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Alamance County Center
NC Cooperative Extension
209-C N Graham-Hopedale Rd
Burlington, NC 27217
Phone: 336.570.6740
Fax: 336.570.6689
<http://alamance.ces.ncsu.edu>



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SOLUTIONS

Newsletter of the Alamance County Cooperative Extension Service

Spring Breaks

Mark S. Danielely, Interim Director

I am very glad that April has finally arrived. The cold temperatures this winter were bad with readings down in the single digits. Many shrubs were damaged by the cold, but should come back this spring. We may see fewer azalea blooms this spring because of the cold damage. Shrubs that were cold damaged can be pruned back now to encourage new growth. Spring bloomers like azaleas can be pruned back after they bloom.

The cold weather has also delayed the strawberry crop. We probably will start picking around the end of April or the first of May and should be in full production by Mother's Day. Of course that all depends on the temperatures we have in the next 30 days. In any case I am looking forward to having some fresh strawberries.



While the cold was bad, the ice was worse. We will be cleaning up from the ice storm for months. Many trees were damaged and some were lost completely. The remaining damaged trees need to be carefully as-

sessed. If half of the tree is gone, it may have a hard time recovering. You will have to decide if the tree is valuable enough to do corrective pruning and take the chance of having to remove it later. After the cleanup is finished, we will have to decide about replacement trees. Some trees had little damage where others were taken to the

ground. The selection of species is important, but perhaps more important is tree location. Bradford pear and river birch took a big hit in the ice storm. Does that mean we shouldn't plant those trees? Possibly, but we need to consider both sides of the issue.

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Calendar Updates

| | | |
|----------------|-------------|--|
| Thurs., Apr 10 | 10:00 | THINK GREEN THURSDAY - Growing Daylilies and Crinum Lilies |
| Sat., Apr 12 | 8:00A-1:00P | Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day, See Page 4 |
| Thurs., Apr 24 | 10:00 | THINK GREEN THURSDAY - Vegetable Gardening for Beginners |
| Sat., Apr 26 | 10:00 | Rain Garden Workshop and demonstration, call for details |
| Thurs., May 8 | 10:00 | THINK GREEN THURSDAY - Container Gardens |
| Thurs., May 22 | 10:00 | THINK GREEN THURSDAY - Honey Bees and Beekeeping |
| Thurs., Jun 5 | 10:00 | THINK GREEN THURSDAY - Drip Irrigation |
| Thurs., Jun 19 | 10:00 | THINK GREEN THURSDAY - Plant Propagation *\$5.00 FEE |
| Thurs., Jul 10 | 10:00 | THINK GREEN THURSDAY - Preserving Your Bounty |

For more information
and to register:
Call 336.570.6740 or visit
<http://alamance.ces.ncsu.edu/>



Spring Breaks

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We know Bradford pears are brittle and are relatively short-lived trees. They also have beautiful flowers in the spring and nice fall color. I may want to enjoy the tree for twenty years knowing that it will mostly likely fall apart. As long as

the tree doesn't damage anything when it falls apart, then I have no problem using that tree.

River birch has been used extensively in landscapes in the past 30 years. Unfortunately, they were mostly planted in the wrong places. Many were planted next to the foundation of the house where they quickly became too big. Others were planted over a deck or patio where aphids feeding on the leaves dropped sticky honeydew everywhere. This may be a good opportunity to remove those trees. A river birch in the right place can be a beautiful tree. It has been many years since river birch has been damaged in a storm and may be many years before it happens again. If we quit planting any tree that might sometime get damaged in a storm then we will have very little to choose from.

Mark S. Danisley

4-H Spring Chickens

Erin Bain, 4-H Agent

Spring has officially sprung here in Alamance County and along with it, our 4-H program is helping hundreds of students around the county learn about the growth and development of chickens through our Embryology Project. Embryology is just one of the many School Enrichment curriculums that 4-H offers to help teachers offer their students hands-on, experiential learning opportunities, particularly in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) fields.

