Feature

BULBS
by Patty Brown

Bulbs are truly the lazy gardener’s friend! What could be easier than digging a hole, plopping in a nice firm bulb, covering with soil, and then (mostly) forgetting about it for the next several months? The payoff comes in late winter and spring when the bulbs sprout and flower, adding color and scent to the landscape before many perennials and annuals look like much. If you’ve never tried bulbs, here are the basics to get you started:

What to look for when buying – Buy bulbs that are plump and firm, not mushy or withered. Buy as soon as bulbs become available at your garden center for a larger selection and better quality.

How to store, when to plant – Until you’re actually ready to plant, keep the bulbs in a cool, dry spot, ideally 50-65°F. Bulbs need cold to develop a root system and eventually bloom. They prefer to be planted when the soil temperatures are below 60°F. In North Carolina, that means planting in late October through the end of November.

Where to plant – Consider sun, soil and site. Sun: Most spring flowering bulbs like a minimum of 5-6 hours of direct sun daily. However, for bulbs to naturalize or perennialize, select an area that’s shielded from the hot midday sun – by the branches of overhanging trees, for example. Soil: Bulbs demand good drainage. If your soil consists of compacted clay, work in lots of organic matter (aged bark, compost, peat moss) or plant in raised beds. If your soil is sandy, adding organic matter will help increase its

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**Featured Plant**

*Ginkgo biloba*

Ginkgo; Maidenhair Tree  
By Tina Stricklen

Did you know that the *Ginkgo biloba* or Maidenhair is considered one of the world’s oldest tree species? Referred to as a “living fossil” by Darwin, this tree has existed on the planet earth for several million years. Dating back to the dinosaurs, this broadleaf, deciduous tree ranged from what is now called Asia, Europe and North America. The native *Ginkgo biloba* became extinct in the wild but over time through cultivation, these trees are now found around the world.

Some gardeners may recognize it for its lovely fan-shaped leaf that starts out green in the springtime and turns a stunning golden yellow color in the fall. Ancient Chinese records describe the tree as “ya-chio-tu” meaning a tree with leaves like a duck’s foot. While most people today simply refer to it by its common name Ginkgo, it is a widely recognized tree in the modern landscape.

Hardy from zones 3 to 9, the Ginkgo is a slow growing tree that requires full sun but can take part shade. It grows in all soil types including alkaline and compact with the exception of consistently wet areas. The specimen can grow to heights of 40 to 75 feet or more with an irregular shape reaching between 20 and 40 feet wide. Young trees tend to have an irregular or open habit but will eventually produce a full appearance with age.

If you are interested in growing a Ginkgo, you may wish to select a male variety as the female plant produce seemingly innocuous “orangish, 1-to 1 ½-inch long, plum like seeds” in the fall. After dropping to the ground “the outer flesh decomposes” and “provides a rancid butter odor that is the scourge of the neighborhood.” (Dirr, 167) Since it takes about 20 years for a Ginkgo to fruit, you should purchase a male cultivar from a reputable nursery. ‘Autumn Gold’ and ‘Princeton Sentry’ are two good choices but for an extensive list that grow well in our area, please refer to North Carolina State’s website at: [www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/consumer/factsheets/trees-new/cultivars/ginkgo_biloba-table.html](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/consumer/factsheets/trees-new/cultivars/ginkgo_biloba-table.html)

Beyond the aesthetics of this iconic plant, there are many other interesting aspects. In Chinese culture the nuts from the tree are roasted which are considered a delicacy. In Japan many ancient specimens are worshipped like gods. They consider the tree a symbol of resilience and longevity due to its ability to survive even the harshest conditions. Indeed, this tree is remarkably resistant to disease, pests, breakage and pollution.

Medicinally speaking, this tree is effectual for researchers and scientists alike. For example, an extract is derived from the roots and leaves and is used to improve blood circulation. In some cultures, Ginkgo is used as a memory booster while others use it to increase immune function. Currently scientists are working on a cure for Alzheimer’s disease and other forms of dementia from various parts of Ginkgo.

