BASIL, HERB OF THE MONTH
by Edna Gaston (aka Ladybug), Kerr Lake Master Gardener

_Ocimum basilicum_ -Basil

**Height:** wide variety offered – tall and leggy to short and bushy, check the seed package or observe the mother plant – usually 1 – 2’

**Flowers:** July and August – it is suggested flowers be pinched off to increase flavor of the leaves

**Propagation:** seeds or cuttings

**Growing conditions:** full sun, well-drained soil

**Cultivation:** tender annual, very susceptible to cold weather. Excellent for containers and, with care, can be brought inside for winter color and use. Harvest leaves as needed, leaving four sets of true leaves

**Uses:** The flavor and color brightens any dish that is cooked, especially pesto and tomato sauce. Use as flavoring for vinegars, soups, butter beans, peas and other foods. Plants supposedly repel flies (I like Lemon Basil on my porch!). Basil with its many color choices is a wonderful garden accent.

**History:** Considered by the French to be _l’herbe royale_ since the word stems from a word for “king” in Greek and since the taste of Basil is so regal. In the language of plants basil shows respect for the dead and is a continuing symbol of love.

More than likely the herb originated in India, migrating to Greece and then to Great Britain via Europe. With the colonists, this herb made its way to America. It is mainly associated with Spanish and Italian cooking.

**Additional Information:**


GARDEN TO DO – FRUITS & VEGGIES
By Carl Shafer, Kerr Lake Master Gardener

- Strawberries set fruit buds for next spring in the fall, so now is the time to fertilize. Water if the ground is dry.

- Blueberries are also setting fruit buds in the fall. If you have not been fertilizing
earlier in the year, do so now and keep plants watered.

- The week of September 1st is the recommended time to spray for peachtree borers. Get prepared now. Spray the trunk and major branches, paying particular attention to ground level. Follow label instructions. Peachtree borers may also attack apricot, cherry, nectarine, and plum trees.


- If you are not planting a fall garden or if you have extra unused space, plant a cover crop. See article in the August 07 issue and/or see: [www.clemson.edu/extension/hgic/plants/pdf/hgic1252.pdf](http://www.clemson.edu/extension/hgic/plants/pdf/hgic1252.pdf). Also check above fall garden web sites.

- If you have areas in your garden that do not produce well, take soil samples of those areas and areas that produce well for comparison to determine if it is a soil problem.

- Make notes of successes and failures in the garden this year so that as you plan next year’s garden you can remember what to change and what to expand on. Note any diseases that require treatment before symptoms appear, so that you can take preventive measures next year.

**PLANTING HERBS**

By Edna Gaston (aka Ladybug), Kerr Lake Master Gardener

Even though we are in the middle of summer, it’s not too early to begin thinking about fall . . . and winter. While we are enjoying our herbs fresh from the garden or pots on the deck, we need to begin preparations for the time when growing conditions are not the best for some of our favorite tender perennials or annuals.

Follow the directions on the packet for starting seeds. Use a good seed starting mix and provide bottom warmth. Provide light via a cool white fluorescent tube light available at any home supply store – light from a window or “grow light” just does not work as well. Remember to keep the seedlings close to the light, almost touching it, so they don’t become leggy. Move the light upward as the seedlings grow. Keep moist but not overly wet – too wet and the seeds will rot; too dry and they won’t sprout. The seed container can be initially covered with plastic to help regulate the moisture.

The commercially available seed-starting kits are good but not necessary. I have this but also use plastic containers that originally contained bakery items. I put small peat pots inside and fill with a seed starting medium. I’ve even used paper egg cartons successfully.

As the seedlings increase in size, move into a larger container. Don’t move too rapidly as it is difficult to keep the plant properly moist in too large a pot – the root system just isn’t large enough to absorb the moisture. Air exchange is limited and the roots will suffocate.
Some of my favorite herbs for starting indoors include Basil (many more seed varieties are readily available as seeds than plants), Chives – both regular and garlic, Dill and Parsley. Each of these is quite easy to grow from seed. Many others, including popular perennials, can be purchased as seeds. If you want a sweep of a particular herb or want to share, seeds are the least expensive way.

