

Successful Gardener

NC STATE UNIVERSITY NORTH CAROLINA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

Helping Carolinians Increase Their Knowledge of Gardening, Manage Their Landscape Investment & Protect the Environment

JC Raulston Arboretum Plant Focus

Deutzias Dazzle in May

Deutzias are among those plants that are passed down from one generation to another, and you often will see them growing in older landscapes or near an abandoned farmhouse. They go unnoticed most of the year, but for a few weeks in May Deutzia dazzles as a striking plant covered in showy white or pinkish flowers borne on upright panicles.

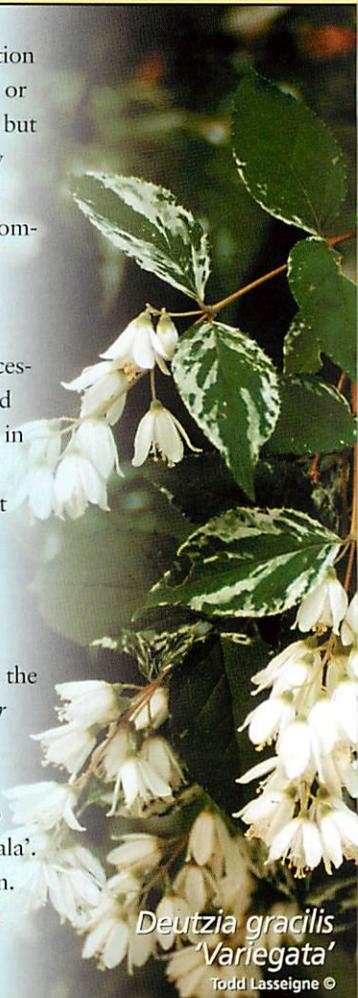
Deutzias are available in many species and hybrids, ranging from small compact forms such as slender deutzia, *D. gracilis*, to showy deutzia, *Deutzia x magnifica*, that may reach a mature height of 8 to 10 feet. They are a tough group of plants and bothered by few pests. The larger varieties can become leggy with time, however, so an occasional, heavy cutting-back might be necessary to keep them full and in bounds. Deutzias are related to hydrangeas and grow and flower best in full sun, but will tolerate partial shade. They thrive in most soil types.

Deutzia gracilis 'Nikko' is a compact plant that normally reaches a height and spread of around 3 feet. It has a slender, graceful, arching growth habit and works well as a natural hedge or border to a property. *Deutzia scabra* 'Godsall Pink' can easily reach 6 to 8 feet high and has showy double pink blossoms that can stand up to early hot spells.

Deutzia x kalmifolia features light green foliage that turns dark purple in the fall and reaches 4 to 5 feet in height. Hybrids of *D. longifolia* and *D. discolor* produce flowers in various shades of pink or white. Cultivars include 'Mont Rose', 'Magician', 'Contraste', 'Perle Rose' and 'Pink Pompon'.

Showy Deutzia bears beautiful white, double blossoms in dense 1 1/2- to 3-inch-long panicles. Look for cultivars 'Eburnea', 'Latiflora' and 'Longipetala'.

You'll find more than 15 different deutzias at the JC Raulston Arboretum. They are scattered throughout the grounds so wear your walking shoes and bring your camera, pencil and pad to take notes on your favorites. Visit www.ncsu.edu/jcraulstonarboretum to learn more. **Royce Hardin**



Deutzia gracilis
'Variegata'
Todd Lasseigne ©



Deutzia ningpoensis
Todd Lasseigne ©



Deutzia gracilis 'Nikko'
Todd Lasseigne ©



Deutzia scabra
'Godsall Pink'
Todd Lasseigne ©

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TOP AWARDS RECEIVED FROM:

- Garden Writers Association
- International Association of Business Communicators
- National Association of County Agricultural Agents
- Southern Extension Forest Resource Specialists
- N.C. Association of County Agricultural Agents
- Mecklenburg County Priority Awards



Robert E. Lyons ©

Lanceleaf Coreopsis



Robert E. Lyons ©

Corn Poppy

Inspiration from the Roadsides

Wildflowers create dazzling bursts of color along our highways, add pleasure to our travels, make us smile and help relieve the worries of highway driving. The N.C. Department of Transportation (DOT) Wildflower Program began small in 1985. Today, there are over 3,000 acres of wildflower beds across the state, which are planted and maintained by the DOT's roadside environmental personnel.

Mixed species of annuals and perennials are planted to achieve several flowerings each growing season. Some of the more popular mixes include *Papaver rhoeas*, red corn poppy; *Chrysanthemum leucanthemum*, oxeye daisy; *Hesperis matronalis*, dame's rocket; and *Coreopsis lanceolata*, lanceleaf coreopsis. Native wildflowers such as *Bidens aristosa*, bur marigold; *Helianthus angustifolius*, narrow-leaf or swamp sunflower; and *H. annuus*, common sunflower are planted for their beauty and to preserve the diversity of natural vegetation in our state.

To bring the beauty of these roadside gardens to your own landscape, the DOT recommends these tips.

