

Garden News

December 2012

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The Garden News is published to provide you with educational information, upcoming programs and opportunities on gardening issues. Feel free to share with others.

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21st Annual Christmas Parade & 60th Annual Tree Lighting

Currituck Cooperative Extension in conjunction with the Currituck County Sheriff's Department and the Currituck County Fraternal Order of Police Lodge #89 will be sponsoring the 21st Annual Christmas Parade at the Currituck County Center of North Carolina Cooperative Extension located at 120 Community Way in Barco NC. This Year's theme for the Parade is "Old Christmas." The parade will begin promptly at 9:00 am on Saturday, December 1st. The parade will travel south down Airport road toward Hwy 158. At this point the parade will turn east bound on Hwy. 158 (Shortcut Road). The parade will then turn north on Aviation Pkwy finishing at the Currituck Extension Center. At the conclusion of the parade, please join us for the 60th Annual Tree Lighting including a visit with Santa and cookies and cocoa. The rain date for this event will be Saturday, December 8, 2012.

Master Gardener Program Training

Now is a great time to complete an application for the 2013 Currituck County Master Gardener Volunteer Program Training Classes. These classes provide a broad scope of horticulture training in areas such as plant identification, vegetable gardening, landscape design, pest management and more. Anyone and everyone is encouraged to apply regardless of past gardening experience. Classes begin Tuesday, January 15, 2013 from 1:00pm to 4:00pm and will continue for 13 weeks. Cost for the classes is \$95.00. If you are interested in becoming a Master Gardener call the NC Cooperative Extension office at 232-2262 to receive an application or email tommy_grandy@ncsu.edu

Soil Testing

It is still a good time to test your soil for next season. When preparing for new gardens, lawns and other cultivated areas it is important to have the soil tested before you plant and every two to three years thereafter. Soil testing provides valuable information on pH and nutrients. Forms and containers are available at the Cooperative Extension office. This a free service provided by the N. C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services for residents of North Carolina. For more information call 232-2262 or email tommy_grandy@ncsu.edu

Organic Gardening Facts

The basis of organic gardening is to eliminate need or use of synthetic pesticides; to enrich and build up the nutrients in your garden soil with natural materials; as well as to acquire sustainable gardening practices for your family. To reach the goal of becoming an organic gardener, one will need to develop a passion by reading, learning from others and most importantly, learning by doing. Ultimately it is up to you, the gardener, to decide what goes into your garden and whether or not you want to call it organic. Commercial organic farmers are bound by a strict set of guidelines from the United States Department of Agriculture with respect to the production practices used and how their product is marketed. However, as a home organic gardener, you are not bound by any of these guidelines when growing for your family.

Once you learn some of the concepts of organic gardening you can begin to convert your conventional garden over to organic. If you don't want to become totally organic you can use many of the organic concepts and practices to improve your conventional garden. One of the keys to organic gardening is keeping your plants healthy by building up your soil. Organic gardeners build their soil by adding lots of organic matter, maintaining a correct pH, and incorporating organic soil amendments. A soil test is important to determine the pH of the soil and the amount of nutrients in the soil. Organic matter can be added to the soil by using cover crops, manure, and compost and will benefit any garden. Organic matter adds nutrients to the soil and releases them at a slow, even rate. Most organic gardeners also use organic fertilizers to provide nutrients to their plants. The following information is presented as some basic facts on soil nutrition and pest controls for organic gardening.

A few of the organic fertilizers that are available are:

Material	Primary Nutrient Provided
fish meal	nitrogen
dried blood	nitrogen
soybean meal	nitrogen
seaweed	potassium
bone meal	phosphorus
wood ash	potassium
cottonseed meal	nitrogen
rock phosphate	phosphorus
rock potash	potassium

To control pests the organic gardener has to rely on a variety of practices. These practices include keeping plants healthy, crop rotation, resistant varieties, inter planting, proper planting date, and inspecting plants regularly. Other good practices are cleaning up crop residue, removing diseased plants, proper watering, planting disease free seeds and transplants and mulching. This is called Integrated Pest Management and will benefit both the organic and the conventional gardener. By using Integrated Pest Management you can control pests, reduce expenses, and reduce the amount of pesticides, either organic or synthetic.

There are a number of pesticides that are acceptable to most organic gardeners and are a good choice for pest control by non-organic gardeners.

