

IN THE GARDEN NOW

HELPING GARDENERS PUT KNOWLEDGE TO WORK

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New Pest on Crape Myrtles



Crape myrtle bark scale Jim Robbins U of ARK CES Bugwood org

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For several years, I've been hearing that crape myrtle bark scale was heading towards North Carolina. Well, now we know that it is here. This is bad news because crape myrtles are typically a tough and low maintenance tree, but trees infested with crape myrtle bark scale will require pest management to stay healthy and beautiful.

Scale are small insects that live and feed on plants but they are not easy to recognize as insects. Scale are circular to oval, wingless and lack a recognizable head, legs or other body parts. They are also largely immobile – feeding on the plant by sucking sap from the vascular system and staying in one location. Their waxy outer coating makes them look white. Light infestations will look like small, white bumps on the bark of the plant while heavier infestations can look like felt mats. As they feed, scale excrete large amounts of honeydew (a sugary liquid) which coats the leaves and limbs of the crape myrtle. This leads to the development of sooty mold (a black fungus) that grows on the honeydew. Most people will notice the sooty mold before they notice the scale insects themselves. Aphids can also cause sooty mold development so it is worth taking a close look at affected trees to determine which insect is the culprit.

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Crape myrtle bark scale Gary Brooks Bayer,
CropScience

Unfortunately, control of crape myrtle bark scale is going to be a challenge. Avoid buying and planting infested crape myrtles. Inspect plants closely before purchase. Once crape myrtle bark scale are found in the landscape, careful choices should be made in regards to insecticide use. Crape myrtles bloom continuously throughout the summer and attract a large number of pollinators making careful choice and application of insecticides critical. When using any pesticide, always read and follow all label directions.

The recent detections have been in Iredell and Wake counties. This pest has not yet been confirmed in Onslow. Please keep an eye out for it and if you think you have this pest, please contact the Onslow County Extension Office at 910.455.5873 or take a picture and email it to lisa_rayburn@ncsu.edu.

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.

Tip and Tasks

Vegetable Garden

- Plant cool season crops like radishes, spinach, and lettuce in September. Cool season herbs like dill, parsley, and cilantro can be sown or transplanted.
- Plant garlic and onion until November. Choose short-day varieties of onions like Grano or Texas Supersweet

Landscape

- Fall is the best time of year to transplant trees, shrubs, and perennials. Keep new plantings watered as they get established.
- Plant winter annuals through November.
- As perennial beds go dormant, cut dead stems back to ground level. Collect leaves and debris from healthy plants and compost.
- Seed heads may be left for winter interest or to feed the birds (ex. sedum, echinacea, black-eyed-susan).
- Most ornamental grasses hold up to the winter weather so leave them for interest. If they look messy, cut them back
- Prune shrubs to remove dead, diseased or broken limbs but save significant pruning for the dormant season. Spring blooming shrubs shouldn't be pruned until after they flower.

Lawn

- Where winter annual weeds have been an issue, apply preemergent herbicides in September.
- Don't overseed warm season lawns like centipede and St. Augustine as this can weaken the turf.
- Submit soil samples to the NCDA prior to Thanksgiving to avoid the peak season soil sample fee.

Nematodes in the Home Garden



Root knot nematode damage on basil roots

Nematodes are a common problem in sandy soils. Nematodes are microscopic worms that live in the soil. Many nematodes are beneficial, preying on pests, microorganisms and even other nematodes; but some feed on plant roots, stunting growth. Several species of nematodes are found in coastal North Carolina but the most common and easiest to recognize is the root knot nematode.

Root knot nematodes can be a serious problem for vegetables. Affected plants appear stunted and pale, drop flowers and fruits, wilt and decline even when plants have adequate water and fertilizer. The culprit is most obvious when plants are pulled at the end of the season. Root knot nematode infected plants will have bumpy, knot-like galls on the roots.

