



Coming Events

October 1-22

4-H Fall Plant Sale—click picture for info:



Monday, November 1

Deadline to apply for Master Gardener Class of 2022 (See page 2 for more information.)

NC STATE

Extension
Master Gardener

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Your Home Orchard Starts Here

So, you're thinking of growing your own fruit. Great idea! But, where do you start? Which plants should you use? How should they be planted?

Thanks to the ongoing work at Buster Sykes Demonstration Orchard, we are learning and sharing the best practices and testing the best varieties of a dozen different kinds of fruit-bearing trees and plants. More than 300 plants occupy this 2-acre orchard in Mebane. (See the next page for more about Buster Sykes Farm.)



Now is a great time to plan and get started on your own home orchard. Begin with a soil test of the area. Collect samples and the Extension Master Gardeners will take them to Raleigh. The NCDA soil lab offers this testing service at no charge until Thanksgiving. Call us for more information.

While you wait for your test results, order your new plants to get your home orchard started. [The 4-H Plant Sale](#) is happening right now! Click [here](#) to choose blackberries, apples, figs, plums and pecans—all varieties that have been chosen because of their suitability for growing in Alamance County.



About the Orchard

In 2006 Coleman Clark “Buster” Sykes signed an agreement with NC State University to place his 170-acre farm in a land trust with the NC Agricultural Foundation. Trusted to the care of Alamance County Cooperative Extension Service, the land was to be used to establish learning centers and demonstrations for youth and adults.

Around 15 acres of the mostly wooded land were cleared and the funds from the sale of the timber support ongoing Extension projects on the property.

In 2015 Alamance County’s Extension horticulture agent Mark Danieleley began planning a 2-acre demonstration orchard to be carved out of what is now known as Buster Sykes Demonstration Farm and Forest. Since then, with the help of Extension specialists and the Extension Master Gardener volunteers, more than 300 fruit plants have been installed, maintained and observed on this 2-acre plot. A wealth of data continues to be compiled. This information, along with the advice of NC State’s fruit specialists, provides a wonderful resource for us to share with you, the hopeful home orchard grower. Stay tuned for live events happening at the orchard in 2022.



Master Gardener Volunteers



Do you love to learn about all things that grow in the ground? Love to share what you’ve learned? Then you may be just the gardener we need!

Applications are now available for the Master Gardener class of 2022, which will begin January 19. Deadline to apply is November 1, 2021.

The 14-week course covers soils and fertilizers, plant ID and botany, lawns, pruning, fruits and vegetables, woody plants, flowers, insects, plant diseases, and integrated pest management.

Initial training includes 42 hours of formal instruction from Extension horticulture agents and specialists, certified arborists and Master Gardeners.

Read more about the program here: [EMGV INFO Brochure 2022](#)

If you’re ready to take on the challenge and join this exceptional group of volunteers, contact Chris Stecker, Program Coordinator: christine.stecker@alamance-nc.com

[Click here for an application:](#)

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Expect the first frost around the middle of October. Before that night, bring in houseplants that have summered outdoors. Inspect them for uninvited guests, such as insects or snakes, and place the plants in a bright spot for the winter. Reduce watering and hold the fertilizer—even houseplants need to rest a bit.

Also on your “to do” list before frost: Harvest sweet potatoes, gourds and winter squash. Pick green tomatoes and wrap them individually in newspaper to ripen at room temperature.

A soil test will help you determine whether you need other nutrients besides nitrogen (the NCDA soil lab doesn’t test for nitrogen, as this nutrient is water soluble and is presumed to be zero by the time you fertilize). Phosphorus and potassium are far less soluble. The soil test will help you decide which kind and how much fertilizer to apply. The test is still free this month, and the Master Gardeners will take them from the Extension office to the NCDA soil lab for you.

Think spring when in the vegetable garden this month. This is a great time to till in compost and lime and any other nutrients and get them working over the winter. You’ll be ready to plant those sugar snap peas when February 2022 rolls around.

Plant pansies, snap dragons, ornamental kale and other cool-season-loving annuals. Wait until after frost to mulch well.

To determine how much fertilizer you will need to spread to get one pound of nitrogen, you’ll need to do a little garden math: The three numbers displayed on a bag of fertilizer represent the percentages of the three main nutrients (nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium) contained in that bag. For example, a bag of 17-17-17 fertilizer contains 17 percent nitrogen, 17 percent phosphorus and 17 percent potassium. To apply one pound of actual nitrogen, divide 1 pound by the percentage contained in the bag; in this case, 0.17. ($1 \div 0.17 = 5.88$) You will need to apply 5.88 pounds of 17-17-17 fertilizer per 1,000

square feet to achieve the recommended 1 pound of actual nitrogen.

Divide peonies in October. Using a garden fork, and keeping well away from the roots, carefully dig the plant. The tuberous root system is brittle, so gently lift out of the soil. Then wash away all soil and remove leaves and stems. Cover with a damp towel and let rest overnight. Using a knife, carefully cut sections with at least three eyes and plenty of roots. Replant divisions, making sure that eyes are not covered by more than one inch of soil. If planted too deeply, flowering will be reduced or possibly eliminated entirely.

Fall is the best time to plant trees and shrubs. The plants will have two seasons to establish a strong root system and be better able to withstand the worst of summer. Dig the planting hole at least twice as wide, but no deeper than the root ball of the plant. Loosen a tight root ball and plant just a little high to allow for settling. Check for good drainage, and water plants thoroughly as you backfill.

Arbor Gate Plant of the Month



Aromatic aster

Symphyotrichum oblongifolium

Hooray! It's aster season! Among our favorites here at Arbor Gate Garden is the North Carolina native, *Symphyotrichum oblongifolium*, specifically the variety "Raydon's Favorite." Rather than the flowers, the common name 'Aromatic Aster' comes from the foliage, which releases a pleasant minty scent when crushed. "Raydon's Favorite" has proven to be a dependable herbaceous perennial that puts on a wonderful fall flower show. This 3' tall by 2-3' wide mounding aster is covered with blue-purple simple ray flowers throughout October. The yellow-centered blooms provide a late-season source of nectar for bees and butterflies. Grow in full sun to part shade and well-drained moist to dry soil. Aromatic Aster stands up well to drought. Propagate by division in the spring or fall or take cuttings in early summer.



Read more here: <https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/symphyotrichum-oblongifolium/>