

# Successful Gardener

NC STATE UNIVERSITY NORTH CAROLINA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION



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

## JC Raulston Arboretum Plant Focus

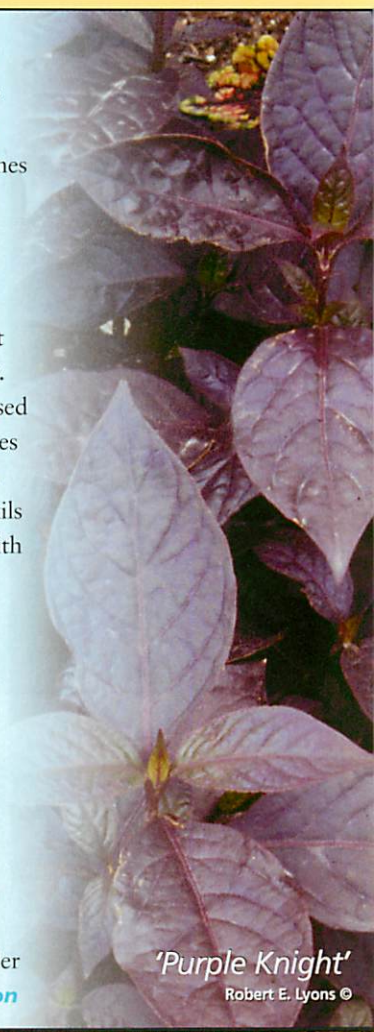
### Joseph's Coat Enhances Other Colors

**A** *Alternanthera ficoidea* is an heirloom plant that was popular during the Victorian era in formal gardens, and has made its way into our annual gardens with several new cultivars from Mexico and South America. Joseph's coat is the common name for this plant, but it is sometimes confused with a yellow green form of summer poinsettia that is also called Joseph's coat. Landscapers call the plant chartreuse alternanthera to avoid the common name confusion. It is also called golden parrot leaf, golden alternanthera or chartreuse calico plant.

Chartreuse alternanthera has eye-catching yellow green foliage, compact growth habit, durability and nonstop color from early spring until fall frost. The growth habit is 4 to 8 inches tall and 6 to 12 inches wide. It is often used in formal knot gardens or as edging to define plant beds. The plant enhances or echoes other colors, making them appear more vibrant. Alternanthera is grown for its foliage. Its small, greenish white flower is borne in the leaf axils and hidden by the foliage. Chartreuse alternanthera does best in full sun with moist, well-drained soils. Light pinching will keep plants compact.

*Alternanthera dentata* 'Purple Knight' is a frost-tender perennial grown for its dark purple foliage and can be used as a beautiful contrast against other plants in less formal beds and flower borders. The rich color is only produced in full sun and makes a dramatic accent in sunny gardens. To maintain a compact habit, regularly pinch out the growing tips. To keep a formal appearance, use pruning shears to trim the plants in summer. Plant in well-drained soil; water regularly during summer. The growth habit is 18 to 36 inches in height with an equal spread. The purple leaves excel in high heat and humidity. This plant looks great with rudbeckia and lantana.

Look for *Alternanthera* during summer in the entrance garden at the JC Raulston Arboretum. This planting, of mainly tropical annuals and tender perennials, is a celebration of color, texture and form. **Amy-Lynn Albertson**



'Purple Knight'  
Robert E. Lyons ©

- inside
- 2 Community Gardens
- 3 Enviro-Tip
- 4 Garden Spot



www.ces.ncsu.edu



Chartreuse Alternanthera  
Robert E. Lyons ©



Calicoform Alternanthera  
Robert E. Lyons ©



Red Threads  
Robert E. Lyons ©



Guilford County Gardens



Guilford County Children



Gaston County Teens



Guilford County Adults

## Community Gardens Grow More Than Plants

Community gardens are blooming in many cities across the country. They have always existed but their popularity is growing. Today's community gardeners not only have food economy in mind, but many are concerned about the pesticides used on produce they purchase. Many people want the opportunity to grow their own fresh produce, having more control of what goes on their food. The food is fresher, more nutritious and often of greater variety. Another factor in their popularity is diminishing space and more people living in high density developments.

