

HorticultureHUB

The Place for Horticulture in Chenango County

January 27, 2015

Let's Talk Horticulture

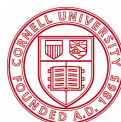


Are you buried under seed catalogs yet? Every year it amazes me how many catalogs I get in the mail. But each one is a bright surprise that I often have to pace myself through or I end up in a seed catalog coma, prices and varieties swirling around me like some cartoon character who hit her head.

It pays to shop around in times like this and it pays to be organized. I typically place orders with up to 5 different companies and keeping the varieties straight, the shipping costs low and the seed quantities high is tricky. No single company carries everything I want for the price I'm willing to pay. It's at this point that I vow I will do a better job of saving my own seeds this year; and I'll admit, each year I do save more. However, some plants, vegetables in particular, don't produce seed the first year (they're biennial) and won't survive the winter to set seed the following year. What to do?

Whatever is possible. It is possible to harvest leek seeds, for instance, if they have a good covering of snow and are left in the ground. Leeks will flower the second year and produce seed that will have an incredibly high percentage of germination and is a cinch to harvest. Leek seed doesn't last more than a couple years so this trait could come in handy! Lettuces and many leafy greens often set seed the first year (bolting!). When you see the amount of seed most plants set, you'll be amazed that you never tried saving it in the past. All it takes is time!

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



Cornell University
Cooperative Extension
Chenango County



My Robin Friend; Part 1 (let's take a step back in time)

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

FOLKS may say the dog is our most devoted friend, and perhaps they may be right, but having had a Highland Scotch great-grand-father I am going to quote from one of his sayings: "I ha' me doots."

The Robin Redbreast will prove true as steel, if we show him (or her) that we are trustworthy. My Robin Redbreast was worthy, and no doubt she thought the same of this old gardener. The gardener must often dig in the ground if the flowers are a success, and it was while the writer was digging among the flowers at a big hotel way out West that a Robin happened to be a guest there.

Springtime found me busy with the borders, hanging baskets and specimen plants that added to the beauties of the big wide porch, and with springtime, came the birds in great numbers. They right promptly took an interest in the work of cultivating the flower beds and borders, and also invited themselves to the porch as well as the borders. After the dozens of hanging baskets were arranged all around the porch, then our task was to give the necessary water. However, much of the time was devoted to digging through the flower beds. The angleworms were plentiful, and perhaps that was the reason why the Robins were also. It is a fact that a Robin would prefer an angleworm to a specially good piece of cake—at least my Robin friend did.

Shy at first they hesitated about accepting several that were offered as my special gifts. Then temptation overcame timidity, and at once we were friends—lifelong friends it proved to be.

THEN time for the nesting, and other new hatched friends came, and it proved to be my daily task to do enough digging to furnish the worms for the red wide-mouthed youngsters that have proven their friendship ever since.

On a bright morning soon after my Robin friend had shown her confidence, the round was made with the sprinkler and stepladder to water the hanging baskets. In one of them were found bits of grass, strings, twigs and a few feathers. They were thrown out. Then the next time I found more of the same litter and began to wonder about it. Again I threw them all out. Another round was made with sprinkler, and again the straws and litter were right there—even more of it than before.

While debating the question in my mind what to do about it, Lady Robin arrived with bill filled with other litter to be added. The look of astonishment we each gave the other, provoked a laugh on the part of the old gardener. The mystery was explained right then and there. Lady Robin plainly showed that she intended to go on with her home building, right in that particular place. A kindly old lady resting comfortably in a big rocker happened to notice the dilemma the old gardener was in and said: "Why not let her build and hatch her little family right there? (to be continued!)"

Roadside Bloomer Report



The date: January 27th 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.

Chinese Jasmine
Jasminum polyanthum



Talk about an overachiever.

