

NC STATE

EXTENSION

Master Gardener | Johnston County

The Gardener's Dirt Newsletter

September 2018

JOHNSTON COUNTY CENTER

Feature Article:



Take stock - How did your landscape perform over the summer?

By: Beverly Futrell
Extension Master Gardener Volunteer

Between late August and early September, our thoughts start to turn to fall. As gardeners, it's a good time to review our landscape plan and evaluate how our landscape plants and shrubs did over the summer season. Was there anything that did not do well in your landscape or disappointed your plans; if so, what should you do...? Hopefully, while you were planting, you took good notes of what was planted, and where, as well as the care it was provided over the growing season. This type of garden journaling along with research can go a long way in determining what went wrong and what you can do for better results during the next growing season. With the right planning, you'll be off to a great start for next year!

Let's talk chores...

Clean-up - A lot of getting ready for next year is the chores we need to be doing right now. It is a good time to get clean-up done before those pesky leaves start falling making this task even harder and more time-consuming! Cleaning up also helps to reduce disease and insect problems as we remove those hiding places! Removing old diseased material is also a good way to prevent disease from wintering over and spreading in the landscape.

Pruning? - a lot of novice gardeners believe the first signs of fall mean it is time to prune! However, while ... "pruning at the wrong time of year rarely kills a plant immediately. Doing so ... may remove flower buds or make the plant more susceptible to frost damage, sunscald, insects, or disease. Light corrective pruning can be done at any time of year and reduces the need for severe pruning, which can weaken the plant and reduce its natural beauty. Base the selection of when to prune on the pruning objectives, when the plant flowers, and how extensive the pruning should be." One exception is our beloved hydrangeas. Hydrangeas should be pruned in fall, after flowering. However, again, make sure you understand the variety to determine what to prune as some hydrangea varieties bloom on old wood and some on new, while others bloom on both! As well, "...the minimal pruning needed by broadleaf evergreens is best done in early spring but can also be done any time of year." Bradley, L., B. Fair. 2018. Woody Ornamentals, Chpt. 11, In: K.A. Moore, and. L.K. Bradley (eds). North Carolina Extension Gardener Handbook. NC State Extension, Raleigh, NC, [Read more»](#). As a rule, most pruning should be done in winter and not fall. Again, moral of the story is know your plants and do your research!

Planting - another fall chore, if you want to call it a chore. Planting new varieties, you may have been looking forward to having in your landscape should be fun and rewarding! Again, review your landscape plan as fall is a great time to plant many ornamentals and fall bulbs. But, as with planting anything, understanding your soil report is fundamental in getting off to a good start. It's a great time of year to get this chore done as soil tests are free April through November in North Carolina. As well, samples will not take as long as generally large growers are not sending in samples this time of year. [CLICK HERE](#) for more information as to soil testing services in North Carolina.

Lastly, you can consider mulching. Fall can be a good time of year to take stock of your beds and replenish mulch where needed, as it can get a head start on helping to enrich the soil. Remember though there are optimal levels of mulch and too much is not a good thing! For more information, [CLICK HERE](#) to determine when and how to mulch.

Feature Plant:



Photo by: Wilson Bros Garden



Southern Living Plant Collection Photo

Baby Gem™ Boxwood

Buxus microphylla var. *japonica*
'Gregem' PP21159

(GROWN AND RECOMMENDED BY JOHNSTON COUNTY NURSERYMEN)

Baby Gem Boxwood, from the Southern Living Plant Collection, is a fine-textured broad-leaved evergreen that grows as tall as it is wide. It reaches a maintainable size of 4 feet and resembles a little green muffin. It's an exceptionally compact boxwood excellent for use in smaller gardens for borders and focal areas. Densely branched, the tiny, green foliage is abundant and adds a distinctive note to the landscape, retaining its color particularly well in winter. The moderate rate of growth makes these boxwoods ideal for carefree edging in a wide area of the US. Other splendid characteristics include deer resistance and tolerance of dry soils once established.

Good or Bad:

Pruning Hydrangeas



Written By: Joanne King
Extension Master Gardener Volunteer

I have a neighbor who apparently did not understand hydrangeas when she took the previous owners magnificent lacecap hydrangeas just about to the ground in the fall. Horrors! I didn't know how to inform her of the grave error. Two years later, they have leafed up but have yet to produce flowers.

Hydrangeas don't need to be pruned unless they have overgrown their space or need to be shaped to a more attractive form. Sometimes the branches just get in the way and need to be eliminated. It is important to know what kind of hydrangea you have because some bloom on the previous years' branches (old wood) and some bloom on the current years' branches (new wood). So, timing is important or you could end up like my neighbor.

