



Dutchess Dirt

A gardening newsletter from:



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Dutchess County

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FINALLY

Two months ago we were anxiously watching the calendar, the temperature and the lingering piles of snow asking "Is it spring yet?" Now, in my neighborhood, spring is busting out all over. Each day brings another seasonal surprise.

Willows turned from dull gold to bright yellow to green. Pussy Willows appeared. Maples burst from plump buds to frilly red flowers. Shagbark Hickory flowers (male catkins and female petallets) burst open. And finally, the Magnolia bloomed.



Spicebush and Forsythia competed to be the first blooming shrubs. The race was tight. Now they're both covered in yellow. Shadbush soon will join the fun with white. Crocus and Coltsfoot were the first flowers to open, followed by Hellebore, Dutchman's Breeches, and Trout Lily. Ramps are growing now too. Yum. Bees are buzzing. Yippee! But Lily Leaf Beetles are already chewing new growth. Boo.

The level of noise in my backyard is almost deafening. Gold finches, House finches and Red-winged blackbirds sing their tunes accompanied by the tap tap of Hairy, Downy, Red-Bellied and Pileated woodpeckers. And today, the Ruby Throated hummingbirds arrived. Finally.



MASTER GARDENER PLANT SALE MAY 15-16

Mark your calendars for the annual CCEDC Master Gardener Plant Sale Friday, May 15 (10am-4pm) and Saturday, May 16 (9am – 2 pm). Our plant sale features a wonderful selection of healthy annuals (flowering and foliage), perennials, vegetables and herbs. All plants are grown by our Master Gardener volunteers. More details about the sale including lists of the annuals, herbs, and vegetables are on our web site at [CCEDC Master Gardener Plant Sale](#). Details on perennials will be posted there early in May.

Would you like to share the joy of shopping for great plants with other gardeners? Gift certificates are available. They may be purchased for any amount and are not redeemable for cash. Stop by the office, contact Nancy Halas by email at nh26@cornell.edu or call 845-677-8223 ext 115.

This sale helps us continue our Master Gardener volunteer and community educational programming. Your support is greatly appreciated.

KITCHEN COMPOSTING

By Mary Grosskopf, Master Gardener Volunteer

Everyone is talking about composting. In our throw-away society, we're all looking for ways to reuse and recycle the many pieces of our daily life. So that we don't feel like we're missing out on something, composting takes place every day in nature. It happens around us all the time - the natural decay, decline and deterioration of organic matter. When we have a chance, we can both observe and participate in this amazing process.

When gardeners and homeowners talk about composting it's usually with a renewed sense of purpose to be actively part of a positive movement. For homeowners, this small scale contribution helps more than the environment. Thinking long term, kitchen composting helps us to manage our time and our home all the while creating a product we can then use in our gardens. When we prepare a meal, vegetable peelings become a reusable by-product of our efforts. When we clean out the vegetable drawer, recycling food we didn't use, we come to a clearer understanding of food waste and hopefully become better stewards of our food supply. In addition to food scraps and unused kitchen veggies, another handy component of kitchen composting efforts includes shredding the daily newspapers once they've been read. They form an important part of our efforts.



In our kitchens, we need to mimic the beginnings of natural composting by creating a balance of high (brown) and low (green) carbons. At the bottom of a sturdy plastic grocery bag, I shred our unwanted newspapers. Newspapers (avoid the shiny colored fillers) are printed with soy based and food safe ink and become our "brown", or high carbon, material. Newspaper also absorbs the liquid that tends to ooze out of our veggies. Alternating with all the paper goes the coffee grounds, used tea bags, apple rinds, carrot peelings, old lettuce, etc. These are our 'green' materials. If you are a weekender, consider starting composting bags in your city kitchens and then bring up the bags on the weekends to add to your composting project.

During the summer these bags of layered composting material go straight outside into a covered composting holder. During the winter months bags are stored in a large garbage can near the back porch where they simply freeze over during the winter. We then move them into the black, stationary covered composting bin in the spring. To avoid attracting wildlife, such as raccoons and skunks which could also bring disease, we keep any outdoor composting bins tightly covered, even adding a rock or





two for safe measure. When the contents of our composting bags are added to the outside covered bin, we'll also add some additional soil and brown matter like leaves or extra wood mulch to assist in the decomposition process. Over time, the compression of the weight of the materials in a stationary composter breaks things down and, after a year, we remove the composted material from the bottom hatches which we use in the vegetable garden. In this kitchen to composting process, the natural cycle completes itself and we've had a chance to participate in the journey.

CILANTRO by Anthula Natsoulas, Master Gardener Volunteer

Now that spring is here, it is time to begin thinking about that herb garden again. Cilantro can be a nice part of the garden. It has a pretty white/pinkish flower that adds color and texture and is an herb that has multiple personalities. To begin with, both its leaf and its fruit or seed are used in cooking. In addition, it's a hate/love relationship for its fresh leaf. The "lovers" really enjoy the taste of fresh cilantro in their food and the "haters" describe it as "soapy". Cilantro looks very much like flat leaf parsley but has a distinctly different odor and taste. It is one of the oldest known cultivated herbs with recorded use going back at least 3,000 years.



