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The Gardener's Dirt

Johnston County Center

April 2016

Feature Article

Everyone Should Be...Bee Friendly!

Jeff Morton

Anyone who has been out in their yard or garden during the last two weeks has noticed that spring seems to have arrived ahead of schedule this year. A wide variety of plants have suddenly flowered all about the same time. My three 150-foot rows of blueberries are in full flower and in the middle of the day the air is full of the sound of buzzing bumble bees and honey bees. To be honest the bumble bees greatly outnumber the honey bees and I am a beekeeper with five hives.



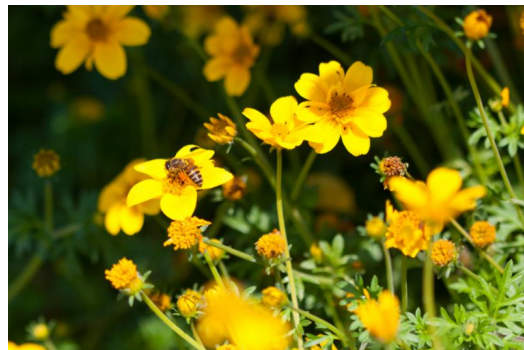
Many people who don't keep bees comment that honey bees don't seem to be as plentiful as they once were. This is an accurate observation since feral or wild honey bee populations that once were commonplace are now nearly extinct. If you do see honey bees, it almost certainly means somebody within a 3-mile radius of you is managing honey bee colonies. Without human involvement most bee colonies will not survive longer than 18-24 months. In the last few years, much news media coverage has been given to a condition called Colony Collapse

Disorder. CCD has greatly affected the number of honey bees, but has been more of an issue in parts of the country with large commercial pollinators, such as the midwest and west coast. For most hobby beekeepers which comprise the vast majority here in NC, the problem seems to be our continual nemesis, the Varroa mite and a problem not fully understood with the longevity of queens.

One great benefit of Colony Collapse Disorder is that its coverage by the news media has greatly increased public awareness of the plight of the honey bee and the important role they, as well as other native bee species, play in food production through pollination. It has also resulted in a renewed research effort at USDA facilities and land grant colleges, like NCSU, primarily through an influx of grant funding as people seek answers and solutions. The Obama administration created a "National Strategy to Promote the Health of Honey Bees and Other Pollinators." That, along with federal funds, was able to do something rarely seen. It actually stimulated a discussion between researchers across the country that defined overall issues and goals and yes, even more importantly, resulted in cooperation among researchers. As time progresses helpful steps are being taken to create best management practices for farmers, landscapers and even homeowners. Lots of good work is being done and maybe, just maybe, the issue of pesticides, specifically neonicotinoids and their sub-lethal effects on honey bees and other pollinators will finally be objectively evaluated and reported.

**As a homeowner you can become a part
of this national strategy by taking four steps.**

(1) You can plant a range of plants in your landscape that attract honey bees and other pollinators with a goal of having some blooming early, mid, and late season. Not all plants attract the same pollinators equally, so part of the fun and challenge is learning about the requirements of the different insects. It takes a lot of flowers (2 million) to make a pound of honey, but together we can make a difference.



There is a wealth of information available on the internet.

(2) Create nest sites for native bees. Honey bees are not native bees, so we are talking about bumble bees, carpenter bees, orchard bees, mason bees, sweat bees, digger bees, cuckoo bees, sunflower bees and squash bees, to name a few. Some of these bees actually use simple nesting structures that can be purchased or made fairly inexpensively. Others just need the right type of soil environment.

(3) Learn to tolerate more weeds in your landscape or lawn since many of them are important nectar and pollen sources (dandelions and clover), often when nothing else is available. Consider creating some weed strips, a small weed garden or native wildflower meadow.

(4) Strive to use less pesticides, particularly neonicotinoids and other systemics that become distributed throughout plant tissue. If you must use a pesticide, read

the label and follow it, especially as to timing of use so as to reduce risk to pollinators.

