Scotland County Center

Sept. – Nov. 2024

The Carolina Sandhills Gardener

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Scotland County Announcements

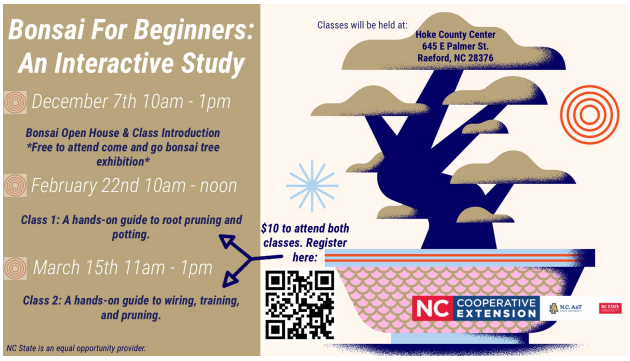
Free Fall Extension Gardener Classes Start Soon!

Oct 03	10am-noon	Starting Vegetable Seeds
Oct 10	10am-noon	Sustainable Vegetable Gardening
Oct 24	10am-noon	Easy to Grow Fruits and Berries
Oct 31	10am-noon	Organic Pest Management
Nov 7	10am-noon	Landscaping with Native Perennials
Nov 14	10am-noon	Low Maintenance Shrubs and Trees
Nov 21	10am-noon	Lawn Care and Lawn Alternatives

All classes are for residents of Scotland, Hoke, and Robeson counties and will be held in person at:

Robeson County Center
O.P. Owen's Agricultural Center
455 Caton Rd,
Lumberton, NC 28360

(*They will be offered again in Summer 2025 at the Scotland County Center)



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Soil Sample Fees

Soil Samples are now FREE until Dec.1, 2024.

The turnaround time for samples right now is 2 weeks. Plan accordingly. Samples are submitted every Friday. Have them here by 12pm Friday to be shipped the same day.

We are using a new texting service to stay in touch with our clients. Use this QR Code to complete a web-form if you'd like to stay up to date on our latest horticulture news!

Lawns and Turfgrass: General Management and Pre-Emergent Herbicides

Jacob Barber

Horticulture Agent with N.C. Cooperative Extension - Bladen County

General Management Practices

During Fall months you are generally managing any cool season grasses. This includes aerification and thatch control. This is a great time to lime for all season cool grasses. In the coastal plains of North Carolina, warm sea- son grasses are better suited for our conditions. You still have time during September and October to fertilize your warm season grasses. However, do not wait too late to do so. Depending on your grass species, late fertilization might affect how it over-winters and can result in issues leading into the spring green-up.

There are a few diseases and insects we want to be on the lookout for this fall such as Gray leaf spot, large patch and Pythium root rot. Large patch is a disease infecting Centipede, St Augustine, and Zoysia grass. It often shows up during wet conditions and warm night temperatures. Spring Dead Spot is also another disease that is concerning during the fall. It is caused by a fungus that infects the turf in the fall. However, symptoms do not appear until the following spring with large circular dead spots, which do not green-up with the rest of the Bermuda grass.

Pre-Emergent Herbicides to Control Winter Annuals

Preemergence refers to the period before weeds emerge or before they germinate. Pre -emergent herbicides are used to prevent the emergence of weeds. This is a great way to prevent weeds from emerging in your lawn during the winter and summer months. Pre-emergents applied in late summer and early fall control winter annual weeds. Application must be made about 2 weeks before germination. However, timing also depends on the weed's life cycle.

Winter Annuals include: lawn burweed, clover, Florida Betony, some species of Vetches, bittercress, chickweed, henbit, horseweed and others. Florida Betony is a weed I get calls about during the winter and early spring months every year. This weed has a very aggressive growth. Most of the time, the best option for control is herbicides. Lawn Burweed is another common weed that emerges in the winter.

Using herbicides such as Weed b Gon or Trimec will control most of the winter annuals in your lawn. You can also use herbicides containing dicamba, MCPP, and 2,4-D, (3-way herbicide) to control these weeds.

An example of a name brand chemical would be **Treflan** / Preen (trifluralin) – Controls winter annual weeds including annual bluegrass, chickweed and henbit well but tends to be less effective on summer weeds.

