



Alamance County Cooperative Extension Horticulture Department

Coming Events

Workshops and Demonstrations

At this time, all workshops and demonstrations have been cancelled through May.

We are optimistic for these and for those that follow:

Thurs., Jun. 11, 10:00a

Woody Plant Propagation

Thurs., Jun. 25, 10:00a

Pressure Canning

Sat., Jun. 27, 10:00a

Pressure Canning

Thurs., Jul. 16, 10:00a

Water Bath Canning

Sat., Jul. 18, 10:00a

Water Bath Canning

Classes will be held at the Agricultural Building (address below)

Registration is required for all classes.

Register online [here](#):

Contact us :

Alamance County Cooperative
Extension Service

209-C N. Graham Hopedale Rd.

Burlington, NC 27217

Phone: 336-570-6740

E-mail:

Mark Danieleley

mark_danieley@ncsu.edu

Chris Stecker

christine.stecker@alamance-nc.com

Visit our website:

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

Weeds Don't Do "Social Distancing"

Vegetable gardening can be rewarding and challenging. Insects, diseases, squirrels, rabbits, groundhogs and birds may plague your garden at various times. If those are not enough, we always have weeds. I cannot guarantee anything else will grow in your garden, but I can guarantee you will have weeds. Let us talk about some strategies for weed control in the vegetable garden.



First is hoeing and hand pulling. It can be a lot of work, but if you do it on a regular basis, it is not too bad. It can be very satisfying to look back at a row you just weeded to see what you accomplished. Unfortunately, if you are out of town for a few days or we have rainy weather, the weeds may get ahead of you and it becomes not so much fun. That is one reason I like to use mulch on my garden.

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Cover Up!

Mulch can be very beneficial in the vegetable garden. Conserving moisture and controlling weeds in the garden will increase yields and reduce the amount of time spent hoeing and pulling weeds. There are many choices of organic materials that can be used to mulch the garden. Hay, wheat straw, shredded paper, cardboard, leaves and pine bark are a few of the options. Shredded paper and cardboard are good mulches, but need to be held in place with a little bit of some other mulch material or they might blow away.



Hay and wheat straw are good mulches even though they may contain some weed seeds. I prefer to use older hay and straw that has decomposed a little and is less likely to have as many weed seeds. Pine bark fines are a good mulch and can be incorporated into the garden at the end of the season to help improve the soil.



My favorite mulch is leaves. The price is usually right (free) and the leaves can be tilled into the garden.

There are some situations where you may need to use an herbicide, primarily where you have a problem with bermudagrass. No matter how much you hoe or how much mulch you use, bermudagrass finds a way to keep growing. If you have a problem with bermudagrass, there are grass herbicides like Hi-Yield Grass Killer containing sethoxydim that are labeled for vegetable garden use. Organic gardeners can use an herbicide like Scythe to help control bermudagrass and other problem weeds. You do need to be careful to shield the vegetable plants to avoid damage. I usually use a piece of cardboard held next to the vegetable plants to keep the herbicide on the weeds and not on the tomatoes.



Garden bed without mulch



Garden bed mulched with chopped leaves



Mosquito Abatement

While I am on the subject on using pesticides, I want to say a few words about the new trend of spraying your yard for mosquitos. The information I find states the chemical that is used is in the synthetic pyrethroid family. Those products do kill mosquitos and most likely every other insect that is contacted with the spray including butterflies and honey bees. The recommendation I read said the standard treatment needs to be applied every 2-3 weeks. I cannot tell you what to do in your own yard, but this seems to be a bad practice. The constant use of a pyrethroid insecticide in your yard is not only killing beneficial insects, it can also lead to an increase in damaging insects like scales and mites. If you have a problem with mosquitos in your yard, I recommend using a personal protectant spray and not the spray that kills beneficial insects along with the mosquitos.

Get 'Em Before They Get You!

