



Cumberland Gardener



Cumberland County Center

March and April, 2015

Inside This Issue

- The Dogwood - NC's State Flower
- Vegetable Gardening
- Annuals
- Gardening Quiz
- Perennials
- Apples on Azaleas?
- Help Conserve Rainwater
- Gardening To Do List
- Better Living Workshops for March & April

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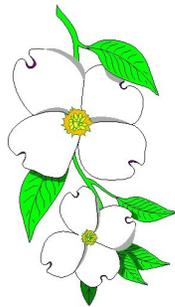
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The Dogwood North Carolina's State Flower

"I love spring anywhere, but if I could choose I would always greet it in a garden."

Ruth Stout



Spring is upon us and in April the North Carolina state flower, the Dogwood, will bless us with its beauty. This native tree is a great addition to any landscape. It has few pests, is easy to grow in our area and is simply stunning in full bloom. Everyone needs at least one!

Cornus florida, or dogwood will enhance any yard or landscape. A small tree, the dogwood rarely reaches 25 feet tall. It is widely available with red, white or pink flowers and can be found at your local garden center. Dogwood branches are tiered or layered and it appears as if fairies placed each flower on the branches meticulously. They are used as foundation plantings, also as accent and specimen trees that compliment any terrace or patio. The tree will provide some shade after the flowers have faded and the new light green leaves unfold. They also look great planted in beds with azaleas and rhododendrons. Dogwoods are well-behaved trees for any landscape.

Even the novice gardener will find growing the dogwood unchalleng-

ing. This tree grows as an understory tree in the wild in the shade of taller trees. Therefore, it is necessary to place dogwoods where they will receive midday to afternoon sun. This prevents stress and leaf scorching for the tree. They also are "shallow rooted" which means they do not have a taproot and their roots are most active near the surface. Place a three inch layer of mulch around the tree but not on the trunk itself to help conserve moisture. It needs well drained soil but extra watering in the drought of summer is necessary.

Dogwood pests are few but important. The dogwood borer larvae will attack a tree that has mower or weed eater injury. This insect can kill the tree, so take precautions. Also, dogwood anthracnose is a fungal leaf disease that causes purple spots on the leaves. It occurs during cool and moist periods. Powdery mildew is also a fungus that attacks dogwoods. It looks like white powder on the upper surface of the leaves. This fungus also attacks other plants in the landscape, especially crape myrtle. It is a good idea to scan the yard periodically to inspect for these problems. The fungal attacks are easily taken care of with fungicides. Ask your garden center expert for the best product to use.



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Be on the lookout in 2016 for a new dogwood hybrid developed by our very own Dr. Tom Ranney at North Carolina State University. The new 'Little Ruby' dogwood displays dark pink flowers (which are actually bracts) and its foliage is red in the fall and winter. It holds its leaves until 15 degrees F which makes it semi-evergreen. It is very disease resistant and heat tolerant and may be planted in full sun.

Flowering dogwoods remain a favorite small tree in North Carolina landscapes. It is beautiful in full bloom, not only in the residential yards, but in the natural woodlands as well. Below are some favorite varieties of dogwoods!

'Cherokee Chief' - red

'Cherokee Princess'-white & 'White Cloud' - white

'Red Cloud' - Pink

<http://content.ces.ncsu.edu/the-flowering-dogwood/>



Vegetable Gardening

Nothing compares to picking tasty tomatoes, squash and watermelons from your own backyard. Let's get busy preparing, planning and planting those vegetables. Here are a few tips for creating a bountiful vegetable garden:

1. Test your soil: Call your Extension Master Gardener Volunteer or Horticulture agent at the Cumberland County Cooperative Extension office for directions at 910-321-6882 or 321-6870.
2. Sunlight: Every garden needs at least six (6) hours of direct sunlight each day for optimum growth and fruit production.
3. Convenience: Grow your vegetables close to a water source and near your home. This makes it easier for you to water, weed and harvest.
4. Soil: A loose, rich loamy soil is best. Add organic matter such as manure and/or compost to your sand or clay and mix well. Drainage is a must.
5. Water: Is it available? Is it within close proximity? Gardens need at least 1 inch of water per week.
6. Mulch, mulch, mulch: Mulch goes on top of your soil. It conserves moisture, prevents weeds, and helps to keep the soil cool from the sun. (It also helps to make nice paths).

March is a great time to start cool-season vegetables. It is easiest to plant the seed directly in the ground for radish, beets, peas, carrots, lettuce and spinach. Transplants or small, young plants work well when planting cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, and kale.

It is best to wait until mid-April, when our last frost-freeze date has passed to plant warm-season vegetables. Cucumbers, tomatoes, squash, melons, peppers, beans, okra and corn prefer warmer temperatures. Plant corn, beans, southern peas and okra seeds directly in the ground. The other warm-season vegetables may be planted by using transplants or direct seeding.

Fertilizer may be applied as you plant or beforehand. If your soil test results are not completed, it is standard to use one tablespoon of 10-10-10 balanced fertilizer to each transplant. A side dressing of fertilizer is done by sprinkling the food around the plant; however, do not get it on the plant to prevent burning. 10-10-10 is a synthetic fertilizer and releases its nutrients in a consistent manner.

Organic fertilizers help to build soil texture and add nutrients. Examples are manures, composts, bloodmeal, cottonseed meal, greensand, peanut hulls and wood ashes. Organic fertilizers rely on microorganisms to release the nutrients to the plants and this is done at different rates. It is important to get soil testing done for optimum growth and a bountiful harvest.

Extensions's Better Living Series workshop, "Time to Grow Terrific Tomatoes", is scheduled for April 14. Contact Susan Johnson at 321-6405 to preregister and for a complete listing of the Better Living series workshops.

