressive birds such as sparrows. Sparrows will reach into a nesting bluebird box and peck at the female and/or chicks until they die and then confiscate the boxes for themselves. The common Sparrow is not native to the United States, another invasive species that has had a detrimental affect on our natives.

This week is National Invasive Species Awareness week . Invasive species come in all sizes. They fly, swim, grow a foot overnight and otherwise mess up a rather lovely native system already in existence here in the U.S. There are invasive species of one kind or another existing in every state. An invasive beetle that carried Dutch Elm Disease (D.E.D.) singlehandedly wiped out American Elms, an entire species of tree that people my age (mid-thirties and younger) have never even seen, they were wiped out before I started to pay attention to trees. Researchers are working to restore this native tree, but it's unlikely to ever have the same dominance in our forests and cities as it was famous for: <http://www.savetheelms.mb.ca/education/aboutElms.html>. Species can be wiped out by invasives but there are things you can do to help. Visit www.nisaw.org to learn more and be conscious of your plant choices this season!

Patty Stimmel; Horticulture Educator
patty.stimmel@cornell.edu; 607-334-5841 x16

Roadside Bloomer Report



The date: February 25th 2015

The topic: Hey, what's that plant?

There's nothing blooming out there you might say? That's right but that's ok, just like last year, we're switching over to an **Inside Bloomer**

Report for the winter!

Check out this column for interesting houseplants.

Cineraria



Cineraria is a bright-spot houseplant that will spruce up your windowsill this time of year. Commonly found in garden centers in pinks and purples (sometimes in reds and whites) Cineraria prefers things a little cool so keep it away from your radiator or other heat sources. Keep it evenly moist and root bound. This means intentionally letting the roots fill the pot. Most Cineraria will be partially root bound anyway when you buy them but bear in mind, this means you will have to water frequently to keep it evenly moist! It's easy to underwater in the winter since the sun is weak, it doesn't seem like potted plants will dry out too quickly indoors but they will! The air is so very dry in the winter in your house that many plants dry out very fast and you have to be diligent in keeping them watered.



My Robin Friend; Part 2 (let's take a step back in time)

By S. L. Harper from The Flower Grower
published January 1924 Calcium, NY

"Why not let her build and hatch her little family right there? She expects it of you, and is not one bit afraid of you. Do let her have her own way-please do." A gardener is always kindly attentive to the guests at a big hotel, and it may be said the old lady and also Lady Robin had their own way.

A small block of wood was shoved under the nest to keep it from being flooded with water, and soon after it was finished, there were found five eggs of genuine "robin's egg blue." Very soon after that, Lady Robin showed enough trust in the old gardener to smile with happiness when his daily rounds were made with sprinkling can. Then she actually accepted one nice lively red angleworm that he offered to her in his dirty hand.

Only a few trusted friends knew the secret of that beautiful hanging basket. Then soon there arrived four red, wide-mouthed little helpless creatures. That was when our secret was told to many visitors who sat there beneath that hanging basket. The constant clamor of the little ones for more food told the secret when Lady Robin and the gardener happened to be busy hustling for more angleworms. That constant hustle to find enough angleworms really did have good results for the borders and beds of flowers.

