

EXTENSION'S

Successful

Gardener

NC STATE UNIVERSITY

NORTH CAROLINA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

Helping
Carolinians In
The Piedmont
Increase Their
Knowledge of
Gardening &
Manage Their
Landscape
Investment

Let Us Make An Introduction!

Ask for Extension's Successful Gardener at one of your local garden centers each month!

We're glad you picked up a copy of the new Successful Gardener newsletter!

Successful Gardener is produced by the N.C.

Cooperative Extension Service, an educational outreach of N.C. State and N.C. A&T State universities. The monthly newsletter is available at

selected garden centers and nurseries in counties across the Piedmont region.

Our research-based recommendations will help you make wise decisions when it comes to your landscaping investment, whether it's advice on which plants to select and how to plant and care for them, wise environmental use of water, fertilizer and pesticides or how to select lawn care professionals.

We're pleased that our Raulston Plant

Selection feature each month is brought to you by the N.C. Association of Nurserymen. We'll also include tips on tree care and we express our appreciation to another sponsor, the N.C. Department of Forestry. Thanks also goes to Duke Energy, WTVI Charlotte and N.C. State University Extension.

In addition to the Successful Gardener newsletter, horticulture agents in many counties offer Successful Gardener workshops as well. Listings will be included in future issues or you may call your local Extension Center for information.

We hope you enjoy and learn from Extension's Successful Gardener. We're wishing you success in your gardening adventures!

—The Editor

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'Tangerine Beauty' Adds Surefire Sensation to Gardens

A surefire sensation to any garden is the 'Tangerine Beauty' Crossvine, a showy, long-flowering cultivar of the native American vine *Bignonia capreolata*. 'Tangerine Beauty' is garnering attention as the 1999 JC Raulston Selection plant for regional gardens.

In order to be named a Raulston Selection plant, 'Tangerine Beauty' had to prove itself in trials at the J.C. Raulston Arboretum at N.C. State University, and it did just that.

The vine's trumpet-shaped flowers, borne in profusion from late spring through early summer, are a rich shade of orange-red outside and tan-yellow inside. A vigorous grower, capable of reaching 10' in a single year, it grows well in both sun and shade but flowering is much more intense in full sun. A two-year-old plant at the Raulston Arboretum in Raleigh stopped

see tangerine, on page 3



dogwood



crape myrtle



azalea

To Prune or Not to Prune? That Is the Question

Your Spring Pruning Guide

Pruning is often puzzling to many gardeners. Some plants bloom on old wood and some on new, and it's important to know the difference. Here's a guide for what to do now and what to do later this spring.

Spring Flowering Woody Plants

Azaleas, forsythias, dogwoods and spireas all bloom on old wood in the spring, which means they develop flower buds the summer before they bloom. Though some people think this time of year is the time to prune, it's not. If you prune spring-flowering plants now, you'll lose flowers. The time to prune azaleas, forsythias, dogwoods, spireas and other spring-flowering plants is after they have bloomed and the flowers have faded.

Shaping Spring-Flowering Plants

Shaping spring-flowering plants in February and early spring will not harm them, even though you will lose some flowers. To shape azaleas, prune vigorous shoots back to the average height of the plant. Let forsythias grow to their natural height and weeping form. On mature plants only, thin out one-third of the older canes to the ground to open up the plant.

Summer Flowering Woody Plants

Summer flowering plants such as crape myrtle and butterfly bush bloom on new wood, which means they will not develop flower buds until they have put out new leaves. However, you don't want to prune in fall because pruning activates new growth that could become damaged by the cold. The best time to prune these plants is late February or early March.

Shaping Summer Flowering Woody Plants

Crape myrtles do not need to be pruned for improved flowering. The practice of topping crape myrtles is a detriment to the plant and Extension horticulturists strongly recommend against topping plants. It is beneficial to remove any sprouts at the base, and keep the plant at three to five trunks. To increase light reception throughout the plant, remove some of the inner branches. To maintain bloom all summer and into the fall, trim off flower heads as the flowers fade. Let crape myrtles grow to their natural height. If you want flowers to stay at head height, choose the low-growing varieties.

