

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

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## Consider Waterwise Landscapes

Changing climatic conditions and a growing population have increased demands on water and have resulted in community-imposed water use restrictions in some areas. Landscapes that are waterwise not only make sense but are crucial for today's gardeners and our environment.

A waterwise approach known as xeriscaping helps conserve water and protects our environment. Xeriscape comes from the Greek word Xeros, meaning dry. This practice has long been used in the Southwest and West, and as one garden writer said, "Xeriscaping is not zeroscaping."

Considering that this is a popular practice in the West, first thought when we talk about xeriscaping may be cacti and rock gardens. Xeriscaping is much more, including green landscapes full of beautiful plants. What's even more beautiful is that xeriscapes generally require less fertilizer and pest control measures. They also reduce water consumption which means lower water bills!

Waterwise gardening includes many practices: proper soil cultivation, proper siting of plants, appropriate use of mulch to conserve moisture and plants that are hardy and drought tolerant. To learn more, read the page two article on *Waterwise Gardening in the Piedmont*. As you plan, plant and nurture your gardens, think about this precious natural resource and make wise water use a priority. – *The Editor*

## Loropetalum Chinese 'Burgundy'

Loropetalum Chinese 'Burgundy' is an excellent plant that adds lots of color in every season to the Piedmont landscape. It's also one of the N.C. Association of Nurserymen Raulston Selection Plants, which means it has proven itself in trials at the J.C. Raulston Arboretum at N.C. State University.

The spring foliage is a rich reddish-purple that matures to a purple-green with the fall leaf color turning to a

brilliant orange-red. The flowers are hot pink with the peak of bloom occurring late March to mid-April.

'Burgundy' grows best in full sun with well-drained soils. Give this plant room, its size will range from 6 to 10 feet high and wide. Don't be fooled by its groundcover look while being grown in a container. Once placed in the landscape it will start to produce wonderful upright branching that will grace your garden. *Stephen Greer*



ginkgo

red-flowering  
horse chestnut

## Waterwise Gardening in the Piedmont

Landscapes that are waterwise, incorporating heat and drought-tolerant plants, will become even more important as our population grows and the demand for water increases. A landscape approach known as xeriscaping is a way to incorporate plants that require less water and, when irrigation is used, groups plants according to water needs. This practice started in the more arid regions of the country but is being used in our region as well.

Effective xeriscaping requires grouping plants according to water needs. Divide plants into water-use zones: regular, moderate, and low or no irrigation. This enables gardeners to apply supplemental irrigation to plants that need it, reducing the amount of water used.

For greatest water conservation, use plants that require the least amount of water. Make sure the condition of the planting site matches the water-use zone. A gardener can still practice xeriscaping even when using plants that require moderate or high amounts of water. For example, if you plant azaleas, which are high water users, site them close together in partial shade within a natural area and

occasionally irrigate during drought, *you will be* using a xeriscaping technique.

Full sun areas require drought-tolerant plants that need little or no irrigation. However, when establishing a planting, careful and occasional watering is needed, even if the plants are drought tolerant. When planting trees, it takes one year of recovery for every inch of trunk diameter. Larger plants will need greater and longer observation for watering. Most trees and shrubs need one inch of water from rainfall or irrigation during the first two years. Remember, the best time to plant in the Southeast is in the autumn so that root systems can develop during the winter months.

To reduce the use of water, use drip irrigation in your flower, vegetable, tree and shrub beds. When sprinkler irrigating turf, make sure the sprinkler heads reach only to the end of the turf and not into unintended areas. Water early in the day. Early morning is the least wasteful and least disease-susceptible time to water any plant.

Soil preparation is crucial to waterwise garden-

ing. Tilling entire beds before planting and adding soil amendments such as compost, pinebark mulch and fertilizer can help clay soil retain moisture and nutrients, which is especially helpful during drought periods.

If you have trouble establishing plants in a certain area, take the soil and part or all of the plant to your local Cooperative Extension Center. Extension horticulturists can diagnose the problem and make recommendations.