When using chemical application to control weeds, there are several things that should be taken into account. **Read the label!** The label is the law. The pesticide label will provide you with regulations as to application rate, your personal protective equipment, etc.

If you have questions, please contact your local extension office or you can use North Carolina Cooperative Extension's TurfFiles.

Plant Spotlight: Tree of Heaven, *'Ailanthus altissima'*

Jacob Barber

The Tree of Heaven is a non-native invasive tree that was introduced into the United States for the purpose of being a shade tree. Its origin is China. It is an aggressive species in the Simaroubaceae family that can be found throughout N.C. This tree is also known as Ailanthus, Paradise-tree or White Snakeroot. It can been confused by some Sumacs, Kentucky Coffee Tree and Butternut.

Tree-of-heaven leaves are composed of many individual leaflets.

Ryan Bohannon, NC State University CC BY 4.0

Each samara (fruit) is composed of a flat, twisted wing with a seed near its center.

Ryan Bohannon, NC State University CC BY 4.0

It is most easily identified by its large compound leaves with glandular notched base on the leaflets. The margins of the leaflets are toothed or serrated. The compound leaf can have from 10-40 leaflets along the main stem. Another interesting way to identify this tree would be the smell of the leaflets if broken or torn between your fingers. Depending on the person it will give an off-putting smell such as burnt popcorn or burnt peanut butter. The tree's flowers are a cluster of yellow in the spring and are followed by winged fruit called samaras. The samaras are the trees way of reproduction. Wind and rain will help disperse the samaras. Not only do the trees reproduce through seeds, but also suckers. If you pull up volunteers, they are easily identified by serrations near the base of their leaves before they flower. The growth of this tree is dense and prolific. It can tolerate poor soil conditions and displace native species to compete for nutrients, space and sunlight. It is difficult to eradicate and poses other issues. It is a potential host for the invasive spotted lanternfly. This tree is listed as invasive by the NC Invasive Plant Council. If you are looking for shade trees to add to your landscape, think of alternatives to this tree that are native instead. For more information please contact your local extension office or use the North Carolina Extension Gardener Plant Toolbox: https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/ailanthus-altissima/

Collards: A Local Favorite

Mack Johnson

Horticulture Agent with N.C. Cooperative Extension - Robeson County

Collards are a cool season crop that is truly a southern staple. Collards can be grown in two separate seasons in our area -– early spring and again into the fall/early winter. You can direct seed late July and early August; these seed will germinate quickly in warm soil. In spring, start your seed indoors 6-8 weeks prior to your earliest frost-free planting date since they germinate poorly in cool soil, or purchase transplants for a spring crop. A mature plant will withstand frosts and light to medium freezes more than a younger plant.

Direct-seeded collards will need even moisture for a uniform germination rate. Plant spacing is dependent on your harvest plans, but if the plants are left for maturity, allow 18-inch spacing within rows and closer if you plan to harvest younger plants. Rows should be no closer than 18 inches. Collards can tolerate several types of soil, but a heavier loam can increase yields. Well-drained soils, high in organic matter and having a pH of 6.0 to 6.5 are preferable.

There are several different ways to harvest collards. They can be harvested just weeks after planting the seed as micro-greens. You can cut the entire plant at maturity; you can also cut it at younger stages and promote regrowth of the col- lard. You can expect maturity in 60-80 days from direct seeding. Collards can also be harvested by breaking the individ- ual leaves, starting with the older, larger ones at the bottom and moving up. Continue to next page...

Continued from page 3...Varieties that perform well in our region are the Morris Heading collard, Vates, Georgia Southern, and Blue Max. Our very own Maxton, NC's claim to fame include the Morris Heading collard developed by the Morris Plant Farm and the collard sandwich, which is also a local favorite.

https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/media/images/bigstock-Market-Garden-39161527.jpg

