



Home Gardening Newsletter

February-March
2018



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Upcoming Horticulture Events

Strawberry Blackberry & Raspberry Seminars

The following Strawberry-Blackberry & Raspberry Seminars will be held in Jackson and repeated in Swain County.

- **Tuesday February 6th** at the Cashiers Library on 249 Frank Allen Rd Cashiers, N.C. 10:15-12:00 p.m.
- **Wednesday February 7th** at the Swain Extension Center on 60 Almond School Rd. Bryson City, N.C. in room 114 from 10:00-12:00 p.m.
- **Thursday February 22nd** at the Jackson Extension Center on 538 Scotts Creek Rd. Sylva, N.C. 2nd floor in room 234 from 6:00-8:00 p.m.



Blueberry & Grape Seminars

The following Blueberry & Grape seminars will be held in Jackson and repeated in Swain County.

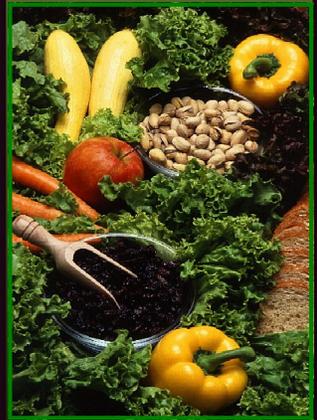
- **Tuesday March 6th** at the Cashiers Library on 249 Frank Allen Rd Cashiers, N.C. from 10:15 – 12:00 p.m.
- **Thursday March 8th** at the Jackson Extension Center on 538 Scotts Creek Rd. Sylva, N.C. 2nd floor in room 234 from 10:00-12:00 p.m.
- **Thursday March 15th** at the Swain Extension Center on 60 Almond School Rd. Bryson City, N.C. in room 114 from 6:00-8:00 p.m.



Fruit Tree Seminars

The following fruit tree workshops will be held in Swain and repeated in Jackson County.

- **Thursday March 22nd** at the Swain Extension Center on 60 Almond School Rd. Bryson City, N.C. from 6:00-8:00 p.m.
- **Tuesday March 27th** at the Jackson Extension Center on 538 Scotts Creek Rd. Sylva, N.C. from 6:00-8:00 p.m.
- **Tuesday April 3rd** at the Cashiers Library on 249 Frank Allen Rd. Cashiers, NC from 10:15-12:00 p.m.



For more information or to register for any of the above seminars contact Christy Bredenkamp at 828 488 3848 or 828 586 4009 or via e-mail at clbreden@ncsu.edu

Thinking Outside the Box - Small Gardening Alternatives

Whether we experience a mild or frigid winter, it's the time of year when many gardeners get "twitchy" to do something with their gardens! But for those who have no space or limited space gardening in "traditional rows" is not an option! In this article, I want to encourage readers with sparse soil options to consider gardening with some of the following "alternative" small gardening practices.

Container gardening is a popular small gardening "alternative" and works wonderfully for folks in apartments or if you have a porch or patio and want to have your vegetables as close to the house as possible. Almost any kind of container is fair game when growing vegetables, as long as there are drainage holes in the bottom. Many folks use traditional containers such as a window box or a decorative pot made of clay or plastic. Over the years, I've seen watering cans, bathtubs, wheelbarrows, children's wagons and other such items repurposed into container gardens that can be quaint and quite imaginative! Always remember to drill holes in the bottom to ensure proper drainage and avoid potential plant root rot from inside.

When choosing the type of soil for your containers, consider using a potting mix rather than top soil. Be prepared to monitor your plants closely and water more frequently as quite often the soil dries out quicker in containers than soil in the ground. Eventually you will water everyday once the roots have grown throughout the container and the temperatures are consistently warmer.

Another interesting method many gardeners have inquired about is straw bale gardening. People wonder how you could possibly grow anything in a straw bale, but the process is pretty straight forward. First off, you'll need bales that have begun to decompose in the center, so use either year-old bales, or condition the bales prior to planting by watering and adding a heavy nitrogen fertilizer. It takes about two weeks to properly condition the bales and then you'll be ready to plant. If starting seeds, you'll need to add a few trowels of compost to the center of the bale before sowing. Not all plants are ideal for straw bale gardening, but strawberries, tomatoes, peppers, squash, pumpkins, cucumbers, watermelon, and zucchini work quite well. Hay bales can also be used for the same purpose, but be aware that hay bales will generate a lot of weeds, whereas straw bales are generally less so. Straw bales require more water and fertilizer than traditional gardens, but are a good "alternative" if you have soil with poor fertility, disease and or limited space.



