

NC STATE

EXTENSION

Master Gardener | Johnston County

The Gardener's Dirt Newsletter

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JOHNSTON COUNTY CENTER

Feature Article:



Planting Bulbs

By: Cindy Stephens
Extension Master Gardener Volunteer

If you want to include spring flowering bulbs in your garden, October is the month to begin preparing. Planted in the fall, bulbs are among the first flowers to provide color in your landscape. After blooming, they die back and remain dormant throughout the summer. With proper selection of early, mid, and late-season cultivars, you can have bulbs blooming in your garden from January throughout May.

The most popular of the spring flowering bulbs are tulips (*Tulipa* hybrids), hyacinths (*Hyacinthus orientalis*), and daffodils (*Narcissus*). Other bulbs, not as commonly grown, but equally delightful include crocus (*Crocus*), anemone (*Anemone*), aconite (*Aconitum*), fritillaria (*Fritillaria meleagris*), glory-of-the-snow (*Chinodoxa*), grape hyacinth (*Muscari armemiacum*), Dutch iris (*Iris hollandica*), lily-of-the-valley (*Convallaria majalis*), and snowdrops (*Gathanthus nivales*).

Daffodils are some of the easiest bulbs to grow. They typically come back reliably every year with minimal care and come in a wide variety of colors including white, yellow, and peach. The fragrant hyacinth usually only blooms once, however can be encouraged to repeat bloom with proper site preparation and fertilization after blooming. Tulips are generally considered annuals in our area zone 8.0 gardens, because our mild winters usually do not provide the eight to ten weeks below forty-five degrees to meet the chilling requirement. However, there are tulip cultivars that could successfully perennialize if given proper fertilization and soil preparation. You can find a chart of tulip cultivars that are successfully grown in this area at https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/extension-gardener-handbook/10-herbaceous-ornamentals#section_heading_9170

Bulb catalogs begin arriving in the mail in August, and bulbs appear in local garden centers soon after. Buying bulbs early allows for the best selection. Always choose the largest bulbs as they will produce the largest flowers. Choose bulbs that are heavy for their size, plump and firm. Preferably, the bulbs should be unblemished, but a few nicks and some missing outer papery skins are okay. Bargain bulbs are generally too small to flower the first year. For the most attractive display, bulbs should be planted in groups of twelve to twenty-five, not in rows.

If you buy your bulbs early, store them in a cool dry place around sixty-five degrees to keep them from drying out. Do not store bulbs close to ripening fruit such as apples or pears as the ethylene gas emitted by these fruits will interfere with blooming.

In our area, bulbs should be planted in November through early December, since the soil temperature should be around sixty degrees by then. Most bulbs prefer full sun, or at least five to six hours a day. Bulbs can be planted under deciduous trees since they flower and produce foliage before the trees leaf out in the spring. Bulbs grow best in well drained, deep loamy or sandy soils with a pH of 6.0 to 7.0. Dig beds for bulbs to a depth of twelve inches incorporating organic matter into soil such as compost or pine bark soil conditioner. Bulb fertilizer is available specifically for bulbs (9-9-6) and should be incorporated into the soil at planting time. Follow the directions on the package for the proper amount to apply. Daffodils and hyacinths are usually pest free, but voles and squirrels love tulips and crocuses, so you can try incorporating pea gravel around these bulbs when planting.

Bulbs should be planted at a depth three times the diameter of the bulb, usually five inches deep for smaller ones, and eight inches deep for larger ones. Since two to three inches of mulch is recommended, consider this amount in the planting depth. Mulch keeps the soil temperature more uniform and delays warming of the soil in spring. Plant the bulbs pointed side up, about three to four inches apart, and water well after planting.

Foliage on bulbs generally begins to appear in late winter and is very cold hardy. When the

shoots are one to two inches tall, fertilize again with bulb fertilizer, being careful not to get fertilizer on the leaves.

With proper site selection, soil preparation, fertilization and cultivar selection, bulbs can provide a burst of color in your spring garden for years.

