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NC STATE

EXTENSION

Master Gardener | Johnston County

The Gardener's Dirt

Johnston County Center

July 2017

Feature Articles

Art In The Garden

Magic in my Garden

By Tamara Jo Wallace, Master Gardener Volunteer

Decorating my garden has become a springtime tradition which usually takes several weeks to finish. Each year my goal is to have the garden look different from the year before. Many items get a fresh coat of paint and a good cleaning. At this point in my life, it's all about bright and colorful. The brighter the better. My purpose is to make it an enjoyable adventure when I spend time in my garden, even during the mundane chore of weeding.

Many people consider me to be an artist which is so very untrue. What I am is a "re-purposer" of

yard sale and flea market finds.



Many of my favorite finds were not meant to be used outside. Old swag lamp globes from the 70's make great garden art or architectural finds.



Old bed frames are one of my favorite finds and after trial and error, metal is the way to go. I'm never looking for a particular item, I look for the odd and unwanted treasures. Stuff that most people walk away from but I can buy at a bargain which is part of the adventure.



Photos Courtesy of Tamara Wallace

I hope these pictures from my yard will inspire you to look at junk as a way of adding something interesting to your garden.

A Treasured Gift in the Garden

Dana Warren, guest writer

Varying from simply fun and whimsical to the more serious and sentimental, garden art adds interest and can personalize a garden. When there is a story behind it or special meaning, it is appreciated all the more. My husband, Horticulture Extension Agent, Marshall Warren, had been eyeing a spot in our yard for some time where he wanted to place some sort of garden art. Our upcoming 30th wedding anniversary in July 2015 gave him a perfect excuse to search for such an object to give to *me* as a gift! Browsing through a garden center,

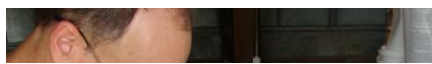




Photo Courtesy of Dana Warren

he saw the Painted Peace art posts and liking the look of these, but wanting something more personal, he was inspired to create one himself, personalized in a way that would be meaningful to the both of us.

We were beginning a new season in our lives and I had been reflecting on life lessons learned during recent stressful times of caregiving for my mother-in-law as her health declined, coping with and trying to overcome some health issues of my own, and supporting Marshall through stressful times in his sales career. I have always enjoyed writing and had started dabbling with blogging as Marshall was making the decision to go back to his first love, other than me - horticulture!

Marshall brainstormed as to what to put on the post and decided to use the words from my blogging endeavor - **"Cultivating Serenity in Life and Love - Striving for Peace and Growth in Every Season"**. They certainly seemed like perfect words to plant in a garden.

Taking time to write had been therapeutic for me. For Marshall, taking a much-needed break from the high pressure of sales and with the hope of a position with Johnston County putting his mind at ease, painting a post with our anniversary as his deadline was good down-time and therapeutic as well, allowing him to indulge in creativity and get back in touch with his artistic side.

To make the post, he used an aged, dry 6x6" treated landscape timber that was cut in the desired length and thoroughly sanded. Any cracks were filled with wood filler. He chose all the paint colors that complimented the flower and leaf colors in our garden. He also got some of his artistic creative ideas from the Painted Peace website and photographs of the perennials and wildlife in our yard. To set up his work on the post, he drilled a hole in the center of the post at each end and supported it with re-bar suspended between two saw horses in an enclosed shed on our property. This allowed him to sit in a relaxing position while working and to spin the post, enabling him to paint all sides without getting unwanted finger prints or smudges on the wet paint. He painted it with several coats of base primer first. Then he painted it with several coats of outdoor semi-gloss paint as the base and background color. For the artistic painting of the flowers, he used outdoor acrylic craft paints carefully blended to capture the true colors of our garden. A local printer cut out vinyl lettering for the wording. Once it was finished, he applied 4 to 5 coats of an outdoor SPAR Urethane UV clear coating to protect it from the weather, being sure to sand lightly between coats. He worked a couple of hours each day for about three weeks and managed to hide his project from me until it was nearly completed.

It was quite the endeavor and probably one he will not repeat without a great deal of new inspiration. I am glad our 30th wedding anniversary inspired him and I think he surprised himself at what he accomplished, especially having never painted much other than the bumpy plaster walls of our old farmhouse. His beautiful labor of love is placed directly within view of our kitchen windows and every day I enjoy viewing his meaningful gift to *us*!