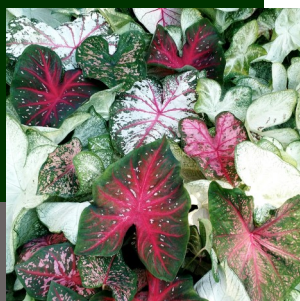
Female mosquitoes (the ones that bite) lay their eggs in standing water. If the water stands for more than a week, a generation of mosquitoes is born. Any standing water will do—from a birdbath, to your stopped up gutters, to a saucer under a pot, or a little used pleasure boat. Empty these sources once a week and there will be fewer mosquitoes to worry about. If you can't empty the standing water, toss in a mosquito "dunk" - a compressed pellet that contains an organic pesticide—*Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis* - a bacteria harmless to humans, pets and fish, but death to mosquito larvae.



Mosquito larvae

NC STATE

Extension Master Gardener



May Garden Tips

That first juicy, vine-ripened tomato from your garden is so close you can almost taste it! Here are a few simple things you can do to extend your tomato season: Avoid overhead watering, but try to keep soil moisture even. This will help reduce disease problems. Soaker hoses or drip irrigation systems are good ways to achieve this without wasting water. Mulching will also help keep soil moisture even.

Wait until tomatoes set their first hand of fruit before fertilizing with 10-10-10. Repeat in three weeks. When the soil temperature reaches 70 degrees, it's time to plant warm-weather vegetables such as lima beans, southern peas, okra, sweet potatoes, peppers, watermelon and cantaloupes.

Begin fertilizing bermudagrass lawns this month at the rate of 1 pound of actual nitrogen per 1,000 square feet. Reapply at this rate in June, July and August. Apply half this amount in September.

Remember to water newly-planted shrubs and trees unless there is an inch or more of natural rainfall during the week. A two-to three-inch layer of fresh mulch will help conserve

moisture and keep the soil cool. Keep the mulch a few inches away from the trunks of the plants.

Fertilize blueberries, blackberries and grapes this month. Find out just what your berries need with a free soil test. Call Cooperative Extension Service at 336-570-6740 for more information.

Continue to plant summer-flowering bulbs in the flower border. Dahlias, caladiums, gladiolas, tuberous begonias, calla lilies, and canas are just a few of the colorful choices available at your local garden center.

When spraying to combat insect pests, keep in mind that beneficial insects share the same plants as the bad guys. Use low-toxicity pesticides when possible, spray at dusk, and avoid spraying flowers as pesticide residues can harm bees. Always read and follow label directions for safe pesticide application. Before you spray, call us at Extension for proper identification and a recommendation.

Move your houseplants outdoors when night temperatures stay above 60 degrees. Avoid sunburn on the leaves by moving the

plants gradually from the relative darkness of the house to their bright summer location. Start in a shady spot and progress slowly to brighter light. Most houseplants summer very well in bright shade, rather than full sun.

Mowing your lawn at the proper height for the type of grass is especially important as temperatures rise. Keep bermudagrass lawns at around one inch. Fescue and fescue-bluegrass lawns should be cut no shorter than 3-1/2 inches. These heights will help maximize turf density and crowd out weeds as well as the other, less desirable, grass types.

Murder Hornets? It's the latest buzz—an invasion of killer wasps sweeping the nation! Fact is, *one* nest was found and destroyed in Washington state last year, as well as a single hornet. Read the article [here](#) to learn the difference between the Asian giant hornet and the European hornet commonly found in North Carolina, as well as some others of our native wasps and bees that you may encounter.

As always, please feel free to bring us a sample or send a photo for proper identification. Call 336-570-6740 for guidance.

Arbor Gate Plant of the Month

Oak Leaf Hydrangea

Hydrangea quercifolia

Hydrangea quercifolia—oak leaf hydrangea—is a low-maintenance woody shrub that shines at woods' edge or as a centerpiece in your perennial border. This great southeastern US native offers four seasons of visual interest, as well as food for butterflies and birds.

The flower show begins in May with branches tipped in panicles of creamy white. In June, the flowers morph into shades of pink to nearly red, depending on the cultivar, then slowly fade to parchment by autumn, when the foliage begins to turn to shades of deep burgundy and bright red. When the colorful leaves finally fall in late winter, the beautiful exfoliating bark of the trunks is exposed.



June color

Size varies by cultivar, from about 4' high by 4' wide to about 8' by 8'. Plant in part sun to shade in well-drained humusy soil. Keep watered until established, after which this plant is fairly drought tolerant.

Read more here:

<https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/hydrangea-quercifolia/>



November color