



FROM THE GROUND UP FLORENCE COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS NEWSLETTER

December 2015

“Sowing The Seeds Of Love For Gardening”

<http://www.florencecountymastergardeners.org>

From the Potting Bench

This year has really flown by hasn't it? I'm so thankful for our extended fall season. I'm still planting bulbs and tucking some perennials into the garden for next year. There are seeds to be collected and kept until next year's plant sale at PDREC's Discovery Day. I hope you have also been collecting your seeds and marking the plants you can share.

Our Christmas Party will be held December 14 at 6:00 this year. We will be at the Lynches County Park community building. Spouses are included in the invitation. Please bring a side dish or dessert. We will provide the fried chicken. Our gift exchange this year is a RE-gift exchange. Your spouse is welcome to bring a RE-gift and join in the fun.

The Teddy Bear raffle winner will be drawn at the party. Tickets are \$1. This is for the big Teddy Bear. Betty Davis won the small bear at our November meeting.

2016 is shaping up to be a busy year for us. TJ Saverino will be our speaker at the January meeting. Shelby will teach us how to build a bluebird house. We'll have a tour and talk at Taylor Gardens. Throughout we'll be preparing for the Discovery Day at PDREC in May. Plans for additional volunteer opportunities are underway. We're looking at Adopting a Spot in Timrod Park and working with Keep Florence Beautiful. Two schools from Florence District One are participating in the School Gardening for SC Educators. The program hopes to pair a Master Gardener with a school educator to oversee a new school garden. Before you know it, it will be warm again.

Merry Christmas to all of you and may the New Year be full of growth with no weeds.

Christine

So what can be done in the garden in January and February?

Study and Learn – If you're an experienced gardener, you may already have a good idea about what grows well here in our climate, as well as what you've had success with in the past. You've probably experienced your own share of failures as well. But if you're new to gardening, don't worry, someone else has ALWAYS ALREADY tried, and probably failed, with just about every aspect of cultivation. That's the good news! The bad news is that it takes a bit of work studying and reading to learn what is a sure bet for your region, and how to best plant, transplant, cultivate and harvest what you choose.

Reputable seed companies usually have careful instructions on how to grow different seeds. Take the time to read how to do it right and you'll have a much higher rate of success. There are countless articles and blogs (like this one) on the internet now to help you in your quest for knowledge. Always keep in mind the region about which the author is writing, however, as climates can differ greatly.

Map your Garden – This doesn't have to be a huge project. You don't need to create professional level blueprints here, but you do need to have a general idea about the space where you are planning to plant. There are four primary necessities for any successful garden: Light, Water, Soil, and Space. You need to determine the range of all of these so you can choose plants that are best suited for that area.

Measure and draw your garden as close to scale as you can. Draw in any large fixtures, such as the garage, a large tree, a big rock, or anything else that could potentially cause shade during the day. Determine which way is East so you can mark the map and so you'll have a general understanding of the way the sun will move through the day. Determine your water source, and mark that on the map as well. Consider your soil, and what you will do to keep it healthy and productive. (A huge topic, best left for another article).

**FLORENCE COUNTY MASTER
GARDENER OFFICERS:**

President:

Christine Petrush 843-617-5147
christine.petrush@gmail.com

Vice President:

Ginger Bryngelson 815-751-2968
gbryngelson@gmail.com

Treasurer:

Shelby McCormick 843-621-3130
smccormick5@sc.rr.com

Secretary/Newsletter:

George Radcliffe 843-667-0232
gmrada@aol.com

Master Gardener Website:

George Radcliffe 843-667-0232
gmrada@aol.com

Master Gardener Coordinator

Anthony "Tony" Melton,
Florence County Extension Agent
amelton@clermson.edu

Volunteer Hours

You can now log your volunteer hours online at <http://www.clemson.edu/cemg/login.php> If you do not have Username and Password, contact Simon Carraway at swcarraway@gmail.com and he can assign you a username and password.

Membership Dues

Just a reminder, Master Gardener dues are due in January. Dues are \$10 and if you would like to pay ahead for time, you can contact Shelby McCormick at 843-621-3130 smccormick5@sc.rr.com or pay at the November or December meeting.