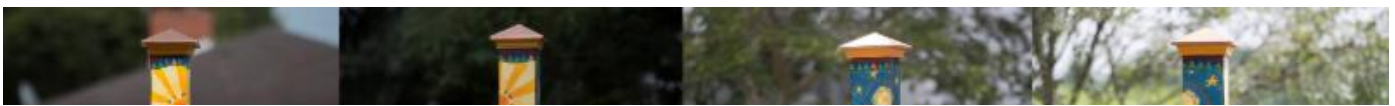




Photo Courtesy of Lindsey Warren Photography

Grow Native

Switchgrass

(Grown and recommended by Johnston County Nurserymen)

Silvia Caracciolo, Extension Master Gardener Volunteer



Photo Courtesy of Pender Nursery

I have to confess... I love ornamental grasses! The relaxing sway of the leaf blades in the breeze, their showy colors in blades and flowers, and the abundant choices of varieties make them an excellent addition to any garden. They can grow from a dwarf size (ground cover) to 15 feet high in some varieties. They are easy to care for and require little maintenance. You can have part of the prairie in your own yard. Ornamental grasses are resistant to disease and insects. Give them full sun and good drainage - they are ready to enhance your landscape.

Right plant - right space. This is certainly important in planting Switchgrasses. Switchgrass will reach full maturity in three years. When planting switchgrass, consider the height and width of the mature grass and place it so it doesn't cover up smaller plants. As a clumping variety, switchgrass is never more than half as wide as it is tall.

Plant at least 12 inches apart and the addition of organic matter to the soil is recommended. These plants seed vigorously so you might find babies in your yard! It is suggested to mulch thickly. You can fertilize in early spring but they don't really need special care.

Switchgrass has a long taproot, which will eventually grow 10 feet long or more. Young plants can be put in containers, however, as they mature they need deep pots. With an extensive root system, the rhizome will remain alive underground through the winter. In late winter or early spring shear it back to within a few inches of the soil line. This allows better air circulation and sunlight to the new growth.

Just a few of the many ways Switchgrasses can be used are as a focal point, to add privacy, to create texture, to soften hard shapes, and to add accents in planting beds. However, one of the most important aspects of grasses is the year-round beauty they can produce.

Talk about year-round beauty. Dallas Blues Switchgrass is a bold grass. It evolves from loose clumps into

Talk about year-round beauty, Dallas Blues Switchgrass is a bold grass. It evolves from loose clumps into an upright, slightly open look. This plant is noted for its gray to blue-green foliage. During the summer it produces unusually large, loose, diversely branching tiny plumed flower clusters. Dallas fans claim they are as large as footballs! During the fall, the flower cluster's tones intensify. Wintery weather helps it to produce seeds for birds and shelter for those seeking the warmth. The strands stand tall, while the weight of snow turns Dallas Blues into a creamy tone.

There are several nurseries in the Johnston County Nursery Association (JCNA) that grow switchgrass. Contact the retail nurseries and garden centers and ask for the varieties they offer. I located at least nine varieties produced by the JCNA: Cloud Nine, Dallas Blues, Heavy Metal, Northwind Upright, Prairie Fire Red, Red, and Shenandoah.

One more note, switchgrass has been studied for over 70 years as a hay and forage crop. With new plants and management practices, this crop has caught the interest of farmers. It can produce 5-10 tons per acre and is researched as biomass energy. Farmers and bio-refineries are looking to meet future energy requirements of our nation.

All About Switchgrass - University of Tennessee system
milan.tennessee.edu/research/switchgrass_info.asp

Switchgrass Research Group: Progress Report - Genomic Science ...
genomicscience.energy.gov/pubs/switchgrassreport.pdf

Good or Bad?

Spittlebug

Tiffany Whichard, Extension Master Gardener Volunteer



Photo Courtesy of NC State University

Every now and again, you'll probably see a glob of white froth or what looks like tiny soap suds, on the stems of plants. You might even spot it on bushes or the branches of a tree. What you might not have known is that this froth actually conceals one or more immature stages of an aptly named Spittlebug.

Here in North Carolina, we are most likely to see two generations of Two-Lined Spittlebugs. What do they look like? Well, they measure roughly a third of an inch long and have dark bodies with distinct orange-red, horizontal stripes. Their wings come together to form an inverted 'V' near the top of the head. Depending on where you go, they may also be called Froghoppers, the moniker owing to the fact that certain types can resemble a light green frog when they aren't cloaked in the spittle-like substance.

