Pumpkin Carving
By Judy Choplin, Master Gardener, Vance County

First of all, you need to select a pumpkin large enough for the design you want to carve on it. Because pumpkins range in size from tiny to very large, it would be a good idea to take a copy of your design along on the pumpkin shopping trip. Medium sized ones work best for most stencils. The pumpkin you select should be uniformly orange, no bruises, cut or nicks. Do not pick up the pumpkin by its stem. It may break off.

You may want to use a pumpkin carving set which can be found at local stores.

The materials you will need to carve the pumpkin if you do not want to use a carving set are printer and paper or a copy of your design, spoon or pumpkin scoop, small nail and a serrated knife.

Follow the steps below:
1. Cut a hole in the top angling the saw inwards so your lid sits on top of the pumpkin.
2. Scoop out the seeds and strings using a spoon.
3. Scrape the inside out of the pumpkin until the pumpkin wall is about an inch thick.
4. Create, copy or print out a pattern (look for computer sites with free patterns) if you don't already have it.
5. Trim off any excess paper. Tape or use push pins to attach the pattern to the pumpkin.
6. Poke holes through the pattern with the nail about 1/8th inch apart.
7. Remove the paper from the pumpkin, then rub flour all over the poked holes so you can see them.

8. Push a nail through the pumpkin where you want to start carving, then remove it. Repeat anywhere that will be a starting point for carving.
9. Using the serrated knife, start in the center of the cut out area and with a sawing motion cut out your design.
10. Take your time sawing and let the knife do the work for you. When making curves, turn the knife slightly. When making sharp corners, simply remove the knife and re-insert it to the right angle.
11. To remove the pieces, push them out from the inside.

Once your pumpkin is carved, use a pumpkin light or candle in a candleholder to light up the pumpkin. Be sure to place a piece of tinfoil under the candle inside the pumpkin.

When the candle is in place, put the lid on for a minute. Remove the lid, note where the smoke mark is on the lid. Cut a vent hole in the lid where the smoke mark appears.

Put the lid back on the pumpkin. Now you are ready to proudly display your carved pumpkin.
PLANTS OF THE MONTH
By Marty Finkel, Master Gardener, Granville County

Pink Muhly

I know that by now everyone is familiar with Muhlenbergia capillaris, or Pink muhly grass, but since it is so beautiful I could not resist naming it as plant of the month. Since it is being used in masses nearly everywhere in commercial as well as residential landscapes, we’ll do a double plant of the month, profiling one not as familiar, Calamagrostis brachytrica, or Korean feather reed grass.

Pink muhly is native to sandy or rocky soils, in prairies, pine barrens, and openings in woodlands from Massachusetts to Indiana and Kansas, south to Florida, Texas and Mexico. It blooms, here, September to November at about 3 feet tall with a spread of about that size. It is a clump-forming grass, meaning that it does not run. It is effective as a singular focal point against dark-foliaged perennials or shrubs, but it is especially dramatic in sweeps and groups. It is tough enough to use as groundcover, even in such challenging settings as traffic islands. It does well in our area, is drought tolerant, and does best in full sun to light shade. Propagate by seed or division in the spring.

Korean feather reed grass

Korean feather reed grass is native to eastern Asia, occurring in moist woodlands and at the edges of woods. It flowers in September-October, here, with whitish or ivory blooms and is especially gorgeous when backlit. It is clump forming, too, and grows to about 4 feet tall by about 2 feet across. The flowers last into winter and are suitable for fresh or dry arrangements. Sometimes in shade it is rather lax in its growth habit but tends to be more upright in the sun. It is a beautiful grass for use as a single specimen, in drifts, or in containers. If grown in full sun, provide sufficient moisture. Cut back in late winter.

Propagate by seed or division in spring

Even though I grow both these grasses, I relied on The Color Encyclopedia of Ornamental Grasses by Rick Darke for part of the information contained here.

ROSE TIPS FOR THE MONTH
By Heidi Moore, Master Gardener, Warren County

Routine maintenance is the key in October for the rose garden. The cooler temperatures will make your hybrid roses thrive and produce some huge beautiful flowers. Continue to deadhead and spray for black spot and powdery mildew. As the plants start to defoliate, due to the fall weather, be sure to keep the garden clean. Remove fungus infected leaves from your bushes and be sure to clear any spent blooms and foliage that drop beneath.

Ramblers will continue to produce long suckers that should be removed from the main runner. The New Dawn rambler is difficult to control as it seems to send out so many shoots this time of year. I prefer to trim them now, but not cut the bush back too severely at this time. I try to remove the longest shoots, keeping the bushes somewhat controlled and pleasing to look at.

If you haven’t discontinued fertilizing, now is the time. Keep weeds and other plants away from all your rose bushes.

On the web:
The Garden Path Newsletter
vance.ces.ncsu.edu/content/thegardenpath
Vance County Extension
vance.ces.ncsu.edu
warren.ces.ncsu.edu
Urban Horticulture at NC State University
www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/consumer

This half of the summer, we have been fortunate to have had sufficient rain to keep our roses well hydrated. Continue to give them plenty of air circulation and they will reward you with beautiful blooms and very little insect or disease problems.
PESTS!!
By Cynthia Dickinson, Master Gardener, Warren County

Azalea stem borers are slender long-horned beetles about 1/2 to 5/8 inch long with yellowish brown heads and thoraxes. The wing covers are yellowish gray with dark outer margins, and there are 2 black spots on the thorax.

