



Brunswick County Master Gardener
Volunteer Association

NEWSLETTER

September 2006

[Soil Science](#)... will be our topic at the September 28 meeting. Our speaker will be **Rick Morros**; he is Regional Agronomist with the NCDA Agronomic Division. Rick works in Bladen, Brunswick, Columbus, Cumberland and Robeson counties. FYI, in case you're wondering, the Agronomic Services Division analyzes soil samples, plant, solution and irrigation water samples, and animal, municipal and industrial wastes. Recommendations are designed to improve production efficiency and protect natural resources. Regional agronomists help growers solve field problems and implement recommendations.

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- **LIFE ON THE FARM** will start up again during the last two weeks of October. We will probably work with three schools each week. We will have more information as the time approaches, but keep this in mind and let Charlie know if you can help.
 - Planning continues for the **REUNION GARDEN PARTY** on November 10. We're looking for photos, too – if you have any **photos of MG events** that you would like to share, let Barb McCoy know (575-7679; mccoymb@atmc.net) – her group is going to set up a history display as part of this event. And...we're still **searching for a 1996 class list!** And, as always, we'll be looking for help with

setting up, cleaning up, etc. – the more help, the easier for everyone.

- NC State Fair is Oct. 13 – 22.
- Mark your calendars for the next **COASTAL GARDENING SEMINAR** on September 29 (the August newsletter said Sept. 21 - sorry). Topics and speakers will be announced soon.
- Our next **PLANT SALE** is scheduled for October 12, 13 and 14. There will be **no pre-sale** of plants at this or any future plant sale. Come in, help out.
- We have **SEMINARS** scheduled and Charlie's looking for volunteers to help – here are the dates, places, times:
 - ✓ Sept. 11, 10:30 am, Roark Library, Shallotte
 - ✓ Sept. 14, 9:00 am, Oak Island Library
 - ✓ Sept. 22, 2:00 pm, Hickman Crossroads Library
 - ✓ Sept. 25, 1:00 pm, Coastal Garden Club (Richard Boland has the details)
 - ✓ Sept. 28, 2:00 pm Southport Library
 - ✓ Sept. 30, 10 am – 1 pm, Southport Wal-Mart, including a plant clinic
 - ✓ Leland Library will also have a seminar – date and time will be announced when it's scheduled

Susan Morgan will embroider the Master Gardener logo on your shirt for only \$5⁰⁰!
Let Charlie know if you are interested.

He Didn't Really Mean It....

When **Charlie Spencer** announced that he will be retiring at the end of September, he really thought that's what he would do. But, as he announced at the General Meeting in August, there are just too many exciting things on the horizon here at the Extension Center and he just can't leave and miss the opportunity to be involved. Thanks, Charlie, we're glad you're staying on.

Have you noticed how nice the planters in front of the Extension Office look? How about all the changes – improvements and new plants, etc – in the Botanical Garden and where the planting area is being extended out from the Garden? Our volunteer work groups are doing a great job in these areas, with a LOT of help from Jim, too.

*****If you are providing refreshments at the meetings, are you aware that you can be reimbursed? Just save your receipt and give it to our Treasurer...I think there's a cap of \$25.00. *****

Lots of new projects are in the works. Some ideas include:

- Installing lighting in the Botanical Garden area.
- Continuing to bring in different varieties of crepe myrtle; when finished we will be the only garden in the U.S. with every variety of crepe myrtle. We will hold an open house when all are in bloom.
- Creating a semi-tropical planting area outside the conference room door.
- Beautify the area around the entrance to the greenhouse, including installing additional drainage and irrigation, new beds, new plantings.

We will also be acquiring **PowerPoint** presentation software and developing some presentations and/or editing NC State programs for the seminars we provide in the community.

Want to have some fun? Attend **BUG FEST** at the Museum of Natural Science in Raleigh on September 16. Free food....hope you like bugs!

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HOTLINE

In September 2005, there were 72 calls to the Hotline. The break-down of these calls is as follows:

General: 14. Of the 14 calls, 3 requested Newcomer packets and 8 requested soil sample kits and interpretation of analysis.

Lawns: 13. The majority of the calls were general in nature in that information was requested for new lawns. Centipede and weeds in the lawn made up the others.

Trees: 18. The species of trees varied widely among 5 types; however, oaks had the most calls and the remainders were for general information about growing trees in Brunswick County.

Shrubs: 11. Azalea had the most questions but the remainders were for numerous other plants.

