

The Gardener's Dirt Newsletter

May 2019

Feature Article:

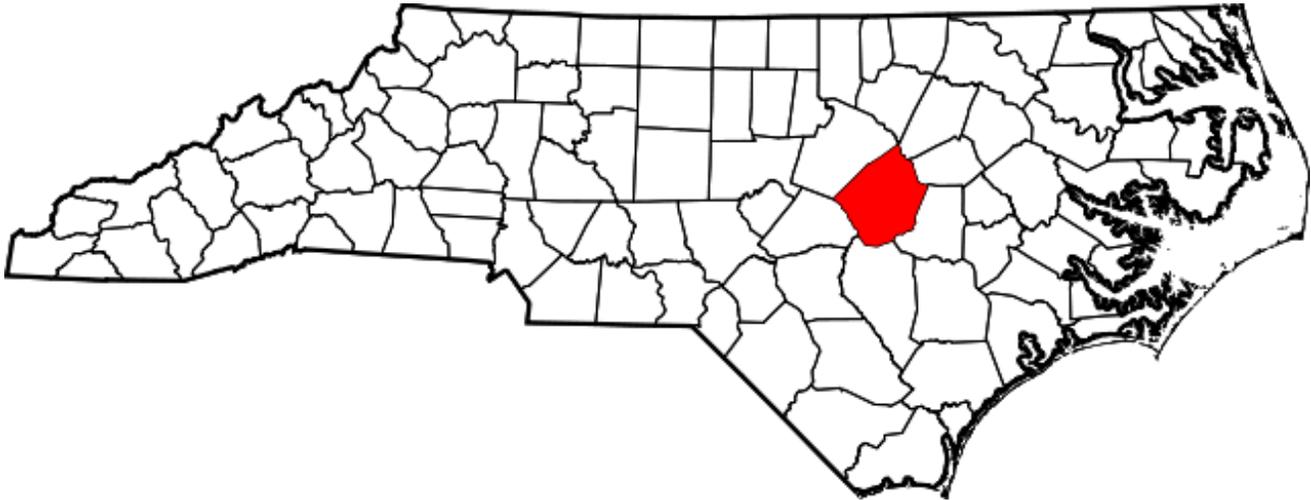


Photo by: [David Benbennick \[Public domain\]](#)

New to Johnston County? What Gardeners Face

By: Tiffany Whichard
Extension Master Gardener Volunteer

Years ago, I lived in Texas and did my best to garden in the rugged, arid Hill Country outside of Austin. The sun was brutal, relentless, baking the hardscrabble ranches surrounding me until everything was the color of wheat. Following that was Florida, when I returned to my hometown. It was a beautiful coastal city, hemmed in by turquoise waters and sugar white beaches. Despite sounding idyllic, even that had its challenges. Depending on where you were living, you may have to contend with the sometimes exasperating soil or deep shade created by towering oaks. And then there was places where the chore was finding plants that could take the ever-present salt spray in stride.

Fast forward a few years and my husband I landed in Johnston County. Immediately, we knew this would be far different than other places we had lived. We'd have to get familiar with our gardening environment if we hoped to succeed. How would we deal with our new construction lot? What would grow in this area? What wouldn't? What in the world was that weed? What grass was best? Does this sound familiar? Are you overwhelmed? If so, read on.

If you're a new resident, eager to get started on your landscape, try to be patient. We moved into a new home and took a few months in learning our property. What do I mean by that? Well, not

only did we monitor the shade and sun patterns, we also made note of drainage issues, soil concerns and microclimates that were unique to our landscape.

Speaking of soil, it is a good idea to get your soil tested. It's a very simple process and will give you an idea of your soil's pH and the nutrients it may be missing. Soil is a critical building block for any plant and it can mean the difference between a lush, thriving vegetable plot or flower garden and one that is plagued by problems. Stop by the Extension Office for boxes and forms. For most of the year, this service is free and for the remaining months there is a nominal charge.

One of the first things my husband and I did when we moved here was take an introductory class at our nearby arboretum. This helped us to understand the limitations and opportunities we might have with growing vegetables, herbs, fruit trees and landscape plants in this area. It's also a good idea to seek out botanical gardens, community gardens and specialty garden clubs throughout the state. Additionally, the Extension Office is a phenomenal resource on all things growing.

Consider stopping in to the library too! You'll be able to find lots of great titles at your fingertips that will help you to get a jump start on having a productive and beautiful property! Former horticultural extension agent Toby Bost is only one of several local authors you'll be able to find.

