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SOLUTIONS

Newsletter of the Alamance County Cooperative Extension Service

What's the Buzz at Extension?

Spring is a busy time of year and things are certainly buzzing around the Alamance County Extension office. The telephone is ringing more and people are walking in with questions. Dwayne is checking tobacco greenhouses and Lauren is out looking at pastures. Taylor is working on the school embryology program and Eleanor is lining up her spring foods classes.

Spring is my favorite season of the year. Trees and shrubs are blooming and everything is turning green again. Unfortunately, some of our trees were fooled with the warm spell we had in February. I have seen some plum and peach trees in bloom, and that does not bode well for those crops. It is not likely we can avoid another hard freeze before mid-April, but I am still hopeful for a good tree-ripe peach in July.

We look forward to providing solutions to your requests this spring. Whether your interest is traditional row crops and livestock, programs for youth or your home lawn and garden, we are here to help.

Mark S. Danieley



Calendar Updates

- Thurs., Apr. 5 10:00 **THINK GREEN THURSDAY** - Home Vegetable Gardening
- Fri., Apr. 6 🍀 Deadline to order from 4-H Plant Sale
- Tues., Apr. 10 Alamance Cattlemen's Field Day
- Tues., Apr. 10 *More in My Basket at the Market* for SNAP recipients (see page 4)
- Sat., Apr. 14 8:00-12:00 Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day (see page 5)
- Sat., Apr. 14 Homegrown In The Park, Burlington City Park
- Wed.-Thurs., Apr. 18-19 Central Piedmont Livestock Show and Sale
- Wed.-Fri., Apr. 18-20, 8:30 AM—4:30 PM Pick up days for 4-H Plant Sale
- Sat., Apr. 21 🍀 Deadline to apply to teach a 4-H Summer Sizzle class
- Thurs., Apr. 19 10:00 **THINK GREEN THURSDAY** - The Herb Garden
- Thurs., May 3 10:00 **THINK GREEN THURSDAY** - Warm Season Lawns
- Thurs., May 3 🍀 6:00 PM 4-H County Activity Day
- Tues., May 8 Food Demonstration and Nutrition Class at North Park Farmer's Market
- Thurs., May 17 10:00 **THINK GREEN THURSDAY** - Carnivorous Plants
- Thurs., Jun. 7 10:00 **THINK GREEN THURSDAY** - Vermicomposting
- Thurs., Jun. 21 10:00 **THINK GREEN THURSDAY** - Propagation Workshop

For more information and to register
 Call 336.570.6740 or visit
<http://alamance.ces.ncsu.edu/>



A Real Buzz Kill

by: Mark Danieleley, Horticulture Agent

I will have to admit that I have not always appreciated honey bees. When I was a teenager, my father had a beehive beside our garden and if I got too close, they would persuade me to work elsewhere. I have now a greater appreciation for honey bees after attending several bee classes by Dr. Geoff Leister, Alamance County Master Gardener Volunteer and beekeeper.

Honey bees are the most important insect pollinator for crops grown in North Carolina. Vegetable and fruit crops that require honey bees for pollination include apples, blueberries, cucumbers, melons, peaches, squash and strawberries. Unfortunately there has been a dramatic decline in the honey bee population in recent years



because of the introduction of two exotic parasitic mites. These mites can destroy an entire colony if left untreated. Most wild honey bee colonies have been wiped out by these mites. Our farms and gardens would be pretty sad if not for the efforts of our local beekeepers to maintain honey bee colonies.

There is another threat to the honey bee population and that is the insecticide imidacloprid. Imidacloprid is a neonicotinoid insecticide that became available in 1994 and now is the most widely used insecticide in the world. It is used on crops, ornamentals, pets, livestock and turf. The main advantage of using imidacloprid is its systemic activity. The chemical can be taken up by the plant and transported into the leaves where most of the insect pests feed. That is very useful for pests like aphids, soft scale, whiteflies and leaf-feeding beetles that are hard to control with a typical foliar spray. The systemic activity of imidacloprid also means the chemical finds its way into the flowers contaminating the pollen and nectar.