Visit <http://content.ces.ncsu.edu/home-vegetable-gardening.pdf> for additional information concerning vegetable gardening.

Annuals



Are there any plants that bring masses of color, have great versatility, and are in flower for 6-8 months out of the year? Annuals are your answer! These plants are relatively inexpensive and bloom profusely whether they are in containers, hanging baskets, flower beds or window boxes. They complete their life cycle in one year. This means they do not survive winter and must be replanted in the spring each year or “annually”.

Cool season annuals may be planted before the last frost but must be protected or covered on those extra cold nights. Petunias for example are cool season annuals and prefer temperatures below 80 degrees F. However, the ‘Tidal Wave’ and ‘Wave’ series, as well as the Super-tunias including ‘Bubblegum’ are very heat tolerant and bloom all summer. These petunias are trailing, up to three feet and will fill a bed quickly with spectacular color. Geraniums are cool season annuals also and will bloom all summer with a little afternoon shade and the spent flower umbels are removed. This is done by following the flower stem down to the branch it arises from and simply snapping it off. Snapdragons, lobelia and pansies are also cool season annuals.

It is best to wait until all danger of frost has passed, between April 10-18 in our area, to plant tender annuals. These include begonias, all types of impatiens, celosia, coleus, marigolds, cosmos, gomphrena, and sweet potato vines. Planting the seeds of these annuals directly in the ground is easy, but why wait 6-8 weeks for flowers when the young transplants are waiting for you in your garden center? These plants pack a lot of bang for your buck and are already beginning to bloom when you purchase them.

For additional information please visit: <http://content.ces.ncsu.edu/growing-annual-flowers/>



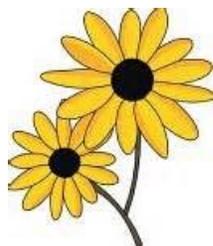
Gardening Quiz

Mulching controls weeds. What is the recommended amount of mulch to apply around trees and shrubs to prevent weed seeds from germinating?

- 1-2 inches
- 2-3 inches
- 3-4 inches
- 4-6 inches

Find the answer later in this newsletter

Perennials



Perennials are the opposite of annuals. They do not have to be replanted every year. Most will last for at least three years before having to be replanted or divided. It is a good idea to do some planning before purchasing perennials because many only bloom during a particular three to four weeks of the year. This may be in the spring, early, mid or late summer, and even in the fall. Columbines bloom throughout springtime while Hellebore blooms very early in the spring. Peony will bloom in May while yarrow and gaura bloom throughout summer and into fall. Black eyed susans, salvias and coneflowers bloom throughout summer. Tall sedums bloom in the early fall. Combining an assortment of perennials in your landscape adds variety and interest and color throughout the growing season. For the ultimate in color, mix annuals with your perennials to guarantee your landscape will have continuous color spring through fall.

Apples on Azaleas?

Are those miniature green apples on my azaleas? Actually what you are seeing is called leaf gall. It is caused by a fungus during cool, moist or wet weather like we have in April. The leaves become thickened, swollen, curled and pale green in color.



Serious damage rarely occurs to the plant with leaf gall. It is simply unattractive. The fungus also attacks sasanqua camellias and rhododendrons during the spring season. The best control measure is to simply prune away the infected parts of the plants, particularly before the white fungal spores appear. These spores will spread by splashing water and will lie dormant until next year. When the time is right, they will cause the galls to form again. Dispose of the infected plant parts by burning or burying them. Planting resistant varieties of azaleas such as 'Coral Bells', 'Formosa' and 'Glacier' will reduce the occurrence of leaf gall.

HELP CONSERVE RAINWATER



Using a barrel to collect water when it rains is one of the simplest, most inexpensive ways to conserve water. The recycled barrels that are featured in this article were originally used for shipping pickles. Barrels will hold 50-55 gallons of water and are made of light weight durable plastic. The barrels can easily be placed in just the right spot and/or be painted to add color to your outside décor.

The barrels are flushed of any pickle debris. The top of the barrel has a hole that is covered with mosquito net with a ring type lid to keep out debris and bugs. On the side of the barrel, near the bottom, there is a spigot for attaching a hose for watering plants. Also, an overflow attachment that will fit a standard hose is attached. The overflow can be connected together with a standard hose to add to your water barrel collection or used as an overflow of excess water.



Cumberland Soil and Water Conservation District sells rain collecting barrels like the one shown in this photo. Proceeds from the sale of these barrels are used to promote education for the young people of Cumberland County.

For additional information concerning purchasing a rain barrel, please call the Cumberland Soil and Water Conservation District office at 910.484.8479, option #3.

Gardening To Do List

- ◇ Prune spring flowering shrubs after they bloom.
- ◇ Prune roses.
- ◇ Start warm season vegetables indoors to transplant after frost, when the night temperatures are above 45 degrees.
- ◇ Rotate your vegetable garden plants. For example; plant lettuce where you grew tomatoes last year.
- ◇ Mow turf when it turns green at these heights: Zoysia 1/2 first, then at 1 1/2 - 2", Bermuda 1", and Centipede 1".
- ◇ Apply preemergent herbicides to turf now. READ THE LABEL to ensure the herbicide will not injure or harm your particular grass.
- ◇ Plant cool season vegetables such as cabbage, potatoes, carrots, spinach and peas, now.



Gardening Quiz Answer
B. 2-3 inches

Better Living March and April Workshops

- ◆ Green Cleaning for Healthy Housekeeping - March 24
 - ◆ Time to Grow Terrific Tomatoes - April 14
 - ◆ Introduction to Raw Food Dishes - April 23
- Call Susan at 910.321.6405 to register**