Lastly, I would also encourage you to keep a gardening notebook. This will serve as an indispensable tool in seasons to come. Not only can you make note of what cultivars performed best for you, what diseases you had to contend with but it will also help you anticipate the arrival of beneficial insects and garden pests.

Of course, if you have other questions as you're getting started, don't hesitate to call us. We can be reached at (919) 989-5380. And if no one has said it just yet, welcome to Johnston County! You're going to love it here!

Grow Native:

Wisteria frutescens American Wisteria 'Amethyst Falls'

**By: Margy Pearl
Extension Master Gardener Volunteer**



Amethyst Falls By Margy Pearl

Driving along NC county roads in April, you're likely to see enormous wisteria vines dripping from tall trees. Are they a native vine? Absolutely not!

That's Chinese wisteria (*Wisteria sinensis*), an aggressively invasive vine that engulfs plants and even kills trees. An individual vine can live up to 50 years, choking out huge areas of native plants. If Chinese wisteria is on your property, cut the vine at the base, brush on undiluted brush killer and repeat, if needed.

Can you have those iconic fragrant, gorgeous blue-purple blooming clusters in a non-invasive

vine? Yes! Plant instead the native species, American Wisteria (*Wisteria frutescens*)! Growing rapidly, it can reach 8-10 feet and may grow up to 30 feet, if not pruned back in late winter. This heavy, twining vine needs to be planted on an extremely sturdy pole, arbor or trellis.

Amethyst Falls should be planted in full to partial sun. Once established, it's drought tolerant and even deer resistant! Blooming heavily in the spring, usually May, and also lightly in the summer, both the silver-spotted skipper and long-tailed skipper butterflies use it as a larval host plant. This great native vine is available at local nurseries; plant one soon!

Sources:

<https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/all/wisteria-frutescens-amethyst-falls/>

<http://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/care/weeds-and-invasive-plants/wisteria.html>

Quick Tip:

Proper Watering Requirements of Newly Seeded Lawns

by Marshall Warren

Johnston County Extension Horticulture Agent

Proper watering of a newly established lawn is very important for its establishment. Water the newly seeded lawn well immediately after planting, and continue to water as often as necessary to keep your soil constantly moist. Two or three waterings weekly may keep your soil moist during mild, cloudy weather, but everyday watering is often necessary during hot, sunny weather. Most lawn sprinklers apply less water than is generally thought and must be operated for a considerable time in one place before moving in order to wet the soil thoroughly. If the area is on a slope, the sprinkler may be moved and later returned to the same area to continue watering. This will ensure that the area is deeply watered.

If the soil is kept constantly moist for about three weeks, you should have a stand of grass seedlings, and then you may reduce the frequency of your watering. Cool season grasses will germinate faster than warm season grasses and you may reduce the watering frequency sooner. Do not quit watering completely, as the tiny seedlings have a very shallow root system and will be killed if you permit the soil to dry out beneath the depth of their root structure. Begin to increase the volume of water for each watering and reduce the frequency of watering. This will promote deep rooting of the seedlings.

Water established lawn grasses only when it needs it, and then water deeply. Grass that begins wilting early in the day is suffering from lack of water. Most lawn sprinklers must be run for several hours in one location to afford a deep watering. Dig down to see what you are actually doing. Shallow watering brings the roots near the surface where they demand more frequent watering still, and prevent good performance of the grass. Many people who have an underground irrigation system like to see the water running almost everyday. This is not healthy for the lawn. Only water when the ground is dry, and then water deeply. It is important to remember that supplemental water should be applied as needed and not on a timetable basis.

Veggie Tales:

Controlling Garden Pests - a light hand and a determined habit

By: Barb Barakat
Extension Master Gardener Volunteer

Insects, weeds and disease are all parts of the natural process of succession within an ecosystem. But to bring crop to harvest, the gardener must intercept and control these natural processes in ways that are mindful of the ecosystem as a whole. First a quick IPM (Integrated Pest Management) recap.

1. Encourage Strong Plants - Attend to your crops' water and soil needs, encourage strong, deep roots, add dolomitic limestone & crushed egg shells when planting, do a soil test.
2. Weed and Clean - prevent habitats for wintering over and nesting pests
3. Scout Daily and Hand-Pick Bugs - Toss bugs (and eggs) in a bucket of soapy water.
4. Row Covers - use PVC pipe to suspend row cover over young crop - if the crop flowers to produce fruit, remove when 2nd flower appears for pollinator access.