The azalea stem borer is found throughout the eastern United States wherever azaleas and related plants grow. Azalea stem borers infest azalea, rhododendron, blueberry and mountain laurel. Infested twigs wilt and die as the larvae bore downward inside. At this stage, symptoms may resemble those from aerial phytophthora blight. Later in the season, infested stems often break off at the base leaving the plant lopsided and unattractive. Small plants may break off completely.

Adult azalea stem borers emerge from mid-May through June. The eggs have been described as "yellow" and are inserted under the bark between two rows of holes chewed through the bark about 1/2 inch apart.

The larva hatches and bores down the twig into the stem and eventually all the way to the crown of the plant. The stem is greatly weakened at the base. The larvae then bore down into the roots where they spend the winter. Coarse sawdustlike frass is expelled through holes in the bark of the stem and at the base of the plant. Infested stems wilt as the larva bores downward inside. The larvae pupate the following spring.

Cutting off and burning infested stems as soon as they are noticed in the growing season are recommended for control. If shrubs have been reinfested year after year, it may be helpful to protect the plants with a pyrethroid insecticide such as permethrin or cyfluthrin. This should give adequate control if applied in spring, mid-May and, again, in early June, after the new growth has emerged and hardened off.

INTERESTING TIDBITS
By Marty Finkel, Master Gardener, Granville County

Cornell mildew cure: This formula was developed by Cornell University to control powdery mildew and blackspot on roses, but has been found to be remarkably effective against the strain of mildew fungus that attacks crape myrtle. When sprayed on mildew covered crape myrtles, one user reported that the mildew dissolved into nothingness and never came back. The formula: Into one gallon of water, mix 2 tablespoons of light horticultural oil, 1 heaping tablespoon of baking soda, and 1 teaspoon of a mild liquid dishwashing detergent. Mix well and spray late in the evening when the sun is no longer on the foliage. Spray both sides of the leaves and all the wood to the point of runoff.

As you’ve probably noticed, there are many new coneflowers (Echinacea) on the market, and I want to mention a couple of dwarf ones (since tall ones tend to fall over in my garden). One is the 12” fragrant dark magenta ‘Emily Saul’ and the other is the 16” rose-pink ‘Lilliput.’ Since we’re on the subject of shorter plants, try the 12” Achillea millefolium ‘Apricot Delight,’ and the 10” Coreopsis lanceolata ‘Little Sundial’ with maroon-margined gold flowers all summer.

A warning when using glyphosate (one brand is Roundup) with surfactants: the use of the wetting agent causes injury to trees and shrubs such as bark-splitting (usually blamed on cold winter temperatures when bark is exposed to the sun). The herbicide makes the bark structure weak so that it splits open even in comparatively warm winters. It often takes years for plants to break down with even low doses of glyphosate with surfactant.

Extension specialist Hannah Mathers of Ohio State University says this injury shows up on black gum, crabapple, dogwood, hawthorn, maple, mountain ash, magnolia, and numerous species of Prunus and Pyrus. Other injuries show up as stunting, dead branches, witch’s brooms, and chlorosis. So don’t use it to remove suckers, and keep a 30 foot buffer between the weeds being sprayed and the woodies.

Love ginger but would like a better way to keep it fresh? Grow it in a sunny window and use only what you need at one time! Plant pieces of a plump, unshriveled ginger root from the supermarket in a 6” to 8” pot in a moist, sandy mix. Besides culinary uses, it is good as an aid in digestion, cold remedy, and is as effective as Dramamine in preventing motion sickness. Note: I have a 5-gallon nursery pot FULL of ginger, in full leaf now that I take into a small, sunny greenhouse each winter and cut off pieces of the root whenever I need it.

Information for these bits (aside from Marty’s comments) is from “The Avant Gardener,” Vol. 40, No. 12, October 2008.
**OCTOBER TO DO!**

**Fruits and Veggies**

*By Carl Shafer, Master Gardener, Vance County*

- We often have two or three weeks of nice weather after the first frost in the fall. To avail oneself of this additional growing time for tender vegetables (green beans, summer squash, tomatoes, peppers, etc.) have frost protection material ready to use when frost is predicted. Materials to consider: Row covers – light weight and easy to use, Sheets and blankets – need support structures because of their weight, Plastics – need to be kept off of the foliage and removed in the morning before sunshine hits to prevent overheating. When a hard freeze is forecast, harvest your tender and semi-hardy vegetables.
- Continue to monitor your fall vegetables for insects. Watch for aphids on cole crops. Use insecticidal soap for control. For caterpillars use a BT product.
- Harvest sweet potatoes, gourds, pumpkins, and winter squash before frost.
- As fall clean-up continues, remove any diseased plants and leaves from the garden area and discard. Do not compost this material.
- Fall is an ideal time to have soil tests done on garden and lawn areas. If lime is needed, fall is an excellent time to apply it.
- Use a bagging lawn mower to chop and collect leaves. The chopped leaves can be used for mulch, tilled into the garden, or composted.

**Landscaping & Lawn Care**

*By Onda Marable, Master Gardener, Vance County*

- Plant pansies and/or violas in all their glorious colors.
- Sow cool weather annuals such as larkspur, forget-me-nots and poppies.
- Relocate small trees or shrubs that need more room to grow.
- Add to your garden by planting new perennials, trees and shrubs.
- Scout nurseries for fall close-out bargains.
- Select new trees while thinking of winter interest. Look for unusual textured/colored barks, berries, twisted twigs, etc.
- Don't forget to add soil conditioner when planting if the soil needs it.
- Begin planting spring flowering bulbs.
- Dig, dry and store tender bulbs and tubers like dahlias, caladiums, tuberose, etc.
- Over-seed warm grass lawns with ryegrass about 2 to 3 weeks before first frost.
- Plant, aerate and fertilize cool season grasses like fescue.