



Alamance Gardener

Alamance County Cooperative Extension Horticulture Department

Coming Events

Workshops and Demonstrations



Thu., Feb. 9, 9 a.m., workshop at BSF*

Fruit Tree Pruning

Sat., Feb. 11, 10 a.m., DEMO at BSF*

Fruit Tree Pruning

Thu., Feb. 23, 10 a.m., DEMO at BSF*

Grapevine Pruning

Thu., Mar. 2, 9 a.m., workshop at BSF*

Blueberry School

Sat., Mar. 11, 10 a.m. DEMO at BSF*

Fruit Plant Pruning Catch Up

Thu., Mar. 16, 10 a.m., workshop

Pruning Woody Ornamentals

*BSF pruning demos will be at Buster Sykes Demonstration Farm, 2430 Turner Road, Mebane, NC. Pruning Ornamentals workshop will be held at the Agricultural Building, 209 N. Graham-Hopdale.

Registration is required for all classes. Register online here:

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

Contact us:

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We're starting off Think Green Thursdays for 2023 with a slate of fruitful pruning demonstrations and workshops at Buster Sykes Demonstration Orchard in Mebane.

If you don't know about this unique property, you'll enjoy reading about Buster Sykes's legacy in the following article by Extension Master Gardener Jackie Allen.



Buster Sykes Farm—A Fruitful Legacy

Nestled in the burgeoning urban growth of Alamance County sits a beautiful testimony to one man's love for his land and the joy of Extension collaboration.

In 2004 Buster Sykes, a local landowner seeking to protect his farm from development, donated his 176-acre Mebane farm to the North Carolina Agricultural Foundation. His idea that became Alamance Extension's mission was to educate the general public through 4-H events, educational tours, and demonstrations and classes taught by Cooperative Extension agents and specialists.

The farm is now host site for the NC Wildlife Inland Fisheries Divisions and Buster Sykes Demonstration Farm and Forest.

The Buster Sykes orchard was planted in 2017 and is funded by Alamance County Cooperative Extension, Alamance County, the NC Agricultural Foundation, and private donations. It is unique in that it is planted with a wide range of fruiting plant species, varieties, cultivars and root stocks in an effort to determine what best grows in the Piedmont of North Carolina. Led by farm manager Mark Danieley and supported by Alamance County Extension Master Gardener Volunteers, we annually evaluate processes such as pruning techniques, pest management, plant diseases and weather patterns to learn how fruit production is impacted. Classes are offered regularly to the community on topics such as pruning, thinning and harvesting. We also offer taste testing to better identify the fruits most appealing to the broadest audience and to aid participants in choosing fruit they would like to grow themselves.



Let's Learn Something!

For Alamance County Extension Master Gardeners the Buster Sykes orchard is a place rich with volunteer opportunities and educational experiences. EMGVs volunteer annually February through October pruning, planting, weeding, clearing debris, thinning fruit, identifying diseases, harvesting fruit and answering questions from the community. We frequently host tours for local daycares, school children, community college and university horticulture students, members of the local community and other EMGV groups from neighboring counties. With each hour we volunteer we learn something new about orchard management. In 2022 alone Alamance County EMGVs worked more than 775 volunteer hours at the Buster Sykes Farm.



One cannot speak of the Buster Sykes orchard without mentioning what happens to all of the beautiful and delicious fruit it produces. Yes, EMGVs are often taste testing fruit as we work. Yes, the EMGVs are offered the opportunity to take some of the bounty home as their own. But, more importantly the majority of the fruit from the orchard serves our local community. The hours of hard work become a labor of love when the figs, blackberries, grapes, blueberries, pears, apples and peaches are donated to charitable agencies to be distributed to members of the Alamance County community struggling with food insufficiency. In 2022 alone nearly 5000 pounds of peaches were donated to those in need. Folks who might never be able to afford fresh fruit are able to reap the benefits of the generosity of Buster Sykes, a man who loved this land that remains a living, breathing, life giving corner of paradise.



