



# Alamance Gardener

*Alamance County Cooperative Extension Horticulture Department*

## Coming Events

### Workshops and Demonstrations

- Thurs., Apr. 4, 10:00a and 6:00p  
*Home Vegetable Gardening*
- Thurs., Apr. 11, 10:00a  
*Rain Gardens and Storm Water Mitigation*
- Thurs., Apr. 25, 10:00a  
*A Dalliance With Dahlias*
- Thurs., May 2, 10:00a and 6:00p  
*Dealing With Deer*
- Thurs., May 16, 10:00a  
*The Secret Lives of Birds in Spring*
- Thurs., Jun. 6, 10:00a  
*Growing and Hybridizing Daylilies*
- Thurs., Jun. 20, 10:00a  
*Prehistoric Gardening*
- Thurs., Jul. 11, 10:00a and 6:00p  
*Food Preservation—Put It Up!*

All classes will begin in the auditorium at the Agricultural Building and are free, unless otherwise indicated.

Registration is required. Call 336-570-6740, or register online here:

<http://alamance.ces.ncsu.edu/>

### Contact us :

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## Garden Goals...



I do not know about you, but I am tired of winter. Many people had hoped to plant an early spring garden, but it was either too cold or too wet. If you have a small garden space, you may want to wait a little bit longer and plant your summer garden. I know it is hard for some folks to wait and they may start planting too early. Tomato plants are already in the garden stores and it seems like it is time to get into the garden. You do need to remember that we can still have temperatures in the 20's the first two weeks of April. If you decide to plant early to order to have ripe tomatoes before your neighbor, you need to be prepared to cover your plants in the event of frost.





## *Dream Big, But Start Small.*

If you are new to vegetable gardening there are some things you need to consider before starting your garden. Selecting a garden site is very important to the success of your garden. Be careful not to start with too large a space. If you are over ambitious when starting your garden you may soon get overwhelmed with work and lose interest. The average size family garden should be only 640 square feet (20' X 32'). If you are a first time gardener, a 200 square foot garden will provide plenty of produce without a tremendous time commitment. Many vegetables can be successfully grown in containers on your patio or deck.



*Start with this, instead of*

*this*

There are several other factors to consider when planning your vegetable garden. The most important factor is the amount of sunlight your garden spot receives. Six hours of direct sunlight is necessary and eight to ten is better. Some vegetables tolerate shade better than others. Broccoli, collards, kale, parsley, and lettuce are more tolerant of shade than root and fruit



crops like potatoes and tomatoes. The garden should be planted away from trees, buildings, and shrubs. Good air drainage is important. Try to avoid low spots at base of hills. Low spots warm up slowly in the spring and are prone to form frost pockets in the fall.

Select the vegetables you want to grow and draw a diagram of the garden site. This plan will ensure you have a good variety of produce without too much of any one vegetable. Keep this plan for the future so you can avoid planting related vegetables in the same location more than once in three years. This crop rotation helps prevent the buildup of insects and disease problems, which will reduce the need for pesticides.



*Raised beds serve as the Victory Garden at Extension's Arbor Gate Teaching Garden*

The ideal garden soil is a good loamy soil that is fertile, deep, easily crumbled, well drained, and high in organic matter. Unfortunately most of us don't have that kind of soil. Heavy clay soil can be productive with the addition of some type of organic matter. A 3-4 inch layer of well-rotted leaves, pine bark fines, or compost tilled into the clay soil will improve the drainage and aeration of the soil. Cover crops planted in the fall and tilled into the garden in the spring will help improve the soil. Green manure crops like wheat or ryegrass make good cover crops.

The general recommendation is to take a soil test every three years, but I prefer to take a soil sample every year. Once the pH has been corrected you should not need to apply lime every year, but you will probably need to apply some nitrogen. It is important however to not apply too much nitrogen as that will cause poor fruiting in vegetables like tomatoes and squash. The soil test will give specific recommendations for the proper amount of fertilizer to apply. The pH for most vegetables is 6.0 to 6.5 and it is best to apply lime several months before planting if possible and till the lime into the soil.

If you have any questions about vegetable gardening or any other gardening topic, please give me or Chris a call.

## NC STATE

### Extension Master Gardener



## April Garden Tips

Check leaves of azaleas, rhododendrons and camellias for signs of leaf gall disease. Affected leaves will be unusually thick and waxy. Pinch off these unsightly growths and discard in the trash. There's no need for a fungicide spray.

Begin spraying fruit trees with a home orchard spray as soon as the flower petals fade.

Now is the time to begin to fertilize your warm season lawn (Bermudagrass or zoysia). Apply ½ pound of nitrogen per 1000 square feet (5 pounds of 10-10-10 over an area 10 feet by 100 feet). Repeat the application in June and August.

Mowing season is in full swing for cool-season lawns. To reduce weeds and encourage the long, strong root growth that will better withstand drought, set your mower blade high; at least 3 inches, but 3-1/2 inches is better. Mow frequently this time of year, removing no more than 1/3 of the blade. Leave the clippings

on the lawn; you can reduce the amount of nitrogen fertilizer you add to your lawn by as much as one-third if you recycle.

Start seeds of sweet corn, pole beans, lima and snap beans, cantaloupe, cucumbers, summer squash and watermelons after the 15<sup>th</sup>. For best success with wind-pollinated sweet corn, plant in blocks rather than rows. If you must plant in a row, try using your leaf blower to act as the "wind" and get pollinating!

Of course you're anxious for that first vine-ripe tomato, but wait until the end of the month to set out tomatoes, peppers and eggplant. These do best when the soil warms up and night temperatures are a little warmer; closer to 60 degrees.

Divide, repot and fertilize houseplants before moving them outdoors for their summer vacation at the end of the month. Remember to acustom them gradually to the bright sun after spending the winter indoors.

When selecting summer annuals, look for short, bushy plants with green leaves, well-developed root systems and more buds than flowers. Wait until after danger of frost (approximately April 15<sup>th</sup>) before planting out in the garden.

April is a good month to start scouting for insect pests on your shrubs and trees. Aphids, azalea lace bugs and boxwood leaf miners will be active this month. Look closely at your plants to see what kind of insects might be present. Proper identification is necessary before any control methods are used. Less than three percent of the insects you will see are actually potential plant pests. Most insects are beneficial and will help control the bugs that cause problems. If you have an insect on your shrubs or trees that needs to be identified, you can bring it to the Cooperative Extension Office.





## Arbor Gate Plant of the Month



### Pawpaw

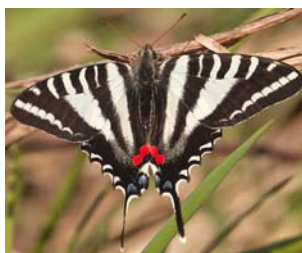
Consider this handsome native to stand in for some over-used and rather invasive exotics, such as Bradford pear. The April flowers won't light up the landscape, but they are fragrant and rather lovely in their own maroon way. The odd flowers are followed by an edible fruit—if you can get to it before the squirrels and raccoons!

Pawpaw is the host plant for the larva of the zebra swallowtail, which caterpillars munch on the coarse-textured dark green leaves nocturnally in spring and summer. They don't eat much, so there will still be plenty of foliage to put on a late autumn show of yellow and gold.

Although *Asimina triloba* does fine in full sun, it's really an understory tree it's happiest at the edge of the woods in a deep, somewhat acidic soil. This is a plant that can take wet feet and is well suited to the rain garden.

Read more here:

<https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/all/asimina-triloba/>



### *Asimina triloba*

