



Coming Events

Coming this month!

Annual Wreath Sale to benefit 4-H—watch our website for dates: alamance.ces.ncsu.edu



Tuesday, November 26th

Last day for free soil testing at the NCD A Soils Lab in Raleigh. Soil samples must be at the lab by that day to avoid the \$4/sample fee. Testing will be free again in April 2020.



We're working on our slate of classes for Think Green Thursdays in 2020.

Classes will begin in February. Let us know if there's a topic you would like to see covered. We'll work on it!

Contact us :

Alamance County Cooperative Extension Service
209-C N. Graham Hopedale Rd.
Burlington, NC 27217

Phone: 336-570-6740

E-mail: Mark Danielely
mark_danieley@ncsu.edu

Chris Stecker
christine.stecker@alamance-nc.com

Visit our website:

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

Follow us on Facebook!



Taking Stock



November is a good time to make an annual evaluation of your home landscape. If you find a place for some new plants, this is the perfect time to plant. You probably have some shrubs that just do not work for you anymore, but have not really noticed how bad they look. I have two arborvitae beside my front porch that are getting too big for their space and may need to be replaced. If they were a broad-leaf evergreen plant, a severe pruning would help, but the arborvitae cannot be pruned like that.

Chris and I were walking around Arbor Gate garden the other day evaluating the garden and making a list of chores for our next Master Gardener Volunteer work-day. We discussed what plants are doing well and which ones are not. Some plants need to be relocated because they are growing poorly in their spot and need to find a happier place. Some plants are growing too well and need to be moved to a larger space. Our trees are getting bigger and are shading spots that were once full sun. Plants that we thought we wanted in our garden have turned out to have undesirable characteristics and need to be removed. These examples really illustrate how gardening is always a learning experience and because of this I encourage you to try to grow different plants.

Just a Little Off The Top

As we were making our notes I noticed that there were several shrubs that needed pruning. Many shrubs will put on a flush of growth in August and September and will need to be pruned some to look their best over the winter. One shrub that we will definitely prune this fall is our Korean boxwoods. These boxwoods usually have some late growth that doesn't get completely hardened off before cold weather. This leads to a fair amount of cold damage and brown leaves that we have to look at all winter. Last fall, we lightly trimmed the new growth on the boxwoods to see what would happen. After this we noticed they had no cold damage at all even though we saw temperatures go down to single digits. Because of this discovery, we will certainly prune the Korean boxwoods again this fall.

We have reached a time now when many other plants can also be pruned. The general recommendation for roses and butterfly bushes is to remove about 1/3 of the total height. This keeps the winter winds from whipping the bushes around too much and damaging the root system. These shrubs should be cut back to about 18" in early March to control the plant size and encourage new growth.

Light pruning (with added emphasis on **light**) can also be beneficial for many other shrubs. Some people have a tendency to get excited and want to do heavy pruning in the fall. For example, even though you can cut back your hollies severely now, I don't recommend it. The first reason is aesthetic. Do you really want to look at bare stems all winter? The other reason is plant health. Severe pruning in the fall can lead to cold damage. I do not know what kind of winter we might have, but I think I will save my heavy pruning for March.

There are a few plants that should be left unpruned until late winter or early spring. Some perennials, such as *Pulmonaria*, retire back to a dense clump of basal foliage that should be left in place. Leave evergreen perennials, such as *Epimedium*, *Euphorbia* and *Helleborus*. Some plants have hollow stems and may be harmed by cutting back too soon. The open ends of hollow stems could allow water to accumulate and subsequent freezes kill the plant. On the No-Prune list are *Penstemon*, *Lantana* and late blooming salvias, such as *Salvia madrensis* and *Salvia leucantha*.

Besides avoiding harm to the plant, another reason to leave perennials unpruned is to provide wildlife with winter forage. Birds and small mammals eat the seeds, of course, but also insects that overwinter on plants in egg masses, cocoons and galls.