I had always assumed that if the imidacloprid was applied after the plants finished blooming, the insect pests would be controlled without harming the bees. I was wrong! The latest research shows imidacloprid has a half-life of 1000 days in the soil depending on the rate applied. That means there is a strong possibility it is still in the soil and is still available for plant uptake the next year when the plants flower again. Even if the concentration of the chemical is not enough to kill the honey bees immediately, there are definite negative effects of a sub-lethal dose. A sub-lethal dose of imidacloprid can be a little as 20 parts per billion.

A sub-lethal dose can affect the hive in many ways. The contaminated pollen/nectar is fed to the queen, larvae and others. This exposure can lead to poor navigation and failure of some bees to return to the hive. This obviously affects foraging success which then leads to reduced food stores and honey production. Without sufficient food reserves, we get reduced worker survival and low overwinter survival of the colony. The contamination also affects reproduction, reducing brood and drone production. If all of that is not enough, a sub-lethal dose of imidacloprid reduces the colonies' resistance to mites and other pathogens.

Now that I have all this information, I am no longer recommending the use of any insecticides that contain the active ingredient imidacloprid. The question then is what insecticides contain imidacloprid? Almost every manufacturer and brand has these products. If the insecticide label contains the word 'systemic' you should look very carefully at the active ingredients and avoid imidacloprid. What do you do if you already have imidacloprid products? The Alamance County landfill is sponsoring a Hazardous Household Waste collection day Saturday April 14. That would be a good time to responsibly dispose of unwanted pesticides as well as many other household products.

What's the Buzz With Alamance County 4-H?

Taylor Jones, 4-H Agent

The hive is busy buzzing as we gear up for spring activities here in 4-H and we are swarming with information to help you and your family get involved!

We have many exciting events coming up this spring that you should definitely be a part of. Moving on into 2018, there are many activities and projects we are looking forward to in 4-H. From countywide community service, to citizenship opportunities, and more, there will be something for everyone. We are gearing up for our County Activity Day in May, which will be your opportunity to practice those public speaking skills in order to prepare for District Activity Day and State Presentations! More information on that is below. We also are excited to start planning our 2017 Summer Sizzle Program. Along with a couple of themed county camp weeks, we are lucky in that we have access to so many museums and natural areas and I cannot wait to incorporate that into our summer activities! I am very excited to see what spring and summer have to offer us and cannot wait to share it with you!



County Activity Day



This year, our County Activity Day will be held on May 3rd, starting at 6:00PM here at the 4-H Office. Registration for County Activity Day can be done online at alamance.ces.ncsu.edu or at the 4-H office. Please note, this event is for you to practice your presentation and receive feedback for how to move forward for DAD. Also, we will be selecting the two talent acts for DAD at County Activity Day so if you are interested in representing Alamance County in talent, please register for that as well. We will have some awesome judges that are really excited to hear your presentations! Please also be reminded that County Activity Day is not required to participate in DAD however you will have to let me know you want to participate. I am looking forward to seeing everyone on May 3rd!

Residential Overnight Camp Week

We are gearing up for an awesome 4-H summer camp week this year. Our camp week will be July 8th through the 13th. We still have a few spots open as of today so if you are interested, contact the 4-H office as soon as possible.

For those of you who are signed up and getting excited about camp like us, Our annual camp night to discuss overnight residential 4-H camp at Betsy Jeff Penn 4-H Camp will be held on Tuesday, June 5th, at 6:00PM here at the 4-H office. If you have signed up to attend overnight camp with Alamance County 4-H this year the week of July 8th through the 13th, please make plans to attend this very important meeting. We will go over and discuss all the forms and things that need to be taken care of and signed in order for your child to attend camp at Betsy Jeff Penn. Please RSVP for this night by May 18th so we know who we can expect to attend. If you have any additional questions about camp, please call Taylor Jones at 336-570-6740.



Summer Sizzle Proposals



Summer is on the way and we are so excited to bring some wonderful day camp opportunities to your youth. It is now time to start planning for those of you who are interested in teaching or leading a Summer Sizzle workshop this summer. Please read through the form carefully when submitting a form. Also, please note that there may be time conflicts with other events and therefore not every workshop will be chosen this year. Please wait to hear confirmation from the 4-H office regarding your workshop before gathering supplies and resources. We want to accommodate everyone who is willing to teach our 4-

Hers a life skill. Please put as much detail/information on the form as possible in order for us to better prepare for this summer. Those with more open schedules will be chosen first. We anticipate loads of awesome things, so be sure to get yours in by the deadline of April 21st. (Same as County Activity Day deadline). Can't wait until summer is here!

