



# Extension Gardener

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Empowering  
gardeners.  
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## Fragrant Shrubs for All Seasons

Evergreen plants provide fill and great backdrops for interesting foliage and flower colors. Variegated foliage often brightens up dark areas of the garden. Nothing provides greater delight in the garden, however, than wonderful fragrance from flowers or foliage. Try to fit a few plants into your landscape that will brighten your day through fragrance.

Fragrance, according to *Webster's Dictionary*, is an agreeable sweet odor. No garden is complete without it. It is even better if you select plants to provide fragrance for each season of the year. Here are a few fragrant winners that are hardy throughout North Carolina. Use these or other fragrant plants to enhance your enjoyment of the garden.

Butterfly bush (*Buddleja davidii*) is a deciduous shrub available in slow- and fast-growing forms that reach up to 10 to 15 feet high and just as wide. Its deciduous leaves are often gray underneath. Lavender, white, yellow, purple and pink flowers grace the garden with their butterfly-attracting fragrance from June to September. Full sun and well-drained to moist soil provide the best growth.

Sweet shrub (*Calycanthus floridus*) is a traditional southern landscape plant that grows naturally from Virginia to Florida. This 6- to 9-foot-high by 6- to 12-foot-wide shrub is deciduous and grows best in partial shade and deep

moist soils. Its green leaves are often shiny with a quilted appearance due to vein patterns. Reddish-brown or maroon flowers with a fruity fragrance are prevalent in April and May. Purchase sweet shrub in flower to be sure it's fragrant.

Small anise-tree (*Illicium parviflorum*) is an evergreen shrub with olive-green leaves that are held upright on a plant that grows 8 to 12 feet high and just as wide. It is tolerant of sun or shade and moist or dry soil. The plant blooms in May and June with small yellow-green flowers hidden by the foliage. The flowers are not fragrant, but the leaves of this tough screening plant smell like licorice. Star-shaped fruit become noticeable in the fall.

Perhaps the toughest deciduous fragrant shrub is winter honeysuckle (*Lonicera fragrantissima*). The plant grows 10 to 15 feet high and as wide in sun to partial shade and moist to well-drained soil. Creamy-white lemon-scented flowers grace this shrub from January through March.

Tea olive (*Osmanthus heterophyllus*) is an evergreen shrub that looks like a holly and grows 12 to 15 feet high and 12 to 15 feet wide. Small white flowers have a long-distance fragrance that will get your nose's attention from across the yard during September to November. It grows best in light shade and moist, well-drained soil.

—Danny Lauderdale

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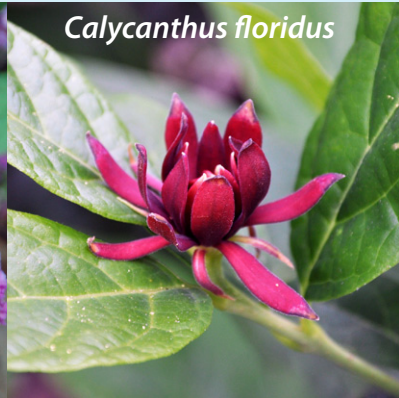
*Lonicera fragrantissima*



*Buddleja davidii*



*Calycanthus floridus*



## Upcoming Events

**April 10** (9 AM – 12 NOON)

### Wilson County Master Gardener Plant Sale

Wilson Agriculture Center, 1806 S.W. Goldsboro St., Wilson

**April 16-17**

### Triangle East Home and Garden Show

North Side Industrial Park, Wilson

- Featured speaker: Felder Rushing
- Call 252.237.0113 for details.

**April 16** (9 AM – 5 PM; April 17, 10 AM – 4 PM)

### Pender County Master Gardener Plant Sale

Pender County Extension Center, 801 S. Walker St., Burgaw

- Call 910.259.1235, or visit <http://pender.ces.ncsu.edu/> to find out more.

**April 17** (9 AM – 12 NOON)

### Wayne County Master Gardener Plant Sale

Wayne County Extension Center, Goldsboro

- For more information, call 919.731.1525.

