



# Home Gardening Newsletter

May - June  
2017



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## Upcoming Horticulture Events

### Organic Pest Management In Your Garden

The N.C. Cooperative Extension Service is holding an in-depth Organic Pest Management Seminar for gardeners who desire to learn more on how to control (organically) insects, diseases and weeds that plague their vegetables. Seminars will be held at the following dates and locations:

- May 8<sup>th</sup>** from 10:00 - 12:00 a.m. room 114 at the Swain Extension Center on 60 Almond School Rd. Bryson City, N.C.
- May 11<sup>th</sup>** from 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. room 234 at the Jackson Extension Center on 538 Scotts Creek Rd. Sylva, N.C.

This seminar (free) will cover a whorl wind of topics such as companion plants, farm-scaping, soil amendments, organically approved sprays, a plethora of tips and more. Participants will receive plenty of handouts, ask questions and enjoy a great presentation. You won't want to miss it! To register for this class or for more information or directions contact Christy Breden Kamp at your local N.C. Cooperative Extension Center at phone # 586-4009 or 488-3848 or e-mail [clbreden@ncsu.edu](mailto:clbreden@ncsu.edu)





## ORGANIC Pest Management Seminar

**May 2, 2017**  
Cashiers Library  
10:15 am - 12:00 pm

**May 8, 2017**  
Swain Extension Center  
10:00 am - 12:00 pm

**May 11, 2017**  
Jackson Extension Center  
6:00 pm - 8:00 pm

**Attention: GARDENERS**

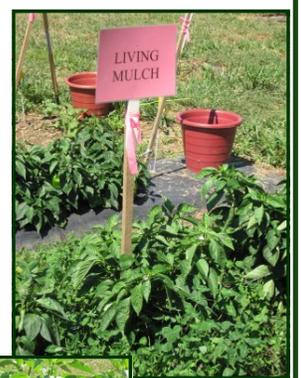
*Do you want to learn how to organically control insects, diseases and weeds that plague your vegetables?*

Then you don't want to miss this high impact seminar!

- Topics include companion plants, farmscaping, soil amendments, organically approved sprays and more
- Great photo presentation
- Question and answer session
- Plenty of handouts
- Plus . . . it's FREE!

To Register  
Call 586-4009 or 488-3848  
[christine\\_breden@ncsu.edu](mailto:christine_breden@ncsu.edu) • Horticulture Agent





# Dead Leaves on Native Rhododendrons

Recently, a few homeowners and landscapers in the higher elevations are seeing large patches of rhododendrons and mountain laurel with brown leaves. When cutting into the stems and branches one can see either green tissue which means the wood is still living or brown tissue indicating death. You may be wondering what caused these symptoms and can these plants be saved?

Last summer we experienced very little rainfall, then the wildfires... and by November we reached the drought classification D4 equating to exceptional drought. As we breathed a sigh of relief into the new year, colder temperatures hit us in January. Homeowners with property in the higher elevations with shallow and or rocky soils, and in areas prone to high or gusty winds may observe brown patches of their native rhododendrons and mountain laurel. The combination of rocky or shallow soils, low soil moisture, freezing soils without a snow cover, cold temperatures and gusty winds all helped to create the "environment" for leaf desiccation and wood damage.



## What to do

The prospect looks good in saving your plants and one can capitalize on this opportunity to reinvigorate your patch with various pruning approaches! One approach is to leave your patch alone and let the plants take care of themselves. This equates to waiting for new growth. Dead leaves will ultimately fall off and eventually you will see dead wood without new growth. Make cuts above growth zone to prune out dead wood.

Another pruning option is to wait until after April 15<sup>th</sup> or so as we may experience a few more cold snaps. At this time frame prune back no more than 1/3 of the plant. The roots should be able to handle this and come out just fine. A third possibility is to wait until Father's Day after all of the native rhododendrons and mountain laurel have leafed out. At this time, prune out 1/3 of the plant or more if you observe dead tissue. Of course, with any evergreen types you can prune the daylight out of these and they'll come back just fine.