This is the time of the year when honey bee colonies cast off swarms which go in search of a new home. It's nature's way of reproducing honey bees so the species can survive. They are looking for a cavity with a small entrance about 8-10 feet above ground level. That could be the wall or eave of your home, if it is not properly maintained. A slow walk around your home looking for any cracks or small holes in the exterior that need to be caulked could be time well spent. Getting a colony of bees out of a house is no easy, inexpensive task, even if you can find someone willing to do it.

Resources:

The Xerces Society www.xerces.org

The National Pollinator Stewardship Council www.pollinatorstewardship.org

Managing Alternative Pollinators, NCAES Pub, ISBN 978-1-933395-20-3

Be Creative, Grow Native

American Wisteria *Wisteria Frutescen*

Joyce Pettengill, Master Gardener



Who doesn't love fragrant beautiful blooms in the late spring and early summer? What if I told you that you could have that, plus have it repeat lightly for the rest of the season? What if I said that when it isn't blooming, you could have a lacy canopy to show off?

Yes, folks, I am talking about the American Wisteria! It is a deciduous, perennial, twining vine that is native to many parts of North America. No more out of control vines like the Asian varieties!

The American Wisteria blooms are shorter, rounder, and more compact (think pine cone) than the Asian wisteria blooms. Plus, you get the added benefit of blooming at a younger age with longer lasting blooms on this season's wood.

Simply plant your American Wisteria in full sun in well-drained, moist soil next to a sturdy support - a trellis or arbor. Resist growing it up a tree! Gently tie up the vine until it can twine itself around the structure. To maintain this beauty, you may need to water during dry spells and prune lightly as needed after each flush of blooms. For heavy pruning, late winter is the best time, but be sure to leave four buds to each stem.

But wait! There's more! Beauty and fragrance isn't all the American Wisteria has to offer! It is also a great source of nectar. Yes, you will be feeding butterflies, hummingbird, bees, and other creatures that need a food source. This plant just keeps on giving!

FYI: Chinese Wisteria twines counterclockwise while the American and Japanese

Good or Bad?

Carpenter Bees

Marshall Warren, Horticulture Extension Agent

Is the Carpenter bee good or bad; that is the question.
The answer is "Yes".



Like other bees, Carpenter bees are reported as being excellent pollinators of many vegetables and flowers in our gardens and landscapes. They are economically important insects that are active from early spring through summer. They also provided many hours of entertainment for me when I was a youth trying my skill at swatting them down with only a tobacco stick - it was too easy with the badminton racquet. This helped improve my batting average in Little League baseball!

Homeowners are often frightened about being stung and attacked by the Carpenter bees that hover erratically around their homes. These are not stinging bees like honeybees and bumblebees. A male Carpenter bee is aggressive when protecting its nesting site, but is harmless because it doesn't have a stinger. Although the female has a stinger, it will not usually sting unless it is handled or highly agitated.

Carpenter bees are large, black and yellow bees frequently seen in spring hovering around the eaves of a house or the underside of a deck or porch rail. They emerge in April and May with the males usually the first to appear. Males can be distinguished from females by a whitish spot on the front of the face.



They are most often mistaken for bumblebees, but differ in that they have a black shiny tail section. The Carpenter bee is so called because of its habit of excavating tunnels in wood with its strong jaws. The round half-inch diameter entrance holes are usually found on the underside of a board. A telltale trace of coarse sawdust is often found on the surface beneath the hole. They do not consume the wood as food, but simply excavate tunnels for nesting sites. They are nuisance pests,

but can cause aesthetic and considerable structural damage if large numbers of bees are allowed to drill many tunnels over successive years.

The bees often eliminate their wastes before entering the tunnel. Yellowish-brown staining from voided fecal matter may be visible on the wood beneath the hole. Wooden decks, overhangs and other exposed wood on houses are prime targets. Painted and treated woods are less preferred, but they are by no means immune to attack.

