

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

JC Raulston Arboretum Plant Focus

New Creeping Raspberry Groundcover

A new groundcover creeping its way into our landscapes is *Rubus rolfei*. Commonly known as creeping raspberry, the groundcover is often listed incorrectly in some catalogs as calycinoideis, and it is sometimes also listed as *Rubus pentalobus*. This groundcover adapts well to difficult sites that are hot, dry, erodible slopes or ditches where moisture fluctuates. Few plants can tolerate these conditions but creeping raspberry is well suited to them.

The non-fruiting groundcover from Taiwan grows 1 to 3 inches tall, with crinkly, deep-green leaves providing needed texture in lightly shaded areas. White flowers are borne in mid-summer, but they are generally lost in the foliage and not prominent. The plant quickly forms a dense carpet. In the fall and winter, foliage transforms to subtle rusts and pinks. The groundcover is aggressive, but not invasive. It will not climb trees or smother nearby shrubs, and can be controlled easily with an edger. Space creeping raspberry plants 4 to 6 feet apart, allowing them plenty of room.

Creeping raspberry adapts well to containers and tumbles easily over rock walls, providing a "spilling over" effect. Bulbs or other perennials are able to pop up through the foliage to create interesting compositions.

'Emerald Carpet' forms a low, dense, evergreen groundcover bearing textured, dark green leaves through the growing season. In the cooler months these leaves are blushed with burgundy tones. This cultivar is easily found in the Lath House and the Klein-Pringle White Garden at the JC Raulston Arboretum (JCRA) at NC State University. 'Golden Quilt' is a branch sport from one of the clones found at the JCRA. This cultivar bears striking golden-yellow leaves and is especially prominent on the new growth of the season. Look for it in the bed that slopes down from the east side of the Ruby C. McSwain Education Center, just up from the Manooch Cascade.

Darrell Blackwelder

All photos
'Emerald Carpet'
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Daffodil



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Saffron Crocus



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Allium



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Crocosmia

Fall for Spring Bulbs

Fall is the best time to plant spring-flowering bulbs to create a kaleidoscope of color next spring. Thousands of tulips and daffodils find their way into Tar Heel gardens each year. Bulbs are planted in the fall in order to develop a root system and to satisfy the cold requirement necessary for the robust, colorful flower buds. It is best to wait until the ground has cooled to below 60°F before planting. For most of North Carolina that is October or November.

Soil Preparation

Good soil drainage is essential for spring-flowering bulbs. Poorly aerated soil is probably the biggest factor in bulbs that fail to naturalize and return year after year. If the soil is mostly clay, mix in an organic amendment such as compost or aged pine bark, 25 percent or more by volume. Or plant in raised beds that are well prepared. If the soil is sandy, add an organic amendment to increase water and nutrient holding capacity.

Soil pH is another critical issue for longevity of bulb plantings. The pH of the planting area should be in the 6 to 7 range. Frequently, both limestone and phosphorus fertilizer are deficient in new planting beds. One of the myths with bulb planting is that bonemeal gives better results. Studies at NC State University indicate that commercial bulb fertilizer is the preferred method of supplying nutrients. If you need assistance in this area contact your county Extension Center for a soil test kit.

Where to Plant

Use spring-flowering bulbs in borders with annuals or perennials, groundcovers, rock gardens and wooded areas. They do best in areas that receive light shade during midday, especially in hotter zone 8 gardens. Some bulb types, such as crocus, muscari and allium, can be interplanted in the same area based on time of flowering and plant heights.

In established bulb beds, summer is a good time to divide old plantings to ensure continuous flowering and bulb health. Before replanting, excavate new beds deeply, to as much as a one-foot depth. This improves aeration and drainage for the roots.

Space and Plant Bulbs According to Size

Plant bulbs to the proper depth. Measure from the base of the bulb to soil level.

- Small-sized bulbs (1 inch in height) – plant 5 inches deep. Space small bulbs (crocus and snow-drop) 1 to 2 inches apart.

- Large-sized bulbs (2 or more inches in height) – plant 8 inches deep. Space large bulbs (tulips and daffodils) 3 to 6 inches apart.

These planting depths will help protect the bulbs against frost, animals and physical damage due to hoeing or other gardening chores. Be certain to thoroughly loosen the soil under the bulbs.

Plant dozens of bulbs in an area to create a more effective flower display. After covering the bulbs with soil, water thoroughly. Cover beds with 2 to 3 inches of mulch. Most bulbs are sensitive to preemergent herbicides, so restrict weed control to hand weeding, mulch and grass weed killers. If the fall is dry, water as needed.