For a long time, these little critters weren't thought to be very destructive, but now that is being reassessed. Turns out, they can be problematic for some bean crops, strawberries, grasses, hollies and other ornamentals. Basically, eggs overwinter in leaf debris and protected areas. Come Spring, they hatch and become nymphs. The nymphs feed, using a needle-like mouth and remove fluids from each plant. This allows them to excrete the froth that they use to hide in.

As you might imagine, their feeding can sometimes weaken or stress a host plant, causing stunted growth, dwarfing and browning. Big infestations, luckily, can be addressed with insecticidal soap (readily available at garden centers and home improvement stores), handpicked or simply removed by a blast of water.

Do you have questions about another bug or insect that you can't identify? If so, send us a description, where you found it, and, if possible, a clear photo and we'll be glad to help you.

Quick Tip:

Keeping Bird Baths And Feeders Clean

Chris Alberti, Extension Master Gardener Volunteer

If you like to attract wildlife to your garden, place bird baths or other water receptacles throughout the garden. To create watering stations for pollinators, place rocks in them that allow bees and butterflies access to perch and drink without drowning. Clean these frequently and add fresh water. If you have hummingbird feeders, don't neglect them. Clean these out and replenish every two to three days.



Photo Courtesy of Pixabay



Photo Courtesy of Pixabay

Ask An Expert

Daylilies!

Noel Weston- Lakeview Daylily Farm, Garner, NC



Daylilies are very hardy perennials. Most people find them very rewarding-they're easy to grow and your garden is different literally every day! Daylilies grow very fast in the

spring; during bloom season, they don't grow much at all; then, in August and September they begin growing again.

How do I lessen the effects of leaf streak, rust, and root rot of daylilies?

This is a difficult question to answer as it depends on the specific conditions of your garden.



Photos Courtesy of Lakeview Daylily Farm

This is probably the most important factor in growing beautiful daylilies! Keep the pH of the soil up around 6.5-6.8. When used properly, lime will control more diseases for its cost than anything on the market. Most North Carolina soils tend to be acidic. In this area, they are often around 5.2. We urge gardeners to get a soil test (free) from NC Department of Agriculture's Agronomic Division on Reedy Creek Road in Raleigh. We suggest that you take several samples from your garden. If you plan to plant near concrete, that area will likely have a higher pH than an area near pine trees. Keep your samples separate and mark them so you'll know where you took each sample. When you get your results, a note will tell you how much lime to add to your soil.

How should I fertilize daylilies?

Begin in February and use complete fertilizer 10-10-10, 19-19-19, or 8-8-8. We use 8-8-24 in our garden. The very best is 13-13-13 Nutricote, but it's very pricey at about \$55 per 50# bag. You'll want to fertilize a minimum of twice per year in February and August; with Nutricote, you can fertilize every 70 days. Do not use fertilizer during the bloom season.

When can I divide my daylilies?

Early spring (before bloom season) and September are most productive. Dividing during the heat of the summer makes daylilies tend to rot.

Reflection on Past Event

Jr. Master Gardener Camp

Valerie Little - Master Gardener Volunteer

This year the JCMGV's hosted our third year of Jr. Master Gardener Camp. We had 5 attendees and 3 MG's who taught plant life, classification, soil differences, created a variety of experiments and learning aids as well as each camper planned and installed a 4x4 garden of their own and performed a service project of maintaining the numerous Blue Bird Nest Boxes located on the Cooperative Extension's campus. One of our MG leaders, Sam Coburn, wrote a great summary of all our activities during our 15 hours with the campers, age 9-13. Thanks for supporting your JCMGV group as we provide opportunities for our 4-H youth to get their hands dirty in the garden!





Photos Courtesy of Valerie Little

Summary of our Junior Master Gardener Camp, June 19-23, 2017: by Sam Coburn

Oh what a delightful week we all had with the kids! John knew so many answers to plant questions (maybe he knew the atomic number of Calcium since he has a poster of the Periodic Table of elements on his bedroom ceiling?); Although Scott was unable to attend camp on Monday and Thursday, he liked the camp so well, he asked if the camp could be extended. Maybe next year Scott!; Lilly sang a wonderful rendition of the Pollination Song to the tune of "This Land Is Your Land"; Jordan's guizzical nature was contagious for all of us with his intense interest in Pollinator Bees. On the last day (Friday), Edan had a black cake she had baked with gummy worms to share with us. The cake represented soil with worms.

