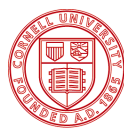
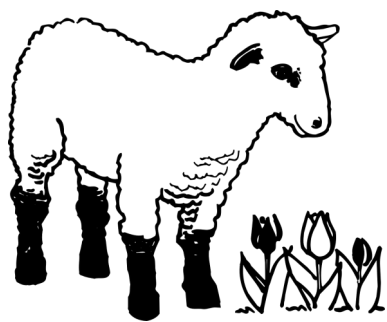


Horticulture HUB

The Place for Horticulture in Chenango County

March 2016

Let's Talk Horticulture



Cornell University
Cooperative Extension
Chenango County

Growing things is never boring is it? Whether you grow flowers or vegetables, trees or shrubs, fruit or nuts (or a little of everything!) each year is new, different and worth the effort. When people tell me they have a black thumb I think to myself "You just haven't had the right teacher yet" because growing things is so rewarding, I want to share the benefits with everyone. Where else can you bend over for hours on end and have your work rewarded with fresh tomatoes? Or leafy greens? Or dinner plate Dahlias? Growing anything, anything at all teaches us about ecology, economy, gravity and survival. That sticks with you for life. So pardon me a little while I wax on about the thing I love most; I hope it's catching.

Patty Stimmel; Horticulture Educator
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Inside Bloomer Report



The month: March

The topic: Hey, what's that plant?



The crocus – such as the pictured above Snow crocus *Crocus tommasinianus* – is one of the earliest flowers to appear in the garden each year, some start to bloom as early as February if late winter is mild enough. This flowering bulb, similar to daffodils, tulips and hyacinths, will bloom and multiply for years with minimal care.



Want to see more crocuses in your gardens? Make sure you plant them in full sun or light shade in early fall, depending on your zone: Zone 4 and 5, plant by late September to early October; in Zone 6, plant by mid-October. As the years go by, separate overcrowded clumps and re-plant them after the foliage begins to wither. If you want to plant crocus bulbs this fall, try these cultivars: *Crocus flavus* (yellow one above), *Crocus angustifolius*, *Crocus vernus* and *Crocus chrysanthus*.

Source: *Sequence of Bloom of Perennials, Biennials, and Bulbs*, Cornell Cooperative Extension <http://www.gardening.cornell.edu/flowers/pdfs/sequenceofbloom.pdf>

Article submitted by:
Christian Vischi; MGV Intern

While it's spring awakening for plants, it's still time to make a bed

By Christian Vischi, Master Gardener Volunteer Intern

"This is my year!" you tell yourself as your fingers slowly glide over a package of *Daucus carota* subsp. *sativus* 'Atomic Red'. You are bound and determined to grow some of these heirloom carrots this year; a repeat of last year's dwarf – let's be honest, "pigmy" – crop is not going to happen on your watch. But how can you plan for success when your clay or silty clay soil needs a jackhammer in the summer? Although you can certainly improve your garden soil, this article is going in a different direction: Raised-bed gardening.



The pictured raised-bed features PVC braces for a hoop house, which helps extend the growing season. It is also set up for square foot gardening, which is a great way to fit a lot of plants into a small footprint. Image courtesy wikipedia.org

Why consider a raised-bed garden? These types of gardens have several advantages over traditional in-ground gardens including: improved soil drainage, less soil compaction, easier weed control, warmer soil temperature in spring, ease of access, and reduced soil erosion. Another key advantage is that you can prepare the soil to best meet the needs of your plants. If you want a slightly acidic soil – perhaps for garlic, blueberries or alpine strawberries – you can amend your mix with aluminum sulfate; for slightly alkaline soil – which some varieties of asparagus and leeks prefer – spread some form of pulverized lime. You should first have your soil tested so that you know what your baseline pH level is. (This can be done through Cornell Cooperative Extension of Chenango County. We'll need approximately 1/2 cup of dry soil from a few spots in your garden, so

contact us for complete details.) When you amend your soil to the desired pH always follow the specifications outlined on the package.

Soil texture is another important factor to consider when preparing the soil for your raised beds. Carrots prefer a light loamy or sandy soil, meaning good drainage and very few stones; they also like a more acidic soil. Can you try growing carrots in a pH neutral or slightly alkaline soil with stones, clods and lots of clay? Sure, absolutely! But when it comes to peeling forked, spindly and other misshaped forms of carrot for

Learn a Thing or Two

Pruning Workshop Part 2: Ornamental Trees & Shrubs

March 23rd from 4-7pm
at CCE Chenango; 99 N. Broad St. Norwich
Do your shrubs look like meatballs? Meat-balling your shrubs and topping your trees can not only be detrimental to the health of your woody plants but can become a bad habit that needs breaking. Don't take the easy way out. Learn a thing or two and get the best out of your ornamental trees and shrubs. We'll re-view basic pruning practices, why they matter and give you some confidence to ask more out of your under-achieving woody plants. \$10 per person, bring pruners if you have them! Garden club members and Master Gardener Volunteers enjoy a reduced rate of \$7 per person. Register by Tuesday March 22nd by calling 607-334-5841 x 11 or x 16 or email patty.stimmel@cornell.edu

