



Coming Events

Workshops and Demonstrations

Thurs., Feb. 8, 10:00a DEMO

Grapevine Pruning With Andy Zeman

Thurs., Feb 22, 10:00a

Homies and Honeys—Native Bees and a Honey Bee Update

Thurs., Mar. 1, 10:00a DEMO*

*Fruit Tree Pruning at Buster Sykes Farm**

Thurs., Mar. 8, 10:00a DEMO

Pruning Shrubs and Trees

Thurs., Mar. 22, 10:00a

Spring Birds-Watch your Windows!

Thurs., Apr. 5, 10:00a

Home Vegetable Gardening

Thurs., Apr. 19, 10:00a

The Herb Garden

*Fruit Tree pruning Demo will be at Buster Sykes Demonstration Orchard, 2430 Turner Road, Mebane, NC. Registration is required for all classes. Click the image to register online:



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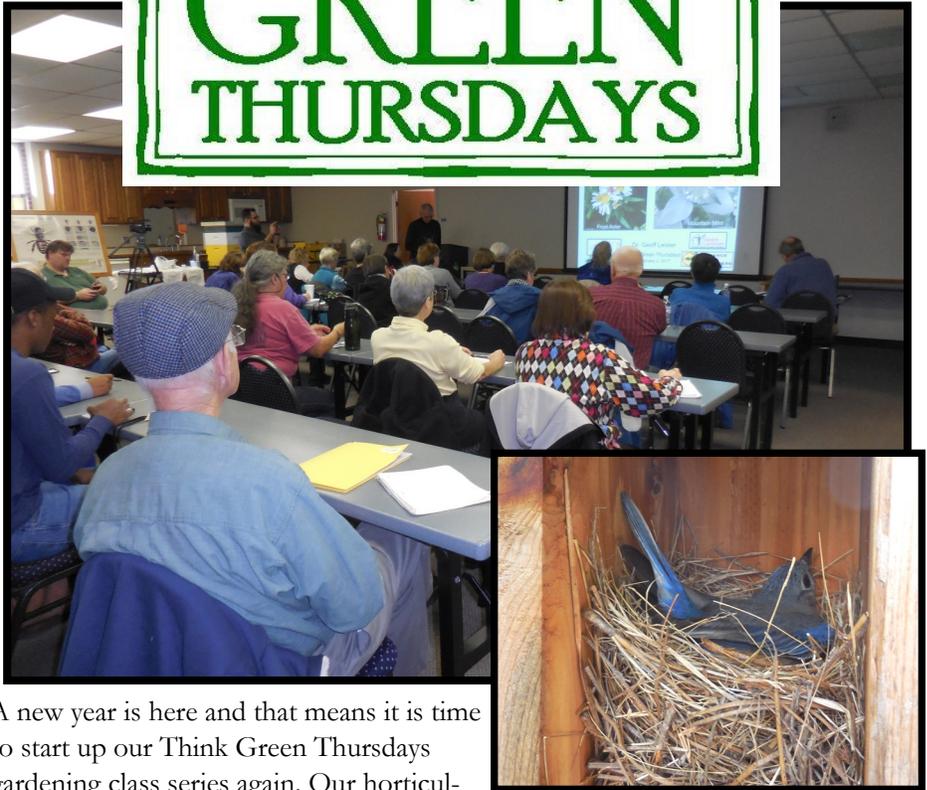
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We're At It Again!



A new year is here and that means it is time to start up our Think Green Thursdays gardening class series again. Our horticulture advisory group, class participants and readers of this newsletter suggest the class topics. When Chris and I first discussed offering these gardening classes, I wondered how we would come up with enough topics to fill the year's schedule. The problem we have now is how to get all the classes we want to do in one year.

We always try to add something new every year while many popular topics like pruning, vegetable gardening and lawn care are repeated. Adding new classes means something else is left off. Some of the other regular classes like daylilies and rain barrels may be offered every other year. It is a challenge trying to get every class we want to present on the calendar. We have scheduled 19 TGT classes for 2018 that will consist of a variety of different subjects. A complete class list for 2018 can be found on our website. <http://alamance.ces.ncsu.edu/>

Get A Refresher Or Learn Something New!

While Chris and I are good at what we do, we cannot be experts in all horticulture related topics. In order to have new and interesting subjects for our classes we need the help of others. Our guest presenters make the wide variety of class topics possible.

We start on February 8 with grapevine pruning. Andy Zeman of Benjamin Vineyards has presented the class for several years and will demonstrate proper pruning practices after a classroom presentation. The February 22 class is on native bees and honey bees and will be presented by Master Gardener and beekeeper, Dr. Geoff Leister. This is an interesting and important topic especially with the decline in the honey bee population.



March 1 is fruit tree pruning with Dr. Mike Parker from NC State. This will be the first class offered at our new Buster Sykes Farm demonstration orchard. March 8, I will do a woody plant pruning demonstration in the Arbor Gate garden at the Ag Building. Dr. Lynn Moseley, Master Gardener and local bird expert, will have a class on spring birds on March 22, including information on protecting the birds and your windows during mating season.