Valerie, I learned so much from you with your teaching style with crafts and planting the garden with kids. Thank you so much for your leadership with Judith and I in our goal to provide the kids knowledge and interest in gardening. Judith your insights for the kids, and your concepts of plants and soil helped to accentuate the kids' comprehension of growing plants in the garden.

Finally, I felt as if we had God's presence with us to make the camp experience a success!

Monthly Garden Tasks

July Garden Tasks



Photo Courtesy of Pixabay



Photo Courtesy of Pixabay

GENERAL IDEAS

- Water deeply but infrequently, this will encourage deep rooting of plants for better drought resistance.
- Control fungal diseases which flourish in hot and humid weather by keeping irrigation water off

foliage. The best time to water is early morning. This allows the sun to dry water from foliage. Watering in early evening creates damp foliage all night which encourages the development of fungal diseases.

- Help reduce the mosquito population by emptying any containers with standing water. Mosquito larva can grow in shallow water, like plant saucers that do not dry completely.

LAWN CARE

- When should you water your lawn? When the grass blades are just starting to curl and your footprints remain on the lawn when you walk on it. Watering too often encourages a lawn with a shallow root system that cannot handle drought well. Apply an inch of water, in the early morning. Set your timer for 4 am if you can.
- Grasses vary in their needs. Check out the Lawn Maintenance Calendar for your grass and learn how best to care for it, month by month...

Bermuda - <http://www.turffiles.ncsu.edu/turfgrasses/bermudagrass/lawn-maintenance>

Centipede - <http://www.turffiles.ncsu.edu/turfgrasses/centipedegrass/lawn-maintenance>

Zoysiagrass - <http://www.turffiles.ncsu.edu/turfgrasses/zoysiagrass/lawn-maintenance>

St. Augustinegrass - <http://www.turffiles.ncsu.edu/turfgrasses/st-augustinegrass/lawn-maintenance>

Tall Fescue - <http://www.turffiles.ncsu.edu/turfgrasses/tall-fescue/lawn-maintenance>

- Keep fescue mowed at a height of 3 - 3 1/2 inches to help it survive hot, dry periods. It is a cool season grass that slows down in the summer. If it is cut too short, the tender roots will be exposed to extreme heat which will certainly damage, if not kill them. It is also difficult for fescue to recover from cutting too short as it is not actively growing at this time.
- Repair Warm-Season Lawns: Bermuda, Zoysia, and centipede are growing strong by now, making it easy to see spots that are weak or weedy. Pull weeds and patch bare spots if you haven't already.
- Established fescue lawns naturally go semi-dormant in the heat of July. Established fescue can survive up to three weeks without water, but will need a drink if it doesn't rain by then! Water only when grass shows sign of wilt (footprints show when grass is walked on). Fescue planted last fall will need watering every week. See the Fescue Lawn Maintenance Calendar (link above).

TREES, SHRUBS and ORNAMENTALS

- When you visit your roses, clip off leaves that show early evidence of blackspot - a common fungal disease that causes black spots on leaves. Put the spotted leaves in the garbage (not in the compost pile.)
- When gathering cut flowers to bring indoors, cut stems early in the day. Bring them indoors and recut the ends while they are submerged in a sink of water.
- Don't use Japanese beetle traps. The pheromones in the traps often attract beetles that would not otherwise visit the area. To control a particularly pesky group of beetles, go hunting for them in early morning and shake them into a bowl of soapy water to get rid of them.
- Keep potted plants watered! Plants in pots outside may need daily watering in the heat of summer.
- Pinch out the tips of garden mums to encourage lower, compact plants with many flowers.
- Start stem cuttings of geraniums and leaf cuttings of succulents to be potted for use as house plants this winter.
- Propagate shrubs by rooting cuttings. Semi-hardwood cuttings of Azalea, Camellia, and Holly can be taken this month. The wood should be hardened enough that the stem breaks when bent.
<http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/hil/hil-8702.html>
- Prune spent crape myrtle blossoms to prolong the flowering period.
- Sooty Mold on the crape myrtles will make the leaves appear dark and sooty or almost uniformly charcoal gray. Sooty mold grows on honeydew (the sticky leftovers) from aphids. Control the aphids, and the mold will wash off.
- Powdery Mildew makes leaves appear gray and powdery. It's a common problem which disfigures the foliage, but doesn't kill the tree.
- Hand-pick bagworms off evergreens. Pesticides are not effective once the caterpillars are safe in their bags.
- Remove vigorous upright sprouts growing from tree roots ("suckers"), or from the upper surfaces of tree branches ("water sprouts"). Pruning the sprouts out directs the tree's energy into desirable growth.
- Weed when it's easy. Weeds are easier to pull when the soil is moist, so wait until after a soaking rain or irrigate the area first. The roots of desirable plants can be injured by pulling large weeds nearby so pull those weeds in late afternoon or on cloudy days, and water the area afterward to help injured plants recover.
- Start seeds for cool-weather annuals indoors in July/August for fall planting. Try foxglove, pansy, alyssum, snapdragons, ornamental cabbage (kale), and primroses. Pansy seeds germinate well