Nematodes can be a major issue in the landscape as well. Nematodes are a frequent problem on figs and can also affect landscape plants and turf. Infected plants may have poor growth, low vigor, yellowing leaves, loss of leaves and stem dieback. Nematode damage

in grass results in yellowing and thinning. Plants affected by nematodes usually decline slowly over a period of several years. Since other problems like root rot or too much fertilizer can cause symptoms similar to those produced by nematodes, it is a good idea to conduct a soil sample to look for nematodes. The North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Sciences conducts this service for a nominal fee. Contact your county extension office for details.

There are no chemicals available that will kill nematodes in a home garden or landscape but



Root knot nematodes have stunted the roots of this tomato plant.

there are several steps that can be taken to manage them. In the vegetable garden, one of the easiest options is to grow vegetables that are not susceptible to attack – including crops like sweet corn, asparagus, broccoli, cabbage, kale, collards, and mustard. When available, choose nematode resistant varieties of other crops such as ‘Amelia’ or ‘Celebrity’ tomatoes. Certain cover crops can suppress nematode populations as can frequent tilling in the spring and summer to expose nematodes to sun and air, adding compost to the soil, and soil solarization. For more detailed information, consult <http://www.aces.edu/pubs/docs/A/ANR-0030/ANR-0030.pdf>

Nematodes are much harder to control in the landscape. Often the best option for landscape beds is to remove infected plants and replace them with resistant species. For lawns, provide optimum fertility and irrigation to prevent additional stress to the turf. If necessary, consider replacing turf with a more vigorous selection or a ground cover.

Jams and Jellies



Muscadine grapes, ready to be picked and made in to jam!

Fall is a great time to enjoy fresh fruits. Right now, I'm enjoying figs and muscadine grapes. When I finally get my fill of fresh fruit, I like to preserve some of summer's bounty to enjoy through the fall and winter months. An easy way to get started is by making jam.

Jam is really just crushed fruit that is set in some way. Traditionally jam is made by cooking fruit with sugar until the natural pectin in the fruit causes the jam to gel. Pectin is a naturally occurring substance that helps hold the fruit's cell walls together. As the fruit cooks and concentrates, the natural pectin causes the jam to gently set. The level of pectin varies naturally between different types of fruit. Sour apples, crabapples, and sour blackberries are naturally high in pectin while blueberries, figs and peaches are relatively low in pectin. So

some fruits are better suited to this technique than others. Unripe fruit has higher levels of pectin than ripe fruit does. So sometimes jam made with just fruit and sugar sets and sometimes it doesn't – depending on the fruit used and its natural pectin levels.



Peach jam, processed and ready to enjoy this winter.

For this reason, some people prefer to make jam with a commercial pectin. An example of one such product is Sure-Gel. Adding pectin makes it easier to ensure that the jam will set consistently and the fruit does not need to be cooked for as long a period of time. The drawback to commercial pectin recipes is that they tend to call for a lot of sugar and this can sometimes overshadow the flavor of the fruit itself. Measure all of your ingredients carefully and don't cut down on the sugar in a jam recipe or you risk your jam not setting. If you want to reduce the amount of sugar or use an alternative sweetener, look for pectin that is advertised for "low sugar" or "no sugar" recipes or one that is marketed as a "universal" pectin. These products will come with recipes that allow you to reduce or eliminate the amount of sugar used or use an alternative sweetener.

Cooked jams should only be stored in the refrigerator for a month or so. If you want to store them for longer than that, jams are easy to can in a water bath canner. Look for a good

recipe such as one from the University of Georgia's Center for Home Food Preservation (you can find them online here:

http://nchfp.uga.edu/how/can7_jam_jelly.html)

or by using an up-to-date canning reference like the University of Georgia's book "So Easy to Preserve" or the "Ball Blue Book Guide to Preserving". Once you have followed the recipe and your jam is ready to set, you will pack it in clean, sterile jars and process it in a water bath canner. Remember to follow all of the directions and process for the amount of time listed in the recipe to ensure that your jams are safely preserved.

There is another option for jam making that doesn't require you to cook the fruit at all. In these "no cook" or "freezer" jam recipes you simply clean and crush the fruit and mix it with the prescribed amount of sugar. The pectin is mixed with water and heated. Once it achieves a boil and boils for a minute, it is added to the prepared crushed fruit and you stir. The fruit retains its bright, fresh, just picked flavor and the pectin causes it to set. Pack the jam in freezer containers, allow it to sit out for 24 hours to achieve its gel, then pack away in the freezer. This technique is great if you want to involve kids in the process.

