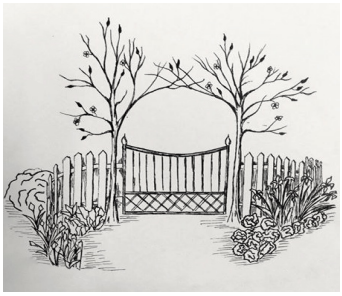
IN THE GARDEN NOW

HELPING GARDENERS PUT KNOWLEDGE TO WORK

June 2016



Carpenter Bees

Carpenter bee on a flower (J.K. Barnes, U. of Ark.)

Be on the lookout for carpenter bees this month. Carpenter bees are large bees resembling bumble bees that drill holes in wood to make their nests. This becomes an issue when they choose to use your house or outbuildings for nesting locations. These bees are not aggressive (in fact the males don't sting at all and the females usually only sting if handled) but they can be very intimidating due to their large size and loud buzzing.

People notice carpenter bees when the bees are found hovering around their homes or outbuildings. Carpenter bees often choose to build their nests under eaves, around window trim, or in wooden siding.

Carpenter bees don't usually cause serious damage but repeat infestations can weaken wooden structures. They are attracted to bare, unpainted or weathered wood and seem to prefer softwoods like cedar, cypress or pine. Painted and pressure treated wood are less likely to be attacked by carpenter bees but they are certainly not immune.

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Adult carpenter bees overwinter in the wood inside the old nest tunnels. They emerge in the spring to mate and excavate new tunnels in which they lay eggs. Larvae grow within the tunnels and a new generation of adult carpenter bees emerges from the tunnels in late summer. The longer carpenter bees colonize an area, the more damage will be done to the wood.

Controlling carpenter bees may require multiple approaches. First, paint all exposed wooden surfaces to make them less appealing. Polyurethane or oil-based paints are best. If carpenter bees are still an issue, spray an insecticide like carbaryl (Sevin) or Bifenthrin (Talstar) into the holes and close them with putty, caulk or plastic wood. You may need to treat several times to get an established infestation under control. Liquid sprays of carbaryl or a synthetic pyrethroid (like permethrin) can be applied as a preventive, but these treatments are usually only effective for a week or two.

If carpenter bees are nesting in an area where their damage can be tolerated, remember that they are native pollinators. They forage in early morning and are excellent pollinators of eggplant, tomato, other vegetables and many types of flowers.

Fire Blight

Guido Schnabel. ©2015 Department of Agricultural & Environmental Sciences, Clemson University

Fire blight is one of the most devastating and difficult to control diseases of fruit trees such as apple and pear. Unfortunately, this spring's wet, cool weather has been conducive to fire blight. This disease is caused by a bacterium (*Erwinia amylovora*) that can spread rapidly when environmental conditions are right for disease development. The bacteria can enter plants through the flower blossoms or wounds (such as those caused by wind or hail damage). Infected flowers or leaves turn black and die. The disease moves down the branch resulting in the death of young twigs which blacken and curl over. Leaves on affected branches wilt and blacken but remain attached to the branch giving the plant a fire-scorched appearance. If you look closely at the bark, slightly sunken areas called cankers appear on branches and the main stem. Insects and rain can spread the disease from plant to plant.

Fire blight is most commonly seen on apples and pears although other plants such as crabapple, pyracantha, hawthorn, photinia, quince and loquat can also be affected. There is no cure for fire blight so disease prevention is extremely important. When choosing plants, select varieties that are less susceptible to fire blight. Avoid excessive nitrogen fertilization which can result in succulent growth that is susceptible to disease.

