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The Gardener's Dirt

Johnston County Cooperative Extension

October 2016

Feature Article

Pass-Along-Plants

By David Lockett, Extension Master Gardener Volunteer

When my wife and I moved to North Carolina in 2000, I started our landscape and gardens on a neglected few acres of sandy soil in Johnston County. Since there was nothing on our property but underbrush and long leaf pine trees, which we had planted several years earlier, I decided to primarily use local and native plants from family, neighbors, and friends - with some exceptions. Many of the plants were pass-along-plants. For the novice gardener, the practice of pass-along-plants is a good way to obtain proven plants that have and will do well in your landscape and garden. Over the years, the list of pass-along-plants in the landscape has grown and there is a wonderful story with each one.

Some of the plants passed along to me are: Hellebores, Winter Honeysuckle, Pieris Japonica, American Beauty Berry, Carolina Allspice, Hydrangea, roses, figs and even a heritage pear tree. Many plants were acquired from my gardening friends, and I learned that gardeners love and need to share plants, so ask. Some of my most treasured plants are from fellow gardeners. I have certainly benefited from their largess.



Gardenia Cuttings Photo Courtesy of David Lockett

One of the plants that I acquired and passed along is gardenia. The new gardenias got started serendipitously when I had cut some of them as cut flowers for a vase and discovered, as the blooms finished and were removed, the stems started developing roots! Discovery and learning, even if it doesn't work at first, is still a wonder and pleasure of gardening. I am a firm believer that you must invest in good soil to help your plants germinate. So I always use a good soil to help plants get started and always protect and gently handle tender roots. I use a locally purchased mixture of sphagnum peat, pine bark, perlite, and vermiculite.

A plant I really cherish are the fig trees I started from cuttings

from my mother's plant in Philadelphia. Several years ago during the fall season, usually the best time to start plants, I cut four healthy stems from her tree and planted them in my vegetable garden in October just to see what they would do. In the spring, three of the four had new foliage. I planted one which is now huge and gave one to a neighbor and one to a relative. All of these plants are doing well. This summer, I passed along cuttings from my "mother" plant to my sister who is also a master gardener in New Jersey.



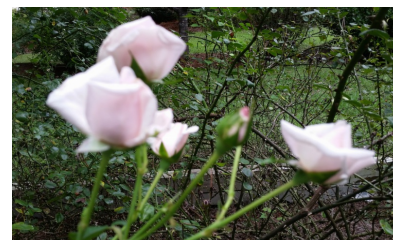
Fig Cuttings Photo Courtesy of David Lockett



Photo Courtesy of David

One of my sisters-in-laws had a very large and old hydrangea plant that had more than overgrown its space, and she wanted it removed. I gladly removed the plant and relocated it to my landscape after dividing it into four new plants. We were able to do this in the fall of the year as it prepared for dormancy. I have found hydrangeas are a wonderful addition to the landscape, and there are many established and quite old plants that can be divided.

Another treasured pass-along-plant that was indeed from a passed along is a most remarkable and fragrant rose bush. I grew the rose bush from cuttings of a plant that was moved from a dear friend's mother's house at her death. The original plant is over 70 years old. The first year I took cuttings, none made it. The next June, I tried again and had success. Unlike many hybrid roses this is a huge bush with the most fragrant and beautiful pink roses. The pink color reminds me of a shade of pink named after the former first lady, Mamie Eisenhower, and is referred to as "Mamie Pink". Remember, some of your most cherished plants are those that are passed along from others willing to share.



Photos Courtesy of David Lockett

Be Creative, Grow Native

Muhly Grass

Muhlenbergia capillaris

By Eloise Adams, Extension Master Gardener Volunteer

Muhlenbergia capillaris, commonly known as Muhly Grass or Pink Muhly Grass, is an outstanding native perennial ornamental grass. Another common name is Sweetgrass which is used in the low country of South Carolina for traditional basket weaving. Its native range is from Kansas to Massachusetts and south to Florida.

Muhly grass is a warm season plant which is in full bloom in the fall. It prefers full sun but can tolerate some light shade. The plant can tolerate a wide range of soil types and moisture conditions. Muhly prefers a mildly acidic organic soil with a pH range of 5.5 to 6.8. Known for its extreme drought tolerance, growing this plant is easy and requires little maintenance. It can be planted in rain gardens if the soil is amended; consistently wet soil can be a problem. Growth range is 3' x 2-3' and the growth rate is fast. It can be planted anytime, but spring is preferable. Its growth habit is mounding and/or clumping and it makes a bigger impact when planted en masse. The North Carolina Department of Highways uses Muhly grass in many of its wildflower areas. When in full bloom, it looks like a cloud of pink, at ground level, thus its name Pink Muhly grass. It is disease resistant and is an attractant for lady bugs. It also seems to be deer resistant. The feathery flowers produce oblong tan or brown seeds which are a food source for birds. If left unpruned during the winter, it provides seasonal structural interest in the garden.

