



Coming Events

Workshops and Demonstrations

Thurs., Jan. 28, 10:00a

Your Healthy Landscape

Thurs., Feb 11, 10:00a DEMO

Grapevine Pruning

Thurs., Feb 25, 10:00a DEMO

Pruning Trees and Shrubs

Thurs., Mar. 10, 10:00a

Rain Gardens

Thurs., Mar. 24, 10:00a DEMO

Fruit Tree Pruning

Thurs., Apr. 14, 10:00a

Herb Gardens

Thurs., Apr. 28, 10:00a

Vegetable Gardening

All classes will begin in the auditorium at the Agricultural Building and are free, unless otherwise indicated. Registration is required. Phone, visit, e-mail, or register online at our website.

Contact us :

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<http://alamance.ces.ncsu.edu/>

Mark Your Calendar



A new year is here and that means it is time to start up our Think Green Thursdays gardening class series again. The class topics are suggested by our horticulture advisory group, class participants and readers of this newsletter. When Chris and I first discussed offering these gardening classes I wondered how we would come up with enough topics to fill the year's schedule. The problem we have now is how to get all the classes we want to do in one year.

We always try to add something new every year while many popular topics like pruning, vegetable gardening and lawn care are repeated. We have scheduled 19 TGT classes for 2016 that will consist of a variety of different subjects. A complete class list for 2016 with links for on-line registration can be found on our website.: <http://alamance.ces.ncsu.edu/>

Probe the Pruning Paradox

There isn't much to do in the garden this time of year so some folks will start pruning when they get tired of sitting in the house. Many of our ornamental shrubs and trees can be pruned now with the exception of the spring-bloomers. Plants like azaleas, forsythia and rhododendron should be pruned in the spring after they have finished blooming. If you are interested in learning more about pruning ornamentals we will have an ornamental pruning class on February 25.

Like us on Facebook, Click the link below:

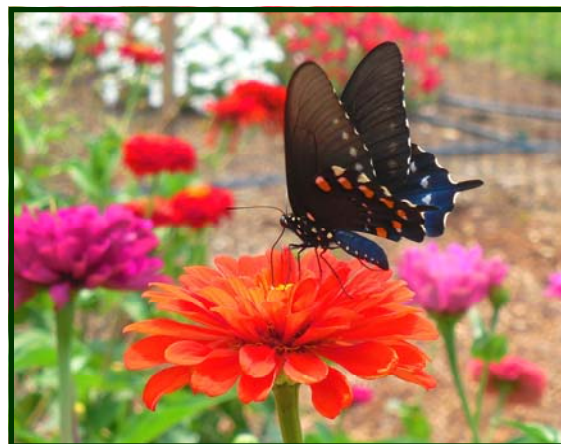


Learn Something New!



Pruning spring blooming shrubs this time of year will reduce the spring flowers, but doesn't really hurt the plants. Pruning grapevines and fruit trees incorrectly is more important because you can lose possible fruit yield. If you prune incorrectly you can cut off the flowers buds that produce the fruit. If you prune too early you can reduce the winter hardiness of the plants and the flowers might be lost to a spring freeze. The best course of action is to attend our pruning classes to learn the correct technique and then wait until spring to prune. As long as you finish the pruning before the flowers or leaves appear everything will be fine. The grapevine pruning class is on February 11 and fruit tree pruning is March 24.

We will have two classes on encouraging wildlife in the garden this year. One will focus on birds



and the other on butterflies. These classes will teach you how to encourage wildlife by providing food, water and shelter. The plants that are good for wildlife can also be attractive additions to your landscape.

Another new class this year is how to garden with children. There is an increased interest in school and community gardens and it is important to know how to get the children excited about gardening. We have a group of Master Gardener Volunteers that will share their experiences in creating a successful children's gardening program.



If you have any questions about our 2016 Think Green Thursdays class schedule or any other gardening topic, please give me or Chris a call.

Survey Says.....?

The New Year is also a time to look back at what we did in 2015 to see what worked and what might need to be improved. If you have participated in any of our horticulture classes and demonstrations in 2015, we would like to get your input. We have developed a short survey to help us improve our horticulture program. It will only take a few minutes of your time to complete this survey. Thanks in advance for your feedback and support!

Complete the anonymous, on-line survey here-
<http://go.ncsu.edu/horticulturesurvey>

North Park Farmers Market

Healthy Alamance is pleased to announce a new farmer's market housed in a permanent structure at North Park, Burlington! The Farmer's Market at North Park is an exciting new frontier in Burlington's food scene, providing farmers with a new consumer base while creating a community gathering space that provides residents with fresh, healthy food and nutrition education. The Farmer's Market at North Park will run every Tuesday from 3:00pm-6:00pm from April 5th through October 25th.

