Feature Article, Be Creative Grow Native, Good or Bad, Visiting Great NC Gardens, Quick Tip:, Monthly Garden Tasks, Cool Connections, Upcoming Events

The Gardener's Dirt

Johnston County Center **August 2016**

Feature Article

What Johnston County Residents Want to Know

Vicki Shore, Extension Master Gardener Volunteer

There are some gardening dilemmas that affect all of Johnston County from Clayton to Princeton and Benson to Kenly. Here are a few of the questions the Master Gardeners are frequently asked.

1. Do I have moles or voles, and how do I get rid of them?
The easy way to distinguish moles versus voles is to think "m" for moles that are meat eaters (actually insects), and "v" for voles that are vegetarian. Moles tunnel in your yard as they search for grubs, the fat white grub worms (Japanese beetle larvae). Eliminating the grub worms or other food sources is one of the cultural methods of mole control. Trapping and chemical baits are other alternatives to control.
There are two types of voles in the county, the pine vole and the meadow vole. Both have a strong resemblance to mice and the meadow vole is the larger of the two. Pine voles are more localized and stay underground; therefore, most of their damage is done below the soil line eating roots. The meadow vole will travel further damaging above ground even to the point of completely girdling a tree. Cultural methods of reducing voles are mowing and removing excess vegetation and mulch as well as landscape fabric. Chemical baits are also available.

2. How do I get rid of fire ants?
The red imported fire ant has increased steadily in our area due to their high reproductive rate and our mild winters. Two methods used in treating are mound treatment and broadcast treatment. If there are only a few mounds then treating them individually can work. This is done using a bait that will kill the queen. The broadcast method can be used once or twice per year over a larger area. There are also some products intended for use in the vegetable garden. As with any insecticide, it is important to read and follow the label instructions.

Photo Courtesy of Pixabay

3. Why is my Leyland Cypress turning brown?

Several diseases are becoming a problem with Leyland Cypress as it has been used more often in our landscapes as a screening plant. In most cases the plant starts to show a few dying branches and progresses until the entire tree is brown. One disease is Seiridium Canker in which sunken, dark patches appear on the bark often accompanied by a resin flow. This is a fungus that can spread from tree to tree. Currently there are no chemical controls to control this in the landscape. Similar to Seiridium is Botryosphaeria Canker and this disease does not extrude resin. Again, no chemical control is available. Cercospora Needle Blight and Phytophthora Root Rot are other problems of the Leyland Cypress.

Maintaining healthy plants with adequate water, proper mulching and insect control are the best defense. In the event that is not enough, consider replacing with other screening plants. More information is available at https://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/pp/notes/Ornamental/odin17/od17.htm

Photo Courtesy of Pixabay

4. What is wrong with my tomatoes?

Two of the largest complaints we hear about tomatoes are rotten spots on the ends (blossom end rot) and wilt. Blossom end rot is caused by a lack of calcium in the developing fruit. Uneven watering and excess soil salts caused by over fertilization, particularly nitrogen, can cause this type of problem. To prevent blossom end rot, one should maintain even moisture and avoid high nitrogen fertilizer. Also soil testing is recommended as the ph should be between 6.5 and 6.8. There are several wilt diseases of tomatoes such as Fusarium, Verticillium, and other bacterial diseases. Once these are present not much can be done to save the plant. For future plantings, crop rotation is a must. For those without room to rotate, container planting for tomatoes is a good alternative. An excellent resource for learning about tomato wilt can be found at the website, http://www.aces.edu/pubs/docs/A/ANR-0797/ANR-0797.pdf

5. How do I control mosquitoes and am I going to get the Zika virus?

The recent announcement of the first locally-transmitted cases of Zika virus on the mainland U.S. (in south Florida) has the media and the public in a frenzy and raising concern about spending time outdoors and the need to control mosquitoes. Several calls from Johnston County residents have come in asking how to control mosquitoes in their yards and neighborhoods.

