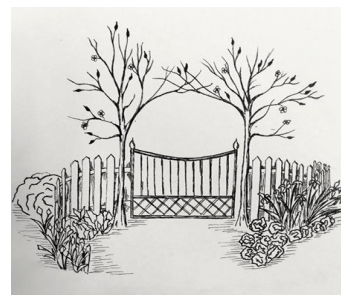


IN THE GARDEN NOW

HELPING GARDENERS PUT KNOWLEDGE TO WORK

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2015



CAMELLIA FESTIVAL AND SALE

The 2015 Camellia Festival and Sale, sponsored by the Onslow County Master Gardener Volunteers, will be held Saturday, February 21, 2015, at the Onslow County Multi-Purpose Building. The Festival will run from 9:00 A.M.-3:00 P.M. The Festival will include an amateur camellia show, informational seminars, a camellia sale, camellia displays, artwork displays, a raffle, and a bake sale.

Lisa Rayburn

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.

The amateur camellia competition is open to the public. So bring your blooms and let them shine! The seminars will focus on camellias and related gardening topics. All proceeds will be used to further the educational and outreach efforts of the Onslow County Master Gardener Volunteer Association.



Camellias will be for sale at the Festival, as well as pre-ordered. To see a selection of the camellias available or to preorder your favorite variety – see the links below. Numbers of each variety are limited so if you have your heart set on one, consider pre-ordering it to reserve yours.

<http://onslow.ces.ncsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Camellia-Final-Preorder-Form.pdf>

<http://onslow.ces.ncsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Camellia-Final-Preorder-Photo-List-2015.pdf>

Pre-order forms can be mailed to:

Onslow County Master Gardener Volunteers
4024 Richlands Highway, Jacksonville NC 28540

For more information, find us on Facebook at Gardening in Onslow County.

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

Empowering People • Providing Solutions

NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS FOR GARDENERS

The New Year is a time for looking back on the past, and even more importantly, forward to the coming year. It's a time to reflect on the changes we want or need to make and resolve to follow through on those changes. As gardeners, there are steps that we can take to improve the ecology and sustainability of our landscapes. Consider adopting one or more of these resolutions for your garden in the New Year:

Commit to eating more seasonally and locally:

- Buy produce during its peak season. This is when a crop is at its freshest and most delicious and also when you can buy it from a local grower.
- Support your local farmers market, CSA (community supported agriculture) or farm stand.
- Plan your vegetable garden for year round production. In Onslow County, you can grow some sort of vegetable almost year round. Nothing is more local than your backyard.
- Incorporate fruit crops into your landscape. Fruit trees and blueberry bushes can be beautiful additions to the yard while also producing fruit.
- Choose plants and varieties that are low maintenance and easy to grow in our area - figs, muscadine grapes, rabbiteye blueberries, strawberries, and blackberries grow well in Onslow County.
- Find dates and locations for the Onslow County Farmers Market on their website at <http://onslowncfarmersmarket.com> or follow them on Facebook. The Farmers Market will reopen for the 2015 season in April.
- Find local farms, farm stands and pick-your-own operations at <http://www.ncfarmfresh.com>.

Be pollinator friendly. Protect honeybees, native bees and other pollinators by taking the following steps:

- Plant flowers that serve as pollen and nectar sources throughout the season. Check out this publication from the Xerces Society for a list of pollinator-friendly plants for the Southeast: http://www.xerces.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/plants-fact-sheet_southeast.pdf
- Use pesticides only when needed. Ensure that cultural (examples include crop rotation, early or late planting dates to avoid pests), mechanical (examples include hand pulling weeds or handpicking insect pests, row covers) and biological control options (promoting insects and predators that prey on pests) are your first line of defense.
- Avoid planting crops that will require a lot of pesticide sprays (such as apples or non-muscadine grapes) to produce a quality crop.
- When pesticides are needed:
 - Never apply pesticides to plants that are flowering.
 - Choose liquid formulations over dusts.
 - Apply late in the day when pollinators are no longer foraging.
 - Ensure that pesticide sprays do not drift to nearby flowering weeds or water puddles.

Reduce your water footprint – and water bill:

- Build your soil's ability to hold water and nutrients by adding compost each year. Aim for 2-3 inches of compost tilled in to each new bed that you bring into production and a topdressing of 1 inch of compost to established beds.
- Harvest rainwater through the use of rainbarrels or cisterns. Use this water first to irrigate new plantings, the vegetable garden, container plantings or lawn.
- Choose plants that are a good fit for the location. Use moisture-loving plants in low damp areas and choose plants that are drought tolerant for drier areas. Remember that drought tolerant plants need regular watering after planting to get established.

Whichever resolution you choose, I want to wish you and your garden a Happy New Year!