Referring to the Morris Heading Collard, the following was copied directly from Heirloomcollards.org: "This strain is from Eric Morris of Maxton, North Carolina. His great-grandfather, Elisha Morris, and grandfather, Fairley Morris, developed the original Morris Heading collard in the 1920s. Elisha died in 1933, and Fairley devoted the 1930s to selling and promoting the variety. North Carolina State University promoted it as a 'recommended' variety in the early 1950s and sales of the seed expanded greatly. Seed companies purchased seed from the Morris family for several years but then started growing and saving their own Morris collards. This particular strain may be different from seeds collected for decades by farmers or seed companies, because Eric's father, Lawrence Morris, 'tweaked' their collard a little in the late 1980s to produce a plant with less of a heading habit. That action was taken in response to comments by customers that Morris collards were developing too much of a head. Therefore, it is possible that collec- tors have saved seeds and preserved a variety with more of a head than is being produced now by the Morris family. In 2006, Eric Morris gave seeds to Dr. John Morgan, a cultural geographer and professor of geography at Emory & Henry College, who was collecting heirloom collard strains for preservation on behalf of the USDA Accession. Seed Savers Exchange requested this variety in 2016 from the USDA Accession collection (PI 662842)." For more information on growing collards, please contact your county Cooperative Extension service.

Extending the Growing Season: Keep Them 'Maters Coming!

Mack Johnson

Everyone who has crops growing doesn't want to see cooler weather become their demise. A little thoughtful planning now may actually extend your warm-season garden plants into or even past the frost deadline. Not only warm-season, but with the right provisions cool-season crops may continue thriving right through most of the winter season.

University of Wisconsin Extension https://hort.extension.wisc.edu/files/2016/01/RowCover6.jpg

I am sure you have heard the phrase "season extension" – it is exactly what it sounds like! It is providing a little more care and a controlled environment to protect your garden plants from our weather's erratic and/ or extreme behavior. We are all aware of having an early frost in fall or a late frost in spring, or even a week or two of extremely high temperatures in the summer, and those effects on our garden. We can apply gardening techniques to minimize the damage that these extremes may cause.

Season extension in the fall may come a little easier since our soils are already warm and can offer radiant heat for the crops. There are fabric covers of varying weights you can purchase that can offer different degrees of protection depending on the weight of the fabric. Unfortunately, a higher degree of protection comes at a price, since heavier-weighted fabric will be thicker, which reduces the percentage of light transmission to the covered plant. On the right is a table showing the weight of the cover, the degree of protection and the percentage of light transmission.

Fabric Weight	Degrees of Protection	Percentage of Light Transmitted
0.5 oz	4	85%
1.0 oz	4-6	70%
1.5 oz	6-8	50%
2.5 oz	8-10	25%

It should also be noted that using multiple layers of covers are cumulative, so you are adding more protection but decreasing light transmission to the crop. When applying a row cover for plant protection from cold, it is extremely important that the cover seals with the ground to allow radiant heat from the soil to be captured within the cover. Many folks just throw a blanket over the top of the plant for frost protection, but this provides very little effective insulation that will actually protect the plant.

Continue to next page...

Continued from page 4… Most of these covers are applied as a floating row cover, meaning it lies directly on the plant canopy, but there are a few crops that can incur damage from the cover movement by the wind. Tomatoes, peppers, and squash are a few crops that would benefit from a wire or hoop support to hold the cover off the plants. I would also note that weeds can be problematic under these covers, so mulch to reduce weed pressure can be very important. There are other features of season extension; this article is only addressing one of the most commonly used. For more information on season extension, please contact your county Extension agent.

Pest Alert: Fall Army Worms

Allen West

Horticulture Agent with N.C. Cooperative Extension - Cumberland County Center

A few weeks ago, just before Hurricane Debby's remnants made its way through North Carolina, I was listening to a turfgrass specialist speak at a meeting. During the meeting he warned us to be on the lookout for Armyworms over the next couple of weeks. He noted that often after a tropical system comes to our area via the Gulf Coast, we see an influx of Armyworm populations. Sure enough, it wasn't long after the storm passed, clients began visiting our office with specimens of Armyworms and reporting damage to their lawns.

The Fall Armyworm is the caterpillar species that is most often seen causing foliar damage to turfgrasses in our area. They are identified by having small stripes of light green or being mostly black. There is also a noticeable "Y" shaped light coloring on their head. Although Armyworms have a wide range of host plants including vegetables, field crops, and landscape ornamentals, they are most often reported feeding on Bermuda lawns in our area.