After mating, fertilized females either re-infest old tunnels or excavate new ones. The female bores into the wood perpendicular to the grain for about the length of her body, makes a sharp 90-degree turn, and tunnels parallel to the grain of the wood. Females lay their eggs within a series of small cells. The adult bees die in a matter of weeks. The eggs hatch in a few days and the offspring complete their development in about 5 to 7 weeks. The adults begin to emerge in later summer. Although the bees remain

active, feeding on pollen in the general area, they do not construct new tunnels, but may be seen cleaning out old tunnels which they will use as overwintering sites when the weather turns cold.

Although it is a time-consuming and seemingly endless task, treating the entrance holes with an insecticidal spray or dust can reduce future nesting activity. Products containing carbaryl (Sevin), cyfluthrin or resmethrin, among other chemicals, are suitable. These control efforts should be attempted in late afternoon or at night when the bees are inside the wood tunnels. After 24-36 hours, treated tunnels should be sealed with a small ball of aluminum foil and caulked. Since active or abandoned tunnels may be used as overwintering sites or can be reused next spring for nesting, it is important that they be sealed. The insecticide treatment is important because it kills both the adult bee as well as any offspring as they attempt to emerge later. Simply plugging untreated tunnels with wire mesh or similar material might trap bees inside, but more resourceful bees will simply chew another exit hole.

Resources:

<https://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/ent/notes/Urban/carpenterbees.htm>

<http://www.aces.edu/pubs/docs/A/ANR-1302/ANR-1302.pdf>

Visiting Great NC Gardens

Cape Fear Botanical Garden

Tiffany Whichard, Master Gardener

Cape Fear Botanical Garden in Fayetteville is one of my favorite public gardens to visit in all of North

Carolina. As a matter of fact, my husband and I used to make it a habit to go at least once a year. Not only is it meticulously maintained, but it features a little something for everyone. There are 79 acres of pine and hardwood forest, preserved natural areas, a heritage gardens with indigenous plants and a natural amphitheater. Steep ravines border the river, as do outlook bluffs. Preserved historical buildings (two dating back to the 1800s) can be found, along with a lake, picnic area, art and sculpture installations, a children's area and...if that wasn't enough...a very personable goose.



When you first walk on the property there is an impressive 33,000-square-foot building. The entry pavilion is domed, made almost entirely of glass and bathed in natural light. It contains the offices, welcome center, first set of two restrooms, gift shop, an indoor conference facility, cafe and the orangery. At the time of our last visit, there was a lavish wedding reception taking place in the orangery, or we might've had a better look at it, but my understanding is that the room has a 52-foot-tall conical cupola ceiling constructed out of natural pine.

General admission is \$10 for adults, \$9 for military with ID, \$9 for adults 65 and older, children ages 6-12 are \$5.00 and wee ones 5 and under are free. Paths are accessible to both wheelchairs and strollers. Most are packed with gravel or mulch. If you are a parent with young ones, I would caution you that during our last visit there only appeared to be two sets of public restrooms on the property. Parking is free.

Exiting the pavilion complex, we generally turn left toward the Butterfly Stroll and lake. There is a sweet little covered tunnel here.



Photo courtesy of Brenda Clayton

Looping back, you'll find the Camellia Garden. A woman by the name of Mrs. McLaurin is credited to donating her own 50 year old bushes to the property. Past that is a little Friendship Garden. Depending on when you go, Sweet Autumn Clematis and Mock Orange cover the arbors here like fragrant clouds. A chubby cherub perches nearby, dappled in shade and littered with petals.

That's when it gets whimsical. The nearby Children's Garden features a massive Gulliver's Travel chair threatened to be smothered with vines. A pair of enormous spectacles sit on the sandy beach overlooking the pond. Colorful metal crabs 'skitter' around the edge. Round the bend and you'll see delightful Lilliput Lane with dozens and dozens of wind chimes suspended from metal arches. Practically an invitation for kids to make music!

