Oh, dear! That’s putting it mildly! It can be months with no visible signs of ravage. Then a long cold winter, and little food in sight, the assault occurs! Why would the deer eat every single leaf off my camellias in February when they never bothered them before?

Either I was really lucky in prior years. Or due to low acorn production in the fall and a slow start to spring, there was less food available so camellias were added to the menu.

I figured this out at an Urban Deer Management workshop I attended where I learned many interesting facts about deer. Deer breed in November, with the fawns born in May. When deer have an abundant food source, they reproduce more. A doe can produce 1-4 fawns per season. A deer herd, which can exceed 120 deer, wanders within a one square mile territory.

Deer are browsers. Fertilizing and watering in the landscape creates the flower buds and sugars beneficial to their diet. Deer are ruminant. They consume in the browsing area and retreat to a safe area where the food is processed by chewing their cud. Our landscape consists of lush lawns and plants for their food. The greenway buffer of our subdivisions provides the safe habitat or “edge” where their food can be processed.

Deer prefer leaves and tender shoots at ground level and up to five feet high. Their food consumption increases in the fall, as they prepare for the minimal food availability of winter. They depend on acorns, or mast, to fatten up. During periods of drought, when fewer acorns are produced, you might expect to see “extra” damage in late winter or early spring as the deer seek other food sources.

So what can a homeowner do?

Plant selection and design: When deer are hungry they will eat what is available. Don’t give them good choices in the first place. Deer seem to dislike plants with aromatic properties. They seem to stay away from ornamental grasses and bulbs. Try using plants that deer seem to dislike near plants that are vulnerable. Use hardscape materials to minimize plantings. Use plantings in the open (Continued on page 4)
Featured Plant
*Cercis canadensis*
Eastern Redbud

Eastern redbud is a native tree to the Midwest and Eastern United States. It is usually found as an understory tree in mixed forests. Growing best in moist, well-drained soils in part shade to part sun. However, the eastern redbud has proven to be very adaptable to different soils, full sun, and dry areas. If grown in wet soils it is prone to root rots. Eastern redbud has a fairly fast growth rate and will reach a mature height and spread of 15 to 20 feet.

This plant is a member of the Fabaceae or pea family, meaning that some parts of this plant are edible. For example the flowers taste just like peas and make an excellent addition to a spring salad. The young seed that look very much like peas in the pod are also edible. It is said that people in the Appalachian Mountains use young stems to season venison while cooking.

The eastern redbud is most well known for its beautiful lavender flowers early in the spring. The heart-shaped leaves and zigzagging young stems give it a distinct appearance among trees. Some of the newer cultivars include a white flowering variety var. *alba*, ‘Forest Pansy’ has purple leaves early in the spring with a much darker color to the flowers, and there are some with leaves that are splotched with white or cream colored variegation patterns such as ‘Silver Cloud’.

Being a fast growing tree in the landscape it can be expected to have a life of 10 to 15 years before it starts to decline from problems associated with old age.

By Shawn Banks

References:
http://hcs.osu.edu/hcs/TMI/Plantlist/ce_ensis.html

Upcoming Events

**Vegetable Gardening Class** will be held in Clayton at The Clayton Center, Clayton, NC on May 6 and May 27 at 7:00pm. May 6 topics include weed and disease control. May 27 topics include controlling insects and wildlife in the garden. For more information or to preregister for the class call Matt Lorion at 553-1554 or e-mail mlorion@townofclaytonnc.org.

**Master Gardener Plant Sale** will be held at the Johnston County Agriculture Center, 2736 NC Highway 210, Smithfield on Saturday, June 5 from 9:00am until 12:00 noon. Master Gardeners will be selling plants they have propagated from their own yards.

**Rain Barrel Workshop** will be held Saturday, June 5 from 9:00 am until 12:00 pm at the Johnston County Agriculture Center, 2736 NC highway 210. Come learn how to make a rain barrel, then put one together. You take home a completed rain barrel. Cost is $35.00, paid in advance. To register or for more information call 989-5380 or e-mail snbanks@ncsu.edu.
**Events (Continued)**

**Fire Ant Workshop** will be held on June 5th from 9:00am until 12:00 noon at the Johnston County Agriculture Center, 2736 NC Highway 210, Smithfield. Learn the best way to treat fire ants to kill the mound or keep them out of the area.