Community gardening does much more than produce food, however. It improves the quality of life for people. Those involved can't help but experience a kind of therapy in the garden. It stimulates social interaction, encourages self-reliance, builds self-confidence, produces nutritious food, stretches family budgets and creates opportunities for recreation, exercise, education and the enjoyment of nature.

Because research shows that community gardens can enhance communities economically and socially, North Carolina Cooperative Extension works with communities across the state to help them establish gardens.

In Burke County, Cooperative Extension works with the health department in a program called Pathways to Wellness, made possible with a Kate B. Reynolds Foundation grant. The program provides garden space to limited-resource families. The goal is to help teach better nutrition and eating habits. Last year, nearly 40 families grew vegetables. Extension helped with planting dates, recommended varieties and demonstrated proper planting techniques. Extension Master Gardener Volunteers visited the garden two evenings each week during the growing season to give advice to participants. The garden also involved 4-H youth, who put up scarecrows in the garden.

"The garden is a great benefit to the community. Not only has it helped stretch food dollars, it has also given many families an activity that they can do together," said Rebecca McLeod, assistant health director in Burke County.

In Gaston County, the community gardens effort focuses on nurturing youth, in addition to vegetables. Extension currently has three community garden sites, with plans to start two more sites soon. The Cooperative Extension advisory council and staff identified several needs and issues pertaining to youth in Gaston County: obesity, loss

of employment opportunities and lack of experiential learning opportunities to apply classroom knowledge to life situations. Through a \$15,000 grant from NC A&T State University, Extension teamed with local partners to establish the gardens. Two are located on middle-school properties and one is located at a community center.

Julie Flowers, community garden coordinator with Cooperative Extension in Gaston County, said, "Educating these youth on nutrition and gardening is empowering them to make better food choices and is equipping them with the skills necessary to positively impact the communities in which they live, learn and grow." She has noticed that students from the Warlick Alternative School seem to view working in the garden as a reward. One of the students commented, "I like this because it's helping me to learn new things and it's fun."

Community gardening in Guilford County takes a slightly different approach. In an expansive space located by the Cooperative Extension Center on Burlington Road in Greensboro, 65 four by five foot garden spaces are available for lease to anyone in the community. The site is a draw for anyone who has an interest in gardening or good food. It is visible from the Extension Center parking lot and is like a magnet, pulling people over to view the gardens that are packed with tasty produce and flowers. The community gardens foster cultural understanding. In Greensboro, at least three of the plots are leased by Laotian, Latino and Hmong residents. Through help from a program at UNC-Greensboro, they will grow and label vegetables for ethnic dishes. Later in the season, cooking demonstrations will show gardeners and others how to use the produce.

Some community gardens across the state also provide a portion of the food to local soup kitchens and homeless shelters. Each plot holder in Greensboro contributes 10 percent of what they produce to the community through the Plant a Row for the Hungry program. The Guilford County effort is innovative in other ways, too. Extension is working with a local solar organization to install a shed with solar collectors where batteries will be charged to operate tillers in the gardens. Extension Master Gardener Volunteers assist with the gardens.

Cooperative Extension and Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation work with six

see Community Gardens on page 3 ▶

### gardentalk

"Gardens . . . are the first sign of commitment to a community. When people plant corn they are saying, let's stay here. And by their connection to the land, they are connected to one another." Anne Raver



## Why do I sometimes see large clusters of honeybees on a tree limb?

These clusters are known as swarms. They occur when a hive gets overcrowded, frequently in the spring. A queen, along with a large number of workers, leaves the hive in search of a new home. A tree limb, shrub or other location is simply a place for the bees to stop while scout bees look for a more permanent home.

Bees in a swarm are generally not aggressive. However, you should use common sense. Give them a wide berth and they shouldn't be a problem. They

will stay a relatively short time, usually less than 24 hours.

A number of beekeepers in the state will come and capture swarms if they are fairly accessible. Call your local Cooperative Extension Center for a list of beekeepers who will catch swarms.

Please try to avoid killing honeybees. Our honeybee population is much lower than it used to be. Bees are pollinators for many fruits and vegetables so we want to keep them alive whenever possible.

