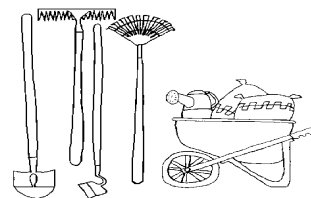


# IN THE GARDEN NOW

HELPING GARDENERS PUT KNOWLEDGE TO WORK



SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 2012

## DO YOU NEED A RAISED BED?

Raised bed gardening is any type of gardening where plants are grown in soil higher than the surrounding ground level. A raised bed may have a structure (like a wooden box) or simply be a mounded pile of soil. Building a raised bed takes a little more time and effort than growing directly in the ground but raised beds have some definite benefits, including:

- **Improved drainage.** In sites with heavy soil or poor drainage, raised beds elevate the root zone of the plant for better growth. Some plants such as blueberries thrive in raised beds.
- **Extending the growing season.** Soil temperatures in raised beds are typically warmer in the spring and fall allowing for earlier spring plantings, later fall plantings and a longer growing season.
- **Distinguishing between pathways and growing areas.** Raised beds make it easier to keep your feet (and those of your kids and pets) out of the growing area. If you are careful not to step in your raised beds, soil structure will improve over time and compaction will be reduced.
- **Accessibility.** Raised beds can make gardening more accessible for people in wheelchairs or with other mobility limitations. Raised beds of 24" are recommended for wheelchair access.
- **Making soil improvements easier.** In soils that need significant additions of organic matter, amending a smaller raised bed is easier and more economical than trying to improve a larger garden area.

Framed beds are best for building accessible raised beds and create a physical barrier to prevent unwanted foot traffic but they are more expensive and require some effort to install. Unframed beds are simple to set up and low maintenance. However, the edges of the unframed bed may erode over time and the lack of a hard side makes them more susceptible to encroaching weeds and wandering feet.

Lisa Rayburn  
Extension Agent,  
Horticulture

### Contact Us:

NCCE-Onslow County  
4024 Richlands Hwy.  
Jacksonville, NC  
28540

(910) 455-5873  
(910) 455-0977 Fax  
<http://onslow.ces.ncsu.edu>

North Carolina State University and North Carolina A&T State University commit themselves to positive action to secure equal opportunity regardless of race, color, creed, national origin, religion, sex, age, veteran status or disability. In addition, the two Universities welcome all persons without regard to sexual orientation. North Carolina State University, North Carolina A&T State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and local governments cooperating.

**NC** State University  
A&T State University  
**COOPERATIVE  
EXTENSION**

Empowering People • Providing Solutions

## GOLD MEDAL WINNERS

Charlotte Glen – Horticulture Agent, Pender County



*Cherry Dazzle®*, a new crape myrtle shrub, will bring record setting color to your summer landscape.

Extreme heat, erratic rainfall, and prolific pests turn southern landscapes into Olympic arenas each summer, where the goal for plants from all over the world is simply to survive. Any plant that can make it through to August still looking decent is definitely tough. Those that look great undeniably deserve a gold medal. If late summer finds your yard looking a little worse for the wear, add some of these landscape champions and expect years of stellar performances.

### Above and Beyond

Plants that thrive on heat and humidity, waiting until the dog days of summer to put their best foot forward, definitely go above and beyond the call of duty. Among well known landscape plants crape myrtles certainly fall into this category, but if all you picture are trees when you think crape myrtle, get ready to expand your mind. The new **Cherry Dazzle® crape myrtle** is a true shrub, forming tight mounds that grow 3'-4' tall and wide and are covered in intense red flowers throughout July and August. Dark green, disease free leaves are the perfect foil to these bright blossoms and provide interest in the fall by turning red themselves. Just as tough as any crape myrtle tree, plant this drought tolerant, deer resistant shrub any sunny place you need hot summer color.

### Wax Mallow

For extreme drought tolerance coupled with profuse flower production, you can't beat **wax mallow**, *Malvaviscus drummondii*. This shrubby perennial's upward facing, bright red flowers never fully open, yet attract flocks of hummingbirds and butterflies. Plants grow 4' to 5' tall and wide and bloom from June through October. Though more compact and heavier flowering in full sun, wax mallow also does surprisingly well in part shade. Almost never



bothered by deer, wax mallow thrives in sandy soil and looks great with other drought tolerant standbys like 'New Gold' lantana and the silver leaved 'Powis Castle' Artemisia.