Grow Native:

American Boneset

[EUPATORIUM PERFOLIATUM, FAMILY: ASTERACEAE]

By: David Allison

Extension Master Gardener Volunteer



Photos Courtesy of David Allison, Extension Master Gardener Volunteer

The American Boneset plant was new to me, so I wasn't sure what I would get, but what I got was a pollinator magnet! On any given day I had eight or more species of pollinators (honey bees, two spotted bumblebees, wasps, and butterflies) visit. The flat-topped clusters (compound corymbs) of small, fluffy, white flowers appear July to September. You might be lucky enough to stumble across this plant in a marsh or wetland area anywhere in North America. You will recognize it by the clusters of small, fragrant, white flowers sprouting from

tall stalks with leaves whose bases are grown together. The American Boneset is a native of the SE United States, Zone 3-8, it needs full to part shade, and likes medium water to wet. It is susceptible to drought so lack of water can prove deadly. Mine was fine under 3" of mulch.

This healthy plant is a delight if you want to attract pollinators. The plant gets up to 4 feet tall and spreads to 2 feet wide within the first year. The tiny white flower heads must have magic in them to attract so many pollinators at once. The mature plant can reach 6 feet in height and spread to 4 feet wide. Deer won't touch this plant.

Boneset herb's name probably comes from its healing attributes which included the 18th century Break Bone Fever. Modern study has shown that they may act as a general immune system stimulant as well as being traditionally used to treat dengue fever. These herbaceous and shrubby plants are easy to grow. The showy flowers can be used as cut and dried flowers also. Look for this plant and more native plants at the 2018 Master Gardener Plant Sale.

Quick Tip:

Watering Young Plants

By: Silvia Caracciolo
Extension Master Gardener Volunteer



Our winter vegetable crops are in the ground. Young plants need plenty of water, but always avoid wetting the plant's leaves! Wet leaves can lead to mold, rot, and a sick plant! The general rule of thumb is to give plants an inch of water per week. Yellow leaves may indicate too much water! Stick your finger up to the first joint in the soil to check and see if your plant needs water. If your plants are in dark colored containers or clay pots they may require more water due to the heat absorbed from the sun.

[Growing a Fall Vegetable Garden](#)

Ask An Expert:

Farm Law Comment on Tree Fall Liability

By: Andrew Branan, JD
Extension Assistant Professor
Department of Agriculture and Resource Economics
North Carolina State University



Hurricane Florence reminds us all how quickly wind and rain can upend or disfigure a decades-old - sometimes centuries-old - tree. Trees and limbs often fall across property lines and cause damage, particularly in residential settings but also rural settings where the tree fall causes damage to fencing and other structures. This comment is meant to shed light on the question of who is responsible for such damage.

As a practical matter, a homeowners or farm hazard policy should cover structural damage from a tree or branch falling on the property though the tree is rooted across the property line. It is not the policy-holder's responsibility to establish fault, and money for the tree damage and removal should come from the policy. In theory, the insurance company - if the amount paid out is significant enough - could pursue indemnity from the neighbor (or more likely their insurance company) under a theory that the neighbor was negligent in allowing a dangerous tree to loom beside the property line.

The North Carolina legislature has not addressed this issue of tree damage by statute, so the determination of liability is left to the common - or court-made - law. North Carolina jurisprudence follows the common law negligence standard for property and bodily injury for damage caused by falling trees and limbs. A person who is injured or suffers property damage due to the fall of a tree rooted on the adjoining tract must prove that the owner of the adjoining tract was negligent in permitting a dangerous tree to remain standing and poised for damage. Traditionally at common law, courts treated trees as "a natural condition of [the] land" that relieved one landowner of liability when his or her tree caused "an invasion of another's use and enjoyment" of another's land."^[1] Over the years courts have eliminated the distinction between trees that grow "naturally" and those planted by humans.