Bird bath with stagnant water.
(Photo - M. Waldvogel, NCSU)

Reducing mosquito populations helps reduce both the nuisance biting aspect as well as the risk of exposure to other mosquito-borne diseases. All of the attention has been on Zika, but we also have "resident" diseases such as West Nile virus (WNV), eastern equine encephalitis (EEE) and LaCrosse encephalitis (LAC) which show up in relatively low numbers in our state nearly every year.

With the recent rains and several more weeks to our long hot summer, we're likely to see additional cases of these diseases; but there are things you can do now to reduce the population of mosquitoes. See link below for steps you can take now.

https://ncurbanpests.wordpress.ncsu.edu/feature/2016/mosquito-control-more-than-pesticides/

These are some of the questions most often asked of the Master Gardener volunteers by our Johnston County residents. You can learn more about these topics and more by calling the Johnston County Cooperative Extension office in Smithfield at 919-989-5380.

Be Creative, Grow Native

Coneflower

Echinacea

Joanne King, Extension Master Gardener Volunteer

Photo courtesy of Joanne King

Echinacea is a native perennial flower with nine species. The most common is echinacea purpurea, or purple coneflower, named due to the large purple flowers it produces. It is a great summer-blooming perennial that, with its many hybrids, offers a wide color range for enduring display in the garden. It is drought tolerant, deer resistant, and the blooms with their cone-shaped centers endure into late autumn. Some hybrids of echinachea purpurea include 'Evening Glow', both pale pink and pale yellow flowers from the same plant; 'Hot Papaya', bright orange changing to red pom-poms as they open; 'Leilani, bright yellow; 'Fatal Attraction, shorter growing pink flowers; 'Tomato Soup', large red flowers and a favorite for hummingbirds. Each has various heights, ranging from 24 to 40 inch stems, and varying flower size. One well-known supplier shows 58 different hybrids with delicious-sounding names like 'Mac-n-Cheese', 'Milkshake', 'Raspberry Tart'.

The stems are sturdy but can get top heavy. Deadheading will help keep them upright and will encourage flower production. Birds love the seeds from the cone center, especially gold finch whose bright yellow color gives a sharp contrast to the purple-pink petals. Coneflowers are also a favorite landing spot for butterflies.

Hardy in USDA zones 3-8, coneflowers like well-drained soil and full sun but can tolerate some shade. Water regularly during the first growing season to establish a deep, extensive root system. Once established, they are drought tolerant so a dry site is tolerable. Cut back in fall after frost, or leave dried seed heads through winter. Fertilize in spring and divide at that time by root cuttings.

Coneflowers are a close cousin of the rudbeckia, commonly known as black-eyed susan. The leaves that emerge in the spring of both plants are very similar. So, when attempting to thin out your perennial bed, be aware of their similarities.

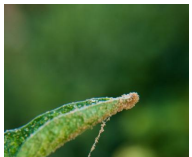
The dried root of echinacea purpurea, pallida and augustifolia species have been known to be used in herbal medicine for their supposed effects on the body's immune system, but its effect is medically non-conclusive.

Good or Bad

Spider Mites

Deborah M. Crandall, Master Gardener

High TSSM population on tomatoes

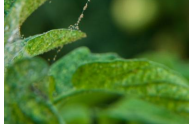


The most common cause of yellowing of tomato leaves this time of year is a spider mite (Tetranychus

urticae:TSSM), infestation. North Carolina gardeners will have some mites on tomatoes in the heat of the summer.

Adult mites are about 1/50th of an inch, and one needs a hand lens to see them. If you tap a leaf over a piece of white paper, sometimes they can be seen as tiny moving dots. With dense populations, some webbing of leaves may be seen as well.

There are many varieties of mites; tomatoes usually have the two-spotted mite. They are greenish and thrive when it is hot, dry and dusty. They can have a new generation every 5-6 days, and it doesn't take long for a population to explode involving the whole plant.



Above Photo's Courtesy of Steve Schoof

Adult female TSSM overwintering under bark.

