THE GARDEN PATH

Garden path by Edna Gaston, 
Kerr Lake Master Gardener

ROSE TIPS FOR THE MONTH
By: Heidi Moore, Kerr Lake Master Gardener

Whether you are adding to an existing rose garden or just starting to grow roses for the first time, those garden catalogs you’ve been receiving in the mail will help you decide what rose varieties would be best suited for your landscape. The location you choose must be able to support roses by providing a minimum of six hours of full sun, fertile soil, and adequate drainage. Once you have established a suitable location, it is time to decide what role you want your roses to play in your garden. There are plenty of varieties available for consideration, whether you are interested in producing flowers for inside arrangements, creating a hedge for the property line, concealing yard obstructions, or just for enhancing the beauty of the yard. Creating a focal point in the garden, even when rose bushes are not blooming provides a constant attraction. Garden structures such as trellises, arbors, a gazebo or fence gracefully draped with climbing roses will bring your garden to life during blooming season, and will also enhance the area when roses are dormant.

When purchasing new bushes over the internet or by catalog mail order, I prefer to get them in the bare root stage, and request that they be delivered by the middle of February for planting in this area of NC. If you prefer to wait until planting time to select your rose bushes, you should be able to find several varieties to choose from at a local nursery or retail store.

Final considerations when selecting a rose bush should also include the amount of time that you will need to care for a particular variety. Hybrid tea roses require the most constant care such as spraying, deadheading and watering. Floribunda and grandiflora varieties require less care, but some varieties need periodic deadheading and spraying for insects and fungi. Knockout roses are generally maintenance free except for periodic fertilizing and hydration.

Once you have made your decision and ordered your rose varieties for the new growing season, it is time to be sure all your planting and pruning equipment is in order. Be prepared for pruning in late February and early March by having a good pair of bypass pruning shears available for use. The anvil-type blade shears tends to crush the stems rather than cut cleanly, so I do not encourage using this type to prune your roses. You should also have a pair of lopping shears and a pruning saw to remove large woody canes. This will enable you to make clean cuttings without damage to the bud union. Be sure you have cleaned, sharpened and oiled your tools so they will be ready for use come planting and pruning time.
PLANT OF THE MONTH

Magnolia maudiae

By: Marty Finkel, Kerr Lake Master Gardener

Magnolia maudiae

If you want beautiful, fragrant, up-to-six-inches-across flowers without the size of a Southern Magnolia, try Magnolia maudiae, which seldom grows taller than 20 feet. It used to be in the genus Michelia, but now all Michelia are Magnolia (most readers probably know Banana Shrub, which was Michelia figo). M. maudiae has lustrous, dark green foliage which shows the white flowers to advantage January – March, July, August, and again in December, at least at the JC Raulston Arboretum where it was photographed at these times. The culture is similar to that of the Magnolia grandiflora: plant in full to part sun in any good soil that drains well. Water enough to keep the soil moist until the tree is well established, after which it is relatively drought tolerant. There are usually no disease or insect problems, but it can get magnolia scale if under stress. This tree is available at an area nursery.

GARDEN TO DO

By: Carl Schafer, Kerr Lake Master Gardener

Prune fruit trees and grape vines now through early March. For publications and web sites for these and berries, see the February, 2010 issue of this publication.

After pruning, apply dormant spray when the temperature will remain above freezing until the spray can dry. For the dormant spray only, dormant oil and lime-sulfur may be combined. When leaves are present this combination will burn them.

For information on pruning trees, shrubs, and perennials, see: Pruning Trees & Shrubs, AG-71 (www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/consumer/agbubs/ag-071.pdf) and The Well-tended Perennial Garden – Expanded Ed. By: Tracy DiSabato-Aust. For more information, do a web search and specify a plant to limit results (e.g. pruning hydrangea).

If we have a dry spell and the soil can be tilled, you may want to prepare part of your garden for planting early cool season crops in February and early March when the ground is often too wet to till.