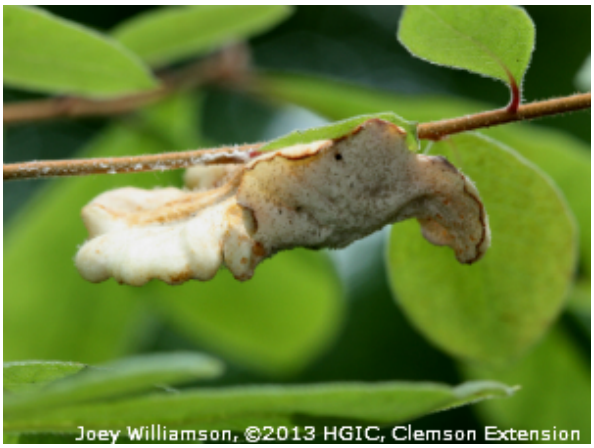
Bradford pear (an ornamental pear) is fairly resistant to fire blight. When infected, Bradford pears tend to compartmentalize the disease well losing only inches of branches to the disease in a season. However, these cankers can serve as a reservoir of disease for subsequent seasons. Susceptible varieties of pears and apples can see substantially more damage.

Preventive spraying in early spring with streptomycin or copper based fungicides is possible in a commercial orchard setting. However, for most homeowners the cost and effort is not reasonable. Trees need to be sprayed at a 3 to 4 day interval during bloom and the entire leaf canopy must be treated for control.

You can reduce the spread of fire blight by removing and destroying all affected plant parts after the window for disease development is past. A warm dry period during the summer or during the winter dormant season are good times to prune. Pruning cuts should be made a minimum of 8 to 12 inches below any sign of affected tissue. Dispose of all infected prunings away from the orchard and sanitize pruning shears between cuts. A 10% household bleach solution or Lysol can be used to dip the pruners between cuts and reduce disease transmission. If not pruned out, these cankers will continue to spread the disease in subsequent seasons.

What's that thing growing on my azalea?

This spring's cool, wet weather has favored the growth of exobadium leaf galls. *Exobasidium* is a fungus that is very common in early spring on azaleas (*Exobasidium vaccinii*) and camellia (*Exobasidium camelliae*). The fungus infects the new shoots and leaves causing them to become enlarged, thickened, and distorted. The affected tissue turns from light green to nearly white or pink. Later, the galls mature and either rupture to release spores (camellia) or become covered in a powdery white substance before turning brown and hard (azalea).



Leaf and flower gall (*Exobasidium vaccinii*) on deciduous native azalea.
Joey Williamson, ©2013 HGIC, Clemson Extension

Camelia leaf gall (exobasidium camelliae) on Camellia sasangua, Joey Williamson, ©2012 HGIC, Clemson Extension

Exobasidium leaf gall rarely does enough damage to warrant chemical control. Instead, simply remove and destroy any young galls before they mature and release their spores. This will help prevent the disease from spreading next season. Rake up and remove fallen leaves and avoid wetting the leaves when watering plants.

Tales from the Clinic:

I have had several questions this month about **lichens**. Lichen is a unique organism that is actually the result of a symbiotic relationship between a fungus and either an alga or bacteria. These two organisms together are able to live in very inhospitable environments that includ the side of trees, rock faces, fence posts or bare ground. Lichens can vary dramatically in appearance from green, mossy masses to flat, leafy gray plaques.

Homeowners often wonder if lichens are harmful or damaging their plants. Lichens frequently appear on plants that are growing poorly or declining in health, thus giving the appearance that they are sucking energy from the plant. However, the reality is quite different. Lichens require light to grow. A healthy plant usually has a thick leaf canopy that shades the branches and prevents lots of lichens from growing. When a plant is stressed, the canopy tends to thin out allowing more light to penetrate and giving lichens a chance to colonize the branches. Lichens only use the tree for physical support – they do not damage or harm it in anyway – but they are a symptom of the tree's declining health.

There is usually no need to treat or try to kill lichen growing on a tree, however you should investigate why your tree is growing poorly. Common causes of poor tree growth include environmental stress, poor management or being situated in the wrong location. Improving the growing environment for the tree will help improve its vigor. Appropriate fertilizing and irrigation schedules should help. However, if the tree is growing in an unsuitable location – consider transplanting it to a better location or replacing it with another plant that is better adapted. If your tree is very heavily infested, light pruning will remove branches with the heaviest lichen load and may stimulate new growth within the tree that will help shade the lichen out.

