



April-May  
2025



193 Thomas Heights Rd.  
Franklin, N.C. 28734  
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macon.ces.ncsu.edu

# Home Gardening Newsletter

## 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 **Tuesday April 15<sup>th</sup>** 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 amendments, 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](mailto:debbie_hunter@ncsu.edu)

### Garden Myths vs Reality

There are many tried and true home garden remedies that abound in lore being passed down from one generation to the next, from neighbor to neighbor and between friends. These precious gems of knowledge are beloved as one remembers spending time with their grandmother or father while harvesting watermelon, pulling weeds or facing a familiar pest. However there are just as many "Myths" that can be found on the internet that may do more harm than good in your particular garden. Many times, I receive calls from homeowners asking about the effectiveness of a particular "home brew" that they've heard or read about from varying sources. Often times, I will question, did it work? If the individual is happy with the results, I'll advise them not to change what seems to be working. However many times I'll hear some lulu's. My standard answer is to simply say that your remedy or data is not backed by research but let's try and logic through the possibility of the potential success or potential harm that may occur with your soil, plants, and or beneficials. The following are a few common gardening myths.

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# Garden Myths continued

**Myth:** You need 8-10 hours of full sun to grow vegetables.

**Reality:** There are various vegetables that can be grown in less than full sun; for example beans, beets, leeks, peas, radish and turnips need 4-6 hours of full sun while cabbage, kale, lettuce, spinach and Swiss chard need 2-4 hours of full sun. Vegetables that need 8-10 hours of full sun include tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, corn and squash.

**Myth:** Due to the lack of calcium in the soil, blossom end rot on tomatoes can be fixed by adding egg shells and various other calcium sources.

**Reality:** Blossom end rot usually occurs because there is not enough consistent water available for the plant to transport available calcium into the fruit. There may be enough calcium in the ground but if there is not enough water in the soil, then the leaves pull the available water into themselves more effectively than tomato fruit. Due to the mechanisms of transpiration, the leaves win the "water wars" every time. When plants begin making fruit, there might be one or two defective tomato clusters at first but, eventually the plant adjust accordingly. To ensure success, try using timers when watering your garden.



**Myth:** Epsom salts are essential for great tomatoes, add them to your garden every year.

**Reality:** Epsom salts contain magnesium(Mg) and sulfur, so if you've done a soil test and your soil lacks magnesium and your plants are not growing well, give it a try. But if you've already added lime which also contains Mg and calcium then you may be doing more harm than good.

**Myth:** A mixture of dish soap, salt and vinegar make a great weed killer.

**Reality:** Although this mixture will burn the top growth of the weeds understand it will kill earthworms, harm the soil structure, damage the grass, burn eyes if not protected, and not kill the roots of your targeted weeds.

**Myth:** Fall is the best season for pruning.

**Reality:** Shrubs and trees store carbohydrates in their branches and leaves, so fall pruning creates an added stress that will reduce their cold hardiness. Additionally, spring-flowering plants such as azaleas will bloom poorly if pruned in fall, as next year's flower buds are present at that time. It's best to prune Spring flowering plants right after petals fall in spring and early summer.

**Myth:** The soil under oaks and pines is acidic.

**Reality:** This is sometimes true. The acidity of soil depends not only on the nature of vegetation growing on it, but also on the type of rock below. Some soils under oaks and pines are neutral or alkaline thus canceling the need for lime.

**Myth:** Mushrooms growing in the lawn means that the soil is lacking in nutrients.

**Reality:** Mushrooms are merely the above-ground growth of fungal organisms living in soil. Some fungi live on buried lumber, dead roots, or fragments of organic matter. Others fungi e.g., Mycorrhizae live in harmony with tree roots, assisting in the uptake of water and nutrients. The sudden appearance of mushrooms does not mean the lawn needs lime, fertilizer or anything else.

**Myth:** Moss growing in lawns indicates a need for lime.

**Reality:** There are many reasons why moss grows in a particular site. Acidic soils are one of the conditions for moss crowding out your grass, but so will heavy shade, poor drainage, low fertility, and compact soils. When any one or multiple conditions exist moss can take over.

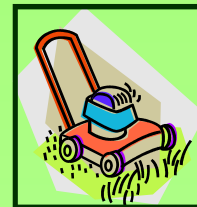


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# April Horticulture Tips

## 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.



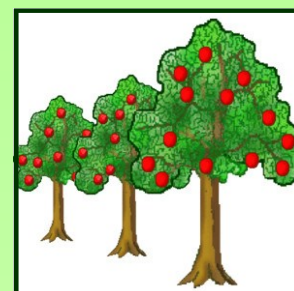
## Vegetables

- 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.



## Garden Myths vs Reality cont.

**Myth:** When it comes to garden chemicals if a little bit is good, a lot is better.

**Reality:** False! Doubling or tripling the dose of any one pesticide can have disastrous results. Weed killers used in this manner will injure plants and potentially leave long-lived residues in soil. Over-use of insecticides may kill beneficial bugs, harm plants, and render vegetables unfit for consumption. Doubling the recommended rate of any pesticide increases the chances of poisoning people by inhalation, absorption through the skin, and by other routes. Read the label for safe ways to handle and effectively control your unwanted pests.

When applying fertilizers, too much will burn plants, prevent seed germination, and contaminate water resources. This holds true for conventional (10-10-10) and even with organic fertilizers such as manure if used in excessive rates.

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