



Brunswick County Master Gardener  
Volunteer Association

# NEWSLETTER

February 2006

## RICHARD'S RAMBLINGS

What a great way to start the New Year! We had a well attended, productive business meeting and who didn't benefit from the "double dip" program. "Team Blazich" can't be beat!

Shirley and David have worked hard to offer us a dazzling line up of programs for the remainder of 2006 and far into 2007. Many of us have had a chance to glimpse the roster of those who will be presenting programs and I don't want to miss out on a single one - to do so would be to throw away an extraordinary learning opportunity.

Remember, too, that YOU are the association. What goes on at business meetings concerns YOU! Mark your calendar so you can be at every meeting. Your participation is valued!

Thanks for all you do for Master Gardening and have a great month!

Richard

## FEBRUARY'S SPEAKER

Don't miss the February meeting. Our speaker will be Phyllis Meiloe. She will speak about "Ability Gardening: the Use of Garden Tools to Make Gardening Easier for Seniors."

### February Meetings:

*Board, Feb 16, 9 a.m.*

*General Meeting, Feb 23, 9 a.m.*

### *A Note from Kathy Walters:*

Thank you so much for the lovely South Sea pearl and silver brooch and the plaque you presented me upon my resignation from the Cooperative Extension Service. I will treasure them always...but most of all, I treasure the Brunswick County Master Gardeners! So many of you have been in touch and expressed such kindness – I can't thank you enough for your thoughtfulness! I am so fortunate to know you and to count you among from friends!

***Did you sign your Certification Agreement for this year?***

***If not, see Charlie for a copy – or get one in the Hotline Office – and return to Charlie, David or Bette at the front desk when you sign.***

## NEWS FROM CHARLIE:

Please remember that **to be a Master Gardener** you must have completed all the requirements each and every year. There have been some occurrences where folks have claimed to be Master Gardeners and they have not completed and maintained their obligations. This is a violation of the law.

What a great success the **Blazichs' seminars** were. We not only paid for all their expenses but also made a little bit of money as a result. We helped out our friends in 4H as well since they provided the meal. Our visitors seemed to really enjoy themselves and hopefully they will come back for the next one.

Speaking of which, **the North Brunswick Expo** was a great success also. Twice as many people attended as last year and there were lots of new questions. We must have over 20 "Newcomers Kits" to pass out.

Which brings on the next topic, which is all the seminars coming up. I will be contacting you on **the Supply Elementary School project**. Other upcoming seminars include: Feb. 16th, **Southport Library**, 2:00-3:00 PM, subject "Are you ready for Spring?"; **Southport Wal-Mart**, Feb. 18th, 10:00-1:00, seminar at 11:00, same subject as above; Feb. 20, **Coastal Garden Club**, BMEC room, 1:00-2:00 PM, "Preparing for Spring"; Mar. 1st, **Welcome Center in Southport**, 1:00-2:00 PM, "Composting"; Mar. 8th, **Leland Library**, 10:00-11:00 AM, "Are you ready for Spring?"; Mar. 24-26th, "**Home and Garden Show**" at West Brunswick High School. I'm sure other things will come up. Please remember these events and I will call if you live in the area and ask for some help signing folks in and selling books, etc.

What a great year we had in 2005 and it looks like this year will be even better. New class starts Feb 8<sup>th</sup>; stop in and say "Hi" to our new members. Help make them feel at home!

Charlie,

PS, I almost forgot, Mar 31st is the all-day "**Coastal Garden Seminar**" We will invite the public again and try and cover expenses. Billy Privette and 4H will again prepare the food. Topics will be provided at a later date.

### Master Gardeners Board

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*The "Amen!" of Nature is always a flower.*

# HOTLINE NEW STORIES

In February 2005, there were 127 calls to the Hotline. The breakdown of these calls is as follows:

**General:** 70. The majority of these calls were for requests for Bluebird house plans, no doubt a result of Charlie's newspaper articles. The rest were for Newcomer Packets, soil sample kits and soil sample analysis information.

**Lawns:** 16. Most requested information on starting lawns and the rest concerned problems with weeds.

**Trees:** 7. The calls concerned fruit trees and pruning trees.

**Shrubs:** 8. Questions concerned oleander, azalea, roses and other shrubs.

**Pests:** 5. The pests were voles and others.

**Vegetables:** 14. Grape information was prominent; the rest were for general garden questions.

**Flowers:** 7. Questions concerned houseplants, bulbs, roses, ornamental grass and growing annuals.

When you work on the Hotline, write down as much information as possible about the problems and their solutions on the Hotline forms. The back of the form has some questions to help you clarify the caller's problem.

