

April 2017

Gardening News

Hoke and Scotland County

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Welcome to Gardening News



Strawberry Pickin' Time

One of the rites of spring is picking and eating lush, ripe, delicious strawberries!

Strawberries are a perennial, meaning they grow for several years. The strawberry has its seeds on the outside, which is unusual. All other fruits have their seeds on the inside. Think about blueberries and other small fruit. Tree fruit such as apples and pears also have their seeds on the inside.

When buying or picking strawberries look for clean, dry berries that are plump, firm and fully red. The caps should be green and fresh looking. Avoid bruised or wrinkled berries.

If the farmer allows picking your own, he will send you to a specific location to pick. Remember, the farther from the car into the field you go, the bigger and better the berries may be.

Support your local farmer by buying local. Not only are you supporting the farmer, you are supporting the local economy and keeping the tradition of farming alive.

Local growers in Hoke and Scotland County are:

Jep's Farm, 2351 Aberdeen Road, Raeford, NC 28376, (910) 624-2417
Cooley's Strawberry Patch, Airbase Road, Wagram, NC 28396, (910)-369-2630
E. Morris & Son Plant Farm, 19441 Old Maxton Road, Maxton, NC, (910) 276-0515

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These growers do have Facebook pages. Be prepared in some cases to pay by cash or check. Always call before going to ensure berries are available.

If you are interested in growing your own strawberries, read more about their culture and management in Strawberries in the Home Garden available at the following site <https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/strawberries-in-the-home-garden>.

Organic and Sustainable Gardening

Are You Worried About GMO Seeds?

Don't be. Seed catalogs are arriving, and it's time to plan the garden. Are you wondering where to purchase GMO-free seeds? Many seed companies have signed a "safe seed pledge" stating they don't knowingly buy, sell or trade GMO seeds. This safe seed pledge may raise questions and imply that other seeds are unsafe. But is this true? Every crop we grow has been modified from its original wild form. The terms "genetically modified" (GM) and "genetically modified organism" (GMO) apply to crops in which the DNA has been modified through a specific process where several genes are added or removed. The added genes can be from a completely unrelated organism. This is a process that would be difficult, if not impossible, to achieve through regular plant breeding. GMO products are in the grocery store, your clothes and your car's gasoline. In the United States, there are nine GM crops commercially available: corn, soybeans, cotton, alfalfa, sugar beets, canola, papaya, squash and potato. If you buy processed foods containing corn, sugar or soy, chances are good that you are buying GM products—unless the food is labelled as organic or GMO-free. You are not likely, however, to find GMOs in your vegetable garden. Seed companies are not marketing GM-seeds to home gardeners because the companies could easily lose control of their investment and technology patents. Getting access to GM seeds would take extraordinary effort and ingenuity on your part. The "safe seed pledge" is a marketing strategy that takes advantage of consumers who do not know that GM seeds are not freely available to home gardeners. So rest assured whether you choose organic, heirloom or hybrid seeds for your garden, there are no GM seeds in your cart. —Lisa Rayburn, Horticulture Agent, Onslow County

April Gardening Chores

Our average last frost date is April 15, earlier planting of tender annuals and vegetables may require frost protection. It is better to wait until later in the month to plant tender plants.

Lace bugs will begin to be seen on azaleas. Control with horticultural oil or pyrethroids in April and May. Be sure to read the label and follow directions carefully. Each of these work differently.

Prune spring flowering evergreen shrubs like camellia and azalea when finished blooming. They begin setting their flowers for 2018 as soon as they finish blooming.

Roses: Begin a regular spray program for roses. Watch for rose rosette. Article to follow.

USDA Hardiness Zone: Knowing your plant zone is important for making decisions on purchasing plants that will grow in your yard and garden. To find the plant zone at your home, visit: [USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map](#)

April is a busy time in the garden. Enjoy!

Plant of the Month:

The Flowering Dogwood

From NCSU Publication written by Kim Powell, Specialist in Horticultural Science, NCSU

Introduction

Among the early spring-flowering trees, the dogwood, *Cornus florida*, is regarded by most North Carolinians as unrivaled in attractiveness either in its natural woodland habitat or in cultivated landscape gardens. This small, ornamental tree offers landscape interest for all seasons, beginning with its floral display in spring and followed by pleasant green foliage (casting a light shade) in summer. Fall in North Carolina is enhanced by the brilliant show of red, orange, and scarlet foliage along with the bright-red fruit borne in small clusters. In winter, button-shaped buds are prominent on the tips of the twigs. The interesting bark texture and branches help create an excellent winter silhouette.