**Master Gardener Plant Clinics** will be held Saturday, May 8 at both Lowes Home Improvement Stores in Johnston County from 10:00am until 2:00pm and Saturday, May 15 at the Clayton Community and Farm Market in Clayton. Bring questions or samples and have a Master Gardener answer your gardening questions.

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**Insect Investigator**

**Spiders**

*Class:* Arachnida

*By* Shawn Banks

Spiders are in a completely different biology from insects in that they have eight legs with no antennae or wings. They can be found in the garden and are often associated with webs although there are many that never spin a web. Spiders can be classified as beneficial in the garden although there are a few of their cousins (the mites) that are plant pests.

Spiders eat insects, and other small prey that fall into their waiting arms, or legs as the case may be. Unlike some insects, spiders cannot eat solid food. They must first digest the food outside of the body by injecting it with enzymes to break it down prior to siphoning the liquid up through their mouthparts.

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Although feared by humans, most spiders are not venomous. There are a few, mainly the black widow and the occasional brown recluse that may be found in North Carolina. Both like to live in dark, damp locations like storage buildings and tool sheds so be careful when opening and going into these places. As a general rule even these poisonous spiders only bite when threatened.

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**What’s in Season?**

*By* Amie Newsome

**Strawberries**

*Fragaria x ananassa*

5 Reasons To Love Strawberries

1) **Pick Your Own Operations:** In today’s society many kids and adults believe that fruits and vegetables come from the grocery store. This is one fruit which many farmers offer pick your own operations to help educate the general public on the reality of where their food comes from.

2) **Fan Favorite:** Strawberries are among the top 5 most popular fruits in the United States, surpassed by bananas, apples, oranges and grapes. Even with the 5th most popular rating, 95% of consumers will purchase strawberries this year.

3) **Nutritional Nugget:** Strawberries are free of fat, sodium and cholesterol. They provide a god source of fiber, potassium, vitamin C and folic acid. Antioxidants are very prevalent in strawberries making them desirable for disease prevention.

4) **Mixed-Up Little Fruit:** Being the first fruit to ripen in the spring has gone to the strawberries heads. They make their own way in the world by being the only fruit with its seeds on the outside. On average one strawberry can produce 200 seeds.

5) **Fruit of Love:** Folklore tales of strawberries being an aphrodisiac have been the driving force behind French newlyweds being given strawberries for
their honeymoon trips. Another tale states that if a double strawberry is cut in half and shared with someone you are interested in, then love will follow. In Medieval times strawberries were given between warring parties as a sign of peace.

Recipe: Spinach Salad with Strawberries
By The Denver Post
Serving Size 4

4 cups of baby spinach leaves – washed and dried
1 cup of firm ripe strawberries – sliced
1 tablespoon of white wine vinegar
3 tablespoons of lightly flavored olive oil
¼ teaspoon of fresh cracked black pepper

Place the strawberries on top of the spinach in a salad bowl. Drizzle the vinegar, then oil. Add the black pepper, toss and serve.

Per serving (excluding unknown items): 1 Calorie; 0g Fat (0% calories from fat); 0g Protein; 0mg Carbohydrate; 0mg Sodium

Deer (Cont. from pg 1)

areas of your yard that draw the deer through your yard to the greenway.

Use fences and barriers: This option may be limited for some homeowners but useful in certain situations, especially vegetable gardens. A fence has to be high enough so the deer can’t jump it.

Use repellants: Repellants are applied directly to the plant and repel by taste or odor. They should be applied and reapplied in periods of expected deer browsing or when the plant is sending off tender new growth. Repellants rely on stinky stuff, like rotten eggs, hot pepper capsicum and garlic. They can be convenient, but expensive.

There are home brews that are cheaper and may be comparably effective. Deer get used to them, though, so try different ones.

Scare tactics: The use of loud noises, rustling of plastic bags, an old unwashed flannel shirt (human odor), security lights, motion detectors and dogs have been effective.

The bottom line is if you live in an area with deer, try thinking like a deer. Be mindful of when the deer are likely to be hungry. Protect what you have when the deer are most likely to be browsing or the plant is most desirable. And don’t get hooked on one method of control. Above all, keep the most desirable deer food off the menu because if you feed them, they will come!

