

February 2017

Gardening News

Hoke and Scotland County

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Contact Us

NC Cooperative Extension
Hoke County Center
116 W. Prospect Avenue
Raeford, NC 28376
Phone: 910-875-3461
Fax: 910-875-9044
hoke.ces.ncsu.edu

Scotland County Center
231 E. Cronly St. Suite 800
Laurinburg, NC 28352
Phone: 910-277-2422
Fax: 910-277-2426
scotland.ces.ncsu.edu

Shannon R. Newton
Shannon Newton
Area Extension Agent,
Horticulture
shannon_newton@ncsu.edu

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Welcome to Gardening News



Winter Muscadine Chores

Establishment of muscadine vines is quite labor intensive, with each vine requiring attention every week of the growing season. Winter chores are just as important, with the main concern being dormant pruning needs. Do you know how to prune your muscadine vine or when dormant pruning should occur?



Preparing for Winter

To prepare for winter, grow tubes should be removed in September and irrigation lines should be drained. No fertilizer should be applied after early July so the vines can properly harden off for the winter.

Winter Pruning

Prune later to delay budbreak. Based on observations from 2007, growers should wait until February/March if possible, to prune their vines. Pruning later may cause the vines to “bleed” more, but studies have shown that the “bleeding” is just a sugar water solution and does not harm the vine.

When pruning, choose the best wood to leave for fruiting. Growers should prune out bull canes and 1-year-old wood less than pencil width in diameter. The best fruiting wood is about a pencil width in diameter and has good color (see photo above). Growers should aim to leave 3-4 count buds per shoot, with spurs spaced every 4-6 inches. If a cordon has not yet reached desired length, the spurs can be cut more severely (leaving 1-2 count

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buds) to direct vine resources into extending the cordon. Shoots around the head of the vine are often more vigorous and can be pruned harder, in attempt to force more even vigor and productivity down the cordon. This is an area of current research and observation, so growers interested in trying this should do so on a limited scale and in consultation with their local Extension Agent.

Mechanical pruning is an efficient method of pruning for wine production. Most growers prefer mechanical pruning due to cost savings in time and labor. Recent studies have shown that mechanical pruning is acceptable for fruit yield and quality, but growers should devote time every other year or so to perform some additional hand pruning to remove dead wood and shoots with poor orientation, and select or encourage new fruiting "bearers." Fresh muscadine growers need to perform this additional hand pruning yearly to maintain an open canopy and optimize fruit quality. Studies are ongoing at NCSU to determine the key number of buds per vine to leave for maximum yield and fruit quality for both the fresh and processed markets – stay tuned for updates!

Be sure to remove tendrils that may be girdling the trunk or cordon. These tendrils become very hard and eventually act as a tourniquet, preventing the flow of water and nutrients from the roots to the fruit-producing shoots of the vine, and preventing the flow of carbohydrates from the photosynthetic regions of the vine (leaves) back to the roots. Remember, the more stress a vine is under, the more prone it will be to disease and cold injury.

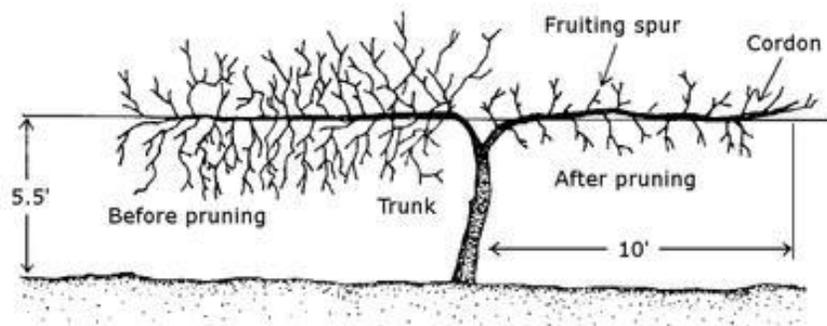
Still have questions about pruning? Contact the Hoke County Cooperative Extension Center at 910-875-3461 or Scotland County Extension Center at 910-277-2422. A grape pruning workshop is planned for Saturday, February 25, from 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. at the O. P. Owens Agriculture Center, 455 Caton Road, Lumberton, NC 28360. Contact Mack Johnson at 910-671-3276 by Wednesday, February 22 to register.

