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The Gardener's Dirt

Johnston County Center

March 2016

Feature Article

Plant a Row (PAR)

Tiffany Whichard, Master Gardener

The numbers are staggering. 20,000 people in Johnston County alone hover at or below the poverty line. Chances are a family near you, someone you know personally, is struggling. Maybe it's an elderly neighbor on a fixed income that is forced to make a choice between purchasing a needed medication or making a weekly trip to the supermarket. Or it may be that child you see clambering off your daughter's school bus on Friday afternoon. The child that faces the reality of empty cupboards when he returns home. The irony is that in a farming community like ours, one teeming with agricultural heritage, 1 in 6 residents don't always know where their next meal is coming from. Even for those that qualify for supplemental assistance, buying fresh fruits and vegetables can be a luxury.



Plant a Row for the Hungry Johnston County, my local volunteer group, is committed to changing all of that. Our goal, quite simply, is to insure every family in our area has access to wholesome, nutritious produce. The tagline we've adopted from the national campaign is 'Harvesting hope for our community'. And that's what our volunteers do. They give generously of their time. Selflessly, tirelessly, each and every week.



Plant a Row, I should note, began as a national organization. The original mission is to

encourage home gardeners to plant an extra row of vegetables in their plots at home for the purpose of donating it to food banks and soup kitchens. Since the inception of our local garden in 2010, we have been fortunate to get donations of seed and supplies which has enabled us to keep growing. During the coldest part of the year, we move inside of the JCC Arboretum's commercial-sized greenhouse and continue with our crops, cultivars that are especially suited for that environment. Believe me when I say that we are very proud to be able to gift flavorful, vine-ripened tomatoes to families in need in the middle of Winter!

Adult volunteers of all skill levels are welcome to join us. We also welcome church and civic groups wishing to do a single day of service or a project for community outreach. Each participant is provided with hands-on instruction plus an educational weekly newsletter. Hours are flexible. As a group, we plan, install, and maintain the vegetable plots on the property along with a small orchard. Each season, we average 30 different varieties of fruits and vegetables. Our goal for 2016 is ambitious...we hope to harvest at least 2,000 pounds of produce by year's end.



With SNAP (the food stamp program) now sanctioning the purchase of seeds for individuals, we have plans to become a larger demonstration garden. We are confident we can empower low income families by teaching them to grow their own vegetables and fruits, providing them with the information and support they'll need to become more self-reliant.

Do you have questions about our program? Would you like to get involved? If so, feel free to contact us at plantarow@yahoo.com or visit our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/PlantARowJoCo/>. Should you have extra produce from your garden during the year, we welcome that too. We'll insure all donations are given to the families that need it the most. Simply contact us to arrange a drop off time.

Happy Growing! --Tiffany and the JoCo Plant a Row Team

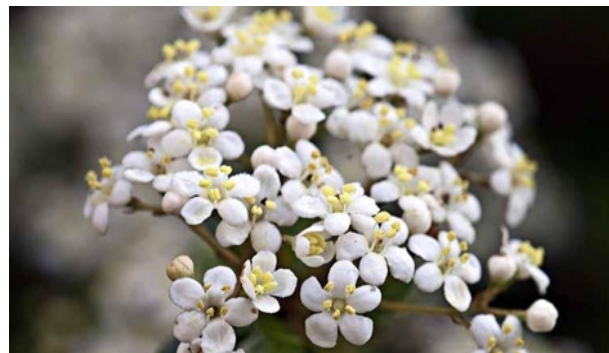
Feature Plant

Dwarf Viburnum

Viburnum obovatum 'Raulston Hardy'
by Choice Plant Series, JC Raulston
Arboretum

Native plants from the southeastern United States are some of the finest plants for southeastern and mid-Atlantic gardens.

Glaciers pushed many of these plants south during the last ice age where these plants thrived in the heat and humidity but never lost their cold tolerance. *Viburnum obovatum*, often called Walter's viburnum is one such plant.



