

Gardening News

June/July 2020



Plan Now for Fall Vegetable Gardens!

What? It's so hot and humid in June and July, why in the world would you want to start planning a fall vegetable garden? The plans you make now, will be used in July, August and September. If starting seedlings or ordering seed, you should think about what you are planting for the fall. By planning now, you can have a good crop of vegetables and herbs for your use in the kitchen. July and August are the main planting time for fall crops. By using the Central North Carolina Planting Calendar for Annual Vegetables, Fruits and Herbs, you can determine the best time for planting your fall crops.

https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/show_ep3_pdf/1590592912/23265/

If you are considering containers, lettuce, spinach, cabbage, broccoli, parsley, cilantro, radish, and swish chard are good choices. Cabbage and broccoli do grow to a large size, so remember that in choosing your container. Perennial herbs such as chives, oregano, thyme, rosemary, and sage can be grown in containers or in the ground.

Many cool season vegetables can tolerate frost. Some are hardy meaning they can tolerate heavy frost, such as cabbage, kale, collards, and carrots. Others are half-hardy meaning they will tolerate light frost and will grow into December. An example of half-hardy vegetables are broccoli and cauliflower.

Leafy greens grow quickly and be grown into the fall. Many leafy greens are ready to harvest in 30 to 40 days. Another great point about leafy greens, such as leaf lettuce, they can be harvested multiple times. Head lettuce is the exception to this because it has a single growing point. Once cut it will not grow again.

Remember now is the time to plan for your fall vegetable garden. If you haven't taken a soil sample in 2 or more years, be sure to do this. Applying lime now will allow it be available when you need the correct pH. Soil sample results will also provide information on the correct amount and type of fertilizer needed for your vegetables and herbs to flourish.

New to vegetable gardening or want more information on general vegetable gardening? 'Vegetable Gardening: A Beginner's Guide' is an excellent resource for you.

https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/show_ep3_pdf/1590591370/22947/

Need more information? Contact your office of NC Cooperative Extension. Hoke County 910-875-3461, Scotland County 910-277-2422.

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Contact Us

N.C. Cooperative Extension
Hoke County Center
116 W. Prospect Avenue
Raeford, NC 28376
Phone: 910-875-3461
Fax: 910-875-9044
hoke.ces.ncsu.edu

Scotland County Center
231 E. Cronly St. Suite 800
Laurinburg, NC 28352
Phone: 910-277-2422
Fax: 910-277-2426
scotlandces.ncsu.edu

Shannon R Newton
Shannon Newton
Area Extension Agent, Horticulture
shannon_newton@ncsu.edu



Tips for Starting an Organic Garden

Posted by Kelly Flynn, National Institute of Food and Agriculture in Research and Science. Feb 21, 2017.



Backyard organic gardening can be easier than you think – if you learn the basics. (Photo by Stephanie Engle)

Whether you're an avid gardener or just starting out, the idea of creating a garden using organic methods can seem overwhelming at first. But organic gardening is less daunting than you may think if you understand some basic principles; it's about creating a more holistic, natural ecosystem and can be done right in your own backyard.

What distinguishes an organic garden from any other is the absence of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides. Synthetic chemical pesticides come from petroleum and other chemical sources while most organic pesticides are derived from plant, animal, microorganism, and mineral sources.

According to Mathieu Ngouajio, national program leader for organic agriculture at USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), a successful garden begins with healthy soil texture and structure. Well-draining soil comprised of sand, silt, clay, and compost amendment is ideal. However, most backyards have a ratio that leans heavily to one side. Ideally, soil should have 50 percent pore space and 50 percent solid particles. To achieve this ratio, compost can be worked into the soil. The best garden soils have a loose, crumb-like structure that water, air, and plant roots can easily penetrate.

Soil fertility is the third component of healthy soil. The amount of nutrients in the soil, its texture, organic matter, and pH (the measure of alkaline), can all influence the fertility of soil. Organic gardeners often build the natural fertility by adding organic matter to preserve and improve soil structure and modify the soil's pH balance.

