



FROM THE GROUND UP FLORENCE COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS NEWSLETTER

February 2016

“Sowing The Seeds Of Love For Gardening”

<http://www.florencecountymastergardeners.org>

From the Potting Bench,

Greetings and Warm Thoughts for February. These few warm, sunny days see me outside checking the gardens and looking for those first signs of spring. The daffodils, hyacinth and crocus are poking up among the leaves. The dogwood trees, blueberry bushes and Carolina Jessamine are ready to bloom. I can't wait to get started on my garden this year. The seed and flower catalogs stay on the kitchen table and are already well-thumbed.+

Was your yard affected by the flooding last fall? Whether it was standing water or flooding caused by a nearby creek or stream, pond or lake if your yard was under water, it is important to have your soil tested for this spring. Flooding may have washed away needed nutrients.

Our meeting this month will be Monday, February 15, at 6:30 p.m. We will be meeting at the Clemson Extension Office at the corner of Irby and Third Loop Roads. Shelby McCormick will be presenting this month's program "How to Build a Bluebird House". We will combine our group with the new Master Gardeners class for this program. Please wear your name tags to the meeting and introduce yourself to one of this year's students if you have the opportunity. I look forward to seeing you at our next meeting.

Christine

Reminder:

2016 Master Gardener dues are due. Dues are \$10 a year and you can pay them at the next meeting.

How does my garden grow?

1 part soil

2 parts water

3 parts wishful thinking

Spring Gardening Tips

Pruning early-blooming shrubs

Shrubs that bloom early in the year, such as forsythia, form their flower buds the previous year. In the rush of the spring season, there are always so many chores to do it's easy to forget that these early flowering shrubs need pruning immediately after bloom. If you wait too long before getting around to it, you'll cut off next year's flower buds. And if you don't prune at all, these strong growers will quickly turn into giant tangles.

As soon as the last flowers fade, use a pruning saw to cut off one-fourth to one-third of the biggest, oldest stems at ground level. Use pruning shears to shorten all of the stems to two or three feet from the ground. If you wish to greatly limit the shrub's size, you can cut the branches as far back as six inches from the ground. By the end of the growing season, new branches will have formed. These will arch gracefully from the center and will be covered with new flower buds for next year's spring show.

A little TLC for your perennials

- Remove winter mulch from around the crowns of perennials.
- Cut back any parts of the plant that were left up for winter interest, such as flower stalks and seed heads.
- For evergreen perennials, remove any dead leaves.
- When new growth is about three to four inches tall, dividing and transplanting may be done. For spring-flowering plants, wait till they are finished blooming.
- Begin placing stakes to support the growth of tall or fragile perennials.

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**You Might Be A Master
Gardener If....**

...You make compost in the
crisper drawer of the
refrigerator.

...You actually had your soil
tested.

...Your vacation is based on
which gardens and nurseries to
visit.

...You carry pruners, baggies,
bottled water and paper towels
in your vehicle, just in case the
opportunity for a "cutting"
arises.

...You look at your child's
sandbox and see a raised bed.

...You keep a shovel in the
trunk of your car at all
times...Just in case...

Courtesy of iVillage Garden
Web
Master Gardeners Forum

UPCOMING EVENTS

**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 those challenges. They will provide you with information and resources drawing from their expertise in horticulture and environmental research. You will be able to take this information with you and use it to revitalize your inner gardener and get started with your gardening plans for 2016.

<http://symposium.yorkmkg.org/>

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

Saturday, February 13, 2016

8:00 am – 3:45 pm

Featuring entertaining and informative speakers from near and far. The symposium provides attendees an inspiring and engaging day and an introduction to new ideas in the ever-changing world of horticulture.

[Link](#)

Moore Farms Botanical Garden

Pruning Made Easy

Thursday, March 3, 2016

9:30 am – 2:00 pm

It's time to get pruning! Winter is the best time to alter your plants structure so come learn how to do it the right way. Erik Healy, MFBG's Horticulture Manager, will be leading this class covering what to prune, how to prune, when to prune, what tools to use. This class will be very hands on, so please bring gloves and pruners if possible.

[Link](#)

W. Gordon Belser Arboretum

Open House

February 21 Columbia, S.C.

An open house for the general public occurs on the third Sunday of every month from 1-4 p.m. The trail system will be available for walking, and there will be a special event from 2-3 p.m., such as a guided trail walk to point out highlights. Late February brings a great outburst of spring flowers, including camellias, sasanquas, daffodils and jonquils, crocus, Carolina jasmine, Okame cherry, and many others

March In The Garden

GENERAL

Gather and destroy fallen leaves and dead blossoms of camellias --- Do not compost.

Be prepared to cover tender plants if a freeze is forecasted.

Allow foliage of spring bulbs to die naturally to replenish nutrients in the bulbs.

Check for aphids on new growth. Aphids can be controlled with an insecticidal soap spray, but some plants may be sensitive to this treatment. Treat one plant first and if the soap spray damages the plant, try ridding the aphids by spraying with plain water.

Apply pre-emergent herbicide.

De-thatch lawns.

Check for insects, diseases and rodents in lawns. Treat appropriately.

Fertilize houseplants, prune dead foliage, and repot plants that have become root bound.

LAWNS

Fertilizing: Do not fertilize before April 20. Lawns should be fully greened up before fertilizer is applied. A frost could kill tender new growth as well as damage established lawns.