Bulb Fertilization

Fertilization improves bulb performance. In addition, fertilization encourages bulbs to naturalize. There are two fertilizer methods available for spring-flowering bulbs. The first system utilizes a single fall application at planting using a slow-release bulb fertilizer. Incorporate the fertilizer in the rooting area. The second system uses 10-10-10 in the fall, followed by a repeat application of the same fertilizer as soon as you see new shoots breaking through the ground in late winter.

Bulb Pests

Gardeners complain most about the wildlife they encounter when attempting to grow bulbs. Though squirrels will leave your poisonous daffodil bulbs alone, they may nibble a tulip flower. The real menace for lily growers is the presence of pine mice, also known as voles. Fortunately, there are legal ways to control voles, including snaptraps and rodenticides. For the average homeowner in suburbia, a good cat or amending the soil with gravel or Voleblock™ goes a long way.

Not Just for Spring Anymore

Bulb flowers are not just spring flowers. In the Carolinas, bulbs can bloom throughout the year, with a mix of species.

Indulge yourself with the wonderful woodland varieties like magic lilies, autumn crocus and rain lilies. For vertical accents, scatter a few gladiolus and crocosmia bulbs in a sunny perennial border. The Oriental lilies produce large, exquisite, picture-perfect blooms for cutting, while their smaller Asiatic cousins are made for color beds.

Toby Bost

gardentalk

“... the crunch and rustle of leaves The acoustics of this season are different and all sounds, no matter how hushed, are as crisp as autumn air.”

Eric Sloane





How do I become a Master Gardener?

Persons having an interest in soil and plant management plus a desire to learn and to assist the public are good prospects for the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Master Gardener program. Some ultimate rewards include confidence and skills in areas like intensive vegetable gardening, managing a home orchard, and having a beautiful green lawn and healthy trees and shrubs that are highly admired.

As representatives of Cooperative Extension, Master Gardener volunteers work with the local Extension agent, helping with activities such as *Extension's Successful Gardener Learning Centers*, demonstrations, workshops and office phone duty. Diagnosing insects, weeds and plant problems are a major part of a volunteer's work. Volunteers can provide major

contributions in special interest subjects because of previous personal experience. If a person has little or no experience in basic horticulture, but a strong desire to learn and share, they are good candidates for Extension's Master Gardener program.

Contact your local N.C. Cooperative Extension horticultural agent for training availability and class schedules. Download an application form at www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/consumer/masgar/should.html and get additional details from www.cals.ncsu.edu/hort_sci/p2consumer.html. Expect a screening process based on your application. If approved, a fee is required to cover all materials, including a training manual which you keep. Forty to 50 hours of classroom and hands-on training are provided, which participants must "pay back" through volunteer work. *Don Breedlove*

Plants That Are Easy To Propagate

Vegetative propagation is a good way to increase the number of plants for your garden or to share with family and friends. Many plants are easy to propagate by rooting cuttings, which is easy any time of the year. Rooting plants is a rewarding experience and a good way to get children excited about gardening.

Coleus is a favorite plant to propagate. Coleus roots easily in water, and watching the roots form can be quite amazing. There are hundreds of varieties of coleus with many different colors and leaf shapes.

Spider plants make excellent hanging baskets. The plantlets that form along the stems develop roots while still attached to the mother plant. Remove these plantlets and place directly into moist potting soil to begin a new plant. These small plantlets work very well for planting in terrariums.

Snake plants are easy to care for and also easy to propagate. Cut a leaf section into a 3- to 4-inch piece and insert into moist potting soil. Be sure to notch the terminal end to avoid planting the leaf upside down. If you stick the top end in the soil it will not root.

Another favorite to root is the piggyback plant. When the small plantlet forms, remove the small leaf at the petiole joint and place in water or soil. And who could forget plants like philodendron or pothos? Their vining stems can be rooted easily in water before planting. *Mark Daniele*

ENVIRO-TIP

Pesticide Container Recycling

With the increasingly limited space in landfills, along with the dangers of contaminated groundwater, pesticide container disposal has become an issue for many farmers, industry professionals and homeowners who use small to significant amounts of pesticides.