An issue all gardeners face is unwanted pests. While some gardeners may turn to synthetic pesticides to tackle the issue, Ngouajio said that organic gardeners take a different approach—integrated pest management (IPM)—which combines biological, cultural, physical, and chemical strategies to control pests. IPM involves using the least environmentally harmful methods first and only using toxic methods as a last resort. IPM methods include using pest and disease resistant varieties of crops, rotating crops each year, cleaning tools, covering plants, and introducing predator organisms.

Weeds are another nuisance for gardeners. Natural remedies for eradicating weeds include pulling them out, smothering them with mulch, introducing plants that grow faster and stronger than weeds, and burning them using a weed flamer.

Learning the basics and working from the ground up—creating a healthy base, free of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides—is the first step in creating a sustainable organic home garden. For more information on organic gardening visit the USDA Organic Website at <https://www.usda.gov/topics/organic>

June Gardening Chores

- Lawns need 1" of water each week. If it does not rain, you will need to water by applying 1/3" every 3 days in sandy soils.
- Water trees and shrubs that have been planted for less than a year each week if it does not rain.
- Cut back fall blooming perennials by 1' to encourage branching.
- Divide ornamental grasses such as panic grass, muhly grass, and Miscanthus if needed.
- Divide bearded iris clumps to prevent overcrowding.
- If your squash or zucchini plants collapse, they probably have squash vine borer. Inspect stems for borers and squish or drown if you find them.
- Be on the lookout for early blight on tomatoes.
- Keep soil consistently moist and don't over fertilize to avoid blossom end rot on tomatoes.
- Begin harvesting blueberries but wait a week after they first turn blue to pick to develop sweetness.

- Harvest blackberries in early morning for best quality.
- Blackberries require “summer tipping.” When canes reach 30” to 36” tall, cut off the tips to promote side branching.

July Gardening Chores

- If you have a birdbath, consider moving it into a shady location. The water can evaporate quickly in the sun. Also, the water may become very hot and this could pose a hazard to your birds.
- Japanese Beetles can be devastating to roses and other plants. Handpick and drop in soapy water. You can place a trap with pheromones to attract the Japanese Beetles. Be sure to place well away from roses or other plants that you are trying to protect.
- Apply a slow release fertilizer to your containers and flower beds. This should be done mid-month.
- Water, water and water. Usually July is a hot month. Be sure to water your containers thoroughly. You can check the weight of the plant to see if it is dry or thoroughly wet. If watering a lawn or garden, do not use a hand waterer. This only encourages very shallow roots, which can lead to weakened plants or grass. Water in the evening or early morning, applying one inch of water per week to your gardens or turf. You can lose up to 50% of water if applied during the daytime.

Know and Grow....

Garden Peony (*Paeonia hybrids*)

Part One: Growing and Selecting Your Peony

Peony is a very beautiful long-lived plant. Select carefully and plant in a permanent location in September. Much like planting a tree, peonies become a permanent fixture in your garden. This allows the root system to develop and be ready for spring growth. Don't expect flowers until the third year.

If you already have peonies in your garden, you know they are easy to grow and require minimal care. Do not fertilize until plants have been in the ground for about 5 years. Check your soil pH with a soil test and add lime as needed. Mulch around the plants to help keep the roots cool in our hot summers. Compost and bone meal are good supplements for your peony plants.

As peonies grow in the spring, be sure to provide some type of support for the foliage and leaves; this will keep them from falling to the ground. As the flowers begin to fade, remove the spent flowers and place in the compost bin. This will minimize disease problems.

