

NC STATE

EXTENSION

Master Gardener | Johnston County

The Gardener's Dirt Newsletter

December 2018

Feature Article:

JOHNSTON COUNTY EXTENSION MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEERS

By Silvia Caracciolo

Extension Master Gardener Volunteer



When I think of plants nurtured in a garden, growing, thriving and producing seeds for future generations, I think of Extension Master Gardener Volunteers (EMGVs). Just like those plants, we master gardeners are nurtured from our days in class, to provide the public with research based information in establishing and maintaining gardens, lawns, landscapes and natural resources.

We are a non-profit organization in affiliation with North Carolina State University and the Johnston County Extension. We are dedicated to educating the public and provide many opportunities to share our knowledge. EMGV's work in local school gardens to engage students in growing and eating vegetables and is aligned with each grade's curriculum requirements. We provide Mobile Plant Clinics at local retail locations to answer consumer questions. During the summer we provide a 4-H based curriculum where students are taught the basics of plant life, plants are incorporated into art activities, and students are given the opportunity to create meals with fruits and vegetables. Not only are the children learning culinary techniques but are encouraged to try things that have never eaten at home!

On the grounds at the Johnston County Center, Master Gardeners maintain a Choice Plants Garden, where Johnston County nurseries feature new plants and our new Vegetable Garden is used to demonstrate growth of agricultural and vegetable crops for the everyday homeowner. Some of these vegetables are used for demonstration cooking and some are donated to our local food banks. Our Bee Hotel is a structure donated by one of our EMGV's family that promote our native pollinators. The Customer Help Line is another resource where the EMGV's can assist the public with their gardening and landscape concerns.

Master Gardeners along with community volunteers maintain two community gardens which provide free vegetables to food banks located in Johnston County. One is located in Clayton at the Community Center off Amelia Church Rd, and the other one is located in Smithfield across the street from the Johnston County Community College. Last year these two gardens produced over eight thousand pounds of fresh produce to six food banks.

Each year we have a plant sale fundraiser located at the Clayton Community Center. Vegetables, flowers, shrubs, perennial and annual plants showcase our Plant Sale. A Craft Committee of EMGVs has products to sale at this event. The funds that are raised are used to sponsor our educational programs for the public.

Extension Master Gardener Volunteers also participate in the State Fair and at the Home & Garden Show in Raleigh. As we grow like the plant in your garden - we are beneficial to our environment. Our passion is to educate those around us. As we flower and produce seeds, we look to find more people interested in the Master Gardener Program. Generation upon generation, we are here to serve the residents of Johnston County.

Quick Tip:

Floating Row Covers

By: Tiffany Whichard
Extension Master Gardener Volunteer



At my Plant a Row for the Hungry Garden in Smithfield, we use something called floating row covers during the Fall and Winter season. Sometimes these are referred to as frost blankets or by the common brand name of Reemay . The terms are used interchangeably and mean a spun polyester or polypropylene fabric that

is used to cover crops. It allows some sun and water in, but keeps seedlings and plants warmer than the outside temperature. Aside from that, it also can be used to protect tender plants from damaging winds and help to temporarily safeguard against pests. You can purchase them in different weights--light, medium and heavy--each one offering progressively better protection. If you are lucky enough to find the in a retail store, they are always light. If you want to have a different weight, you'll need to order through catalogs or online. The heaviest row covers, incidentally, will keep plants eight to ten degrees warmer. If you'd like to extend your season, this is a great first step!

Native Feature Plant:

"Ilex verticillata"

Winterberry

By: Margy Pearl

Extension Master Gardener Volunteer



Ilex verticillata, Winterberry, Pearl's Garden

When the bleakest months of winter makes your landscape look dull, don't you want plants that pop with color? Look no further than this member of our stunning native *Ilex* or holly family! This dense, deciduous bush, covered with hundreds of bright red berries from fall to very late winter, attracts many songbirds. Virtually every gardening magazine article using the phrase "winter interest", features the stunning, low maintenance winterberry!

Since winterberries are dioecious (separate male and female plants), the signature attractive red berries are produced only by the fertilized female flowers. One male winterberry is generally needed for pollinating up to 10 female plants.

Some area nurseries carry winterberries; there's still time to plant at least 2 of this unusual, beneficial native. Next fall, prune some branches for your holiday decorations!

Wildlife Value: nectar for butterflies, host plant for Henry's Elfin butterfly, fruits eaten by songbirds and small mammals, bird nesting site and cover, somewhat resistant to deer damage, special value to honeybees. All hollies support the specialized bee: *Colletes banksii*

Height and Spread: upright, rounded habit, slow-growing, up to 12ft in the wild, easily pruned. Cultivars: 'Nana'- 5ft., 'Winter Red'- 9ft., 'Sunset'- 8ft.

Foliage and Flowers: leaves are toothed but not sharp, may turn shades of maroon in the fall and black with first frost. Inconspicuous greenish-white flowers appear late spring

Site: Native to eastern swamps and water edges, prefers acidic, moist to wet soils in full sun to part shade, adaptable to light or heavy soils, very winter hardy. Ideal for rain gardens or a moist natural area hedge.

For further information and photos:

<https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/all/ilex-verticillata/>

Additional Source:

<http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder/PlantFinderDetails.aspx?kemperco de=d440>

Veggie Tale:

Expand your diet and garden - with some Kohlrabi!

