

# Alamance Gardener

*Alamance County Cooperative Extension Horticulture Department*

## *Coming Events*

### **Workshops and Demonstrations**

Thurs., Jul 9, 10:00a  
*Preserving Your Bounty*  
Thurs., July 23, 10:00a  
*Fall Vegetable Gardening*  
Thurs., Aug 6, 10:00a  
*Hydroponics*  
Thurs., Aug 20, 10:00a  
*Fall Lawn Care*  
Thurs., Sept 3, 10:00a  
*Scree Gardens*  
Thurs., Sept 24, 10:00a  
*Planting Trees and Shrubs*

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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## *Garden Problems? Show and Tell!*

July is a big month for vegetable gardeners, especially the folks who like tomatoes. I planted my tomatoes on April 11 even though I have always told people that early planted tomatoes rarely mature much earlier than tomatoes planted May 1st. I should have listened to my own advice. I had several sleepless nights wondering if my tomatoes would survive the frost. They did survive, but I didn't really have any tomatoes to pick before the fourth week of June. Perhaps I'll actually follow my own recommendation next year.



Now that the garden harvest is in full swing, Chris and I know that there will be a lot of calls about garden problems. Some problems are easy to diagnose and some are not. Early in my Extension career Rett Davis was my go-to guy when I had a vegetable garden problem I couldn't solve. He always had the answer and I asked him how I could become more proficient in answering these questions. At that time I was not a vegetable gardener, so Rett suggested that having my own garden would be a good learning experience. Now I had some experience gardening with my Dad when I was younger and mostly remember a lot of hoeing and pulling weeds. I wasn't real excited about the possibility of pulling weeds again, but I did as Rett suggested and started a garden.

I still have a lot to learn about vegetable gardening, but Rett was right, experience is a great teacher. Not only have I learned a great deal about vegetable gardening, I also found out that I really enjoy gardening, even the weeding. This experience has been very helpful when answering gardening questions. I had a call last week from a man who said his cucumber vines had wilted and died almost overnight. He was concerned that there was a problem with his soil. As it turns out I had the same experience last year. The problem was a bacterial wilt transmitted by the cucumber beetle. I assured him that there wasn't a problem in the soil and he could replant in the same spot. We discussed treatment options to control the cucumber beetle and I think his next planting will be more successful.

## Size Matters

Chris and I are glad to help with your gardening questions, but sometimes we can't answer the question with a telephone call. It may be necessary in some cases to email a picture or bring a sample to the office. If you decide to bring a sample to the office, there are a few things you can do that will be helpful.

The first tip is to make sure you bring an adequate sample. If the sample is too small, then we probably can't diagnose the problem. Half a leaf in most cases won't work. If it is a plant sample, try to bring in several branches, some that have the problem and some that look normal. It may be necessary in some cases to bring in a sample of the roots. Leaf and stem die-back in azaleas and Japanese hollies may be related to a root rot. Once you have collected the sample, try to bring it to us promptly. If you leave the plant sample on the dash of your truck for two days we probably can't help you.

Chris does a good job with insect identification, but some can be a little tricky. Try to bring the whole insect and not just a few parts. It is also helpful if the bug has not been stepped on. A squashed bug is hard to identify. Insect samples like plant samples should be as fresh as possible. If you put the insects in a jar and let them decompose for a few days before you bring them to the office, not only are they hard to id they also have a rather strong and usually unpleasant smell. Insects that are alive should be brought in a clear container. It is a little unnerving to open a container and have the insect jump on your chest.

If you have any questions about identifying a plant, insect or disease problem please let us know. We can explain what kind of sample we need to diagnose the problem and discuss with you what options you have to treat the problem.







## July Garden Tips



**A**nnual bedding plants will benefit from a summer haircut. Stagger your pruning by cutting back one-third of a bed or container each week. By the third week, the first group of pruned plants will be blooming again, assuring some color during the entire pruning period.

