



Coming Events

Workshops and Demonstrations

Thurs., Mar. 12, 10:00a

Composting

Mon., Mar. 16

Deadline to order blueberry bushes from 4-H

<http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/?p=337276>

Thurs., Mar. 19, 10:00a

Small Fruit (rescheduled from 2/26)

Thurs., Mar. 26, 10:00a

Pruning Trees and Shrubs

Thurs., Apr. 9, 10:00a

Vegetable Gardening 101

Thurs., Apr. 23, 10:00a

Totally Tomatoes

All classes will begin in the auditorium at the Agriculture Building and are free unless otherwise indicated.

Registration is required. Call 336-570-6740, or register online here:
<http://alamance.ces.ncsu.edu/>

Contact us :

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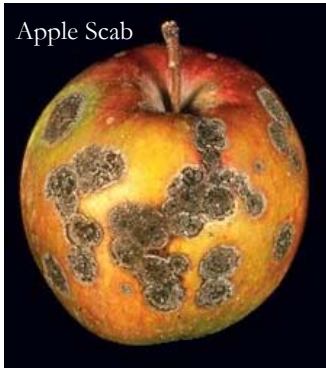
If You Plant It...

This month I want to continue on my fruit tree theme. Now that you know how to properly plant a fruit tree I want to address pest management. I'm sure everyone has heard the old joke about what is worse than finding a worm in your apple? That is half a worm. I know that I have eaten apples that have had worms in them and it didn't hurt me, but I would prefer not to. I'm sure that most folks feel the same way. Now it is possible to have a worm-free apple without doing anything, but that is the exception to the rule. A good pest management plan will greatly improve your chances of having good fruit. Unfortunately many people don't think about insect or disease problems until it is too late. It is important to start early and be consistent throughout the season.



A good pest management program begins while the trees are still dormant. The first application should be a dormant oil spray using a product like Fertilome Horticultural Spray Oil or Bonide All Seasons Horticultural & Dormant Spray Oil. This spray should be applied before bud break and is important in helping to control scale and mite insects on apple, pear and peach trees. Another dormant season treatment that can be helpful is a lime-sulfur product like Hi-Yield Lime Sulfur Spray. This can reduce disease problems like scab and powdery mildew on apples and leaf curl disease on peaches.

...They Will Come.



Apple Scab



Peach Leaf Curl



Fire Blight

Our next concern is fire blight disease on apples and pears. This is a bacterial disease that infects the tree during flowering and can cause blossom blight as well as twig and branch dieback. Rainy or high humidity conditions during flowering can increase the severity of this disease. A streptomycin product like Agri-Mycin or Fertilome Fire Blight Spray is recommended for fire blight control. Treatments should begin at 10% bloom and be repeated every 3-5 days until the end of bloom. Streptomycin applications are the only pest management practice I recommend during bloom. It won't harm the bees that are pollinating the flowers and can greatly reduce fire blight infections and damage.



While the dormant sprays are helpful, they are not nearly as important as the early season treatments. Many people don't think about pest management until the fruit is showing signs of damage, but that is too late. The three week period after the petals have fallen from the blossom is the most important time to control insects. You may not be able to see the fruit very well, but the insects can. The plum curculio and the oriental fruit moth start laying their eggs on the small fruitlets at petal fall and guess where the larvae goes after it hatches. Once the larva is inside the fruit there is nothing you can do except pick the fruit off the tree and destroy it. The codling moth larva is another pest that is likely to be inside your apple. Add in stink bugs, apple maggots, plant bugs and other insects that like fruit and you begin to see the challenges involved in producing good fruit. I won't take the time to go through all the possible fruit diseases, but they are plenty of those as well.

The first step in a good pest management plan is sanitation. All fallen leaves and fruit around the tree should be raked up and destroyed. That helps to limit the amount of disease and insects that occur this year and/or carry over to the next year. The next decision is whether to treat the pests with conventional products or organically. Either way will produce decent fruit, you just have to start early and be consistent.

Conventional fruit tree sprays that contain malathion, carbaryl and captan like Bonide Fruit Tree Spray work well in the home orchard. Since this product contains both insecticides and a fungicide there is no need to buy separate products. This product is labeled for apples and peaches, but not pears.