After that, we set out on the River Trail to the Paw Paw outlook. Never in my life have I seen Paw Paws that tall! This trail encircles the Floodplain Forest and is bordered not only by the Cape Fear River but also by Cross Creek. The views from the Laurel Loop Trail and Rim Walk are really breathtaking. Branching from here, we went to the Rain and Shade Gardens and the Banana Tree Pond.



Photo Courtesy of Tiffany Whichard

A family picnic area is in this section, along with the Conifer Garden and Amphitheater. In the center is a diamond shaped Daylily Garden with paths that radiate out from the center like spokes. Finally, we took our way past the Butler Gazebo and Great Lawn, past the Outdoor Pavilion and another pergola, to the tiny Water Wise Garden and the Heritage Area.

Completed in June 2015 is the 263rd large scale, whirling, animated sculpture created by Patrick Dougherty. Maple and sweet gum saplings were cut, collected by the truckloads and stripped of their leaves, then woven together to create this amazing addition to the Garden. With doors, windows, skylights and curving passageways, you're encouraged to get inside this monumental artwork and explore.

Coming in 2016! **Nature Connects: Lego Brick Sculpture Exhibit**. Inspired by nature and built from nearly half-a-million LEGO pieces, the exhibit will feature larger-than-life sculptures representing the complex and amazing network that interconnects all living things on Earth.

The exhibit runs from September 30, 2016 to January 8, 2017.

You will definitely want to visit the Cape Fear Botanical Gardens. It's a great place to spend a day!

Quick Tip:

Using Old Hoses

Brenda Clayton, Master Gardener

Got old hoses you're planning to toss? Think about using them as the base to your landscape watering system. Go to the home improvement store and explore the landscape sprinkler aisle with all the plugs, emitters, etc.



Lay out your old hose in your flower bed, punch holes for the plugs, cut tubing and attach one end to the plug and the other end to an emitter. Voila!

Roses, for example, will need their own individual emitter. Flowers will enjoy a spraying emitter. You can also make your own sprayer! Water comes out of holes drilled into all sides of this pvc pipe.



Monthly Garden Tasks

APRIL GARDEN TASKS

LAWN CARE

- Grass clippings are a great source of nitrogen. Practice grasscycling, a recycling practice where you leave the grass clippings on the lawn to return nutrients to the soil. This could reduce the amount of nitrogen needed in fertilizer for the year by 25%. Clippings may also be composted or sprinkled onto flowerbeds as long as they're not allowed to mat together.
- Warm season lawn seed may be planted toward the end of the month. Call us for a copy of 'Carolina Lawns' which tells you exactly when and how much seed to plant.



TREES, SHRUBS & ORNAMENTALS

- Renew mulch around trees, shrubs, and in garden beds. Make sure mulch does not touch the bark of trees or shrubs and extends to the drip line of young trees.
- If rambunctious perennials have reproduced too freely, pot up the excess plants and pass them along to friends and family. New gardeners will be thrilled to receive free plants.
- Don't overfeed azaleas and camellias. These shallow-rooted plants are not heavy feeders and can be damaged by over-fertilizing. Submit a soil sample to determine if fertilizer is needed. Use a slow-release, balanced fertilizer immediately after blooming. Apply it around the drip line of the shrub according to label directions.
- Special fertilizers for 'acid-loving plants' are not necessary as our soils are sufficiently acid naturally.
- Watch for black spot and powdery mildew on roses - common problems in our

humid climate. Although these diseases make the foliage look bad, the plants generally do well anyway.