Under negligence theory, the landowner is under a duty to eliminate a reasonably foreseeable danger a tree may pose to adjoining property. Various facts point to the issue of foreseeability, including but not limited to 1) whether a tree is dead or visibly dying, 2) leans prominently toward the adjacent tract, 3) whether limbs of the tree have extended far across the property line, or 4) the tree-owner cut through a large anchoring root of the tree. If these or similar facts are

produced, the trier of fact (judge or jury) may find that the owner of the tree could have foreseen that it was a matter of time before the fell. Whether the direction a dead tree would fall was itself predictable may be irrelevant. If the court finds that a reasonable person would have known of these facts, the jury could find that the owner acted unreasonably in waiting for it to cause damage, and is therefore liable. North Carolina does not follow a strict liability standard.

One North Carolina court case tells of a situation where neighboring landowners, seeing the deteriorating condition of a tree on the other side of their property line, obtained permission from the owner of the tree to remove it but failed to do so before the tree - after considerable time - eventually fell causing damage. The Court held that the question of whether the neighboring landowners' failure to remove the tree when given the chance amounted to contributory negligence (a bar to recovery) on their part was a proper question for the jury to consider.

Again, such issues of liability should concern a damaged property-owner only in the event the property owner is not carrying insurance, has a lapsed policy, or otherwise isn't covered for the damage caused by the falling tree. As a practical matter the property owner should not be found at fault - i.e. denied insurance coverage - for failing to compel a neighbor to remove a threatening tree, which would be a costly and legally dubious effort.

[1] Restatement of the Law of Torts, § 840, p.310 (cited in *Rowe v. McGee*, 5 N.C.App. 60, 168 S.E.2d 77 [N.C. App., 1969])

October Gardening Tasks



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 well, making a bed of 8-12" 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.

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.
- If you didn't do this in September, help prepare your centipede lawn for winter by applying 1 pound of potassium fertilizer per 1000 sq. ft. Use 0-0-50 or 0-0-60. Do not use fertilizer that contains nitrogen.
- If you had Large Patch Disease in your warm season lawn, now is the time to apply fungicides. Large Patch begins to develop when soil temperatures decline to 70 degrees F in the fall, but the symptoms do not necessarily at this time

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

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 - Landscape Design](#)

[Growing a Fall Vegetable Garden](#)

Upcoming Events:

Calling all Gardening Enthusiasts! Have you considered becoming a Johnston County Extension Master Gardener Volunteer?



If you love to garden, enjoy the company of others with the same interest, have a desire to expand your scope of knowledge and like the idea of volunteering and making a difference in your community, then becoming a Johnson County Extension Master Gardener Volunteer is for you! All skill and knowledge levels are welcome! The only requirement is an enthusiasm for learning and a desire to be involved. Extension Master Gardener Volunteers expand Extension's capacity to meet the needs of the gardening public by learning to use and to teach research-based horticultural practices. All training and resources are provided by NC State faculty and staff to help

you become a highly effective community educator providing the public with unbiased, research-based, environmentally sound information about growing lawns, fruits, vegetables, trees and ornamentals.

To learn more about Master Gardeners, go to <https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/north-carolina-extension-master-gardener-volunteer-program-guidelines/ii-north-carolina-extension-master-gardener-volunteer-program>

The training starts on Thursday January 31st 2019. Classes will be held each Thursday afternoon from 1:30 to 4:30 for 15 weeks. Contact Horticulture Extension Agent Marshall Warren for more information at mhwarren@ncsu.edu. The fee for the course is \$150. The application and fee are due by January 4th, 2019.

Johnston County Extension
2018 Fall Fruit & Nut Sale - Available NOW!!
[Click here for information and form](#)

2018 Fall Mobile Plant Clinic
Hudson Hardware & Outdoor Equipment in Clayton
Saturday, October 6, 2018
10 a.m. until 2 p.m.

Future Events:

Birds, Bees, Butterflies and Growing Pollinator Gardens Symposium
September 14, 2019

[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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