Reminder from Charlie: **DO NOT** diagnose disease or pests over the phone! You need a specimen to make a proper diagnosis. All turf problems should go to Charlie, David, Al or Matt, in that order, other problems to Dave or Charlie.

## Supply Elementary School Program

**We have an exciting new program** coming up at Supply Elementary School working with students in the K through 5 classes, and Charlie will need a lot of Master Gardeners to volunteer some time to make this a success.

The program will cover three topics and we will be working with students in two age groups: Kindergarten through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and grades 3 through 5. A brief overview of the topics is:

Propagation, March 21 and 22: We will provide each classroom with containers with growing plants/seedlings, plus measuring devices for water and plant growth. The pots will have 3 types of soil – sand, clay and loam. Students will learn how to care for the plant and will keep charts until we return in April.

Soils, April 11 and 12: Review what students learn re: plant growth in the three different soil types. The program will involve what plants require for growth and why plants grow in certain environments and not in others, as well as how soils are amended to provide what plants need to grow. We will also ask the cafeteria staff to save plastic containers to use in each classroom to collect scraps or discarded fruits and vegetable from the tasting breaks; then put the scraps into a compost bin which we will provide the school.

Compost and Worm Bins, April 25 and 26. This will be an outside program. We do final plant measurements and will bring the worm bin so student can see and touch the worm and see how worms aid in the soil. Also, at this class we'll give each student a plant to take home, probably a tomato plant.

**Charlie is looking for volunteers to work on this project and others that may develop. If you want participate, let Charlie know.**

## **Pro Days Seminar and Trade Show**

The NC Cooperative Extension Service will present the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Regional Pro Days Seminar and Trade Show for area "Green Industry" workers and plant professional on Wed. and Thurs., Feb. 15 and 16, across from the Leland Industrial Park. The schedule of events will include a number of seminars, e.g., on turfgrass weed management, pesticide application, pesticide disposal, ornamental and turfgrass diseases and insects, plus exhibits featuring equipment, plants and landscape supplies, and finally, educational programs offering NCDA pesticide recertification credits; pesticide applicators will be eligible to receive specialty credits to satisfy their "X." For information, contact Matt Martin or David Barkley at 253-2610 or Al Hight at 259-1235.

**Ash is in the Greenhouse every morning – why not come in and help him out – Wednesday is the most popular morning for working in the Greenhouse, but he would appreciate your help any morning!**

**A Taste of China:** The Extension and Community Association, directed by Susan Morgan, would like our help in preparing food for their annual cultural program. The theme this year is China with an emphasis on history and cuisine. As in years past, the ECA is asking MGs to prepare food for the tasting program, which will be on Saturday, March 11 in the Extension Training Room. Those who prepare a dish (or two) will receive special treatment:

- A special guest table with the privilege of going through the line first
- A complementary cookbook with recipes for all the featured dishes
- The tasting is free to all preparers (you guests will have to pay)

Save your receipts for reimbursement. For more information call Susan Morgan or Bette Rose at the Extension (253-2610).

## **News and Info from David Barkley:**

This is the time of year when many home gardeners get the urge to cut on the shrubs around the house. **The time to prune** may be correct for some, and for others, it may not.

There are several reasons to prune an ornamental plant. Always keep dead wood and broken branches trimmed off. Many plants may have gotten too large for the intended space. Some are being grown for a particular shape or form and may need pruning. Young plants, especially trees, need extra attention during the early years to provide for the best branching structure. Many plants, especially those about for several years, will require complete renovation.

Whatever the reason for pruning, timing is a key factor for successful results. Most landscapers agree that late winter and pre-spring are the best times to prune. **The key here is before bud break.** This is true for summer flowering trees and shrubs and most evergreen shrubs. Spring-flowering shrubs are treated differently. Pruning will be stressful to plants, and one of the most stressful periods is during bud break and leaf expansion in the spring (plants are depending on stored food supplies for these action times). It is recommended to complete the pruning chores before this time occurs.

Go to the web site to see a list of plants that are best pruned in late winter/early spring and those that should wait until they complete their spring show of blooms.

### **LATE WINTER SHRUB REJUVENATION**

There is also a group of plants that easily become overgrown and leggy, or simply need to be pruned to induce more flowers. We have a tendency to only tip prune these plants. The first that comes to mind is an old, overgrown azalea. If you have large azaleas that haven't flowered well over the last couple of years and are a lack of interest in the landscape, then it's okay to sacrifice what little bloom may come out in the spring to get the plant back on the right track for

the future. Don't be bashful (you don't have much to lose anyway). Spiraea, Abelia and Nandina could fall into this group also.

