



Home Gardening Newsletter

June - July
2022



193 Thomas Heights Rd.
Franklin, N.C. 28734
828-349-2046
macon.ces.ncsu.edu

Galls, a Wierd Growth on Your Plants

This spring you may have noticed unusual growths and bumps on flowers and buds of rhododendrons and azaleas and on the leaves of maple and oak trees. These abnormal structures entitled galls may be caused by the fungus *Exobasidium vaccinii* or from insects such as midges and mites.

Over the past few weeks, homeowners have dropped off samples or emailed pictures of distorted leaves and flowers of rhododendrons and azaleas. In each of these cases, the culprit is the fungus *Exobasidium vaccinii*. *Exobasidium* is favored by cool wet weather and its spores travel via the wind or splashed to healthy leaves or flower buds. When spores of this disease land on new emerging tissue, the leaves become thickened, curled, fleshy and light green to white in color. Later as the disease progresses, the leaves become enlarged and covered with a white powdery substance.



Although unsightly, this disease seldom causes enough damage to justify spraying a fungicide, so if only a few plants have observable symptoms, prune or hand pick off and destroy any infected leaves as the swelling begins around April and May in WNC. As an option, try planting resistant varieties such as Amonena, Gloria, Coral Bells, Glacier, Formosa, and Aphrodite. Susceptible varieties of azalea include: White Gumpo, Rosebud, Mother's Day, and China Seas.

Other predominate pests responsible in the appearance of galls include many types of insects. In fact there are over 2,000 kinds of gall-forming insects that occur throughout the United States. The top three gall formers are gall wasps, gall midges, and gall mites. Whenever midges or mites land on plant tissue, the plant is tricked into protecting the pest's developing offspring as the insect injects enzymes that regulate plant growth. Galls from these insects may form on any part of the plant from the flowers, leaves and stems to the roots. Less common gall producers are aphids, psyllids, gall flies, along with the non-insects, bacteria and nematodes.

Common galls observed on maple trees are the bladder leaf gall mite (*picture on the right*) and spindle gall mites. Each has its on distinct look. Although these mites cause galls that appear aesthetically displeasing, they're not considered a serious threat to the host tree. Handpicking infested leaves found most often on lower limbs, may help reduce populations.



Landscape Expertise Who to Call?

When driving throughout Macon county one can't help but observe the stunning beauty when our native rhododendrons and azaleas are in bloom! Quite frankly we are blessed with an abundance of plant diversity in and around the landscapes of our homes and business'. Inevitably when taking note of various eye-catching shrubs, flowers and trees, ideas are birthed on how to create, improve or change one's own landscape. This can be accomplished as a do it yourself project or if considered too daunting then there are experienced individuals who are up for the task. Let's take a quick look at the varying options.

Landscapers - Traditional landscaping tasks include installation and maintenance of varying flowers, trees and shrubs, lawn care, mulching, pruning and controlling varying pests e.g., weeds, insects and diseases. If organic or conventional pesticides are called for then landscapers by law must have a commercial lawn turf and ornamental pesticide license from the NCDA & CS. This certification requires landscapers to obtain 10 credit hours over 5 years that will enable them to keep up to speed on the latest safety and outdoor pest control measures. To find certified commercial pesticide applicators for Lawn Turf and Ornamental go to:

<https://www.ncagr.gov/SPCAP/pesticides/license.htm>

Arborists – Arborists are known as “tree experts.” They are knowledgeable in the discipline of planting, caring for, and maintaining individual trees. Examples of their expertise include pruning, tree removal, emergency tree care, tree risk assessment, cabling, bracing and more. Certified Arborists achieve their expertise through experience and by passing a comprehensive examination along with attending courses to maintain and keep up to date on the latest techniques in arboriculture. To find a certified arborist go to:

<https://www.isa-arbor.com/>



Landscape Architects – Frederick Law Olmsted considered by many to be the father of the landscape architecture profession in the United States is famous for his design of New York City's Central Park (with Calvert Vaux) and laying out of George Vanderbilt's 120,000 acre Biltmore Estate near Asheville N.C. Tall shoes to fill but landscape architects endeavor to create beautiful “outdoor spaces.” This approach may involve site planning, landscape design, project management and implementation. Projects range in size from rather small to massive undertakings in the cases of neighborhood parks, golf courses and industrial projects. Landscape Architects must hold a certificate in N.C. obtained on the basis of demonstrated knowledge acquired by education and or experience. To find a certified Landscape Architect go to: <http://www.ncbola.org>