Pests: 8. All the usual suspects – hornets, moles, fire ants and snakes.

Vegetables/Flowers: 8. The calls varied among numerous flowers. Confederate roses had the most.

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.

The Brunswick County Fall Clean-up

is scheduled for Sept. 11–16. During that week, county residents can dispose of all materials except regular household trash for free. This applies to material brought to *the landfill in Bolivia only* – items will not be picked up with your regular trash service. The four convenient sites will maintain regular fees during this time. For more info, call the Brunswick County Solid Waste Department at 253-2520.

FREE MULCH – Brunswick County is giving mulch to county residents only. The mulch will not be delivered, but will be loaded at the landfill in Bolivia only. For info, call 253-2520.

Litter Sweep 2006 – Volunteers

needed! The NCDOT's annual Litter Sweep Fall Roadside Clean-up will take place Sept. 16 – 30. Brunswick County will waive tipping fees at the landfill In Bolivia for anyone bringing in DOT bags from a roadside clean-up during this time. Contact the DOT office (754-4540) to register. DOT will provide gloves, safety vests and trash bags.

Household Hazardous Waste Collection, Clothing Drive and Electronic Recycling Event –

Brunswick County will collect household hazardous waste, clothing and electronics at the Southport Wal-Mart on Sept. 16 from 9 am to 2 pm. This is a one-day collection only – items will not be picked up with regular trash service and will not be accepted at the four convenient sites or at the landfill. This collection is free for county residents and farmers only – no commercial or industrial waste will be accepted. For info call 253-2520.

It's Fall Gardening Time

David Barkley, Horticulture Agent

Getting the garden soil tilled, fertilized and ready for planting of fall vegetables can be a rather tiresome job, especially with outside temperatures above 90 degrees F. Undoubtedly, most people would find it more comfortable under an air conditioner, but maximum results from gardening efforts are not always achieved under the most ideal of working conditions.

Vegetables that have a 60-80 day maturity cycle like rutabaga, cabbage, snap beans, and lima beans need to be planted in early August. Shorter season vegetables like turnips and leafy greens can be delayed in seeding until about mid-September. Keep in mind that the planting dates can be as much as 10-20 days earlier in Western North Carolina and 7-14 days later in the East. This length of time is based on the assumption that there will be adequate moisture so the plants can germinate and grow with minimum delay.

Before the soil can be prepared for the fall garden, a decision has to be made on what to do with the remains of the spring garden. About the only spring crops worth leaving will be okra, tomatoes, eggplants and peppers; destroy everything else. The old vegetable plants should be put in the garbage and not the compost pile. Composting vegetable residue may be contribute to future insect and disease problems if the temperature of the compost does not get high enough (at least 160 degrees F) to destroy the insects and pathogens. It is probably preferable to destroy the old vegetable residue entirely.

The soil should be worked to a depth of 6-8 inches. Poor soil preparation will yield a poor stand and poor stands mean low yields. If the site is infested with weeds, be sure to allow sufficient time (about 10-14 days) for the weeds to decompose before final preparation, fertilization and planting are done. Many gardeners also choose to add more organic matter to improve the tilth of the soil during this preparation stage.

Getting a good stand of fall and winter vegetables in the heat of the summer is no easy task. The secret to producing healthy plants is in modifying the seeding area of the planting row. Once the seed furrow has been opened, take a garden hose or watering can and wet the soil 3-4 inches deep. Allow the water to soak in. Then, plant the seeds in the furrow. Always plant more seeds than you need. Next, cover the seeds with compost, potting soil or vermiculite instead of garden soil. A covering material such as compost will provide good aeration and eliminate soil crusting. It is important to add additional water to the soil as needed to keep the seedlings actively growing once they begin to emerge. The plants should be thinned to the proper stand after they are 1-2 inches tall.

High quality vegetables and adequate soil moisture go hand in hand. Failure to provide sufficient water (1 inch or more per week) will put stress on the plants and reduce yields. It is drought, not heat, that damages fall vegetables. Therefore, every gardener should water the fall garden regularly during periods of limited rainfall. To further combat moisture stress, use an organic mulch such as straw, leaves or compost. Mulches not only conserve moisture; they help reduce soil temperatures and check weed growth.

