



Alamance Gardener

Alamance County Cooperative Extension Horticulture Department

Coming Events



Thurs., May 12, 10 a.m. @ BSF

Summer Fruit Tour at the Orchard

Sat., May 21, 10 a.m. @ BSF

Summer Fruit Tour at the Orchard

Thurs., May 26, 10 a.m. @ BSF

Summer Fruit Tour at the Orchard

Thurs., June 9, 10 a.m. @ BSF

Summer Fruit Tour at the Orchard

Sat., June 18, 10 a.m. @ BSF

Summer Fruit Tour at the Orchard

Thurs., June 23, 10 a.m. @ BSF

Summer Fruit Tour at the Orchard

Bring all your fruit-growing questions and see how your favorites are doing. There may be some tasting along the way as each variety ripens. Registration required for each tour:

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

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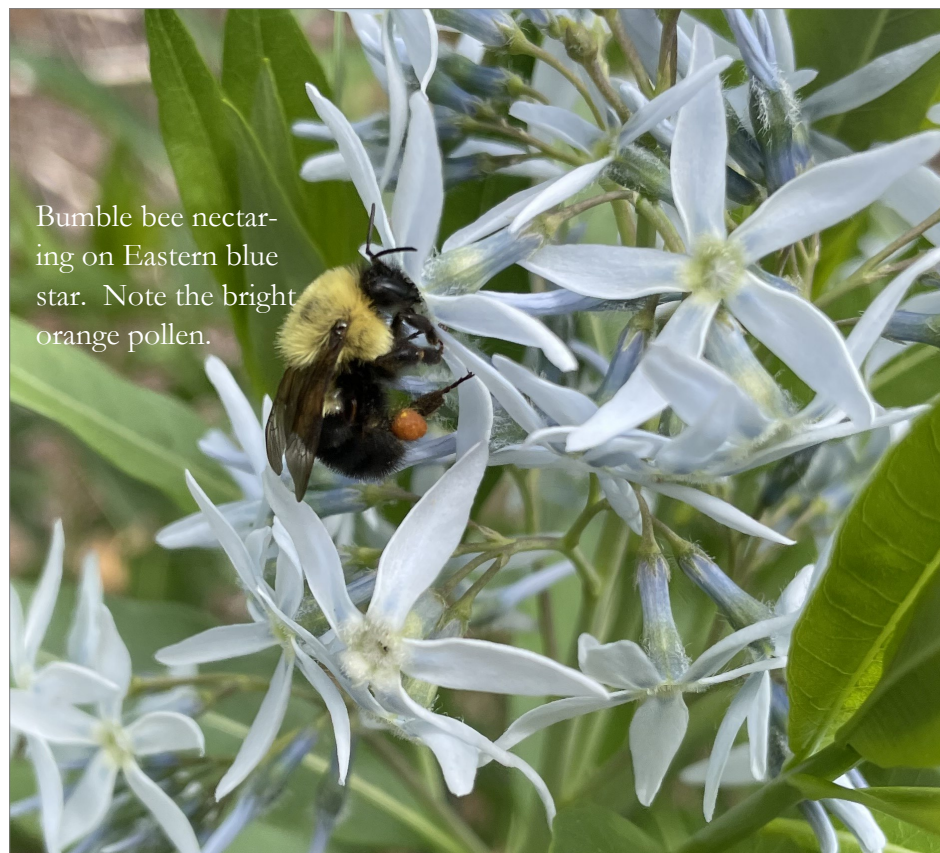
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the link below:



Save ALL the Bees!



Bumble bee nectaring on Eastern blue star. Note the bright orange pollen.

It wasn't long ago we were clamoring to save the honey bees! Of course, we do love their honey, but as pollinators go, these foreigners aren't the only bees in town. After all, honey bees are imports. The European subspecies of *Apis mellifera* was introduced into North America in the early 1600s, and of course we are happy to have these domesticated insects in our hives!

Honey-making aside, consider the more than 4,400 described species of native bees in North America. It's these pollinators pulling the heavy load while the honey-makers get all the press.

However, the somewhat quirky lifestyles these natives have developed over the ages may seem a cause for concern around your home and in your garden.



The bees did it!

Learning about the fascinating lifestyles of some of our native pollinators may help solve some of your most confounding garden mysteries.



Leafcutter bees take tidy semi-circular slices from the leaves of many different plants (usually your garden favorite). Mystery solved! These pollinators use the cut leaves to construct their nest cells which are often built in a hollow stem or some other tube. Not a problem unless the tube is your outdoor water spigot. Don't worry about your plant—the damage is rarely life threatening. Like most of these solitary bees, only the females can sting and they won't, unless handled. Read more here: [Leafcutter Bees](#)



Here's another excellent native pollinator grabbing a snack on Eastern bluestar (*Amsonia tabernaemontana*).



