

The Gardener's Dirt Newsletter

November 2019

Feature Article:

I'm Liking the Lichen & the Vines are Fine

By Barb Barakat, Extension Master Gardener Volunteer



Foliose (leafy) Lichen



Fruticose (shrubby) Lichens



Crustose (crusty) Lichens

Lichen is a very cool organism - it straddles the classification between algae (a plant) and fungus (a decomposer). It's non-parasitic to higher level plants - which means it doesn't cause damage to the plants it lives on. Lichen are opportunists - meaning they will prosper on a branch that is already dying.

Lichen is:

- very innovative - it takes its energy from the sun and its nutrients from the rain - no roots, no stems, no leaves
- very versatile - lives on plants, rocks, soil, and even grows on tortoise shells
- very hardy - survives in all of Earth's environments - no matter the temperature range or moisture levels
- very resistant - can go months without water and revive itself after a rainstorm

Vines Are Fine


Vines . . . you've got to admire them. They are certainly fearless of height. Up, up, up, up they go . . .

"Might as well grab on to that mighty tree" says the vine . . .

"Watch out how you're grabbing me or we'll both come tumbling down," says the mighty tree.

"How about I make you a trellis?" says the gardener.

There is nothing quite like a vine to add height and dimension to any landscape. Flowering vines are the best - they overwhelm your senses in a cascade of beauty but, as always, you will have to accommodate their needs and they will surely need to cooperate with you (aka pruning). Be sure to help things along by planting native, non-invasive vines and building a support structure (trellis, arbor, fence) they can climb upon.

In the Natural World	How Vines Climb	In the Cultivated Landscape
 <p data-bbox="305 1381 425 1413">Wisteria</p>	<p data-bbox="639 1031 954 1066">Climbing by Twining</p> <ul data-bbox="639 1108 1000 1346" style="list-style-type: none"> • vines climb by winding around upright tree trunks • can girdle a young tree - constrict the flow of water & nutrients <p data-bbox="621 1381 976 1499">Wisteria, Honeysuckle, Jasmine, Morning Glory, Clematis</p>	 <p data-bbox="1175 1381 1302 1413">Clematis</p>
 <p data-bbox="245 1759 485 1791">Virginia Creeper</p>	<p data-bbox="623 1520 971 1556">Climbing with Tendrils</p> <ul data-bbox="639 1640 964 1955" style="list-style-type: none"> • slim, flexible and leafless stems that wrap around most anything • as the vine grows upward new tendrils develop & hold the vine to the tree <p data-bbox="618 1990 980 2066">Wild Grape, Virginia Creeper, Passion Flower</p>	 <p data-bbox="1159 1850 1321 1881">Wild Grape</p>



Poison Ivy

Climbing with Arial Roots aka Clinging

- vines that adhere to the trunk & branches of trees

Trumpet Vine, Hydrangea, English Ivy, Poison Ivy



Trumpet Vine

For more information on vines, please check out:

Lichens & Vines on Trees

The Four Types of Vines & Climbing Plants

Feature Plant:

The American Persimmon (Diospyros virginiana)

By Griffin David Lockett, Extension Master Gardener Volunteer



Several years ago, I attended a cookout in Southern Johnston County. The owner's property backed to old wooded land. In the woods, I noticed what appeared to be small orange-burgundy balls at the base of a tree. I had no idea what they were, but I was fascinated. I learned that it was a native persimmon tree, and that they could be found in old woods, are native to North Carolina (species that evolved naturally in a region without

the help of humans, they developed and adapted to local soil and climate conditions over a very long time). I picked up several of the fruits and took them home. When the seeds dried, I planted them and today I have two trees.

Since then, I have learned a great deal more about native or common persimmon trees. They, of course, can be grown from seed, which I do not recommend - they are slow growers. Obtain bare root trees instead. They are long lived, cold hardy deciduous trees and can take 7-10 years to produce fruit. Depending on your soil, location, and spacing they can grow up to 30-50 feet. In a natural wooded area, they are most likely to be shorter. They are also dioecious, which means there are separate male and female trees. You will need one of each for fruit. They do not self pollinate. Only female trees bear fruit, and unlike Asian persimmons, the fruit is only about 1-3 inches in size. The fruit is astringent, and they are ripe when they get very soft, but so sweet and delicious.