The species, *V. obovatum*, is a rather rangy shrub or small tree native to South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, and Alabama. It generally grows to about 6'-15' but has been known to grow to over 30' under ideal conditions in the wild. While the wild species makes an

attractive plant, the selection named 'Raulston Hardy' is an outstanding landscape plant.



Viburnum obovatum 'Raulston Hardy' was introduced by the JC Raulston Arboretum for its tight, dwarf habit and hardiness. It grows to about 3' tall by slightly wider with a fine texture and small, narrow leaves on a very tight bun-shaped plant. The plant covers itself in clusters of white flowers in April but will often begin flowering in fall and continue sporadically until spring. Flowers are followed by red fruits which become black and are highly favored by birds. In mild winters, it will remain mostly evergreen although often taking on purplish tones after frost. In colder

areas, it will become semi-evergreen to fully deciduous.

In the wild, this plant often grows in boggy areas that are constantly moist. In the landscape, however, established plants have proven to be exceptionally drought tolerant. 'Raulston Hardy' will flower best in full sun but will grow quite happily in shadier locations. This plant prefers the acidic soils typical of much of the Southeast and in more basic soils, the addition of organic matter will be beneficial. Although it grows naturally in warm areas, it is hardy into cold zone 6 gardens with no problem.

Viburnum obovatum 'Raulston Hardy' is an excellent landscape plant and is especially useful where native North American plants are desired in the landscape. It can be used as a foundation planting instead of dwarf boxwoods or Japanese hollies or clipped into a formal, low hedge. This selection can be planted as a specimen or in containers in damp or dry areas and makes an excellent addition to the wildlife garden. Its small size, tidy habit, tough constitution, and four-season appeal make 'Raulston Hardy' one of the best all around native plants for the landscape.

Quick Tip:

Master Gardeners' Plant Sale

Vicki Shore, Master Gardener

The Johnston County Master Gardeners will hold their annual plant sale on Saturday, April 30 from 8AM until 12 noon. This year, for the first time, the sale will be held at the Clayton



Community Center at 715 Amelia Church Road, Clayton. 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, 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.

Ask an Expert

How can I protect my existing trees from Ambrosia Beetles, and how do I know if I am purchasing an Ambrosia Beetle free tree?

Trees that have been attacked by ambrosia beetles typically die. If one branch is attacked instead of the trunk that branch will die. So, the best way to avoid getting an ambrosia beetle infested tree is the same way you would pick trees in general. Look for trees that are alive and that do not have dead branches or branches with wilted leaves that could be dying from ambrosia beetles or something else. It is always good to inspect tree trunks for tiny holes made by ambrosia beetles but you want to inspect the trunk anyway to look for scars or other damage.



Ambrosia beetles are attracted to trees that are under stress. Typically, we think of drought-stress - when trees do not get enough water. However, for ambrosia beetles we have found that too much water is the real problem. Trees with water-logged roots produce ethanol and release the ethanol from their bark. Ethanol attracts ambrosia beetle (it is what we use as a lure in our traps!) that then attack the tree. Over-watering can occur in landscapes if trees are planted in dense clay soil since drainage is poor and the root ball may sit in water for a long time. Dig a large hole and amend it with organic matter to improve drainage. Evidence exists that other stresses also increase ambrosia beetle attacks. Winter injury has been associated with attacks of less cold-hardy trees such as crape myrtle. This is particularly true, it seems, when crape myrtles are topped and the new tender growth is exposed to frost. Tree topping is another stress associated with many pest attacks. Topping of trees puts them under extraordinary stress, reduces their life span, and makes branches more likely to break from the trunk. The new flush of growth from a topped tree is the favorite of most pests particularly sucking pests like scales and aphids which can drop their honeydew on things below.

March Garden Tasks

LAWN MAINTENANCE

- The best defense against weeds is a healthy lawn. Learn how to care for your lawn throughout the year. Visit [TurfFiles](#) and click on Turf Tips to learn more about your lawn type. Keep it happy, healthy and weed free.
- Control existing weeds now, before they get large and/or set seed.
- For yards with an established weed problem, use pre-emergent herbicides to kill seedlings as they germinate. Pre-emergent herbicides can be used to control crabgrass and other broadleaf weeds. Pre-emergent herbicides should be applied while the forsythia is in bloom - late February to mid-March.
- Sharpen mower blades! A sharp blade cuts. A dull blade tears, making grass susceptible to diseases.