Buddleia or butterfly bush should be trained to five or seven stems and should be topped (one of the few woody plants you can do this to) to about two feet off the ground in early spring.

Shade Trees, Evergreens and Fruit Trees

Shade trees such as maples and oaks can be pruned at any time of the year, except in the spring. However, avoid unnecessary pruning such as topping of shade trees, and allow them to grow to their natural height.

Prune evergreens in late February if you want to encourage new growth. Prune in June if you want to control growth.

Prune fruit trees in late February when flower buds start to open and during the summer to remove sprouts and other vigorous shoots.

John MacNair

Extend Valentine's Day With Showy Potted Bulbs

An alternative to cut flowers for Valentine's Day is a gift basket of potted bulbs already in bloom with additional pots, soil and bulbs to plant and enjoy long past February 14. Wonderful plant choices for forcing bulbs include hyacinths, paperwhites, daffodils and amaryllises. All it takes is the bulb planted in a pot and a room with sunlight.

Guidelines for home forcing of bulbs are available from the N.C. Cooperative Extension Service. Call your local Cooperative Extension center and request the following leaflets:

Stephen Greer

HIL-8507

Home Forcing of Hyacinths

HIL-8530

Home Forcing of Potted Paperwhites

HIL-8531

Home Forcing of Daffodils

HIL-8529

Home Forcing of Potted Amaryllis

gardentalk

Any garden demands as much of its maker as he has to give. But I do not need to tell you, if you are a gardener, that no other undertaking will give as great a return for the amount of effort put into it.

— Elizabeth Lawrence





Is it time to plant tender annuals?

Some years
have nice days in
February and March.

By late March you may be bitten by the planting bug. Be careful. The average last frost date in the Charlotte area is April 2. In Chapel Hill it is April 15. Average means that tender plants will get killed 50% of the time. Most gardeners wait until the 90% frost-free date. In the Piedmont this is 12 to 14 days later. In river bottoms the date is even later because cold air slides off the hills.

A 90% frost-free date means tender plants

would only die 10% of the time. By observing the five day forecast, you can improve the odds. Vegetables vary in their hardiness.

Planting dates for vegetables can be found in the Home Vegetable Gardening Guide available from your local Extension center or at the website listed below. Cool season plants like cabbage or broccoli can be planted earlier than the average last frost date. Warm season or tropical plants like watermelon and okra shouldn't be planted until the soil feels warm while you sit in the garden naked. I seldom do that before May 1. **David Goforth**

http://ipmwww.ncsu.edu/urban/horticulture/home_vegetable_gardening.html

▼ ...tangerine

continued from cover

visitors in their tracks when it first bloomed in 1992, with masses of tangerine-colored blooms that totally obscured its leaves.

'Tangerine Beauty' has no serious pests, and is drought-tolerant once it's established. It can climb wire or wood trellises and fences, as well as tree trunks and wooden or stone walls. To keep it in check, prune annually after it finishes blooming.

'Tangerine Beauty' is a reintroduction of a plant sold only for a short time in the 1950s by Wayside Gardens.

TOP

5 PERENNIALS

The following five perennials perform well in our climate and aren't plagued with disease or insect damage. They all appreciate well-drained soil that has been amended with organic material.

BRAZILIAN SAGE *Salvia guaranitica* was awarded the prestigious Georgia Gold Award for herbaceous plants in 1995. I have grown this for years in both sun and high shade. It graces the garden from late spring until heavy frost with deep blue flowers, beloved by hummingbirds, on a 3- to 4-foot-tall, clump-forming plant that eventually will reach 4 feet in width. The plants may be cut back early in the season to promote compactness and control height.

BLACK-EYED SUSAN *Rudbeckia* 'Goldsturm', is a compact cultivar of the Black-eyed Susan. It begins flowering in July and, if the spent flowers are removed, continues until late September. Its deep-yellow blooms with their black cone centers rise on 1 1/2 - to 2-foot stems. It performs well in sun and shade and tolerates drought.

LENTEN ROSE *Helleborus orientalis*, the Lenten rose, is an ideal 2-foot plant for shade or semi-shade. Its stun-

ning, glossy, palmate leaves are evergreen and the branched flower stems have small clusters of nodding, cup-shaped flowers in pink, white or wine-red in late winter through late spring.