**R**emove water sprouts and weak new growth from apple trees, crapemyrtles and others. Summer pruning is less likely to produce weak growth. Discontinue pruning by August 1st so any new growth will harden off before frost.



**T**ry rooting softwood cuttings of your favorite crapemyrtle or rose. Remove all but the top-most leaf, dip the cut end in rooting hormone and place in a moist mixture of sharp sand and perlite or your favorite medium. Root semi-hardwood cuttings of many other shrubs, including aucuba, azalea, buddleia, camellia, nandina, gardenia, holly, kerria and weigela.



**F**ertilize established warm-season (Zoysia or Bermudagrass) lawns at the rate of one pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet. Unlike fescue, which

should be kept tall – at least 3 to 3-and-a-half inches, warm-season lawns need to be maintained at a height of only  $\frac{3}{4}$  to 1". This promotes dense growth and discourages many weeds.

**E**ven moisture at the root zone of tomatoes may help prevent blossom-end rot. Use soaker hoses or drip irrigation rather than overhead watering and keep plants mulched.

**W**hen temperatures soar into the mid 90s, tomato blossoms may drop off. Don't be discouraged, though. As soon as temperatures moderate, your plants will start making fruit again.

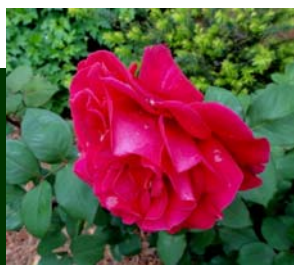
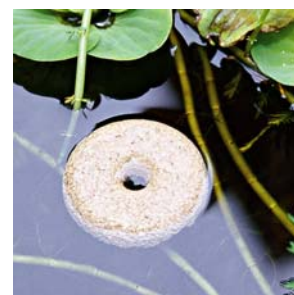
**P**lant Brussels sprouts, carrots and rutabagas from July 1st to the 15th. Mid month begin planting beets, broccoli and collards. Keep vegetables picked to encourage production.

**I**f you are willing to keep them well-watered all summer, roses may be fertilized every four weeks until mid-August. This will keep them blooming well into fall. However, if deep watering is not an option, roses can be rested

this month. Keep blossoms cut to encourage further bloom, too!

**M**ature vines of poison ivy, trumpet creeper, English ivy and wisteria that climb your trees can be killed at this time. Cut a chunk from the vine near the base of the plant, being careful not to cut the resident tree. Apply brush killer to the cut. The cut must be fresh – no more than 15 minutes old. Bag vines and dispose of in the trash. Never burn poison ivy!!!

**K**eep birdbaths filled and clean them out at least once a week to discourage mosquitoes. Look for hidden breeding sites such as saucers under pots, pet dishes or wheelbarrows. As little as a cup of water left standing for a week is enough to support a generation of mosquitoes. If the standing water can't be emptied, such as that in a still water pond or water garden, add a mosquito "dunk" – a low-dose insecticide harmless to plants and fish.





*Eucomis spp.*

Pineapple Lily

Who says you can't grow pineapples in Alamance County? Well, maybe not the kind you can eat, but feast your eyes on the unusual flower of this hardy South African native.

You'll love *Eucomis* for the bold, strappy foliage that starts out deep purple in the cultivar "Sparkling Burgundy", and green speckled with red in "Freckles". In July, the unusual inflorescence pops up, looking for all the world like a pineapple on a stick when in bud. The buds open to reveal perfect, pale pink to greenish flowers on spikes that rise to a height of 12 to 24 inches.

If you're looking for something out of the ordinary for your sun-to-part-shade border, plant Pineapple Lily; a real conversation starter.

Speaking of starting, propagation of this unusual bulbous perennial can be somewhat out of the ordinary as well. Of course, you can plant the bulb offsets, but leaf cuttings taken in early summer and placed in damp medium will root in a few short weeks.

Visit this link for more information:



<https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/all/eucomis-bicolor/>