Old Wood Varieties

Hydrangea macrophylla: This is a big leaf variety and probably the most common. It includes mopheads and lacecaps in various colors. They bloom early summer on old wood, so they should be pruned when the blooms begin to fade in the summer. New buds are formed in late summer and early fall.

Hydrangea quercifolia (oakleaf hydrangea): This native hydrangea features cone-shaped white blooms that turn a russet color in late summer.

When pruning plants that grow on old wood, remove dead limbs and branches that cross, and thin out the center to create air and light space. Leave the sturdiest stems. Remove the oldest canes at the soil line to promote vigorous growth. Do the same for the tallest canes if you need to control height. For a neater look throughout the year, you can snip off faded blooms at the flower base if it gets unsightly. This is not pruning and should not affect next years' blooms.

New Wood Varieties

Hydrangea paniculata: This includes Peegees and the popular 'limelight' hydrangea. They have a panicle-shaped white flower that blooms in mid- to late summer. Blooming on new wood, they should be pruned in late fall, winter or early spring before they sprout new foliage.

Hydrangea arborescens, 'Annabelle': This variety produces globe-shaped blooms in spring that start out chartreuse and later turn white. It blooms on new wood, so prune in early spring. It can withstand a severe pruning so they can be cut to 6-12 inches. When pruning hydrangeas that grow on new wood, follow the basics for pruning. Eliminate dead branches, crossing branches, or branches that are in the way. Whether you take the plant to the ground or down to about 3 feet depends on how much you want to control its size.

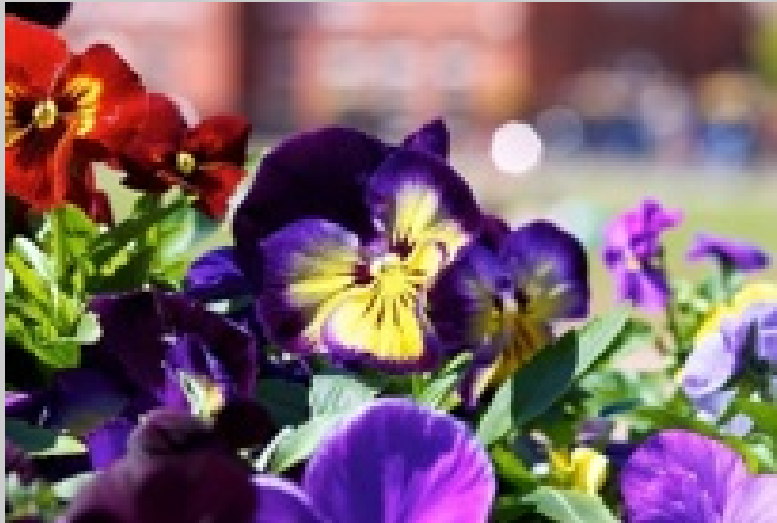
Both Old and New Wood

Reblooming hydrangeas: The most popular of this cultivar is 'Endless Summer'. This variety has been developed to bloom more than once, so it blooms on old wood and new wood. These plants can be pruned at any time. But keep in mind the timing if you expect blooms on the old wood in early summer.

Quick Tip:

Growing Pansies

By: Silvia Caracciolo
Extension Master Gardener Volunteer



Pansies are like "smiling faces" and are the flower symbol for thought. They are edible and have a mild minty flavor. They grow in all four seasons but are considered an annual. You can start pansy seeds indoors 6 to 8 weeks before you plan on transplanting them. Plant seeds in late winter for early spring and summer flowering, or plant seeds in the summer for winter flowering. Plant in moist, humus-rich, well-drained soil. Pansies like sun, but cooler temperatures. Space the plants about 7 to 12 inches apart. They will spread about 9 to 12 inches and grow to be about 6 to 9 inches tall. Pansy plantings should be mulched with a finer textured mulch such as pine bark and may be edged with pine straw. Do not use pine straw to mulch the pansy beds because it has been shown to reduce growth and flowering in the spring.

[Read more»](#)

Home Landscaping:

Landscape Renovation - Is it time for a change?

By Marshall Warren - Horticulture Extension Agent



Every few months when I go over to visit my neighbor, immediately upon entering her home, I notice she has rearranged her furniture and redecorated her home in some fashion. She seems to thrive on change and although it is always tasteful, this constant change must frustrate her son, especially when he is trying to navigate around the house during the night! Contrast this with a home that has not seen any changes or updates in 30 to 40 years. I would imagine things would be starting to look rather dull and worn. After so much time it is certain that some changes would be refreshing.

Sometimes you need to take a fresh look at your surroundings - not just the inside of your home but also the outside. Is your home surrounded with 20-year old Helleborus and Compacta Hollies? Are the bushes taller than your windows? Is your lawn mostly weeds? Is your soil hard as bricks? Are your neighbors surprised when they see you because they thought you had abandoned your home? If you answered yes to one or more of these questions, then your yard may need to be renovated and this fall is the best time to get started.