Product	Pest Controlled
Bacillus thuringensis (BT)	Many caterpillars
Bacillus subtilis	Disease Control
Copper sulfate	Disease Control
Diatomaceous Earth	Soft bodied insects
Horticultural oil	Soft Bodied insects
Insecticidal soap	Aphids, whiteflies, thrips and spider mites
Neem	Many insects and some diseases
Pyrethrin	Many insects
Spinosad	Caterpillar, beetle and thrips pests
Sulfur	Disease control

A Rural Christmas ~ The time to get into the holiday spirit is here! Currituck County 4-H invites you to come celebrate with us at the Currituck 4-H Rural Center in Powells Point on December 8. We will be hosting "A Rural Christmas" from 5:30-7:30 pm. The event is designed to be fun for the whole family and includes hayrides, self portraits with Santa, crafts for the kids, chili, hot chocolate, music, storytelling and more. The teen 4-H Council is sponsoring the event to offset costs for community projects they will be working on for the upcoming year. Please come out and support the teens while enjoying the sights, sounds and smells of Christmas. Tickets may be purchased ahead of time or at the event. Cost is \$5 per person/max of \$20 per vehicle (tickets can be purchased in advance). For more information about the event, or to find out more about 4-H, please contact NC Cooperative Extension at 232-2262.

Always check the label directions for the crops that these products can be used on and for more detailed information on the pests they control. Always read and follow the label directions for proper application when using these or any pesticides.

To learn more about organic gardening try the variety of researched-based publications available at:
www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/consumer/hortinternet

Books and bulletins are also excellent sources of information. Books on organic gardening are available at the library or any bookstore. "Organic Vegetable Gardening" from the University of Florida Cooperative Extension Service and "Growing Vegetables Organically" from the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service are two good publications on organic vegetable gardening.

Things to do in the Garden . . .

Use decorative stakes or garden art to mark the location of perennial flowers and herbs. This will prevent disrupting them when the planting "bug" gets you early in the next season. There is still time to dig, divide, and replant crowded perennials. Look for perennials that have grown out of bounds or have declined due to overcrowding and have developed a ring of growth with an empty center.

Watch for spider mites on your houseplants. They string tiny webs between the leaves and stems. If detected, isolate the plant and wash with plain water or apply an insecticidal soap.

Before winter bird feeding begins, clean your feeders with a solution of one part bleach to nine parts water. Scrub with a brush and rinse thoroughly. This will prevent old and moldy seeds from harboring diseases which could possibly cause birds to be sick.

Clean old plant debris from your vegetable garden. Remove dead foliage as well as the stakes and row markers. Be sure to throw out or burn any diseased foliage. Do not put it into the compost pile.

After Chrysanthemums have stopped blooming, cut stems back to the ground and dispose of stems and all dropped and dried leaves and branches.

Reduce peony botryis blight and hollyhock rust by removing and disposing of all old stems this fall. This will reduce the carryover of the diseases during the winter and you will have less trouble next year.

Tree leaves piling on the lawn should be removed or composted, because leaves that are allowed to pile up on the lawn will cause the grass to decline in those areas.

Weed Watch:

Many winter annual weeds germinate in lawns during the fall, then slowly grow during the winter months before growing vigorously at the first sign of warmer weather in late winter or early spring. Some of the winter annual weeds are henbit, lawn burweed (more commonly known as spurweed), sowthistle, cudweed, as well as false dandelion to mention a few. A selective herbicide applied properly and at the right time, based on the type of lawn grass will help eliminate some of these problem weeds prior to spring green up. You may go to Turf Files Lawn Care website: **www.turffiles.ncsu.edu** for weed control and other lawn care information, or contact the Currituck Extension Center, 232-2262 for more information on specific lawn weed problems.

Upcoming Events:

- December 1 **21st Annual Christmas Parade & 60th Annual Tree Lighting**, beginning at 9am at the Currituck Extension Center
- December 8 **“A Rural Christmas”** at the Currituck 4-H Rural Center in Powells Point, 5:30-7:30 pm, admission \$5.00 per person / \$20.00 per vehicle. Purchase your ticket in advance from the Currituck Extension office. For more information call 232-2262 or email **ellen_owens@ncsu.edu**
- January 2013 **Currituck Master Gardener Volunteer Training Classes**. For more information call 232-2262 or email **tommy_grandy@ncsu.edu**. Pre-registration required.

Go Green!

To sign up for the Currituck Extension enews please notify **donna_keene@ncsu.edu** to be removed from the US postage mailing list and added to the email list.

For additional information on any of the contents of this newsletter call or e-mail Tommy Grandy at 232-2262, **tommy_grandy@ncsu.edu**

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MISSION, VISION AND GOALS

North Carolina Cooperative Extension partners with communities to deliver education and technology that enrich the lives, land and economy of North Carolina.

For accommodations for persons with disabilities, contact the Currituck County Center at 252-232-2262 no later than five business days prior to the event.

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