Landscape Use - Dogwoods have a variety of landscape uses. With the year-round interest, dogwoods are excellent for specimen or accent plantings around the terrace or patio. Often a combination of rhododendrons, azaleas and dogwoods planted in a raised bed creates an interesting natural landscape feature. Dogwoods make excellent understory trees in a semi-shaded area and are also now being used in conjunction with typical foundation plantings and groundcovers in large beds around a building.

Culture - Dogwoods are easily grown in lawn and garden areas all across the state, adapting itself to various exposures and soil types. Generally growing to a height of 20 to 30 feet with a low, broad head and tiers of horizontal branches, the dogwood is considered a "well-behaved" tree -- and requires very little maintenance.

When planting dogwoods, be certain to provide good drainage. The most favorable soil is moist, fertile loam, slightly acid to neutral (pH 5.5 to 6). The addition of peat or leaf-mold improves nearly all soils for the dogwood. A 3- to 4-inch layer of organic mulch, replenished occasionally, is beneficial as it keeps soil moist near the surface where the roots are most active, discourages weeds from growing, and most of all, offers protection to the trunk from mowers and other equipment. The optimum transplanting time is fall and winter. It is helpful to root-prune dogwood a season before transplanting. However, trees grown in containers are transplanted throughout the year. Nursery-grown trees that have been root-pruned and grown in full sun-light are far superior to those transplanted from the woods. In most cases, their cost is well justified by quicker recovery after transplanting and better-shaped branches.

After planting, and during the first few years of establishment, the most important cultural aspect is to provide ample water during dry stressful periods. Dogwoods are also susceptible to a very serious insect pest which can lead to general decline of the tree. The dogwood borer larvae is mainly a problem to trees which have been physically injured (lawnmowers or weedeaters too close to trunk) as the larvae need an injured area in order to penetrate the bark. Dogwood anthracnose, *Discula*, has weakened and killed many native trees. There are several fungicides which are recommended for this problem. It is a good idea to plant trees in areas in somewhat open areas that get good air circulation.

Remember to mulch well around base of tree, brace newly planted trees for the first season to prevent wind damage, and wrap the trunks of newly transplanted trees with burlap or tree wrap paper the first winter after transplanting.

Selected Cultivars

'Cherokee Chief' (red bracts)

- 'Cherokee Princess' (white)
- 'Cloud 9' (white)
- 'Pendula' (white, weeping form)
- 'Plena' (double white form)
- 'Red Cloud' (pink bracts)
- 'White Cloud' (white)

Cornus Kousa - Kousa Dogwood

The kousa dogwood is also a popular, small ornamental tree with numerous landscape uses. This species blooms about 2 weeks later than *Cornus florida*, with 4 bracts that are tapered at the ends. Blooms typically last 5 to 6 weeks. As the tree ages, the bark develops a multicolored tan-gray appearance. The fruit is somewhat different than *C. florida*, being approximately 1 inch in diameter on a single, drooping stalk, borne in late summer and early fall. An interesting characteristic about the Kousa dogwood is that the blooms appear after the foliage comes out in the spring.

Selected Cultivars

- 'Milky Way'
- 'Summer Stars'
- 'Aurora'
- 'Celestial'
- 'Stellar Pink'
- 'Ruth Ellen'

Other dogwood species of interest

- *Cornus alba* - Tatarian (Redtwig) dogwood
- *Cornus mas* - Cornelian cherry dogwood
- *Cornus controversa* - Giant dogwood
- *Cornus sericea* - Redosier dogwood

Name this insect.....

Eastern Tent Caterpillars



In the spring, as leaves begin to emerge, tent caterpillars start their spring feeding frenzy. They primarily feed on wild cherry, crabapple, apple, but can occasionally feed on other trees. The caterpillars feed in groups and can completely defoliate trees. On sunny warm days, caterpillars leave the nest several times a day to feed. Although they are not harmful to humans, they are unsightly and can damage your tree.

About 6 weeks after hatching, caterpillars will leave the nest to crawl to another location and begin to spin their cocoon. Once pupated, the moths fly and lay eggs. Eggs don't hatch until the following spring.

Tents can be pulled down with a stick and caterpillars can be destroyed. Remember the caterpillars feed during the day so removal close to dark is preferred.