Weed Management

Before bud break in the spring, control for weeds under the vines using recommendations in the 2008 Southeast Regional Muscadine Grape Integrated Management Guide (<http://www.smallfruits.org/SmallFruitsRegGuide/Guides/2008/2008muscadineIMG22108.pdf>) or the 2017 NC Agricultural Chemicals Manual (<https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/north-carolina-agricultural-chemicals-manual>).

For further information on muscadine grapes in North Carolina visit <https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/muscadine-grapes-in-the-home-garden>

Connie Fisk, Former NCSU Employee



Right Plant, Right Place

2017 All-American Flower Selections for Your Garden

As you plan your garden this year, consider some of the newer varieties recognized as All-American Selections (AAS). AAS goal is to “promote new garden varieties with superior garden performance judged in impartial trails in North America.”

AAS recognizes both flowers and vegetables. This month, we will look at the national winners for flowers.

Two varieties of Vinca have been recognized as 2017 AAS National winners. Vinca Mega Bloom Orchid Halo is one of a new series of Vinca bred to withstand heat and humidity without succumbing to disease. Orchid Halo produces huge bright rich purple blossoms with a wide white eye creating a striking look for the garden, even from a distance. Plants maintain a nice, dense habit with flowers staying on top of the foliage for full flower power color. Vinca Mega Bloom Pink Halo produces huge soft pink blossoms with a wide white eye. These flowers present a striking look in the garden, even from a distance. Plants maintain a nice, dense habit with flowers staying on top of the foliage for full flower power color.



Vinca Pink Halo



Asian Garden Celosia



Geraniums

Asian Garden Celosia blooms on sturdy stems, keeping the bright pink color all summer long, holding up even through some of the first frosts of the season. AAS Judges commented on the fact that this celosia was a pollinator-magnet, making this AAS Winner a sure bet for pollinator-friendly gardens.

Geraniums are always popular. This year a geranium with an outstanding deep red velvety flower color and great branching habit, Calliope® was unmatched in the AAS Trials when compared to other market varieties. This AAS Winner has a mounded, semi-spreading growth habit with strong stems supporting the flower heads that are loaded with deep red blossoms. These plants work great in containers, combination plantings, hanging baskets as well as in an in-ground landscape. Gardeners will enjoy exceptional landscape performance in normal conditions as well as in more challenging high heat and drought conditions.

For a complete listing of All-American Selections, visit <http://www.all-americanselections.org/>

Organic and Sustainable Gardening

Attracting Pollinators to Your Garden

Follow these simple steps to create a pollinator-friendly landscape around your home or workplace.

- **Use a wide variety of plants that bloom from early spring into late fall.**
Help pollinators find and use them by planting in clumps, rather than single plants. Include plants native to your region. Natives are adapted to your local climate, soil and native pollinators. Do not forget that night-blooming flowers will support moths and bats.
- **Avoid modern hybrid flowers, especially those with "doubled" flowers.**
Often plant breeders have unwittingly left the pollen, nectar, and fragrance out of these blossoms while creating the "perfect" blooms for us.
- **Eliminate pesticides whenever possible.**
If you must use a pesticide, use the least-toxic material possible. Read labels carefully before purchasing, as many pesticides are especially dangerous for bees. Use the product properly. Spray at night when bees and other pollinators are not active.
- **Include larval host plants in your landscape.**
If you want colorful butterflies, grow plants for their caterpillars. They WILL eat them, so place them where unsightly leaf damage can be tolerated. Accept that some host plants are less than ornamental if not outright weeds. A butterfly guide will help you determine the plants you need to include. Plant a [butterfly garden!](#)
- **Create a damp salt lick for butterflies and bees.**
Use a dripping hose, drip irrigation line, or place your bird bath on bare soil to create a damp area. Mix a small bit of table salt (sea salt is better!) or wood ashes into the mud.
- **Spare that limb!**
By leaving dead trees, or at least an occasional dead limb, you provide essential nesting sites for native bees. Make sure these are not a safety hazard for people walking below. You can also [build a bee condo](#) by drilling holes of varying diameter about 3 to 5 inches deep in a piece of scrap lumber mounted to a post or under eaves.
- **You can add to nectar resources by providing a hummingbird feeder.**
To make artificial nectar, use four parts water to one part table sugar. Never use artificial sweeteners, honey, or fruit juices. Place something red on the feeder. Clean your feeder with hot soapy water at least twice a week to keep it free of mold.
- **Butterflies need resources other than nectar.**
They are attracted to unsavory foodstuffs, such as moist animal droppings, urine and rotting fruits. Try putting out slices of overripe bananas, oranges and other fruits, or a sponge in a dish of lightly salted water to see which butterflies come to investigate. Sea salt provides a broader range of micronutrients than regular table salt.
- **Learn more about pollinators**
Get some guidebooks and learn to recognize the pollinators in your neighborhood. Experiment with a pair of close-focusing binoculars for butterflies, bees and hummingbirds.