If you have fruit to harvest in your yard, consider putting up a batch or two of jam. If you don't have any fruit of your own, consider visiting your local farmers market. When winter time rolls around, you'll be glad you did. So go grab some fruit and get jamming!

Dividing Perennials

Fall is a great time to divide perennials. Dividing perennials promotes plant growth while allowing you to easily create more plants. Vigorously growing perennials like chrysanthemums and asters may need to be divided every season or two, while slower growing plants may never need division.

Let the plant's growth habit dictate whether you need to divide it. Perennials need to be divided when:

- flowering is reduced or flowers get smaller
- the center growth dies out but there is growth around the edges
- bottom foliage is sparse
- the plant loses vigor
- the plant flops over or requires staking
- it has simply gotten too large for its space in the garden
- you want more plants for your garden or to share with friends.



Perennials should not be divided while they are in flower. Flowering demands a lot of energy from the plant and you do not want to stress a plant by dividing it at the same time. The general rule of thumb is to divide spring-and summer-flowering plants in the fall and fall-flowering plants in the spring.

Prepare ahead of time. Water your plants thoroughly a day or two before you plan to divide them and prepare the area where you plan to put your new divisions. Minimize the amount of time that the plants' roots are out and exposed to the air. If appropriate, prune the stems and foliage down to about 6 inches from the crown to ease division and cut down on moisture loss.

Use a sharp pointed shovel or a spading fork to dig down and lift the plant or section of plant. Dig down all around the plant about 4 to 6 inches away from the base. Slide your tool underneath the root mass and lift the clump out. Shake loose soil off the root ball and remove any dead leaves or stems. Division of the clump will depend on the growth habit of the plant you are dividing. For any plant, remember that you need to maintain a portion of the growing point (crown) and a portion of the root system intact.



Dividing perennials msue.anr.msu.edu

Some plants can easily be divided by teasing the root system apart and separating the crowns by hand. If the clump is more substantial, you may need to use two digging forks placed back to back to pull the crowns apart. In some cases, you may need to divide the clump by cutting with a sharp heavy knife or handsaw. Work your knife between the crowns and cut down through the clump and root ball making sure that each crown has a healthy portion of root attached. Likewise, a sharp pointed shovel can be worked between the crowns and used to cut down through the root clump. Whatever technique or tool you use, make sure each division contains at least 3 to 5 shoots.

Never allow your divisions to dry out. Keep a bucket of water close by to keep them moistened until planting. Prune off any broken or damaged roots prior to planting. Immediately plant your new divisions in the prepared garden bed or in containers filled with a clean, coarse potting mix. Plant divisions at the same depth that they were growing originally. Firm the soil around the roots and water well after planting. New divisions should be watched carefully and protected from drying out until the root system is well established.

Not all plants benefit from division. Butterflyweed, euphorbias, oriental poppies, Japanese anemones, and false indigo are all examples of plants that should not be divided. Likewise, most woody plants don't divide well. Instead, look for a branch that has naturally layered near the base of the plant. Once rooted, the branch can be severed from the parent, dug up and replanted.

For detailed instructions on dividing many perennials, check out the following publication: <http://www.clemson.edu/extension/hgic/plants/landscape/flowers/hgic1150.html>

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Onslow County Farmers' Market



Days and Times

Don't forget that the Onslow County Farmers Market is open. 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

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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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>

Association Meetings

Onslow County Farmers' Market Association Meeting

September 6, 4 pm

Contact: Marie Bowman, 910.459.3463,
marie.s.bowman@gmail.com

Onslow County Master Gardener Volunteer Association Meeting

September 8, 9 am

Contact: Lisa Rayburn, 910.455.5873,
lisa_rayburn@ncsu.edu

Onslow County Beekeepers' Association Meeting

September 13, 7 pm

Contact: Jeff Morton, 910.330.5732 or
jeff_morton@ncsu.edu

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