when stored in the refrigerator (not freezer) for 10-14 days before planting.

VEGETABLES & FRUITS

- Pinch out the tips of blackberry shoots when they reach about 4 feet tall. This helps form a tidier hedgerow for easy picking.
- Soon after tomatoes begin to set fruit, give them a boost of fertilizer to keep them vigorous and productive. Most of the new varieties are heavy producers if provided with good nutrition and adequate soil moisture.

LANDSCAPE IDEAS

- Deckscape: Play with colors, textures, and the placement of furniture on your deck or patio. Use container-grown plants, windsocks and sculptures to change or fine-tune your color scheme and overall feel.
- Think strategy. Now that deciduous trees and shrubs are in leaf, survey your landscape critically. Do you have too much? too little? are plants too low where screening is needed? So tall a view is blocked? Take photographs and make plans to add or move shrubs this fall. Don't do it now.

WILDLIFE

- Put out a bird-bath. Keep it filled with fresh water. Change it once a week to minimize mosquitoes. Birds will pay you back by eating lots of insects!
- Think twice about squashing caterpillars; many turn into butterflies. Swallowtail caterpillars love parsley, so set out a few extra plants to share with them. A pan of moistened pebbles or sand will attract butterflies.

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](#)

[Field Guide to the Southern Piedmont](#)



Photo Courtesy of Pixabay

Upcoming Events

Seedling Trees Available to Order from The N.C. Forest Service Nursery Program

The N.C. Forest Service Nursery Program will begin accepting orders for seedlings **July 3**. The NCFS produces about 16 million quality seedlings for 47 species of both conifer and hardwoods annually, including an expanded selection of control mass pollinated loblolly pine seedlings. These seedlings offer superior growth, form and disease resistance.

Catalogs are available at local NCFS offices, which are located in all 100 N.C. counties. The catalog is also available at the "Tree Seedlings & Nursery Program" link located at ncforestservice.gov. You can also visit the online seedling store at www.buynctrees.com. Seedlings can be ordered by mail or by calling **1-888-NCTREES (1-888-628-7337)**. Visa or Master Card payments accepted. Completed order forms should be mailed to **Seedling Coordinator, 762 Claridge Nursery Road, Goldsboro, NC 27530**.

JOCO Plant Show

2017 Johnston County Nursery Marketing Association Trade Show at the Kerr Scott Building - **NC State Fairgrounds** - Raleigh, NC on Wednesday, **July 12, 2017** 9:00am - 4:00pm. Cost: **FREE!** Hosted by member nurseries of the Johnston County Nursery Marketing Association. For event details: http://www.ncnla.com/site_event_detail.cfm

Certified Plant Professional Training Course

A series of 7 cumulative classes to prepare for the **October 26, 2017 Certified Plant Professional (CPP) Exam** in **Wilson, NC** will **start on September 7**. **Registration deadline is August 18**. See flyer for more information and registration at: <https://www.ces.ncsu.edu/2017-wilson-cpp-training-course-2/>. To learn more about the CPP program visit: <http://www.ncnla.com>

NEWSLETTER EDITED BY: Silvia Caracciolo, Katie Maynard, and Marshall Warren

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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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 [Home Horticulture in Johnston County, NC](#)

[Johnston County NC Extension Master Gardener Volunteers](#)