



Coming Events

Workshops, Demos & More!



Thurs., Apr. 7, 10 a.m.

Container Gardening

Thurs., Apr. 21, 10 a.m.

*Daylilies & Hostas, Plus SALE**

**We will be offering divisions from our Daylily Garden for sale after the class.*



Registration is required for all classes.

Register online here:

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

Friday and Saturday, April 22 and 23

23rd annual WRC Herb Festival

Master Gardeners will be on hand to answer your gardening questions.

On May 12, we will start our 10-session season of Summer Fruit Tours at Buster Sykes Orchard. Bring your fruit growing questions and get a taste of what's growing on. Register [HERE](#)

Contact us :

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All In The Family...

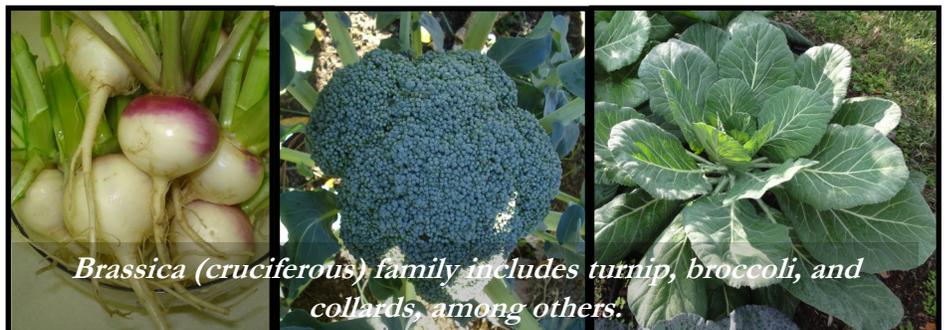
At Extension we recommend crop rotation for farmers as well as home garden growers. But why should vegetables be rotated in your garden?



Plant families are like human families when it comes down to it—the characters may all look different, but those characters are connected by genetics. And genetics can lead to problems in the garden.

Plants in the same family have similar characteristics such as their flowers, reproductive structures, leaves, or their roots' symbiotic relationship with soil. Plants in the same family also have similar weaknesses, such as susceptibility to insects, diseases, particular weeds, and nematodes.

Gardeners can use this knowledge by practicing crop rotation which helps manage those pest pressures and build soil fertility. But how?



Relatively Speaking...

Most people have limited space in their yard to grow a garden, and they can't just rotate the garden to another site. One solution to a space challenge is to rotate vegetables by family, with vegetable plants in the same plant family being treated as a single rotational group. If you make decisions about which vegetables you will plant based on the families they are members of, it will help you know better how to place and rotate them.

Plant Family	Crop
Alliaceae (Onion)	chive, garlic, leek, onion, shallot, asparagus (<i>Asparagaceae</i>)
Apiaceae (Carrot)	carrot, celery, parsley, parsnip, dill, cumin, coriander
Asteraceae (Sunflower)	artichoke, endive, Jerusalem artichoke, lettuce, sunflower, dandelion
Brassicaceae (Mustard)	bok choy, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, Chinese cabbage, collards, horseradish, kale, kohlrabi, mustard greens, radish, rapeseed, rutabaga, turnip
Chenopodiaceae (Goosefoot)	beet, spinach, swiss chard, quinoa
Cucubitaceae (Squash)	cucumber, honeydew melon, cantaloupe, pumpkin, gourds, squash, watermelon, zucchini
Fabaceae (Pea or Legume)	alfalfa, bean, clover, lentil, pea, peanut, vetch, soybean
Malvaceae (Mallow)	okra
Poaceae (Grass)	barley, corn, oat, sorghum, wheat, rye
Polygonaceae (Knotweed)	rhubarb, buckwheat
Rosaceae (Rose)	strawberries, blackberries, raspberries
Solanaceae (Nightshade)	eggplant, pepper, potato, tomatillo, tomato

To properly use this method, divide your garden into three or more plots. For example, if you have three plots in your garden, you can do a three-year crop rotation plan with three plots growing vegetables from three different plant families. The following year, change it up and rotate the families. But have a rotation plan something like this: [PLAN](#)

Some vegetable plants should not follow members of other families because of susceptibility to common pests. A good example is the disease *Verticillium* wilt. If you have strawberries (*Rosaceae* family) planted, never follow with a planting of members of the *Solanaceae* family (tomatoes and peppers), or you will have a high chance of dealing with *Verticillium* wilt.