The fruit is very sweet, when ripe, and they are a food source for many animals, especially if the fruit is left on the ground. If you do not have ample yard or landscape space, you should consider self-pollinating Asian persimmons. For more information, please check out the following links:

https://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=divi5

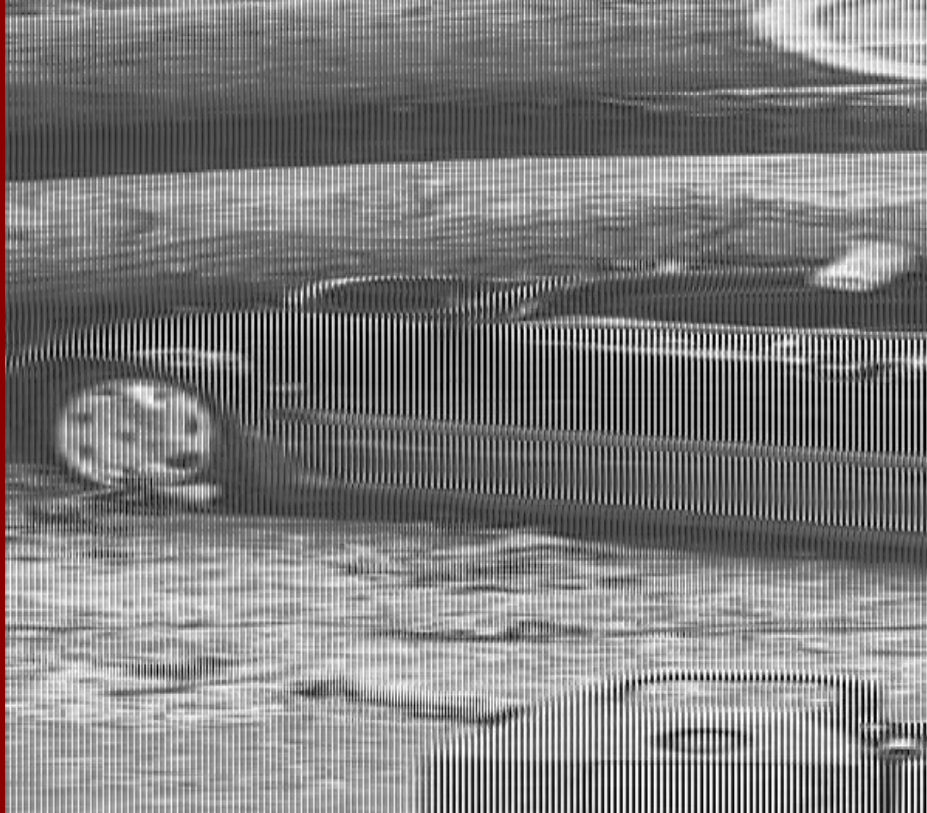
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KigVjA79bfw>

<https://granville.ces.ncsu.edu/2012/12/persimmons/>

Quick Tip:

Hiring Tree Care Professionals

By Bev Futrell, Extension Master Gardener Volunteer



When it comes to services provided by tree care professionals, the sky's the limit really. Tree care professionals provide a variety of services depending upon their training and credentials. The key though, as with any project, is to do your homework first as not all tree care experts are trained in the same type of services. As with hiring any professional take time to check credentials, get multiple bids and always ask for estimates. Finally, to protect yourself and your investment in your property, make sure your service provider is insured and ask for proof of liability for personal injury and property damage to be on the safe side. For further note, realtors and researchers estimate that a well-maintained property's value is increased by 15 to 20 percent when trees and landscape are properly cared for. For additional information, consult the following links:

[How to Hire A Tree Care Professional](#)

[Showing the World the benefits of trees](#)

[American Society of Consulting Arborists](#)

[North Carolina State Board of Registration for Foresters](#)

Ask an Expert:

Caring for Trees with Storms in Mind



Photo Credit Citizen Times



Photo Credit Charlotte Observe

Storms will come and go, but we want our trees to last forever. Maybe not forever, but long after we are gone. There are certain steps you can take, though, that may help minimize possible damage and plant death.