- Select a well-drained, visible, sunny site.
- Take a soil sample to determine plant nutrient requirements.
- Remove unwanted weeds with a non-selective herbicide containing glyphosate.
- Add plant nutrients and lime according to soil

test results. General recommendations require 3 to 5 pounds of 10-10-10 fertilizer and 25 to 70 pounds of lime per 1,000 square feet.

- Plow or rototill site to a depth of 3 to 5 inches. Incorporate a well-composted organic matter to improve soil quality.
- Plant wildflower seed according to optimum date for the species you select, usually between September 1 and April 30.
- Broadcast seed evenly over the area as you would plant a lawn.
- Rake very lightly to barely cover the seed with soil to a depth of 1/16 inch.
- Mulch lightly with a weed-free mulch such as pine straw or coastal Bermuda hay. Allow 25 percent of the soil surface to be visible after mulching.
- Water the area to keep soil moist for adequate germination.

You will enjoy watching your wildflowers grow in a few weeks. Keep in mind that there are no magic wildflower mixes. A successful planting requires sound agronomic practices and maintenance. Remember to remove weeds, topdress with fertilizer and water as needed.

To learn more about wildflowers visit www.ncstate-plants.net, then click on "plant factsheets." Find out more about DOT's Wildflower Program and other Roadside Environmental Beautification Programs at www.ncdot.org/~beautification. **Mike Wilder**

Trees Add Value

Trees add value to our lives every day in many ways. Too often, however, we think of landscape trees only for their beauty, without regard for functional value. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder and is difficult to quantify. Yet trees are useful for much more than beautification and serve an important role in manufacturing and purifying the air we breathe, cooling our urban environment, reducing erosion and noise, and providing wildlife habitat.

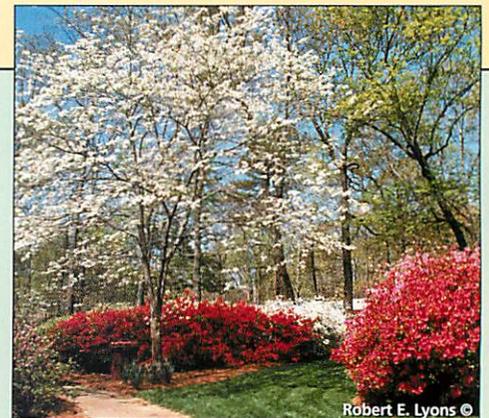
These benefits go beyond aesthetics and provide tangible economic value. For example, some experts estimate that trees increase the market value of a home up to 15 percent. Others estimate that properly placed trees can reduce air conditioning needs by 30 percent and reduce heating costs by 20 to 50 percent. Obviously, the loss of a large shade tree can have a profound economic impact on a homeowner.

The value of trees is so significant that the Council of Tree and Landscape Appraisers developed a "Guide for Plant Appraisal," which allows plant appraisers to assign a dollar value to damaged or

lost trees. This guide also gives tree professionals standards for establishing the economic value of trees. These guidelines are based on four factors: tree size, species of tree, tree condition and location. All of these factors can be physically measured and, coupled with the professional experience of the appraiser, used to determine a tree's value for insurance purposes, court testimony in lawsuits or for tax deductions.

For assistance in determining the economic value of trees in your landscape, contact www.asca-consultants.org/directory/index.cfm.

Fred Miller



Robert E. Lyons ©



How can I get rid of slugs in my flower beds?

One of the most successful ways to control slugs is to remove their habitat. These favorite locations are usually in moist, shady areas of your garden and under flowerpots, boards and debris. Remove any debris that provides a hiding place.

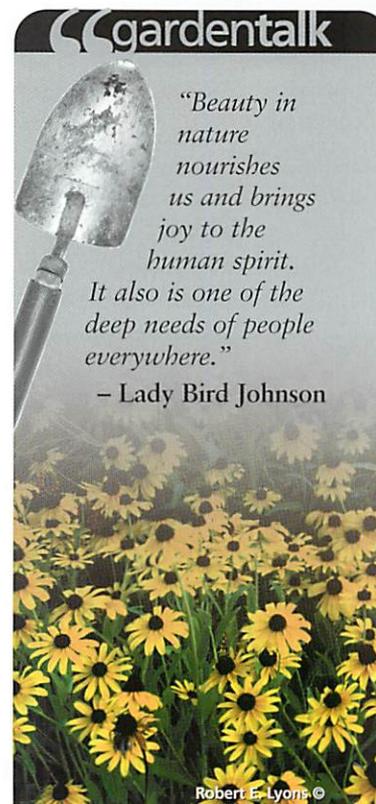
Add mulch that slugs don't like. Cedar chips, pine needles and rinsed, crushed eggshells often repel slugs, either due to odor, resin or sharp edges. Many hosta growers report remarkable success with pine needles that are applied two to three inches thick.

Handpicking is another alternative, especially during the evening and early morning hours. Trapping slugs under boards or overturned flowerpots is an effective control method for these annoying creatures. Keep the traps in the garden several

days to allow slug populations to find them.

