

## THE GARDEN PATH

SEPTEMBER 2014

A publication of Kerr Lake Extension  
Master Gardener Volunteers



### PLANT OF THE MONTH - SEPTEMBER

By Marty Finkel

Mexican Giant Cigar Plant (*Cuphea micropetala*)



What can be more colorful in the fall garden than this firecracker of a plant that attracts butterflies and hummingbirds? Add it to your list of pollinator attracting plants if you don't already grow it. It makes a 3' tall by 3' wide clump that is topped with small tubular flowers that line the upper portion of each stem. It blooms from early fall to frost. The flowers also remind one of the Halloween favorite, candy corn, because the flowers open bright yellow but as they age, the base turns orange-red before the entire flower takes on that color. Grow it in full sun in well-drained soil. It is slow to return in the spring, so it may be wise to mark its place in the garden before you start adding new plants.

### CHECKLIST FOR SEPTEMBER

By Mary Jane Bosworth

- ✓ Plant pansies for winter color.
- ✓ Cut back impatiens to promote new growth.
- ✓ Collect seeds from zinnias, marigolds, melopodiums and other annuals.
- ✓ Now is the time to order bulbs for the spring so they can be planted in October and November.
- ✓ Fertilize lawns around mid-September, if you have fescue. The 3 fescue fertilizing holidays are Labor Day, Thanksgiving and Valentine's Day.

- ✓ Consider planting trees that will give you fall color. These include Ginkgo trees, red maple, southern sugar maple, Japanese maple and sourwood.
- ✓ Planting sasanqua camellias add to the color in autumn.
- ✓ Compost is nature's way of giving back to the garden. Save grass clippings and non-disease plant refuse for use in the spring.
- ✓ Control winter weeds by applying a pre-emergent herbicide to gardens.
- ✓ Overseed warm season grasses with rye grass in late September for that green look all year long.

### GARDEN TO DO – SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER

By Carl Shafer

For September:

Remember early September is the recommended time to treat for peach tree bores. See the August 2014 issue for details.

Prune out fire blight killed wood from apples, pears, and pyracantha if you have not already done so. Be sure to check crab apples and Bradford pears also. If you wait until winter it will be more difficult to determine the dead wood.

Continue to remove spent crops and plant cool weather fall crops, cover crops or cover the bare ground with a layer of mulch that can be tilled under in the spring. It is too late for beans, cucumbers, and squash unless you use robust frost protection (ie Row covers with tunnels or hoop houses.). You can try cool weather cole plants, but they should have been set out in late July or August. Cool weather seeded crops include: kale, lettuce, mustard, onions, radishes, spinach, and turnips. See the August 2014 issue for more details and web links.

Carefully monitor your fall crops for insects. See the NC Agricultural Chemicals Manual for recommended treatments or contact your local extension agent. Always follow label instructions and observe minimum days to harvest waiting period.

In the later part of the month, clip new blossoms off tomatoes, peppers, and eggplants so that the last fruits will mature quicker.

Late fall or early winter is the best time to plant trees and shrubs. If you are planning to start or expand tree and nut plantings, you should check local plant nurseries and/or online/mail order sources to have plants when needed. Small fruits are usually planted in the spring.

#### For October

For the time period 1971-2000, the average first frost date (32° F or less) 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 first frost date for 1981-2010 is Oct 22 and the first freeze date (28° F or less) is Nov 4. I have not found SDs for these dates but I assume they are not much different from the earlier values. 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 2013 Issue for web links with more details on season extenders including extending into the winter season. Note that little or no growth is expected when daylight is 10 hours or less. This occurs between about Nov 24 and Jan 17. Also the average low low temperature of 24°F occurs from about January 4 thru January 27 and the average low high temperature of 48°F from about January 2 thru January 16. Combining these indicates that little growth can be expected during December and January. To get growth in this period it will be necessary to provide supplemental heat and light. 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, dates and temperatures are for Henderson.