By: Dave Allison

Extension Master Gardener Volunteer



I started growing Kohlrabi many years ago, and each year look forward to harvesting a dozen (keeps in the refrigerator for months). The name comes from German words: Kohl "cabbage" and rabi (turnip). It looks like a turnip but is not. Kohlrabi is in the Brassica Genus, which is where mustard, cabbage, broccoli and many other cruciferous vegetables. The thick stem can get 4" to 12" wide and once peeled can be eaten like an apple, or sliced with salt and lemon. Several varieties are available from seed catalogs, I like the Konan Hybrid, though the Purple Vienna has nice color outside, but the inside is the same pale green/yellow. I have not found a bad variety for this area yet!

The stem starts to plump above the ground, these photos are from my garden on November 3rd. Note the beginning of the stem plumping and the hardy leaves. They love compost and I lightly mulch mine below the plumping stem.

Local nurseries will also have "transplants" in the early spring and in late August for planting. In 50

days you will have a nice plump stem with edible leaves. Wilt the leaves like spinach or "greens" and serve as a side. The kohlrabi can also be cooked and is quite mild in taste, so add seasoning and spices as you like. It will have a mild cabbage taste so consider celery salt, mustard seed, nutmeg, tarragon, garlic, caraway, or dill. So in the early spring, plant some kohlrabi seeds or find starter plants in the local nursery and enjoy an unusual plant that is a culinary delight eaten raw or sliced and cooked. Don't forget to cook the leaves like "greens" - enjoy, you'll be planting Kohlrabi every year!

December Gardening Tasks



LAWN CARE

- Promptly remove fallen tree leaves from the lawn to prevent smothering that cause dead areas.
- For cool season grasses, mow to 3 inches and remove leaves and other debris.
- Cool-season weeds in established dormant Zoysia or Bermuda grass lawns may be treated with broadleaf herbicides.
- NEVER burn off centipedegrass to remove excess debris.
- Selected herbicides (like atrazine or simazine) can be applied to control annual bluegrass and several annual broadleaf weeds. Read label directions to see if these herbicides can be used on your grass type.

GENERAL REMINDERS

- Winterize your outdoor water pumps, pto pumps, power washers and anything else that may freeze and break. Don't leave hose pipes screwed to faucets when extended freezing weather is expected.

- Prune evergreens to use for winter decorations in the house by cutting out unwanted limbs that would be pruned in February anyway. Save major pruning for late winter. Holly, Magnolia, Cedar, and Nandina foliage will last a long time.
- Prevent winter damage to plants from desiccation (drying out), freezing and thawing, and breakage from ice and snow loads. Keep plants watered during dry periods. Read *How to Protect Plants from Cold Damage* at <https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/protecting-plants-from-cold-damage>
- After tree leaf fall is an excellent time to mulch shrubs, trees, perennials, and herbs for winter protection. Apply a layer 3 inch deep since most perennials are dormant and it's easy to get a wheelbarrow into the garden. Mulch comparisons and general info: <https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/mulches>
- Put your cut Holiday tree to use! Cut the branches and lay them over perennials to protect them from the cold. Shred small branches to make mulch.
- Do NOT prune fruit trees now. Fruit trees are best pruned late winter just before they start to grow in spring. <https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/training-and-pruning-fruit-trees-in-north-carolina>
- Asparagus crowns can be planted now through March.

WILDLIFE

- Clean bird feeders monthly with hot sudsy water and diluted bleach to prevent the spread of wild bird diseases. Keep seed hulls from accumulating underneath the feeder to discourage rodents.

Cool Connections:



Helpful Links from N.C. Cooperative Extension Johnston County

[**Additional Informative Links**](#)

[**Basic Steps for Home Landscaping**](#)

Upcoming Events:

Calling all Gardening Enthusiasts! Have you considered becoming a Johnston County Extension Master Gardener Volunteer?



If you love to garden, enjoy the company of others with the same interest, have a desire to expand your scope of knowledge and like the idea of volunteering and making a difference in your community, then becoming a Johnson County Extension Master Gardener Volunteer is for you! All skill and knowledge levels are welcome! The only requirement is an enthusiasm for learning and a desire to be involved. Extension Master Gardener Volunteers expand Extension's capacity to meet the needs of the gardening public by learning to use and to teach research-based horticultural practices. All training and resources are provided by NC State faculty and staff to help you become a highly effective community educator providing the public with unbiased, research-based, environmentally sound information about growing lawns, fruits, vegetables, trees and ornamentals.

To learn more about Master Gardeners, go to <https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/north-carolina-extension-master-gardener-volunteer-program-guidelines/ii-north-carolina-extension-master-gardener-volunteer-program>

The training starts on Thursday January 31st 2019. Classes will be held each Thursday afternoon from 1:30 to 4:30 for 15 weeks. Contact Horticulture Extension Agent Marshall Warren for more information at mhwarren@ncsu.edu. The fee for the course is \$150. The application and fee are due by January 4th, 2019.

Johnston County Extension



Blueberry & Grape Production & Pruning Workshop

Future Events:

**Birds, Bees, Butterflies and Growing Pollinator Gardens Symposium
September 14, 2019**

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For accommodations for persons with disabilities, contact Bryant Spivey at (919) 989-5380, no later than five business days before the event.

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