Check your left-over seeds. If ordering seeds on the internet or mail order, place your order early for fast service. For a sample of interesting seed catalogs, see the January, 2009 issue of this publication. If you interested in open-pollinated varieties and seed-saving, look for seed companies that specialize in such varieties.

If you are planning to start some of your own transplants, get your seeds and other materials organized ahead of time. Remember to clean and disinfect (10 % bleach solution) if reusing seed-starting containers.
Some books you may find useful:

**Month-By-Month Gardening in the Carolinas**

**The Carolinas Gardener’s Guide**

These are Mid-Atlantic versions of the above two books:

**Don Hastings’ Month-By-Month Gardening in the South**

**Best Garden Plants for North Carolina**
*By: Pam Beck and Laura Peters* – Has sections for: Annuals, Perennials, Trees & Shrubs, Roses, Vines, Bulbs, Corms & Tubers, Herbs, and Ferns, Grasses & Groundcovers.


**The Southern Garden Advisor**
*By: Barbara Pleasant* – Monthly guide.

**Garden Calendar for North Carolina**
*By: John H. Harris* – Brief

**680 Weekend Gardener Guide** - Free

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**HERB OF THE MONTH**

*Laurus nobilis - Laurel, Sweet Bay*

*By: Ladybug aka Edna Gaston, Kerr Lake Master Gardener*

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*Laurus nobilis – Laurel, Sweet Bay*

**Height:** 10 to 60’ if planted outside in ideal conditions, up to 5’ in a container

**Flowers:** spring, inconspicuous

**Propagation:** Fall cuttings but usually take a long time to root

**Growing conditions:** full sun to part shade, moderately rich soil, hardy to zone 8.

**Cultivation:** tender perennial, very susceptible to cold weather. Excellent for containers and, with care, can be brought inside for winter use. Harvest leaves as needed. Leaves can be dried for future use but green leaves should be weighed down to prevent curling.

**Uses:** Tasty addition to soups and stews (be certain to remove before serving – once I
forgot and my husband was not too happy when he bit into the leaf.)

History: The Greek god, Apollo, was in love with Daphne. In order for her to escape his pursuit, her father changed her into a laurel tree. Apollo declared it sacred forever and to honor his love, he wore a laurel wreath. The roof of Apollo’s temple in Delphi had a bay leaf roof as protection from lightning and witchcraft. Because of this association, bay laurel came to represent greatness, glory and honor. Garlands of bay were worn by notables in Greece and Rome.

Additional Information for Herbs:


SPRING DREAMING
By: Marty Finkel, Kerr Lake Master Gardener

Many times the best laid plans of the winter fall short of realization of spring dreams, whether it is renovating ornamentals and/or vegetable beds, adding new shrubs and perennials, or trying new or recommended old annuals. One reason may be that you just don’t know where to find the desired seeds and/or plants; another may be that the window for starting seeds for certain plants passes by, another may be disappointment with past trials of plants that failed to meet expectations. Sometimes a different cultivar of the same species will be successful, or a new seed strain will produce superior plants.

Take pansies, for instance – why settle for ordinary pansies when you can have large, double, ruffled pansies from seeds (offered in several catalogs)? And there is the trailing pansy mentioned in last year’s Tid-Bits, the Endurio series ‘Sky Blue Martien’ suitable even for hanging baskets and containers as well as for bedding. Pansy seeds should be started December 15th to February 15th for early spring planting outside. Many plants continue to be improved with shorter internodes between flowers, space coverage, flower size (in some cases, smaller is better or at least different), self cleaning, more colors, disease resistance, heat and humidity tolerance, longer flowering period, for a partial list. Look at the improvements in the ‘Wave’, ‘Easy Wave’, ‘Shock Wave’, ‘Avalanche,’ ‘Ramblin’ and ‘Opera’ petunia series. Last season’s sensational disease-resistant ‘Cora’ series of vinca bred for hot, humid conditions is now available in trailing form, ‘Cora Cascade.’ To those who “just don’t bother with annuals”, reconsidering their use could bridge color gaps in beds and borders from April to October and often November. ‘Black Pearl’ and ‘Purple Flash’ ornamental peppers used with low to medium tall grass or sedge (woven in with Pink Muhly Grass!) would be a knock-out.