BEEKEEPING SHORT COURSE

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 three-day class includes comprehensive training and an end-of-course test. The class will be held at the Onslow County Cooperative Extension Office on February 28, March 7 and March 14 from 8 a.m. until noon each day.

Contact the Onslow County Beekeepers for more information and to register: Eric Talley, President, at 910.389.7709 or via email at erictalley@ec.rr.com. Cost is \$30 per person or \$40 for a couple that shares a book.



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 2014, the Onslow County Master Gardener Volunteers provided over 5577 hours of service to our community. This brings the program to a lifetime total of 41525 hours donated to Onslow County over the last twenty years. This group contains many wonderful volunteers and each year I struggle to select one outstanding member to recognize as Master Gardener Volunteer of the Year. This year, I want to recognize Tom Nicoll as Master Gardener Volunteer of the Year and give a special mention to his dedicated committee – the Discovery Garden Workday Crew.

Tom Nicoll has been an active Master Gardener Volunteer for many years taking on a variety of leadership and support roles. He has served in



many capacities from President to volunteer coordinator, from supporting and mentoring new volunteers to organizing workdays in the Discovery

Gardens. Tom is always willing to step in and help whether he is applying his logistical mind to a project or process, helping clients and volunteers, or helping me wrangle all of the “to-do” lists of the organization. Tom has volunteered 657 hours this year alone and 2154 hours over his years with the program. Thank you, Tom!

I also want to mention a very dedicated group of men that has helped us accomplish so much in the Discovery Gardens this year. The Discovery Garden Workday Crew was led by Tom Nicoll but would not have been possible without the combined efforts of our most regular members – Gary Gerard, Paul Leslie, Billy Spencer, Jay Schrader, and Tom Parker. These men have done everything we asked of them and more. They have cleared brush, cut down trees, pulled weeds, tilled, planted, dug holes, mulched, pruned and then some.

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

PRUNING CRAPE MYRTLES

Late winter (February to March) is a good time to prune many trees and shrubs in eastern North Carolina and many gardeners are considering pruning their crape myrtles. While crape myrtles, like many woody plants, benefit from judicious pruning, I see many that have simply been topped.



Properly Pruned Crape Myrtle

Many crape myrtles are cut back to bare trunks in the belief that this will yield more flowers. In reality this type of severe pruning results in a shorter bloom time, delayed flowering, weaker branching, and can increase insect and disease problems. This practice, known as topping, although common, is harmful and is not the right way to prune a crape myrtle.



Improperly Pruned Crape Myrtle

Unfortunately this technique is so ubiquitous that many people think it is the right way to prune crape myrtles and simply follow the lead of their neighbors. Luckily, it is not hard to prune crape myrtles in a way that enhances its natural form, increases plant health and long term beauty.

Check out the following links for step-by-step instructions illustrating how to prune your crape myrtle correctly:

<http://pender.ces.ncsu.edu/pruning-crape-myrtle/>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2he8_mol0Wc

KEEPING BACKYARD CHICKENS

As the days slowly lengthen, my small flock of hens is starting to lay again. This year marks the fourth season that my girls have been in lay. As they age, egg production has started to drop off and their non-laying molting period has



increased. As spring approaches, I am considering bringing new chickens into the flock to rejuvenate it.

I am certainly not alone. The popularity of backyard chicken flocks has increased greatly in the past couple of years. It is a natural fit as people have become involved with the local food movement and developing more self-sufficient home garden systems. Chickens provide a healthy source of protein, bug control in the garden, and nutrient rich manure to add to the compost pile, not to mention that they make fun, entertaining pets as well. If you are thinking about raising chickens, keep in mind the following considerations.

First, check your local ordinances to determine if keeping chickens is legal and, if so, what restrictions (including number, sex and setback limitations) apply. Some communities limit the number of birds you can keep and many prohibit roosters altogether. A call to your local animal control or zoning officer will give you the information you need. If you live in a subdivision, your homeowners associations may have additional restrictions. In Jacksonville, chickens are permitted but are not allowed to be a noise or smell nuisance. This means it is advisable to not keep roosters if you are within the city limits. In Swansboro, chickens are permitted but limited to six hens and roosters are prohibited.

Once you have done your homework, consider how much space you have to work with. Each chicken needs adequate space in the coop and run. Figure a minimum of 4 square feet per bird within the coop and an additional 5-6 square feet in the outside run. You can certainly provide more space – my birds enjoy a large run and spend time free ranging in the yard each day as well. The more space your chickens have, the fewer stress related problems you will have.

Once you determine how many birds you have space for, you'll need to decide how many chickens you want. On average, a laying breed hen will produce around 2 eggs every 3 days (or up to 15 dozen eggs) during her first year and then her productivity will decline with each subsequent season. By her fourth year, egg production will have dropped off significantly.

