



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

NC STATE UNIVERSITY

NORTH CAROLINA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE & LIFE SCIENCES

JC Raulston Arboretum Plant Focus

'Little Gem' – Magnificent Southern Magnolia in a Smaller Form

The Southern magnolia, *Magnolia grandiflora*, may be a favorite plant for many but totally unrealistic for today's smaller lawns. If you're a magnolia fan and want to enjoy the beautiful evergreen leaves and large, creamy white blossoms that are features of the Southern magnolia, yet you don't want the tree to totally dwarf your landscape, then 'Little Gem,' a cultivar of *Magnolia grandiflora*, is the plant to consider.

'Little Gem' grows 20 feet high by 10 feet wide in 10 years, making it a long-lasting screen plant. It also makes a regal stand-alone specimen without taking up the entire property.

The glossy green leaves have bronze undersides. Its fragrant, creamy white flowers are six inches wide and begin to bloom when the tree is only 2 or 3 years old. Abundant flower production arrives in May and June and tapers off sporadically into November. Although tolerant of shade, plant in full sun for a profusion of flowers and to show off the glossy green leaves. The honeycombed fruit husks have attractive red seeds that ripen in fall and are ravenously eaten by birds. There are no serious insect and disease problems. Occasionally, woodpeckers create shallow holes in rows, but this should not damage the plant unless the holes are numerous. Broadleaved evergreens including 'Little Gem' drop older yellow leaves in late spring, so don't worry that you have a problem when the leaves fall.

When visiting the JC Raulston Arboretum at NC State University, make sure to observe 'Little Gem' and a variety of completely different species being used for a diverse and aesthetic screen planting.

Other cultivars of Southern magnolia to consider are 'Gold Strike' with yellow variegated leaves, 'Bracken's Brown Beauty' with cinnamon brown leaf undersides and 'Baby Doll' which is round-shaped instead of pyramidal. For details about the arboretum, visit the website at www.arb.ncsu.edu or call (919) 515-3132. *John MacNair*



'Little Gem'
Robert E. Lyons ©

Inside

2 Landscape with Ornamental Grasses

3 Enviro-Tip

4 Garden Spot

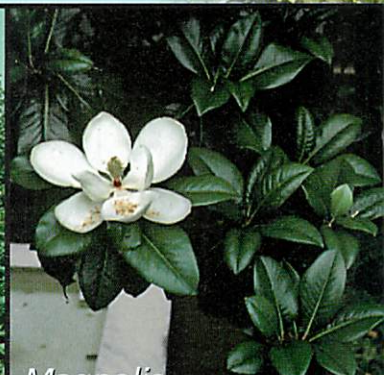
Successful Gardener 1999 Silver Quill Award Winner



Magnolia grandiflora
Robert E. Lyons ©



'Little Gem'
JC Raulston ©



Magnolia grandiflora
Robert E. Lyons ©



Robert E. Lyons ©

'Cosmopolitan' grass



Robert E. Lyons ©

'Variegatus' grass

Accent Landscape with Ornamental Grasses

Gardeners are beginning to realize the fine accent and architectural effect ornamental grasses contribute to a garden. Most ornamental grasses would be described as having graceful, arching foliage which provides seasonal interest from spring "green-up" through the summer, with rich autumn colors in the fall and winter. The flower plumes on several species can be spectacular.

Ornamental grasses are highly resistant to insect and disease problems, tolerant to heat and drought and require little pruning. Two important requirements are full sun and well-drained soil. Ornamental grass species grow to various sizes, some growing to 15 feet while others are considered dwarf groundcovers. Ornamental grasses have several uses as functional landscape plants.

When combined with a few evergreen shrubs, these grasses help create an excellent screen for privacy:

- Pampas grass (*Cortaderia selloana*)
- Zebra grass (*Miscanthus sinensis* 'Zebrinus')
- Variegated miscanthus (*Miscanthus sinensis* 'Variegatus')

Grasses that can be used as accent plants in the intermediate size include:

- 'Cosmopolitan' miscanthus (*Miscanthus sinensis* 'Cosmopolitan')
- Northern sea oats (*Chasmanthium latifolium*)

- Fountain grass (*Pennisetum alopecuroides*)
- Quaking grass (*Briza media*)
- Feather reed grass (*Calamagrostis acutiflora* 'Stricta')
- Variegated purple moor grass (*Molinia caerulea* 'Variegata')

Excellent groundcovers for small areas include:

- Blue fescue (*Festuca glauca*)
- Blue gray sedge (*Carex glauca*)

These grasses are perennial plants and can be pruned back in mid-winter when they are completely dormant. This is best accomplished with pruning shears or electric hedge clippers. The new growth will begin to appear in late spring when fertilizer can be applied, if desired. However, many grasses require little additional fertility than what's in the ground already. Excessive fertilizer will cause weak, floppy, undesirable growth.