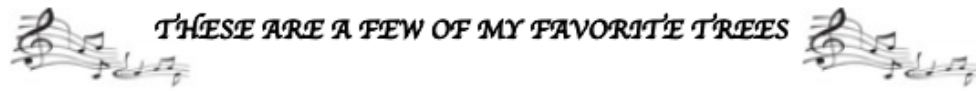
Start with good landscape design and site preparation. The key is to create a hospitable soil environment providing trees with as much rooting volume as possible. Preventing soil compaction and proper planting practices promote development of an extensive root system and a substantial root flare. Healthy roots help keep trees upright despite the force of storm waters and winds. Sound landscape maintenance practices, such as young tree training aimed at building a strong structure also promote greater overall plant health and increase a plant's resilience in storms.

As flooding is often a result of typical storms, we need to understand what happens in the plant when growing under long-term anaerobic conditions. Inundation leads to chronic health problems. Some symptoms include wilting, premature leaf drop, early fall color or chlorosis. Eventually, photosynthesis and transpiration begin to slow down and plant functions are compromised. Root growth slows, and roots may begin to die. The plant may then be infected with root rot. Root rot may not occur right away, but may affect the plant years later, especially if droughts occur, further stressing the trees.

To minimize the impact of flooding, improve soil drainage. Select plants that tolerate wet soils. A number of trees are well-suited. Try hedge maple, Kentucky coffeetree, sweetbay magnolia, elms, and swamp white oak to name a few. If you want shrubs, why not try clethra, itea, buttonbush, winterberry holly, distylium, and red-twig dogwood.

Good design, site preparation, right plants for the site, proper planting, and maintenance practices can all help minimize storm impact and promote a long-lived, resilient landscape.

Veggie Tale:



By Don Houser, Extension Master Gardener Volunteer

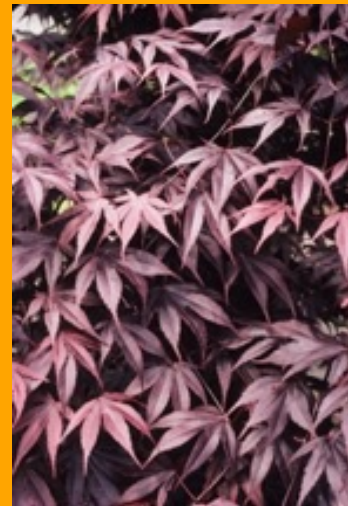


I have been asked to write about five of my favorite trees. The trees I will be writing about today in alphabetical order are Eastern Redbud, Japanese Dogwood, Southern Magnolia, Japanese Maple, and the White Oak. These trees all grow in North Carolina.

The Eastern Redbud, *Cercis canadensis*, is an attractive tree that introduces us to the beginnings of spring. This deciduous tree can grow 20-30 feet tall and 15-25 feet wide. The tree originates in eastern and central North America and eastern Mexico. This tree flowers in early spring before the tree produces heart shaped, cordate, leaves. This tree has a rounded habit that is multi-stemmed and multi-branched. The Eastern Redbud is an attractive tree for any yard. You can use this tree as a specimen tree to be a focal point or in a grouping. There are various varieties and cultivars that grow in different sizes and shapes. I prefer the weeping variety for smaller gardens as a focal point. The Eastern Redbud is a larval host plant for twelve species of Lepidoptera (butterflies).