TREES, SHRUBS & ORNAMENTALS

- Divide fall-blooming perennials that are overgrown, such as asters, primrose, irises, shasta daisies and mums. This is an easy way to enlarge your garden.

- Control leaf gall on azaleas and camellias. Leaf gall, a fungal disease, shows up as swollen leaves covered with a white powdery material. It is unsightly but generally not harmful to the plant. Pick off the affected leaves and dispose of them to avoid spreading the fungus.
- Do not compost diseased plant material.
- Remove protective winter mulch from tender perennials in early March to warm the soil and stimulate the plant to grow.
- Apply fresh mulch in April after perennials have emerged. Mulch helps with water conservation and weed control. <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/hil/hil-608.html>
- Spring flowering shrubs such as Quince, Spirea, Forsythia, Azalea, Camellia japonica, Carolina Jessamine, Viburnum, Mock Orange, Weigela, Oriental Magnolia and Indian Hawthorn flower on old growth. Prune them soon AFTER they bloom.
- Time for heavy, rejuvenation pruning of summer-blooming shrubs. Prune holly, Nandina and Beautyberry before new growth begins. Althea, Buddleia, Vitex, Crape Myrtle and Pomegranate can be pruned at the beginning of March to stimulate more flower production later.
- Prune roses before bud break. <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/hil/hil-641.html>
- For a better show next spring, let the foliage of spring-flowering bulbs die back naturally.
- Mulch or living ground covers are better choices under large trees. Ground covers act as "living mulch." Low-maintenance, shade-tolerant ground covers include pachysandra, periwinkle (vinca), ajuga (bugleweed), liriope and mondo grass. A 2 to 3" layer of composted mulch conserves moisture, reduces erosion and provides nutrients to the tree. Keep mulch away from the trunk of the tree to discourage rodents and rot.
- Protect shade tree roots from injury. Remember that most of a tree's feeder roots are near the soil surface, under and just outside the tree canopy. If digging, foot traffic, or vehicles injure roots then damage to the tree can range from slowed growth (minor) to the death of the tree (major!). Some trees, such as dogwoods, are very susceptible to root damage; others, like maples, are more tolerant.

EDIBLES

- Plant cool-weather vegetable crops such as lettuce, mustard greens, sugar snap peas, radishes, onions, potatoes, spinach, and cole crops (such as cabbage and collards) as soon as soil can be worked. <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/hil/hil-8016.html>
- If a ball of soil crumbles when squeezed in your fist, the soil is workable.
- Take a soil test to see how much fertilizer to apply around pecan trees. It's time!
- Beets, broccoli, cauliflower and Chinese cabbage can be started by the third or fourth week of March. Now is the time to start seeds indoors for vegetables such as tomato, pepper, eggplant, and others to get a jump-start on the summer growing season.

WILDLIFE & INSECTS

- Put up martin and bluebird houses by mid-March to encourage these birds to nest. Learn how to build a blue bird nest box at nabluebirdsociety.org/nestboxspecs.htm or nabluebirdsociety.org/nestboxplans.htm
- Clean out last years' birdhouse nesting materials to make them more attractive to house-hunting birds.

LANDSCAPE IDEAS

- Take photographs of your yard while your spring bulbs are blooming to help you remember where to plant more bulbs in the fall

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](#)



Upcoming Events

JOCO Networking For Charity - Tuesday March 15th from 5:30 to 8:00 PM at the Bistro on Third Restaurant, Third St. Smithfield, NC.

JOCO Networking For Charity is for professionals to meet and network while raising money for local charities. A portion of the sales from these events is donated to charity. This month's event is to benefit the Clayton Community Garden. This garden is used by our local Johnston County Extension Master Gardener Volunteers to give hands on classes about vegetable gardening. Produce harvested is donated to local food pantries. Last year, over 2700 lbs. was donated!

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, 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

NEWSLETTER EDITED BY: Brenda Clayton

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