Photo Courtesy of J F Walgenbach

Mites feed on a wide variety of vegetables, ornamentals, trees and houseplants. They feed on the underside of leaves where they suck out sap, producing yellow dots that develop into a bronzing of the leaves as if sandblasted. Eventually, leaves turn totally yellow, curl up and die.

A sharp stream of water will remove a significant number of mites; but beyond that, organic pesticides are the most effective. Man-made, nonorganic pesticides are not recommended because they kill the good insects helping to keep the mites under control.

The organic pesticides - neem oil, horticultural soaps and horticultural oils - are only effective if sprayed on mites directly. They are also the safest for your children, pets and the good insects. Because mites are commonly on the backside of leaves, they must be applied to both sides of leaves. They will need to be applied regularly, according to the labeled directions.

Remember, the best strategy for gardeners is to monitor plants closely and to use what tools are available as early as possible. For more information on details on controlling spider mites, see
https://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/ent/notes/O&T/flowers/note25/note25.html
http://www.clemson.edu/cafls/departments/esps/factsheets/turforn/spider_mites_to13.html
http://extension.msstate.edu/content/spider-mites

Visiting Great NC Gardens

The Children's Secret Garden, at the Wilson Botanical Gardens

Joanne King, Extension Master Gardner Volunteer

The Wilson Agricultural Center, located at 1806 Goldsboro Street SW, Wilson, NC, is home to the Children's Secret Garden, situated in a shady area adjacent to the center's parking lot. It is a great place to let kids and the young at heart discover the beauty of plant life integrated with colorful, imaginative elements.

Children (or any small-sized person) can use the slide to enter the garden. There is also a pathway as well as a handicap accessible path at the opposite end. There is garden tunnel, a sand lot and picnic area, called the Parents Corral. The Tree House is a covered pavilion where

many educational programs take place. From this shaded area you can sit and observe the garden from different perspectives. A rain wall circulates water from a stream below, where plants suitable for wet areas are featured. As you enter, it looks like a light rain spilling over the Tree House.

Photo Courtesy of Joanne King

The Banana Split Sundae Garden is so named because its plants look, smell or are named after banana split ingredients. See the banana trees in the photo? The banana split bowl fountain is a colorful focal point.

Photo courtesy of Joanne King

And what area for children is complete without a place to dig, swing, climb, get wet, and make noise? The Dino Dig fossil hunt area features materials mined in North Carolina. The tire swing is in a playground area. Sunflower sprinklers cast raindrops to cool down on a warm day. The Labyrinth is a low, spiral hedge that leads to a large gong in the center, waiting to be chimed. The Music Court has a butterfly xylophone begging to be struck. Wake up!

And, of course, the garden is home to many flowers and shrubs that allow everyone to observe close-up the beauty of plant life, butterflies and bees doing their job.

The Garden is open every day year round. Restrooms are available in the center during business hours (M-F, 8-5). If you would like additional information, you can call the Wilson Agricultural Center at 252-237-0113, or check this
link. http://wilsonbotanicalgardens.com/gardens/childern.html

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Clayton Community Center Garden - Helping the Community

Tommy Bagley and Brooke Taylor, Extension Master Gardener Volunteers

Photo courtesy of Tommy Bagley

What started as a vision five years ago for Shawn Banks, former Johnston County Extension Agent, has evolved into a wonderful partnership for the Clayton community and the Johnston County Extension Master Gardeners. Shawn saw an opportunity to improve the public gardening space at the Clayton Community Center Garden and teach gardening classes at the same time. The A to Z Gardening classes have been taking place at the center for the past three years and the vegetable gardening area on the rear of the property has been restructured and improved thanks to Shawn's vision and the hard work of many of the Master Gardener volunteers as well as many interested people of the community. Shawn is pictured at the Community Center teaching an earlier A to Z class.

In 2015, Shawn accepted a position as County Extension Director at Catheret County; but thanks to the hard work of many Johnston County Master Gardeners, most especially Roy Lewis, the program has continued to grow and expand. The community garden is feeding many of the needy of our community with harvests being distributed through the Clayton Area Ministries. From the beginning of this year until July 25th, there has been a bounty of over 3125 pounds of produce harvested and distributed and the garden continues to thrive due to the hard work of everyone involved. Roy Lewis is pictured working and teaching at the garden.