Nothing takes away winter blues like the sweet smell of jasmine. It's like having a whiff of summer in the middle of winter. They aren't too hard to grow IF you remember to water them. They don't like drying out and will get a bad case of aphids before you can say 'gross' if you let the soil dry out too much. But if you can keep on top of that, and if you have a south or east facing window, give this beauty a try. They are usually easy to find in the houseplant departments this time of year. Some vine more than others. Don't be afraid to prune them to keep them in check as this will often prompt better blooming.



Learn a Thing or Two

For home gardeners:

Growing Heirloom Vegetables

Jan 31st 1-2pm- What is up with those purple tomatoes? Heirloom vegetables are gaining popularity at farmers' markets and in many backyards around the region. The owners of Muddy Fingers Farm in Hector, NY have been growing heirloom veggies for a decade. Cornell Cooperative Extension invites you to attend this fun and educational workshop on why to choose heirloom vegetables and how to grow them at home. Come learn how these veggies differ from traditional hybrid varieties. The one-hour presentation will also include information on how to get started in seed-saving. This workshop will be offered on Saturday January 31, from 1-2pm at the civil defense center, 7220 State Route 54, Bath NY. Reservations are appreciated and can be made by call 607-664-2300 or email Kerri at 607-583-3170. Cost to attend is \$10 per person.

For commercial gardeners:

An Introduction to High Tunnels

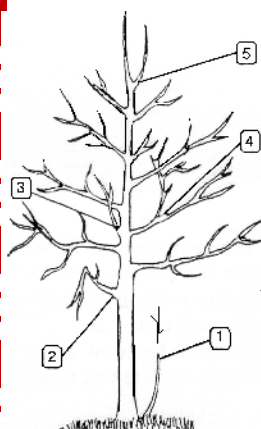
February 9, from 1-4 PM at Good Life Farm in Interlaken. Topics to be covered include – types of tunnels & construction, bed preparation, crops to grow, managing crops in high tunnels, and pest management. Tour Good Life Farm Tunnels. Instructors include: Judson Reid – CCE Vegetable Crop Specialist (and high tunnel expert); farmers Melissa Madden and Garrett Miller with Good Life Farm and Evangeline Sarat with Sweetland Farm. Information on NRCS High Tunnel Grants will be presented by a NRCS representative. Register for this workshop via Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County. Call 607-272-2292 or email mr55@cornell.edu. Pre-registration is required to ensure we have enough space. There is a \$5 fee for this class, pay at the door.

2015 Winter Commercial Horticulture Webinar Series YardWorks, a Landscape Design Opportunity Thursday January 29th with Josh Cerra, Assistant Professor Cornell University Landscape Architecture YardWorks is a collaboration between Cornell's Lab of Ornithology and Department of Landscape Architecture that is facilitating New York neighborhoods and individual land owners to create desired green space that provide environmental services. Josh Cerra will detail efforts in two communities developing greener landscape design solutions using a combination of urban ecological design strategies as well as yard designs that accommodate landowners intentions while meeting environmental objectives. He will share specific examples including creating bird-friendly habitat for professionals that want to embrace these strategies in their clients' landscapes. These design solutions offer another product for firms wishing to expand on the 'green' theme.

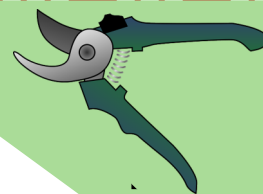
<http://yardworksithaca.wordpress.com/>

If you've been reading the Pruner's Corner for a while, you already know that the late winter pruning season begins about now. Fruit trees are the obvious needy trees when it comes to pruning, but don't forget the ornamental trees in your lawn and landscape. Here's why:

- 1) A well pruned tree will be less susceptible to insects and diseases
- 2) A well pruned tree will live longer
- 3) A well pruned tree will grow faster and fuller