Another practice that has been increasing in popularity is square foot gardening. Square foot gardening is a system developed by gardener and author Mel Bartholemew, and is described at length in his books *Square Foot Gardening* and *All New Square Foot Gardening*.

Square foot gardening is a method where vegetables are grown in one-foot by one-foot squares within a raised bed. Gardeners arrange their beds in multiple ways, from a single square to as many as sixteen squares arranged four by four. Within each square, you can grow desired vegetables with the spacing and plant density in each square varying depending on the mature size of the vegetable within that square. Large plants, like tomatoes, peppers and broccoli would have just a single plant per square, allowing room for each plant to grow to full size. Smaller plants like beets can be planted up to 16 plants per square, while plants such as carrots can have 32 per square. As you can see, the concept behind square foot gardening is to maximize available space, as opposed to "open" spaces between the rows in traditional row gardens.

Always remember to be smart and creative when picking which vegetables to grow! Don't be afraid to try something new! Think vertical as a means to expand your garden as in the case of stringing up cucumbers. Consider growing both cool and warm season vegetables, utilize succession planting and tap into the benefits of low tunnels.

February Horticulture Tips



Lawns

- Fertilize cool season lawns with a slow-release fertilizer at a rate of $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 lb. of nitrogen per 1000 sq. ft.
- If broadleaf weeds are present, pull them while they are small or spot treat with a broadleaf herbicide.



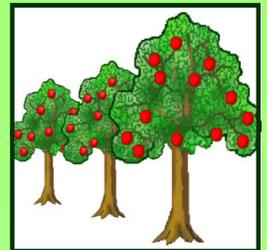
Vegetables

- Break up soil in garden beds when soil is dry enough.
- Turn under cover crop when soil is not too wet.
- Plant asparagus crowns, radishes and potatoes.
- Start transplants for cool season plants such as broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, and kale indoors early in the month.
- Onion seeds for transplants can be sown indoors early this month.
- Sow spinach seed in well-drained soil that was turned over in autumn. Cover lightly with straw.
- Late in the month, when soil is dry enough to work, begin sowing shelling and snap peas, snow peas, onions, radishes, and spinach.



Fruits

- Plant fruit trees and blueberry, blackberry, and grape plants now through April.
- Prune grape vines.
- Spray fruit trees with dormant oil when temperature is above 45 degrees F. and will remain above freezing for 24 hours. This will help eliminate some insects by suffocating over-wintering eggs and larvae.
- Spray peach and nectarine trees with a fungicide to prevent leaf curl.
- Order fruit plants from the 4-H club. Order forms are available from the Extension Office.



Trees Shrubs & Flowers

- Plant trees and shrubs when ground is not frozen.
- Cut back overgrown shrubs. Prune evergreen shrubs lightly. Prune summer-flowering shrubs to encourage new blooms. Prune shade trees if necessary.
- Spray woody ornamentals with dormant oil.
- Fertilize large shade trees with 3 pounds of 10-10-10 per inch of trunk diameter.
- Watch for signs of frost heaving; firm the soil around heaved plants.
- Fertilize spring-flowering bulbs as soon as the leaves begin to appear if bulbs were not fertilized in fall. Use 10-10-10, 1 teaspoon per bulb or 4 cups per 200 square feet.
- Trim back ornamental grasses, liriope and mondo grass.
- Order seeds and plants.
- Prune roses before they leaf out.



Upcoming Bee Events

- **New Jackson Bee Club** - 1st meeting will be held on Tuesday February 20th, 7:00 p.m. at the Jackson Extension Center at 538 Scotts Creek Rd. Sylva N.C. All those interested in Beekeeping are most welcome!
- **Beginner Bee School** hosted by the Smoky Mountain Beekeepers Association will be held on Saturday March 17th from 9:00-4:00 p.m. at the Swain Extension Center on 60 Almond School Rd.(SCC Bldg.) Pre-registration is \$25 and \$30 at the door. For more information contact Jon Waldroup at 828 736 1340 or e-mail tribalmedic129@gmail.com or go to website smokymtnbeekeepr.com



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Sincerely,
Christy Bredenkamp, Extension Agent
Agriculture-Horticulture



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EXTENSION

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