A native of the eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East, cilantro is best known for its role in Mexican cuisine in guacamole and salsas but its leaf is a popular herb in Mediterranean and Middle Eastern dishes and its seed an ingredient in Asian spices. The name "cilantro" is most often used to refer to the leaves of the plant and "coriander" is used to refer to the seeds or fruit. In Mediterranean cuisine, cilantro leaves are used as a garnish on fish; in India, coriander is a part of the garam masala spice mixture.

Cilantro, coriander or *Coriandrum sativum* is a member of the carrot family, Apiaceae. It is an annual in the Hudson Valley. It grows best in well-drained, organically rich soil in a sunny or partially shaded location. It does well with a wet spring and a dry summer during which it should not be allowed to dry out. Cilantro can also successfully be grown in large deep pots filled with enriched potting soil. Place a container near the kitchen door for an easily accessible supply of freshly cut leaves. The leaves should be cut regularly to encourage continuous growth. Regular watering early in the day will keep the plants happy.

Cilantro can be grown by either purchasing nursery plants or by starting plants from seed. Nursery plants can be put in the ground when danger of frost has passed. The number of plants depends on how much cilantro leaves you plan to use and whether you will want to harvest the fruit or seeds. Alternatively, cilantro seeds can be planted to a depth of ½ inch after the last frost; germination will take place in about two weeks. Once the plants begin to grow, they will do so quickly and should not be transplanted. Mulching helps to keep moisture and discourage weeds.

Cilantro leaves should be used fresh; their flavor does not survive drying. Once the plants begin to flower, the production of new leaves decreases. For a continuous supply of fresh leaves, new plantings should be made every three to four weeks. The flower of the cilantro plant is composed of multiple small white blooms coming out of a common point in an umbrella-like shape. The seeds will form on the flower heads after flowering occurs and then begin to ripen. A pleasing odor is a sign that the seeds are ripe and ready to be harvested. They should not be allowed to fall to the ground. To harvest the seeds, cut the flower stems, bundle them, place them upside down in paper bags and hang indoors to dry.

CULINARY USES

In addition to being a key component in Mexican cuisine, cilantro seeds can be an ingredient in chutney and its leaves a flavorful addition to a salad. I have been known to take liberties with recipes for a chimichurri used to garnish baked or broiled fish by adding a handful of fresh cilantro leaves and other herbs to the basic parsley, oregano, garlic, scallions, lemon juice and olive oil mixture. Cilantro is especially compatible with basil, chives, dill, garlic, mint and parsley. In the Middle East, crushed coriander seed is added to coffee to flavor the strong espresso brew so common in that part of the world.



Here are two Greek Cypriot recipes that use dried crushed coriander seeds. One is made with pork and the other is a vegetarian version for mushrooms. The latter can be used as part of a “meze” or appetizer dinner.

PORK AFELIA

1 ½ lbs. cubed stewing pork
1 tblspn. crushed coriander seed
½ cup dry red wine
olive oil for sautéing
hot water as needed
salt and pepper to taste

Marinate the pork with the coriander seeds and the red wine for about 4 to 6 hours. Drain the meat, retaining the marinade liquid. Heat the oil in a Dutch oven and add the pork. Sauté the meat until it is browned. Add the marinade liquid and enough hot water to cover the meat. Bring to a boil. Simmer the meat until tender. Add salt and pepper to taste. Serve with rice or bulgur pilaf.

MUSHROOM AFELIA

2 ½ lbs. mushrooms
½ cup butter
1 tsp. crushed coriander seeds
½ cup dry red wine
hot water as needed
salt and pepper to taste

Cut the stems from the mushrooms; halve the caps if they are very large. Sauté the mushrooms in the butter until lightly browned. Add the crushed coriander seeds and sauté with the mushrooms for two to three minutes. Add the wine and enough hot water to cover. Simmer until the mushrooms are cooked.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday, May 2, 10am-3pm, Hudson Valley Garden Fair Montgomery Place, 25 Gardeners Way, Red Hook, NY. Presented by the Hudson Valley Garden Association. CCEDC Master Gardener Volunteers will answer gardening and composting questions. For more information, visit www.hvgardenfair.com

Saturday May 9, 10 am, Stanfordville Free Library, 14 Creamery Road, Stanfordville, NY, "Cutting Gardens" by Master Gardener volunteer Susan Kavy. For more information visit www.stanfordlibrary.org

Saturday, May 9, 9am – noon, the Verplanck Garden Club Pre-Mother's Day Plant Sale at Fishkill Town Hall, 807 Route 52, Fishkill, New York. Perennial Divisions from Member's Gardens, sunny annuals, vegetable plants, herbs, hanging baskets, Mother's Day gift baskets, hanging basket raffle, gardening gloves, cookies and coffee. We will have a Master Gardener table set up for your questions. Guests and new members are always welcome to attend our meetings the 2nd Tuesday of each month. To contact VGC, visit us during the plant sale or e-mail verplanckgardenclub@yahoo.com.