Although 4-H still celebrates its roots in agriculture, these constantly evolving STEM topics help us to also prepare youth for their future careers in emerging fields. Embryology is an excellent marriage of the past, present, and future of 4-H and Extension because it allows youth to connect agriculture with important science topics and get real world experiences that enhance their learning. As Cooperative Extension achieves its 100 Year Anniversary in 2014, this project is an amazing example of how we can connect our history to the needs of today and remain extremely relevant for our youth and other clientele.

The Embryology project starts with teachers receiving training and equipment along with approximately a dozen fertilized chicken eggs provided by a local farmer. These teachers and their students then get to act as mother hens for their eggs while they grow and develop in incubators in their classrooms for three weeks. Throughout that time they can follow the hands-on activities in the curriculum to learn about a variety of topics related to the chicken's development. They are exposed to important vocabulary terms, learn about when different body parts and organs are forming, and get to experience the joy of watching the chicks hatch in their rooms. Teachers who have participated in the project in the past report that their students increase engagement and retention of what they learn through this program.

Here in Alamance, Embryology is focused mostly on 7th grade and 2nd grade students because that is where the 4-H curriculum most closely aligns with the North Carolina



Department of Public Instruction Essential Standards for youth's learning goals and objectives. We also have been fortunate enough to partner with special needs classrooms at other grade levels. In addition to the regular training and materials, these teachers are provided with an extra box of specially developed materials that help their students using sensory and other tools to adjust to their learning needs.

This Spring, close to 1,000 students in Alamance County will have the opportunity to participate in the Embryology program in their classrooms. This project is an excellent example of how 4-H and Cooperative Extension are helping our youth learn about important STEM topics that will prepare them for future education and careers while still remaining connected to our agricultural history. For more information about Embryology or any other 4-H Programs, please do not hesitate to contact our office.



Hello, Alamance County!

by: Dwayne Dabbs, Field Crops Agent

Let me introduce myself; I am Dwayne Dabbs. I am serving as the new Field Crops Agent here in Alamance County, trying to fill the shoes of Roger Cobb, who recently retired back in July. I graduated from North Carolina State University in December of 2012, where I majored in Agronomy, concentrating in Crop Production. I grew up on a farm in the Cherry Grove/Anderson Community in Caswell County, growing corn, wheat, soybeans, oat, grain sorghum, and tobacco before the buyout came through. So I have some experience in working in the field and knowing some of the problems that farmers face growing their crops. I was in the FFA in High School and was fortunate to go to the National Conventions twice with the Agronomy and Environmental Science (Envirothon) Competitions. A combination of working on my family's farm and being in the FFA helped me to decide that farming was what I wanted to do for the rest of my life. I am happy to be here in Alamance County and look forward to meeting everyone here in the county.

New Rules for Tobacco Growers

As most tobacco farmers know, with the institution of Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), changes have come into the picture. Many more responsibilities fall on the farmers' shoulders to make sure everything is in order to get your contract from the tobacco companies.

In addition to the required GAP workshop and all things affecting farmers-from H2A workers to product integrity-farmers are now required to test their bulk barns. Bulk barns must be checked every three years to make sure that they are not leaking. A CO2 Meter has to be inserted in either the top front portion of the barn or in the back where you check the tobacco during drying, to measure how much CO2 is coming out while the burner is on. Cooperative Extension hosted three different workshops to show how to do this, but if you were unable to attend a workshop and want information about how to check your barns please come by our office, and I will be happy to show the PowerPoint that was shown at these meetings and answer any questions you may have about the process.