**April 19, May 17 and June 21** (5 PM)

### Wilson Botanical Gardens "Alive at 5" Guided Garden Tours

Wilson Agriculture Center, 1806 S.W. Goldsboro St., Wilson

**May 15** (10:00 AM – 12:00 NOON)

### Pitt County Arboretum Plant Sale

Pitt County Agricultural Center, 403 Government Circle, Greenville

- Plant swap open to anyone at 11 AM. Visit [http://pitt.ces.ncsu.edu](http://pitt.ces.ncsu.edu/), or call Lynne Maclaga, 252.756.4520.

**May 16** (10 AM – 2:30 PM)

### Coastal Gardening Festival "Gardening with a Green Thumb"

The Outer Banks Arboretum and Teaching Gardens, Mustian Street (next to the Thomas A. Baum Senior Center), Kill Devil Hills

- For information, call the Dare County Extension Center, 252.473.4290.

## Smart Gardening — Integrated pest management

**A**lthough not a strictly organic approach, integrated pest management (IPM) is a common-sense, holistic approach to pest control that promotes good management strategies. Its purpose is to keep pests and diseases at an acceptable level rather than attempting total elimination, which is not practical or even wise. All creatures and organisms in nature have a role to play. Nature strives to maintain a balance, and so should we as homeowners. The following practices will help homeowners incorporate IPM into their landscapes.

**Get to know your landscape and garden.** Start by making a scale drawing of your existing landscape, including a list of all permanent plantings. Learn what a healthy plant should look like so you know when something is going wrong. If you have plants that repeatedly have problems, remove them and replace with better adapted plants.



**Build a healthy garden.** Encourage healthy plant growth by amending planting beds with organic matter and fertilizing the soil based on soil-test results. Create your own organic matter by starting a compost pile or worm bin. Mulch beds to conserve moisture

and reduce weed problems. For new plantings, choose plants adapted to your site conditions while avoiding plants known to have serious pest problems. Keep newly planted trees and shrubs watered for the first 6 months, but avoid overhead watering that wets foliage because this encourages diseases. When problems occur, promptly remove diseased, infested or dead plant parts.

**Recognize beneficial insects and the plants that attract them.** Learn to identify the natural enemies of pests so you can welcome the good guys into your yard. Common beneficials include lady beetles, lacewings, hover flies, preying mantids, pirate bugs, dragon flies, spiders, assassin bugs, predatory stink bugs, ground beetles and parasitic wasps. Plant a diversity of plants, especially flowers known to attract beneficial insects, such as asters, milkweed, goldenrod, agastache, yarrow, mint, Queen Anne's lace, tansy, cosmos and fennel.

When you do have a problem, contact your county Extension center to have it correctly diagnosed before taking action. If corrective action is needed, start with the most environmentally friendly control methods first, such as horticultural oil or insecticidal soap.

—Jeff Morton

## Food Production — Don't plant too early

**S**pring is in the air—bees are buzzing and birds are chirping—leading a gardener's fancy to thoughts of playing in the soil. Though temperatures are on the rise, winter may still be lurking in the shadows. While it is easy to think of planting tomatoes and peppers when air temperature reaches the 60s and the sun is shining, wait until the danger of frost has passed. This is after mid-April for most of eastern N.C., though your county Extension center can provide a more precise last frost date for your location.

While it might not yet be time to plant summer crops, many vegetables can be planted in early spring that do not mind seasonal nightly lows. These include roots crops, such as radishes, beets, turnips and carrots, which are best sown directly into the garden in early March. Transplants for broccoli, lettuce, cabbage and spinach

can be purchased from garden centers and planted outside from late February through March. This is also the correct time to sow garden peas in the garden and plant Irish potato sets. If you are anxious to start growing frost-sensitive crops like tomatoes, eggplants and peppers, start them from seed indoors on a sunny windowsill 6 – 8 weeks before the last frost date.