UPCOMING EVENTS

**Kershaw County Master Gardeners
Garden Seminar**

January 16, 2016
9:00AM to 3:00PM

[LINK](#)

**Master Gardeners of York County
11th Annual
Joy of Gardening Symposium**

February 27, 2016

This year's Joy of Gardening Symposium presents a roster of experts who can help you with the challenges of your garden.

[LINK](#)

**Greater Greenville Master Gardener Association of South
Carolina
Annual Symposium**

Featuring entertaining and informative speakers from near and far, the annual GGMG symposium is held in **early February**.

[LINK](#)

Southern Spring Home & Garden Show - Charlotte

February 26 - 28, 2016 and March 4 - 6, 2016

February 26-28

Friday: 10am-8pm

Saturday: 10am-7pm

Sunday: 10am-5pm

March 4 - March 6

Friday: 10am-8pm

Saturday: 10am-7pm

Sunday: 10am-5pm

The Southern Spring Home & Garden Show Garden celebrates 56 years of ushering in spring. Experience gardens filled with flowers, chic designer rooms and exhibits focusing on the best in landscaping, building, remodeling and decorating, all located under one roof. Stroll through 18 beautifully landscaped gardens alive with color and all the blooms and scents springtime has to offer.

[LINK](#)

January in the Garden

GENERAL

Have your soil tested for lawns and spring gardens.

Plan herb garden now; then order seeds as soon as possible.

Cut back browned perennials.

Plan garden layout.

Study seed catalogs; order now for spring and summer planting.

Prepare beds for spring planting; remember to add compost, manure or other organic matter.

Replenish mulch to protect roots and tender plants; mulch to make vacant beds appear tended.

Water gardens during periods of inadequate rainfall. This will reduce damage to plants during a cold snap.

Remove dead flowers from and around camellia bushes to prevent camellia petal blight.

Apply aluminum sulfate to hydrangeas to obtain blue flowers; treat with lime for pink flowers if this was not done in the fall.

Deep water plants before a hard freeze.

Force spring bulbs for early blooms indoors.

Mist houseplants to maintain humidity.

LAWNS

Mowing: Cut back ornamental grasses to 6-8 inches above the ground. Edge the lawn. Even when dormant, runners that stretch onto the sidewalk, driveway, and beds can be trimmed.

Special Care: Treat broad-leaf winter weeds with post-emergent herbicide.

VEGETABLES & FRUITS

Planting: Sow seeds indoors for spring gardens. Start seeds for tomatoes, eggplants, and peppers inside.

Plant garden peas and mustard mid-month. Plant asparagus crowns. Plant fruit and nut trees, as well as blueberries. Sow dill and chive seeds now through March. Set out transplants of broccoli, Brussels sprouts, and cabbage late in the month. Plant sugar snap seeds and other edible podded peas now.

Fertilizing: Fertilize established asparagus and strawberries. Mulch strawberries and order additional plants.

Pruning: Prune muscadine and other grapevines.

Special care: Spray fruit trees with dormant oil to control mites and scales. Do this on a day when the temperature will be at least 45 degrees for 24 hours.

TREES & SHRUBS

Planting: Plant / transplant ornamental trees and shrubs. Consider mature size. Choose varieties recommended for the Pee Dee area. While selecting a spot for a new shrub, remember that an area sunny now may be in the shade when deciduous trees are in leaf. Root hardwood cuttings, i.e., azaleas, camellias, hollies, forsythias, crape myrtles, flowering quince, old-fashion roses. Prepare beds for roses now for planting later, select location that is well drained and receives at least 6 hours of sun per day.

Pruning: Wait until spring to prune plants that are damaged by freezes. Extent of the damage can be better assessed at that time.

FLOWERS

Planting: Plant seeds of cool-season annuals (larkspur, sweet peas, poppies). Sow seeds of slower growing annuals (ageratum, petunias, begonias) indoors. Force bulbs indoors now. Plan changes and additions to your garden and then order seeds and plants.

