



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

JC Raulston Arboretum Plant Focus

Kerria Brightens the Shade

Japanese kerria is a fine-textured, deciduous shrub with thin attractive stems that provide subtle ornamental interest in winter and yellow flowers in the spring. This shrub is also known as the "Easter Rose" as it often is in flower every year around Easter, and is also a member of the Rose family. It has an arching habit that becomes rounded with age. Kerria matures at a height of 5 feet and grows to 6 feet wide. There are two variants: one has pom-pom-type flowers and the other has single flowers. This is a shrub that not only grows and thrives in full shade, but also flowers. It is a great choice for a difficult shady spot that calls for a large shrub.

Kerria will tolerate a variety of soils, but prefers well-drained, slightly acidic soils. It is hardy in zones 4 to 9, and is heat and drought tolerant. To add to its desirability, it has few disease or pest problems. It is tolerant of heavy pruning, which helps rejuvenate older plants. In the spring, the foliage emerges as a bright medium green color that changes to dark green as the season progresses. In the fall the color turns chartreuse and persists through November. From April through May, kerria boasts bright yellow flowers.

This shrub is a good choice for a woodland garden and makes for great winter interest when planted against stone or a wall of red or white brick. Kerria is also excellent for naturalizing an area and preventing soil erosion. If there is any drawback to this plant, it is a tendency to spread moderately via underground suckers.

At the JC Raulston Arboretum in Raleigh you can see *Kerria japonica* 'Honshu' and 'Chiba Gold'. 'Honshu' has larger, 2-inch, single, sunny yellow flowers with petals that overlap and give a fuller effect. The shrub has the same arching habit as winter jasmine, but is slightly smaller, growing up to 5 feet tall but only 3 feet wide. *Kerria japonica* 'Chiba Gold' is a newly introduced gold-leaf cultivar that originated in Japan. It stands 3 to 6 feet tall and has a colonizing habit. *Amy-Lynn Albertson*



*Kerria japonica*  
Thomas G. Ranney ©

inside

2

Front-Yard Gardens Maximize Space



3

Enviro-Tip

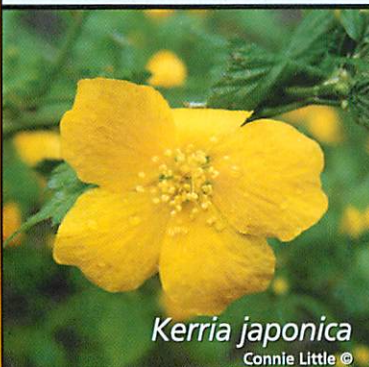


4

Garden Spot



This issue sponsored by



*Kerria japonica*  
Connie Little ©



*Kerria japonica 'Honshu'*  
Dennis J. Werner ©



*Kerria japonica 'Picta'*  
Robert E. Lyons ©





## Front-Yard Gardens Maximize Space

Neighbors used to gather on each other's front porches for neighborhood news, a rest stop while walking the dog or perhaps to enjoy a refreshing glass of tea. Today, many front porches are still surrounded by large green lawns but, for the last few decades, Americans have turned their lifestyles completely around, choosing the backyard over the front for friendly gatherings and personal relaxation.

Many landscapes suffer from this conversion. Backyards are only so big and can soon run out of room for all of the plants and purchases gardeners bring home while the front lawn goes unnoticed, unused or neglected.

Gardening in your front yard may be the cure for space limitations in a postage-stamp-size yard. Front-yard gardens can add to the experiences you enjoy inside and out as you expand your garden territory.

Grass has great benefits for the environment, recreation and aesthetics around a home, but consider the time, materials and equipment required to keep it looking its best. If well designed, gardens in the front yard offer many benefits and can require less maintenance, depending on the plants you choose. There are many plants to choose from that will provide interest to your landscape and remain attractive year-round with minimal maintenance.

Birds and wildlife will benefit from native plants that provide flowers, berries and nuts year-round. A cutting garden can be incorporated into the front yard, particularly for those who long to fill vases inside with homegrown flowers, but keep in mind that this type of garden can be high maintenance to keep it looking its best.

Tropical plants could make stepping out of the front door feel like an exotic vacation. Colorful herbs and vegetables can mingle with annuals planted along the front walk.