So far, brown patches of native rhododendrons and azaleas have been observed at higher elevations in Jackson, Buncombe, Transylvania and Henderson counties. I suspect as folks get out more to the hiking trails, additional sightings will be noticed and quite possibly in the lower elevations too if a rhododendron patch lies in a cold pocket.



As a final note, after pruning is complete watch your patch for new growth. You may consider fertilizing individual plants after they leaf out with  $\frac{1}{2}$  ounce of nitrogen e.g., 5 oz. of 10-10-10 to help promote growth.

# May Horticulture Tips



## Lawns

- Do not fertilize cool-season lawns between April-August unless using a slow releasing fertilizer at 1/4 lb of N per 1000 sq ft..
- Mow fescue and bluegrass lawns 3 inches high.
- Be sure newly spring seeded lawns get 1 inch of water per week.

## Vegetables

- Transplant warm season vegetable plants (tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, squash, etc.) after danger of frost is past. Drive stakes next to tomato plants at planting time to avoid injuring roots later.
- After mid-May (after soil has warmed to 65 degrees), plant seeds for beans, lima beans, corn, cucumbers, kale, melons, okra, southern peas, pumpkin and squash. Keep seedbeds moist as seedlings emerge.
- Mound soil around potato plants to encourage tuber formation.
- Use a 2-inch thick mulch of straw to reduce weeds and retain soil moisture in vegetable beds.
- Fertilize vegetables 6 to 8 weeks after germination. Consider fish or fish-and-seaweed emulsion for a fast acting, well balanced organic fertilizer.
- Thin seedlings of early planting when they have 1-2 true leaves.
- Watch for worms on cabbage family vegetables and greens. Spray with *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) if needed. Watch for flea beetles on eggplant and tomato, cucumber beetles on cucumbers. Spray only if needed.
- Harvest asparagus. Watch for beetles on young asparagus shoots. Apply rotenone-pyrethrin as needed.
- Be prepared to cover early plantings with row cover fabric if a late frost threatens.



## Fruits

- Control weeds in strawberry beds and around fruit trees. Fertilize grapevines, blackberries and blueberries if not done earlier.
- Continue with fruit tree spray programs through August. Be sure to follow label instruction for pre-harvest interval. Weekly fungicide sprays will be needed to prevent brown rot on peaches and black rot on grapes.
- Thin apples, pears and peaches to about 6 inches apart when the fruit is the size of a nickel.
- Harvest strawberries.

## Trees Shrubs & Flowers

- Plant trees, shrubs and ground covers.
- Fertilize ornamentals as needed.
- Prune flowering shrubs after they bloom.
- Prune hedges
- Pests to watch for: azalea leaf gall, bagworms, boxwood leafminers, scale, spider mites & aphids
- Plant summer-flowering bulbs: gladiolus, dahlia, canna, caladium.
- Plant perennials and annuals (wait until after last frost date to plant tender annuals).
- Begin pinching chrysanthemums and continue through early July.
- Do not cut back spring bulb foliage until it turns yellow and brown.
- Control weeds by hand pulling or carefully choose pre and or post emergent herbicides.
- Mulch flower beds with pine needles or pine bark. Remove weeds before applying mulch.



## June Vegetable Gardening Tips

- Plant beans, lima beans, beets, carrots, Swiss chard, corn, cucumbers, okra, southern peas, pumpkins, and turnips.
- Side-dress vegetables 6 weeks after planting.
- Assure that vegetables get a least one inch of water per weeks. Do not wet foliage late in the day. Consider drip irrigation.
- While squash plants are still small, apply *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) to stems weekly to prevent squash vine borers. Scout for insects. Hand pick, or if necessary to save the crop, use the least environmentally harmful insecticides.
- Spray tomatoes weekly with fungicide to prevent early blight and late blight diseases.
- Dig new potatoes when tops begin to die down.
- Plant pumpkins for Halloween.

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Sincerely,  
Christy Bredenkamp, Extension Agent  
Agriculture-Horticulture



**NC** COOPERATIVE  
EXTENSION

N.C. A&T

NC STATE

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