Alamance County is an agricultural county at heart, and the Farmer's Market at North Park wants to celebrate that heritage. Please join us in creating this vision.

We want your input and involvement - please contact Cat Palmer at Catherine.palmer@conehealth.com for more information, or visit the Cooperative Extension of Alamance County's website for additional details and application.





January Garden Tips

Except for the nodding heads of Lenten rose and the lively yellow-orange fringe of witchhazel, January is a quiet time in the garden. A time to rest. A time to make Big Plans! So, stoke the fire, grab your catalogs and your 2015 Garden Journal and get busy!

Sow seeds of cool-weather vegetables (broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, collards, lettuce, onions and spinach) in containers for transplanting into the garden in March. Outdoors, sow edible-pod peas and English peas beginning this month. Continue to plant asparagus.

Check the condition of stored bulbs and tubers of dahlias, tuberous begonias, caladiums and callas. Bulbs stored in warm, humid conditions are prone to rot. Discard any bulbs that feel soft or rotten.

Toward the end of this month, apply a dormant horticultural oil to roses. Do this before bud-break to smother over-wintering insects and their eggs. Read the label carefully for instructions on use.

Use a magnifying glass to inspect both sides of leaves of your houseplants. Look for signs of insects. Sticky residue may indicate the presence of mealy bugs or scale insects. Small, fine webs are a sign of possible spider mite infestation. Call the Alamance County Cooperative Extension for information on the treatment of insect problems on houseplants.

Do not fertilize houseplants and go easy on the watering during the winter months. Houseplants need some time off, too.

When the weather turns frigid, remember that fresh water is essential to all animals. Check to see that bird-baths are ice free and filled up. Keep the water moving in water features and fountains to provide free-flowing water for wildlife.

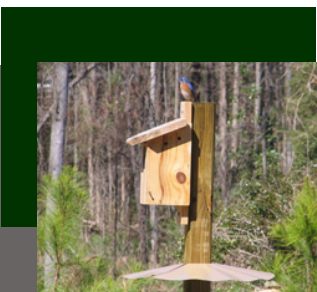
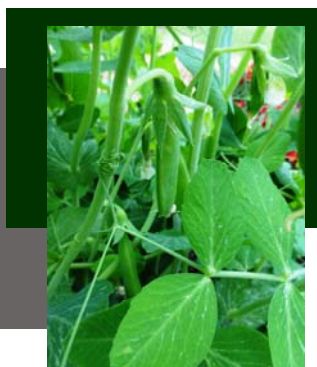
Mulch strawberry beds for winter protection. Use wheat straw or pine needles. When the first blooms appear, pull back the mulch.

Chances are, winter annual weeds are popping up now in your January garden. Hand pulling or raking is the most effective method of removal at this time. Resist the temptation to spray with herbicides unless temperatures turn mild for a few days (Above 50 degrees). Sprays just won't work when it's too cold. Remember to read and follow all label directions.

Before you spray those winter annual weeds, you might want to consider the bees. Not many plants are in bloom this month, but on a warm day in winter, honey bees will venture out of the hive to forage. Chickweed, henbit and deadnettle, the scourge of your lawn, are on their menu.

Here's a January project that might keep the winter doldrums at bay: Build and install a bluebird nest box! Bluebirds will begin selecting nesting sites next month and you'll be ready, if you follow the simple instructions in the publication linked below:

<http://content.ces.ncsu.edu/building-songbird-boxes>





Arbor Gate Plant of the Month

Cast Iron Plant

Aspidistra eliator

Dry, deep shade is always a challenge for us here at Arbor Gate Teaching Garden, especially under the picturesque, but shallow-rooted Silver Maple. (*Acer saccharinum*). We've tried and are trying many plants here, but *Aspidistra eliator* 'Asahi' has risen to the challenge like few others. Having braved two rather extreme winters here, this *Aspidistra* not only lives up to its "Cast Iron" common name, but also adds a spot of brightness to the shade with its creamy white leaf tips which stand up all winter. Its only downside is that it is rather slow growing, so as a ground cover, you will need much patience or many plants. Luckily, Cast Iron plant is also easy to propagate—any section of rhizome that has roots and leaves will survive transplanting readily. Also in its favor is the fact that Cast Iron Plant is practically deer-proof. Flowers are borne at ground level and are inconspicuous. It's all about the leaves for this updated, once ubiquitous houseplant of the Victorian era. Read more about *Aspidistra eliator* here: <https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/all/aspidistra-eliator/>