

IN THE GARDEN NOW

HELPING GARDENERS PUT KNOWLEDGE TO WORK



March / April 2014

Assessing Winter's Damage

After several mild winters, this winter's cold and sometimes snowy weather has been a hard one for gardens. Let's talk a little bit about the sort of damage you may find in your yard this spring:

Some portions of the county received damaging ice in February. Trees with broken limbs can be pruned now to create clean cuts that will heal well. If the tree has lost more than 50% of its limbs or the main trunk was damaged, it is unlikely to recover and should be removed. Most broadleaved evergreen shrubs (camellias, azaleas, hollies) and deciduous shrubs (spirea, butterfly bush, Knockout roses) damaged by ice can be severely pruned and recover. Spring blooming shrubs cut back now will not bloom this year. However, conifers like juniper, cedars and arborvitae will not tolerate heavy pruning.

Other plants may experience dieback from the cold weather. If you suspect that cold has killed portions of your plant, wait until new growth starts in the spring to evaluate the damage. Some plants will experience a delay in growth and development so wait until late spring or early summer to prune or remove cold damaged plants. Flower buds are more susceptible to cold damage than leaf buds so flowering may be reduced in some plants.

Many evergreens will change color during extended periods of cold temperatures – typically developing a bronze or purple hue. These trees and shrubs will return to their normal color when temperatures warm up.

To learn more about cold damage and how to prevent it in future winters:
http://www.clemson.edu/extension/hgic/pests/plant_problems/hgic2350.html

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Extension Master Gardener Volunteer

Recognizing the Master Gardener Volunteers

I would like to take a moment to recognize the Master Gardener Volunteers who work so hard to help me answer the gardening questions that we receive in Onslow County. These volunteers support a variety of projects including manning the Plant Clinic and Ask-A-Master Gardener booths at community events, providing educational classes to the public, and working to plant and grow the Discovery Gardens of Onslow.

In 2013, the Onslow County Master Gardener Volunteers provided over 4872 hours of service to our community. Our group contains many wonderful volunteers and each year I struggle to select one outstanding member to recognize as Master Gardener Volunteer of the Year. In 2013, I was unable to select just one, so I selected two Master Gardener Volunteers of the Year.

This year Amy Borsay and Rebecca Ingram shared this honor. Amy Borsay was instrumental in leading the effort to revise, update and expand our FAQ booklet – “What’s Hot on the Hotline?”; while Rebecca Ingram was consistently involved in virtually every event, committee or booth from manning the Plant Clinic, to Discovery Garden workdays, to putting together the County Fair Booth.

If you see either of these ladies in the Plant Clinic, garden or at classes this year, please thank them for their hard work and efforts on the behalf of Onslow County’s gardeners. Thank you ladies!

Keep a Garden Journal

— Nicole Sanchez, Commercial Horticulture,
Area Specialized Agent

A garden journal is an extremely useful garden tool. Winter is the perfect time to set up this tool to aid you all year.

- Use your garden journal to track orders, record planting dates, and note varieties. Tape packing slips or empty seed packets right onto the page, or tuck invoices into a folder pocket. Knowing exactly how much you planted comes in handy later.
- A journal is also useful for tracking pests. If there is a pest emergence pattern, (such as the last two weeks in June or after a heavy rain), you know what to look for and when to look for it as you monitor your garden. You may also find cultivar differences not listed in catalogs. Once I planted three green bean varieties. Mexican bean beetles ate two varieties but left the third variety alone. My journal told me which ones to plant, and avoid, the following year.
- Weather patterns; when you pruned, fertilized, divided perennials; and planting rotations, include them all. Start your journal with your wish list of seeds and plants for spring, and develop a habit of making notes in it when gardening activity picks up.



Calibrating Your Spreader

As summer rolls around, some homeowners will be applying fertilizers and pesticides to their lawns and gardens. It is important to realize that each of these products are labeled to be applied at a certain rate per unit area. To ensure that you are applying the right amount of product, you will need to calibrate your spreader regularly.

One convenient way to calibrate your spreader is the “Sweep and Weigh” method. Push the spreader over a 10-ft-by-10-ft tarp, then collect and weigh the material from the tarp. The weight of collected material is multiplied by 10 to find the rate that would be applied over 1,000 square feet

Alternatively, you could “Weigh Before and After”. For this technique, measure the labeled rate per 1,000 square feet, then spread the material over a 1,000-square-foot course.

Example: A spreader that has an effective swath of 8 feet will need to travel a distance of 125 feet to cover 1,000 square feet ($1,000 / 8 = 125$). After the course has been traveled, the remaining material is measured and subtracted from the beginning weight to get the rate applied. Since you cannot collect the product dispensed using this technique, do not use this method repeatedly over the same area.