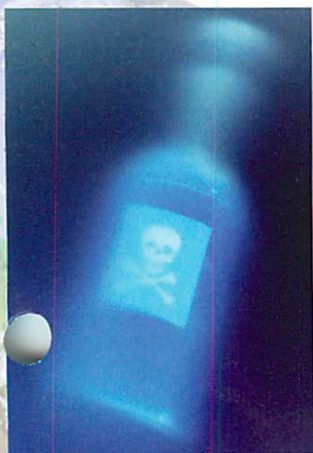
Many North Carolina counties have found a solution. Grants administered by the North Carolina Department of Agriculture through the 1993 Environmental Trust Fund have made it possible for a pesticide container recycling program to be set up in any county that wishes to participate. Pesticide containers that are one-gallon size and larger, and have been properly rinsed, can be collected and saved for recycling by companies that come to the counties on a yearly basis. The plastic is recycled and sold to companies that manufacture plastic items such as park benches or fence

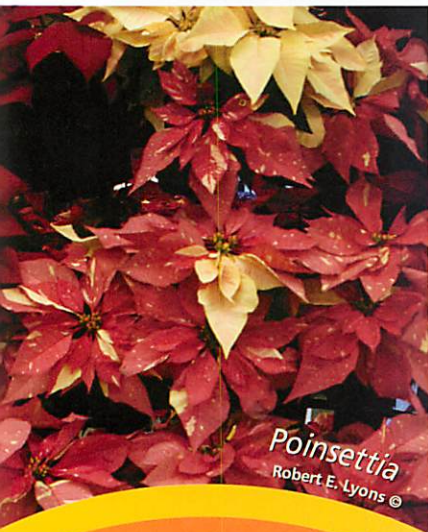
posts. In addition to counties that may have a once or twice yearly drop-off program, some of the larger counties have specific sites where pesticide containers may be left throughout the year.

Pesticide container recycling is done at no extra charge to the customer and is an environmentally sound method of pesticide container disposal. It can save pesticide applicators time and money by offering a simple and inexpensive way to dispose of empty pesticide containers, while at the same time providing plastic material that is suitable for reuse.

To find out if your county has a pesticide container recycling program, call your local Cooperative Extension Center or go to www.ncagr.com/fooddrug/pesticid/recycle.htm.

Donna Teasley





Poinsettia
Robert E. Lyons ©

Gardening in November

Lawns

- Piedmont and mountain areas that were reseeded in late summer can benefit from a light topdressing of a complete fertilizer, such as 21-3-14. Established cool-season lawns need 1 pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet this month for their fall treatment.
- Keep fallen leaves from accumulating on newly seeded lawn areas. Leaves can be mowed and mulched, or raked and added to the backyard compost pile. Germinating grass seeds need all the light and air they can get at this critical time. A heavy layer of leaves will kill the new grass.
- Coastal lawns will soon be dormant. Continue to mow, rake leaves and water during dry spells.

Ornamentals

- Plant spring-flowering bulbs. Popular daffodils for our state are Barrett Browning, Carlton, Cheerfulness, Dutch Master, February Gold, Fortune, Geranium, Ice Follies, Mt. Hood, Peeping Tom, Professor Einstein, Suzy and Unsurpassable.
 - Delay coastal planting of bulbs until December.
 - Pinch tops of pansies and snapdragons to remove stocky growth.
 - Late in the month or early next, prune evergreen foliage and berries for holiday decorations. Favorites include the holly species, nandina, pines and cedars. Save the heavy pruning until late winter.

Edibles

- Sanitation of the vegetable garden is important to reduce pests next year. Remove spent plants and recycle in compost pile.
- Garlic can still be planted, especially in coastal areas.
- Coldframes are a great way to lengthen the growing season of vegetables such as lettuces and greens. *David Barclay*

Extension's *Successful Gardener*™ program provides timely, research-based horticultural information. The newsletter is part of the statewide horticulture program which includes Extension's *Successful Gardener*™ Regional Seminar Series and county workshops. We publish 10 issues per year. Comments concerning *Successful Gardener*™ may be sent to:

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Garden Spot

The names of poinsettia varieties are many – **Jingle Bells, Jolly Red, Silverstar, Valentine**, to name a few – and all signal the approaching holiday season. NC State's Poinsettia Open House, from 1 to 5 p.m. on Sunday, December 4, at the Ruby C. McSwain Center in Raleigh, will open your eyes to the many colors and forms of poinsettias. More than 100 variations of this wonderful holiday plant will be on display.

Growers from around the nation and world send poinsettia cuttings to NC State during August. Floriculture specialists track the plants to determine which varieties perform best in North Carolina growing conditions.

A hybrid poinsettia that is a cross with the *Euphorbia* plant family will be on display. Ask to see this new and exciting plant that goes by the name 'Dulce Rosa'.

Don't miss out – take time to visit this bright and colorful display of the holidays, and cast your vote for your favorite.

Stephen Greer

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- ▶ Garden Writers Association
- ▶ International Association of Business Communicators
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