Muhly grass is a clumping species and should be divided periodically to renew vigor. Spring is the best time for dividing. Replant divisions immediately or share them with a gardening friend. This action keeps them in an upright habit and encourages more blooms. Newly planted divisions should be kept watered until established. The plant should be cut back before new growth emerges. Although drought tolerant, it will flower better with supplemental water during extreme drought.

Muhly grass was voted 2012 Plant of the Year by the Garden Club of America. It is a beautiful native grass, about as maintenance free as you're likely to find.



Photo Courtesy of Clemson University



Photo Courtesy of Clemson University

Helpful Links:

http://www.clemson.edu/extension/hgic/water/resources_stormwater/rain_garden_plants_muhly_grass.html

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muhlenbergia_capillaris

Good or Bad

Winter Weed Control

By Joanne King, Extension Master Gardener Volunteer

Who can think about winter? Allow me to borrow from the holiday song "Let It Snow". Let it grow, let it grow, let it grow! If you follow practices that keep your lawn healthy and lush, weed control should be minimized.

Although the type of lawn grass you have will dictate which maintenance schedule to follow, weed control is the same. First and most important, you want to follow practices which promote a healthy lawn. This involves proper soil care (aerating, soil test, lime as needed); watering and feeding. If the grass is thin with sparse areas, weeds have the sunlight and space they need to thrive.

Hand picking may not be practical, but this mechanical measure may have a useful purpose. If I hand pull weeds, I become more familiar with their habit, what areas of the lawn are suffering, and the potential for further invasion. Also, I find that when I mow the lawn myself, I am inspecting its condition. Proper mower height, frequency and mower blade care are important mechanical measures.

Finally, there are chemical measures you can employ. A pre-emergent herbicide appropriate for your lawn will prevent the weed seed from last years' crop from germinating. This is an effective way to control annual bluegrass, one of the most common winter weeds in our area. If you reseed your grass, pre-emergent is not an option as the herbicide prevents grass seed from germinating. If you reseed, or it is too late to use a pre-emergent, consider a post-emergent herbicide when the weeds appear later. It is imperative to know your grass type and the weed type to determine how to manage weeds with herbicides. The use of herbicides is very specific to both, although there are many herbicides that will treat more than one weed variety.



Photo Courtesy of Clemson University

Helpful Links:

Annual bluegrass: <http://www.clemson.edu/extension/hgic/pests/weeds/hgic2325.html>

Lawn maintenance: <https://gardening.ces.ncsu.edu/plants-2/lawns-2/>

Weeds in warm season grass: <http://www.clemson.edu/extension/hgic/pests/weeds/hgic2310.html>

Fescue maintenance: <http://www.turfgrass.ncsu.edu/turfgrasses/fine-fescue/lawn-maintenance>

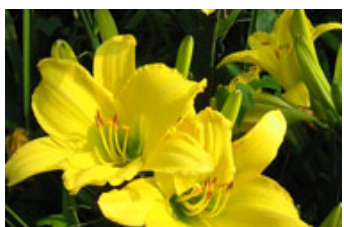
Visiting Great NC Gardens

It's Re-Blooming Time at Local, Lovely, Lakeview Daylily Farm!

By Margery Pearl, Extension Master Gardener Volunteer



Did you know there are 5 acres of over a thousand varieties of beautiful, fragrant daylilies, Southern magnolias, bald cypress, Sparkling Burgundy Pineapple Lilies (Eucomis), and Crinum Sangria in Garner? At Noel Weston's Lakeview Daylily Farm, 1000 Benson Road, you can tour the gardens and purchase plants you choose from the landscape at very reasonable prices. Although the peak daylily bloom time is mid-summer, fall is the time re-blooming daylilies take center stage for their encore performance!



Noel opened the Lakeview Daylily Farm for commercial operation in 1989 after a 30-year career as the Horticulturist for the City of Raleigh. Of all the landscape plants he used, he found daylilies the most rewarding to grow. Hybridizing and propagating daylilies and other plants for over 40 years, Noel routinely fills orders in the tens of thousands for highway departments and businesses. Yes, the daylilies that beautify Interstate 40 were grown by him!