When planning your waterwise landscape, don't automatically assume that plants which grow naturally near water are "water lovers." Some "water lovers" like river birch do poorly under drought conditions, but other "water lovers" such as Bald and Pond cypresses are incredibly drought tolerant. **John MacNair**

### Drought-Tolerant Plants for Waterwise Landscapes

For gardeners interested in wise water use and lower water bills, drought-tolerant plant choices abound. Consider these choices:



yarrow

- Daylilies
- Junipers
- American and Chinese hollies
- Many ornamental grasses
- Gaillardia
- Yarrow
- Crape myrtle
- Carolina jessamine
- Lacebark elm

▪ Southern sugar maple ▪ Ginkgo ▪ Red-flowering horse chestnut

*Other waterwise tips:* ▪ Reduced lawn size ▪ Proper grass selection  
▪ Proper soil preparation ▪ Proper selection and timing of fertilizer

#### For more information:

Contact your local Cooperative Extension Center  
Access <http://www.bae.ncsu.edu/programs/extension/publicat/wqwm/usewtr.html>

Manual of Woody Plants (1998 edition) by Michael Dirr  
North Carolina Gardener's Guide by Toby Bost

**John MacNair**

### gardentalk

*"Apprentice yourself to nature. Not a day will pass without her opening a new and wondrous world of experience to learn from and enjoy.*

– Richard W. Langer





## What is this black stuff on my crape myrtle?

In summer, a black-colored fungus can cover plants. It is common on crape myrtles but can affect other plants. This sooty mold fungus doesn't hurt the plant directly. It shades the leaves and makes the plant look bad. Sooty mold occurs because of insects. Scales, aphids or whiteflies make a living sucking sap from the plant. They use the simple sugars, but the complex sugars are extra. The insects may not be able

to digest the complex sugars. A sweet sticky residue called honeydew drips from these infestations. You have probably noticed how sweet this honeydew is if you have ever parked under an aphid infested tree and then licked your windshield. To solve a sooty mold problem, use horticultural oil. This is a pesticide available at the garden center. The oil will kill the aphids and loosen the sooty mold so it washes off easier. **David Goforth**

## Tomatoes: The Gardener's Favorite

Tomatoes are probably the most popular garden vegetable grown in the U.S., thanks to their unique flavor, attractiveness, richness as a source of vitamins C and A, and versatility as a food.

The most important step for the gardener is to select the proper varieties to plant. A good garden variety is resistant to many diseases, growth



cracks and bursting caused by alternating dry and wet weather. Excellent choices for the Piedmont gardener are Better Boy, Whopper, Celebrity and Mountain Pride, which are slicing and canning tomatoes. A Roma tomato variety which is a good choice is Viva Italian. Cherry tomato varieties include the 1999 All-American Selection 'Juliet,' Sweet 100 Plus and Red Cherry. Your garden center can make more recommendations.

Access the Extension web page on vegetables at <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/hil/>

**Willie Earl Wilson**



## Successful Gardener Series

Saturday, June 12

### Propagating Native Woody Plants

- ▶ 10 a.m. to 12:30 pm
- ▶ Winghaven Garden  
248 Ridgewood Ave., Charlotte
- ▶ \$10 fee • Register by June 11
- ▶ Limit 50 • To register: 336-2561

## ENVIRO-TIP

### Alternatives to Traditional Pesticides

Many homeowners ask what they can use instead of synthetic pesticides to control various pest problems around the home. Consider these options:

#### Baits and Traps

Instead of ant and roach sprays, use bait systems. These contain materials either ingested by the culprits or carried back to their "homes" that will prove fatal, and you eliminate the problem of spray drifting to non-target surfaces. Roach motel-type traps are also effective.

Meal moth traps contain pheromones that attract the moths. Once they enter the trap, they cannot escape.

Sticky traps are available for various insects such as flies, ants and whiteflies. Traps also are available for wasps.

#### Dehydrating Materials

Diatomaceous earth and silica gels actually kill small insects by drying them out. Take precaution to prevent inhaling these materials as they can be quite bad for the lungs. Always wear a protective mask during application.