Now, this brings up an important question. What do you plan to do with your ladies after their productive years are passed? In the past, grandma would quickly turn a non-productive hen into a batch of chicken soup. While this may still be an option (again, check your local ordinances), many of us prefer not to have to dispatch Penny or Gertrude after enjoying their company in the garden for several seasons. If you plan to keep your “retired” hens on as pensioners, remember to include their numbers when you figure out the size of the coop that you will need. Remember that a hen can live 8-10 years or more! In some urban areas, animal control offices are now faced with increasing numbers of hens that have been relinquished as they pass their productive years. Remember that chickens, like other pets and livestock, are a commitment and you will need to have a game plan for what happens after the eggs stop coming.

Once you have decided how many birds you want, it’s time to select a breed or two to build your flock around. Barred Rocks, Rhode Island Reds, and Orpingtons are heritage breeds that perform well in North Carolina but others will do just as well.

When starting your flock, you can choose to buy day-old chicks and brood them yourself or purchase older birds. While little chicks require some extra effort and care, it is an enjoyable process and a great way to get children interested. It is quite possible to set up a small brooder in a large storage tote or other container. If you opt to go this route, remember to order sexed chicks from the nursery. This way, you won’t wind up with an overabundance of roosters. Roosters are not necessary for egg production and there isn’t room for more than one rooster in a small flock. Alternatively, you can buy pullets. Pullets are young hens that are about to start laying. You will pay a lot more for pullets but it saves you the effort and time of raising baby chicks.

If you think you would like to add chickens to your yard, check out the NCSU publication available online, *Keeping Garden Chickens*. This publication provides details on housing requirements, feeding guidelines and healthcare and is available here: http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/poulsci/tech_manual/s/Backyard_Chickens.pdf.

SPRING’S FIRST CROPS – PEAS AND POTATOES

Winter isn’t gone yet but I can’t resist the urge to get out in the garden and plant. Peas and potatoes are two of my favorite spring vegetables – for one reason because they are tasty but I think even more so because they are one of the first vegetables that I can plant as winter starts to fade in to spring.

Garden peas, and their edible-podded relatives, snow peas and sugar snaps are easy and productive crops to grow. In coastal areas, peas can be planted outside as early as mid-January. As you move further inland, delay planting by a week or two but make sure to get in the ground by mid-February at the latest. These cool season vegetables need to mature before hot weather sets in.



Peas should be grown from seed in the garden. Soaking your pea seeds before planting will speed germination. Place them in a jar of water and soak them for 6-8 hours just before planting. I often set mine to soak the night before and plant them the next morning.

Sow seeds an inch deep and one to two inches apart. Water well after sowing and keep moist until seedlings begin to emerge, usually within seven to ten days. Peas are a vining crop and benefit from a low trellis or even just a row of branches to climb on.

Fresh peas will be ready to harvest 65 to 80 days after planting. Tasty raw or cooked, many of my sugar snap and snow peas never make it as far as the house.



Potatoes are great fun to grow and a neat way to get kids interested in the garden. Potatoes can be planted in mid February. Purchase seed potatoes from a garden center. These small potatoes have been grown under special conditions to ensure that they are free of diseases. Seed potatoes usually give better results than potatoes purchased from the grocery store or those held over from the previous season.

Kennebec and Red Pontiac are classic varieties that do well in coastal North Carolina but I have great results with Yukon Gold. I love the moist texture and buttery taste of this gold-fleshed variety.

Cut seed potatoes into pieces that are each about the size of an egg and contain at least one eye. You can plant your seed pieces right away or sprout them indoors for a few weeks by placing them in a warm, sunny location.

Plant seed pieces six inches deep and ten inches apart in the row with three feet between rows. Keep in mind twelve pounds of seed potatoes can plant around one hundred feet of row and yield over two hundred pounds of spuds. Potatoes can also be grown successfully in large containers – I grow mine in 25 gallon pots but people have also been successful with trashcans, large baskets and similar containers.

As the shoots grow, “hill up” around the base of the plants with soil or mulch. New tubers are set between the seed potato and the surface of the soil. Depending on the variety, potatoes will take 85-110 days to grow to maturity. When the tops of the plants start to die back, it is time to dig the potatoes. Harvesting potatoes is a bit of a treasure hunt and fun for children of all ages!

Other cool season vegetables that you can plant in February include lettuce, spinach, radish, mustard, turnip greens, beets, turnips, kohlrabi, carrots, cabbage and broccoli.

RECYCLING YOUR CHRISTMAS TREE



Now that the holiday season is coming to a close, plan on giving your Christmas tree back to the earth by recycling it. In order to recycle a Christmas tree make sure to remove all ornaments, tinsel, lights, hardware and stand. Christmas trees that have been sprayed with artificial snow are not a good option for recycling. There are many ways to recycle your cut Christmas tree:

Some coastal communities use natural Christmas trees for dune restorations. Trees are lined up along the toe (base) of the dune to collect and hold sand.