Fertilizing: Continue feeding pansies every two weeks with liquid fertilizer and water regularly. Feed spring bulbs with 5-10-10 or bulb food when leaves appear.

Pruning: Deadhead pansies to encourage more growth.

Houseplants: The most common reason that houseplant leaves turn yellow or drop is too little light. Be careful to water correctly: most plants like to be slightly dry between waterings. Look for spider mites, scale, and mealybugs. Treat as indicated.

10 SIMPLE STEPS TO A BETTER GARDEN

The 10 basic tenets of the SMARTGARDEN™ program are principles that apply to all of us as responsible stewards of the earth. Listed beneath each tenet are several examples of specific practices. Depending on your region's climate and your individual garden site, some of the examples will apply to your gardening situation, others will not. You are probably already following some of these practices on a routine basis, but others may be new to you.

1. Work with nature whenever possible.

1. Avoid impulse buying--select plants that are well adapted to your site, including natives
2. Select plants that are resistant to pests and diseases common in your region
3. Avoid plants known to be invasive in the garden or in the wild
4. Compost yard and kitchen wastes and use the compost in your garden
5. Encourage natural predators of problematic pests
6. Rotate annual plants, especially vegetables, to reduce incidence of disease
7. Practice sanitation--dispose of plant parts that may harbor disease and/or insects

2. Assess your site thoroughly.

1. Test your soil for pH, nutrient content, and beneficial soil organisms
2. Test your soil drainage
3. Determine your USDA hardiness and AHS heat zones
4. Know which areas of your yard represent microclimates
5. Identify areas of your garden in terms of light exposure: sun/part sun/shade

3. Assess yourself and your lifestyle

1. Time available for gardening
2. What you want to grow
3. Physical benefits and limitations
4. Financial limitations
5. Willingness to try new ideas

4. When adapting natural conditions to create a garden for plants that may not be suitable for your site as it exists, consider optimum location and all modifications necessary for the garden prior to planting.

1. dust soil pH slightly, if necessary
2. Improve soil fertility and structure by regularly integrating organic matter
3. Site the garden according to available crusting

5. Learn specifics about your plants so that you can provide them with appropriate care now—and later

1. Plant at proper depth
2. Provide required nutrients and water
3. Prune appropriately and at the proper time
4. Provide support for plants that need it
5. Transplant or divide plants when necessary

6. Look at your plants regularly, make notes to help plan future gardening efforts and avoid repeating mistakes.

1. Keep track of plant names including cultivars
2. Be aware of planting, flowering, fruiting dates
3. Record dates of fertilization, incidences of pest problems, and pesticide applications
4. Make end-of-season notes about annual and vegetable varieties you want to grow again, as well as those you don't
5. Mark the location of perennials that are late to start growth in spring

7. Conserve water

1. Water early in the morning or use drip irrigation
2. Water deeply, not daily
3. Apply mulch to reduce evaporation and soil crusting
4. Collect water from downspouts for use in garden
5. Provide extra water to newly planted areas until established

8. Use all available resources

1. Consult authoritative periodicals and books (like the AHS SMARTGARDEN Regional Guides).
2. Research pertinent Web-sites
3. Talk to local gardening professionals at botanical gardens or garden centers
4. Share information with other gardeners through garden clubs or garden chat groups

9. Consider each gardening practice in terms of environmental impact

1. Monitor pests to determine when control is necessary
2. Use the least toxic products to control pests
3. Remove pests by hand or with hard sprays of water
4. Encourage natural predators and beneficial microorganisms
5. Avoid unnecessary use of power tools to reduce emissions and noise pollution

10. Above all, have fun!

1. The goal of the SMARTGARDEN™ program is to make gardening easier and more successful. If you find you are not having fun with your current garden, analyze why it is not fulfilling. It may be that you are making things hard on yourself by trying to create something complex when you have very little free time. Consider trying a new design or growing different kinds of plants. Maybe you find gardening too solitary an activity, in which case try joining a community garden or volunteer at a local botanical garden.

Copyright © 1998-2009 American Horticultural Society. All rights reserved.

Published with permission from the American Horticultural Society,