Once hatched, the larva feed for about 14-21 days. It is during these last few days that they do the most foliar damage, before burrowing into the soil to pupate. After only two weeks a new generation of moths emerge. Though Armyworms do most of their damage in the late summer and early fall, they can live in our area on up until the first hard frost.

Frank Peairs, Colorado State Univ. Bugwood.org via Wikimedia Commons

If you think that you may have Armyworms, a quick way to be sure is by preparing a soapy water mixture and pouring it next to an affected area. Mix 2 tablespoons of dish detergent in 1 gallon of water until suds appear. Slowly pour the mixture over a 3 feet x 3 feet square of healthy grass next to a damaged area of the lawn. If you have Armyworms, you will see them emerge to the surface over the next 10 minutes. Another possible symptom of an infestation is noticing an unusually large number of birds on your lawn.

Take note, these caterpillars can cause significant damage to lawns in a short amount of time. I recently I had a client say that these caterpillars made parts of his Bermuda lawn look like it went dormant in just a couple of days. This is why it is important to come up with a plan quickly to control them once they are identified.

Once it is determined you do have Armyworms, there are several options for treatment. Insecticides with the active ingredient, Spinosad, pyrethroids, or carbaryl are effective at controlling Armyworms in the home lawn. With contact insecticides avoid applying just before a rain or wait at least 24 hours before irrigating to ensure good contact with the leaf.

If damage is done to Bermuda grass lawns from Armyworms, they can recover. However, we want our lawns to go into the fall and winter as healthy as possible, in order to green up well in the spring. So if you suspect Armyworms, take action quickly to minimize long term damages.

Contact your local Horticulture Extension agent, for more information about Armyworms and their control in your garden and landscape.

Sustainable Feature: Save Those Seeds

Allen West

Purple Coneflower

Summer is quickly passing by. In just a few short months the hot humid days will dissolve into cool frosty mornings. Although many landscapes plants are still in the prime of showing off their floral glory in late summer, some are beginning to fade out in preparation for fall. Fortunately, those faded flowers leave behind a wonderful gift to the gardener. That gift is seeds.

Collecting seeds is one of my favorite garden activities. For there to be a seed, it means that the plant was healthy and happy enough throughout the growing season to reproduce. In other words, seeds are a sign of gardening success. Though you can buy seeds at the garden center, there is a sense of self-reliance when you collect seeds that you pro- duced, harvested and stored. Furthermore, sometimes we have plants whose seeds can be hard to find. Collecting our own seeds from our favorite plants, ensures that we will not have to search for them next year.

Whether you are a seasoned pro or a garden newbie, here are some helpful tips for collecting seeds. The first thing to ensure is that the plant you want to collect seeds from is considered "open pollinated." This simply means that the plant produces seed naturally through pollinators, wind or other natural means and produces characteristics of its "parent" plant. Avoid collecting seeds from hybrid varieties, whose seeds will more than likely not be reliable in germination or holding the same characteristics of the parent plant.

Mature Seedhead

Also be aware of cross pollination from plants in the same species. For example, if you only have one variety of a certain plant and collect seeds from that plant, then more than likely the seeds' characteristics will be true to the parent plant. For example, if the only tomato variety you grow in your garden is a Cherokee Purple tomato, then those seeds will produce Cherokee Purple tomatoes. Howev- er, if you grow a Cherokee Purple tomato in the same garden spot as a Homestead tomato, then the seeds could produce plants that are mix of the two varieties. This is true for flowers and their colors. If you plant a pink Zinnia variety next to an orange Zinnia variety the seeds will produce Zinnias, but the coloration may be slightly different or a mix of the two. It's easy to look up research based online resources to see how far plants must be spaced in order to ensure the seed stay true to type.

Collect seed heads that are mature and have started to dry out. Place them on paper towels or in paper bags in a dry room to ensure they are completely dried out. Once completely dry you can separate the seeds by shaking in a envelope or sifting the seed heads onto a piece of paper. You can use the breeze of a fan to help remove unwanted chaff.