**Kevin Starr**

## ENVIRO-TIP

### Pest-Tolerant Roses Require Fewer Pesticides

Roses have been a garden favorite for years, but the amount of work required to keep them looking good has discouraged many gardeners. Black spot and powdery mildew can quickly ruin a beautiful rose. There is hope, however, for homeowners who want roses without the continuous maintenance of hybrid tea roses. If you are looking for a low-maintenance rose, the shrub rose could be the answer. Shrub roses have good disease resistance, requiring little, if any, need for chemicals. They also require little pruning. 'Knock Out' and 'Carefree' are two popular series of shrub roses that have good disease resistance. The flower forms range from single and semi-double to double.

'Knock Out' roses have a long cycle of bloom from early spring until late fall. The growth habit is compact with a height of about 3 feet. They work well for hedges, borders and mass plantings. The 'Knock Out' roses are available in cherry red, pink and blushing pink.

'Carefree' roses also offer nonstop blooming all season. The growth habit is medium, bushy and may be 4 to 5 feet in height, depending on variety. 'Carefree' roses work well for borders and mass plantings. Colors available are yellow and several pink blends.

While shrub roses have good disease resistance, proper site selection is still important. Roses need 6 to 8 hours of direct sunlight each day and good air movement is necessary. If you do not have a full sun site, morning sun is more important than afternoon sun. The morning sun will help dry the dew from the leaves quickly. Limiting the amount of time the leaves stay wet will reduce the incidence of black spot.

A discussion of pest-tolerant roses would not be complete without mentioning Lady Banks rose. It is a vigorous climber that has white to yellow blooms in April and May. Lady Banks has a relatively short bloom period, but has the advantage of being an evergreen vine.

**Mark Danieleley**



**'Knock Out' Rose**

Nancy Doubrava ©

## Community Gardens

*continued from page 2*

community gardens.

Extension personnel and Master Gardeners provide numerous opportunities to help community gardeners learn desirable varieties and proper planting, maintenance and harvesting techniques.

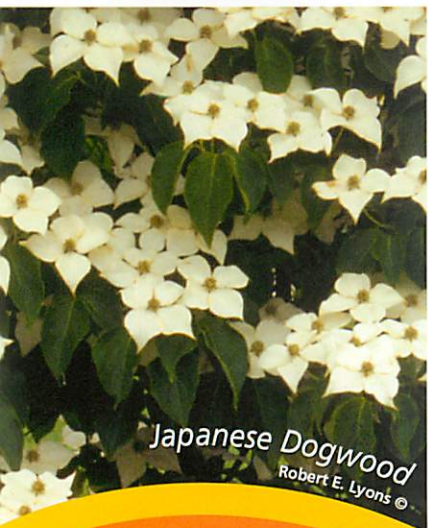
"Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation is committed to utilizing park lands for community gardens as a way to build communities as well as grow vegetables," said Greg Jackson, branch manager for recreation, operation and services.

Mecklenburg officials readily acknowledge that one of their most successful gardens was the result of an individual who voluntarily assumed the role of head gardener and organized participants through e-mails and work days.

Indeed, behind every successful community garden there is a supportive group of gardeners, neighbors and perhaps one or two official sponsors. A garden brings people together who may not have met or worked together before. This network of supporters often moves beyond the garden, helping develop a better sense of community through neighborhood cleanups or other issues important to the community.

Interested in a garden? Contact your county Cooperative Extension Center or visit the American Community Garden Association's Web site at [www.communitygarden.org](http://www.communitygarden.org).

**Karen Neill and Leah Chester-Davis**



Japanese Dogwood  
Robert E. Lyons ©

Garden Spot

Travelers to the beaches in southeastern North Carolina now have another opportunity to visit a botanical garden and walk away with some gardening ideas.

The **Brunswick County Botanical Garden** was developed to become a center for landscape gardening education. It demonstrates proper design, installation and management of plants, and seeks to broaden the use of trees and shrubs for coastal environments.

Still in its infancy, the garden features an outdoor deck-classroom, an entranceway arbor, boardwalk for handicap accessibility, about 100 plants on the Certified Plant Professional List and a waterfall with a meandering stream and reflecting pool. New varieties of ornamental trees and shrubs are being evaluated for a coastal environment. Extension Master Gardeners in Brunswick County help develop, install and maintain these gardens. The garden sits off of Government Center Drive at 25 Referendum Drive in Bolivia.

