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

JC Raulston Arboretum Plant Focus

JCRA Introduces 'Hartlage Wine'

A plant of interest in the Piedmont garden passed down from one generation to another is the Carolina allspice or sweet Betsy, *Calycanthus floridus*. So fragrant are the dusky rose-colored blossoms that some older folks claim that young women would hide them in their clothing as perfume.

A new hybrid, 'Hartlage Wine', portends to be another Piedmont favorite. Available at local nurseries this fall, x *Sinocalycalycanthus raulstonii* 'Hartlage Wine' is an intergeneric hybrid of *Calycanthus floridus* and *Sinocalycanthus chinensis*, the Chinese wax plant. This plant was developed through the efforts of Richard Hartlage while a student at NC State in the early 1990s. The plant's unusual name reflects the plant's genetic parentage and the influence of the late horticulture professor J.C. Raulston on Hartlage's work.

Raulston allspice, as the plant is known, is an outstanding, fast-growing deciduous shrub that performs best in partial shade, although plants will prosper in full sun with adequate water. The flowers, 3 to 4 inches in diameter with maroon outer and white-ringed central petals, are borne at the leaf axils and open just prior to leaf emergence in the spring. Unfortunately, 'Hartlage Wine' flowers do not exhibit the heady fragrance of Carolina allspice, but the striking beauty of the blossoms more than makes up for this genetic anomaly.

This plant is a vigorous grower and, if left unpruned, will likely reach a height of 6 to 8 feet. To control the height, simply cut back the canes to the ground every few years.

The many desirable characteristics exhibited by this plant made it worthy of recent introduction to the nursery industry by the JC Raulston Arboretum. Inquire about 'Hartlage Wine' at your local garden center. To learn more, visit www.ncsu.edu/jcraulstonarboretum. **Royce Hardin**



all photos
'Hartlage Wine'
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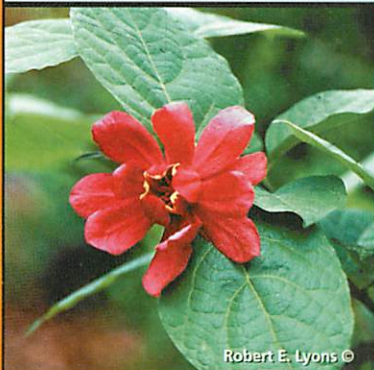
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Keep Natural Areas Looking Their Weed-Free Best

Homeowners often create natural areas with a two-fold purpose: one as an added design element and the other as a logical method to reduce maintenance chores such as reseeding shady lawn areas every year. Keep in mind, though, that natural areas are not maintenance free and require some work to keep them looking their best. Natural areas with organic mulch often need to be refurbished periodically either by fluffing with a leaf rake or simply replacing the mulch. Some landscape supply dealers offer dye that can be used to dye mulch each year to keep the area sharp.

The most influencing factor for determining which mulch to use should be the existing trees. For example, under pine trees, mulch with a 3- to 4-inch layer of pine needles. Pine needles are readily available at most landscape nurseries or garden centers. A typical bale of pine needles covers about 40 to 50 square feet. Other recommended organic mulches are compost, leaves, cedar shavings, bark and even grass clippings. Again, the good part about natural areas is that when the needles and leaves fall they add to the mulch and complement the area.

The use of black plastic is not recommended for weed control for natural areas. Black plastic material simply does not allow moisture to penetrate and also does not promote a free exchange of oxygen. These factors can cause problems for many ornamentals and, during a stress period, weak plants may die. Recommended alternatives to black plastic are geotextile fabrics. Gaining in popularity for use in natural areas, these fabrics help discourage weeds from getting established in

the natural areas and walkways. The landscape fabrics will allow moisture to penetrate and also not inhibit oxygen exchange. Research shows that landscape fabrics in conjunction with organic mulch are effective in controlling some but not all weeds.

Before spreading mulch, remove all grass and perennial weeds. It is true that a 3- or 4-inch layer of mulch will control weeds, but only as a temporary control. It is very important to identify the weeds and completely eradicate physically or chemically. Several herbicides such as those that contain glyphosate are effective for home use to control most weeds or grasses. Be sure to observe label directions and avoid drifts by applying at low pressure.

Germinating tree seedlings can be a problem, especially in the spring. Woody tree seedlings such as maples, mulberry, tree-of-heaven or Oriental bittersweet can be controlled with a preemergence herbicide called Gallery. Apply preemergence herbicides in the spring before germination occurs while the soil temperature is still cool in late February or early March. This herbicide controls the tree seedlings by inhibiting growth from seed, not established plants. Glyphosate is a poor control for emerging seedlings. A more effective control option may be to use the postemergence herbicide containing triclopyr. These herbicides are sold in garden centers as brush killers under several other names. Be careful when using any triclopyr product. This herbicide kills trees and brush, and does not know the difference between the weed tree seedlings you want to kill and the plants you want to keep.

Darrell Blackwelder

Avoiding Winter Damage

After a hot summer, zero degree weather seems like something in the distant future. Since we will soon move into the winter season, it may be helpful to be aware of some of the factors which contribute to winter damage of ornamental plants.

Much of the success with landscape plants is due to proper plant selection. Plant hardiness zone information can be helpful when choosing plants. Most of Piedmont North Carolina is in hardiness Zone 7, meaning that the average annual minimum temperature is between 0 and 10 degrees. The mountains are in Zone 6 with average annual minimum temperatures between 0 and -10 degrees. The coast is Zone 8 with average mini-



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um temperatures of 10 to 15 degrees. Plants that really need warmer climates will be difficult, if not impossible, to grow.

The exact location of a plant is important. Certain spots are more protected than others. Walls, trees and

see **Winter Damage**, on page 3 ▶

Q&A What is the knotty black growth on the branches of my plum tree?

