

February 2013



GardenWise

Year Round Plants for Fragrance

by Craig Mauney, Horticulture Agent

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One of the most prevalent memories during the different holiday seasons is the smells that fill the air from the tasty items being cooked up in the kitchen. You can also create a lasting memory in your garden for your visitors. Have you ever been walking in a garden and folks are saying, “What is that smell?” Wouldn’t it be great in every season of the year, that when you entered a garden, a wonderful fragrance filled the air? Just as smells define the holiday, like evergreens make us think of Christmas, maybe the fresh odor of lemon thyme will remind our visitors of walking down the path through our garden.



To accomplish this we can’t rely on just one great smelling plant in the landscape. We want to have a palette of scent at different times of the year. And we can’t just depend on annual and perennial flowers to give us the fragrance we are striving for. There are many fragrant shrubs and trees that are pleasing to the gardener, such as False Holly or Osmanthus. As you work toward more fragrant plants in the landscape you must consider some planning issues when placing the plants so you can enjoy them. Here are some tips to follow:

- Visit some gardens with fragrance to make sure the smell is pleasing to you.
- If the fragrant plants are put in the open yard, wind can diffuse the scent before we enjoy.

- Heat radiating from a wall can increase the intensity of the odor from your plants.
- Placing the plant near the house will allow you to enjoy the smell inside and out.

Wherever you live, make a list of the plants that will grow in your heat zone, by season, so you will be able to consider that when shopping. Here are a few plants in each season that will give you some fragrance for your garden.

Spring

- Tree – *Tillia* spp./Lindens
- Shrub – *Calycanthus floridus*/Sweet Shrub
- Flower - *Convallaria majalis*/ Lily of the Valley

Summer

- Tree - *Styrax obassia*/ Fragrant Snowball
- Shrub - *Osmanthus* spp. / False Holly
- Flower - *Monarda* spp. / Bergamot, Bee-balm

Fall

- Tree - *Evergreen* spp. (Pine, fir, spruce, juniper, cedar, etc...) Foliage
- Shrub - *Hamamelis virginiana*/ Autumn Witch-Hazel
- Flower - *Thymus* spp. / Thyme (Most of the herbs work here; tarragon and lovage)

Winter

- Tree – *Camellia oleifera* / Camellia
- Shrub - *Lindera benzoin*/ Spicebush
- Flower - *Artemisia* spp. / Wormwood

Kale *by Derek Morris, Horticulture Technician*

Kale, we are told, is one of the most nutritious vegetables known and thankfully, it is also one of the easiest vegetables that we can grow. Kale, being in



the cabbage family, is closely related to collards, broccoli, and of course cabbage and is treated much the same way in the garden. Kale is a cool weather crop and although it will struggle and grow

during mid summer's heat, its taste would not be to anyone's liking being quite strong and bitter. This is why kale is usually planted in our area as a fall crop because it can supply greens throughout the entire winter since kale is extremely cold hardy. Kale can be planted in late winter for a spring and early summer crop but most think it is best relegated to the fall garden. Another reason it is best planted in fall as opposed to spring is that frost actually improves the flavor making kale much smoother and sweeter in flavor. So if it is planted in late summer or early fall it can be harvested throughout the late fall and winter and will be at its best tasting.

Kale seed is usually either broadcast in wide bands or can be sown in rows. Either way plants should be thinned to eventually stand about 12 inches apart. Seed can be started most anytime in August in well prepared ground that lots of compost or well rotted manure has been added. Kale is a heavy feeder and delights in rich organic soil that never dries out. For fastest growth and most tender flavor make sure plants get at least an inch of water per week. Mulch the plants well before freezing weather sets. This will help keep down any weeds that might try to grow and will also help hold in soil moisture. You may also be able to find plants of kale that you can simply transplant in August or September if you prefer not to sow seeds. To me, sowing seeds is half the fun since they are cheaper and you have a much bigger selection of varieties to choose from.

