



Home Gardening Newsletter

April-May
2023



193 Thomas Heights Rd.
Franklin, N.C. 28734
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Upcoming Horticulture Programs

Organic Gardening Seminar

The N.C. Cooperative Extension Service will be holding an in-depth Organic Pest Management Seminar for gardeners who desire to learn more on how to control (organically) insects, diseases and weeds that plague their vegetables. This program will be held on **Monday April 10th** from 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. at the Macon County Extension Center located at 193 Thomas Heights Rd Franklin N.C.

This seminar (free) will cover a whorl wind of topics such as companion plants, farmscaping, soil amendments, organically approved sprays, a plethora of tips and more. Participants will receive plenty of handouts (online), ask questions and enjoy a great presentation. You won't want to miss it.



To register or for more information, contact the Macon County Extension Center at 828 349 2046 or e-mail debbie_hunter@ncsu.edu

Nostoc: What's This Green Gelatinous Goo?

Nostoc is a dark blue-green, jelly-like organism sometimes found in soggy lawns and or in the landscape or driveway settings. Finding Nostoc may be alarming for some individuals however, the cyanobacteria have likely been there all along as a black, shriveled crust just waiting for enough moisture to resume their jelly-like consistency. Nostoc does not harm lawn or landscape plants. Instead, the organism is merely filling in space where grass or other plants will not grow, such as areas with compacted soil, excessive moisture, and high soil phosphorus levels. Nostoc may also form on wet concrete or gravel sidewalks, causing a slipping hazard if not managed.



To control small patches, skim Nostoc from walkways or the soil surface with a flat-edged shovel, aerate or deeply till turf areas to relieve soil compaction and add organic matter to help improve soil structure and drainage. To reduce excessively wet areas, eliminate low spots where water collects, fix drainage problems, and reduce the amount of irrigation applied. There are very products that adequately control Nostoc, but chemicals that contain potassium salts of fatty acids, e.g., moss & algae killers, may provide temporary management. Finale (glufosinate) takes several weeks to see the full effect but provides good control.



Mummy Berry in Blueberries

Blueberries are beloved in the Appalachian Mountains as a fun berry to eat, to visit pick your own blueberry farms, to hunt along the Blue Ridge Parkway and or to grow in many backyards. The popularity of blueberries along with the benefit of having more antioxidants than 40 other fruits and vegetables (USDA), has spurred many gardeners to start and maintain their own blueberry patch. The topic of this article will address a specific disease “mummy berry” a fungal disease that has increased in blueberry fruit rot and shoot blight like symptoms throughout WNC.

Mummy Berry's, scientific name *Monilinia vaccinii-corymbosi* is a fungal disease of major importance in regions that produce rabbiteye along with northern and southern highbush blueberries. Mummy berry causes considerable damage to the fruit resulting in losses of 1/3 or more of the crop. The fungus overwinters on the ground, and in springtime produces a cup-shaped mushroom that releases spores. These spores infect and kill emerging leaf shoots, causing the shoot blight (primary) phase of the disease. Blighted shoots then produce a second type of spore that is carried by insects to the flowers, where fruit (secondary) infection occurs. The end result is infected berries (mummies) that do not turn blue, but instead turn pale pink or salmon-colored and fall to the ground.



In early spring, small, stalked, brown, cup-shaped mushrooms called apothecia are produced from old mummies left on the ground from the previous year. Spores produced by the apothecia are released at about the same time when new growth emerges during cool, wet weather. Spores are carried by air currents to the young emerging leaf and flower shoots infecting and blighting the new growth. The secondary or fruit infection stage occurs when spores (conidia) are released from the primary infections and carried by insects to open flowers where the spores germinate and infect the developing berry. Initially, infected berries appear normal but when ripening begins, berries turn light pink or salmon color rather than its customary blue, and soon drop to the ground. These infected fruit, if left on the ground will provide a source of disease the following year.



Mummy Berry Control Options

Cultural Control - Remove or bury infected fruit to prevent overwintering of the fungus. Mummies on the ground are most visible immediately after harvest, but are harder to see in the fall, so hand-removal or raking should be done immediately after harvest. In addition, it's helpful to bury mummies an inch or more in depth to prevent germination. Apply soil or mulch under the bushes any time after harvest (but before Spring of the following year) to prevent mummies from germinating and infecting in ensuing seasons.