Black knot is a common fungal disease caused by *Apiosporina morbosa*. It occurs throughout North Carolina on wild plum and cherry trees, so it is easily transmitted to cultivated varieties. Seen mostly on twigs and branches, which often die as a result, this disease can kill entire trees if left unchecked. The first symptoms are small, light brown swellings usually located at the base of the leaf petiole or on the fruit spur. However, most folks do not realize a tree is infected until

the development of older knots which are coal black in color and hard in texture, hence the common name of black knot. Infection can occur anytime from bud break in the spring until shoot development ends in early summer. Regular fungicidal sprays during this period can prevent most new infections. Purchasing disease-free plants, sanitation and properly pruning out infected tissue are keys to preventing further infection. Contact your local county Cooperative Extension Center for more specific control measures. **Royce Hardin**

Winter Damage

continued from page 2

hedges often create conditions for nearby plantings that may not exist just a short distance away. Each side of a house will have its own set of growing conditions.

Cultural conditions can have a big influence on the susceptibility of plants to winter damage. Obviously, plants can't take up water when the ground is frozen. A good organic mulch such as pine straw will conserve moisture and also act as insulation for the soil. Thus, prolonged freezing of the soil is less likely.

An ideal scenario for winter injury to occur is to have the ground frozen and have a broad-leaved evergreen plant exposed to winter winds. The wind blowing over the leaf surfaces increases the rate of water loss. This is where that protected location can come in handy. Sometimes, folks even erect temporary screens around valuable plants in the winter to protect them from the wind.

Another cultural factor to consider is late-season fertilization. Don't use fertilizers containing nitrogen late in the season. The promotion of late-season growth will increase the odds of winter injury. Pruning in late summer or early fall also promotes growth. Wait to prune when plants are dormant in the fall or in early spring.

Kevin Starr

ENVIRO-TIP

Keep Contaminants Out of Stormwater Runoff

Many people don't realize that stormwater runoff – the water that runs down the streets and into the storm drains after a rain – flows directly into our creeks, rivers and lakes. Unlike the wastewater from our homes, it is not treated to remove contaminants. So what kind of contaminants does it contain and what can we do about it?

- Never allow toxic chemicals such as motor oil, pesticides or paints to flow into a storm drain. Dispose of these chemicals through a household hazardous waste collection program.
- Fertilizers can also cause problems. Nitrogen and phosphorous, two of the main ingredients in most fertilizers, can have a very detrimental effect on water quality. There are several steps you can take to avoid fertilizer runoff. First, always fertilize based on a soil sample or research-based information about plant needs. This will reduce problems with over-application. Second, use slow-release or organic fertilizers wherever pos-

sible. Since they dissolve more slowly they are more likely to stay in place after application. And finally, if you accidentally get fertilizer on the sidewalk or driveway, sweep it back into the yard where it won't wash away.

- Silt or fine soil particles also can be carried away in stormwater runoff. Silt is detrimental to aquatic habitats as it makes the water cloudy. It also can be deposited in areas that provide habitat for fish and aquatic insects, interfering with their life cycles. To help keep silt from streams and lakes, be sure you don't have any bare areas in your yard that can erode away. Sloped areas are especially vulnerable. Cover them with mulch, groundcover plants or some type of vegetation. **Paul McKenzie**



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gardentalk

"Delicious autumn! My very soul is wedded to it and if I were a bird I would fly about the earth seeking the successive autumns."

– George Eliot



Gardening in November

Lawns

- In the Piedmont and mountains, turf areas that were reseeded in late summer can benefit from a light topdressing of a complete fertilizer, such as 10-10-10. Established cool-season lawns need 1 pound of nitrogen per 1000 square feet this month for their fall treatment.
- Coastal lawns will soon be dormant. Continue to mow, rake leaves and water during dry spells.

Ornamentals

- November is one of the best times of the year to plant landscape trees and shrubs before the ground freezes.
- To get the best selection and one that will last longer, pick out your Christmas tree for the holiday season in late November.
- Tip prune this month. Many evergreens are used in various Christmas decorations from both the foliage and berries. Favorites include the holly species, nandina, pines and cedars.
- Do not fertilize landscape ornamentals this late in the season to avoid causing plants to remain tender throughout the winter and suffer cold damage.

Edibles

- Fall gardens may be harvested through the cold weather in the coastal areas. Cold frames planted with leafy greens will provide throughout the winter months.
- Store pumpkins, gourds and other cucurbit fruits with hard skins and starchy rinds in ventilated areas with temperatures from 50 to 55 degrees F and a relative humidity between 50 to 75%.
- Remove dead vegetable plants from the garden to prevent insects and diseases from overwintering.
- Treat scales with a dormant oil spray applied to the branches and stems where scales are attached. **David Barkley**

Hemlock Bluffs

Nature Preserve in Cary is definitely worth a look when you're visiting the Research Triangle. The preserve contains a very unique ecology that is rarely seen so far east of the mountains. North-facing bluffs over Swift Creek create a cool, moist, shady environment in which a native stand of Canadian hemlocks has survived. This stand is believed to be a relic from thousands of years ago when the Piedmont climate was much cooler. The Stevens Nature Center, designed to blend with the preserve, contains educational exhibits and nature programs. Over two miles of well-maintained trails provide enjoyment for the casual stroller as well as the more serious hiker. Any season is nice, though early spring will reward the visitor with views of many woodland wildflowers, including many species not usually found this far east. Located at 2616 Kildaire Farm Road, approximately 1 mile south of Tryon Rd., the trails are open daily. For more information, visit www.townofcary.org or call (919) 387-5980.

Paul McKenzie

Garden Spot



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

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