



February Lawn and Garden Tips

Inside this issue:

Understanding the Seed Packet 2

Starting Onions & Leeks from Seeds 2

Starting Seeds Indoors 3

Growing Shiitake Mushrooms 3

Important Message 3

From the Master Gardener Hotline 4



Forsyth County Center
 1450 Fairchild Road
 Winston-Salem NC
 27105
 336-703-2850
 Fax: 336-767-3557
 www.forsyth.cc
 forsyth.ces.ncsu.edu

R. Craig Mauney

R. Craig Mauney
Extension Agent
Horticulture

•**Lawn Care** - Cool season lawns should be fertilized in February. Follow soil test recommendations. In absence of a soil test add 1 pound of actual nitrogen per 1000 square foot of lawn area.

•**Vegetables** - Time to start planting those cool season vegetables. The extension office has a Quick Reference Guide that contains a list of vegetables and the dates to plant them in Forsyth County as well as a few locations to find vegetable seeds of varieties that do well in our area.

•**Fruit Trees** - If not already applied you can use dormant oil on fruit trees to kill insect eggs before leaf and flower buds begin to expand.

•**Ornamentals** -

- ◆ Prune plants that bloom on current season's growth in late February, such as Butterfly Bush.
- ◆ Trim ornamental grasses, such as lirioppe, mondo grass, and pampas grass.
- ◆ Plant trees and shrubs now so the roots can get established before hot dry weather.
- ◆ Cut back those overgrown evergreen shrubs now. Any type of severe pruning should be done in February.
- ◆ February is a good month to also plant bare root material such as roses.
- ◆ Start dividing perennials such as daylily and shasta daisy in February and continue through March.

Forsyth Extension Community Garden Mentor Program

Why a Community Garden Mentor Program? Community gardening is a great tool for improving food access to individuals who may not have good garden conditions on their property. Many community gardeners are first time gardeners and often need help with the basics of growing a garden. Garden groups may need help with garden organization and operation. Garden mentors help support community gardens by providing information and resources from Forsyth Cooperative Extension to community gardens.

What is a community garden mentor?

A Community Garden Mentor is someone who is knowledgeable about gardening, enjoys sharing that knowledge with others, and has been trained to support community development around gardens. A Community Garden Mentor encourages best practices in the community garden.

Community Garden Training Program:

Community Garden Mentors receive 18 hours of mentor training in classroom instruction including the American Community Garden Association 'Growing Communities' curriculum. Mentors are required to attend a monthly meeting with other Garden Mentors, are encouraged to enroll in the 'Sustaining Community Gardens Series' and to take advantage of other classes offered by the Consumer Horticulture Program of Forsyth Cooperative Extension. Garden Mentors are also expected to carry out the duties of a Community Garden Mentor.

In addition to training and orientation, Forsyth Cooperative Extension provides Garden Mentors resources for their assigned garden such as seeds, starter plants (when available), access to a tool lending shed, soil nutrient testing, ongoing support during the mentorship process, and printed material on vegetable gardening, pest identification, pest

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

management, composting, growing fruits, growing herbs, and growing flowers. We strive to partner Garden Mentors with the garden of their choice.

How to Become a Community Garden Mentor: If you are interested in becoming a community garden mentor contact Mary Jac Brennan, Extension Agent for community Gardens, at 703-2869 or brennamj@forsyth.cc.

How to Request a Community Garden Mentor for your Community Garden: If you are interested in requesting a community garden mentor for your community garden, complete the request form on the Forsyth County Cooperative Extension Service website <http://www.forsyth.cc/CES/Gardening/> or call Mary Jac Brennan at 703-2869.

Understanding the Seed Packet

As we shop for seeds in the many catalogs and visit garden centers we may be taken away by the colorful pictures we see on seed packets. Before you get carried away and buy them from the pretty picture take a minute or two and read the packet with understanding. We need to be selecting varieties that we have space to plant. Some varieties sold in our stores may surprise you but may not be best for your area. Others do best in certain soil types, shady conditions, or may need to be started indoors first before moving to the garden. To help you make an informed decision below are some things to look for when buying those seeds.

Date: For best results, buy only the seed packed for the current year. The date is generally stamped on the back flap of the package. Poor storage conditions reduce the viability of seed. Purchasing seeds packaged from last year is not a good buy unless you know how the seed was stored.

Variety: Most seed packets list the name of the variety and tell you if it is a hybrid. Flowers are also identified as annuals, biennials, or perennials.

Starting Indoors: Starting seeds indoors in flats usually gives you a slightly higher germination rate. Germination

information is usually included on the packet. If using old packets of seeds, indoors is a better choice for starting.

Culture: Most seed packets will contain information on how and when to plant, including the number of days to germination and days to harvest. Packets will note spacing requirements, thinning instructions if planted in the ground, growth habit, special cultural needs, and height & spread at maturity.

QR Code: If you have a smartphone and a free app for scanning, this QR Code will take you to the company's web site for more information about the product.



Starting Onions and Leeks From Seed

This month is a good time to start the long-season alliums, such as leeks and onions from seed. They need 10 to 12 weeks of indoor growth before they are transplanted in the garden. Sprinkle the seed on top of seed-starting mix, keep it moist, and as soon as the seedlings emerge, place the flats under grow lights so they grow strong or in a sunny window.



The germinated seedlings are usually transplanted when the tops are two to three inches tall. Plant them in the garden fairly close. After the seedlings are established they will need to be thinned. For larger dry onions, thin seedlings to two or three inches apart; for medium-sized onions, one or two inches; and for green onions, a 1/2 to 1 inch.