The Japanese Dogwood, *Cornus kousa*, is a great tree. This deciduous tree grows 20-30 feet tall and 10-25 feet wide. The Japanese Dogwood produces beautiful white flowers about a month after our native Florida Dogwood, *Cornus florida*. The Japanese dogwood grows in vase shape then gradually becomes pyramidal as it gets older. The Japanese Dogwood originates from Japan, Korea, and China. This tree is naturalized to the United States and it is not invasive. In the spring, the flowers show and then the glossy green leaves appear. In the fall, the leaves turn to red or burgundy with fruit looking like raspberries. The tree in winter shows light and dark brown exfoliating bark. The Japanese Dogwood is interesting all four seasons. The Japanese Dogwood fruit is eaten by birds and squirrels. The tree supports various bees and provides nesting sites for birds. The Japanese Dogwood is resistant to Anthracnose and blights that affect our native *Cornus florida*. The Japanese Dogwood comes in many varieties and cultivars. It can be used as a focal point in a yard or a grouping. The variety I like, '*Chinensis*', grows into the shape of a Christmas tree. When the flowers come, it looks like snow on the branches.



The Japanese Maple 'Bloodgood', *Acer palmatum* 'Bloodgood'. This tree slowly grows 15-25 feet tall and 10-25 feet wide. This deciduous tree grows in a spreading rounded dense shape producing deep red leaves. The leaf type is simple and arranged opposite each other on the stem. The leaf margin is lobed and serrate. The growth rate is slow to moderate. This tree originates from Southeast Korea and central and southern Japan. I feel the 'Bloodgood' cultivar Japanese Maple is a good selection because of its smaller form. The leaves are a deep red and orange. In the fall the leaf color darkens. The Japanese Maple comes in many varieties and cultivars. This tree makes a great specimen tree in your yard during the summer and the fall.



The Southern Magnolia, *Magnolia grandiflora*, is a broadleaf evergreen noted for its attractive dark green leaves and large extremely fragrant flowers. This tree shape is pyramidal to rounded and will grow 40-80 feet tall and 30-40 feet wide. The leaf type is simple, arranged alternately on the stem. The leaf shape is elliptical and ovate. The flowers of this variety of Magnolia are very large, white, and showy. The leaves of Magnolias come in many varieties and cultivars. This tree is native to moist areas in the southeastern United States from North Carolina to Florida and Texas. The Magnolia trees furnish seeds that are eaten by birds and small mammals. This tree provides severe storm and winter coverage to some wildlife. Magnolia trees require a lot of space to grow and flourish. The best place to plant a magnolia tree is in large areas that are beneficial to the tree and its beauty.



The White Oak, *Quercus alba*, is a majestic tree. This tree is deciduous growing to 50-80 feet tall and 50-80 feet wide in cultivation and up to 100 feet tall in the wild. This tree is native to the Eastern United States. The White Oak has a pyramidal shape when young, and then develops into a wide spreading rounded crown with age. The leaf type is simple, they alternate on the stem. The leaf shape is elliptical and obovate. This tree has a history of being used in the building of wooden ships because of its great strength and durability. Today, we use oak for cabinets, flooring, and furniture. The fruit of the oak tree is eaten by birds and animals. Above the mighty Oak Tree is pictured!

November Gardening Tasks



Eno River State Park in Durham, N.C.

GENERAL REMINDERS

- Clean up and throw away any diseased plant material. Do not compost! Leaving infected leaves, fruits, nuts on the ground or on the plants provides a source of inoculum for reinfection next year.
- Use shredded leaves as mulch. Fallen leaves contain lots of nutrients, but they decompose slowly. Help the process along by shredding or mowing them.
- Compost your yard waste! As you cut back your perennials in preparation for winter, return that bounty to your garden in the form of compost. Compost is nature's favorite fertilizer and soil conditioner. Recycle grass clippings, leaves, and non-diseased garden refuse.
- Put the garden to bed for the winter. Pull out all annuals that have completed their life cycle and cut back perennials.

LAWN CARE

- Check out the [Lawn Maintenance Calendar](#) for your grass and learn how best to care for it.

