



Home Gardening Newsletter

April-May
2024



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

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 8th** from 6:00p.m. – 8:00p.m. at the Macon Extension Center located on 193 Thomas Heights Rd. Franklin NC.

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



For more information, go to <https://macon.ces.ncsu.edu> or contact the Macon County Extension Center to register at 828 349 2046 or e-mail debbie_hunter@ncsu.edu

Pointers for Growing a Bountiful Garden

Springtime means “seedtime” and for those in Macon County stricken with the “gardening bug,” now is the time to organize and design this year’s vegetable garden! The following pointers are geared for seasoned gardeners but also for those new to gardening or believe they have a brown thumb. I’d like to submit the possibility that if you abide by the following suggestions, your mindset will change as you watch your vegetables grow.

Start Small - There’s a lot to learn! Experience success with a small garden and gradually increase its size. Choose to grow vegetables that you love to eat as you’ll take better care of your garden with the right motivation.

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Pointers for Growing a Bountiful Garden cont.

Site Selection – Location is critical! Consider a site near the house that receives full sun all day, has access to water, is free from large rocks and weeds, has good air circulation and is sheltered from strong winds. Remember leafy vegetables need at least six hours of sunlight to develop suitably, while vegetables such as tomatoes, watermelon and peppers need 10 hours of full sun.

Soil – If possible start with well drained soil knowing subsequent years may entail the addition of soil amendments such as compost, organic mulches, aged manure and varying cover crops. Testing your soil for pH and nutrient levels is a must! It's important to establish a baseline and NCSA's lab in Raleigh will do this service for you. Right now (April-Nov.) the test is free, so pick up the paperwork, boxes and instruction sheet from the Macon Extension Center.



Planning – Steer clear of planting crops from the same plant family in the same spot two years in a row. For example, instead of growing tomatoes that had peppers in the same spot the previous year, plant beans. Both tomatoes and peppers are in the Solanaceae family.



Consider the path of the sun, make sure tall crops do not shade shorter ones. Think about spacing so outer leaves on mature plants will just miss touching neighboring plants.

If you haven't started already, there's still time to set out some of the cool season vegetables such as arugula, beets, broccoli, carrots, celery, collard greens, leeks, mustard and spinach along with potatoes and onions as intermediate vegetables. When the danger of frost has passed (~ May 15), transplant warm season vegetables such as tomatoes, peppers eggplants, and any of the cucurbits.

Crop Varieties – Hundreds are available. Try a few new varieties but be wise in your selection. Choose vegetables that grow in short seasons with cold, wet springs and extremes of temperature and moisture. Also consider disease resistance, the variety's growth habit and length of harvest season.

Water when necessary. When sowing seed or placing transplants in the ground, you may need to water every day. As plants grow then it best to water deeply once or twice a week and, early in the day. As a reference, vegetables need about an inch of water a week which equates to 66 gallons of water per 100 square feet. You can conserve water by building soil organic matter and mulching crops to reduce soil moisture evaporation. When soil around plants is dry a few inches below the surface, soak the soil deeply, preferably with a drip or soaker hose.

Scouting - Visit your garden every day. Check for signs of insects, weeds and diseases so you can take care of problems before they get out of hand. Of course, visit for the sheer joy of watching your plants grow! If problems arise make sure to correctly identify the cause before applying a "treatment." Oftentimes, certain pests, or too much or too little rain or fertilizer can muddle the proper diagnosis. If unsure, contact your local Extension Agent for help.

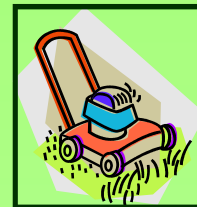
Sanitation - Maintain good sanitation by removing diseased leaves, fruits and vines and of course controlling weeds too! Common weeds that are edible include: pigweed, mustard, purslane, lambs quarter and dandelion greens.



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.



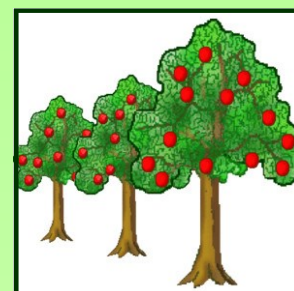
Vegetables

- 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.



Plants that Flower in the Spring NC Native Plant Society

Green & Gold - *Chrysogonum virginianum* - partial sun
Celandine Poppy - *Stylophorum diphyllum* - partial sun
Merry Bells - *Uvularia grandiflora* - partial sun
Crossvine - *Bignonia capreolata* - partial sun
Foamflower - *Tiarella cordifolia* - partial sun
Trillium - *Trillium grandiflorum* - partial sun
Atamsaco Lily - *Zephyranthes atamasca* - partial sun
Shooting Star - *Dodecatheon meadia* - partial sun
Bloodroot - *Sanguinaria Canadensis* - partial sun
Woodland Phlox - *Phlox divaricate* - partial sun
Virginia Bluebells - *Meterensia virginica* - partial sun
Blue Star - *Amsonia tabernaemontana* - partial sun
Columbine - *Aquilegia Canadensis* - partial sun
Sweetshrub - *Calycanthus floridus* - partial sun
Redbud - *Cercis Canadensis* - partial sun
Flame Azalea - *Rhododendron Calendulaceum* - partial sun



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Christy Bredenkamp,
Macon County Extension Director



NC COOPERATIVE
EXTENSION



Macon Extension Center
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