If you are thinking about adding peonies to your garden, understanding their growth habit and flower type are good ways to begin selecting varieties for your landscape. There are three (3) basic types of peonies:

Paeonia lactiflora

Herbaceous peonies grow to be about 1 ½ to 2 feet tall and wide. They typically bloom in late April with a variety of colors in the white, pink and red ranges. Many are double flowers. Flowers can be used as cut flowers or simply enjoyed in the garden. (Pictured left)



Paeonia suffruticosa

Tree peonies, or called Mudan in China, are grafted onto herbaceous root stock. As with all peonies, these are long-lived deciduous woody shrubs that will grow in USDA zones 4-9. Mature plants can have over 50, 8-10” flowers that bloom over a two-week period. (Pictured right)



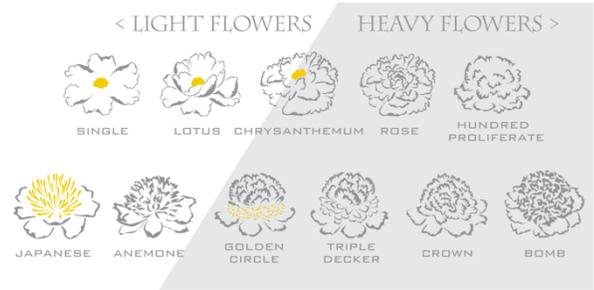
Intersectional 'Itoh' Peonies

Itoh peonies are named for the Japanese nurseryman, Toichi Itoh. Itoh was the first to succeed in hybridizing tree peonies with herbaceous peonies in the 1960s. The leaves and flower formed resemble those of tree peonies, while the growth habit is similar to that of herbaceous peonies. Flowers are held upright on top of the bush. This makes

them different in that they don't require any kind of support. In the fall, after the frost, intersectional peonies are cut back to ground level, and the plants come back larger each spring.

To make things really interesting, there are quite a few types of flowers. From single to bomb, the choices are extensive. Spend some time investigating peonies. Before you know it, late summer will be here and the time to buy peonies will be upon us.

Part Two: Site Selection and Planting Your Peony...
Coming in August-September issue of Gardening News



ABC....XYZ Gardening Vernacular

G is for Girdled

One of the most common causes of plant decline and death is mechanical injury. Mechanical injury is when a person does something that injures a tree, shrub, or lawn, most often unintentionally. Often a string trimmer or lawn mower is involved.

Mechanical injury often causes girdling. Girdling is the damaging, cutting, removing, or clamping of cambium all the way around a trunk or branch. Sometimes, girdling is done intentionally to kill an unwanted tree. Sometimes insects or rodents will feed around the trunks of trees and damage them by girdling.



uncanr.edu



extension.purdue.edu



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You can prevent damage to your trees by properly mulching. Apply a 2 to 3-inch layer of mulch around the base of the tree. Be sure to keep mulch pulled away from the trunk of tree by about 1 to 2 inches. Mulching will keep weeds down, hold in moisture, and prevent, or at least minimize, mechanical damage and girdling.

Are You Killing Your Centipede Grass?

Centipede grass is a low maintenance warm season lawn grass. When grown properly, it provides a beautiful light green lawn. Because we love our lawns and want to help them grow, often extra attention is given to centipede. Guess what, it doesn't even like or want that attention. Let's explore what works and what doesn't when maintaining your centipede lawn.

Soil pH

Centipede, unlike all other grasses, prefers a soil pH around 5.5. All other grasses prefer a higher pH. Have you taken a soil sample lately? If not, it will help you know if you need to apply lime to increase the soil pH or it will tell you that no lime is required. Often lime is applied because it is spring. This is a no, no. If you raise the pH to 6 or more, you will be damaging your centipede lawn. Do not apply lime just because...