And here she is working on your deck:



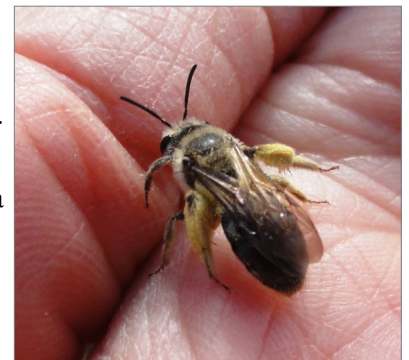
Carpenter bees are very busy this time of year creating nesting cavities in wood protected from the weather, like under your deck railing or the eaves of your house. These big woodworkers don't eat the wood, they just create a nesting site in which to deposit a ball of nutritious pollen and nectar and an egg. The holes in the wood are frustrating, I

know, but they rarely do extensive damage. Again, they may be large and intimidating, but only the females can sting and they will only do so if handled. Read here for ways to deal with these carpenters: [Carpenter Bees](#)



The digger bees season has mostly passed—See? It didn't take that long, but this the work of yet another of our native pollinators. These harmless little critters are solitary bees—one hole, one bee. The season is just a couple of weeks in early spring, so, if you wait, they'll soon be gone. Here's more info:

[Ground Bees](#)

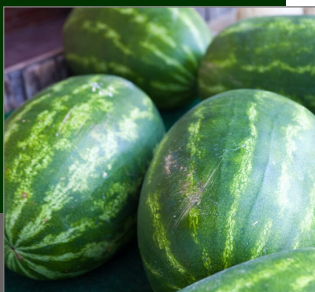


What's bugging your garden these days? Give us a call and we'll try to solve your garden mysteries.

~Chris and the EMGVs

NC STATE

Extension Master Gardener



May Garden Tips

It won't be long before the first juicy, vine-ripened tomato from your garden is in the middle of your BLT. Here are a few tips to make the too-short tomato season last a bit longer: 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 have set the first hand of fruit before fertilizing with 10-10-10 or other balanced fertilizer. Repeat in three weeks.

When spring-flowering shrubs have finished their show, prune where needed. If the rate of growth has been below par, but plants are in general good health, you may fertilize with a slow-release or organic fertilizer at this time.

Begin fertilizing Bermudagrass lawns this month at the rate of 1 pound of actual nitrogen per 1,000 square feet. Re-apply at this rate in June, July and August. Apply

half this amount in September.

A second round of Crabgrass preventer should be applied around May 15. For cool-season lawns, be sure that the product you use contains no fertilizers. These lawn grasses need to rest for the summer.

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.

Plant sweetpotatoes, okra, beans, southern peas, watermelons and cantaloupes this month when soil temperatures have reached seventy degrees or higher.

Fertilize blueberries, blackberries and grapes this month. Strawberries are ready for harvest now. Visit a pick-your-own farm or buy some at the farmers mar-

ket – nothing better than strawberries fresh from the field!

Continue to plant summer-flowering bulbs in the flower border. Cannas, callas, dahlias, gladiolas, caladiums and elephant ears are a few colorful choices. Pinch out growth tips of newly-planted annuals to promote branching and make stockier plants. Continue to remove spent flowers of annuals and perennials throughout the season.

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 and spray at dusk when the bees have all gone home. Always read and follow label directions for safe pesticide application.

Houseplants can be moved outside now. To prevent unwelcome guests from taking up residence in the pots this summer, gently remove the plant from the pot and place a piece of fine-mesh screening over the drainage holes before replacing the plant in the pot.

Arbor Gate Plant of the Month



Possumhaw viburnum

Viburnum nudum

Of all the many viburnum species, this handsome native should definitely find a place in your garden.

Viburnum nudum grows to be a dense, 5-12 ft. shrub with upright stems that become arching with age. Flat-topped clusters of white flowers are followed by colorful summer fruits that start out pink then turn to blue to purplish black—if the birds don't devour them first! Foliage is smoother and more lustrous than that of most viburnums and fall color is dependably beautiful. This is a plant for wet areas, swamps, and rain gardens, preferring soils that are acidic. More flowers and fruit are produced when the shrub grows in full sun and moist soil, but it will tolerate shade and can survive periods of drought. At home in sun or part shade and happiest in well-drained medium to wet soil, possumhaw viburnum is not bothered by deer or leafcutter bees. Read more here: [Possumhaw Viburnum](#)