Cabbage Looper



Cabbage Worm



on Cucurbits - plant family of cucumbers and squashes
watch for Squash Bugs, Vine Borers, Cucumber Beetles



Squash Bug



Vine Borer



Cucumber Beetle



IPM emphasizes the growth of a healthy crop with the least possible disruption to the ecosystem. You might be amazed at the power of soapy water, vinegar and companion plants. . . . timing is everything so catch problems early. Adapt a minimalist philosophy - if that fails, go organic. Always keep in mind that you are eating the crop you grow.

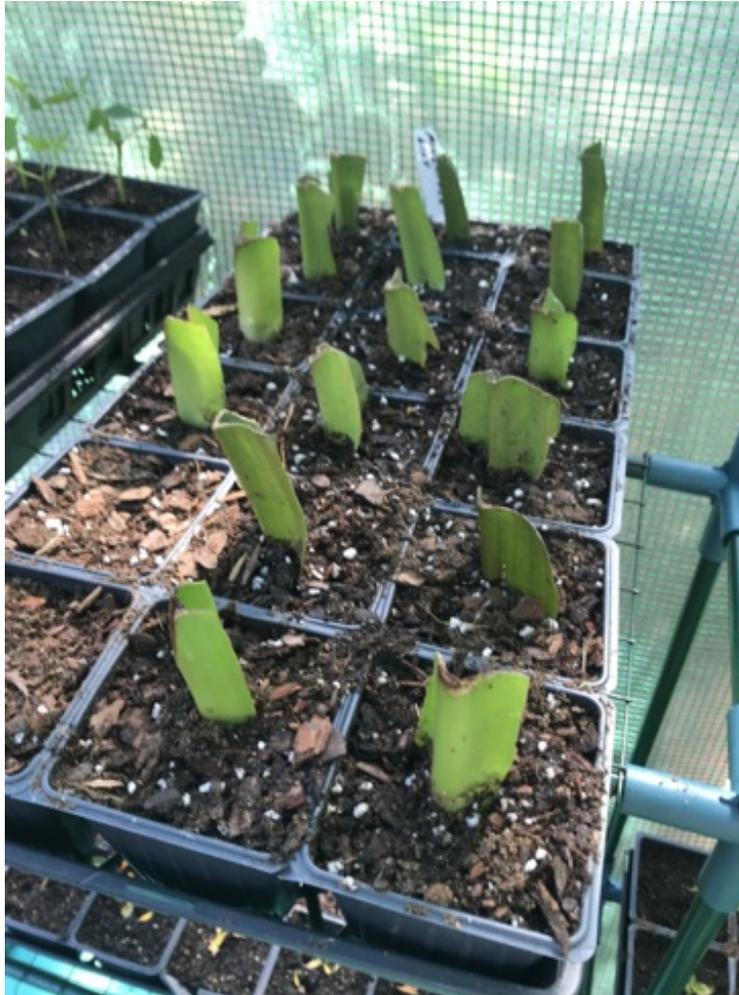
Cited:

<https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/extension-gardener-handbook/8-integrated-pest-management-ipm>

What Master Gardeners Do:

Propagation from Stem Cuttings

By: W. Tommy Bagley
Extension Master Gardener Volunteer



Eucomis 'Sparkling Burgundy' herbaceous perennial that I rooted. It is better known as a Pineapple Lily.

Have you seen the gorilla on Facebook that's gazing in the air? The caption reads that he is thinking about food all the time. That's me except I also think about whacking a plant up to make more of them. What's the best time to do it, which part of the stem is best to use, whether to root it in water or soil, hormones or not, how much light does it need, how easy is this plant to root, how will it keep thru the winter and how many should I try? The questions seem endless! I have great successes, but I also have failures. And it seems like I always have to do a whole flat regardless of how many are practical to root!

I try to study only plants that I have an interest in growing or ones that someone asks me to try to grow for them. Any perennials that are long blooming are on my big list. I just love most any propagation class. Plants Delights has some wonderful propagation classes each year. My motto is keep learning, keep living!

There are four main types of stem cuttings; herbaceous, softwood, semi-hardwood, and hardwood. I expected to write about the last three types but as I continued to study for this article I began to think about writing about herbaceous types like a coleus. What striking varieties we have and they almost root themselves by looking at them. I just break them off and stick them in the soil

without any rooting hormone or anything.