- 1) Trees that are allowed to 'keep' their broken branches are like bullseyes to insect pests. Insect pests can 'smell' out damaged tissues and burrowing pests in particular, use broken branches as a point of entry. Diseases use broken areas on trees as a point of entry because they take longer to heal. Imagine you have a good sized gash on your leg. If you don't put a bandage on it or put antibiotic ointment on it right away, infection will likely set in. Though pruning off broken tree limbs isn't a bandage or ointment, a clean cut with a blade helps the tree to seal off the wound & heal much faster, decreasing the time that the damaged tissues are exposed to the threat of disease.
- 2) Trees that don't have imperfections corrected, may succumb to rot (and pests and diseases of course) sooner than trees that do. For instance, a tree with a double-leader. The leader is the main branch of the tree that grows straight up from the trunk. Often in younger trees, you get a double-leader situation where there are two main branches making a U shape in the top of the tree. This is pretty easy to fix, though not for the faint of heart. In smaller trees, you prune out one leader entirely. Look at both leaders, decide which one to keep based on size, direction of growth and angle to the main trunk. Remove the undesirable leader. Years down the road, this U shape, if not corrected, will likely hold water after it rains and depending on the tree, may begin to rot. This weakens the branch! In addition, the angle of double-leaders makes a weak joint and the tree is more susceptible to breakage from snow and ice weight.
- 3) Pruning encourages growth! When a cut is made, the tree compensates for the loss of a branch by putting out more growth. New branches grow faster than old ones and more branching means a fuller, healthier crown.



Pruner's Corner

Plant Rant

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



Black Salsify or *Scorzonera hispanica* is an uncommon root crop here in the US that has the capability to overwinter in our area without growing bitter or woody. The plant is native to either Spain or Southern Italy where it can be linked with two different meanings, "scorza nera" meaning black bark because of its black tap root appearance or "escuerzo" meaning herb against the toad; folklore said that the plant was an antidote for poisonous animal bites. Though it is black on the exterior, and sometimes referred to as the black oyster plant, the flesh of this vegetable is white. It is similar to salsify (the "other" oyster plant) but is said to have a slightly better flavor. The plant can grow 2 feet high and if left to overwinter will provide an edible yellow dandelion-like flower the second summer. It is in the aster family and its leaves look similar

to that of a daisy. Scorzonera grows best in loose sandy soil so that its roots are uniform and straight. Some gardeners suggest growing it in a deep tub or pot so that come harvest time, you can dump them out with less of a chance of breaking the root. The seeds are known to be slow to germinate and won't keep well from year to year. Buy new seed yearly or collect your own! The root of the scorzonera can be used in many different dishes from stews and salads to baked and sautéed with lemon. The green leaves and flowers are also edible and most often used in salads. If peeling the root it is recommended to put it in a light lemon water mixture to prevent it from discoloring. ~Alysen Parsons (MG Volunteer)

NAME: Black Salsify or *Scorzonera hispanica*

HEIGHT: About 2' tall

SOW SEED: Two weeks before last frost (approx. mid-May for our county)

GROW IN: Full sun, pH 6-6.8, sandy soil or soil that has had most rocks removed up to 8-12" deep if possible! Containers may be better for us!

DAYS TO HARVEST: 120-150, harvest in the fall, Scorzonera can withstand freezing so leave it in the ground until you want it!



in

OF interest

Websites (CTRL + click to go to site)

Northern Organic Vegetable Improvement Collaborative:

www.plbr.cornell.edu/psi/OSP%20home.htm

How to Grow Black Salsify

www.harvesttotable.com/2009/02/how-to-grow-salsify/

An article with suggested seed catalogs:

www.organicgardening.com/learn-and-grow/seed-catalog-time

A guide to Chinese Jasmine

<http://www.guide-to-houseplants.com/jasmine-plant.html>

Connect with Us!

On the Web

www.cce.cornell.edu/chenango

On Facebook

www.facebook.com/ccechenango

On Twitter

@ccechenango



Cornell University
Cooperative Extension
Chenango County

Want to subscribe or unsubscribe? Please email: 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.