Don't forget that vegetables started indoors will need to be hardened off (slowly acclimated to the outside) before being set in the garden. Fast-growing summer crops, such as cucumbers, melons, zucchini and squash, can be started indoors 3 – 4 weeks before the last frost. Corn, okra, beans and southern peas are best sown directly into the garden after the threat of frost is past.

—Ken Wells



## Garden Spot — Tryon Palace Historic Site and Gardens

New Bern is 300 years old, making this a great year to visit Tryon Palace near the heart of downtown New Bern. Tryon Palace offers 14 acres of gardens with historical, aesthetic and educational interest. Representing three centuries of gardening history, from the 18th-century Wilderness Garden, through the lush displays favored by the Victorians and 20th-century colonial revival plantings, the gardens offer almost endless variety through the year. Even if you're not a history buff, you can enjoy the beauty of spectacular displays, such as the fall mum plantings, or the more subtle charms of the flower gardens during the spring and summer. If you like to take notes when you tour gar-



dens, the grounds of Tryon Palace should provide you with an abundance of new ideas for annuals, perennials, shrubs and trees to try out in your landscape. And a visit to the kitchen garden will inspire you to better use your garden space for producing vegetables, herbs and fruit. This year, don't miss the "Garden Lovers Weekend," April 9 – 11. During this event, the gardens will be open free from 9 AM to 6 PM on Friday and Saturday, and from 11 AM to 6 PM on Sunday. This event coincides with Tryon Palace's plant sale and the New Bern Spring Garden Tour. Visit [www.tryonpalace.org](http://www.tryonpalace.org) for additional information.

—Tom Glasgow

## Environmental Stewardship — Organic fertilizers

Organic fertilizers are plant nutrient sources that come from natural materials and require little or no processing. Organic fertilizers can be made from animal manures (cow, horse, hog, poultry), animal byproducts (fish meal, dried blood), natural deposits (phosphorus rock, potash, lime, gypsum), and plant products (seaweed, cocoa shell meal, wood ashes).

Organic fertilizer blends are available from garden centers and major retailers. They should not be confused with soil amendments, such as compost or aged cow manure. Soil amendments add organic matter to the soil, which improves moisture and nutrient retention, but they are generally low in nutrients. Mixing amendments into the soil before planting will improve plant growth, though additional fertilizers are usually needed to supply all the nutrients plants need for healthy growth. All fertilizers, whether they are organic or synthetic, should tell you the amount of nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P) and

potassium (K) they contain on the label. The amount you need to add will depend on your soil and the crop. Application rates should be based on soil test results. For information on soil testing, contact your county Extension center.

Apply organic fertilizers 3 weeks before planting; work them into the top few inches of soil. Because the release of nutrients from organic materials relies on soil microorganisms to break materials down, nutrients are released slowly over time. Temperature and other conditions that favor plant growth also favor nutrient release. Thus, organic fertilizers make nutrients available while plants are growing and leach fewer nutrients into the soil and groundwater than synthetics. Although organic fertilizers may not have the highest nutrient content of fertilizers lining the shelves at garden centers, they have benefits when it comes to long-term soil health. They add to the pool of nutrients and organic matter in the soil.

—Tanya Weyhrauch

# Tips & Tasks

## Spring Chores

- Perennials can be divided in late winter and early spring when the ground is dry enough for digging.
- Crabgrass preventive herbicides can be applied to lawns when the forsythias bloom, but wait until May to fertilize warm-season turf.
- Ornamental trees and shrubs, fruit trees and perennials can be planted throughout spring, though earlier plantings will have more time to establish before the heat of summer.
- Broccoli, cabbage, and cauliflower transplants can be set out in the vegetable garden around mid-March, while beets, carrots, cabbage, kale, lettuce, Swiss chard, turnips and potatoes can be planted anytime in March. Wait until after the threat of frost to plant tomatoes, peppers, squash and other summer crops.
- Fruit trees, roses and summer-blooming shrubs should be pruned in early spring. Wait to prune spring-flowering shrubs, such as azaleas, until after they bloom.
- Overgrown shrubs can be pruned back severely in early spring before new growth begins. This works for most broadleaf evergreens and deciduous shrubs but not for conifers.
- Amend landscape beds based on soil test results in March or April.