David Barkley

Toby Bost

## Gardening in May

### Lawns

- Plant and fertilize warm-season grasses, such as zoysia, St. Augustine and Bermuda. Remove thatch if necessary.
- Mow cool-season grasses, such as tall fescue, at a height of 3 inches to help the roots survive the hot months ahead. Practice grasscycling by leaving the clippings on the lawn.
- Control summer broadleaf weeds with herbicide treatments before the weeds get too large to spray. Hand-weed some infestations.
- Sweep up any fertilizer or granular chemicals that remain on walks and driveways after application to protect water quality.
- Check for white grubs and apply insecticides by mid-June.

### Ornamentals

- Prepare garden beds for dry weather. Use a 2- to 3-inch layer of organic mulch.
    - A drip irrigation system with timer can be a great labor and water saver when dry weather arrives. Keep the foliage dry and reduce leaf diseases.
      - Remove dead, diseased and dying branches from shrubs and trees.
      - Inspect Leyland cypress for bagworms and apply biological sprays if needed.
      - Use slow-release fertilizers for better foliage color. Soil test for application rates.
      - Continue spray treatments on roses.
- ### Edibles
- Plant warm-season vegetables and herbs.
  - Fertilize vegetables 6 weeks after planting and regularly thereafter.
  - Thin peaches to 4 to 6 inches for larger, high quality fruit.
  - Routinely spray orchards and other fruits for pests. Scout for pests often.
  - Divide and transplant mature herb plantings.

### TOP AWARDS RECEIVED FROM:

- ▶ North Carolina State Grange/Extension Foundation
- ▶ Garden Writers Association
- ▶ International Association of Business Communicators
- ▶ N.C. & National Associations of County Agricultural Agents
- ▶ Southern Extension Forest Resource Specialists
- ▶ Mecklenburg County Priority Awards

Successful Gardener™ newsletter is provided to you compliments of:



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:

**Successful Gardener™ Editor**  
Department of Communication Services  
Box 7603, NC State University  
Raleigh, NC 27695-7603

Editor and Team Leader: **Leah Chester-Davis**  
Extension Communication Specialist

Account Coordinator: **Rhonda Thrower**  
Department of Communication Services

Assistant Editor: **Karen Neill**  
Consumer Horticulture Agent, Guilford County

Compilations Editor: **Amy-Lynn Albertson**  
Consumer Horticulture Agent, Davidson County

Contributors:		
County	Name	Phone
Brunswick	David Barkley	(910)253-2610
Burke	Donna Teasley	(828)439-4460
Cabarrus	David Goforth	(704)920-3310
Catawba	Fred Miller	(828)465-8240
Cumberland	Emily Revels	(910)321-6860
Davidson	Amy-Lynn Albertson	(336)242-2091
Durham	Paul McKenzie	(919)560-0525
Forsyth	Toby Bost	(336)767-8213
	J. Stephen Greer	(336)767-8213
Gaston	Mark Blevins	(704)922-0301
Guilford	Karen Neill	(336)375-5000
Henderson	Diane Ashburn	(828)697-4000
Iredell	Donald Breedlove	(704)873-0557
Lincoln	Kevin Starr	(704)736-8452
Mecklenburg	Aaron Lancaster	(704)336-4008
Nash	Mike Wilder	(252)459-9810
Orange	Royce Hardin	(919)245-2050
Randolph	Mark Danielely	(336)318-6003
Rowan	Darrell Blackwelder	(704)633-0571
Surry	Terry Garwood	(336)401-8025
Union		(704)283-3741
Wake	Carl Matyac	(919)250-1100

All Agents of N.C. Cooperative Extension

**Ask for Extension's *Successful Gardener*™ newsletter at one of your local garden centers each month or order a subscription at [www.successfulgardener.org](http://www.successfulgardener.org)**

For a list of garden centers where you can find *Successful Gardener*™, please call (919)513-3112 or visit Cooperative Extension on the web at <http://www.successfulgardener.org>

**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. North Carolina State University and North Carolina A&T State University commit themselves to positive action to secure equal opportunity regardless of race, color, creed, national origin, religion, sex, age, or disability. In addition, the two Universities welcome all persons without regard to sexual orientation. North Carolina State University, North Carolina A&T State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture and local governments cooperating. Vol. 8, No. 1

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



Printed on recycled paper.