If you're unsure about whether to prune, let it be or give us a call.



Unpruned Korean boxwood after a rough winter



Extension Master Gardeners take just a little off the top and sides of Korean boxwood in November



Hardy Lantana "Miss Huff"



Bird-pecked gall on goldenrod



Salvia leucantha Mexican bush sage

NC STATE

Extension Master Gardener



November Garden Tips

Continue planting spring-flowering bulbs this month. As a general rule, plant bulbs two to three times as deep as the bulb is tall. For example, a two-inch tall bulb should be planted about six inches deep (to the bottom of the bulb). Plant tulips, hyacinths, and jonquils about 6 inches apart. Crocus, anemones, and grape hyacinths should be planted 2 inches apart. Remember to plant bulbs with the pointy side up! If deer are a problem, stick to members of the narcissus family—jonquils and daffodils. Alliums and some lesser-known beauties like Siberian squill (*Scilla*), Snowbells (*Leucojum*) and Snowdrops (*Galanthus*) are also relatively deer-resistant.

Set out forget-me-nots, pansies, violas, sweet William, pinks and snapdragons. The National Garden Bureau has named 2019 “The Year of the Snapdragon,” celebrating a flower that has long been a garden favorite!

Put packets of unused seed inside screw-top glass jars. Add a small tissue packet of powdered

milk to the jar to serve as a desiccant, soaking up moisture from the air inside the jar that would otherwise get into the seeds and reduce their longevity. Store the jar in the refrigerator.

After leaf fall, maintain rose beds by raking up and discarding old mulch and fallen leaves and replace with a fresh layer of mulch. This will help reduce next year’s disease and insect problems.

Treat perennial weeds such as mock strawberry and wild garlic this month. Apply a broadleaf herbicide when temperatures are above 50 degrees. Add a spreader-sticker, such as a tiny bit of dish soap (not detergent) to the mix to help the herbicide stick to skinny leaves.

Now is a great time to plant or transplant trees and shrubs. Dig a planting hole no deeper than the plant’s root ball and at least twice as wide. Remove containerized plants from their pots and loosen the roots a bit. Ball-and-burlap plants should be set in the hole

with burlap intact. After placing, loosen the burlap and ties and pull back from around the trunk. Plant containerized or B-and-B plants so the root ball is a couple of inches higher than the surrounding soil. Backfill, then tamp lightly to settle the soil around the roots. Water thoroughly and follow with a 2- to 4-inch layer of mulch, keeping it away from the trunk. Wait until spring to fertilize.

Bring in your rain gauge to avoid freeze damage. Drain and store water hoses to extend their lives. Clean and service garden tools for winter storage. Oil blades of shovels and other tools to keep them from rusting. Drain gas tanks of garden equipment to prevent water buildup.

Reduce botrytis blight on peonies and powdery mildew on bee balm and phlox by trimming away and disposing of old, dead stems and leaves.

Grow leafy vegetables such as lettuce and spinach in a cold frame or beneath a row cover for harvesting all winter long.

Arbor Gate Plant of the Month**Bugle weed***Ajuga reptans* 'Black Scallop'

Looking for an evergreen groundcover that lends a bit of drama to your garden? Take a look at this spreading stunner. Planted in well-drained soil in part sun to part shade, *Ajuga reptans* 'Black Scallop' will quickly fill in an area with dense, glossy green-black rosettes, choking out weeds. You may need to pull it back from some less competitive garden mates and it does have a tendency to invade turf, so, if planted next to your lawn, a barrier is recommended. In spring expect a bonus of six-inch spikes of purple flowers that invite the pollinators to dine. No need to worry about deer browsing; Bugle weed is not on their menu of favorites.

If basic black is not the look you're after, *Ajuga reptans* cultivars come in a veritable rainbow of colored leaves and many interesting leaf shapes.

Read more about Bugle weed here:

<https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/ajuga-reptans/>