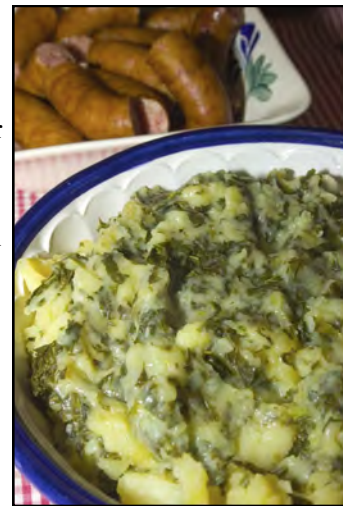
There are many varieties of kale and most are even quite ornamental. One of the most common is 'blue curled scotch' which has beautiful blue/green leaves that are quite curled on the edges. 'Red Russian' has blue/green leaves with purple midribs. One quite unique variety is 'lacianato' which is sometimes called dinosaur kale or palm tree cabbage, it has very dark blue/green leaves that are more elongated and have a odd pebbly

texture. 'Redbore' is a newer variety that resembles 'blue curled scotch' but has purplish red leaves. There are a few others known and all should perform well in our climate.

Harvesting individual leaves from the bottom of each plant will ensure that plants continue to grow throughout the winter. Never harvest more than half of the leaves from a plant at a time or you may weaken them and cause them to decline. If left in the garden through the winter the plants will eventually bolt (go to seed) and you can harvest and use the flower buds just as you would broccoli. They will be much smaller than broccoli but will have a similar flavor and will be quite nutritious. Any you do not harvest will bloom and supply many beneficial insects and bees with an early nectar source.

Blossoms can even be added to salads for beauty and flavor. And of course you can leave them to mature your own seeds for planting back in the fall. If you decide to do this just wait for the seed pods which will resemble miniature pea pods to start to turn yellow or brown being careful not to wait too late as the seedpods will burst open and you will lose your seeds. Once the seed heads start to get dry clip them off and hang upside down in a paper bag in a warm dry place. Over several weeks the seed pods will split open and you will find your new kale seed on the bottom of the bag. These should be stored in an airtight container in a cool dark place until you are ready to sow the next crop. Make sure seeds are completely dry before storing.

Kale may occasionally be bothered by cabbageworms or aphids. These will be more problematic in the warmer months but you can use Neem oil which is non toxic and is a very good spray. A good rotation plan and adding organic matter to the soil should thwart any disease problems. Overall kale is one of the easiest vegetables we can grow and offers so much in terms of nutrition that it should be a mainstay in all piedmont gardens.



Kale Hash - This Dutch recipe is basically a combination of mashed potatoes and kale, served with smoked sausage.

From the Master Gardener Hotline - Improving Garden Soil

By Bert Lantz, Master Gardener Volunteer

In the December issue of "Garden Wise", Craig Mauney included an article "Improving Your Garden Soil". While there is no single recipe to accomplish this, Craig concludes that "adding organic matter to the soil is the most effective way to accomplish building up soil structure". He also mentions that having "organic matter in your soil will make sure you have a food source for beneficial soil organisms".

Each year we receive a number of calls from individuals interested in organic gardening. There are a number of ways to improve your garden soil organically. Cover crops such as crimson clover planted in your garden in the fall will increase the nitrogen level and add organic matter as well. Another interesting idea is the use of "Compost Tea" as a fertilizer.

There are a number of articles written about Compost Tea and a search on the internet will provide an abundance of information on the subject. Years ago, my father mixed dried cow manure with rain water and fertilized tomato plants in our garden. I'm sure he never did any research on his home made liquid fertilizer, but we always had an abundant crop of beautiful disease free tomatoes. He never called it "tea", but that is essentially what it was and it seemed to work.