A welcoming entry to a home adds personality to the entire neighborhood and departs from the old standard of a lawn, shrubs against the house and a tree or two. Have fun expanding your living space into the front yard. Create a space to have a late Saturday breakfast, to use herbs for Sunday dinner, and to greet friends and relatives who stop by and will remember the home you've made outside your house. While most contemporary houses may not be conducive to a front-yard garden, small beds can be created to enhance the entrance garden.

Get started by mapping out areas of your front landscape you would like to change, such as thin turf, overgrown hedges and poor views from inside the house. Include the things you won't change this time: the driveway and utility service, sunny and shady areas, sidewalks and other features. You may need to call your utilities companies to determine underground pipes and cables.

Think about uses and themes for your front yard. Public areas include the entryway, front walk and places to gather with friends. Semi-private areas for reading a book or relaxing may need to be shielded by a hedge or nestled into a corner of the yard. Add a water feature or birdbath. There may be flowers, herbs, vegetables or wildlife plants scattered throughout the whole plan or in spaces designed just for these elements. You may still need some turf out front for a game of croquet or to clear the view to a beautiful tree. Consider leaving some existing plants to make the transition from lawn to garden a little easier.

Before installing any additional plants, get your soil tested. Contact your county Cooperative Extension Center for a free soil test kit and more details. A list of phone numbers is on the back page of this newsletter or visit [www.ces.ncsu.edu](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu). The soil report will provide recommendations on the type of fertilizer and amount of lime that will best balance the needs of your future plants with the nutrition in your soil.

Match plants for your landscape plan with the helpful lists in the "Lawn & Garden" section of [www.ces.ncsu.edu](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu), from annuals to wildlife-resistant plants and more. Native and well-adapted plants have defenses for pests and thrive in our climate, so they will require less maintenance overall. Take advantage of the many learning opportunities offered by Cooperative Extension, from this newsletter to *Extension's Successful Gardener* seminars to "In the Garden with Bryce Lane" and "Almanac Gardener" television shows.

Involve your friends and family, maybe even neighbors, in the planting process to share the fun of gardening. Then enjoy using this new portion of your landscape for more than lawn mower practice. Share some time, and maybe a handful of flowers or herbs from your new front-yard garden, with someone special. **Mark Blevins**



### Gardentalk

*"One of the most delightful things about a garden is the anticipation it provides."*

W.E. Johns





## Q&amp;A

## I want to garden but every year my plants struggle and do not do well. What am I doing wrong?

A few basics will alleviate your problem of struggling plants.

First, test your soil. It is still free in North Carolina and soil test kits are available at your county Cooperative Extension Center. Follow the recommendations. Tap into the wealth of knowledge that is at your fingertips. Visit [www.successfulgardener.org](http://www.successfulgardener.org) for the publication, "Be Healthy – Grow What You Eat." In addition, ask your Cooperative Extension agent for information on proven plants for North Carolina or visit [www.ncstate-plants.net](http://www.ncstate-plants.net). Select the newest varieties with tolerance to diseases and nematodes.

After planting, water the plants when needed. Fertilize every 4 to 6 weeks through the growing season. For perennial crops, stop feeding by the end of July.

Rotate the garden planting sites. Clean up the garden in the fall (remove plants and roots) and plant a cover crop. Use oats, wheat, clover or Austrian winter peas. Lime as needed and add fertilizer and mulch.

During the growing season make sure you look at plants at least twice a week. Daily is better. Do you see "signs" of bugs? Are the plant leaves discolored, holey or diseased? Before you buy that pest control chemical from the store, identify the problem. This is where Cooperative Extension agents shine. Call us on the phone. Bring a sample to the office. If we don't know, we will find out.

If deer, groundhogs, wild turkeys, rabbits and raccoons are a problem, consider an electric fence.

*Terry Garwood*

## Want to Be a Master Gardener?

If you've gained a considerable amount of gardening knowledge on your own, but have a keen sense to learn more, you are a prime candidate for Cooperative Extension's Master Gardener program.

Extension Master Gardeners provide volunteer leadership and service to their communities upon completion of an intensive course in horticulture, which is offered through county Cooperative Extension Centers.