This article only begins to scratch the surface of this unique and interesting tree. Aside from a fascinating genealogy and its effectiveness as a shade and ornamental tree in the landscape it provides many medicinal purposes. If you would like to learn more, please refer to The Ginkgo Pages, a website dedicated to the tree and all its aspects at [http://www.xs4all.nl/~kwanten/](http://www.xs4all.nl/~kwanten/)

References and information resources:
The tachinid flies come from a very diverse family. There are over 1,300 known species in North America alone. Some of these flies resemble the common housefly, while others have some distinctive coloring. A trait that all members of this family share is that the larva (maggots) parasitizes other insects. Many species of tachinid flies target a single species of insect and match their life cycle to that of the host for the larva. Some species of tachinid flies will target two or three different hosts for their young. With so many species in this family of beneficial insects, their host range includes caterpillars, beetle larva and adults, true bugs, sawfly larvae, grasshoppers, and rarely a centipede.

Because the many species of tachinid flies target a specific host, there have been some species introduced into the United States to help control specific introduced insect pests. The European Fly, *Lydella thompsoni*, was introduced to control the European corn borer. *Myiopharum doryphorae* is a parasite of the Colorado potato beetle. Both of these flies can parasitize up to 75% of the pest population in the areas where the fly is found.

These are just two of the examples of tachinid flies.

Adult flies typically feed on pollen, nectar, or honeydew from aphids and scale insects. In higher elevations the tachinid flies may be considered an important pollinator.

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

- **Fire Ant Workshop** at Johnston County Agriculture Building 2736 NC Highway 210, Smithfield, NC 27577. The workshop will begin at 7:00pm and last until 8:00pm on Thursday, September 9.

- **Plant Clinic** at Clayton Farm and Community Market Saturday, September 21 from 9:00am until 1:00pm. Come have your gardening questions answered by one of our Master Gardeners.

- **Backyard Composting** November 8th, 2010 @ 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM Durham, NC
  Dr. Rhonda Sherman, NCSU Extension Specialist in the Bio-Ag Engineering Department will present a free lecture on Backyard Composting. Get tips on vermicomposting and find out how worms can recycle your garbage

The Johnston Community College Arboretum will offer the following workshops and trips during September and October. For more information or to pre-register, which is required, please call the Arboretum staff at 919.209.2052 or 919.209.2184.

- **NC Viticulture and Winery Tour** at Hinnant Vineyard and Duplin Winery
  Wednesday, Sept. 15, 8:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. Meet at Arboretum Mobile Unit $25. Lunch on own at Duplin Winery
• Preserving by Dehydration – An Alternative to Canning and Freezing
  Wednesday, Sept. 22 - 6:30p.m. - 8:30p.m.
  Arboretum Brick Building $20

What’s in Season?

Apples

*Malus domestica*

There are not many things I like better than a cool, crisp, delicious apple. Growing up we had two apple trees in our back yard. I got scolded more than once for picking the apples before they were ripe and biting into a crisp, tart apple. I liked the tartness of the apple and some years it was the only way to get an apple that didn’t have a worm in it.

Apples have a number of sayings associated with them like, “You are the apple of my eye” and “an apple a day keeps the doctor away.” I wonder if this is because apples are so nutritional and good for you.

Apples are a great example of a versatile fruit. They can be used in salads, main course dishes, and deserts. Wither they are eaten fresh from the tree, or preserved as dried fruit, apple juice, or applesauce, they stand out as one of the top fruits produced in the United States. To celebrate the diversity of this fruit national apple week was established in 1904 and in 1996 was expanded to national apple month, September.

Apple Trees are relatively easy to grow. Utilizing proper pruning will keep the canopy open for good light penetration and air circulation. This aids in the prevention of many diseases as well as increases the productivity of the tree. Apple trees are susceptible to insects and diseases throughout the growing season and therefore should be on a spray program. “A Growers Guide to Apple Insect and Diseases in the Southeast”, was created to advise people on how to take care of apple trees and is now available online at http://ipm.ncsu.edu/apple/contents.html. There is a publication available for those who would like to learn more about growing apples in North Carolina. This publication is available at the local Cooperative Extension office or online a www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/hil/hil-8301.html.

Here is what looks like a quick, delicious recipe for Chilled Apple-Ginger Bisque taken from the NCDA&CS website on apples. www.ncagr.gov/markets/commodit/horticul/apples/recipes.htm

**Chilled Apple-Ginger Bisque**

**Ingredients**

- 16 oz apple butter
- 2 oz fresh ginger – peeled
- 8 oz plain low fat yogurt
- 8 oz apple cider
- 2 oz honey

**Preparation:**

Blend all ingredients together in blender.
Serve Chilled.
Makes 1 quart.