There are many other broadleaf ornamentals that would benefit from a severe pruning as every year they get bigger and bigger. The easy rule of thumb to remember is that the faster and larger a shrub grows, the more you can cut it back. Plants that respond to severe pruning are Chinese and Japanese Holly cultivars, Photinia, Ligustrum, Osmanthus, Elaeagnus, Waxmyrtle, Rose of Sharon and Spiraea.

Although a severe pruning will make them smaller, this is only temporary. In a few years, you'll probably need to repeat the process. Also consider creating a multi-stem, small tree from an overgrown shrub. Instead of trimming all of the top off, remove many of the branches all the way to the ground. Leave 3-4 well spaced branches and thin the top. If sprouts appear at the base, keep them trimmed off. Once created, the plant will require much less attention over the years.

*One can severely damage (kill) conifers by pruning severely. Be careful when pruning Arborvitae, Cedars, Pfitzer, Hetz, Andorra and Shore Junipers.*

### **PLANT FIRST GARDEN VEGETABLES SOON**

This is just the right time for "Coastal Carolina" gardeners to plant cool-season vegetables. Cool-season vegetables are those that should be planted early in the growing season because they stop producing when hot weather comes. Among the first vegetables that should be planted in the garden are cabbage, carrots, head lettuce, onions, Irish potatoes, radishes, rutabagas, spinach, turnips, edible podded peas and garden peas, which are also called English peas. Soon after they are in the ground, it'll be time to plant broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, Chinese cabbage, kale, kohlrabi, leaf lettuce, mustard and Swiss chard.

### **LANDSCAPE QUIZ:**

*Which turfgrass is the most drought tolerant - Centipede, Common Bermuda, 'Tifway' Bermuda, 'Raleigh' St. Augustine, or 'Meyer' zoysia?*

Common Bermudagrass, Centipede, 'Tifway' Bermuda, 'Meyer' Zoysiagrass, and 'Raleigh' St. Augustine were evaluated in Griffin, Georgia for drought tolerance (DT), based on wilting and browning during the summer by researcher Robert Carrow.

#### *Results:*

Very High DT: 'Tifway' and Common Bermudagrass; High: 'Raleigh' St. Augustine and Centipede; Low: Meyer zoysia

### **FEBRUARY GARDEN CHORES**

- Plant early vegetable gardens such as peas, sugar snaps, onion seeds, head lettuce, carrots, etc
- Use only fresh new 2006 packaged seed. Don't save seed, particularly hybrid seed, since they will lose vigor or produce plants not true to type.
- Purchase quality seed from reputable dealers or garden centers.
- Purchase varieties that grow well in your area and that have resistance to major diseases such as rust or nematodes.
- Become knowledgeable about varieties that are genetically superior to older vegetables.
- Deadhead pansies periodically to ensure more blooms. During active growth in the spring, fertilize them about once a month.
- Be prepared on the chance there may be some more winter weather ahead. Don't let unseasonably mild temperatures dictate what you do in the landscape.

See more from David this month...on Pruning Camellias, Winter Lawns, Garden Clean-up, Landscape Fabrics, Slow Release Fertilizers, Protecting Trees from Weed Trimmers and Deer Problem on the BCNGVA web site.

# Pesticide Quiz

**Question:** Which is more toxic...a chemical with an LD50 of 500 or one with an LD50 of 80?

**Answer:** LD50 is the amount of material required to cause death in 50% of the test population (Wow! Be careful what you volunteer for!). This is expressed in mg of chemical per kg of animal body weight (mg/kg). So, the chemical with the LD50 of 80 is more toxic.

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If you have an item for the newsletter, be sure to submit it to both Becky Dus ([rcd@nfcexperts.com](mailto:rcd@nfcexperts.com)) and Lisa Miner ([lisaminer@mac.com](mailto:lisaminer@mac.com))

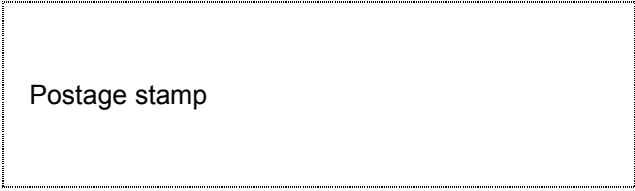
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