SOLOMON'S SEAL *Polygonatum odoratum* 'Variegatum', bears soft green leaves edged with a broad stripe of creamy white on a 2-foot plant. Flowers appear in mid-April and persist for 2 to 3 weeks. It is an interesting architectural plant to light up dull shade. In fall the leaves turn a beautiful butterscotch color.

BLUE MIST PLANT *Caryopteris x clandonensis*, is an excellent sub-shrub for the sunny border. It forms a 3- to 4-foot-tall by 4-foot-wide plant with small gray-green leaves. Blue flowers cover the plant in summer. The shrub should be cut back to 4 inches in mid-March, since the maximum bloom appears on new growth. 'Dark Knight' bears the darkest blue flowers of any of the cultivars. **Ann Armstrong**

Editor's Note: Ann Armstrong is a Master Gardener with the N.C. Cooperative Extension Service in Mecklenburg County.

Raulston Selections Guarantee Quality Plants

The Raulston Selections program is a joint effort of the J.C. Raulston Arboretum and the N.C. Association of Nurserymen. Raulston Selection plants are proven winners for Carolina gardeners and they are sold with tags that explain the plant's desirable features, cultural needs, size at maturity and USDA zone rating.

Look for Raulston Selections, such as the 'Tangerine Beauty' Crossvine, at your local garden center or nursery.

Rudbeckia 'Goldsturm'

Named 1999 Perennial of the Year by the Perennial Plant Association





Gardening in February

What to Fertilize

- Fertilize emerging spring-flowering bulbs.
- Continue to spread wood ashes in areas like flowering bulb beds and vegetable gardens.

What to Plant

- Start broccoli, cabbage and cauliflower plants inside your home the first week of February.
- Plant the following vegetables: Asparagus crowns, English peas, onions, Irish potatoes, radishes, rutabagas, spinach, turnips and carrots.

Pest Outlook

- Peach and nectarine trees may need to be treated with a fungicide to prevent peach leaf curl.
- After pruning, spray all fruit trees with dormant oil to help eliminate some insect pests. Spray when temperature is above 45 degrees and will remain above freezing for 24 hours.

Lawn Care

- Cool season lawns like tall fescue and Kentucky bluegrass should be fertilized in February. Follow your soil test recommendations for best results.
- If needed, apply a herbicide for lawn weeds such as chickweed, henbit or wild onions.

Propagation

- Divide perennials like daylily, shasta daisy, gaillardia and peony when the ground is dry enough.
- Hardwood cuttings of many landscape plants like crape myrtle, flowering quince, forsythia, hydrangea, juniper, spirea and weigela can be taken this month. *John Vining*

Garden Spots

The Southern Spring Show helps usher in the South's most beautiful season each year. For those seeking colorful blossoms and creative ideas, visit the Southern Spring Show Feb. 27 through March 7 at the Charlotte Merchandise Mart.

Spring Reflections is this year's theme. When you visit the Spring Show, make sure you stop by these exhibits:

- N.C. Association of Nurserymen have an award-winning exhibit each year which features wonderful plant selections for Carolina gardeners. Enjoy walking through their Spring Show garden and learning about plants you might want in your own garden.
- The Extension Master Gardeners Horticultural Information Booth is a wonderful place to get your gardening questions answered. Make sure you stop by to enter your name in a drawing for a free plant!

To learn more about the Southern Spring Show, call (704)376-6594.



Tune in to "Making It Grow!" – a gardening show featuring Extension agents from the Carolinas. Saturdays, 1 p.m. WTVI 42, Charlotte

Successful Gardener is provided to you compliments of:



The *Successful Gardener* provides timely, research-based horticultural information to help Carolinians make wise landscape investment decisions and gain greater enjoyment from their lawns and gardens. The newsletter is part of an overall horticulture program which includes Extension's Successful Gardener Workshop Series in various counties throughout the Piedmont region. We publish monthly except January and July. Comments concerning *Successful Gardener* may be sent to:

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Photos courtesy of J.C. Raulston Arboretum

For a list of garden centers where you can find *Successful Gardener*, please call (704)336-2561 or look on our Home Page at <http://mecklenburg.ces.state.nc.us/>

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