Soil is full of microorganisms, both good and bad. Microbes are single-celled organisms and a single teaspoon full of soil may contain millions of microbes. Plants are unable to take the nutrition they need from the soil without these living microbes. Compost Tea is totally organic and is beneficial because it increases aerobic microorganism population in the soil. It enhances fertility, texture, and the microbiological character of the soil which in turn reduces any offensive smell in compost, breaks down poisons and pathogens (any organism that can cause a disease) into safe nutrients and works actively to control disease outbreaks. In simple terms it just makes your soil a whole lot better!!!!

There are a number of materials that can be used to create organic liquid fertilizers. One such ingredient is decayed and pulverized cow manure. This may not be readily available so dehydrated cow manure, such as Black Kow, will also work. A simple list of equipment and ingredients needed is as follows:

- 1 – 5 gallon pail filled with approximately 4 gallons of tap water (rain water preferred)
- 1 – Cover for 5 gallon pail

1 – Rod ½" diameter across the top of the pail to suspend the burlap sack

- 1 – Small aerator to agitate solution
- 1 - Burlap bag or onion sack



Fill the Burlap bag with one shovel of Black Kow and suspend it into the pail of water. Brew for 2-3 days, and be sure to keep the solution aerobic. During the brewing process, 2-3 tablespoons of molasses can be added to create a natural fungicide. Alfalfa pellets or animal feed may also be added to increase nitrogen. When the brewing process is complete apply a solution of 1 part tea with 4 parts water to your plants. Use all of the liquid fertilizer once it has been created to obtain maximum benefit from the solution, and then step back and watch your garden grow.

Upcoming Programs in February

February 6 - 11am - Conifers in the Landscape - at Tanglewood Arboretum -Rob Means, Director of the Conifer Ridge Botanical Gardens will discuss the attributes of conifers in the landscape and how to use them as year-round "bones" in your landscape.

February 6 - 9am to 3pm - Community Garden Mentor Training - This is a free training for anyone who is interested in becoming a mentor to a community garden. For more information, please contact Mary Jac Brennan, Extension Agent at 336-703-2869.

Public Records Law

The Cooperative Extension Service (CES) considers very important the privacy of your personal information. However, consistent with state law, most mailing lists maintained by CES are subject to public release upon request. These mailing lists may include names, mailing and email address, and phone numbers. Please consider this when participating in our programs, or when you provide contact information to CES in conjunction with our programming. If you would like to discontinue your subscription to our GardenWise newsletter at any time, please call us at 336-703-2850 or email us at kathy_hepler@ncsu.edu.

Annual 4-H Plant Sale !



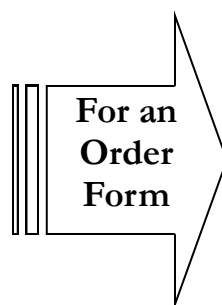
Would you like to grow your own delicious berries such as blueberries, blackberries, strawberries, and raspberries? How about asparagus and herbs? You can purchase yours and support the youth of Forsyth County at the same time.

Forsyth County 4-H is holding their annual plant sale to raise money for their scholarship fund. Youth **EARN** scholarship dollars through participating in 4-H events that they can use to off-set their registration costs to 4-H events such as workshops, teen leadership events and 4-H camp.

Orders are due on or before Wednesday, March 6th.

Pick-up is from 8:30 am - 6:00 pm on Wednesday and Thursday, March 27 & 28th.

New this year are figs! We have two varieties for sale, 'Celeste' and 'Brown Turkey'. Both do very well in our area and are one of the easiest fruits to grow organically. 'Celeste' bears small purplish brown, sweet fruit and is a favorite of many fig lovers. The larger, reddish brown fruits of 'Brown Turkey' are also tasty, and the preferred choice for preserves. Figs do not require cross pollination so you do not have to plant more than one variety.



For a 4-H Plant Sale order form:

Call us at 336-703-2850

Send email to gordonkl@forsyth.cc

Find our order form online at:

www.forsyth.cc/ces

or come by our office at:
1450 Fairchild Rd
Winston-Salem, NC 27105

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