Photos Courtesy of
Lakeview Daylily Farm

Selected by you and personally dug by Noel, lily clumps will typically contain 5-10 plants and cost from \$5 to \$20. It's easy and interesting to compile a variety wish list from the photos, descriptions, and prices at <http://www.weston-farms.com/daylilies/>. On site or by email at lvdaylily@me.com, Noel can offer cultivar recommendations, suggest ways to prevent weeds, deer predation and give tips on optimal growth. Now is a great time to plant lilies!

In June, seven daylily varieties, representing themes important to Johnston County Extension Master Gardener Volunteers, were planted in the Flagpole Demonstration Bed at the County Center. These included four developed by Johnston County grower Lolita Powell; Selma Rose and Princeton varieties, Grape, Point Lace and Eye Glow, as well as Red Volunteer, Garden Style, and Wolfpack Kid. We would like to thank Noel for his generous donation of these wonderful daylilies!

To see an interview with Noel that was filmed for NCSU's Almanac Gardener, learn about varieties and how to separate and plant daylilies, plus get a glimpse of the gardens, go to:
<http://video.uncvtv.org/video/2365754844/>.

Plan a visit to Lakeview Daylily Farm this fall to see the re-bloomers and "fall" for daylilies all over again!

Quick Tip:

Picasso and Glyphosate

By Tommy Bagley, Extension Master Gardener Volunteer

Didn't know I was a painter did you? Yep, I've become a super glyphosate artist. I don't use herbicides much, but I am determined to save a beneficial plant or two. I have plants that have been crowded by what I would call invasive plants/weeds. One is wire grass - let's not call it Bermuda, please; and another is an invasive vine. Another "enemy" can be sprouting trees like walnut or pecan which will spring up right in the middle of my garden. I have been painting glyphosate for a long time now without losing any of my favorable plants yet.



Photo Courtesy of Tommy Bagley

Shown here is wire grass too close to a butterfly bush. With the very smallest amount of herbicide I paint only the wire grass to permanently kill it. As you might know, it is almost impossible to pull up and remove this invasive item by hand. I find this is, by far, the best way to save a plant. I recently saw a decorative flower bed at the beach that was under attack by the obnoxious weed and wondered if I could have saved it using this method. I would have loved to try!

In this example, I have a walnut tree growing in a snowball bush. I take a "heavy duty" gallon container filled with a mixture of water and the herbicide. I bend the walnut tree and any limbs from it down into the jug. If necessary, use an appropriate stick pressed down to hold the invasive plant. Always use a sturdy container or mount the container on a board if you have concerns about it turning over. Never use a common thin gallon water jug. I find a lot of nice gallon juice containers work nicely.

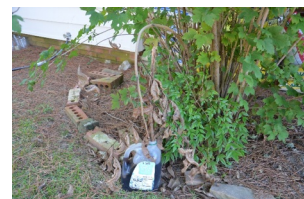


Photo Courtesy of Tommy Bagley

Mix only the amount of pesticide that you think you will use for the job at hand. If you have any left over mix, add it to your sprayer and apply to other areas where weeds need to be controlled. Pesticides should always be stored in sound, properly labeled, original containers.

Happy Planting!

Monthly Garden Tasks

OCTOBER GARDEN TASKS



LAWN CARE

- Pamper newly seeded fescue lawns. Baby grass plants have very small, shallow roots. Keep them watered. Don't let falling leaves smother them. Use a leaf blower on low power or rake very gently so you don't uproot the tender young plants. If desired, bermuda lawns may be over seeded with annual rye at a rate of 5 lbs./1000 sq. ft.
- Avoid cool season weeds by applying the appropriate pre-emergent herbicide to plant beds and turf areas that had cool season weeds last year.