The best organic fruit tree spray is combination of a pyrethrin for insect control and sulfur for disease control. This combination can be used on all fruit trees including pears. These products work pretty well, but don't have the residual effect of conventional products and need to be applied more frequently. As always when using any kind of pesticide read the label carefully.

If you have any questions about pest management for fruit trees or any other gardening topic, please give me or Chris a call.

For more detailed information on disease and insect management in the home orchard you can check out this publication:

<http://carteret.ces.ncsu.edu/files/library/16/2%20Disease,%20Insect.%20Mngmt%20in%20Fruit%20trees.pdf>



Codling Moth Larva



March Garden Tips

Apply pre-emergence crabgrass preventer to your lawn before March 15th. Keep in mind that most crabgrass preventers should not be used on recently seeded or over seeded lawns. Read the label carefully before application.

Here's something else to consider before applying crabgrass preventer: Crabgrass seed requires sunlight to germinate. So, keep your lawn healthy and your lawnmower blade set high—3-1/2 to 4 inches. This will help shade out potential crabgrass. Good lawn health starts with a soil test. Contact Cooperative Extension for information on how to collect a sample and submit it for testing.

Prune butterfly bushes to about eighteen inches. Hardy lantana and salvias may be pruned now, too. Cut old growth of these plants close to the ground.

Finish pruning roses early this month. Reduce hybrid tea roses to 24 inches, prune to an outside bud and remove dead wood. Begin your rose spray program as soon as

first leaves appear. Alternatively, plant some of the tough shrub roses that require little, if any, spraying.

Fertilize pecan trees at the rate of 4 pounds of 10-10-10 per inch in diameter of trunk. Spread the fertilizer under the limbs of the tree to the full extent of the drip line. The "drip line" is an imaginary circle that surrounds the tree with a radius that extends from the trunk to the tips of the branches.

Sow seeds of beets, lettuce, peas and turnips. Plant cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, head lettuce and onions.

If your cool-season vegetable garden usually succumbs to unseasonable heat, try gardening in containers. Pots can easily be moved to a more sheltered spot if unusual heat – or cold – threatens. To be sure container soil stays evenly moist, use a moisture-retentive medium and check frequently.

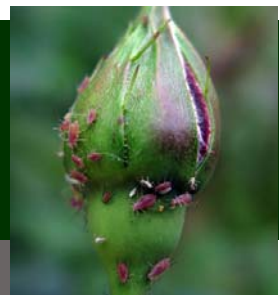
Prune evergreen shrubs now. For the best result, cut back the longest twigs to a joint. This will maintain a more natural look and growth

habit than shearing. Encourage old boxwoods to put on new interior leaves by thinning to allow sunlight to reach the center of the shrub.

Cut back old foliage of liriope, pampas and other ornamental grasses as close as possible to the ground without damaging new growth tips.

Remove spent flowers from spring bulbs but leave the foliage to replenish the bulb for next year. Don't braid or otherwise damage the leaves, but allow them to die down naturally. Planting other annuals and perennials among the bulbs will help disguise unsightly foliage.

As new leaves of roses and other plants emerge, expect an infestation of aphids. These tiny insects have sucking mouth parts that pierce the leaf tissue and may cause unsightly, though not usually life-threatening, damage. A sharp stream from the garden hose should dispatch these critters without pesticide concerns.



Arbor Gate Plant of the Month



Cornelian Cherry Dogwood

Cornus mas

When dressed in summer's green, you might mistake this Dogwood for its later-blooming relative, *Cornus florida*, but *Cornus mas* shines sunny yellow in late winter, even before Forsythia heralds the arrival of spring. Following flowering come the "cherries" - a much larger fruit than those borne by *Cornus florida*. The fruit ripens in late summer and is a favorite of birds, but the tart fruit has been used by humans for centuries to make sauces and preserves similar to those made with cranberries.

Growing more broad than tall, *Cornus mas* can even be pruned as a hedge. To train as a small tree eventually reaching 20-25 feet, remove root suckers promptly and limb up to expose the trunk and its attractive exfoliating bark.

Happiest in sun to part shade and tolerant of clay soils and deer, shouldn't this early bloomer be in your garden?

Read more about *Cornus mas* here:

<http://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/all/cornus-mas/>