Click on each type of grass for link to maintenance schedule:

- Bermuda
 - Centipede
 - Zoysiagrass
 - St. Augustine Grass
 - Tall Fescue
- Fertilize fescue lawns for winter. The November fertilization (near Thanksgiving) is the most important one of the year for cool season grasses. The soil is still warm enough to permit the growth of strong roots that will enable the grass to withstand next summer's baking heat. Use a slow-release fertilizer formulated for turf, and apply according to soil test results.

TREES, SHRUBS, & ORNAMENTALS

- Fall is for planting! September through early February is an ideal time to plant deciduous trees, shrubs, and perennials. Plant evergreen plants from September - November. The cool weather permits establishment of a root system before next year's hot weather.
- Allow space for plants to grow to their mature size. A common mistake is placing a large or fast-growing plant where there is not enough room for its full height and spread. The error results in continuous pruning in an attempt to keep the plant to a size nature never intended it to be. Find out how large the plant can be expected to grow, and place it where it can fulfill its potential.
- It's time to move shrubs from one place to another.
- Mulch shrubs, trees, perennials, and herbs after the first killing frost for winter protection. Apply a 3 inch deep layer.

Cool Connections:



Helpful Links from Johnston County Cooperative Extension

**NEW* Cool Connections - Gardening Resources for ALL!*

Basic Steps for Home Landscaping

Carolina Lawns

NC Extension Gardener Handbook

Vegetable Gardening: A Beginners Guide

Upcoming Events:



The Annual Fall Fruit & Nut Tree Sale

2019, Sponsored by
Johnston County Cooperative Extension Advisory Council

[Click here for Catalogue and Order Form](#)

Blueberry & Grape Production & Pruning Workshop **February 8th, 2020 from 1:30 - 5:00 PM**

Join Johnston County Cooperative Extension and NCSU Extension Specialist Dr. Bill Cline for an introductory workshop on blueberry and grape production and pruning on Saturday, February 8th, 2020 from 1:30 - 5:00 PM at the Johnston County Agricultural Center (2736 NC 210 Hwy., Smithfield 27577). Topics include cultivar selection, budgeting, site establishment (soil conditions and planting), fertilization, irrigation, pruning, harvesting, and resources for pest control. Workshop includes a lecture followed by a pruning demonstration at a local farm. The program is aimed at farmers considering establishing "pick-your-own" operations as well as home gardeners.

There is no cost to attend the workshop.

Dress for probable cold weather for the outdoor pruning demonstration.

**For accommodations for persons with disabilities,
contact Marshall Warren at 919-989-5380.**

For more information on growing and pruning blueberries, visit

NC State Blueberry Portal at:

<https://blueberries.ces.ncsu.edu/>



Muscadine Grape Production:

https://grapes.ces.ncsu.edu/muscadine_grape_production/



Extension Master Gardener Training Class Registration is now OPEN!



[CLICK HERE FOR MORE DETAILS](#)

Visit our
N.C. Cooperative Extension of Johnston County Page

NC State University and N.C. A&T State University work in tandem, along with federal, state and local governments, to form a strategic partnership called N.C. Cooperative Extension.

NC State and N.C. A&T State universities are collectively committed to positive action to secure equal opportunity and prohibit discrimination and harassment regardless of age, color, disability, family and marital status, gender identity, genetic information, national origin, political beliefs, race, religion, sex (including pregnancy), sexual orientation and veteran status. NC State, N.C. A&T, USDA and local governments cooperating.

Accommodation requests related to a disability should be made 7 days prior to any event by contacting:
Bryant Spivey at 919-989-5380 or by email bmspivey@ncsu.edu.

Disclaimer agrichemicals:

Recommendations for the use of agricultural chemicals are included in this publication as a convenience to the reader. The use of brand names and any mention or listing of commercial products or services in this publication does not imply endorsement by North Carolina Cooperative Extension nor discrimination against similar products or services not mentioned. Individuals who use agricultural chemicals are responsible for ensuring that the intended use complies with current regulations and conforms to the product label. Be sure to obtain current information about usage regulations and examine a current product label before applying any chemical. For assistance, contact your county Cooperative Extension agent.