Ornamental grasses can be found in a variety of locations throughout the JC Raulston Arboretum at NC State University. A strong collection can be seen along the southern border of 'Nellie R. Stevens' hollies, across from the Paradise and Butterfly Gardens. Their wispy nature and rustling echoes are perfect audible companions to the opposite water fountain. Access the arboretum's website www.arb.ncsu.edu for directions and more information. **Carl A. Matyac**

Antique Roses Gain Resurgence in Popularity

A visit to the Lincoln County rose garden of Vernon and Nancy Rickard quickly reveals that antique rose varieties hold a special place in their hearts as well as their garden.

Antique roses, also called old garden roses, are a perfect example of the saying that "everything old is new again." Gardeners throughout the country have come to realize the appealing

qualities that many of the old rose varieties have to offer. The Rickards, the winners of numerous awards for the many types of roses they grow and show, understand the resurging popularity of these timeless beauties. Vernon Rickard feels that a large part of their appeal is that many of these varieties are tough, often surviving over the years in spite of minimal care. He says that a number of these varieties have been collected from old home sites and cemeteries where they were subjected to total neglect. While he points out that they will perform best with good care, some types fit especially well into low-maintenance landscapes. He cites the case of a west coast city which recently planted some 50,000 rugosa roses. Rugosas are noted for their toughness.

It's hard for Vernon to name just a few favorites, but he offered several good examples of the hundreds of varieties of antique roses. 'Irene

Watts' produces pink, double flowers with good fragrance. It's a repeat bloomer that grows to about 3 1/2 feet. 'Pink Pet' is a low-growing variety that's good for landscaping and blooms all summer. 'Playboy' produces yellow-orange flowers, has good disease resistance and also blooms throughout the summer. 'Zephirine Drouhin' is an impressive climber which is thornless with pink flowers. It's a repeat bloomer.

It would be easy to be overwhelmed by the numerous varieties of old garden roses. Just the names of the classes to which they belong such as Gallica, Bourbon, Damask and Noisette will likely represent new terminology to many. But don't be deterred. These roses are worth your effort. Many nurseries now specialize in this group of plants. Their price lists and catalogs are a good source of information.

Kevin Starr



'Magnifica' rose

Robert E. Lyons ©

Q&A Why do my tomatoes turn black on the end away from the stem?

Blossom-end rot occurs when the tomatoes don't have enough calcium in the fruit. Determining why they don't have enough calcium may take a little figuring. Many times the tomato plant can't take up enough calcium because there isn't enough in the soil. Even when there is plenty in the soil, there may not be enough roots to carry the calcium up the plant. Or there may not be enough water to carry the calcium. By the time you notice the problem it may be too late to do anything this year. Sometimes,

later fruit develops normally because the roots get larger and find more calcium. Gypsum is a rapidly available form of calcium and may be applied to the soil. Garden centers sell a product for blossom-end rot. The most common product is calcium chloride which should be applied when the plant is young. Calcium nitrate can be sprayed anytime but you can't get much calcium through the foliage. The best thing to do is to try for a better crop next year. Make sure you have added calcium to the soil. Use lime if the pH is less than 6.5. If you still need calcium, use gypsum. *David Goforth*

Be Cool – Plant a Tree!

Trees cool our houses and neighborhoods by shading and by turning sunlight heat into water vapor, which is why a tree will cool more than an umbrella or a building. Trees can reduce temperatures on south-facing walls by 30 degrees, indoor car temperatures by 30 degrees and air conditioner bills by 10 percent.

Selection and placement of trees near the home and driveway are critical. South and west-facing exposures are the hottest. Use deciduous trees (plants that lose all leaves in the fall) near the home as they will tolerate full sun and harsh conditions. Deciduous plants will provide shade in summer but allow greater light in the winter. Use broad-spreading trees as opposed to conical species. Small-maturing trees should be 20 feet or more from the house and large-maturing trees 30 feet or more. Recommended varieties include redbud, golden-rain tree, maples, oaks, river birch, 'Thundercloud' ornamental plum, 'Okame' cherry and other cherries. For best results, plant trees during the fall through early spring.

John MacNair

ENVIRO-TIP

Don't Bug Your Friends

Despite the squeamish responses that insects elicit from many people, there are a few bugs that you just gotta love! Not all insects are harmful. Many are beneficial in many ways, including their aid in the production of fruits, seeds, vegetables and flowers by pollinating blossoms. Others feed on harmful insects that injure garden plants.

Of all the beneficial predaceous insects, the lady beetles or ladybugs are perhaps the most important. Both adults and larvae feed on aphids,

scale insects and many other injurious species. The lacewing, commonly referred to as green lacewings, feed chiefly on aphids in both adult and larvae stages. Lacewings are commonly found in grass, weeds and on the foliage of trees and shrubs. Most adults are greenish in color and have beautiful golden-colored eyes. The eggs are unusual in that each egg is laid on the end of a tiny stalk. Other beneficial insects are the assassin bug, praying mantis, syrphid fly larva, predaceous stinkbug and ant loin.

Before any control measures are used, identify the insect and consider beneficial bugs your friends!