Another control method is to use beer as a bait. Use margarine tubs with plastic lids with holes cut into the side and buried to the hole. This prevents animals from discovering the beer and draining the bait. Slugs are attracted to the yeast smell and will drown when they crawl into the container.

Slug baits are available at garden centers and other retail outlets. Most of the products contain metaldehyde or methiocarb, which are either pelletized or powdered. Pelletized baits tend to provide longer residual than powdered forms. Most baits need to be moist in order to attract slugs. Baits may be attractive to some pets so use with caution. Make sure to read and follow all instructions. **Darrell Blackwelder**



gardentalk

"Beauty in nature nourishes us and brings joy to the human spirit.

It also is one of the deep needs of people everywhere."

– Lady Bird Johnson

Robert E. Lyons ©

ENVIRO-TIP

Grasscycling Helps the Environment

When you throw away grass clippings, you're getting rid of lots of valuable nutrients that your lawn could use. Why throw away those clippings when you can grasscycle instead?

Grasscycling simply means that grass clippings will be left on the lawn so that the water and nutrients they contain will go back into the lawn when they decompose. Grass clippings are about 80 to 85 percent water and they break down rapidly.

Grasscycling is a natural way to use 50 percent of all yard waste while helping the environment. It reduces the need to apply nitrogen fertilizer to your lawn by 25 percent.

Another reason to grasscycle is that a state law prohibits yard waste, including grass clippings, from being discarded in landfills.

If a lawn is properly mowed, watered and fertilized, grasscycling can actually produce a healthier looking lawn. Cut the lawn frequently to produce small clippings that will fall between the standing blades and decompose quickly. If a lawn is not cut frequently enough and long clippings are left on the lawn, it may produce a "hay-like" look which can be unsightly.

Any mower that is in good working condition and has a sharp blade can grasscycle. Mulching mowers may be better than traditional mowers for those who

cannot mow on a regular basis. These mowers tend to cut grass into finer pieces, allowing it to filter down among the standing plants. With either mower, a dry lawn produces the best results.

If bad weather causes you to miss a scheduled mowing, the grass might be too long to leave the clippings. Raking and composting the clippings is another way to use them. Use grass clippings to mulch around trees, shrubs and flower beds. Do not use the clippings as mulch if herbicides have been applied to the lawn recently.

Some people believe that grass clippings that are left on the lawn cause thatch. Not so. Research shows that grass roots are the primary cause of thatch, containing materials that decompose slowly. Thatch is also caused by excessive growth from overfertilizing, by allowing grass to get too high before mowing or by incorrect watering. Some grasses such as Bermuda and zoysia are more thatch-prone than others.

A small amount of thatch (approximately 1/2 inch) is actually beneficial to a lawn, providing insulation to roots and serving as a mulch to prevent excessive water evaporation and soil compaction. It may also create a cushioning effect for lawn play. Too much thatch, however, can influence disease problems that can damage the lawn. **David Barkley**



Robert E. Lyons ©



Garden Spot

The McGill Rose Garden

is a delightful little jewel set in the midst of Charlotte. This urban sanctuary – with nearly 1,000 roses and 100 different perennials and herbs – is lovely any time but is particularly striking in May and June when the roses produce show-stopping color and their lovely fragrances fill the spring air. During the summer, the antique roses take over. The garden added these to show people how to grow roses without chemicals.

The garden is one of the few All-American Rose Selections gardens in the state. It also is involved in outreach to the community, offering educational workshops on roses and serving as a horticultural therapy garden for people with traumatic brain injuries. Its inner-city focus involves children in vegetable gardening at the site.

The garden is at 940 N. Davidson Street in Charlotte. Hours are Tuesday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., with special hours for Mother's Day. Call (704) 333-6497.

Leah Chester-Davis

Gardening in May

Lawns

- Check for white grubs in your lawn and treat with proper insecticides.
- Apply postemergence herbicides on warm-season grasses as needed to control summer annual and perennial broadleaf weeds such as knotweed, spurge and lespedeza. Products containing two or three broadleaf herbicides usually control several different broadleaf weeds in a lawn. Be sure the product is labeled for use on your type of warm-season grass. Apply post-emergence herbicides only when weeds are present and three weeks after the lawn becomes green. Be especially careful if you have centipede grass; it is sensitive to certain herbicides. Follow label directions and use with caution.

Ornamentals

- Prune hybrid rhododendrons after they finish flowering.
- After the foliage has faded on naturalized spring-flowering bulbs, dig up and divide clumps that are overcrowded. A sign of overcrowding is a drop in flower production. Cut back spring bulb foliage when it turns yellow and brown, not before.
 - Apply slow-release fertilizer around caladiums to encourage peak production from their foliage.
 - Add a 3-inch layer of organic mulch to the annual vegetable and flower beds to protect root zones through the heat of the summer.

Edibles

- Plant Southern peas, okra, eggplant, tomatoes, hot and sweet peppers and lima beans in your vegetable garden when the soil warms up.
- Harvest strawberries early in the day. To extend shelf life don't wash or de-stem the berries until you are ready to use them.

Amy-Lynn Albertson



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