Source: <https://www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/pollinators/gardening.shtml>

February Gardening Chores

Roses - According to Horticulture Extension Specialist Kim Powell, the most important thing when considering pruning is to look at the buds. The gardener who prunes too early will gamble future growth to frost, and one who prunes too late will have a plant weakened by loss of sap. So, watch for the buds: when they begin to swell, go ahead and prune. Spring pruning also allows for removal of wood which was damaged by the winter. This is helpful in the overall shaping of the rose. The height of the plant can be controlled by pruning, and even after a severe pruning new canes will usually grow to the desired height. Follow this link from NCSU Extension for more information on rose growing and pruning information. <https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/roses-for-north-carolina>

Bare Root Roses: Bare root roses are showing up in the local garden centers now. Try to pick yours out early and then get them in the ground before new growth begins this spring. If you purchase a bare root rose, remove the wrapper and all packing material before soaking roots in a bucket of water for at least two hours (no longer than 12 hours). Prune roots that are broken, injured, or too long.

Fruit Trees: Apply dormant oil to fruit trees to manage scale, mites and other insects. Also, prune fruit trees according to the following NCSU Extension Publication: <https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/training-and-pruning-fruit-trees-in-north-carolina>

Evergreen Shrubs: Prune deciduous summer-flowering trees and shrubs and broadleaf evergreens. Overgrown shrubs in need of renewal can be trimmed as low as 8"-12" tall in late February.

Plant of the Month:

Japanese Flowering Apricot (*Prunus mume*)

A flowering tree any time of year is a glorious gift. A flowering tree in winter is pure delight. When winter days seem especially dreary, Japanese flowering apricot, *Prunus mume*, produces beautiful, delicate flowers with a rich fragrance that's certain to boost winter spirits.

Most varieties of Japanese flowering apricot bloom sporadically in late winter and early spring. Their season ranges from mid-February through mid-March in most of the state. Although the flowers may be frozen by a sudden cold snap, there is usually another flush of blooms that will open with the next warm spell. Flowers may be white, pink or red. In addition to providing flowers when little else is in bloom, most varieties will easily perfume a small garden. Branches can be cut to bring early spring blooms and fragrance indoors. Japanese flowering apricot reaches about 25 feet. Plant habit, size, flower color and fragrance vary depending on the variety. It will flower best in full sun.



Soil should be fairly well-drained with a pH between 5.5 and 6.5. This relatively new plant has not been thoroughly tested for cold hardiness. However, plants at the J. C. Raulston Arboretum (JCRA) in Raleigh have come through temperatures as low as -7 F with minimal damage, so it should be hardy even in most of the North Carolina mountains. For winter flowers and fragrance, it would certainly be worth a try, especially near a

patio or entryway. The JCRA holds one of the most extensive collections of Japanese flowering apricots {*Prunus mume* cultivars) in the eastern U.S. These beautiful trees provide vibrant and welcome color throughout the winter months. Look for newer or distinctive cultivars such as 'Matsurabara Red' with its double pink-red flowers, 'Tojibai' with its white flowers, 'W.B. Clarke' with its weeping form and double pink flowers, and 'Bridal Veil', a weeping tree with white flowers. Visit the JCRA Web site at www.jcra.ncsu.edu for future events highlighting these fabulous trees. Linda Blue NC Cooperative Extension, Retired.