Willie Earl Wilson



Lacewing Larva

Successful Gardener is the International Association of Business Communicators' 1999 Silver Quill Award Winner!

gardentalk

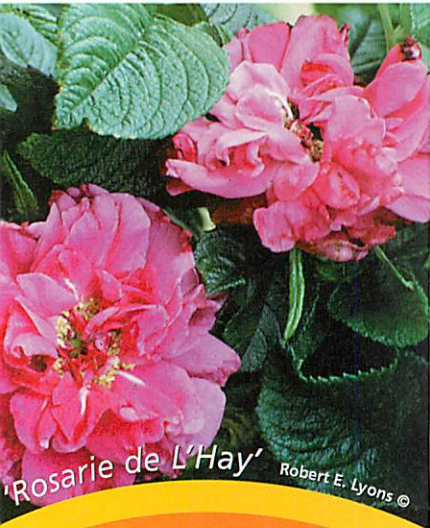
"There is not a sprig of grass that shoots uninteresting to me."

– Thomas Jefferson

Watch Almanac Gardener on UNC-TV Network Stations

12 noon on Saturdays
2:30 p.m. on Sundays

Produced by the N.C. Cooperative Extension Service and UNC Television



Gardening in June and July

Lawns

- Mow cool-season grasses such as tall fescue and Kentucky bluegrass a bit higher than normal (3 to 3.5 inches) to increase drought tolerance.
- Mid-June is the one time of year to apply nitrogen to centipede grass. Use a slow-release, turf-grade fertilizer at a rate of one-half pound nitrogen per 1000 square feet.

Ornamentals

- Don't plant trees and shrubs now, unless you're prepared to water religiously. Better to plan now and wait until fall.
- Many garden pests are tiny and feed on the undersides of leaves. Inspect plants carefully and regularly to catch problems early.

Edibles

- Many crops can be planted now for a bountiful fall harvest, including beans, cantaloupes, carrots, southern peas and tomatoes.
- Plant pumpkins by June 15 so they'll be ready in time for Halloween!

Safety in the Yard & Garden

- Wear a wide-brim hat and sunscreen when working in the yard and garden.
- Be sure that power equipment is operating correctly and that all safety guards and features are functioning.
- Always read the label instructions before opening any pesticide container.

Irrigation

- Most lawn and garden plants can survive on about one inch of water per week. Check your sprinkler or irrigation system to see how much you are applying.
- Irrigate early in the morning so less will be lost to wind and evaporation.

Paul McKenzie

The Wilkes Community College Garden,

a 30-acre garden, has been in existence since 1985. Community support has made this garden a success. In fact, it has become an integral part of the Wilkesboro community. One of the most elaborate displays is the Eddy Merle Watson Memorial Garden for the senses. The main feature is a concrete and brick wall titled "Nature's Alphabet and the Tree of Memories." The wall encourages the visually impaired to touch and experience texture and form. Other features include the Sara Mills Japanese Garden, the Ron Stanley Victory Vegetable Garden and the Lewis Deal Native Garden. The garden is open daily from sunrise to sunset and is free to the public. A map and brochure available to visitors at the center will allow you to enjoy the garden at your own pace. The garden is located on the college campus at 1328 South Collegiate Drive in Wilkesboro. For more information, call (336) 838-6100. *Karen Neill*

Garden Spot



The *Successful Gardener* provides timely, research-based horticultural information. The newsletter is part of a statewide horticulture program which includes Extension's Regional Successful Gardener Seminar Series and workshops throughout the state. 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: **Emily Revels**

Consumer Horticulture Agent, Mecklenburg County

Compilations Editor: **John MacNair**

Urban Forestry Agent, Mecklenburg County

Assistant Editor: **Karen Neill**

Consumer Horticulture Agent, Guilford County

Contributors:

County	Name	Phone
Buncombe	Linda Blue	(828)255-5522
Cabarrus	David Goforth	(704)792-0430
Catawba	Fred Miller	(828)465-8240
Durham	Paul McKenzie	(919)560-0525
Forsyth	Craig Mauney	(336)767-8213
Gaston	Ben Dungan	(704)922-XXXX
Guilford	Karen Neill	(336)375-XXXX
Henderson	Bill Skelton	(828)697-4891
Lincoln	Kevin Starr	(704)736-8452
Mecklenburg	John MacNair	(704)336-2561
	Emily Revels	(704)336-2561
Nash	Mike Wilder	(252)459-9810
Orange	Royce Hardin	(919)732-8181
Polk	John Vining	(828)894-8218
Randolph		(336)318-6005
Rowan	Darrell Blackwelder	(704)633-0571
Union	Willie Earl Wilson	(704)283-3741
Wake	Carl Matyac	(919)250-1100

All Agents of N.C. Cooperative Extension

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 visit Cooperative Extension on the web at <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu>

Disclaimer: The use of brand names does not imply endorsement by N.C. Cooperative Extension nor discrimination against similar products or services not mentioned.

Distributed in furtherance of the Acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914. Employment and program opportunities are offered to all people regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability. NC State University, NC A&T State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture and local government cooperating. Vol. 2, No. 5

Successful Gardener may not be reproduced without written permission. Any news media using sections of the newsletter should credit "Cooperative Extension's *Successful Gardener*."



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:



Printed on recycled paper.