Ruby Throated Hummingbirds are Coming!!!

As early as April 1 and usually by mid-April Ruby Throated Hummingbirds are coming through on their migration from Central America. They fly over the Gulf of Mexico and into the United States. Often the same bird will return to the same feeders, sometimes on the same day. Remember this because the birds and their off spring you feed this year, will be looking for your feeder in years to come.

Ruby Throated Hummingbirds are the only breeding hummingbird in Eastern North America. Most have migrated back to Central America by early November. Rufous Hummingbirds are rare but are an increasing visitor to flower gardens and feeders in our area.



Feeding Hummingbirds

You can attract Ruby-throated Hummingbirds to your backyard by setting up hummingbird feeders or by planting tubular red or orange flowers as part of your landscape.

Artificial Nectar:

- One part sugar to 4 parts water.
- It's not necessary to boil the water. Organisms causing fermentation may be carried by the hummingbirds as they feed.
- Store unused nectar in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks

Change the water before it grows cloudy or discolored and remember that during hot weather, sugar water ferments rapidly to produce toxic alcohol. Be careful about where you put your hummingbird feeders, as some cats have learned to lie in wait to catch visiting hummingbirds.

Buying and Maintaining a Feeder

There are many options for hummingbird feeders. *Red color* is critical to attract hummingbirds. Remember you don't have to dye the nectar to attract the birds, but rather buy a red feeder. *Bee Guards* are often around the feeding ports. Yellow bee guards attract bees and wasps, the manufacturers have changed the guard color to white, resulting in bees and wasps being less likely to be found at your feeder. *Built in perches* are essential as hummingbirds prefer to perch as they feed. *Ease of cleaning* is essential to your hummingbirds' health. Mold can grow in your feeder, so less parts and less nooks and crannies are beneficial to a healthy feeder. Once a month give your feeder a good cleaning using vinegar and scrub all mold and grime from your feeder. Rinse thoroughly before filling and hanging feeder. *Size of feeder* is important. If you never have feed hummingbirds before, start with a small feeder. See what happens. Base your size and number of feeders on how many hummingbirds come to your home.

Want to know more about birds? Visit Cornell's Lab of Ornithology at www.allaboutbirds.org or Audubon's Bird Guide at <http://www.audubon.org/bird-guide>

Name this weed.....

Dollarweed or Pennywort (*Hydrocotyle*, sp.)

Dollarweed is a perennial weed that grows in very wet places. It can even float in water. Spreading by underground rhizomes, seeds and tubers, it will out compete weak turf in wet areas of your lawn or landscape. Eliminating dollarweed is not practical, but managing it is possible through a combination of cultural and chemical controls.



Cultural Control of Dollarweed: Your first step to reducing the occurrence of dollarweed is to reduce the amount of water available in your lawn or shrub bed. One way is to apply only 1-inch of irrigation water per week. Should it rain 1-inch, do not irrigate your turf or shrubs. If the area continues to be wet, consider installing drainage to move the water away from your turf or shrub beds. Healthy turf will minimize the amount of dollarweed in your lawn. Take a soil sample, apply fertilizer and lime as recommended. Proper mowing height will also allow the turf to thicken and minimize dollarweed. For shrub beds, apply a 3-inch layer of mulch to discourage dollarweed growth.

Chemical Control of Dollarweed: Once you have addressed the site and strengthened your turf, you may consider applying an herbicide to minimize this weed. Atrazine may be applied twice a year on centipede and St. Augustine. Apply in the fall and late spring after green-up. Three-way herbicides containing 2,4-D, dicamba and mecoprop (MCP) may be safely used on bermuda, zoysia, centipede, St. Augustine and tall fescue. Be very CAREFUL with any product that contains 2,4-D. Reduced rates are required for 2,4-D applied to centipede and St. Augustine. Repeat applications may be required, consider spot treatments.

Otherwise, space according to label directions. Imazaquin is another chemical to reduce dollarweed populations. It can be applied safely to Bermuda, St. Augustine, centipede and Zoysia. Do not apply to tall fescue.

For complete information on dollarweed and its control, visit these sites:

<http://www.turffiles.ncsu.edu/weeds/dollarweed>

<http://www.clemson.edu/extension/hgic/pests/pdf/hgic2317.pdf>

ABC...XYZ Gardening Vernacular

H: Humus-

The brown or black organic part of the soil resulting from the partial decay of leaves and other matter. Humus can also be made by composting. Humus is used for planting and for improving existing soil.