The Tobacco Short Course

The first week of February, I was fortunate to be able to go to the Tobacco Short Course that NC State puts on each year for new tobacco growers in North Carolina. This



Dwayne Dabbs (center) receives congratulations (and a plaque!) from NC Agriculture Commissioner, Steve Troxler (left) and NC State Extension Tobacco leader, Dr. Loren Fisher for his participation in the 2014 NC State Tobacco Short Course.

course included several specialists from the University, who presented lectures on everything from production of the crop, to the financial aspects on a global scale. We went to the Universal Leaf Processing Facility in Nashville, NC, to see how the tobacco is actually processed; how they separate the leaf from the stem, then clean the tobacco to ensure that only tobacco goes to the manufacturers. They then blend the tobacco to get what their buyers want. After that we went to AVOCA Farm, a facility that has been able to utilize a special process to separate sclareol from the sage plant. Sclareol is one of the ingredients used in fragrances. We went to this facility to learn how in the future, this company may be able to utilize the same techniques to get nicotine off of tobacco leaves as a source of nicotine solution for the Electronic Cigarettes that have been becoming increasingly popular. The last stop we made was to Global Laboratory Services, Inc. in Wilson, NC. This is the place where companies send samples of tobacco to check levels of different compounds in a leaf of tobacco the producers are selling. For example, this is a place where tobacco companies would send the tobacco to check M-H 30 levels.

While I knew some of the items that were covered in the course, it really helped to put the crop into perspective so that I could understand it from the producer's view, helping to giving me a better insight into what farmers deal with, and problems that they face from year to year.

Spring Pasture Checklist

Lauren Langley, Livestock Agent



Spring is an important time of year for pasture care. Here is a list of things you can do in the next couple months to get your pastures looking great.

1. **Plant Seed:** The best time of year to seed/overseed a pasture is fall for cool-season forages. However, spring is an acceptable time of year if you missed the fall deadline. If you seed in the spring, be prepared to let the pasture rest for about a year. The newly planted forage needs to be able to develop strong roots in order to withstand grazing. It is also the most appetizing grass and will have a hard time developing under grazing pressure. Planting Guide for NC: <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/A.-Planting-Guide-for-Forage-Crops-in-NC.pdf>
2. **Plan Summer Pastures:** Now is the time to think about your warm-season perennials or annuals for summer grazing. Refer to the planting guide for the best dates for planting those summer pastures.
3. **Take Soil Samples:** See if your pastures need any nutrients and/or lime. Once the frost is out and the soils have dried, samples can be taken. Contact your county Extension office for more information and to obtain soil sampling forms and boxes.
4. **Fertilize:** As stated in 3, test your soils first, so you know how much you need. Often, only Nitrogen is needed in pastures. Don't guess, soil test!
5. **Spray Herbicides:** Spring is a good time to spray annual weeds as it prevents them from getting established. However, mowing is usually sufficient for annual weed control unless weed densities are high.
6. **Check fences:** Snow/ice and deer can be hard on fences. Check them before you turn out any livestock.
7. **Plan your grazing system:** Think back to last year whether you had enough grass or if the pasture turned into a putting green or mud pit. You may need to supplement your livestock with hay during certain times of the grazing season and set aside a sacrifice area when the pasture needs a rest.
8. **Let the grass grow:** Start rotationally grazing once grass starts growing. Don't let livestock chase green grass over the entire farm since that will delay significant growth and sustained grazing even longer.
9. **Repair Equipment:** Start repairing haying equipment for spring harvest.

Resources: B. Wieland, University of Minnesota and Mark Keaton, University of Arkansas

Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day

Saturday, April 12, from 8 am until 1 pm at 100 Stone Quarry Road, Haw River.

The types of hazardous waste that will be accepted are as follows:

- ☺ Household cleaners, drain openers, toilet bowl cleaners, oven cleaners, disinfectants
- ☺ Solvents, thinners, shellacs, varnishes, sealers, wood preservatives
- ☺ Automotive products including brake fluid, antifreeze, used motor oil up to 5 gal, filters, gasoline
- ☺ Pesticides
- ☺ Miscellaneous materials such as acids, bases, kerosene, batteries, photographic chemicals, pool chemicals, mercury, fluorescent tubes
- ☺ Latex and oil based paint and spray paint

The following will NOT be accepted:

Gas cylinders, Radioactives / Smoke detectors, Medical wastes, Electronics / TVs / Computers, Explosives / Ammunition
If you have questions contact the Landfill at 376-8902 or Cooperative Extension at 570-6740.

