



HORTICULTURE HAPPENINGS

Serving Halifax & Northampton Counties

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Fall Garden Cleanup!

By the end of summer many vegetable gardens are so overgrown, it's a little scary to think of walking through them. But do yourself a favor; get out there and clean the garden up. If you have had problems with insects or disease, you are dealing with living organisms that need somewhere to survive winter. Winter presents survival challenges to most living things. By leaving the old squash and tomato plants we provide protection for insect and disease organisms and enhance their ability to survive into next year.

One of the most comprehensive strategies you can employ is to remove all that old vegetation from the garden. You probably shouldn't even try to compost it. Save it for the winter bonfire or haul it off; just get rid of it! Tilling the garden during fall or winter will further expose surviving insects and pathogens to drying out or cold temperatures.

And for those areas that you won't plant until late spring, go ahead and plant a short term cover crop. One of the easiest to grow is annual ryegrass. It will also be among the easiest to get rid of next spring. The cover crop helps to recycle nutrients left over in the soil. It protects the soil from erosion. It improves water infiltration and retention in the soil. It adds organic matter to the soil. And it competes very well with the winter weeds.



Where to find fall plants

Roanoke Nursery
1165 US-158
Roanoke Rapids, NC
27870

Wildwood Nursery & Garden Center
847 Lizard Creed Rd.
Henrico, NC 27842

Other stores that carry fall garden items

-Lowes

-Walmart

-Tractor Supply

Fall Vegetable Gardening

Leafy greens and crucifers include a wide spectrum of plants - from arugula, collards, broccoli, mustard and turnip greens, to spinach, Swiss chard, beet greens and lettuce. All of these greens are cool-season crops that grow best between 45 and 65°F. Most prosper in eastern North Carolina when planted in August and September for fall harvest.

Among leafy greens, lettuce is one of the easiest to produce. There are many varieties to choose from. Loose leaf lettuces mature quickly and are the easiest to grow, while iceberg lettuce varieties are more difficult because of the long growing season they require and their tendency to go to seed quickly. Romaine is more heat-tolerant than iceberg lettuce and has a sweeter taste. Butterhead types, which have loose heads, are easier to produce than varieties with tight, firm heads. Plant lettuce plants or seeds in succession every couple of weeks through late September to enjoy harvests for several weeks.

Transplants will produce a quicker crop of vegetables than direct seeding. This shorter production time also means transplants have less exposure to pests and environmental stresses. Broccoli and cauliflower do best when started from transplants. Arugula, turnip and mustard greens, and spinach are typically grown from seed. Seed should be sown in a well-prepared seedbed to allow for good soil contact.

Greens can be harvested as whole plants or individual leaves. Turnip, mustard, collards and kale are harvested when the stalks are young and tender. Spinach is harvestable as soon as the leaves are of edible size. In the garden, leafy greens are susceptible to several foliar diseases, including mildews and fungal leaf spots. Watch out for diamondback moths, various worms, aphids, flea beetles and harlequin bugs, and contact your county Extension center for pest control options and recommended varieties.

For more information about fall gardening, please visit <https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/growing-a-fall-vegetable-garden>.



Pests to Watch For

Since they were accidentally imported into Mobile, Alabama, around 1930, fire ants have spread rapidly throughout the Southeastern states and can now be found in most of North Carolina. Fire ants are generally considered a pest of annoyance because they create unsightly mounds in the yard and have a highly irritating sting. However, for those who are allergic to their stings, fire ants can pose a serious health hazard.

The first step in controlling fire ants is to understand that we will never be able to eradicate fire ants from the landscape. Nevertheless, we can manage them. The best season to treat fire ants are late spring and early fall, but if you have an

active mound in an inconvenient location, you can drink it on any warm day.

The most effective management program will combine a two-step process of direct mound treatment and application of baits. It's better to use baits first and follow up with a mound treatment a few days later. You may also drench the mound and follow with bait five to seven days later if there is still activity or if a satellite mound has sprung up. If you have too many mounds to treat individually, baiting is your best solution. Fire ant control will require continual monitoring and repeat treatments as necessary.

Resources:

"Pest Alert- Fire Ants"

<https://extensiongardener.ces.ncsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Ext-Gard-Fall-12-Coastal.pdf?fwd=no>



Fall To-Do's

Soil Samples

A soil sample will tell you how much fertilizer or lime you should add this fall. Test your flowerbeds, vegetable gardens, and even your lawn. The NCDA provides free soil testing from April to November, so make sure and get yours in this fall! Cooperative Extension offices are stocked with the soil testing kits. Feel free to come by and get yours!

Lawn Care

Prepare your lawn for fall seeding. August is the best time to prepare for planting cool season grasses for the optimal planting time, which is the second half of September. Call the Cooperative Extension Service for more information on establishing and maintaining a fescue lawn.

Trees, Shrubs & Ornamentals

Mulch trees and shrubs with a 2-3" layer of mulch to keep roots cool, conserve moisture, and control competing weeds and grasses. Avoid mulching more than 4 inches deep, and leave 3-4 inches between mulch and the trunk of the tree/shrub.

Fruits and Vegetables

Examine fruit trees periodically for scale infestations and mark with flagging tape. Applying summer or horticultural oil can keep them from getting out of hand. If you let them go until winter, that tiny infestation will be a monumental invasion!

Allow peppers to turn red- peppers allowed to turn red will be sweeter and higher in beta carotene. Even jalapeños which are traditionally harvested green, mature to tasty red peppers.

Master Gardener Class

There will be a new Master Gardener class offered in the Fall of 2017. Classes will start October 4th and go till November 16th For an application please contact the Halifax or Northampton County Office!

Upcoming Events

Halifax

September 2nd- Littleton Festival 10am-4pm

September 14th- Master Gardener Class Applications Due

September 25th- Bee Keepers Association Meeting at Halifax Ag Center. Anyone interested in joining is welcome. 7:00pm

September 29th & September 30th- Harvest Days at the 4-H Rural Life Center in Halifax

October 4th- Master Gardener Classes Start

Northampton

September 14th- Master Gardener Class Applications Due

September 25th- Bee Keepers Association Meeting at Halifax Ag Center. Anyone interested in joining is welcome. 7:00pm

October 4th - Animal Ag Day at the Lions Club in Seaboard. 9am - 2pm

October 10th & 17th & 24th- Backyard Farming Workshop

NC State Fair: October 12-22 in Raleigh, NC