What are some other herbaceous plants?..... sweet potato, peony, hosta, mint, most ferns, most grasses, chrysanthemums, dalia, philodendrons, impatiens and poinsettias. I have never tried to root many of these. Hosta divide easily but I have never thought about propagating them as stem cuttings. Stick a single sweet potato in the top of a jar with water and you could have over 50 slips (cuttings) in no time. I'm eager to try some of these cuttings and hope they are as easy as the coleus or a sweet potato. Give them a try! Be a grower of these easy to propagate plants. Let's exchange some herbaceous propagated plants this summer.

May Gardening Tasks:



LAWN CARE

- Don't fertilize cool-season turfgrass (fescue, bluegrass). It has been growing actively all winter, and it will begin to go dormant as summer heats up. Let it slow down naturally, and it will be better able to withstand the heat and drought of summer. Follow link for a Lawn Maintenance Calendar for your type of turf. It tells you how to care for your lawn month by month - such things as fertilization, mowing and watering.

<https://www.turffiles.ncsu.edu/>

- Most of the weeds you see now are winter annuals. The time to control these was last August. In a couple of weeks, the weather will be too hot for these winter annuals, and they will start dying. Don't waste your time and money to spray them with herbicide. The best thing to do is mow them before they produce and spread seed. Put it on your calendar to spray for them in August.

- Warm-season grasses such as Bermuda, Zoysia or Centipede can be planted now.

Mow

cool-season grasses, such as Fescues, at a height of 3- 3 1/2 inches to help them survive hot, dry periods.

TREES, SHRUBS, and ORNAMENTALS

- Pinch prune your plants. Use your index finger and thumbnail to break out the lead growth at tips of branches. Pinched plants have shorter, sturdier stems, more lateral branching and more blooms. Pinch back mums, zinnia, salvia, cockscomb (celosia), petunias, marigolds, snapdragons, and garden phlox.

- It's time to plant summer beauties such as gladiolus, dahlias, caladiums, cannas and all those colorful bedding plants.

- Dead or diseased limbs on woody ornamentals should be apparent by now. Prune them out.

- Stake floppy plants, such as peonies, dahlias, and Boltonia (Michaelmas daisy), while they're small so they'll have support when they need it. After plants have grown large, they are difficult to stake.

- Cut roses properly. Removing too much wood and foliage when cutting flowers can seriously weaken your rose bushes, especially during the first year. Leave 2-3 well developed leaves (groups of five leaflets, not three) between the cut and the main stem.

- Grow great bearded iris by giving them excellent drainage, fertile soil, sunshine, and beds free of competing weeds and grass. Divide frequently (in August) for larger and finer blooms.

- Prune spring-flowering shrubs after they bloom. The best time to prune azalea, rhododendron, forsythia, spirea, flowering quince, kerria, pieris, and weigela is just as flowers begin to fade. Don't wait till summer, or you'll cut off next year's flower buds.

To

keep your shrubs ever young, prune one-third of the oldest canes back to the ground each year.

- Prune wisteria frequently throughout the summer to control vegetative growth and get better blooms next spring.

- Keep dogwoods healthy. Spot anthracnose and powdery mildew are two major disease

problems that show up on dogwood trees in late spring and summer. To help dogwoods

overcome diseases keep them watered, maintain soil fertility, and clean up fallen leaves to minimize the spread of the disease.

- **MULCH!** Prepare for dry summer weather and control weeds at the same time by using a layer of mulch 2-3 inch thick.

- Banish bermudagrass (wiregrass) from your planting beds. Keep it pulled to prevent it from overrunning your garden.

- Plant seeds of annual vines such as moonflower, scarlet runner beans or passionflower.

Mix plants with the same growing requirements in your container gardens. Do not mix sun-loving and shade-loving plants together in the same container.

VEGETABLES and FRUITS

- Plant veggies now that the soil is warm and the danger of frost is past. Sow seeds of beans, squash, cucumbers, and corn. Set out transplants of tomatoes, peppers, eggplant and okra. Pinching also works well for many vegetable plants, including tomatoes and peppers.

- Watch for slugs. These soft, slimy, slender pests have a special taste for tender young

crops. Holes in leaves or on the leaf margins and a silvery slime trail in the morning indicate a slug feast the previous night. Slugs hide under boards, stones or debris

during

- Train and support tomatoes, pole beans, peppers and eggplants. Side dress sweet corn

when it is knee-high.