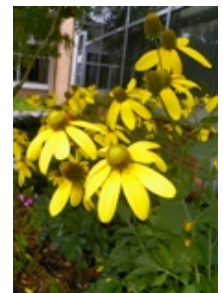
If you are looking for a perennial that will soar to new heights, seek out **'Orange Peel' Cestrum**. Growing 6'-8' tall and 3'-4' wide, this vertically liberated perennial looks like a butterfly bush on steroids. Clusters of glowing, golden orange blossoms top every stem and are sweetly fragrant, especially in the evening. A great plant for butterflies, 'Orange Peel' Cestrum thrives in full sun or part shade, grows in clay or sand, and is almost never bothered by deer. Though this plant grows as a shrub in milder climates, in our area it is best treated as a perennial and cut back to ground level each winter.

### The Home Team

You don't have to look to foreign lands to find exceptional plants for summer color. Quite a few are native to our roadsides and woodland edges. One that amazes me each year is the coastal species of **Joe Pye weed**, *Eupatorium dubium*, which bursts into blossom in the heat of August. Dome shaped clusters of lavender pink flowers are produced atop 4'-5' tall stems and are a magnet for butterflies. Coastal Joe Pye Weed thrives in sunny areas with moist soil and will even tolerate occasional flooding. The recent introduction of the variety 'Little Joe' has made this plant more readily available from local garden centers.

### *Rudbeckia 'Herbstonne'*

**Cutleaf coneflower**, *Rudbeckia laciniata*, is a native perennial that really brings home the gold, in the form of golden yellow flowers. This black-eyed Susan relative grows 5'-6' tall and blooms prolifically in sun or part shade. Plants growing in full sun stand up straight and tall, while those in the shade tend to be a little floppy, in a charming rather than messy way. The selection 'Herbstonne' is unsurpassed, producing extra large blossoms all summer long. This tough perennial grows well in clay or sandy soils, but benefits from extra water in very sandy sites.



**Panic grass**, *Panicum virgatum*, is another hometown hero at peak performance in late summer. Several selections of this clump forming perennial grass are available, including ‘Cloud Nine’, a personal favorite that grow 6’ to 8’ tall, ‘Northwind’, a narrowly upright variety that reaches 5’ in height, and ‘Prairie Fire’, one of the smallest, growing only 3’-4’ tall with ruby red leaves. Like most ornamental grasses, panic grass does best in full sun, is deer resistant, and is not fussy about soil type.

.....

## 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.

Many perennial plants benefit from regular division but don’t divide on a time schedule, 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 or it has simply gotten too large for its space in the garden. Of course, even if your plant is growing and blooming well, you may choose to divide it to create 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-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.

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, many 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.

.....

## TIPS AND TASKS

Cooler temperatures make gardening and landscape maintenance more enjoyable in the fall. There are lots of important tasks to do this time of year that will make your garden neat and tidy over the winter and get your garden off to a healthier start next season

### In the Vegetable Garden

Cool season crops like collards, cauliflower, broccoli, turnips, radish, kale, kohlrabi, and rutabagas can be planted in late August or early September. Later in September, you can still have time for onions, radishes and second plantings of short season hardy crops like leaf lettuce and spinach.

Cabbage, kale, collards, Swiss chard and loose leaf lettuce can be set out through mid-October. Seeds of radish, spinach, turnip and salad greens can also be sown. Plant garlic cloves and onion sets until November. Choose short-day varieties of onions like Grano or Texas supersweet.

Cool season herbs like dill, parsley and cilantro can be direct sown or set out as transplants and will stay green into winter.

Sample the soil to determine fertilizer needs for next growing season. In our area, gardeners should test the soil every 2-3 years.

### In the Perennial Bed

Fall is the best time of year to plant and transplant most trees, shrubs and perennials. It is also a great time to divide and replant perennials. Remember to keep new plantings well watered during their first several weeks as they get established.

As perennial plants go dormant, cut dry dead stems back to ground level. Seed heads may be left for winter interest or to feed the birds (sedum, echinaceae, black eyed susan).

You can prune shrubs to remove dead, diseases or broken limbs but save significant pruning for the dormant season (about February). Spring blooming shrubs shouldn't be pruned until after they flower, or you will lose next spring's blooms.

### In the Lawn

Warm season grasses do not grow during late fall and don't require any nitrogen fertilizer before spring. Fertilizing at this time will encourage weed growth and disease problems like large patch and winterkill.

