News About Community Gardens in NC

By Connie Schultz

Recently Blue Cross/Blue Shield of North Carolina and the NC Recreation & Park Association came together to form a partnership, Nourishing North Carolina (NNC), with the goal of establishing community gardens in each of North Carolina’s 100 counties by the end of 2013. Where counties already have community gardens established, the project will enhance or support them. The Nourishing North Carolina project plans to increase access to fresh fruits and vegetables and encourage folks to get outside this summer and garden! Funds will be awarded to each county to implement a community garden over a three-year period, so if there isn’t an existing community garden, there may be one coming soon!

This is a very important project because currently some 43.6 million people are receiving food stamps in America today. “Food security” is a big issue for many families. Percentages of people on the food stamp program range from as high as 21.9% of the population in Washington DC to as low as 6.4% in Wyoming. North Carolina comes in at 16.1% of our population, a growing number that has risen 2.6% from last year. This can be a time of great stress for families who are challenged to keep a roof over their heads much less food on the table - but Master Gardeners can be a big part of the solution by teaching people how to grow their own food - and what better way than through community gardens.

Master Gardeners are needed in each of these counties to help them plan and plant their gardens and to mentor new gardeners. They need your technical expertise! Here in Johnston County, Clayton Parks & Recreation received one of these start-up grants for their community recreation site on Amelia Church.
Road. The **North Carolina Community Garden Partners** have also joined this venture to provide support, mentorship, information, education and more to new gardens and new gardeners. To learn more about community garden opportunities, visit the North Carolina Community Garden Partners at: http://nccommunitygarden.ncsu.edu/cgpartners.html. Or visit the NC Community Garden Partners on Facebook at: http://www.facebook.com/NCCommunityGardenPartners

Or learn more about eating healthy and being more active this summer at: http://www.stablecommunities.org/sites/all/files/library/1670/communitygardensncsu.pdf

To learn more about the Nourishing NC initiative visit: http://www.facebook.com/NourishingNorthCarolina

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**Featured Plant**

Mountain Fire Pieris

*Pieris japonica* ‘Mountain Fire’

By Shawn Banks

What a beautiful plant for a shady area. This hybrid between *Pieris japonica* and *Pieris floribunda* has yielded a blazingly beautiful plant. The new spring foliage bursts onto the scene in burning reds giving the appearance of a plant on fire. The light pink flowers in mid-spring add to the illusion of a plant on fire.

Mountain Fire Pieris is an evergreen plant that flourishes in the light shade to partial sun in soils with a pH level of 5.0 to 5.5. This nice little plant reaches a height of 4 to 6 feet with an equal spread. Once this plant puts down a good root system it is very drought tolerant.

Mountain Fire Pieris is a wonderful shrub for a dry shade environment. Looking good in small groups or even mixed into a foundation planting.

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**Upcoming Events**

- **Clayton Farm and Community Market**
  July 16 from 9:00am until 1:00pm Extension Master Gardener Volunteers at the market to help diagnose problems in the landscape and answer general gardening questions.

- **Smithfield Farmers Market**, July 15 from 10:00am until 1:00pm Extension Master Gardener Volunteers at the market to help diagnose problems in the landscape and answer general gardening questions.

- **Pesticide Safety Class** Tuesday, July 12 from 8:00am until 10:00am at the Arboretum at JCC. Cost is $10.00. Class will cover personal protective equipment, mixing rates and basic safety. Will be taught by Minda Daughtry and Jordan Astoske. Call 209-2052 for more information on this and other events at The Arboretum at JCC.

- **Peach Production Workshop**, Tuesday, July 19th, 4:00pm – 8:00pm at Sandhills Research
Yard Villians
Phytophthora Root Rot
Phytophthora cinnamomi
By Shawn Banks

Phytophthora Root Rot can be a devastating disease on a wide variety of plant including azalea, camellia, pieris, yew, mountain laurel, blueberry, white pine and others. The symptoms can range from loss of vigor on the entire plant or changes in leaf color resembling nutrient deficiency to individual limbs dying for no apparent reason or the entire plant suddenly dying.

This soil borne disease thrives in warm, moist to wet soils. This disease is more often a problem in heavy clay soils, soils with a high water table, or areas where runoff from roofs, driveways, or parking lots tend to puddle.

To prevent this disease 1) purchase healthy, disease free plants from a reputable dealer. 2) Plant susceptible plants in areas with well-drained soil. 3) When placing plants in the ground, make sure they are no deeper than what they were in the nursery or container. 4) When replacing plants that have died from root rot, select plants that are not susceptible to root rot. 5) Chemical control is a possibility when applied every 2 to 4 months if implemented before the plants are infected with the disease.

For more information contact your local Cooperative Extension office at 919 989-5380 and ask for Ornamental Disease Note No. 13 “Phytophthora Root Rot and its Control on Established Woody Ornamentals” (ODN #13).

What’s in Season?
Tomatillo or husk-tomato
Physalis philadelphica
Family: Solanaceae
By Shawn Banks

This tropical fruit is native to the regions of Mexico and Guatemala where it was a part of the local cuisine for centuries before Columbus even thought about proving the world was round. The growing conditions are similar to those of several other tropical plants such as peppers, and tomatoes. The fruit is ripe when the husk is tight on the fruit and just beginning to split. The fruit color should be a light yellow green.

The fruit is used most often in sauces and green chili. To prepare the fruit cut it into cubes and steam it for about 5 to 7 minutes until it melts into a nice little sauce. Add salt, pepper, onion and chilies to taste. Use as a sauce or add to other dishes.