Different vegetables can be rotated to manage soil fertility. For example, members of the *Fabaceae* (legume) family can be grown to add nitrogen to the soil. On the other hand, members of the *Alliaceae* family (onion) are heavy users of potassium.

So, our advice is to know your plant families and keep them happy by rotating them every year to help minimize pest pressures and to increase soil fertility.

Give a Bed a Break

We rotate plant families in our raised bed vegetable gardens here at Arbor Gate Teaching Garden. In addition to vegetables, we rotate in soil-improving cover crops that inhibit weeds, provide for pollinators and give the bed a break for a season.

For overwintering into spring, we plant crimson clover—a nitrogen-fixing member of the legume family. For summer, we like buckwheat, a member of the knotweed family. Unrelated to our other vegetable crops, annual buckwheat gives the garden a break from weeds while providing a nutritious source of pollen and nectar for beneficial insects. Of course, you can always harvest the buckwheat seeds to make delicious pancakes.

~Chris



NC STATE

Extension Master Gardener

April Garden Tips

Routine soil sampling is free again at the USDA & CS soil lab. We have the forms, sample boxes and instructions here at the Extension office. The no-fee period will end around Thanksgiving.

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 and determine if the amount of damage warrants intervention. Proper identification is necessary before any control methods are used. Less than 3 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, contact us at Extension, 336-570-6740.

Around the middle of the month, begin planting seeds of sweet corn, pole beans, lima and snap beans, cantaloupe, cucumbers, summer squash, pumpkins and watermelons.

Wait until the end of the month to plant tomatoes, peppers and eggplant. These do best when night temperatures are consistently above 50 degrees and the soil has warmed.

Begin spraying fruit trees with a home orchard spray as soon as the flower petals fade. Be sure to wait until the petals have faded. Most home orchard sprays contain insecticides that will kill pollinators visiting the flowers. Always read and follow label directions.

Now is the time to begin to fertilize your warm-season lawn (bermudagrass or zoysia). Apply ½ pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet. That translates to 5 pounds of 10-10-10 for an area 10 feet by 100 feet. Repeat the application in June and August.

If yours is a cool-season lawn (fescue or fescue-bluegrass), mowing season is here! Set your mower blade high -- at least 3 inches, preferably 3-1/2. The higher the grass blades, the deeper the roots! Try not to take more than one-third of the blade off when you mow. This may mean mowing more than once a week this time of year.

Leave grass clippings on the lawn! Grasscycling, rather than bagging and removing grass clippings, is an excellent way to reduce waste and improve the health of your turf. Grass clippings contain nitrogen and water pulled from the soil. When you grasscycle, you return that nitrogen and moisture to your lawn. Clippings left on the lawn do not create thatch and improve the physical structure of soil. You can reduce the amount of nitrogen you add to your lawn by as much as one-third if you grasscycle!

Divide, repot and fertilize houseplants before moving them outdoors at the end of the month. Remember that they've been in lower light conditions indoors than they will experience outside. Bright shade works for most houseplants.

When selecting summer annuals, look for short, bushy plants with well-developed root systems and more buds than flowers.





Arbor Gate Plant of the Month

Ninebark

Physocarpus opulifolius



This handsome native deserves a spot in your rain garden, shrub border or pollinator patch. Graceful, arching branches are clothed in leaves that range in color from chartreuse to deep burgundy depending on the variety. The branches are topped with cascades of pink or white flowers that beckon the bees in spring. A lovely native substitute for bridal wreath or Vanhoutte spirea, ninebark even has attractive exfoliating bark to shine after the leaves have fallen. This feature is the source of the common name—the peeling bark appears to be in nine layers. Reaching a height of six to eight feet and a similar width, ninebark is not fussy about soil and will withstand occasional flooding, but is also drought tolerant once established—the perfect rain garden plant.



Place *Physocarpus opulifolius* in part sun to part shade for the happiest plant. Read more here: <https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/physocarpus-opulifolius/>