Fertilizer

Centipede only needs one fertilization a year of ½ pound of nitrogen in mid-June using a high potassium fertilizer like 5-5-15 or 8-8-24. Most people want to fertilize as soon as warm weather arrives and commercials for weed and feed start showing up. The thing about centipede is not only does the top of the grass die back in the winter, so do the roots. If you

fertilize too early the roots haven't developed. Two things can happen; the new roots can be burned and the fertilizer will assist weeds to grow. Burned roots mean less growth of the grass and more growth of weeds. Apply fertilizer according to the results of a soil sample. The application of lime and fertilizer will then best address the needs of the plant. An additional application of potassium in the fall is very beneficial for root growth. Recommended rates are on your soil sample, but in case you don't have one, apply 1 pound of potassium per 1,000 square feet, 4 to 6 weeks before the first expected frost.

Weed Control

Centipede is sensitive to certain herbicides (for example, 2,4-D). Be careful when selecting weed control products. Weed and feed can be used, but the time to apply pre-emergent herbicides in the spring is different than when fertilizer should be applied. Always know what weeds you are trying to prevent or manage before applying a herbicide. Herbicide or weed killers are specific to certain weeds, so knowledge is power. Lastly, remember some weeds are ok!

Watering

Actively growing centipede grass needs one inch of water each week. If you have less than 1" of rain, you will need to water. Sandy soils often require ½ inch water every third day. A rain gauge will help decide when to water. When you are watering with irrigation or sprinklers, place small straight sided containers in various places in your lawn to determine how much water is being applied. Proper watering in the spring will help prevent or reduce problems in the summer.

Follow this link for a complete Centipede Lawn Maintenance calendar: <https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/centipedegrass-lawn-maintenance-calendar>



hgic.clemson.edu

By following centipede grass requirements, you too can have a beautiful lawn.

White-Breasted Nuthatch

Article from allaboutbirds.org

White-breasted Nuthatches are common feeder birds. You can attract them by offering large nuts such as sunflower and peanuts, and by putting out suet. Find out more about what this bird likes to eat and what feeder is best by using the Project Feeder Watch Common Feeder Birds list.



Photo: allaboutbirds.org

Consider putting up a nest box to attract a breeding pair. Make sure you put it up well before breeding season. Attach a guard to keep predators from raiding eggs and young. Find out more about nest boxes on All About Birdhouses. You'll find plans for building a nest box of the appropriate size for White-breasted Nuthatch.

The White-breasted Nuthatch is normally territorial throughout the year, with pairs staying together. The male has to spend more time looking out for predators when he's alone than while he's with his mate. That's the pattern for most birds, and one reason why birds spend so much time in flocks. But the female nuthatch has to put up with the male pushing her aside from foraging sites, so she spends more time looking around (for him) when he's around than when she is alone.

In winter, White-breasted Nuthatches join foraging flocks led by chickadees or titmice, perhaps partly because it makes food easier to find and partly because more birds can keep an eye out for predators. One study found that when titmice were removed from a flock, nuthatches were more wary and less willing to visit exposed bird feeders.

If you see a White-breasted Nuthatch making lots of quick trips to and from your feeder – too many for it to be eating them all – it may be storing the seeds for later in the winter, by wedging them into furrows in the bark of nearby trees.

Sorry, No Killer Hornets Here!

Written by Dr. Michael Waldvogel. Entomology & Plant Pathology NC State Extension, NC State University.

The news media are reporting that the Asian giant hornet (*Vespa mandarinia*) has been found in Washington state. This hornet lives up to its name because the queens are more than 2" long while the workers are about 1 1/2" long. The "murder hornet" nickname given by the media really refers to their well-deserved reputation as a pest because they attack and can destroy an entire bee colony.

So far, the only reports of the Asian giant hornet in North America are from the Pacific Northwest and southwestern Canada (2019), although it is believed that colonies in both locations have been eradicated. **The hornets are not in North Carolina.**



European hornet worker
(Matt Bertone, NC State University)

European hornet queens are busy building nests which may be hidden in hollow sections of a tree trunk or in attics. If you see large wasps entering holes/gaps in roof fascia and soffits or going under decks, that is often a sign that there is a nest. Although it will take several weeks for the numbers of new workers to start increasing, NOW is the time to act before their colonies begin to grow and produce workers that will defend the nest aggressively (based on first-hand experience!). Watch for signs of wasp activity in and around your home. According to data published by the CDC for the years 2000-2017, an average of 62 people died annually from bee/wasp/hornet stings in the U.S. with about 80% of those cases being males. A study published in 2014 estimated that there are about 220,000 ER-visits annually due to bee and wasp stings.