Whichever method you choose, calibrating your spreader will ensure that you are applying products at the appropriate rate for efficacy as well as to protect your plants and the environment.



Showstopper Plant *Chinese Pistache*

— John Vining, County Extension Director, Polk County

Tough as nails, drought tolerant, and pest free are all terms used to describe Chinese pistache, *Pistacia chinensis*. This beautiful medium-sized tree is perfect for home landscapes and urban environments in USDA hardiness zones 6 to 9. Though awkward and somewhat unruly when young, Chinese pistache develops into an outstanding specimen tree with an umbrella shaped crown.

At maturity, this tree reaches a height of 40 feet and a spread of 25 to 35 feet. Chinese pistache has finely divided, lustrous green foliage during the summer months and terrific fiery orange and red fall color. This plant will flourish in nearly every soil type as long as it is well drained and does best in full sun. Transplant one into your landscape—you'll be glad you did.

Tips and Tasks

Spring blooming bulbs should be fertilized just as the new growth emerges. If your bulbs have already flowered, wait until November to fertilize with a complete fertilizer such as 10-10-10. Summer flowering bulbs can be fertilized when the shoots emerge.

Fertilize trees and shrubs before active growth begins (before mid-March). Fertilize based on your soil test for best results. For more information about fertilizing trees and shrubs, stop by the office and pick up a copy of “A Gardener’s Guide to Fertilizing Trees and Shrubs”. Fertilize perennials and annuals in April. Do not fertilize warm season grasses yet. Wait until May or June for best results.

If necessary, continue application of preemergent herbicides to centipede and St Augustine lawns through early March. Avoid applications of once turf starts to green up. Bring weed samples to the plant clinic for specific herbicide recommendations. While you are here, request a lawn maintenance calendar for your turf type.

March is an excellent time to relocate plants or transplant container grown plants. Fall blooming perennials can be divided now. (Divide spring blooming perennials in the fall.) Keep an eye on new plants and replanted divisions through the spring and summer and provide adequate water to make sure they establish well.

Many cool season spring vegetable crops can be planted now. Early March is a good time to transplant broccoli, cauliflower and cabbage plants. Asparagus beds should be established by the end of March. Kohlrabi, lettuce, mustard, radish, turnips, and spinach can be started from seed through the beginning of April. Potatoes can be planted until the beginning of May.

Remember to wait until after the last frost to plant warm season crops like tomatoes, cucumbers, squash and peppers. The last frost in Onslow County is usually the second or third week in April. However, this is just an average – in any given year the last frost may be earlier or later. Plan to plant tender crops after April 20 and be prepared to protect these crops from a late frost if necessary.

Heat-loving crops like okra, eggplant, sweet potato and watermelons will do better if you wait an extra couple of weeks for the soil and air temperatures to warm.

Once you get done eating peas straight out of their pods in the garden, consider making this tasty side dish. This recipe was featured on ABC’s “The Chew”. Carrots, shallots (or substitute a mild onion), peas and tarragon can all be grown here.

Carla Hall’s Peas and Carrots

Ingredients

2 tablespoons unsalted butter
1 tablespoon olive oil
7 medium carrots, peeled and finely diced (about 3 cups)
1 large shallot, minced (about 1/2 cup)
1/4 cup water
1 pound fresh peas, hulled and blanched in salted water (about 3 cups)
1 tablespoon fresh tarragon, chopped
1 teaspoon lemon zest
Salt and pepper to taste

How-To

1. Heat butter and oil in a large frying pan over medium heat.
2. Once butter foams, add carrots and shallots, and season with salt and freshly ground black pepper. Cook, stirring occasionally, until shallots are translucent and soft, about 10 minutes. Add water and continue to cook until liquid evaporates and carrots are tender, about 5 to 6 minutes.
3. Add peas and cook until heated through, about 3 minutes. Remove from heat, stir in tarragon and lemon zest, season with salt and freshly ground pepper.

Garnish with cooked peas tossed in lemon zest, lemon oil and tarragon.

Upcoming Classes and Events

Growing Fruit in Onslow County

8 March, 10-12 pm

We will discuss which fruit grow well in our area, site selection, plant establishment and management.

Extension office, 4024 Richlands Highway

Spring Vegetable Garden

11 March, 5:30-7:30 pm

Learn what and when to plant for a productive spring vegetable garden.

Extension office, 4024 Richlands Highway

Growing and Using Culinary Herbs

15 March, 9-11 am

We will discuss how to grow, preserve and use common culinary herbs.

Parks and Recreation, 100 Recreation Lane,
Jacksonville

Call 938.5312 to register

Introduction to Canning

25 March, 5:30-7:30 pm

Our Family and Consumer Sciences agent will discuss the basics of canning as a preservation technique including water bath and pressure canning.