Name this weed.....

Common Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*)



Homeowners have a love-hate relationship with dandelions. Children love to pick the bright yellow dandelion flowers because they are close to the ground, pretty and easy to hold. Pollinators love dandelions for their nectar and pollen. For those that enjoy a beautiful green lawn, they are in a constant battle to remove them from the turf area.

Dandelions are a common perennial lawn weed that spreads by wind-blown seeds and new shoots from roots or root segments. When temperatures reach about 50 degrees Fahrenheit dandelion buds start to appear in your lawn.

Seed Dispersal

The dried flower heads that have gone to seed look like puffballs and are made up of 1/8-inch seeds. The ends of each seed have a parachute-type structure on the tip. This allows the wind to carry them for miles, aiding in dispersion.



Cultural Management

Maintaining a dense, healthy, vigorous lawn is the best method of managing many turf weeds. As such, the use of adapted species of grass, adequate fertilization, proper mowing and irrigation practices, and appropriate insect and disease management all help to minimize dandelion occurrence. Low nitrogen fertility may result in high populations due to less competition from desirable turfgrass species. Mowing the turfgrass area as soon as the first dandelion flower-heads appear can help to reduce further infestations. In small areas, dandelion plants can be managed by hand, provided that the taproot, which grows 6" to 18" into the ground, is removed.

Guidelines for Using Postemergence Herbicides

When choosing an herbicide, be sure that it will control the targeted weed and that it is recommended for your turf. Before using, read the entire label and follow it precisely for rate and timing. The following tips will help you achieve optimum control.

- Most broadleaf weeds are best treated in the spring or fall when air temperatures are between 65 and 85° F. During hotter temperatures, turf damage is more likely to occur.
- At the time of treatment, soil moisture should be adequate. When stressed by drought, weed control is poor and turf damage may occur.
- Do not mow immediately prior to or after application. Mowing lessens the amount of herbicide that contacts weed leaf surface area.
- Treat weeds when no rain is expected for at least 24 hours with spray applications.
- Avoid treating on windy days because herbicide drift can injure ornamental plants.
- Best results occur when weeds are young.
- For acceptable control, repeat applications 10 to 14 days apart may be required.

For complete herbicide control recommendations, visit NCSU Turffiles at the following address:
http://www2.turffiles.ncsu.edu/PDFFiles/004112/Dandelion_Common.pdf

Dandelions as a Pollination Source

Dandelion's peak flowering time is from late March to May, when many bees and other pollinators emerge from hibernation. Each flower in fact consists of up to 100 florets, each one packed with nectar and pollen. This early, easily available source of food is a lifesaver for pollinators in spring.

Bumblebees, solitary bees and honeybees all visit dandelions for food, along with hoverflies, beetles, and some butterflies. Goldfinches and house sparrows eat the seed.

ABC....XYZ Gardening Vernacular

In this section of the newsletter, we will focus on a gardening 'word of the month' from the letter a to z.

F is for Fasciation

Fasciation, also known as crested, is a relatively rare condition of abnormal growth in vascular plants in which the apical meristem (Growing tip), which normally is concentrated around a single point and produces approximately cylindrical tissue, instead becomes elongated perpendicularly to the direction



of growth, thus, producing flattened, ribbon-like, crested, or elaborately contorted tissue. Causes may include hormonal, genetic, bacterial, fungal, viral and environmental causes.

Community Gardening Calendar

Muscadine Grape Pruning Workshop – Saturday, February 25, from 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. O. P. Owens Agriculture Center, 455 Caton Road, Lumberton, NC 28360. Contact Mack Johnson by phone at 910-671-3276 or by email at mack_johnson@ncsu.edu by Wednesday, February 22 to register.

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

QUOTE:

“Winter is the time for comfort, for good food and warmth, for the touch of a friendly hand and for a talk beside the fire: it is the time for home.” Edith Sitwell

We hope you find this newsletter informative and fun.

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

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