Apple Tree Pests & Diseases for Beginners

April 28th from 4-6:30pm at
CCE Chenango; 99 North Broad St. Norwich
Spots on your apples got you down? Don't fret. Learn what to do about them and many other nasties that plague your apple trees. Learn Integrated Pest Management. A fancy phrase for being smart about spraying. Based upon the Cornell publication Apple IPM for Beginners. Register by April 26th. \$10 per person or \$7 if you are a MGCV or garden club member. Call 607-34-5841 x 16 to register or email patty.stimmel@cornell.edu

Maple weekend at the Arnot

March 19th and 20th - NYS Maple Weekend Celebrated at Cornell's Arnot Forest. 611 (Schuyler) County Route 13; Van Etten, NY 14889. A great family event to learn how maple syrup is made (and tastes!) at Cornell University's Arnot Teaching and Research Forest. Most exhibits are outdoors, so dress for the weather! For details, please visit: <http://www.nysmaple.com/nys-maple-weekend/>

your stew, you'd surely rather have carrots of standard size and shape? Growing carrots in a raised bed filled with soil you mix yourself is an excellent way to ensure success.

A traditional in-ground garden could take several months to one year to prepare; there may be sod to remove, stones to pull, weeds to kill, amendments to be added, and the list goes on. For a raised-bed, what you lay as soil in the "bed" is usually ready for planting, and because the soil is shallower in a raised bed, a black plastic cover results in a quicker rise in soil temperature.

What is the best size for your raised-bed? A better question might be what length of untreated lumber (wood containing creosote or compounds containing pentachlorophenol are toxic to plants and humans) do you have lying around? Lumber that is 2"x6" or 2"x8" works well; just nail and stake them at the corners. Landscape timbers are another good choice. Keep the bed to less than four feet wide so that you can reach the center without having to step inside; if the bed is longer than six feet add a support brace across the middle to keep the sides from bowing. Use galvanized nails as fasteners to prevent rusting.

Raised-beds work best when framed because they require less watering and erosion is not as bad during periods of heavy rainfall. Frames can be built of stone, brick, or rot-resistant wood, such as redwood. Your soil medium, as discussed above, will depend on the type of plants that you want to grow. Most plants will do well in a raised-bed, but for some deep rooting plants – such as asparagus, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, watermelon – this type of garden bed may not be the best solution.

If your soil requires significant upgrading – or is unsafe to plant in due to toxicity – a raised-bed could be an ideal solution. If you don't have scrap lumber, you have several choices of materials to purchase for your raised garden bed construction. Visit the University of Georgia Extension website for a great primer on some of these materials' pros and cons: <http://extension.uga.edu/publications/detail.cfm?number=C1027-5> More reasons why building a raised-bed is a great spring activity: It gets you moving outside and thinking about the upcoming growing season, each bed will only take a couple of hours to construct, in inclement spring weather you can do most of the construction in a garage or shed, and you can easily plan your garden layout because you will know your exact planting area. *Source: Raised Bed Gardening Fact Sheet, Cornell Cooperative Extension, www.gardening.cornell.edu/factsheets/vegetables/raisedbeds.pdf*

Plant Rant

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



Tubers or toes? Sitting at my first family reunion (newly married), the dowager matriarch of the family asks "Do you dig up your toes?" I soon deduced that we were talking about my dahlias. Dahlias come in many different varieties and colors. They grow large and beautiful and require little care. Dahlia tubers can be put in the ground when the soil is warm (55-60 degrees) about the same time you plant tomatoes. Do not water at planting time-soil moisture should be enough to get them started. Once dahlias have sprouted above the ground, they need to be watered 2-3 times a week with a deep soaking.

Once in bloom, deadheading produces more and more blooms. Avoid fertilizer as this will produce a larger plant but less blooms. Dahlias will freeze in the fall. The foliage will turn black and the

plant will die back. After this, the stems can be cut back to about 6" and tubers can be removed from the ground. Allow clumps to dry and store for the winter in a cool, dry place. Deer don't like dahlias but slugs and earwigs do. Whether you call them tubers or toes, they can produce a spectacular border with minimal effort.

NAME: Dahlia species
GROWING ZONE: Annual here; hardy to zone 8 and native to South America
HEIGHT: 1 to 8' depending on the variety
EXPOSURE/SOIL: Full sun, moist but well drained
INTERESTING FACT: Tree dahlias ([*Dahlia imperialis*](#)) can get 8-15 ft. tall



OF interest

Websites (CTRL + click to go to site)

- The American Dahlia Society
<http://www.dahlia.org/>
- Gardener's Supply Company's Raised bed soil calculator
<http://www.gardeners.com/how-to/soil-calculator/7558.html>
- Crocus in the news
<http://riverdalepress.com/stories/Varieties-of-crocus-experience,59455>

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