Your first step is to start with a soil test. If you are planning on pulling up all the old shrubbery that surrounds your home, or renovate your lawn, it is wise to amend your soil with the correct nutrients before you plant. If your soil is hard and compacted, you should till deeply and amend with compost and maybe some pine bark mulch to open up the soil.

Even if you just moved into a new subdivision and purchased a brand-new home, you need to look at the condition of the soil in the planting beds. Many times, in a new subdivision, the topsoil has been scrapped away and what remains is compacted and doesn't drain well. The condition of the soil is not suitable, and the new plantings will either quickly die or never thrive. The landscape was quickly installed for aesthetic appeal and to pass inspection and not for long-term viability. But don't blame the original landscaper for this, they are under very tight budgets. If you want a good landscape from the start for your new home, then you need to plan for this during the construction phase and plan on paying extra for this service. If your plants are not thriving you may need to dig up your plants, amend the soil and re-plant.

The renovation of a lawn should be considered if it is over 50% weeds. In Johnston County, warm season grasses do the best. September is not the time to seed warm season grasses, but you can still plug or lay sod. If you have perennial weeds and unwanted grasses, then you will need to kill the existing vegetation with a non-selective herbicide such as glyphosate before you prepare the soil and plant. If you would like to get a head start next year and seed your lawn with a new type of grass or an improved variety, then you will need to kill the existing vegetation this fall just before it goes dormant and then you can prepare the soil and seed early next spring. In some circumstances, fescue will do okay if you have some shade, clay soil and an irrigation system. Fall is the best time to seed a fescue lawn.

When you see the same things day after day it is easy to get comfortable and overlook the ugly and broken things that surround you. Consider this fall the time to renovate and refresh your landscape. See links to some of my past landscape articles and other helpful sites.

[Basic Steps for Home Landscaping](#)

[Carolina Lawns](#)

[NC Extension Gardener Handbook - Landscape Design](#)

September Gardening Tasks

GENERAL REMINDERS

- Collect soil samples for testing, so that you'll know how much fertilizer and lime to add this fall. Test your lawn, flower beds and vegetable garden. Testing should be done once every 2-3 years.
- Clean up and throw away any diseased plant material. Do not throw it in a compost pile. Leaving infected plant material on the plants or where it fell on the ground provides a source of reinfection for next year.
- Prepare plants for dormancy. Plants need time in the fall to slow down and prepare for the winter, so do not apply nitrogen (N) fertilizer or prune after July. Consider applying potassium (K) fertilizers, which increase winter hardiness.
- Divide spring and summer blooming perennials that are overgrown, such as daisies, daylilies, creeping phlox. This is an easy way to enlarge your garden without purchasing more plants. Dig the plants, gently separate into smaller clumps and replant immediately.
- Divide spring and summer blooming perennials that are overgrown, such as daisies, daylilies, creeping phlox. This is an easy way to enlarge your garden without purchasing more plants. Dig the plants, gently separate into smaller clumps and replant immediately. They'll have plenty of time to get re-established before next spring.
- Set out cool weather annuals for winter color. In addition to pansies and

ornamental cabbages, other cool weather ornamentals such as dianthus, snapdragons, dusty miller, and ornamental sage look great throughout the winter. Wait to plant spring bulbs till chillier fall weather arrives.

- Start fall vegetables such as lettuce, spinach, collards, and cole crops.

LAWN CARE

Quick Tip for fertilizing cool season fescue lawns: Fertilize on Labor Day, Thanksgiving and Valentine's. Fescue lawns are green and growing during the cool months of fall, winter, and spring. Use a slow-release fertilizer.

- Plant fescue seed to fill in bare spots or rejuvenate your lawn. The best time to plant fescue seed is September 15 - October 15. Contact us for a publication on lawn care and renovation and get your soil samples in!!
- Overseed common bermuda lawns with ryegrass in late September if you want to keep your lawn green all year.
- Control winter grassy weeds such as Annual Bluegrass with a pre-emergent herbicide applied around mid-September on lawn.
- To help prepare your centipede lawn for winter, apply 1 pound of potassium fertilizer per 1000 ft². Use 0-0-50 or 0-0-60. Do not use fertilizer that contains nitrogen.
- 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

Upcoming Events:

2018 Fall Mobile Plant Clinic - Clayton Lowe's at 40/42

Saturday, September 8, 2018

10 a.m. until 2 p.m.

Lowe's in Clayton at 40/42

2018 Fall Mobile Plant Clinic - Clayton Harvest Festival

Saturday, September 15, 2018

9 a.m. until 5 p.m.

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](#)



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.

For accommodations for persons with disabilities, contact Bryant Spivey at (919) 989-5380, no later than five business days before the event.

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.

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.