

June 2011



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## Gardening in June

### Lawn Care

- You may need to water your lawn when it shows signs of moisture stress this month. Signs of moisture stress include a bluish-gray color of the grass blades, footprints that remain in the lawn after walking on it and possibly wilted, folded or curled up leaves.

- This is the time when brown patch begins showing up in cool season grasses. Do not fertilize cool season grasses in the summer because high nitrogen encourages this disease.

- Start cutting your grass at the proper height as the temperature begins to increase during the summer months and cool season grasses slow down the growth. Listed below are the heights:

- Turf type Tall Fescue – 3-3 ½ inches
- Zoysia – 1-2 inches
- Centipede – 1 ½-2 inches
- Hybrid Bermuda – 1-1 ½ inches
- Common Bermuda – 2 inches

### Edibles

- Train and support tomato plants. Watch for blossom-end rot and apply a calcium chloride solution if the disease occurs.
- Cover fig bushes and blueberry bushes with netting to keep birds from eating your harvest.
- Allow strawberry runners to develop into new daughter plants. This will increase next year's harvest of berries.
- Continue spraying the orchard for diseases and insects.

### Ornamental Plants and Flowers

- Snap off growing tips of your chrysanthemum plants when they are about 6 inches tall. They will branch more and increase fall bloom.
- Stake dahlia tubers when you plant them so they'll have support later.
- Be extremely careful when mowing or using a string trimmer around trees and shrubs so that you do not damage the bark. It would be better to mulch a ring around the tree so you don't have to trim so close and risk hitting the bark with the trimmer.
- Check the plants in the landscape regularly for damaging insects and diseases.
- You can still plant trees and shrubs if they are container grown. If you do plant, be sure to water them regularly for the rest of the season.

### Organic Gardening

- Frequent, deep cultivation can damage plant roots, dry out the soil, bring weeds seeds to the surface and will disturb healthy soil organisms. Avoid deep cultivation and only cultivate shallow this time of year.
- To help reduce pest problems in the vegetable garden rotate your crops. Change the position of crop families from year to year.
- Adding plants to containers that have trailing foliage will shade the sides of the container keeping the roots of the container plants cooler and retain moisture better.
- If you plant a terra cotta pot with seeds of

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mixed greens every week you can use the mature salad greens as a part of a meal when you dine outside.

## Rotating Your Vegetables in the Garden

Rotate your vegetables by not planting the same vegetable or related vegetable in the same location year after year. Rotate at least once every three years (or 3-4 seasons between families) especially in small garden areas. If you have space to do so, rotate your entire garden area to another part of the yard. By rotating vegetables from different families, you can prevent buildup of insects and diseases that attack your plants. Because plant insects and diseases are not always obvious, they may not build up to a damaging level in a single season or year. Here is a list of vegetable families which should be helpful when rotating your garden:

- **Sunflower Family (Composite)** – endive, chicory, artichoke, lettuce, salsify, and sunflower.
- **Onion Family (Lily)** – asparagus, chive, garlic, leek, onion, and shallot.
- **Pea Family (Legume)** – peanuts, soybeans, peas

and beans.

- **Nightshade Family** – tomato, eggplant, pepper, and Irish potato.
- **Mallow Family** – okra.
- **Grass Family** – popcorn and sweet corn.
- **Gourd Family** – cucumber, gourd, cantaloupe, watermelon, pumpkin and squash.
- **Goosefoot Family** – beet, spinach, and Swiss chard.
- **Carrot Family (Parsley family)** – carrot, chervil, celery, coriander, dill, fennel, parsley, and parsnip.
- **Mustard Family** – bok choy, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, Chinese cabbage, collards, cauliflower, turnip, rutabaga, radish, mustard greens, kohlrabi, horseradish, kale, and cress.



## Watering the Garden

The amount of water that your garden will need is going to depend on the weather conditions we are having. It is usually very hot in June so the general rule of 1" of water per week may not be enough. The best way to tell if your plants are receiving enough water is to take a trowel or shovel and dig down a few inches. The soil should be moist at least 3-4 inches deep to insure that the water is reaching the root zone of the plant.



The primary rule of summer watering is to water thoroughly and deeply each time and allow the soil to dry out a bit between watering. Deep watering will help the plant's roots to grow deeper as well as anchor the plant into the ground better. Light surface watering actually wastes water, because the water never reaches the root zone of the plant. The moisture rapidly evaporates from the top inch of

the soil. If you planted drought tolerant plants in your garden, you won't have to water as often, but the same principal of deep watering applies.

Try to do your watering during the morning hours so that the leaves can dry off a bit before the hot sun hits them. Evening watering is sometimes acceptable if the temperatures are warm enough to insure foliage drying out before the temperature starts dropping overnight. Wet foliage makes plants more susceptible to fungus and diseases.

**Baking in Terra Cotta Pots** is a great way to bring the garden indoors and add some fluff to your meal. Use your favorite muffin, bread or cake recipe. Grease the pot very well before you add the mix. Always buy the terra cotta pots from a kitchen shop and some have special shapes. Here are 4 easy steps:



1. Again, prepare your favorite recipe. Add several teaspoons of crushed herbs to the bread.
2. Grease the pot extremely well inside.
3. Place the bread recipe in the pot, then top off with some sea salt and more crushed herbs.
4. Bake as instructed with your original recipe. Serve with butter soaked in your same herbs.