- Make consecutive plantings of beans over a few weeks to extend your harvest.

LANDSCAPE IDEAS

- Plant vegetables in your flower beds! Eggplant, pepper varieties, and cherry tomatoes

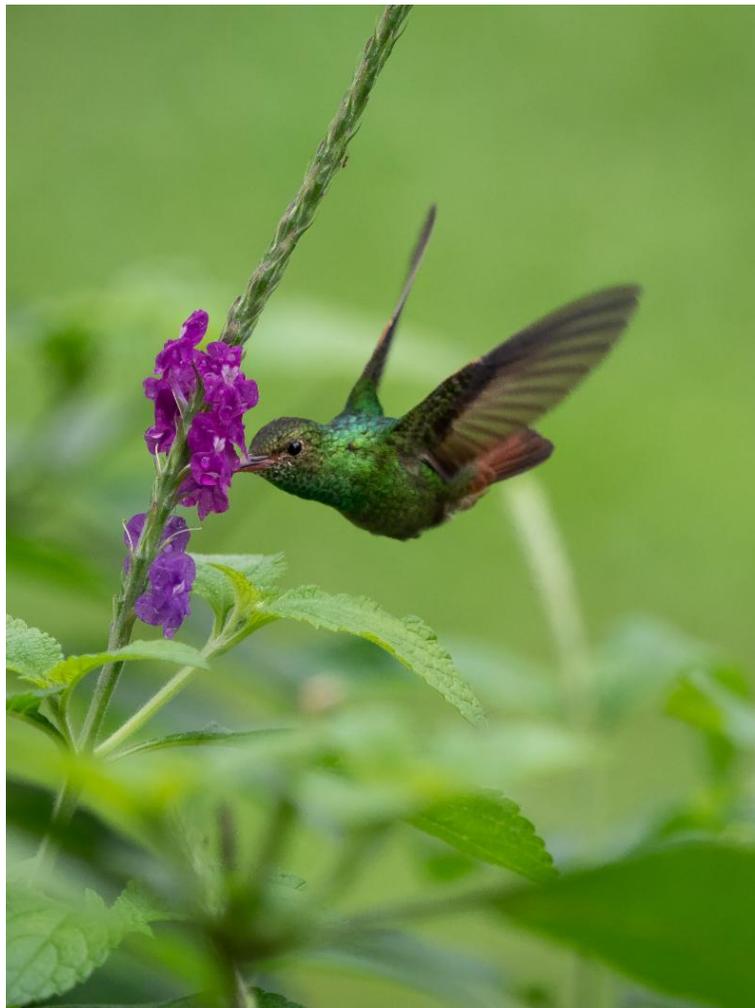
make colorful additions to the garden. Bush beans and climbing beans have attractive foliage and charming small flowers. Vegetables can also mingle with flowers in pots on a

patio or deck.

- Welcome back hummingbirds! Females will be in the area first; the males will follow soon. Salvias, honeysuckles, penstemons, and other tube-shaped flowers, especially red

ones, will attract hummingbirds to your garden. Fill feeders with a solution of 1 part sugar to 4 parts water. Wash feeders and replace the food at least twice a week.

Cool Connections:



Helpful Links from N.C. Cooperative Extension Johnston County

[*Additional Informative Links*](#)

[Basic Steps for Home Landscaping](#)

[Carolina Lawns](#)

[NC Extension Gardener Handbook](#)

[Vegetable Gardening: A Beginners Guide](#)

Upcoming Events:



BIRDS • BEES • BUTTERFLIES AND GROWING POLLINATOR GARDENS

HOSTED BY JOHNSTON COUNTY EXTENSION MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEERS

SATURDAY
SEPT 14, 2019
8:30 AM - 4:00 PM



OPEN TO ALL
GARDENERS &
NATURE LOVERS

JOHNSTON COUNTY CENTER
2736 210 HWY
SMITHFIELD, NC 27577
919-989-5380
jocomastergardeners@gmail.com
www.JoCoMGBBB.com

SPEAKERS:

CHARLOTTE GLEN - EMCEE & GROWING NATIVE
CHRIS MOORMAN - BIRDS
DEBBIE ROOS - BEES
COLLEEN BOCKHAHN - BUTTERFLIES
ANNE SPAFFORD - GARDEN DESIGN

NC STATE EXTENSION

To Register for the Event Follow Link: <https://www.jocomgbbb.com/>

Visit our

N.C. Cooperative Extension of Johnston County Page

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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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