Thursday, May 14, 6:30-8pm, East Fishkill Library, 348 Route 376, Hopewell Junction NY, "Perennial Division" by Master Gardener volunteers Chris Ferrero and Judy Killmer. For more information visit www.eastfishkilllibrary.org

Friday, May 15, 10am-4pm, Saturday, May 16, 9am-2pm, Farm & Home Center, 2715 Route 44, Millbrook, NY, CCEDC Annual Plant Sale, Thousands of beautiful plants grown by Master Gardener volunteers for sale. This is the main fundraiser for Cornell Cooperative Dutchess County's Community Horticulture programs, including the Master Gardener program. MG volunteers will answer gardening questions, help you make selections and even roll your purchases to your car. For more information including details on the plants for sale, visit www.ccedutchess.org/gardening

Sunday, May 17, 1-4pm, Frederick W. Vanderbilt Garden Association Interpretive Tours, 1-4pm, Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site on Route 9 in Hyde Park, weather permitting. Tours of the formal gardens by volunteers discussing the history of the gardens and the mission of the Vanderbilt Garden Association to rehabilitate and maintain the plants, shrubs, trees, and statuary in the gardens as they were in the 1930's just prior to Mr. Vanderbilt's death. Current projects also discussed: renovation of the "Cherry Walk" and replanting of the rose garden terraces. The 1875 Toolhouse building will also be open with Vanderbilt-era photographs. Free to the public. Visitors should park in the Visitor Center parking lot, and walk down the gravel path from the mansion to the gardens. For further information, e-mail info@vanderbiltgarden.org or visit <http://www.vanderbiltgarden.org> or call 845-229-6432.

Wednesday, May 20, 6:30 pm, Millbrook Free Library, 3 Friendly Lane, Millbrook, NY "Think Outside the Window Box" by Master Gardener volunteer Donna Croshier. For more information visit <http://millbrooklibrary.org>

May 23, 11am-3pm, Poughkeepsie Galleria, Hudson Valley Iris & Daylily Society Iris Show, features irises grown in members' gardens. Many of the irises displayed will also be on sale at our annual iris and daylily sale in August at the same location. Free and open to the public.

May 23, Hudson Valley Iris & Daylily Society will host a dinner/lecture with MJ Urist from Tully, NY on growing the Louisiana Iris in our area. The lecture will be presented after a dinner at the Milanese Restaurant. Anyone interested in attending the dinner/lecture should contact President Jim Robinowitz JMRobinowitz@hotmail.com or VP Georgette Martin martingeorgette@aol.com by May 20th. An RSVP is required.

May 23, 24, 25, 9am-4pm, at Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site, Frederick W. Vanderbilt Garden Association Memorial Day Weekend Plant Sale rain or shine. Hundreds of plants will be on sale at reasonable prices, including a wonderful variety of perennial plant divisions from the Vanderbilt Formal Gardens. This is the largest fundraiser of the year for the not-for-profit Association, who must raise all the funds to rehabilitate, plant, and maintain the Vanderbilt Formal Gardens. For further information, e-mail info@vanderbiltgarden.org or visit our website at <http://www.vanderbiltgarden.org> or call 845-229-6432.

Monday, June 1, 6:30 pm, LaGrange Library 488 Freedom Plains Rd. (Rt.55), "Container Gardening" by Master Gardener volunteer Michelle Keeley. For more information visit www.laglib.org

May to mid-June, The Vanderbilt Garden Association online fundraising bulb sale. Go to www.bloominbucks.com click the down arrow and choose Frederick W. Vanderbilt Garden Association, and click the Go button. On the next page click the Yes button to see hundreds of varieties of summer-flowering bulbs available for shipping in May and June. Or call 877-661-2852 but be sure to mention the Frederick W. Vanderbilt Garden Association.

PLANT ID QUIZ



This month's quiz: Can you identify this shrub by its spring leaves and buds?

WEBSITES TO VISIT

- [Ithaca Journal Article: A Sampler of New Flowering Shrubs](#)
- [CCE Tompkins County Early Blooming Shrubs Q&A](#)
- [Wild Edible Ramps](#)
- [Lindera benzoin, Spicebush Culture](#)
- [Helebores – Harbingers of Spring](#)
- [Composting at Home - The Green and Brown Alternative](#)
- [Cornell Plantations Robison York State Herb Garden in Ithaca](#)

***Need Soil pH Testing? Need Lawn or Plant Diagnosis?
Have any gardening questions?***

The **Horticulture Hotline**, (845) 677-5067 is **now open** for the season. Samples for identification or diagnosis can be submitted all year long. Visit our [Horticulture Diagnostic Lab website](#) for reliable resources and information on our services.

HELP SPREAD THE DIRT! Please forward a copy to anyone you think might be interested. To be added or removed from our e-mail list, or submit upcoming gardening events, contact Nancy Halas at nh26@cornell.edu, www.ccedutchess.org.



Websites mentioned in Dutchess Dirt are provided as a courtesy to our readers. Mention of these websites does not imply endorsement by Cornell University, Cornell Cooperative Extension or by the author.

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