Continue to monitor your fall vegetables for insects. See Sept recommendations above.

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 2014 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. Remember that there is now a fee charged for soil tests submitted from December through March. Tests submitted from April through November will continue to be free. Plan accordingly!

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.

Be sure to clean up around fruit trees at the end of the season.

I recommend that everyone bookmark the following site which has a listing with web links to all NC Coop. Ext. Lawn and Garden Publications.

[www.ces.ncsu.edu/lawn-and-garden-publications/](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/lawn-and-garden-publications/)

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

A new book you may find interesting is: Attracting beneficial bugs to your garden: a natural approach to pest control by Jessica Walliser.

A useful extension publication is "Less Toxic Insecticides" from Clemson.

[www.clemson.edu/extension/hgic/pests/pesticide/hgic2770.html](http://www.clemson.edu/extension/hgic/pests/pesticide/hgic2770.html)

## **HERB OF THE MONTH- SEPTEMBER**

By Edna Lovelace Gaston

It's time for another theme garden. Let's plant for our furry friends, the cats. There are several plants that contain "cat" in the name. First of all is the well-known catnip (*Nepeta cataria*). It's hardy and a perennial. But watch out – it will spread. It's a good

companion plant for the vegetable garden. I have planted it near my tomatoes and both are thriving.

There is a saying “if you plant it cats will get it. If you sow it cats won’t know it.” But this doesn’t apply to my two – there is a pot of catnip on the porch shelf just above where they sleep and they ignore it. But if I pick a few leaves, crush slightly then put beside them, the fun begins.

The plant has a tendency to get leggy so I frequently cut it back. There is a cultivar called “Citriodora” which is lightly lemon scented. I like this plant but mine did not survive one winter and I have been unable to find another one. It’s a nice addition to the garden.

Another great plant is catmint (*Nepeta mussinii*). This is a low growing plant, perfect for the front of a garden. Again the scent of the leaves excites our kitties so watch out where it is planted. Its blooms prolifically when planted in full sun.

The third plant is cat thyme (*Teucrium marum*). While this plant belongs to the germander family it does resemble the basic thyme and hence its common name. It is the lowest growing of the three varieties and looks great trailing over rocks or a wall or in a container. Just grow it like any of the other wonderful thymes.

Leaves of all three of these plants can be dried in the latter part of the summer. Harvest early morning just after the dew dries. Place on a screen so air can circulate above and below and place screen in an area away from the wind. After a few days the leaves can be placed in bags. But watch where you store the leaves-cats will search and climb. Also all three plants grow well in containers so it is possible to have fresh leaves for year-round fun.

Try these in your garden. All three “cat” herbs are easy to start from seed or you can buy plants. Catmint and cat thyme can be propagated by cuttings taken in late summer.

Meows and purrs for fun gardening,  
Ladybug

## **THE TYROS' CORNER -SEPTEMBER**

By Eileen Novak

There was a song that was popular when I was young: “to everything, turn, turn, turn. There is a season, turn, turn, turn and a time for every purpose under heaven” (song written by Pete Seeger, using verses from Ecclesiastes). I think of this song when I plan out the annuals I want to have in the garden, greeting people as they walk to the front door. First the

pansies because they bloom in the winter, then the snowdrops and crocuses, followed by daffodils, and on to the star of the hot summer, the begonias. Last of all, the chrysanthemums.

There are just a few problems with this. I have a rock garden, and I want things to be more or less in the same place so I don’t have to move several hundred pounds of rock per planting session. Therefore, when the pansies die back, I put in the begonias, when the begonias suffer from the chill of fall, I put in the chrysanthemums and then back to the pansies just before Christmas. It’s a good plan.

The problem is in the execution. My pansies this year rewarded me with cheerful faces in the worst of the weather. I bought a full flat of begonias in May, knowing the heat would knock out the pansies. In June, the begonias sat in their little plastic cells, languishing. I’m pretty sure they know just how Prince Charles feels, because those pansies had dug in and were continuing to bloom. The begonias are in the ground (I moved lots of rock) and are finally flourishing. Oh, and this is probably the time to admit that one of the chrysanthemums I put in last year is still going strong.