For more information, check out these websites.

http://njaes.rutgers.edu/deerresistance/
pender.ces.ncsu.edu/index.php?page=news&ci=LAWN+44
www.ces.ncsu.edu/nreos/wild/wildlife/animals/deer.htm

May Garden Tasks

LAWN CARE

• Don't fertilize cool-season turfgrass (fescue, bluegrass). It has been growing actively all winter, and it will begin going dormant as summer heats up. Let it slow down naturally, and it'll be better able to withstand heat and drought.
• Call for a Lawn Maintenance Calendar for your type of turf. It tells you how to care for your lawn month by month.
• Most of the weeds you see now are winter annuals. In a couple of weeks, the weather will be too hot for these winter annuals, and they will start dying. The best thing to do is mow them before they produce seed.
• Warm-season grasses such as Bermuda, Zoysia or Centipede can be planted now.
• Mow cool-season grasses, such as fescues, at a height of 3 - 3 1/2 inches to help them survive hot, dry periods.

TREES, SHRUBS & ORNAMENTALS

• Pinch your plants. Use your index finger and thumbnail to break out the lead growth at tips of branches. Pinched plants have shorter, sturdier stems, more lateral branching and more blooms. Pinch back mums, zinnia, salvia, cockscob (celosia), petunias, marigolds, snapdragons, and garden phlox.
• It's time to plant summer beauties such as gladiolus, dahlias, caladiums and cannas and all those colorful bedding plants.
• Dead or diseased limbs on woody ornamentals should be apparent by now. Prune them out.
• Stake floppy plants, such as peonies, dahlias, and Boltonia (Michaelmas daisy), while they're small, so they'll have support when they need it. After plants have grown large, staking can injure them.
• Cut roses properly. Leave 2-3 well developed leaves (groups of five leaflets, not three) between the cut and the main stem.
• Grow great bearded iris by giving them excellent drainage, fertile soil, sunshine, and beds free of competing weeds and grass. Divide frequently (in August) for larger and finer blooms.
• Prune spring-flowering shrubs after they bloom. The best time to prune azalea, rhododendron, forsythia, spirea, flowering quince, kerria, pieris, and weigela is just as flowers begin to fade. To keep your shrubs ever young, prune one-third of the oldest canes back to the ground each year.
• Prune wisteria frequently throughout the summer, to control vegetative growth and get better blooms next spring.
• Keep dogwoods healthy. Spot anthracnose and powdery mildew are two major disease problems that show up on dogwood trees in late spring and summer. To help dogwoods overcome diseases: keep them watered, maintain soil fertility, and clean up fallen leaves to minimize the spread of the disease.
• Mulch! Prepare for dry summer weather and control weeds at the same time by using a layer of mulch 2-3" thick.
• Banish Bermudagrass (Wiregrass) from your planting beds. Keep it pulled to prevent it from overrunning your garden.
• Plant seeds of annual vines such as moonflower, scarlet runner beans or passionflower.
• Mix plants with the same growing requirements in your container gardens. Do not mix sun-loving and shade-loving plants together in the same container.

VEGETABLES & FRUITS

• Plant veggies now that the soil is warm and the danger of frost is past. Sow seeds of beans, squash, cucumbers, and corn. Set out transplants of tomatoes, peppers, eggplant and okra.
• Pinching also works well for many vegetable plants, including tomatoes and peppers.
• Watch for slugs. These soft, slimy, slender pests have a special taste for tender young crops. Holes in leaves or on the leaf margins and a silvery slime trail indicate a slug feast the previous night. Slugs hide under objects during the day.
• Train and support tomatoes, pole beans, peppers and eggplants.
• Side dress sweet corn when it is knee-high
• Make consecutive plantings of beans over a few weeks to extend your harvest.

LANDSCAPE IDEAS

• Plant vegetables in your flowerbeds! Eggplant, pepper varieties, and cherry tomatoes make colorful additions to the garden. Bush beans and climbing beans have attractive foliage and charming small flowers. Vegetables can also mingle with flowers in pots on a patio or deck.
• Welcome back hummingbirds! Females will be in the area first; the males will follow soon. Salvias, honeysuckles, penstemons, and other tube-shaped flowers, especially red ones, will attract hummingbirds to your garden. Fill feeders with a solution of 1 part sugar in 4 parts water. Wash feeders and replace the food at least twice a week.