Starting Seeds Indoors

Get a jump on this season's garden harvest by starting your vegetable seeds indoors in February and March. Growing plants from seed may seem a bit outdated, since transplants are so readily available - seems like started seedlings are readily available at every nursery, as well as many grocery and department stores. Growing vegetable plants from seeds at home offers a number of advantages. For one thing, you'll know exactly what you are growing. Store bought seedlings aren't always clearly identified. Another plus is that your bedding plants will be healthier. And lastly, there is taste. Most store bought seedlings are hybrids, and starting from seeds is sometimes the only way to get the special variety you want.

Really, though, we gardeners like fresh vegetables for their tenderness and good flavor. We prefer extended harvests to have fresh vegetables over a longer time period.



When you start from seed, you have another advantage over planting seedlings, you can sprout the seeds indoors to get a jump on the season for an earlier harvest. Starting them indoors, we pamper them more and have better germination. I won't get into the details of how to start seeds but we have a wonderful leaflet in our

office that goes into detail about starting plants from seeds. We are also having a lecture, "Starting Plants from Seeds" where you can learn more. It is part of the Sustaining Community Gardening Series of programs and will be held on February 13th, from 6pm to 8pm at the Agriculture Building, 1450 Fairchild Road, Winston-Salem, NC 27105. Call 336-703-2852 to register for this FREE lecture.

Growing Shiitake Mushrooms on Oak Logs



Shiitake Mushrooms are one of the easiest mushrooms to grow outside in the home landscape. It really is as simple as ordering shiitake spores, finding a log, and hammering the spawn into the log. Below is a simple step-by-step instruction on growing shiitake mushrooms. A more comprehensive guide is available in the Extension Office.

Step 1 – Using an oak log, drill holes in the log about 6 inches apart in rows.

Step 2 – Insert the spawn into each of the holes.

Step 3 – Using hot wax cover the holes to seal them.

Step 4 – Once the logs are inoculated, you simply let them sit – in a moist spot, raised off the ground. The process can take from 6 months to two years. Watering them every few weeks if the weather is dry is the only maintenance needed.

The logs will fruit usually in either the spring or the fall. Often after a few days of heavy rain they will begin the fruiting process, otherwise you may want to try shocking the fungi into fruiting. This involves submerging the logs in cold water for 24 hours. Then bashing the log with a mallet or dropping it on a rock is enough shock. As part of the "Sustaining Community Garden Series" we will be having a Shiitake Mushroom Workshop. The date is March 10th from 10am till noon. This is a hands-on workshop where you will take home a mushroom log. Contact the Extension office to register or for more information.

IMPORTANT MESSAGE - PLEASE READ

We love sending out this GardenWise newsletter to every person who asks to receive it, especially you! But we realize that things can change with time - people move, their interests change or they sometimes get so much mail, they never get around to reading it all. With this in mind, we are asking all of our readers to let us know if they would like to continue receiving our GardenWise newsletters. To keep your free newsletter coming, please do one of the following:

- * Call us at 336-703-2850 and let us know you want to stay on our GardenWise mailing list.
- * Email our secretary at kathy_hepler@ncsu.edu. If you would prefer the newsletter by email, let her know that as well.
- * Complete the information below and cut out this Important Message section and mail to us at the address on the front of the newsletter.

Name _____ Address _____

If we don't hear from you, we will remove you from our mailing list as of the March issue.

From the Master Gardener Hotline - Brown Rot

Bertram Lantz, Master Gardener Volunteer

Last year we had a call from a man whose peaches had suddenly become shriveled and then turned brown to black. Some of the peaches remained on the tree while others dropped to the ground. We didn't actually see the fruit, but from the description given it appeared to be Brown Rot.

Brown Rot is one of the most destructive diseases of peaches and nectarines. It can also affect other stone fruits such as apricots, cherries and plums. Usually the fungus appears mainly on the fruit, but it can also infect blossoms as well as new shoots on the tree.

Brown Rot fungus will normally over-winter and start all over again as the temperature starts to moderate in the spring. It is also more likely to occur in periods of extended dampness. It is very important to remove and destroy all diseased fruit, as well as any infected plant material both on the tree and on the ground. Any infected plant material that remains on the tree should be pruned away, as well as any weak or dead branches. It is also a good idea to open up the canopy for better air circulation.

In the spring, signs of the fungus may reappear. Blossoms will turn brown and often remain attached to the twig giving the appearance of a gummy mass. Fungicides can be applied as a preventative measure. This should be done when the flower buds start to show pink. Two or three spray applications are usually recommended during the bloom period. Careful monitoring is recommended for any signs of the fungus during the entire growing period. This is especially important when there are prolonged periods of high humidity. Fruit can become totally rotted by the Brown Rot fungus in a couple of days, so timing is very important. Any fruit showing signs of being infected should be removed and discarded. As the fruit starts to ripen, fungicides may be applied during the three-week pre-harvest period. Repeat applications may be necessary up to one week before the fruit is actually harvested. Be sure to read the label on any fungicide being used. It is a chemical and care should be taken to insure that it is used safely.



<http://www.forsyth.cc/CES/>

Call 336-703-2850 for details

Now through March 12th

for their **Plant Sale**

is currently taking orders

Forsyth County 4-H

Winston-Salem, NC 27105

1450 Fairchild Rd

Forsyth County Center

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

PRESORTED
FIRST-CLASS MAIL
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
Winston-Salem, NC
Permit No. 714