Asian giant hornets are not an issue for us at this time and not likely to be one in the near future barring some accidental introduction (as was likely the case in Washington). However, everyone needs to be aware that we have a resident hornet species that, at first glance, appears similar to the Asian giant hornet. As with any bee/wasp/hornet sting, the greatest threat is for people who are highly allergic and need to be careful outdoors. Regardless of whether or not you are sensitive to such stings, always be careful and watch for signs of bee/wasp activity. Use caution when approaching a wasp/hornet nesting site and be careful when working outdoors on items that have not been disturbed for some time (like piles of wood). If you find a wasp that fits the description of the Asian giant hornet, contact your local County Cooperative Extension Center.



Asian giant hornet side view. Note sting at tip of abdomen.
(Matt Bertone, NC State University)

However, over the years, we have received numerous calls and emails from people about finding "Japanese Hornets" and the same is happening right now. In every case, what people were seeing were European hornets, *Vespa crabro*, which is no wimp itself.

Adult European hornets somewhat resemble yellowjackets, but are much larger (about 1 1/2") and are brown with wide yellow markings. Queens of the Asian giant hornet are more than 2" long while the workers are about 1 1/2" long. The Asian giant hornets have an almost entirely yellow-orange colored head. They have a dark thorax (the body section where the wings and legs attach) and the abdomen has dark brown and black bands. The head of European hornet is reddish-brown, becoming yellowish near the face. Also, the eyes of Asian giant hornets are smaller in relation to the size of the head compared to European hornets.

Community Gardening Calendar

CLASSES ARE OPEN TO EVERYONE.

The classes are offered virtually to provide easy access for our customers.

Extension Gardener—Zoom Style

Thursday, June 18th—Growing Great Tomatoes, 10 AM

Register in advance for this meeting: [https://ncsu.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJUkf-ytpzspGdxJwG7GSuq-FIIAW9rBUDs2](https://ncsu.zoom.us/j/94831211111)

Thursday, June 25th—Weeds: What Are They & How Do I Get Rid of Them?, 10 AM

Register in advance for this meeting: [https://ncsu.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJAqfu2rrj4oGNPw5WinHLSXGFdt_aS4apcz](https://ncsu.zoom.us/j/94831211111)

Thursday, July 9th—Watering Plants Is Not Rocket Science, 10 AM

Register in advance for this meeting: [https://ncsu.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJlvd-qgrz8sHdWlev4PkjqPhF8NHP44jxzV](https://ncsu.zoom.us/j/94831211111)

Thursday, July 30th—Fall Vegetable Gardening, 10 AM

Register in advance for this meeting: [https://ncsu.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJlrc-ivpjssEtFffPk1FBcF1Fz55Zsfjq8o](https://ncsu.zoom.us/j/94831211111)

All classes will start at 10 AM and run for 1 to 1 1/2 hours depending on the topic. The zoom invitation is in the information above. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

QUOTE:

“There can be no other occupation like gardening in which, if you were to creep up behind someone at their work, you would find them smiling.” – Mirabel Osler

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Send questions, comments, or suggestions for articles to shannon_newton@ncsu.edu.***

If you are interested in learning more about any information in this newsletter, contact your appropriate Extension Center. Hoke County Center at 910-875-3461 or visit our website at hoke.ces.ncsu.edu or Scotland County Center at 910-277-2422 or visit our website at scotland.ces.ncsu.edu. For accommodations for persons with disabilities, contact Cooperative Extension no later than five business days before the event.

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