If annual bluegrass has been a problem in your lawn, apply an appropriate preemergent herbicide in late August or early September.

## SWEET SEPTEMBER TREAT: MUSCADINE GRAPES

September is prime season for muscadine grapes. These native grapes are a healthy treat with their intense fragrance, sweet flavor and high levels of antioxidants. Wild muscadines are common throughout the region but many varieties have been introduced with improved eating and winemaking characteristics. These grapes can range in color from deep purple to red to bronze. The fruit are excellent eaten fresh or made into juice, jam, jelly, pie or wine.

If you want to grow grapes in Onslow County, muscadines perform much better than table, wine or concord grapes. These sturdy vines grow vigorously and are relatively pest and disease-free while other types of grapes rarely live for more than a few years in our area. To learn more about growing muscadines in your garden, check out the NCSU publication [Muscadine Grapes in the Home Garden](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/hil/hil-8203.html) available at the office or online at <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/hil/hil-8203.html>.

If you don't want to grow your own, there are several vendors at the Onslow County Farmers Market that sell muscadine grapes. Onslow County also has a pick-your-own muscadine vineyard:

### Botticelli Vineyards

Tim Davis  
910.346.3131  
1125 Canady Road  
Jacksonville, NC 28540

To learn more about all things muscadine, check out the **2012 North Carolina Muscadine Festival** which will be held September 28 in Kenansville. The festival even includes a muscadine cooking contest. For more information, check out the website at <http://www.muscadineharvestfestival.com>.

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).



---

## UPCOMING CLASSES

**Growing and Using Culinary Herbs**  
Main Base Library aboard Camp Lejeune  
September 14 at 1 pm

**Raising Backyard Chickens**  
Swansboro Public Library  
September 22 at 10 am

Richlands Public Library  
September 29 at 1 pm

**Backyard Beekeeping**  
Jacksonville Public Library  
September 15 at 10 am

Snead's Ferry Public Library  
September 29 at 10 am

---

*Recommendations for the use of chemicals are included in this publication as a convenience to the reader. The use of brand names and any mention or listing of commercial products or services in this publication does not imply endorsement by the North Carolina Cooperative Extension nor discrimination against similar products or services not mentioned. Individuals who use chemicals are responsible for ensuring that the intended use complies with current regulations and conforms to the product label. Be sure to obtain current information about usage and examine a current product label before applying any chemical. For assistance, contact an agent of the North Carolina Cooperative Extension in your county.*

*The use of brand names in this publication does not imply endorsement of the products or services named or criticism of similar ones not mentioned*

---

## 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 and 5 pm, or visit us online

## The Onslow County Fair is Coming to Town

The Onslow County Fair will be here October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012, through Saturday October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2012. Crafts, sewing items, baked goods, home canned goods are all needed to be judged. Young and old can enter. Entries to be judged can be entered on October 1<sup>st</sup> from 8:00 am until 4:30 pm. Some flowers entries may be entered the next morning.

Fair books are available at all branches of the county's public library or at the Onslow County Extension Office. All entries into the fair for judging have to have been completed within the last year and all participants with items to be entered have to be a resident of Onslow County. A complete listing of all the rules can be found in the fair book. There's a category for everyone from agricultural exhibits to arts and crafts, to canning and baked goods.

Please join in the fun by entering an item or items into the fair. The money awards are not large but the ribbons are special.

Tuesday, October 2<sup>nd</sup>, a talent show will be held with youth from all parts of the county. Talent goes on parade at 7:00 pm. We need everyone to get involved with the fair to show those that attend all the talent we have in our county.

The price to get in the fair this year will be \$5.00. Children under the age of three get in free as well as seniors age 65 and older get in free. Ride tickets will be sold separately on the midway. The fair opens on October 1<sup>st</sup>, at 6:00 pm. Tuesday, October 2<sup>nd</sup>, through Friday October 5<sup>th</sup>, at 4:00 pm and Saturday, October 6<sup>th</sup>, at 12 noon. If you have any questions regarding the entries to the fair or a fair booth, please call us at 455-5873.

NORTH CAROLINACOOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE  
NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY  
ONSLow COUNTY CENTER  
4024 RICHLANDS HIGHWAY  
JACKSONVILLE, NC 28540  
\*\*\*\*\*  
NON PROFIT ORGANIZATION