Ornamental grasses, both annual and perennial, are generally easy to grow from seed. There are 124 grasses offered from seed from one catalog, including the bluestems, cloud grasses, Pannicums, foxtails, many Carex including ‘Amazon Mist,’ ‘Bronco’, ‘Red Rooster’, ‘Toffee Twist’, ‘Prairie Fire’, and others. Pink Muhly is available, as are Fescues and pampas grasses.
For drifts of grasses, when most are sold in one gallon pots for around $6.95, growing from seed can’t be beat – and they grow fast.

Many of us grow vegetables from seed because we can’t find the kinds we want at the garden centers. If space is a problem, we can grow dwarf or shortened varieties or we can train them on a trellis. Plastic deer fencing attached to posts makes a fine trellis even for cantaloupes (or small watermelons) when a section of panty hose is attached on each side of the melon so it can be supported as it grows larger!

There are many new (or new to our area) cultivars of familiar shrubs at area nurseries. Whereas *Daphne ordora* ‘Aureo-marginata’ is well-known and easy to find, *D. odora* ‘Rebecca’ is a welcome new addition with its wider and showier creamy leaf margins and has the same fragrance. *Daphne transatlantica* ‘Eternal Fragrance’ is available for extra perfume. For texture *Pieris japonica* ‘Pygmaea’ has leaves like rosemary and grows very slowly to about 4’. For shape, *P. japonica* ‘Cavatine’ is almost round and grows to 3 ½ to 4’. There is such a choice of sizes, shapes, and colors of needled evergreens that beds, borders, and containers need never be boring. The same can be said of broadleaf evergreens and deciduous shrubs, and so many can be found locally. We are lucky that we have so many adventurous nurserymen who are willing to take chances with new plants.

So – with our supply of plants started from seeds now and around the first of March, and with some ideas for some new shrubs, our spring dreams will come true, both yours and mine.

**INTERESTING TID-BITS**

*By: Marty Finkel, Kerr Lake Master Gardener*

Park Seed, located in Greenwood, S.C., features nine acres of themed gardens and employs more than 300 people. In addition to selling seeds, plants, and garden supplies, it conducts horticultural research. Earlier in the year, Park Seed filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy. This 142-year-old company was bought for $12 million by Blackstreet Capital, a private equity firm in Chevy Chase, Md. The new owners have agreed to keep the business running in Greenwood for at least 3 years and intend to make it viable once more.

The latest on the cause of colony collapse disorder (CCD) of bees: A new piece in the puzzle of CCD has been found by bee researchers in Montana and Army scientists in Maryland and is reported in a study published in October’s PLoSONE, an online science journal. They found that the combined effect of a fungus and a virus appears to play a large role in CCD, and the next step for the scientists is to find out how these unite to kill bees with the goal of preventing further outbreaks. The above two tidbits are from the Nov./Dec. issue of *The American Gardener*.

At the Hoffman’s Nursery field trip, many of the MGVs were quite taken with a low-growing plant with dark purple leaves and black fruits in one of the display beds, and were told it is an annual ornamental pepper, ‘Black Pearl,’ that can be found in several seed catalogs. You might want to try another ornamental pepper with it, this one a winner in the 2010 American Garden Award contest, ‘Purple Flash.’ It’s 12” tall, drought tolerant, has purple-streaked leaves and small black fruits.

For those who have chickens, plant some marigolds for them to eat and get eggs with deeper yellow yolks.

A new porous pavement, Gravelpave 2, has been installed on walks in the National Garden at the US Botanical Garden in Washington, D.C. It has a natural-looking surface and high water permeability.
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