Don’t these plants read the weather reports???? Don’t they know they are supposed to abdicate gracefully and let the next generation take care of business???? Am I supposed to pull up a living, breathing, BLOOMING plant in order to ensure proper succession at the proper time? <Sigh> It looks like it, doesn’t it? It just seems inhospitable that I eject the pansies before they have run their course. I should look into a pasture that I could put the pansies out to. Some place they would be able to finish growing, bloom, and die without messing up the ambiance that I’m trying to achieve along the path to the front door. Maybe in front of the compost pile? I’ll have to investigate.

But in the meantime, I have to tell you that in the almost 3 years we have lived here, only two people have come to the front door: a salesman and a census worker. Friends just come into the garage. Makes me wonder why I bother.

## **INTERESTING TID-BITS FOR SEPTEMBER**

By Marty Finkel

An amazing exhibit will tour 14 public gardens across the nation through 2016 (including the Louis Ginter and the Cape Fear Botanical Gardens – see [www.seankenney.com/portfolio/nature\\_connects](http://www.seankenney.com/portfolio/nature_connects)).

It's artist Sean Kenney's latest exhibit, Nature Connects, and it consists of more than 50 sculptures of flowers, animals, and even life-sized gardeners built from one million LEGO toy bricks! The sculptures illustrate "the relationship between elements of nature, like a fox hunting a rabbit, or a lotus, koi, frog, and water platter sharing space in a pond," says Kenney. A Missouri Botanical Garden staff member says "Kids are brimming with excitement when they see them." The notice in the July/August 2014 issue of *The American Gardener* states: "An advocate of creative expression, Kenny says that seeing his sculptures in botanical gardens completes his vision for them. 'Much like LEGO pieces connect,' he says, 'everything in nature is connected in an intricate balance.'"

In this issue, there is also a memorial to Kurt Bluemel, who died in June at age 81. He was known as the King of Grasses and is one of several American horticulturists credited with awakening the gardening public to the uses of ornamental grasses and herbaceous perennials in the 1980s. He introduced hundreds of plants to the nursery trade, including the switch grass 'Heavy Metal' (*Panicum virgatum* 'Heavy Metal') and Joe Pye 'Gateway' (*Eutrochium purpureum* ssp. *maculatum*). Over time, his wholesale nursery, Kurt Bluemel, Inc. in Baldwin, MD came to offer nearly 1,000 grasses, sedges, and herbaceous perennials. Young people from all over the world came to the nursery to intern or work because of its impressive reputation.

Speaking of Joe Pye weed, there is an interesting bit in this issue about a plant evaluation study of them at the Chicago Botanic Garden in Glencoe, Illinois. It was a 12-year trial of 26 taxa of Joe Pye weed and related genera that tested for "adaptability to a sunny and windy test site and for their disease resistance, winter hardiness, and ornamental qualities." Joe Pye weeds and their relatives are not only highly ornamental choices for garden beds and borders, they are important resources for butterflies, bees, and other pollinators. Four plants received top marks in all the areas tested for: *Ageratina altissima* 'Chocolate', *Eutrochium dubium* 'Little Joe', *E. fistulosum* 'Carin', and *E. fistulosum* f. *albidum* 'Bartered Bride'. Most species tested also had excellent flowering production. For more information, visit

[www.chicagobotanic.org/research/plant\\_evaluation](http://www.chicagobotanic.org/research/plant_evaluation) , Plant Evaluation Notes Issue 37, 2014

Note: In case you're wondering about the use of the genus *Eutrochium* instead of the familiar *Eupatorium*, yes, there was a name-change. The name change is mentioned in the evaluation report: "Eupatorium, a

formerly large genus in the aster family (Asteraceae), has been split up in recent years resulting in species being reclassified under genera such as *Eutrochium*, *Conoclinium*, and *Ageratina*. Most of the commonly cultivated temperate species fall within these new genera, although some species remain in *Eupatorium*." Please click on the link above to see the evaluation and more of the gorgeous photos.



