



Alamance County Cooperative Extension Horticulture Department

### Coming Events



Thu., Mar. 17, 10 a.m.

*Camellias—Winter's roses*

Sat., Mar. 19, 10 a.m. DEMO @ BSF\*

*Pruning Small Fruit Plants*

Thu., Mar. 31, 10 a.m.

*Vegetable Gardening*

Thu., Apr. 7, 10 a.m.

*Container Gardens*

Registration is required for all classes.

Register here: [Alamance.ces.ncsu.edu](http://Alamance.ces.ncsu.edu)

\*BSF pruning demo will be at Buster

Sykes Demonstration Farm, 2430

Turner Road, Mebane, NC.

All other classes listed will be held at

the Agricultural Building, 209 N. Gra-

ham-Hopedale, Burlington

Coming this month!  
4-H Spring Blueberry  
Plant Sale  
Watch the website for  
details.



#### Contact us :

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## Garden Problems? Maybe Not..

It's a beautiful day in the neighborhood—perfect for a walk around the garden. Winter is nearly over, spring is just around the corner, but, suddenly you're seeing things that just don't look right! - Why is that azalea yellow? What is that gray fuzzy stuff growing on your dogwood branches—wait—is it growing on the azaleas, too?! What are these little piles of dirt all over the yard? Are those bug eggs on my holly bushes?! And why are these formerly beautiful evergreen leaves looking spotty, dis-colored and sad?



See Page 2 for a little  
peace of mind.

## Scouting Report

**1** They may look suspicious, but those tiny brown balls in the leaf axils of your holly bushes are actually flower buds. If you're lucky and your holly is perfect-flowered, or is a female variety with a male pollinator close by, those flowers will be bright red berries by fall.



**2** All trees and shrubs lose their leaves. Deciduous trees and shrubs lose them all at once, but evergreens lose them gradually, so there's never a frame of bare branches. White-flowered azaleas often turn bright yellow as the old leaves lose their chlorophyll just before a flush of new green leaves erupts. The leaves of Azaleas with pink or red flowers may turn a deep bronze color as the chlorophyll departs.

Bright green foliage emerges just before the old leaves drop off.



A perfectly healthy azalea with salmon-colored flowers in spring wears somber bronze-brown at the end of winter.



**3** The bright red and orange colors of the old chlorophyll-free leaves of this Chindo viburnum really make the spots and dots of an opportunistic fungus show up. You can see the healthy leaf buds at the tips of the branches. The fungus will go away when the old leaves are shed.



What's growing on your old azalea and dogwood branches is a lichen. Each lichen is composed of an alga and fungus living together for mutual benefit. This interesting algae-fungus combination does not damage the plant, but a heavy buildup of lichens may indicate a decline in plant vigor, as lichens grow on things that are moving very slowly or not at all, like a rock. A soil test will help determine if your slow-growing plant needs a nutritional boost.

**5** The little mounds of soil appearing in your lawn now could be caused by an innocent little ground-nesting bee. These useful pollinators do not sting and will only be around for a couple of weeks. For more information read here: [www.turffiles.ncsu.edu/insects/bees-in-turf/](http://www.turffiles.ncsu.edu/insects/bees-in-turf/)



The moral of the story is: Take frequent strolls through your garden to see what's going on and maybe catch a little problem before it becomes a big one. Take a picture or collect a sample and send it or bring it to us here at Extension for identification and proper treatment, if any is needed. Happy scouting! ~Chris

**NC STATE****Extension  
Master Gardener***March Garden Tips*

**A**pply pre-emergence crabgrass preventer to your lawn before March 15<sup>th</sup>. Keep in mind that most crabgrass preventers should not be used on recently seeded or over seeded lawns. Read the label carefully before application. A second application should be applied about the middle of May (8 weeks after the first). If your lawn is mowed tall (3-1/2 inches or so) and growing well, crabgrass will be shaded out as the seed requires sunlight to germinate.

**F**inish pruning roses this month. Reduce hybrid tea roses to 24 inches, prune to an outside bud and remove dead wood. Begin your rose spray program as soon as first leaves appear. Even better, plant some of the tough shrub roses that don't require spraying. Prune these to five or six sturdy branches about knee high, removing any spindly, crossing or otherwise bothersome branches.

**F**ertilize pecan trees at the rate of 4 pounds of 10-10-10 per inch of trunk diameter. Spread the fertilizer under the limbs of the tree to the full extent of the drip line.

**I**n the vegetable garden, sow seeds of beets, lettuce, peas and turnips. Plant cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, head lettuce and onions.

**I**f your cool-season vegetable garden usually succumbs to unseasonable heat, try gardening in containers. Pots can easily be moved to a more sheltered spot if unusual heat – or cold – threatens.

**C**ut back old foliage of liriope, pampas and other ornamental grasses as close as possible to the ground without damaging new growth tips.

**R**emove spent flowers from spring bulbs but leave the foliage to replenish the bulb for next year. Don't braid or otherwise damage the leaves, but allow them to die down naturally. Plant other annuals and perennials among the bulbs to disguise unsightly foliage.

**Using Saved Seeds?**

To find out if saved seeds are still viable, follow these simple steps:

1 ~ Take a piece of paper towel, fold it in half, then half again, so you have a square. Open up the fold.

2 ~ Sprinkle water on the paper towel so it is damp throughout.

3 ~ Write the name of the plant and the date on a plant label and put it in the middle of the square, with one edge of the label showing.

4 ~ Put 10 seeds on the same side as the label.

5 ~ Fold the paper towel over the label and seeds.

6 ~ Place the packet in a plastic bag and close the bag.

After a week, count the seeds that sprout and calculate the seeds' viability (if six of 10 seeds have sprouted, that is a 60% germination rate). Sow the varieties that have lower rates more thickly to compensate.

**Saving Seeds?**

Those little seed packets can be expensive! To save them for next season, place the packets in an air-tight container with one of those silica packets that came with your last Amazon purchase or new pair of shoes, or fold up a little dry milk powder in a tissue paper packet.



## *Arbor Gate Plant of the Month*



### Cornelian Cherry Dogwood

### *Cornus mas*

Not your everyday dogwood, but this member of the *Cornus* genus offers up a golden cloud weeks before its more common cousin *Cornus florida*. The cornelian cherry dogwood is a deciduous shrub or small tree that can grow up to 25 feet tall and 20 feet wide. Its yellow flowers appear in late winter or early spring before the leaves emerge. Red fruits develop and mature in the mid-summer, but be patient, it may take a few years before the first fruit appears. The fruit is enjoyed by birds and animals, including humans. On mature trees, the bark is scaly and exfoliating. *Cornus mas* is happy in well-drained soil and part to full shade. A tendency to colonize may have suckers coming up where you don't want them, but, grown as a shrub, *Cornus mas* makes a fine screening plant.

Read more here:

<https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/cornus-mas/>