The April 5 class is on home vegetable gardening. I will cover basic gardening techniques with a focus on watering and pest management. Continuing on the gardening theme, Chris will present a class on herb gardening April 19. While many herbs are annuals, some can be perennial additions to the garden.

Warm season lawns is the topic for the May 3 class. Tall fescue makes a nice lawn in the spring and fall, but leaves a little something to be desired in the summer. If you want a nice green lawn in the summer, a warm season lawn is the answer.



Master Gardener Sharon Yarbrough will present a class on carnivorous plants on May 17. Carnivorous plants are unique plants that capture prey (primarily insects) in order to obtain nutrients because they tend to live in soils that have little to no nutrients in them.

Eleanor Frederick, our Family and Consumer Sciences agent, will present the June 7 class on vermicomposting. Vermicomposting is a great way to compost food waste in your home all year long. Chris leads the June 21 class on woody ornamental propagation. This class will give you the opportunity to collect cuttings from the Arbor Gate garden to try to root on your own.

This is just the beginning! There are 19 classes in all from February 8th through October 25th. Click the image for a complete listing with links to register:



If you have any questions about our Think Green Thursdays classes or any other gardening topic, give Chris or me a call.

NC STATE

**Extension
Master Gardener**

January Garden Tips

Review your garden from last year and lay out this year's garden design. Order plants and seeds, keeping an eye toward crop rotation to help prevent disease.

Houseplants don't require much water or fertilizer this time of year, but attention must be paid! Use a damp cloth to wipe dust from plants that have smooth leaves. Use a soft-bristled brush to clean the hairy leaves of African violets and gloxinia. Water only when soil feels dry, then take the plant to a sink and water thoroughly, allowing excess to drain completely before replacing the plant on its saucer.

Use a magnifying glass to inspect both sides of leaves of your houseplants. Look for signs of insects. Sticky residue may indicate the presence of mealy bugs or soft scale. Small, fine webs may indicate spider mite infestation. Call the Alamance County Cooperative Extension for information on the treatment of insect problems on houseplants.

Group clean, insect-free houseplants together to increase humidity during these dry winter months. Mist the group periodically to further enhance air moisture.

If your houseplants are on a windowsill, keep the leaves away from the glass, especially when the weather is very cold. The glass will conduct the cold and may burn tender leaves. Draw the drapes or shades at night for more protection.

Check the condition of stored bulbs and tubers of dahlias, tuberous begonias, caladiums and callas. Bulbs stored in warm, humid conditions are prone to rot. Discard any bulbs that feel soft or rotten.

When the weather turns frigid, remember the wildlife. Fresh, free-flowing water is essential to all animals, so keep birdbaths ice-free and filled up. You might consider a heated birdbath for a worry-free way to serve up fresh water to winter visitors.

Sow seeds of cool-weather vegetables (broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, collards, lettuce, onions and spinach) in containers for transplanting into the garden in March. Outdoors, sow edible-pod peas and garden peas beginning this month. Continue to plant asparagus.

On a mild day (above 55 degrees) you can spot treat winter annual weeds, including wild onions and garlic. These slippery-leaved stinkers will require the addition of a spreader sticker to your mix to help the chemical adhere to the leaves. As for the henbit, deadnettle and chickweed, consider leaving them for the bees. On a mild day, honey bees will venture out to forage, and winter "weeds" are on their menu.

Toward the end of this month, apply a dormant horticultural oil to roses. Do this before bud-break to smother over-wintering insects and their eggs. Read the label carefully for instructions on use.



Arbor Gate Plant of the Month



Fragrant Wintersweet

Chimonanthus praecox

So, it's winter in the garden. Brilliant fall colors have faded to shades of taupe and brown and even the most ardent gardeners have retreated to their firesides to dream about spring. But, there is beauty to be found in the winter garden! Witness the beautiful flaking bark of oak leaf hydrangea, the fanciful curled flower heads of Maidengrass, a brilliant red berry shining among the spiny cladophylls of Butcher's Broom. And, yes! There are flowers! If you're looking for a real early bloomer, look for plants with the word "*praecox*" in the name. *Praecox* means "very early", and, in the case of Fragrant Wintersweet, that means January! The secret to enjoying a fragrant winter bloomer is to plant it near a walkway or entrance, so that it can be enjoyed even when passersby are merely scurrying from one indoor spot to another.

Fragrant Wintersweet is a deciduous shrub that typically grows 10-15' tall and to 8-12' wide. It does best in well-drained soil in full sun to part shade. Given a bit of protection from winter's worst, the sweetly fragrant flowers will persist into February. Prune after flowering, as flowers are formed on old wood. Seed will germinate readily if collected and planted just as the receptacles are changing from green to brown (May-June). Plants may take between five and ten years to bloom from seed.

Read more here:

<https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/all/chimonanthus-praecox/>