Place seeds in a sealed jar or sandwich bag. You can store seeds in the refrigerator to extend the seeds' shelf life. Though it varies by plant, most seeds will remain viable for 3-5 years. Contact your local Extension agent for more information on tips for collecting seeds in your home garden and landscapes. Have fun saving those seeds!

Green Industry Updates

Ashley Grubb

Area Horticulture Agent with N.C. Cooperative Extension - Hoke County Center

It's an exciting time to be in the world of horticulture! Technology is evolving rapidly side by side with a movement to be sustainable and grow in a way that makes the environment better. Two concepts that seem like they might not be complimentary, involving growers who at first glance may seem very different from each other, are starting to combine forces and are growing into something really remarkable. The common questions to which everyone is seeking answers are:

1. How do we grow more in less space?
2. Are there ways we can improve how we provide nutrients to the plants we grow?

An array of potential answers to these questions appear in several industry trade shows and workshops over the next few months, and they're right down the road!

Controlled environment agriculture (CEA) is a buzzword you may or may not have heard. It encompasses a broad spectrum of industries that work to advance food production in environments such as greenhouses, container farming, aquaponic systems, vertical indoor growing, high tunnels and more. While the concept of greenhouse growing isn't new, it's just a tiny part of the rapidly expanding CEA world. At the end of August there was an inaugural CEAg World conference in Raleigh that explored all aspects of growing in a controlled environment and helped to introduce the people who are doing it here. It's sure to be an annual event and is worth keeping an eye out for next year if you want to learn more. As homeowners and farmers of smaller plots of land, these resources can be great tools for helping us to maximize the things we can grow for our families with limited space.

And when dealing with limited space, we are potentially dealing with a finite amount of resources available for our use. Sustainable agriculture practices look at ways that we can regenerate and improve soil health, limit the use of pesticides and synthetic fertilizers, and work with nature to grow food in ways that improve the fertility of our land with each season. Once adopted, seemingly simple practices can allow for incorporating livestock, diversifying wildlife, and creating cleaner air and water too. If you would like to learn more, the Sustainable Agriculture Conference will be held in Durham this fall and will bring together farmers, food systems changemakers, and community leaders from across the Carolinas for a weekend of learning and community; focused on advancing local, sus- tainable, and organic agriculture.

And as always, your local extension agents are available to discuss these concepts in more detail and brainstorm ways that you can incorporate them into your gardening practices - give us a call!

Container Gardening for Beginners

Ashley Grubb


Image from chairish.com

When growing plants in a container, sometimes the container itself really matters. Other times you can let your creativity run wild! Some of my favorite containers to create each fall are small patio lettuce gardens. I enjoy antique shopping and thrifting and I'm always on the lookout for old thin metal roasting pans or camping cookware. These containers are shallow and the metal is easy to create drainage holes in with a hammer and nail. Right around now, I fill them with soil and sprinkle a layer of lettuce seeds across the surface. They're fun to group and display as centerpieces at backyard bbq's and are convenient to harvest salad greens from. Their small size and easy storage make them a quick seasonal, fun-to-grow project.

Along the same lines of using an unexpected container- have you ever planted on top of a pumpkin?! As they begin to fill stores and farmers markets, keep your eyes out for a large flat one with a flat or slightly recessed top. Using a small square of landscape fabric, weed cloth, or burlap you can lay it across the top of your pumpkin and use it as a place to add a little soil (no need to cut into the pumpkin- it will last longer if you don't). A few small pieces of floral foam can be added for attaching additional decorations. Gather a few small houseplants, rooted cuttings, or succulents, as well as some seasonal branches, leaves, acorns and anything else you would like to add and get to work creating a masterpiece! Once everything is in place, use the edges of your fabric to wrap it up like a little pumpkin top present and gently pin or hot glue into place. Moss can be added to the outside to cover the fabric for a more natural look. These planted pumpkins make great holiday table centerpieces!

Biodegradable pots are another fall favorite of mine for starting plants from seeds. Many plants like root vegetables, lupines, wildflowers, peas and beans don't like to be transplanted once they start growing. Using pots that break down once they're planted is a great work around if you want to protect seedlings for a while before turning them loose into your garden- just be sure to gently break off the bottom of each pot before planting.

Do you have a creative fall container gardening project? I'd love to see pictures! Happy Fall Gardening!