**BULBS** (Cont. from pg 1)

ability to hold water and nutrients. The pH of soil should be in the 6-7 range. (If you haven’t tested your soil, contact the Extension Office for free soil testing kits.) **Site:** Carve out new planting areas for bulbs or add them to existing beds and borders.
They also look at home on the edges of wooded areas.

**How to plant** – In general, most bulbs should be planted about 3 times as deep as the bulb is wide; here, we can plant a bit deeper. If you’re planting an entire bed, excavate the area to at least 5-8” and work a complete fertilizer into the soil. Plant at the recommended spacing, which depends on the bulb, so check the package directions. If you’re planting individual bulbs, add bulb fertilizer to the bottom of each hole and add 1-2” of compost or soil, then put in the bulb, pointed end up. Again,
check directions to determine proper spacing. **Tip:** A bulb planter, either hand-held or shovel type, makes planting bulbs easier and faster. Water well.

**Care** – If the fall weather is dry, water periodically and deeply. When leaves first appear in the spring, you can fertilize with a balanced fertilizer. After the bulbs have finished blooming, allow the leaves to remain. They manufacture food for the following year’s bloom, so leave the foliage until it yellows and pulls away easily.

Sources: NC Cooperative Extension Service [http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/hil/hil-611.html] and *the Southern Living Garden Book*, Oxmoor House, Birmingham, January 2004

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**August Garden Tasks**

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

Collect soil samples for testing, so that you’ll know how much fertilizer and lime to add this fall. Test your lawn, flower beds and vegetable garden. Testing should be done once every 3 years. We have FREE kits.

- Clean up and throw away any diseased plant material. Do not throw it in a compost pile. Leaving infected plant material on the plants or where it fell on the ground provides a source of re-infection for next year.

**LAWN CARE**

- Tip for fertilizing cool-season (i.e. fescue) lawns: Fertilize on Labor Day, Thanksgiving & Valentine’s Day. Fescue lawns are green & growing during the cool months of fall, winter, and spring. Use a slow-release fertilizer.
- Plant fescue seed to fill in bare spots or rejuvenate your lawn. The best time to plant fescue seed is Sept. 15 - Oct. 15. Contact us for a publication on lawn care and renovation and get your soil samples in!!
- Overseed common Bermuda grass lawns with ryegrass in late September - to keep lawn green all year.
- Control winter weeds with a pre-emergent herbicide applied around mid-September on lawn and shrub plantings.

**TREES, SHRUBS & ORNAMENTALS**

- Prepare plants for dormancy. Plants need time in the fall to slow down & prepare for the winter, so do not apply nitrogen (N) fertilizer or prune after July. Consider applying potassium (K) fertilizers, which increase winter hardiness.
- Divide spring & summer-blooming perennials - such as daisies, daylilies, creeping phlox - that are overgrown. This is an easy way to enlarge your garden without purchasing more plants. Dig the plants, gently separate into smaller clumps & replant immediately. They'll have plenty of time to get re-established before next spring.
- Set out cool-weather annuals for winter color. In addition to pansies and ornamental cabbages, other cool-weather ornamentals such as Dianthus, snapdragons, dusty miller, and ornamental sage look great throughout the winter. Wait to plant spring bulbs till chillier fall weather arrives.

**VEGETABLES & FRUITS**

- Start fall vegetables such as lettuce, spinach, collards, and cole crops to fill in spaces in the vegetable garden.
• Mulch Peppers. Be sure to mulch the plants to keep the roots cool and moist. Stake plants if you like, or you can allow them to tumble over onto ground that is covered with a thick blanket of hay, straw, or even newspapers.

**LANDSCAPE IDEA**

• Think ahead to next fall and consider plants that will provide autumn color. Trees such as ginkgo, red maple, southern sugar maple, Japanese maple, sourwood, crape myrtle and tulip poplar have outstanding autumn foliage color. The flowers of Sasanqua camellias and autumn-flowering chrysanthemums contribute much to the colorful autumn scene. Don't forget the brilliant red foliage of rabbiteye blueberries. The berries of pyracantha, nandina, viburnum, beautyberry and many hollies provide bright accents into winter. Look for interesting plants in the nurseries, and add them this fall.

**HOUSEPLANTS**

• Plan to bring houseplants and tropicals indoors when temperatures dip below 50 F.
• Move plants into partial shade for a week to condition them to lower light levels indoors.
• Prune them, if necessary, to a manageable size. Give them a good bath in soapy water or spray with insecticidal soap to keep insect pests from moving indoors with them.
• Give tropical plants as much light as possible once they are indoors.