Landscape Contractors - Landscaper Contractors are individuals certified to perform landscape work for a given job site that is greater than \$30,000 within a 12-month consecutive time frame. On August 1, 2014 legislation was passed by the North Carolina General Assembly to: identify individuals as professional to business' and municipalities, to enable the Landscape Contractors Licensing Board to handle legitimate complaints, and to eliminate the need to hold a general contractors license. Landscape Contractors must maintain their certification by attending 7 credit hours every year. To find a certified Landscape Contractor go to: <https://nclclb.com/licensee-search/individual-license/>

NCSU Extension Horticulture Agent – Your county agent typically has a B.S or Masters Degree in Horticulture or related field along with years of experience in serving within their county. If you have any questions about native or invasive plants along with how to prevent or control varying weeds, insects or diseases, cultivar selection, plant care, pruning, gardening, composting and so much more then your county Extension Agent is available to serve. For Macon county contact Christy Bredenkamp, Extension Director at 828 349-2046 or clbreden@ncsu.edu

Whether you decide to do it yourself or contact an expert, identify your needs and priorities. Consider the scope of work you hope to accomplish and match it to the scope of services offered by the appropriate professional.

June Horticulture Tips

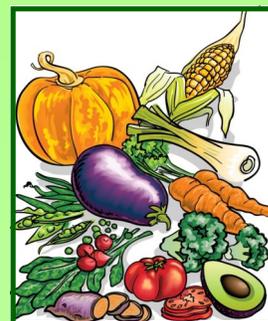
Lawns

- Do not fertilize cool season lawns between April through August.
- If broadleaf weeds are present, pull them while they are small or spot treat with a broadleaf herbicide.
- Mow Fescue and bluegrass lawns at 3 inches.
- Recent wet weather may induce red thread or brown patch fungus disease to start developing in many lawns. The best steps to reduce the spread of the disease is to have a soil pH of 6.0-7.0 along with adequate levels of phosphorous and potassium. Avoid mowing when the grass is wet. Fungicides sprays are an option.



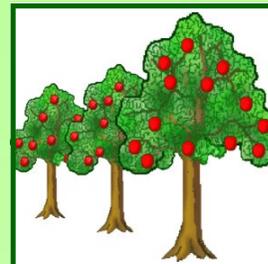
Vegetables

- Plant beans, lima beans, beets, carrots, Swiss chard, corn, cucumbers, okra, southern peas, pumpkins, and turnips.
- Side-dress vegetables 6 weeks after planting.
- Plant pumpkins and other winter squash for a fall harvest.
- Assure that vegetables get a least one inch of water per weeks. Do not wet foliage late in the day. Consider drip irrigation.
- While squash plants are still small, apply *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) to stems weekly to prevent squash vine borers. Scout for insects. Hand pick, or if necessary to save the crop, use the least environmentally harmful insecticides.
- Spray tomatoes weekly with fungicide to prevent early blight and late blight diseases.
- Start Brussels sprouts and collards for transplanting into the garden in mid-July.



Fruits & Berries

- Protect blueberries and raspberries with bird netting.
- Early summer rain has produced perfect conditions for lots of black rot to develop on grapes, as well as brown rot on peaches and nectarines. At this point, if you have not been applying fungicide sprays on a regular basis, you probably already have problems. Products containing Captan are most effective.
- July is a good time to remove suckers and water sprouts from fruit trees.



Trees Shrubs & Flowers

- Water newly planted trees and shrubs weekly if rain is inadequate.
- Prune out dieback on rhododendron, azalea, and mountain laurel.
- Remove dead flowers in flower beds to encourage longer flowering.
- Cut off the faded flowers of perennials to encourage a second flowering.
- Install supports for tall-growing flowers before they start to flop.
- Pinch back chrysanthemums to develop bushy plants with more flowers.
- Nothing perks up a patio or entry like a colorful container garden. You can create great looking containers without relying on flowers. Combine colorful foliage plants such as sweet potato vine, purple heart, coleus, wandering Jew, creeping Jenny, dusty miller, crotons, ivies and grasses.



Horticulture Tips: Tree Shrubs and Miscellaneous Tasks

- Be careful with string trimmers and mowers around trees and shrubs. Young trees can easily be killed when bark is damaged.
- Watch for bagworms, azalea lacebugs, Japanese beetles, spider mites. Spray only if needed.
- Brush Japanese beetles off plants into a bucket of soapy water. If infestation is severe, use a recommended insecticide least harmful to honey bees.
- Submit soil samples for fall fertilizer recommendations.
- Contact the Extension office for information on canning and freezing fresh produce.
- Prepare landscape plan for fall planting.
- Empty and refill birdbaths regularly to prevent mosquitoes from breeding. Scrub with bleach solution to prevent algae buildup.
- Be alert for yellow jacket nests. Beginning in August, populations that have been docile become defensive around the nest.



Page 4

Christy Bredenkamp,
Macon County Extension Director