Photo courtesy of Tommy Bagley

This past spring the Clayton Community Center extended use of the facility to the Extension Master Gardeners for their annual spring plant sale which was a resounding success. In appreciation, the Extension Master Gardeners have presented a check to the Community Center to be used for future programs. Tamara Wallace and Gerald Brown, Extension Master Gardener Volunteers are shown presenting a check for $500. to the director of the Clayton Community Center, Larry Bailey.

The A to Z Gardening Classes will not be held this fall but will continue next year beginning in February. Information about the class can be obtained from the Clayton Community Center at 919-553-1550 or the Johnston County Agricultural Center at 919-989-5380. For classes and programs that the Town of Clayton

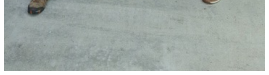


Photo courtesy of Tamara Wallace, taken by Wanda Bowman

Parks and Recreation offer see link:

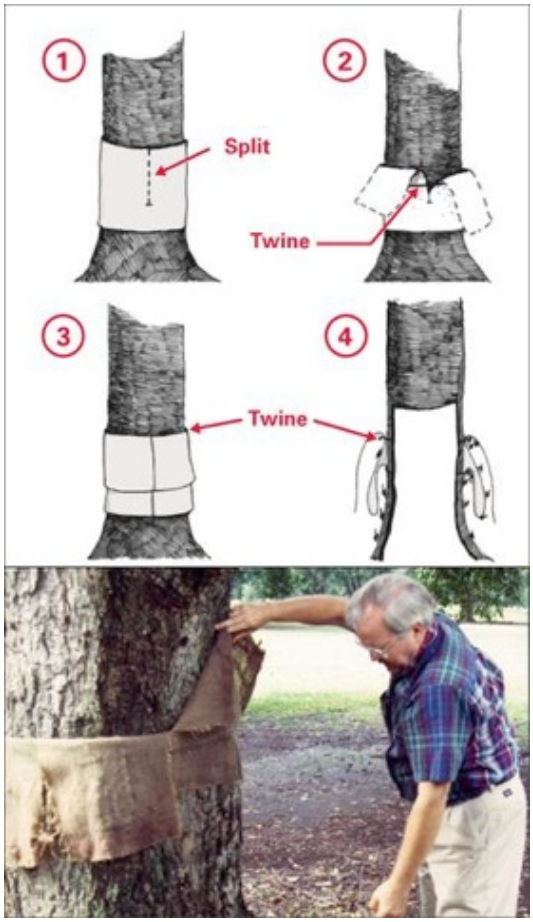
http://www.townofclaytonnc.org/Parks-and-Recreation/classes-programs.aspx

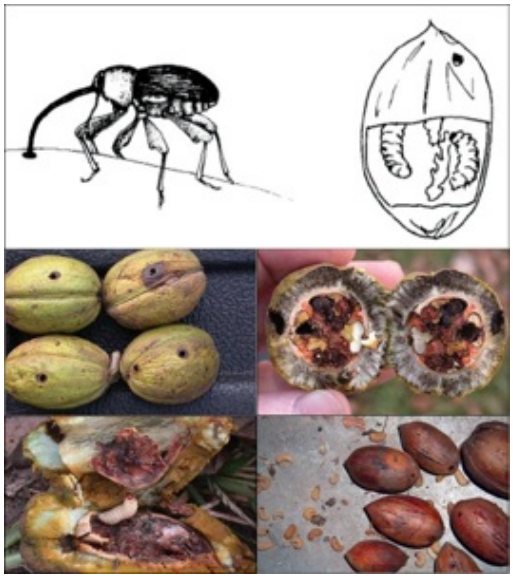
Quick Tip:

Watch for the Weevil

Rose Crickenburger, Extension Master Gardener Volunteer

August through September starts the Pecan Weevil activity as adults emerge from the soil usually after a heavy rain. The adults crawl or fly up into the trees and cause two types of damage. In the first type, weevils puncture the nuts in early August causing the nuts to fall prematurely after two or three days. The second type is caused by larval feeding within the nut. As the nuts fall to the ground, the fully developed larvae chew a single hole through the shell and exit the nut and burrow into the soil. They remain there for one to two years when the cycle starts over. The only possible time to manage infestations is after adults have emerged from the soil and before egg laying starts. To monitor for the pecan weevil, see illustration below. Once infestation is apparent, it can be controlled with foliar insecticidal sprays using liquid carbaryl (Sevin) with two to three applications at 10 day intervals. Follow label instructions.





The pecan weevil punctures nuts and its larvae damage the kernel and then create a small hole through which the larvae exit the nuts.

Pecan weevil monitoring: Burlap is wrapped around trees 3-4 feet above soil and tied in place at bottom. The remaining burlap is overlapped and tied at the top, causing weevils to walk over each flap and allowing time for grower observation.

Resources:
http://content.ces.ncsu.edu/growing-pecans-in-north-carolina
http://gregg.agrilife.org/files/2011/09/controllingthepecanweevil_1.pdf

Monthly Garden Tasks

AUGUST GARDEN TASKS


Photo Copurtesy of Pixabay

GENERAL REMINDERS

- Collect soil samples for testing so you'll know how much fertilizer and lime to add this fall. Test your lawn, flowerbeds and vegetable garden using the free kits from Cooperative Extension. Testing should be done once every 2-3 years depending on the soil type.
- Watering deeply but infrequently encourages a deep and extensive root system for better drought tolerance.
- Control fungal diseases by watering early in the morning, allowing the sun to dry water droplets from the foliage.
- Mulch trees and shrubs with a 2-3" layer of mulch to keep roots cool, conserve moisture, and control competing weeds and grasses. Avoid mulching more than 4" deep, and leave 3-4" between mulch and the trunk of the tree/shrub.
- Avoid pruning shrubs and trees during late summer. Pruning stimulates new growth which will not have sufficient time to harden off before cold weather.
- Avoid nitrogen fertilizers during late summer. New growth at this time of year is vulnerable to frost damage in the fall. If your soil test shows you need to add phosphorus or potassium to your soil, add them now. These nutrients will help your plants better withstand the winter.
- Cut back leggy summer flowers, then fertilize them. They'll regrow within a few weeks and look great till frost.
- Plan for Fall Bulbs. Autumn-blooming crocus and colchicum add color to your fall garden. Since these bulbs are not always available locally, order them now from a mail-order source. They need to be planted in September.
- Prepare garden spaces for fall garden veggies. Greens, cabbage, carrots, parsnips, beets, radishes and lettuces can be started by mid-August.
- New tomato plants and fall cucumbers need to planted quickly.

LAWN CARE

- Check out the Lawn Maintenance Calendar for your grass and learn how best to care for it. http://www.turffiles.ncsu.edu/
- August is the best time to prepare for planting cool season grasses. The optimal planting time is the second half of September.
- Prepare to treat for winter weed control using pre-emergents.

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

Cooperative Extension Search

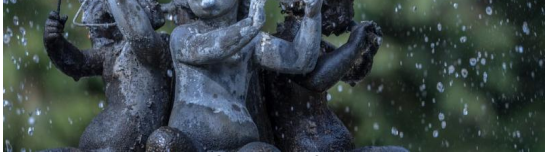


Photo Courtesy of Pixabay

Upcoming Events

Master Gardeners only: Next PPP webinar will be on August 23rd beginning at 10:00 until 12:00 in Kitchen Lab.

NEWSLETTER EDITED BY: Brooke Taylor

*** If you would like to receive this newsletter monthly via email, send an email to mhwarren@ncsu.edu asking to be added to "The Gardener's Dirt" email list.

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Home Horticulture in Johnston County, NC

Johnston County NC Extension Master Gardener Volunteers