Extension Office, 4024 Richlands Highway

Container Vegetable Gardening

29 March, 10-12 pm

Don't have room or good soil for a garden? Learn how to grow productive plants in containers and small spaces.

Extension office, 4024 Richlands Highway

Growing Great Tomatoes

15 April, 5:30-7:30 pm

We'll discuss what tomatoes to grow and how best to prepare your garden for a successful tomato crop this summer.

Extension office, 4024 Richlands Highway

Growing and Using Culinary Herbs

26 April, 10-12 pm

We will discuss how to grow, preserve and use common culinary herbs.

Extension office, 4024 Richlands Highway

Introduction to Backyard Chickens

29 April, 5:30-7:30 pm

Are you interested in a backyard flock? If so, join us to discuss breed selection, chick raising, housing and feeding.

Extension office, 4024 Richlands Highway

Rain Barrel Sale

12 April, 8:30-1:30 pm

Take advantage of the water nature gives us. Using a rain barrel or cistern to collect rainwater can lower your water bill, be good for your plants, and also protect the environment by reducing runoff from your property.

The NC Cooperative Extension – Onslow County rain barrels are made using food-grade barrels from Mt. Olive Pickle Co., so they also help you “reduce, reuse, recycle”. The completed rain barrels come with a brass faucet, an overflow pipe, and a screened water inlet. The fee per rain barrel will be \$50.

The rain barrels, whose sale serves as a fundraiser for some of our Extension programs, are very popular. Please stop by the Onslow Cooperative Extension office to reserve your rain barrel. Your reservation can also be made by mailing the bottom of this form, along with the appropriate fee, to the address indicated below. Please call (910) 455-5873 if you have any questions. Barrels will be available for pick-up beginning Saturday, April 12th. Sales are first-come, first served and will continue until the supply is sold.

Beekeeping Short Course

March 15 and 29

Are you interested in beekeeping? Do you want to learn more? If so, the Onslow County Beekeepers are offering a spring Beekeeping Short Course. This two day class includes comprehensive training and an end of course test. Contact the Onslow County Beekeepers for more information and to register: Eric Talley, President, at 910.389.7709. Cost is \$30.

2013 Agricultural Awards Banquet

The annual Onslow County Agricultural Awards Banquet was held on February 18th at the Onslow County Multipurpose Complex. Recognition was given to the various groups of volunteers, on-farm cooperators, and yield contest entrant that give of themselves to support and expand the work of the NC Cooperative Extension here in Onslow County.

Special recognition was given to **Master Gardener Tom Nicoll** for 2000+ hours of service.

Amy Borsay and Rebecca Ingram were both named the **2013 Master Gardener Volunteer of the Year** for their devotion to increasing the knowledge level of other master gardeners and the public.

Several local famers received awards for Crop Production Contests:

Wheat Yield Champion: George Pierce planted Coker 9978 with 90.82 bushels per acre. The runner-up was **Jack Pierce** who also planted Coker 9978 and produced a yield of 56.25 bushels per acre.

Corn Yield Champion: Timothy Huffman planted AgVenture RL 9583 and produced a yield of 222.5 bushels per acre. The runner-up planted Seed Consultants 11HR63 and produced a yield of 217.67 bushels per acre; the runner up was **Andy Weston**.

The Onslow County Agricultural Hall of Fame Award was begun in 1984. The nominees are selected and voted upon by past recipients of the Master Farmer Award or the James R. Strickland Service to Agriculture Award.

In order to be eligible for the Service to Agriculture Award, the nominee should contribute to the promotion or preservation of the agricultural industry in Onslow County. This year's inductee was: **Mr. Jerome Shaw, for Service to Agriculture.**



2013 4-H Achievement/Leaders Banquet



ALOHA! The Onslow County 4-H Program celebrated the annual 4-H Achievement/Leaders Banquet all in one. The event was held on January 23, 2014 at 10:00am, at the Onslow County Multipurpose Complex. The celebration was centered on a Luau theme, with lots of food, games, and hula dancing. Many 4-H Leaders, Volunteers, and 4-H Members were awarded certificates, for their years of service. 4-H members also received awards and scholarship monies, for project record books and achievement exhibits.

Special awards were given to, the 4-H Most Represented Senior and Junior, and to the 4-H Volunteer Leader of the Year. The awards went to: Taylor Dominessy – Most Represented Senior and Alyssa McCoy – Most Represented Junior, both of these young ladies are from, the Carolina Riders 4-H Club. 4-H Leader of the Year went to Leona Walton and Shelia Gore of Hunters Creek ASA, 4-H Club. Congratulations to all the winners!

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