Those of us fortunate enough to work and volunteer at The Buster Sykes Demonstration Farm and Forest have big dreams for its future. We are currently in the process of clearing and marking trails through the remaining 150+ acres of woods bordering the Haw Creek. Alamance County Cooperative Extension and its partners plan to develop birding trails at the farm to facilitate educational events regarding the importance of birds in our ecosystem. We plan to work with the Forestry Service to offer education and training for people interested in all aspects of forestry. There are also preliminary plans to create educational areas for our Alamance County 4-H groups.

I never met Buster Sykes but I can imagine he would smile to see what is becoming of his 176-acre gift to Alamance County.

~ Jackie Allen, Extension Master Gardener Volunteer for Alamance County

NC STATE

Extension Master Gardener



January Garden Tips

Chances are, winter annual weeds are popping up now in your garden. Make a note to apply a pre-emergence herbicide late next summer to reduce the number of unwanted weeds in shrub borders. Don't use this on lawns or garden areas if you are planting seeds. Oh well, hindsight is always 20/20 and right now, hand pulling or raking are the most effective methods of removal. Resist the temptation to spray with herbicides unless temperatures are above 50 degrees for a few days. Sprays just won't work when it's too cold. Remember to read and follow all label directions. Consider leaving a patch or two of winter weeds for the bees. On mild days, they'll be out looking for a snack and the flowers of henbit, deadnettle and chickweed are high on their foraging menu.

Except for the drone of honey bees among the chickweed, January is a quiet time in the garden. A time to rest. A time to make Big Plans! So, stoke the fire, review your 2022 garden journal, grab your catalogs and get busy!

Sow seeds of cool-weather vegetables (broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, collards, lettuce, onions and spinach) in containers for transplanting into the garden in March. Outdoors, sow edible-pod peas and English peas beginning this month. Continue to plant asparagus.

Clean used terra cotta pots before replanting by soaking them in a solution of vinegar and water. Use a brush to remove fertilizer salts and other residues. Rinse thoroughly with warm water.

Check the condition of stored bulbs and tubers of dahlias, tuberous begonias, caladiums and callas. Bulbs stored in warm, humid conditions are prone to rot. Discard any bulbs that feel soft or rotten.

Mulch strawberry beds for winter protection. Use wheat straw or pine needles. When the first blooms appear, pull back the mulch.

Use a magnifying glass to inspect both sides of leaves of your houseplants. Look for signs of insects. Sticky residue may indicate the presence of mealy bugs or scale insects. Small, fine webs are a sign of possible spider mite infestation. Call or e-mail us for information on the treatment of insect problems on houseplants: 336-570-6740 or askanemgee@gmail.com.

Do not fertilize houseplants, and go easy on the watering during the winter months. Houseplants need some time off, too.

Remember that fresh water is essential to all animals. Check to see that birdbaths are ice-free and filled up. Keep the water moving in water features and fountains to provide free-flowing water for wildlife.

Toward the end of this month, apply a dormant horticultural oil to roses. Do this before bud-break to smother over-wintering insects and their eggs. Read the label for instructions on use.

Arbor Gate Plant of the Month



Dog Hobble

Leucothoe fontansiana

How about a little color in the shade garden right about now? *Leucothoe fontansiana* 'Girard's Rainbow' could be just the thing!

This graceful Southeastern woodland native, so named for a growth habit that impedes even a good hound's progress on the chase, is a relative of *Pieris japonica*, and requires very similar care. Happiest in shade, planted in an acid, moist, well-drained organic soil, dog hobble grows slowly to a 3' tall by 5' wide mound. Evergreen foliage may turn a deep wine red in winter. The cultivar 'Girard's Rainbow' boasts emerging foliage in variegated shades of pink, white and copper. Red buds open in spring to reveal creamy white bell-like flowers borne in axillary racemes along the stems, somewhat hidden by the foliage.

But, we love it for the foliage! A bright spark on a dull January day in the shade garden.

Read more about *Leucothoe fontansiana* here:

<https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/leucothoe-fontanesiana/>