Photo Courtesy of Pixabay

GENERAL REMINDERS

- Fall is for planting! Autumn is an ideal time to plant or transplant deciduous trees/shrubs and perennials. Fall is also a great time to till the soil and add organic material and lime. The bed will have plenty of time to "mellow" before next spring. Turning over the soil also exposes harmful insects such as grubs to predators and cold temperatures.
- Collect soil samples for testing. Test your lawn, flower beds and vegetable garden. Testing should be done every 2-3 years. The kits and analysis are FREE this month. Strong healthy plants start with proper soil pH and fertility.
- Clean up and throw away any diseased plant material. **Do not put it in a compost pile.** Leaving infected plant material on the plants or on the ground provides a source of inoculum for next year's infection.
- Improve your clay soil by loosening the soil and adding well-rotted compost in a ratio of one part compost to two parts soil. Mix compost in well, making a bed 8-12 inches deep.
- Use shredded leaves as mulch. Fallen leaves contain lots of nutrients, but they decompose slowly. Help the process along by shredding or mowing them, preferably with a bagger attachment.
- Compost your yard waste! As you cut back 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.
- Wait to prune trees and shrubs. Pruning before dormancy may induce tender, new growth that will not have time to harden off before the first frost.
- Take cuttings of begonias, coleus, geraniums and impatiens to root and grow indoors during winter.
- Remove bagworms from evergreens to greatly minimize their population numbers for next year. The eggs for next year's caterpillars are in the bag.
- Trigger roses into dormancy by no longer deadheading spent flowers and allow rose hips to form.
- Purchase spring-flowering bulbs and store them in a cool place until chilly weather sets in and you can plant them. Daffodils, Spanish Bluebells (*Hyacinthoides hispanicus*), and Snowflakes (*Leucojum aestivum*) are bulbs to consider. By contrast, tulips and Dutch hyacinths decline after their first season in Johnston County and are best treated as annuals.
- Store tender tubers, such as dahlia, caladium, gladiolus, geranium, and tuberous begonia, which may not overwinter in the garden. Lift roots, tubers, or corms about the time of our first killing frost, just after their foliage dries. Dig deep enough so that the roots will not be snapped apart when lifted from the soil. Leave soil around dahlia tubers, canna, and caladium roots. Store tubers inside in a dry, cool, frost-free place such as a basement to protect against rodents. Geraniums can be overwintered in pots, or bare root in paper bags until soil dries and falls away from plant. Shake soil off roots and tubers, and cut away dried stem. Discard any plant parts that show soft spots or disease. Place tubers and roots in old sawdust or peat moss in a flat box or plastic bag with holes for ventilation.
- Coddle Holiday Cactus - Leave your holiday cactus outdoors in a spot that gets a few hours of bright sun and no light after dark. Give it regular water and fertilizer. The combination of attentive care, bright daytime, and long, dark nights sets the stage for heavy flower bud production in early winter.

VEGETABLES & FRUITS

- Plant a cover crop in your vegetable garden. Legumes, such as clover and alfalfa, will enrich the soil by fixing nitrogen. Cover crops prevent erosion and can be turned over to decompose in the soil and provide needed organic matter.
- Plant a fruit tree or small fruit. The ideal time to plant is December.
- Keep pecans picked up. Weevil larva for next year's populations will crawl out of the nuts and overwinter in the soil if the nuts are not picked up.
- Build a cold frame to plant cool-weather vegetables for a longer harvest into early winter.

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

Fall Fruit and Nut Tree Sale

Sale starts on **Oct. 1st, 2016** and all orders are due with payment, to the Johnston County Agriculture Center in Smithfield, NC by **Nov. 14th, 2016**. You can purchase a variety of fruit trees, blueberries, muscadines, and pecan trees. Pickup is Dec. 9th and pickup for pecan trees is around the middle of January. The link can be found on our webpage, <https://johnston.ces.ncsu.edu/>, as of October 4th, 2016.

NC State Fair

Johnston County Master Gardeners will be working at the horticulture exhibits on Sunday **Oct. 23rd, 2016**.

"Moon Light in the Garden"

At the JC Raulston Arboretum. Saturday and Sunday Nov. 5-6th and Friday and Saturday Nov. 11-12th from 6:00pm to 9:00pm. Follow link to see scheduled activities and to register. <https://jcra.ncsu.edu/events/details.php?ID=1346>

Become a Johnston County Extension Master Gardener!

Calling for men and women who love to garden, would like to learn and share their knowledge, serve as a volunteer and have fun with other gardening enthusiasts! To learn more about Master Gardeners, go to <http://www.ncstategardening.org/>. The training starts on Thursday January 26th, 2017. Classes will be held each Thursday afternoon from 1:30 to 4:30 for 15 weeks. Contact Marshall Warren for more information at mhwarren@ncsu.edu. The fee for course is \$120. **The application and fee are due by January 5th, 2017.**

Fruit & Nut Tree Pruning Workshop

Saturday **January 28th, 2017** 10:00am-12:00pm, taught by Dr. Mike Parker. At the Crop Research Station, 13223 US Business 70 West in Clayton.

Blueberry Production Workshop

Thursday **February 9th, 2017** 1:00-4:00pm. Class begins at the Johnston County Ag Center Auditorium and then a short trip to a nearby blueberry farm for actual pruning demonstration.

NEWSLETTER EDITED BY: Brooke Taylor

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Johnston County NC
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Gardener Volunteers