Rosette Disease--- Maybe a 'Knockout' for the Rose Lover

In the 1940's Rose Rosette Disease (RRD for short) was first seen in Wyoming on multiflora rose. Multiflora rose is common throughout the country and is considered an invasive weed in North Carolina. While RRD took many years to travel across America, in the last ten years or so it is now found all along the east coast. RRD has spread to infect landscape roses, including the two most disease and insect resistant roses, the *Knockout* and *Drift*. In 2007, the Brooklyn Botanical Garden had to remove many of its roses due to RRD, and in 2012 the Raleigh Rose Garden discovered RRD among its roses and in a traffic circle on Hillsborough Street. It can now be found here locally.

Signs and Symptoms:

Once your rose is infected with RRD, it only takes from 7 days to 9 months for your plant to begin to show signs of RRD. Some of the common symptoms are listed, but be sure that it's RRD. (Sometimes you can use glyphosate near the plant and it may have some of the same symptoms if accidentally sprayed or the chemical spray blows on the plant.)



Left Healthy Rose, Right Infected Rose

Signs of Rose Rosette Disease

Excessive thorniness. Rose canes may have a profusion of thorns that may or may not be hard.

Soft canes. Rose canes may not be stiff but instead can be bent nearly in two without breaking.

Red, strappy leaves. Leaves may be thin and strap-like and never expand to resemble a regular leaf. These leaves may also be red. (New leaves of rose bushes are normally red but will eventually mature to green.)

Witches' broom. A witches' broom is a bunch of growth in one area of the plant. Several buds will form in a short section of a stem, resulting in what looks like a broom.

What to do if you suspect your rose has RRD

RRD is a fatal disease carried by the microscopic eriophyid mite and is a systemic virus. Remember the mites are so small they can be spread by wind. If they are on one rose bush, they can be blown or even crawl to another nearby rose. You can help minimize the spread of this disease, by promptly removing the diseased plant and destroying it.

This means you CANNOT TRIM OUT THE DISEASED parts of the rose. Once identified, remove and bag the rose plant, roots and any leaves on the ground, immediately, if not sooner! Be sure to dispose of in your regular trash. Do not put with other grass clippings or limbs for pickup. If your county allows burning, this is another way to eliminate the virus. Do not put the diseased plant and its parts in your compost pile.

Be sure to sterilize your tools and gloves after removing the diseased rose. You can use a household disinfectant such as Lysol. This is another step to help reduce the spread of RRD.

Because RRD is a systemic through the entire plant and root system, do not plant another rose in the same place for two (2) years. The root pieces can still harbor RRD and infect your new rose.

Monitor your healthy roses for any signs of RRD. Make sure your roses are spaced far enough apart so there is not touching of leaves, stems or flowers. If the plants are touching, move them further apart.

You can help reduce the spread of Rose Rosette disease by monitoring your rose garden or roses in the landscape. Prompt removal, correct disposal and sanitation of tools and gloves are key to minimizing the impact of this devastating disease.

Community Gardening Calendar

April 29 – 9 a.m. – 12 noon, Plant Sale, Hoke County Master Gardeners Annual Plant Sale - Sale is held at Hoke Cooperative Extension 116 W. Prospect Avenue, Raeford, N.C. A variety of annuals and perennials will be for sale. Proceeds are used for gardening programs for the community.

May 10 – 9:30 a.m. to 12 noon, Growing A Healthy Beautiful Centipede Lawn - Class will focus on growing centipede lawns including insect and disease problems. Class will be held at the Hoke Cooperative Extension Center, 116 W. Prospect Avenue, Raeford, N.C. Pre-register by calling 910-875-3461. Space is limited. Instructor Matt Martin, Extension Associate for Turfgrass, N.C. State University.

June 1 – 10 a.m. – 12 p.m., Tomato's Diseases and Pest Problems – Understand and identify common diseases and pests of tomatoes. Scotland County Cooperative Extension Center. Pre-register by calling 910-277-2422.

If your organization has gardening events we would be glad to list them here.

QUOTE:

“In the spring, I have counted one hundred and thirty-six different kinds of weather inside of four and twenty hours.”- Mark Twain

We hope you find this newsletter informative and fun. Please share with a friend!

Send questions, comments or suggestions for articles to shannon_newton@ncsu.edu

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