Special Care: The best time to apply pre-emergent herbicide is prior to mid-March.

Check for insects, disease, and rodents, and treat as needed.

VEGETABLES & FRUITS

Planting: Plant figs during this month. Sow seed for spinach, turnips, Swiss chard, carrots, and edible-pod peas. Set out transplants of broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, and brussel sprouts. Before the **15th**, finish planting Irish potatoes, onion sets, and collards. Start planting sweet corn late in March, in 2 week intervals to ensure a continual harvest. Perennial herbs, such as thyme, oregano, lemon balm, sage and chives, will be available soon through local garden centers. It is best to wait until after the threat of frost has passed before planting. Sow caraway seeds now.

Fertilizing: Supply brambles and blueberry bushes with a cup of 10-10-10 per plant before bloom. Fertilize new strawberries now and keep well watered.

Special care: Check the underside of leaves for insects. Begin spray program for fruit trees at time of bud swell and petal fall, continue at 1-2 week intervals. Do not spray with an insecticide when blooming, as this may kill bees.

TREES & SHRUBS

Planting: Plant container-grown and balled and burlapped trees now.

Fertilizing: Fertilize camellias after flowering and again in six weeks. Fertilize trees and shrubs as growth starts. Feed gardenias with a slow-release fertilizer.

Pruning: Spring-flowering trees and shrubs should be pruned after they have bloomed. Trim overgrown and uneven hedges before new growth appears. Trim gardenias that have turned brown after severely cold weather.

FLOWERS

Planting: Rework soil in perennial beds by applying organic matter. Divide and transplant summer and fall flowering perennials. Plant gladiolus corms at two week intervals to extend the flowering season. Plant annuals, such as snapdragons, dianthus, sweet william, sweet alyssum, calendulas, and English daisies. You can directly sow larkspur, baby blue-eyes, forget-me-nots, and Johnny jump-ups. Set out perennials now.

Fertilizing: Use 10-10-10 with minor trace elements to fertilize daylilies when new growth appears. Fertilize established roses with 1cup 5-10-5 per plant as new growth starts.

Special Care: Mulch flower beds and borders. Use beer or bait to control slugs. Remove old mulch around roses to control diseases. Watch for aphids and black spot on roses and begin a regular spray program. Plan to rotate annuals in flower beds to prevent decline in vigor caused by soil disease, nematodes, and other soil-borne organisms.

Wide Row Gardening

If space is becoming a problem in your garden or if you are just trying to squeeze a higher yield from the same space this year in response to economic conditions, then wide row gardening may be for you.

The concept is very simple, instead of planting a single row of vegetables in your garden, plant 2 or 3 or 4 side by side close together. The back of the seed packet will tell you how close you can plant. The only restriction to the number of rows you can plant together is your ability to reach the center for weeding, watering or harvesting. Most people consider a 2 to 3 foot row to be the optimum. If you find that you are having to step on your rows to get to plants for weeding or harvesting, you made the row too wide. Wide row gardening is ideal for small raised beds.

This example from www.mychicagogarden.com gives you an idea of how wide row compares to single row gardening. Take a traditional 1 foot by 4 foot garden bed with a single row of beets down the middle, and a 2 foot by 2 foot wide row garden with a checkerboard style of planting. The traditional single row garden will have 12 plants compared to 48 for the wide row garden. It's a matter of using the space more efficiently.

Advantages of Wide Row Gardening

Increases Yield:

More square feet of space in your garden will be used to grow plants. There may be a slight decrease in production per seed, but the increased production per square foot more than makes up the difference.

Saves Time:

Because ground will be shaded by the wide row, less time will be spent watering and weeding.

Saves Mulching:

You will only need to mulch between rows. The shade provided by the plants eliminates the need for mulching in the rows.

Makes Harvest Easier:

You will be able to pick a lot more from a single location.

Delays Bolting: Your cool weather crops such as lettuce and spinach will not go to seed as quickly in a wide row.

Reduced Nematode Damage:

The soil temperature will remain more constant, discouraging nematodes.

Makes Companion Planting Easier

You can spread more than one type of seed in a widerow. When you sow root crops such as beets, carrots, and radishes with other plants, you cultivate and aerate the remaining plants as you pull up the roots.

Keeps Plants Cleaner: In a heavy rain, mud will not splash up on your produce. This reduces damage and keeps the plants healthier.

Creating wide rows

Mark off rows that are 24 to 36 inches wide with string. If you are planting small seeds, broadcast them as you would for a lawn. When the plants germinate, thin aggressively. It's hard to throw away the healthy little seedlings, but keep in mind that plants that are crowded will be small and sickly. Thin repeatedly as your plants grow. When they reach an edible size, thin out the largest plants and allow the smaller ones to continue to grow. Larger seeds such as beans and squash can be carefully spaced at planting time, eliminating the need for thinning.

Do not forget to take the same care creating the path between rows as you do creating the rows. You will need enough space to work comfortably. If you use a wheel barrel or garden cart, its' width is a good starting point, just add a couple of inches for good measure. If you are growing a leafy crop that will spill over into the path consider adding an extra inch. The key here is you never want to walk on your rows. A path is for walking, a row is for growing.

Wide row planting is not a new concept, it is tried and true. You may even remember this was how your grandfather planted his crops. If space and yield are your concerns, take a hard look at wide row gardening.