

THE GARDEN PATH OCTOBER 2012

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PLANT OF THE MONTH FOR OCTOBER

By Marty Finkel,
Kerr Lake Extension Master Gardener



Arkansas Amsonia (*Amsonia hubrichtii*)
This plant may have been profiled in this column in the past, but it is so glorious that it deserves the spotlight for October. In this case, it's the foliage that makes this amsonia noteworthy instead of its flowers. Its leaves change to a golden, glowing gold that is outstanding, and when sited against green, dark green, blue, or purple foliage, it looks like a molten ball of sunshine. Try it with purple smoke tree, hollies, or one of the blue needled evergreens. The foliage is feathery, which makes a wonderful texture contrast to these trees/shrubs. It can reach 3' in height by about 3' or more in width, so it fits right in with fall-blooming asters, native sunflowers, chrysanthemums, etc. In the spring, it has light blue, star-shaped flowers and does well in well-drained, ordinary garden soil. With flowers, disease and insect resistance, and fall color, who could resist it? Well, the deer do.

GARDEN TO DO – OCTOBER

By Carl Shafer,
Kerr Lake Extension Master Gardener

For the time period 1971-2000, the average first frost date (32 F temperature) for Henderson was Oct 20 with a standard deviation of 11 days. That means that the first frost will be between

Oct 9 and Oct 31 about 70% of the time. About 10% of the time (1 out of 10 years) it will be before Oct 6 and about 10% of the time after Nov 3. The average date has probably not changed from that time period. Note that low areas that collect cold air will often have frost earlier, and in town, sheltered areas, and hillsides that allow cold air to drain away may have frost later in the fall.

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. See the Aug 2012 Issue for web links with more details on season extenders. If you want to try extending hardy vegetable production into the winter season, see: <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/chatham/ag/SustAg/ATTRAseasonext.pdf>. Note that little or no growth is expected when daylight is 10 hours or less. This occurs between about Nov 24 and Jan 17. For comparison the shortest day is 9 hr 41 min around Dec 21, equal day and night around Mar 17 and Sept 25, and the longest is 14 hr 38 min around June 19. These times and dates are for Henderson.

Continue to monitor your fall vegetables for insects. Watch for aphids on crucifer (mustard family) crops. Use insecticidal soap for control. For caterpillars, see Aug 2012 Issue. For other insect or disease problems check the NC Chemical Manual or contact your local extension agent.

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. If considering a cover crop, see the Aug 2012 Issue for web links in the NCOrganic-Production section. A relatively new cover crop is forage radish. This is the 'Daikon' or 'Japanese' radish. To learn about this crop do a web search for: Fact Sheet 824, Maryland Cooperative Extension.

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. The freezing and thawing in winter helps work the lime into the soil in areas that are not cultivated.

Use a bagging lawn mower to chop and collect leaves. The chopped leaves can be used for mulch, tilled into the garden, or composted.

You can continue planting radishes, spinach, leaf lettuce, and Asian greens (includes mustards). Garlic can be planted through Nov. A new planting guide for central North Carolina is available. It can be found on the internet by doing a search for: AG-756 NC Cooperative Extension. Using a color printer to make a copy gives you charts that are easier to follow than black and white copies.

Be sure to clean up around fruit trees at the end of the season. A new home orchard management fact sheet is available. It can be found by doing a web search for: NC Plant Disease Fact Sheets-Disease and Insect Management in the Home Orchard. Check this out because there are some procedures that need to be performed in the fall and during the dormant season. It will also allow you to have the needed products in the spring.

Note that websites for almost any problem, product, or topic can be found by doing a web search. Also, when you find an interesting/useful site, bookmark it so that you do not need to search for it again.

CHECKLIST FOR OCTOBER

By Mary Jane Bosworth,
Kerr Lake Extension Master Gardener

The love of gardening is a seed once sown that never dies. Gertrude Jekyll

- ✓ Divide and replant overgrown perennials like hostas, daylilies and coneflowers. Plant spring flowering bulbs. To discourage moles, squirrels and deer, either wrap the bulbs in chickenwire or scatter cayenne pepper around and over them.
- ✓ Dahlia, canna, caladium, gladiolus, tuberous begonia and ginger lily do not usually overwinter well and need to be dug up. Shake dirt off roots after soil dries and then cut off dried stems. Place tuber and roots in sawdust or peat moss and store in a basement or area where they can't freeze.
- ✓ Now is the time to plant evergreen trees, bushes and shrubs. You can transplant them as well.
- ✓ Get your soil tested. Labs are not busy at this time of year.
- ✓ Clean debris out of your garden to prevent next year's insect and disease problems.
- ✓ Compost those leaves as you collect them. Add some soil to the leaves to get them to compost quicker.
- ✓ Make hardwood cuttings of your favorite flowering shrubs. Cut mature wood 6" to 8" long, dip basal ends in a rooting hormone and set them either in amended soil or in pots with about 2" of the cutting showing. Keep cuttings moist until rooted.
- ✓ Bring houseplants indoors when temperatures dip below 50 degrees F. Give them a good bath in soapy water or spray with insecticidal soap before bringing them indoors.