Then all too soon the time came for a general exodus from that basket, and it was not long until the visit was made to the Sunny Southlands.

~~~

Springtime came again and once more the gardener kept busy at the big hotel. Then came Lady Robin, and with her other Robin friends who kindly greeted us. The old friendship was being renewed when the great world war called the old gardener with enough urgency to carry him away from Lady Robin and her friends. After a few years when talking with the man in charge of gardening at the big hotel I asked him about Lady Robin.



# Learn a Thing or Two

## For home gardeners:

### Invasive Species Workshop

February 26th, 2015 from 6:00 PM-8:00 P.M. at Cornell Cooperative Extension of Yates County, 417 Liberty St., Penn Yan. Cornell Cooperative Extension of Yates County and the Finger Lakes Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management will be hosting a public workshop on invasive species. This free workshop will be held at the Cornell Cooperative Extension of Yates County office, 417 Liberty St., Penn Yan, on February 26th from 6:00-8:00 P.M. Invasive species, such as giant hogweed and hydrilla, are causing harm to ecosystems, the economy, and human health in the Finger Lakes region. Learn how to identify, report and manage these damaging species. Please contact Emily Staychock to register for this event: [ecs268@cornell.edu](mailto:ecs268@cornell.edu); 315-536-5123 x4127

## For commercial gardeners:

### Beginning Hops Class

March 7, 2015 from 9:00 am - 2:30 pm at Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ontario County on 480 North Main Street, Canandaigua, NY. Back in the 1880's, New York was the leader in hops production, producing over 90% of the hops in the United States. As a result of two devastating diseases, downy and powdery mildew, the production of hops declined. In 1920 prohibition provided the final blow to the production of hops in New York and the industry was wiped out. The recent passing of the New York State Farm Brewery Legislation has kick started this once booming industry back to life. Farm breweries are popping up left and right and so are the number of hop growers within the state. With this new revolution comes many questions from folks interested in growing hops. To help address these questions, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ontario County is offering a regional Beginning Hops Class. The program presenters include: Steve Miller, Cornell Cooperative Extension Hops Specialist addressing "What you need to know in growing hops. Rick Pedersen, one of the most experienced hops growers in New York State, speaking on the evolution of his operation, where he started and where he is today. Chris and Brian, Climbing Bines, will address, what brewers are looking for when purchasing hops. Fee: \$25.00/ person which includes lunch. Registration: contact Cornell Cooperative Extension Ontario County, 585-394-3977 x 427 or email [Nancy](mailto:Nancy) with your name, address, and phone number.

(my Robin friend cont'd)

"Yes, the old hussy tried her very best to build her nest right up there in that basket, and I threw it out several times; then had to take down that particular hanging basket for a few days, so she finally decided to build a nest right up there in the joint of that brace arm to the post. She comes every season too. I think she's a nuisance, an impudent sassy old hussy too."



I noticed soon that one particular Robin seemed friendly and very familiar to me somehow. Then I asked for his garden trowel. "Now then Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ just take notice, and we will soon see if this if my good friend as of old." The old gardener began to dig among the flowers of the border, and said: "Come Lady Robin-come and have one of your special favorites—a nice red one. I'll give it the same as of old—come friend."

Right at once my Robin Friend came hopping right up close to me, and the joy of the days of former years could be seen plainly shining in her bright eyes.

When she took a mouthful of those lively angleworms and flew straight up to the nest filled with another greedy family of little birds, it seemed to the old gardener that her happiness could not be equal to that which came to him.

Last year I dug again among those same flower beds, and I made some new friends who will perhaps come again when springtime comes. Perhaps these new friends are of those greedy little birds that ate the worms taken from the hand of the old gardener when he dug them for his Lady Robin of the hanging basket—who knows?

~ The End

# Plant Rant

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



**Autumn Olive** or *Eleagnus umbellata* is an invasive species common to this region. Native to Asia and Japan, it was brought over in 1830 to be used for soil erosion, wildlife cover and its edible fruit produced by the bucket-load yearly. This same delicious fruit is why the scrubby shrub is so invasive. Birds love the berries and spread them far and wide, hither and yon. It's not uncommon to find entire fields taken over by this shrub. Its silvery leaves are quite attractive in the slightest breeze and the salmonish-red berries have a metallic sprinkling of color to them as well. What's so bad about this guy you ask? It sounds like a great plant! I'll admit, it's a mixed bag. But in the end, if you are trying to start a farm, grow a blueberry patch or clear land? It's a serious problem. The large thorns aren't a great feature either. Sure, they provide cover but if you want access to your land it's likely you're going to come out of it pretty scratched up. Prevent the spread of this invasive by cutting down young shrubs and getting rid of what you can before they bear fruit.

**NAME:** Autumn Olive or *Eleagnus umbellata*  
**HEIGHT:** Max 20' tall  
**EXPOSURE/SOIL:** Full sun/Fixes nitrogen so can grow in very poor soils  
**FACTOIDS:** The fruit have 8 times the lycopene of tomatoes and can be used in jams, dried, eaten raw or made in to salsas and meat glazes.



## OF interest

**Websites (CTRL + click to go to site)**

Autumn Olive:  
<http://www.nps.gov/plants/alien/pubs/midatlantic/elum.htm>

<http://www.fruit.cornell.edu/berry/production/pdfs/autumnolive.pdf>

Invasive species:  
[www.invasive.org](http://www.invasive.org)  
<http://www.bugwood.org/>  
An App for reporting invasives:  
<http://apps.bugwood.org/>

## Connect with Us!

**On the Web**  
[www.cce.cornell.edu/chenango](http://www.cce.cornell.edu/chenango)  
**On Facebook**  
[www.facebook.com/ccechenango](http://www.facebook.com/ccechenango)  
**On Twitter**  
[@ccechenango](https://twitter.com/ccechenango)



Cornell University  
Cooperative Extension  
Chenango County

Want to subscribe or unsubscribe? Please email: [patty.stimmel@cornell.edu](mailto:patty.stimmel@cornell.edu)

The once monthly Horticulture HUB is published through Cornell Cooperative Extension of Chenango County. Cornell Cooperative Extension is an employer and educator recognized for valuing AA/EEO, Protected Veterans and Individuals with Disabilities and provides equal program and employment opportunities. All images and content are for educational purposes only and are not to be used commercially. Some content and images may be used with permission, contact Patty Stimmel (email above) for more information.