The Food Buzz

By Eleanor Frederick, FCS Agent

Farmers Markets are BACK!

Asparagus, broccoli, greens, mushrooms, radishes, turnips... All are currently in season and available from your local farmers market! Many of the farmers markets in the area are opening for the season beginning in April. Pick a time to go explore one close to you! You can check out our list of local markets [here](#) or on our website under the heading "Local Food."



Sweet Like Honey

We hear a lot about sugar these days; mostly it's about how much we should (or shouldn't) have, but there is also a lot of discussion around the types of sugar we put in our bodies. Walk down the baking aisle in a grocery store and you will be met with an array of options for sweetening food. Organic, natural, raw, pure... The "health food" words are all present, but does that mean those products are better for you than regular sugar? Not necessarily. It is still important to read the nutrition facts and follow the serving size indicated. White sugar alternatives like honey can be helpful if you are able to use less and still achieve satisfactory sweetness.



Veggie Spotlight

Asparagus is back in season and is an excellent source of Vitamin K, folate, and iron. To prepare asparagus for cooking, rinse well with water and cut off 1-2 inches from the base of the stalks (the "woody" part). Try this roasted asparagus recipe for a vegetable side dish worthy of a spot on a restaurant table!



Asparagus with Lemon-Parmesan Breadcrumbs

~ Recipe adapted from *Cooking Light*

1 pound asparagus spears, trimmed
Cooking spray
1/3 cup panko (bread crumbs)
1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese
2 teaspoons grated lemon rind
1 teaspoon olive oil
2 tablespoons lemon juice
Dash of salt and pepper

1. Preheat broiler to HIGH, place oven rack about 6 inches from heating element.
2. Arrange asparagus on a foil-lined baking sheet. Coat asparagus with cooking spray.
3. Broil asparagus 6-8 minutes or until almost tender, stirring asparagus once.
4. Combine panko, Parmesan cheese, grated lemon rind, olive oil, salt, and pepper in a bowl. Sprinkle mixture over asparagus. Broil 2 minutes. Drizzle with lemon juice and serve.

Mark your calendar! Upcoming FCS events

- April 10, 2018: More in My Basket at the Market: A food and nutrition class for SNAP recipients – North Park Farmers Market (classes on third Tuesdays during market season)
- May 8, 2018: Food demo and nutrition class for all – North Park Farmers Market (classes on second Tuesdays during market season)

Buzzing Into Spring with New Pastures

By Lauren Langley, Livestock Extension Agent

Everywhere you look, new pastures are taking shape across Alamance County. Landowners are interested in converting woodland into pastureland for grazing livestock and/or horses. Most farms I have visited with recently are looking to expand their current pastureland so they can add more livestock. Others are starting out brand new to pasture management. No matter if you are a pro or just starting out, here are a few tips to consider when converting woodland into pastureland:



- **Plan Ahead:** It is never too early to think about fencing, shade trees to keep, water source, and the general flow of the new pasture(s) back to a central area (barn, working facilities, etc.).
- **Top Soil & Stumps:** Some companies do a great job of clearing land with minimal disturbance and others take all the good stuff with them and make it hard to grow grass. It is easier to add fertilizer, lime, and seed if the land has been cleared of stumps and is graded. Make sure you communicate and stay involved with the company you hire so they know your expectations.
- **Soil Sampling:** Odds are you will have to add fertilizer and lime on newly cleared land so a soil sample is a must! This will let you know what nutrients need to be added and how much in order to have a successful establishment.
- **Timing:** Pasture establishment takes time! If you want a cool-season perennial pasture such as fescue or orchardgrass, you will need to plant in September-October. If you want a warm-season perennial pasture such as bermudagrass, you will need to plant in April-May. Your timing may be off and let's say, for example, your land is cleared in the spring but you want to plant in the fall, you can always plant a warm-season annual that will cover the ground until you are ready to plant.
- **Grazing Caution:** Newly established pastures need time to grow and form roots before being grazed. Expect your new pasture to sit out 12 months if it is perennial pasture. If you are planting annuals, you can graze during the growing season without waiting.