## Entice Ladybugs to Your Garden

Of all the insects in the home garden the Ladybug is the most recognizable. They are sometimes called Ladybird or Lady Beetles. They feed on insect pests, primarily aphids. Attracting them to your garden requires some planning but will help with your pest control. One can either place plants in the landscape that ladybugs like or you can release commercially grown ladybugs. First, one must understand the life of a ladybug to entice them to live in your garden.

**Identification** – Adult lady beetles are usually oval or domed shaped, and can range in color from red to orange. The number of black markings can also vary from no spots to 15 spots. The young, larval form is often less recognized.

They tend to resemble tiny, six-legged alligators. Often gardeners unknowingly spray or smash the larval form, not knowing what a benefit they are to the garden.



**Life Cycle** – Within a year, there can be as many as 5-6 generations of ladybugs as the average time from egg to adult is 3-4 weeks. In the fall, adults hibernate in plant refuse and crevices. They often do this in mass where several hundred adults will gather at the base of a tree or under a rock. They especially like areas where there are leaves to protect them in the winter.



**Attracting Ladybugs in the Garden** – Ladybugs, like other insects, require a source of pollen for food and are attracted to specific types of plants. The most popular ones have an umbrella shaped flower, such as fennel, dill, cilantro, angelica, tansy, Queen Anne's lace & yarrow. Coreopsis, scented geraniums and cosmos also attract lady bugs.

**Purchasing Ladybugs** – Sometimes you just can't put the right plants in your design to attract ladybugs so it becomes necessary to purchase ladybugs. It is usually

better to purchase them only when you have a severe problem. It has been found that indoor-reared ladybugs fail to find their own food when released outside so the majority of commercially available ladybugs are collected from the wild. Before releasing ladybugs, here are some tips to make sure they stay in your garden:



Queen Anne's Lace

- Only release ladybugs after the sun goes down or before sun-up.
- Pre-water the area before releasing them. They may be thirsty and the water will help them to stick to the plants to begin with.
- In warm months, it helps to chill the ladybugs first in the fridge so they will tend to crawl instead of fly.
- A floating row cover over an area to release in helps them to stay in that area.

**One last note.**....if you are planning to purchase ladybugs for your garden or greenhouse, select the native ladybug species, *Hippodamia convergens*, rather than the Asian ladybug, *Harmonia axyridis*. The reason I recommend this is the Asian ladybug is the main cause of the "ladybug infestations" in homes, which of course, we would like to avoid.

### ATTENTION:

#### YOUR GARDENWISE NEWSLETTER

We have recently added our GardenWise newsletter to our Cooperative Extension Website at:  
[www.forsyth.cc/CES](http://www.forsyth.cc/CES)

You will find the last four issues of GardenWise on our website on our Lawn and Garden page and we will continue to add the latest issue to this page every month. We currently mail out over 550 GardenWise newsletters each month. In an effort to reduce our postage costs, we are asking that if you would like to view the newsletter online instead of getting a paper mailing, please let us know. We can add you to an email list to let you know each month when the newsletter has been posted online. To make this change, please contact: Kathy Hepler at 703-2852 or [kathy\\_hepler@ncsu.edu](mailto:kathy_hepler@ncsu.edu).

# From the Master Gardener Hotline - Turf

Bertram Lantz, Master Gardener Volunteer

The Master Gardener Hotline is staffed by volunteers from 9am - noon and 1pm - 4pm, Monday - Friday. You can reach an Extension Master Gardener Volunteer by calling the Forsyth Cooperative Extension at 336-703-2850 and ask to speak with a Master Gardener.



A recent call to the Master Gardener Hotline is as follows:

**Question** - Grass or Weed? I have a grass in my yard that has multiple white seed heads. I had some last year, but this spring it seems to be more abundant and is spreading. What do you think this is?

**Answer** - It sounds like you have a growth of annual blue grass, also referred to as *Poa annua*. Poa is basically a cool weather weed, and is fast growing. In Bermuda lawns, it may initially appear as a green clump of grass. As temperatures warm, seed heads appear and individual plants can produce in excess of 300 seed heads. Eventually the Poa will die off in the later part of the dry hot summers. However, the seeds remain dormant until early fall and germinate as soil temperatures drop to 70 degrees. In some cases the seeds may remain dormant for several years. Golf course managers and landscape managers hate this weed, and find it to be difficult and expensive to control.

The root system of Poa is usually quite shallow, so individual clumps can be dug or pulled as they appear in the spring. Clumps that appear in gardens or flower beds should also be pulled and discarded. In fescue lawns, keep your mower blades at least 3" high to help shade out the Poa. The application of a pre-emergent herbicide applied in late September has been somewhat successful in limiting germination of the weed. A second application can be made in late December, but this will give limited control and there is no guarantee that the weed will not appear next year. When you mow, you might also consider catching the grass in the areas that have a significant amount of Poa. Typical weed sprays for lawn weeds are ineffective against Poa. If you plan to reseed your lawn in the fall, remember that a pre-emergent may interfere with seed germination, so read the pre-emergent instructions carefully.

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