Reference:
Tomatillo, husk-tomato found at www.hort.perdue.edu/newcrop/1492/tomatillo.html

Tomatillo found at sustainable.tamu.edu/archives/parsons/vegetables/tomatill.html

JULY GARDEN TASKS

GENERAL IDEAS

- Water deeply but infrequently; this will encourage deep rooting of plants for better drought resistance.
- Control fungal diseases, which flourish in hot and humid weather by keeping irrigation water off foliage. The best time
to water is early morning. This allows the sun to dry water from foliage. Watering in early evening creates damp foliage all night, which encouraging the development of fungal diseases.

- **Help reduce the mosquito population** by emptying any containers with standing water. Mosquito larva can grow in shallow water, like plant saucers that do not dry completely.

### LAWN CARE

- **When should you water your lawn?**
  When the grass blades are just starting to curl and your footprints remain on the lawn when you walk on it. Watering too often encourages a lawn with a shallow root system that cannot handle drought well. Apply an inch of water, in the early morning. Set your timer for 4 am if you can.

- **Grasses vary in their needs.** Check out the Lawn Maintenance Calendar for your grass and learn how best to care for it, month by month by calling your local Cooperative Extension Office.

- **Keep fescue mowed at a height of 3 - 3 1/2 inches to help it survive hot, dry periods.** It is a cool season grass that slows down in the summer. If it is cut it too short the tender roots will be exposed to extreme heat which will certainly damage, if not kill them. It is also difficult for fescue to recover from cutting too short as it is not actively growing at this time.

- **Repair Warm-Season Lawns:** Bermuda, Zoysia, and centipede are growing strong by now, making it easy to see spots that are weak or weedy. Pull weeds and patch bare spots if you haven't already.

- **Established fescue lawns naturally go semi-dormant in the heat of July.** Established fescue can survive up to three weeks without water, but will need a drink if it doesn't rain by then! Water only when grass shows sign of wilt (footprints show when grass is walked on). Fescue planted last fall will need watering every week. See the Fescue Lawn Maintenance Calendar (link above).

### TREES, SHRUBS & ORNAMENTALS

- **When you visit your roses, clip off leaves that show early evidence of blackspot - a common fungal disease that causes black spots on leaves.** Put the spotted leaves in the garbage (not in the compost pile.)

- **Don't use Japanese beetle traps.** The pheromones in the traps often attract beetles that would not otherwise visit the area. To control a particularly pesky group of beetles, go hunting for them in early morning and shake them into a bowl of soapy water to get rid of them.

- **Keep potted plants watered!** Plants in pots outside may need daily watering in the heat of summer.

- **Pinch out the tips of garden mums to encourage lower, compact plants with many flowers.**

- **Start stem cuttings of geraniums and leaf cuttings of succulents to be potted for use as house plants this winter.**

- **Propagate shrubs by rooting cuttings.** Semi-hardwood cuttings of Azalea, Camellia, and Holly can be taken this month. The wood should be hardened enough that the stem breaks when bent.

- **Prune spent crape myrtle blossoms to prolong the flowering period.**

- **Sooty Mold on the crape myrtles will make the leaves appear dark and sooty or almost uniformly charcoal gray.** Sooty mold grows on honeydew (the sticky leftovers) from aphids. Control the aphids, and the mold will wash off.
• Powdery Mildew makes leaves appear gray and powdery. It's a common problem which disfigures the foliage, but doesn't kill the tree.
• Hand-pick bagworms off evergreens. Pesticides are not effective once the caterpillars are safe in their bags.
• Remove vigorous upright sprouts growing from tree roots ("suckers"), or from the upper surfaces of tree branches ("water sprouts"). Pruning the sprouts out directs the tree's energy into desirable growth.
• Weed when it's easy. Weeds are easier to pull when the soil is moist, so wait until after a soaking rain or irrigate the area first. The roots of desirable plants can be injured by pulling large weeds nearby so pull those weeds in late afternoon or on cloudy days, and water the area afterward to help injured plants recover.
• Start seeds for cool-weather annuals indoors in July/August for fall planting. Try foxglove, pansy, alyssum, snapdragons, ornamental cabbage (kale), and primroses. Pansy seeds germinate well when stored in the refrigerator (not freezer) for 10-14 days before planting.

WEEDS & WATER

• Windsocks and sculptures to change or fine-tune your color scheme and overall feel.
• Think strategy. Now that deciduous trees and shrubs are in leaf, survey your landscape critically. Do you have too much? too little? are plants too low where screening is needed? So tall a view is blocked? Take photographs and make plans to add or move shrubs this fall. Don't do it now.

WILDLIFE

• Put out a bird-bath. Keep it filled with fresh water. Change it once a week to minimize mosquitoes. Birds will pay you back by eating lots of insects!
• Think twice about squashing caterpillars; many turn into butterflies. This is just one example of what swallowtail caterpillars look like. This is a swallowtail butterfly(right). Swallowtail caterpillars (left) love parsley, so set out a few extra plants to share with them. A pan of moistened pebbles or sand will attract butterflies.

VEGETABLES & FRUITS

• Pinch out the tips of blackberry shoots when they reach about 4 feet tall. This helps form a tidier hedgerow for easy picking.
• Soon after tomatoes begin to set fruit, give them a boost of fertilizer to keep them vigorous and productive. Most of the new varieties are heavy producers if provided with good nutrition and adequate soil moisture.

LANDSCAPE IDEAS

• Deckscape: Play with colors, textures, and the placement of furniture on your deck or patio. Use container-grown plants,