Building the dunes over time. The town of Topsail Beach does this each year. Trees can be dropped off at Town Park at the Intersection of Davis Avenue and South Anderson Boulevard. For more information, contact: Topsail Beach Town Hall at 910.328.5841.

- If you live further inland, consider submerging your tree into a private fishpond. The tree creates “structure” in the pond and becomes a fish feeding refuge.

- Place in the back of the garden to use as a bird feeder and refuge. Eventually the tree will become brittle and then can be taken apart and chipped into mulch.

- If you have a chipper, chip small limbs and add to the compost pile or use as mulch.

- If you don’t, cut branches off and place on top of landscaped beds for mulch. In the spring, the needles will have fallen off and the larger twigs can be removed and added to the brush or compost pile.

Many municipalities have Christmas tree collection programs to shred the trees and use them for mulch. Avoid placing Christmas trees in the garbage with the rest of the trash. Instead, place on the curbside for recycling. Look in your local papers for collection dates and/or drop off locations. The Onslow County Solid Waste Department accepts real Christmas trees (lights and ornaments removed) at the following sites:

- Folkstone Convenience Center Site
- Swansboro Convenience Center Site
- Onslow County Landfill

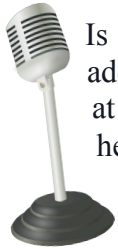
Onslow County Solid Waste also recycles string lights, plastic containers, aluminum (cans, pie plates, foil), metal and glass containers, all paper and boxes for free. Electronics such as television monitors and microwaves can be recycled for \$3. For more information, contact the Onslow County Landfill at 910.989.2107.

Recycling your Christmas tree will help to improve the soil and environment, provide wonderful smelling mulch, and substantially reduce the amount of waste entering the landfill.

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FIND 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.

You can also find me on WJCV once a month as Melvin Bland and I discuss all things garden and yard related. You can join us at 98.3 FM and 1290 FM. We'll be on air January 13 and February 24 at 8 am.

UPCOMING EVENTS AND REMINDERS

Building a Raised Bed Garden

January 31, 2015 at 10:00 a.m.

We will discuss how to build a raised bed garden including dimensions, selecting materials and construction. Participants will help Master Gardener Volunteers install a raised bed garden in the Discovery Gardens.

Cooperative Extension Office
4024 Richlands Hwy
Call 910.455.5873 to reserve your space.

Starting your Own Seeds

February 7, 2015 at 10:00 a.m.

Learn how to start flower and vegetable plants from seed. We'll discuss when, how and why to start your own seedlings and trouble-shoot common seed starting problems.

Jacksonville Recreation and Parks
100 Recreation Lane
Contact [910.938.5312](tel:910.938.5312) to register

HELP Garden Class

February 13 through June 26

Learn to grow vegetables for your own use or for sale. This intensive, hands-on training will lead you through the process from site selection, soil testing and crop scheduling through harvest, storage and marketing, and everything in between. Cost for the entire class is \$75 and you get to take fresh produce home with you too! The class meets each Friday night from 5:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Deadline for registration is February 6, 2015 at 5:00 pm.

Cooperative Extension Office
4024 Richlands Hwy
Call [910.455.5873](tel:910.455.5873) and ask for Larry Kent for more information or to register.

Follow us on Facebook at

www.facebook.com/gardeninginonslowcounty.

For additional classes check out on the Onslow County Cooperative Extension website at <http://onslow.ces.ncsu.edu/events/>.

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 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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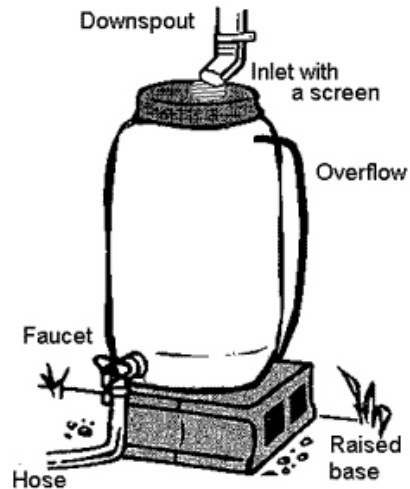
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Rain barrels: use what nature provides to water your plants!

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 with "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, Feb. 21, 2015.** Sales are first-come, first-served and will continue until the supply is sold.



Order Form: Rain Barrel Sale, pick-up beginning Feb. 21, 2015

Mail to: NC Cooperative Extension
Onslow Multipurpose Complex
4024 Richlands Hwy.
Jacksonville, NC 28540

Attn: Rain Barrel Sale

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone number: _____ Email: _____

Fee enclosed: _____ \$50 for each rain barrel ordered

(Make checks payable to: NCCES - Onslow County Center)

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, 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.

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