- Watch for lace bugs, the most common pest for azaleas. Look for whitish, stippled leaves with shiny dark flecks on the undersides. If found, treat with horticultural oil (an insecticide). Be sure the spray reaches all parts of the leaves and stems, including the undersides of leaves.
- Annual flowers such as zinnas, moonflowers, cleome, gloriosa daisies and sunflowers can be seeded in mid-April.
- Let spring bulbs die down naturally. Remove flower heads after the petals fade, but do not cut down the foliage. Do not fold, twist or braid foliage. Once the foliage falls over, it can be removed. Leafy companion plants can hide yellowing bulb foliage.
- Tender bulbs such as ranunculus and anemone can be dug and stored when their foliage begins to yellow.
- At the end of the month, plant summer bulbs like caladiums, lilies, gladioli, dahlias, and elephant ears.
- Prepare new flower beds by loosening and amending the soil. All plants perform better when their roots can spread in loose, organic soil. Till the soil and incorporate organic matter, lime and fertilizer - according to soil test results. Plant perennials now so they can become established before hot weather sets in.

VEGETABLES & FRUITS

- Check tender shoots of vegetables and emerging perennials for aphids. If found, spray off with water.
- Watch out for and control fireblight on apple, blackberries and pear trees (including ornamental varieties). Affected branches look like they've been burned with a blowtorch. Control this bacterial disease by pruning diseased limbs back to 1 foot beyond the diseased area. Be careful not to let infected foliage touch healthy foliage (yes, it's that contagious), and disinfect tools between cuts to avoid spreading the disease. Discard rather than compost the infected limbs.
- Plant turnips before April 15. Plant pole beans, carrots, and winter squash after April 15th. Cucumbers, corn, pumpkins, snap beans, watermelon, and cantaloupe may be safely planted at the end of the month.
- Thin cool weather crops that were seeded last month.
- Pick off blossoms of strawberries planted this season. Let plants mature a year before they bear fruit.
- Keep tomatoes well-watered to avoid blossom end rot.

Cool Connections

[NC Extension Gardener Manual](#)

[Past Issues of Gardeners Dirt](#)

[NCSU Publication Links](#)

[NC Extension Gardening Portal](#)

[NC Extension Plant Database](#)

[Going Native \(Selecting and Planting Native Plants\)](#)

[NCSU Pruning Trees and Shrubs](#)



Upcoming Events

Johnston County Extension Master Gardener Annual Plant and Garden Gear Sale -

Saturday April 30th- 8:00AM to Noon. This year it will be held at the Clayton Community Center, 715 Amelia Church Rd.

A wide variety of annuals, perennials, herbs, and vegetables grown by the master gardeners will be available. Trees and shrubs from local nurseries will also be available. Garden gear such as lightly used tools, Rain Barrels, equipment, books and garden art will be offered along with some handmade crafts. This will be a great opportunity to pick up some great plants and support your Johnston County Master Gardener Volunteers.

Pesticide and Household Hazardous Waste Disposal Day-April 30, 2016

Need to clean out the barn, the chemical storage building, pantry, or underneath the sink? On April 30, 2016, North Carolina Cooperative Extension in Partnership with Johnston County Solid Waste and the NCDA will hold a Pesticide and Household Hazardous Waste Disposal Day. The event will take place at the Johnston County Livestock Arena at 520 County Home Road in Smithfield from 8:00 AM to 1:00 PM. Acceptable items include old and unused pesticides, household cleaners, fluorescent (high TCLP mercury) lamps and bulbs from homeowners, and all types of household batteries i.e. Nickel-Cadmium, Lithium, Alkaline and Metal Hydride. In addition, we will be accepting oil base paint only from the public, but not latex. Oil base paint has a volatile organic odor and can only be washed-off with solvent, such as mineral spirits or kerosene. Latex paint, however, will wash-off with water. If the label is still attached, it will indicate oil base vs. latex. Again, we will only be accepting oil base paint and aerosol paints. The latex paint is a non-hazardous household liquid that can be solidified with sand, soil or kitty litter and disposed of in the landfill.

NEWSLETTER EDITED BY: Brenda Clayton

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