Buy a few packets, play in the dirt, plant them and before you know it, your portable garden is ready. Move outside as long as weather permits. First and foremost, have fun! In other articles I’ll talk about taking cuttings and getting herbs ready to come in for the winter.

Additional Information:
See resources from the “Herb of the Month” article on page one, plus the following:


MONTHLY ROSE TIPS
By Heidi Moore, Kerr Lake Master Gardener

Dealing with the extreme heat that North Carolina has experienced these last two months has been a real challenge in the rose garden. Sufficient watering has become one of the primary concerns. Be very diligent with supplying at least 1½ inches of water to your bushes weekly either by overhead sprinklers or by deep watering each plant individually with a hose. Insufficient watering results in wilting, discoloration of leaves and premature leaf drop.

I have also experienced a change in leaf color and texture closest to the top of my bushes that has become a source of concern. I first thought it could be a disease I hadn’t encountered before but upon further inspection, had determined that this problem was not being caused by either an insect or disease. Further research has indicated that it is possible that the heat generated by too much sunlight during very warm temperatures can cause sunburn on foliage, stems and canes. There is little to be done to remedy these conditions. I try to remove by hand any leaves that become unsightly and to remove any debris that collects around the plants. This should help to prevent any insect or disease problems from occurring while these difficult weather conditions persist.

Plant of the month: Hardy ginger lilies (Hedychium)
By Marty Finkel, Kerr Lake Master Gardener

There is a wonderful world of hardy ginger lilies that needs further exploration because they are not commonly found in garden centers. There are plenty of mail order nurseries that carry them as well as a few of the local nurseries. Most ginger lilies range in height from 4 to 8 feet, depending on the cultivar, and expand from one plant to a 3-4 foot wide clump over a 2 to 3 year period. The striking variegated-leaved H. ‘Vanilla Ice’ grows to about 3 feet. A few ginger lilies punctuating the perennial bed or border add a great deal of pizzazz and takes the design out of the realm of the ordinary. Depending on the cultivar, the ginger lilies bloom from July to frost in colors of white, pink, salmon, peach, yellow, or orange, and all are fragrant. Most describe the fragrance as similar to honeysuckle. All require full to part sun in rich, moist garden soil -- they do especially well on moist slopes. Tony Avent of Plant Delights Nursery advises gardeners...
not to plant the ginger lilies after late August for best winter survivability.

**Interesting Tid-Bits**

By Marty Finkel, Kerr Lake Master Gardener

⇒ An apple that has been tremendously popular in Europe for several years is ‘Kiku’, a sport of ‘Fuji’, and it is being introduced here as the sweetest apple yet discovered (minimum sugar content of 16 brix).

⇒ Now there is a collapsible wheelbarrow, billed as “canvas wheelbarrows” that lie flat on the ground for easy loading of anything including soil, rocks, plants, supplies, etc. Highly maneuverable, they are available in various sizes. What will they think of next?

⇒ This and the above tid bit: The Avant Gardener, Vol. 42, No. 4 Feb. 2010

⇒ We’re all familiar with the beautiful climbing hydrangea, *H. petiolaris*, that will climb tall trees and cover walls. Its relative the Japanese hydrangea vine, *Schizophragma hydrangeoides*, has showier and longer lasting flowers on a smaller vine (20 to 30’) and has lovely cultivars such as ‘Roseum’ with clear pink flowers. Perhaps the best known cv is ‘Moonlight’ whose heart-shaped leaves have a silvery sheen. There is also a Chinese magnolia vine, *Schisandra chinensis*, growing to 25’ in deeper shade with fragrant pinkish flowers followed by hanging clusters of scarlet berries on female plants – if there is a male plant nearby. From The Avant Gardener, Vol. 42, No. 7, May 2010.


⇒ This from Tony Avent’s July Plant Delights Newsletter: If you have a woodland garden, be aware that large trees require a range of between 50 and 200 gallons of water a day in the summer. Most herbaceous plants underneath these trees will suffer if supplemental water is not given.

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