Upcoming Events:

- April 10: Alamance County Cattlemen's Field Day
- April 18-19: Central Piedmont Jr. Livestock Show & Sale

Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day

The next Collection Day will be Saturday, April 14, from 8 am until 12 pm at 100 Stone Quarry Road, Haw River. The types of hazardous waste that will be accepted are as follows:

- ☺ Household cleaners, drain openers, toilet bowl cleaners, oven cleaners, disinfectants
- ☺ Solvents, thinners, shellacs, varnishes, sealers, wood preservatives
- ☺ Automotive products including brake fluid, antifreeze, used motor oil (up to 5 gallons), filters, gasoline
- ☺ Pesticides
- ☺ Miscellaneous materials such as acids, bases, kerosene, batteries, photographic chemicals, pool chemicals, mercury, fluorescent tubes
- ☺ Latex and oil based paint and spray paint



 **The following will NOT be accepted:** Gas cylinders, radioactives/smoke detectors, medical waste, electronics/TVs/computers, explosives/ammunition

The Buzz About Pond Weeds

By: Dwayne Dabbs, Field Crops Agent.

We have finally made it into spring... Maybe, or at least that is what the calendar is telling us, but the temperature cannot make up its mind what it wants to do. This time of year my desk seems to disappear in paperwork, trying to wrap up the meetings that happened during the winter, and folks bring in pondweeds that always seem to show up when the weather decides that it going to nice again.

I'll try to include some tips in this edition of Solutions about pondweeds. Primarily how to mitigate them from taking over your pond as the spring and summer progress. The first thing about dealing with pondweeds is knowing what species you have; whether it is an algae, a free-floating or rooted-floating weed, a submersed weed, or a shoreline weed. I have included pictures in each category to show how hard it can be to discern what type of weed is what. Each category of weed will determine which strategy you will need to implement in order to control it effectively. In the past I have had folks call and ask about using a pond dye to control weeds. Dyes can be an effective tool in slowing weed growth in your pond, but you have to make sure to keep the concentration of the dye consistent throughout the season, because dyes will not kill the weeds, they just reduce the amount of sunlight that reaches the weeds, therefore reducing their growth.

Algae

There are several different types of algae and many times you have to use a microscope to be able to discern what the species is, since some can look the same on top of the water. One key thing to remember is that Grass Carp will not usually control algae, so you will have to refer to a chemical control to get rid of it. These weeds are very stubborn, so usually it will take several treatments to fully control.



Free-Floating and Rooted-Floating Weeds

Many weeds are in this category, and each year quite a few samples have come into the office. A few that always show are duckweed, watermeal, and an assortment of lilies. These weeds are sometimes hard to get rid of depending on which strategy you use, so identification is critical. Grass carp do not usually do too much with the free-floating weeds, but sometimes can help with the rooted-floating weeds depending on what they are. Usually a chemical control is going to be the most effective means to rid your pond of these weeds.



Submersed Weeds

These are the weeds that hide under the surface of the water. Later in the season, when they start showing on the surface is when some realize that they have a problem. These include several naiad species, coontail, hydrilla, and many more. The good news is grass carp are the most effective on weeds of this type, but it may take some time for the carp to do a noticeable job. If you want them gone faster, there are some chemical controls.



Shoreline Weeds

Most people who have a pond have some of these weeds around the edge, and if you want your pond to be well manicured, they can be an eyesore. Alligator weed, cattails, water primrose, and many more can be found around ponds across the county. They can become an issue if left untreated. If these weeds become an eyesore, there are chemical controls you can use to tidy up the edges of your pond.



These are only a handful of the weeds that are out there, so if you have something growing in your pond, please bring a sample into the office. If it is a small weed like shown in the algae or floating weeds, then you can probably get by with a mason jar, with a tight fitting lid (I do not want to end up wearing the sample) for identification. If the weed is larger, like shown in the submersed or shoreline weeds, then you may need to bring in an entire plant, so that I have flowers, leaves, stems, and roots to look at. As I said, identification is the key to making sure that you control the weeds that are in your pond. Sometimes multiple weeds are present, so you may have to turn to multiple strategies. If you have any questions, or want to bring a sample into the office for me to identify, then please come on. I ask that you please call first, to make sure that I am here before you make the trip, or give me a call (336-570-6740), and I will try to answer the questions that I can over the phone.