Resistance - All blueberries are susceptible to mummy berry, but some tend to have fewer infections and are considered a bit more tolerant to the disease. Resistant cultivars include: southern highbush (Star, O'Neal, Legacy) rabbiteye (Premier, Powder blue) and northern highbush (Duke, Bluecrop, Patriot).

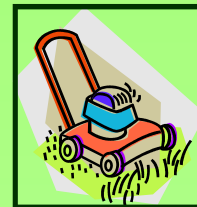
Sprays - There are several fungicides that control mummy berry but each varies in price and effectiveness. Systemic fungicides that work well but tend to be expensive include: Indar, Orbit, Propimax, Proline and others. Protectant fungicides that are easier to obtain by homeowners include: Captan and Ziram. Both products are effective but are highly dependent on coverage and frequency of sprays. Serenade is an organic product known to suppress mummy berry but must be done in tandem with burying/mulching over old mummies. Whatever you choose, be certain to apply your fungicide spray during shoot emergence and especially during bloom for effective control. Spray every 7 to 14 days beginning when the green tips of emerging leaf shoots first become visible (or when the first flowers clusters begin to emerge, whichever comes first) and continuing through bloom. Once the bloom period is over and all flowers are gone the door for further infection has been closed for the year.



April 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.



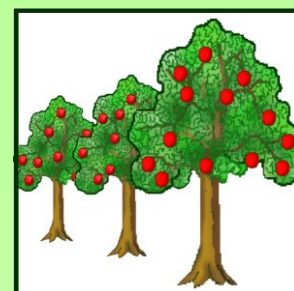
Vegetables

- Break up soil in garden beds when soil is dry enough.
- Turn under cover crop when soil is not too wet.
- Plant asparagus crowns, radishes and potatoes.
- Sow seeds for beets, carrots, cabbage, cauliflower, Chinese cabbage, lettuce, radishes, spinach and Swiss chard.
- Transplant broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower and kale.
- Plant potatoes about the time that dandelions bloom.
- Start transplants for warm season vegetables indoors. Do not plant frost-sensitive plants outside until May.
- Spray broccoli, cabbage, and cauliflower for worms if needed with Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*).
- Cut back perennial herbs to keep them compact.
- Keep last frost date in mind. May 15 is average for Macon County. The actual last frost date will fluctuate depending on your elevation and the weather.



Fruits & Berries

- Prune out fire blight in pear and apple trees. Sterilize pruners in a solution of 1 part bleach to 9 parts water after each cut. Spray streptomycin on apple and pear varieties susceptible for fire blight.
- Check fruit trees for winter damage and prune dead or weakened wood.
- Fertilize fruits if not done last month.
- Mulch berries and fruit trees (4 inches in a 2-ft in diameter)



Trees Shrubs & Flowers

- Plant trees, shrubs and ground covers.
- Side-dress trees, shrubs and ground covers with compost.
- Mulch trees and shrubs, and perennial beds after removing weeds.
- Prune spring-flowering shrubs after the flowers fade.
- Watch for azalea lace bugs, boxwood leafminer, euonymus scale. Spray if needed.
- Work a 2-3 inch layer of compost into the soil to improve drainage in flower beds.
- Plant flowering perennials and ground covers.
- Divide or transplant perennials and herbs when growth is 3-4 inches high.
- If rose varieties are not disease resistant, start weekly fungicide sprays to prevent black spot. Continue spray program through October. Consider replacing disease-prone varieties with disease-resistant types.



Edible Flowers

Try edible flowers! Plants such as pansies and nasturtiums can be planted in the landscape along with other annuals and perennials. Additional plants with edible flowers include:

Bachelor buttons	Bee Balm	Calendula	Chamomile
Chicory	Chrysanthemum		Dandelion
Daylily	Dianthus	Marigold	Passionflower
Rose (Rosa sp.)	Sunflower	Violet	

Finally think vegetables and herbs! Some can be grown as ornamentals. Chives create an attractive border, cabbage can be tucked into a perennial bed, strawberries make a great groundcover and asparagus can add a light, fluffy texture to the scenery. If space is an issue try container gardening. Additional annuals and perennials include:

Swiss Chard	Lettuces	Tomatoes	Eggplant	Pepper	Corn
Kale	Alliums	Squashes	Celery	Basil	Dill
Pumpkins	Pole beans	Herbs	Many Others		

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Christy Bredenkamp,
Macon County Extension Director



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