It is not uncommon for insects and diseases to get their share of the fall garden. Most of the problems with insects and diseases are due to a buildup in their populations from spring through summer. There is hope in keeping these pests at tolerable levels if a few strategies are followed. First, review pertinent literature on insects and diseases in order to distinguish the difference between problem and nonproblem situations. Second, strive to keep the fall vegetables healthy and actively growing. Healthy plants are less susceptible to insects and diseases. Third, check the vegetable plants frequently for signs of insects and disease damage. When sufficient damage is detected, use an approved pesticide.

True, fall gardening will have a few ups and downs during the growing season. However, the rewards of fresh vegetables will make it all worthwhile at harvest time. All the heat and sweat will be forgotten when the food is put on the table.

Garden Chores for September:

- Some areas are having an excellent year for caterpillars, butterflies and moths. If you lose foliage from a deciduous tree this time of the year, it will not hurt the tree. The leaves have already produced plenty of food for the tree and they would fall anyway in another month. The main reason to kill these fall caterpillars would be to keep the droppings off the sidewalk or out of the pool. Any pesticide labeled for caterpillars would work. Be sure to use one labeled for fruits or nuts if you plan to spray something edible. By the way, the ones that make webs this time of the year are commonly called fall webworms. Tent caterpillars will show up in the spring and their nests are normally in the forks of the tree. Fall webworms will make nests on the ends of the limb. Bagworms have individual protective bags instead of webs. Speaking of bagworms, it is too late to control them with a pesticide. The good news is that the eggs will be laid inside the bag and hand-picking them will work from now until next June.
- Rising energy costs have some of us considering cost-saving measures, even when it comes to our lawns. Do you have more lawn than you need? Many urban landscapes are quite small, but there still are plenty of homes with huge expanses of grass. It is not difficult to convert a lawn to a forested area, although you may have to comply with certain zoning requirements. A forested area requires less energy to maintain.
- The high price of gas will likely cause the cost of produce to rise at the grocery store. Support local growers by purchasing at farmers markets or, better yet, plan to put in a fall garden, if you have not already. Plant cool-weather plants such as lettuce, broccoli, cabbage, collards, spinach and other greens now, along with root crops such as carrots, radishes, beets, onions and garlic. Turnips for roots need to be planted now. Turnips for greens can be planted until September 20. Season extenders such as cold frames or row covers can provide the necessary protection to help you produce well into the late fall or early winter.
- Consider growing some edible crops in your landscape. Choices for edible landscaping include blueberries, figs and grapes.

- Compost is not only good for your garden but making and using it is good for your community. Any leaves, grass clippings or pruning that go into the pile don't end up being collected by cities. Make a simple compost pile by incorporating a small amount of garden soil and a little fertilizer to a pile of leaves. Next spring you will have a supply of leaf mold to improve the structure of your garden soil. To achieve faster decomposition of the compost pile, turn the pile over every month or so during the growing season. For more detailed information on composting go to <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/hil/pdf/ag-467.pdf>.
- With the threat of heavy winds during hurricane season or the ice storms that may occur this winter, it is a good idea to check your trees for any potential hazards. Go to the International Society of Arboriculture Web site to learn how to identify defects within the tree that can make them unsafe. <http://www.treesaregood.com/treecare/hazards.asp>

Spring Bulbs, Peonies, Evergreens

- Garden centers will soon start to display wonderful varieties of spring bulbs. Now is the time to buy to get the best selections, but hold off on planting until the temperature has cooled off. Bulbs can be stored in a cool, dry location to await planting. Consider trying some of the more unique bulbs such as fritillaria, colchicum, chionodoxa (Glory of the Snow), the various alliums, scilla or lycoris.
 - Dig and divide peonies, they can be planted in early fall but make sure the crowns are buried only 1 ½ to 2 inches below ground level. Deeper planting keeps the plants from blooming.
 - When landscaping for energy efficiency, choose evergreens for the north and northwest side of the house where they will block winter winds without limiting winter sun. Block early morning and late afternoon summer sun by planting deciduous trees to the east and west of the house, including the southeast and southwest corners.
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Together Making a Difference – Litter Sweep, Oct. 7, 2006 at 9 am near you!

You, your family and your business are invited to make a difference just by spending a few hours picking up litter on Oct. 7. Round up a team, or if you need a team to join, call Jennifer Whitley at *Keep Brunswick County Beautiful* (253-2524 or jwhitley@brunSCO.net)

If you have an item for the newsletter, be sure to submit it to both Becky Dus (rcd@nfcexperts.com) and Lisa Miner (webmaster@bcmastergardener.org)

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