A few lichens here or there are normal and nothing to be worried about; however if you see a lot of lichens on your tree, evaluate the plant's health and consider what steps you can take to improve it.

Onslow County Farmers' Market Days and Times

Don't forget that the Onslow County Farmers Market is open for the season. Come out and support your local farmers, vendors and crafters. You will find a selection of local produce, meats, cheese, baked goods, wines, wares, jams and jellies, prepared foods and hand crafted items. Vendors vary from market to market so make sure you check out all three locations:

- Saturdays from 8:30 to 1:30 at 4024 Richlands Highway
- Tuesdays from 10 to 2 aboard Camp Lejeune in front of the commissary
- Thursday from 10 to 2 on Western Boulevard in front of Big Lots

To learn more about the Farmers' Market and upcoming special events, check out their website or follow their Facebook page for more details:

http://onslowncfarmersmarket.com/

https://www.facebook.com/pages/Onslow-County-Farmers-Market/111126258908994

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Find the Gardening Information on the Radio

I host the Garden Journal on Public Radio East. The Garden Journal airs Friday at noon on all PRE Stations and Saturday at noon on News and Ideas. In Onslow County, that is 91.5 FM and 89.3 FM on Fridays and 91.5 FM Saturdays. Tune in and join me. Is there a topic that you would like me to address on the show? If so, email me at lisa_rayburn@ncsu.edu and you may hear your answer on the air.

Upcoming Classes

****All classes are held at the extension office. Must Pre-register. Please call (910) 455-5873 to register***.

Common Vegetable Garden Problems
We'll cover common insect pests and diseases that affect the vegetable garden. We will focus on identification and control.
June 8, 6 pm

Rooting Cuttings for Fun
We'll discuss when and how to root cuttings of common garden plants. We'll stick some cuttings and you might even wind up with a cutting or two to take home with you.
June 18, 10 am

Food Preservation Classes
Whether you are new to canning or just want to brush up and make sure you are using the most up-to-date recommended techniques, these classes are a fun, hands on way to get your canning season off to the right start. These classes will be held in the Learning Center at the extension office. Cost for each class is $10 and preregistration is required.

- **Introduction to Canning**
  We'll cover the basics of canning high acid foods. We'll process salsa and jelly in the water bath canner.
  June 9, 1 – 4 pm

- **Pressure Canning**
  Learn how to safely preserve low acid foods like vegetables, soups and meats. We'll process vegetables in the pressure canner.
  June 16, 1-4 pm

Summer Gardening Series
All classes are free and open to the public. This series will run Monday nights from 6-8 pm at the extension office.

- **Understanding and Preparing Your Soil –** June 6
- **Landscape Design I –** June 13
- **Landscape Design II –** June 20
- **Annuals and Perennials –** June 27
- **Woody Plants –** July 11
- **Best Planting and Pruning Practices** – July 18
- **Dealing with Water Issues –** July 25
- **Dividing Perennials –** August 1
- **Equipment Maintenance** – August 8

Association Meetings

- **Onslow County Farmers' Market Association Meeting**
  June 7, 4 pm
  Contact: Marie Bowman, 910.459.3463, marie.s.bowman@gmail.com

- **Onslow County Master Gardener Volunteer Association Meeting**
  June 9, 9 am
  Contact: Lisa Rayburn, 910.455.5873, lisa_rayburn@ncsu.edu

- **Onslow County Beekeepers' Association Meeting**
  June 14, 7 pm
  Contact: Jeff Morton, 910.330.5732 or jeff_morton@ncsu.edu

CONTACT US

If you have questions about lawn, landscape or garden problems, contact your local Cooperative Extension office. In Onslow County call 455-5873, Mon – Fri. 8 am – 5 pm, or visit us online anytime at http://onslow.ces.ncsu.edu. While you are there, you can post your questions to be answered by email using the "Ask an Expert' widget (in the upper left hand corner).

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