## **GARDENING FOR THE BIRDS AND THE BEES...PLUS BUTTERFLIES AND ME-SEPTEMBER**

By Edna Lovelace Gaston

Fall is for planting. As noted in a previous article there has been a lack of butterflies this year. But let's be optimistic and get ready for a "bumper crop" in 2015. So now is the time to set out some plants, give them a chance to become established before winter arrives. That way they will be ready to burst forth to provide nectar or be a host next growing season. Frequently plants are on sale this time of year at the box stores so you can get good bargains. More bang for the buck helps our gardens! Here are some suggestions: Asters, Bee Balm, Coneflower, Coreopsis, Dianthus, Ironweed, Phlox, Salvias, and Sedums – all of these are great nectar plants. Create that perennial border to help our butterflies or fill in gaps in existing beds. And don't forget Milkweed – very important for the Monarchs. What can be more attractive than Butterfly weed when it blooms!

Some shrubs to consider are Butterfly Bush (and now so many bloom colors are available so plant more than one!), Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*), Pawpaw, Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*) or Wax Myrtle. While the several species of *Ligustrum* are considered invasive, I have had this shrub growing in the yard where I grew up and in my current yard for many years with absolutely no problem. I have both solid leaf and variegated leaf plants growing and in most years butterflies flock to the blooms. Use your own discretion if considering this plant. [Extension Agent's note: For more information about exotic invasive plants, visit <http://ncbg.unc.edu/invasive-plants-resources/>]

There are many annuals / biennials to consider for next year – dill, marigold, parsley, and zinnias among others. And don't forget other herbs like chives, both regular and garlic plus the thymes.

So flutter on down to the gardening center and let's get ready for next year,  
Ladybug

## NEW VIEWS- SEPTEMBER

by John and Dottie Palya



“An unusual front door greeting!”

**volunteer** : ...5. *Bot.* growing from a seed that has fallen naturally to the ground, not planted by man — *vt.* to offer or give of one's free will without being asked or obliged.

We've all had them. That odd veggie in the garden that shouldn't be in the middle of the tomatoes or the beautiful bloom in the flower bed that certainly wasn't there last year. Each, a small gift from Mother Nature. Sometimes we reach down and pull them out without a thought. Other times we can't bear to destroy this growing thing that surely struggled to birth itself in a place it was never intended to live. It is our

decision on how we treat these “surprises” but, whatever that decision may be, one has to admire the resilience and determination of the “volunteer”.

This year our little garden was pampered and fed, cultivated and prayed over all spring and early summer to produce those succulent long, green cucumbers we planned to pickle after consuming more than our taste buds actually enjoy. We knew the rigid watering schedule and mushroom manure would surely do it's job this year! Without going into detail, let me just say that the pretty jars of bread and butters and dills that grace our cupboard wouldn't be there but for our neighbor whose crop overflowed as usual. But did you happen to see that odd little vine on the fence beside the cucumbers, who wasn't invited but somehow managed to produce a perfectly beautiful and tasty orange cantaloupe? Yes, that same little vine we kept trying to identify in our gardening books and finally concluded had to be one of those - the “V” word!



“Hanging by a string.....”

Have to admit, we admire those little culprits, especially when they turn into beautiful, healthy plants that grace our garden NO MATTER where they decide to root themselves. It is a pleasant surprise - when so often in life we have to deal with the UN-pleasant surprises - to look down and see an amazing volunteer, even if we didn't plan for him to be there. So in gardening as it is in life, “ If you want to hear God laugh, make a plan.”

*Photos by John and Dottie Palya, courtesy of Plant Delights Nursery, Inc. [www.plantdelights.com](http://www.plantdelights.com) and courtesy of Chicago Botanic Garden.*

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