#### Organic Controls

*Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) and *Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis* (Bt.i.) are effective in controlling caterpillars and mosquito larvae respectively.

#### Horticultural Oils and Insecticidal Soaps

These products help control scale and many soft-bodied insect pests.

Learn how to identify beneficial insects such as ladybeetles, green lacewings, encarsia wasps and praying mantises. Protect these natural predators.

**Royce Hardin**





## Gardening in June

### What to Fertilize

- Fertilize or sidedress your vegetables as needed.

### What to Plant

- Start broccoli and cauliflower for transplanting into the garden in mid-July.
- Plant beans, Southern peas, peppers, sweet potatoes, pumpkins and tomatoes.

### What to Prune

- Prune narrowleaf evergreens like juniper and arborvitae late this month.
  - Prune bigleaf or florist hydrangea when flowers fade.
- Trim hedges such as hollies and boxwood as needed.
- Cut off the faded flowers of phlox, shasta daisy and purple coneflower to encourage a second flowering.

### Pest Outlook

- Check these shrubs for insect pests: bagworms on arborvitae, juniper and leyland cypress; leafminer on boxwood; aphid on crape myrtle; borer on dogwood; spider mites on hemlock; and lace bug on pyracantha. Apply control measures as needed.
  - Keep spraying your tree fruits, bunch grapes and roses.
  - Spray these vegetables if insects are observed: cucumber beetle on cucumber, squash vine borers and aphids on squash, flea beetle on tomato and eggplant; worms on broccoli, cabbage and cauliflower.

### Lawn Care

- Start any warm season lawns like zoysia, Bermuda and centipede grass in June.
- Continue fertilizing your warm season grasses like Bermuda and zoysia. Fertilize centipede grass. Do not fertilize tall fescues now!

*John Vining*

### The Daniel Stowe Botanical Garden

is well on its way to becoming a world-class garden. Established in 1991 through the generosity of textile executive Daniel Jonathan Stowe, the garden will eventually encompass 450 acres, making it one of the largest botanical gardens in North America. Though it's still under development, the garden has much to offer. Ten acres are landscaped with native perennials, ornamentals, lilies, seasonal annuals and a kitchen garden. The garden is working toward an early fall 1999 grand opening for its 110-acre "Phase One," which will include two ponds rimmed with more than 60,000 spring-flowering bulbs, woodland nature trails, wildflower meadows and a variety of thematic gardens. Any time is a good time to visit as particular care has gone into the seasonal color display.

The garden, located 30 minutes from Charlotte outside of Belmont, is open Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.; on Saturdays from noon to 5 p.m. Call (704) 825-4490 or access [www.stowegarden.org](http://www.stowegarden.org).

*Karen Neill*

Garden Spot



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:

**Successful Gardener Editor**  
Mecklenburg County Extension Center  
700 N. Tryon St.  
Charlotte, NC 28202

Editor and Project Coordinator:  
**Leah Chester-Davis**  
Area Specialized Agent, Marketing & Media Relations, Mecklenburg, Gaston, Cabarrus

Project Coordinator:  
**Stephen Greer**  
Urban Horticulture Agent, Gaston County

Compilations Editor:  
**John MacNair**  
Urban Forestry Agent, Mecklenburg County

Contributors:

County	Name	Phone
Cabarrus	David Goforth	(704)792-0000
Durham	Paul McKenzie	(919)560-0000
Forsyth	Toby Bost	(336)767-8213
Gaston	Stephen Greer	(704)922-0301
Guilford	Karen Neill	(910)375-5876
Lincoln	Kevin Starr	(704)736-8452
Mecklenburg	John MacNair	(704)336-2561
Orange	Royce Hardin	(919)732-8181
Polk	John Vining	(828)894-8218
Rowan	Darrell Blackwelder	(704)633-0571
Union	Willie Earl Wilson	(704)283-3741
Wake	Carl Matyac	(919)250-1116

*All Agents of the N.C. Cooperative Extension Service*

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

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

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