In the 73 counties that currently offer the program, more than 3,000 volunteers share their knowledge with the public via myriad projects. For example, in Forsyth County, certified Extension Master Gardeners operate a gardening hotline, serve as curators in the Tanglewood Park Arboretum, host *Extension's Successful Gardener* seminars in the public libraries and develop educational exhibits.

Through this program, volunteers become more knowledgeable, which enhances their skills and empowers them to assist the public by answering questions and by helping solve problems related to gardening.

If you would like to become an Extension Master Gardener, contact your county Cooperative Extension Center or visit [www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/consumer/masgar/](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/consumer/masgar/).

*Toby Bost*

## ENVIRO-TIP

## Protecting Our Water Resources

Protecting our water resources means preventing the pollution of lakes, rivers, streams and groundwater that serve as a source of our drinking water. Protecting the creeks, rivers and lakes that are near us is something that all of us can be involved with. We can take steps to reduce pollution by not over-fertilizing our lawns and plants, by keeping litter and debris out of the drainage system and by not wasting water.

Runoff carries sediment, plant nutrients, oil, antifreeze, pesticides and other pollutants directly into surface waters. Slowing water runoff is an easy way to protect our water resources.

## Ways you can help protect water resources:

- Direct downspouts into the lawn and planting areas and away from paved surfaces.
- Use mulch or compost to reduce erosion and allow rain to soak in.

- Be conservative with pesticides. Follow sustainable gardening practices and keep your plants healthy.
- Fertilize only when necessary and use the correct amount.
- Plant strips of native plants near water sources such as ditches, streams or lakes to stabilize the soil and slow and filter the water runoff.
- Use soaker hoses or drip irrigation in your planting beds and gardens.
- Do not pour anything down the storm drains.
- Wash your car on the lawn and not on the driveway.
- Properly dispose of used motor oil.
- Properly dispose of all pet waste. Do not allow the waste to be washed into the drainage system.
- Water wisely. Plants do not waste water, people do.

*Emily Revels*



Robert E. Lyons ©





## Gardening in March

### Lawns

- Now is the time to apply preemergent herbicide on lawns to control crabgrass, goosegrass and foxtails.
- Lawns need 1- to 1 1/2-inches water per week. Water clay soils to a depth of 4 to 6 inches or just until water runs off. Water sandy soils 1/2 inch every three days.
- Do not fertilize cool-season lawns such as tall fescue after March 15.
- Fertilize warm-season grasses 3 weeks after green-up per soil test results. In the absence of a soil test, use a complete fertilizer with a ratio of 3-1-2 or 4-1-2 at a rate of 1/2 pound per 1,000 square feet.
- Leave grass clippings on the lawn. They provide 25 percent of a lawn's fertilizer needs.

### Ornamentals

- Landscape sanitation is important. Remove weeds, leaves and dropped flowers from beds. Place 2 to 3 inches of mulch on the beds.

This will inhibit weeds and improve the soil's ability to drain or retain water, depending on soil type.

- Prune out all dead, diseased and damaged wood from woody ornamentals. Corrective pruning can be done now, but prune no more than one-third of the plant's size. Prune spring-blooming shrubs after they bloom.

Overpruning a shrub can put too much stress on a plant.

- Begin scouting plants for insect pests. The Southern red mite is typically active at this time of year when redbud trees are blooming. For more on what to look for regarding mites, go to [www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/ent/notes](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/ent/notes).

### Edibles

- Plant cool-season vegetables such as broccoli, cabbage, kale, lettuce, spinach, onions, turnips, radishes and collards.

*Michelle Wallace*

### Extension's *Successful Gardener* Learning Centers

are one of the features of home and garden shows across the state this spring. Be sure to stop by and pick up researched-based gardening information to start your spring off right, and have your gardening questions answered by N.C. Cooperative Extension horticulture agents and Master Gardeners. Some of the shows will feature *Extension's Successful Gardener* Seminars and a container gardening contest.

**Southern Spring Home & Garden Show**  
Feb. 28 – March 4, Charlotte Merchandise Mart

**Southern Ideal Home Show, Greensboro**  
March 9-11, Greensboro Coliseum

**Carolina Home and Garden Show**  
March 23-25, Cumberland County Crown Center

**Southern Ideal Home Show, Raleigh**  
April 13-15, NC State Fairgrounds

Details at [www.successfulgardener.org](http://www.successfulgardener.org)

*Karen Neill*

### 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

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

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