—Jacob Searcy





Plant Haven, Inc.

## Showstopper — 'Crown Jewel' gardenia

If you see a 'Crown Jewel' gardenia (*Gardenia augusta*, patent no. 19896), you might just think you have died and gone to heaven. This new dwarf hybrid gardenia is compact, cold hardy and absolutely gorgeous. The product of a formal plant breeding project in Siler City, NC, 'Crown Jewel' combines the best traits from its parents: 'Kleim's Hardy' and 'Chuck Hayes'. It has the dwarf size and prolific flowering of 'Kleim's Hardy' along with the cold hardiness and double blooms of 'Chuck Hayes'.

'Crown Jewel' gardenia has attractive dark-green evergreen foliage on a plant that will grow to only 2 feet high and 5 feet wide. It has a mounding habit with white, intensely sweet, fragrant flowers in summer. Use 'Crown Jewel' as a low hedge, foundation plant or in a group planting in a sunny, well-drained area. It is suitable for planting in zones 7 – 10.

—John Vining

## Sustainability

### Attracting Pollinators

Pollinators are important parts of a well-balanced garden ecosystem and essential to vegetable production. The best known pollinator is the European honeybee, but other animals—such as native bees, wasps, flies, hummingbirds, butterflies, moths and bats—also play a role in pollination. Help pollinators thrive by developing pesticide-free habitats. Provide a variety of plants with different colors and shapes that bloom at different times. Plant native plants to attract and conserve native pollinators. Incorporate different plant heights to provide protection against predators. A planting guide with specific recommendations can be downloaded from <http://www.pollinator.org>. Plant tender annual flowers right after the last frost in time to celebrate National Pollinator Week (June 21-27).

—Karen Blaedow

## Incredible Edibles

Home-grown asparagus is a delicacy. Growing asparagus is different from growing most vegetables because it is a perennial, meaning it comes back from the same roots every year. Many other vegetables are annuals that must be planted each year. To establish an asparagus patch, purchase dormant plants in late winter. 'Jersey' varieties are recommended. Plant asparagus in a well-drained soil in full sun. Mix in plenty of compost, and soil-test to see what nutrients to add. Plant asparagus crowns by digging a trench 6 – 8 inches deep. Space plants 18 inches apart, and cover with 2 inches of soil. As plants grow, add soil until the trench is completely filled. Do not harvest spears the first year. Light harvests can be made in the second and third years, and 6 to 8 weeks of harvest can begin in the fourth year and beyond. —Charlotte Glen

## Pest Alert — Gypsy moth

The gypsy moth (*Lymantria dispar*) is a pest of many hardwood tree species. This non-native insect was introduced to the U.S. in 1869. The N.C. Department of Agriculture has been conducting surveys statewide since 1982. Occasionally, local infestations are found, and the NCDA initiates treatment programs to eradicate populations before they spread. Currituck and parts of Dare County are quarantined for gypsy moths.

The destructive stage of the gypsy moth is the caterpillar, which can consume up to a square foot of leaves during its lifetime. Repeated defoliations can reduce plant vigor and eventually result in tree mortality. At maturity, caterpillars are 3 inches long and can easily be identified by the 5 pairs of blue dots followed by 6 pairs of red dots on their backs.

The vigorous reproduction of the gypsy moth contributes to population explosions and defoliation severity. After mating, each female moth lays several hundred eggs in a hairy, tan, oval-shaped mass about the size of a quarter. Egg masses are present from August through April and can be found attached to various surfaces, such as trees, buildings, cars and firewood. Female gypsy moths cannot fly, so this insect's spread depends on people. All firewood and other objects moving from infested areas should be checked for hitchhiking gypsy moths, caterpillars, and egg masses. Suspected gypsy moth infestations need to be reported to the NCDA's Plant Protection Division: <http://www.agr.state.nc.us/plantindustry/plant/entomology/GM.htm>

—Karen Blaedow

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**Gypsy moth caterpillars impair tree health by eating foliage**  
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