INTERESTING TID-BITS FOR OCTOBER

By Marty Finkel,
Kerr Lake Extension Master Gardener

Rose rosette disease is in Raleigh news with large, climbing rose bushes on 3 prominent arbors in the Raleigh Municipal Rose Garden being removed in August. Only 4 bushes in the 6.5-acre rose garden have been diagnosed, but the disease can spread. Also, all the rose bushes in the center of the roundabout at the NCSU Bell Tower were removed in August because a few infected bushes were seen on the campus and were replaced by perennials. Wayne Schindler of the city parks and recreation department said the disease can persist in a plant for 6 to 8 years before the plant dies but during that time can affect other bushes. Mike Munster, a plant pathologist at NCSU, said that the disease has been around for awhile but has become an increasing problem over the past several years. He says rose rosette shows these symptoms:

- ✓ Red leaves are narrower than normal, and they should have turned green.
- ✓ Thorns are unusually profuse in number and are soft and pliable instead of stiff.
- ✓ Leaves are often stunted and petals discolored.
- ✓ Presence of “witches broom” clusters of small branches.

The disease is caused by a virus carried by a windborne, microscopic mite, and some growers have reported symptoms on plants within 4 weeks after they were planted downwind from infected plants. Highly susceptible roses are the wild multiflora and some kinds of cultivated ones, including Knockout roses. Diseased plants should be uprooted and burned or bagged for the landfill. From the August 25 News and Observer article, “Raleigh parks department roots out infected rosebushes.”

HERB OF THE MONTH, OCTOBER

By Edna Lovelace Gaston,
Kerr Lake Extension Master Gardener



Aloysia triphylla – Lemon Verbena

Height: 10 - 15 ft. zones 9 or 10, 5' in container

Flowers: tiny white to pale lavender, late summer to early fall (mine are white and have just started blooming)

Propagation: seeds, cuttings

Growing conditions: being tender in this area, use a good potting soil in a container. Grow in full sun.

Cultivation: to prevent the plant from becoming leggy, pinch tips but this can reduce the number of blooms. It likes a moist soil, but as with most herbs, it cannot tolerate soggy soil. Excellent air circulation helps the plant to thrive. It does need frequent feeding to ensure a robust plant.

Uses: The leaves have a wonderful lemon scent. As such it is wonderful in potpourri or a tussie mussie and flower arrangements. In commercial uses, its oil can be found in perfumes and occasionally a lemon verbena tea can be found in stores. For a formal dinner, place a few leaves in a finger bowl. Leaves can be used a flavoring when cooking but always use caution whenever adding any herb.

General Information: this herb is mentioned in the classic book and movie *Gone With the Wind* as one that was favored by Ellen Robillard O'Hara, mother of Scarlett. In a painting by Charles Wilson Peale, there is a sprig of lemon verbena in her dress.

One of the many wonderful lemon scented plants, Lemon Verbena is one of my favorites. It

makes a striking focal point in a garden. Since it is tender in this area, it does well in a pot, especially a colorful one since the flowers are not very showy.

To prepare for winter, take inside as temperatures get lower. About February, cut about a third of the foliage and repot. These cuttings can be rooted. Extra leaves can be dried for many uses and enjoyment.

Try to get one of these wonderful plants. In the heat of summer, just brush your hand across the leaves and inhale – you can't help but feel refreshed. So put the pot where you can enjoy it frequently!

Additional Information:

Herbs Their Culture and Uses. Rosetta E. Clarkson. The Macmillan Company, New York, NY, 1942.

The Herb Book. John Lust. Bantam Books, New York, NY, 1974.

Rodale's Illustrated Encyclopedia of Herbs. Claire Kowalchik and William H. Hylton, Editors. Rodale Press, Emmaus, PA, 1987.

Editor: Fern Boyd,
Kerr Lake Extension Master Gardener
Extension Agent: Paul McKenzie
305 Young St., Henderson, NC 27536
252-438-8188 or 252-257-3640
paul_mckenzie@ncsu.edu,
<http://vance.ces.ncsu.edu>,
<http://warren.ces.ncsu.edu>

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Pictures courtesy of Edna Gaston and JC Raulston Arboretum