

Horticulture Hints



Surry County Center

April—June 2017

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Surry County Farmer's Markets are Opening Soon



There are three Farmer's Markets in Surry County and all three of them open in April. Vendors that sell at these markets are the real farmer or artisan that is providing the good at their booth. This season there will be fresh, local produce, fruit, honey, cut flowers, vegetable transplants, herbs, plants, eggs, meats, baked goods, and various crafts. Come out and meet who provides food for your table. The market's schedules are:

Elkin Farmer's Market: Every Saturday beginning April 15th from 9 am until 12 noon
Town Hall Parking Lot, 2226 North Bridge Street, Elkin

Mount Airy Farmer's Market: Every Tuesday beginning April 18th from 9 am until 12 noon
Mill Creek General Store, 541 West Pine Street, Mount Airy

Dobson Farmer's Market: Every Thursday beginning April 20th from 3 pm until 6 pm
Dobson Square Park, 302 West Folger Street, Dobson

Vendor applications will be accepted until May 27. Applications may be found at surry.ces.ncsu.edu or you may call the Extension Center at 336-401-8025.

Upcoming Horticulture Workshops



The Extension Master Gardener Volunteers have a few more programs for homeowners that will be offered through May. If you are interested in knowing how to garden and do not have a lot of space or you are not physically able to tend to a large vegetable garden, you may want to know more about raised bed gardening. Learn tips on reducing your garden work load while increasing your harvest. Or maybe you are interested in herbs or organic gardening and composting. These are other great programs offered by Master Gardeners. Look at the Calendar of Events for a detailed listing of programs!

Produce Scales

Any farmer's market vendor selling items by weight are required by law to have certified scales before selling products. The North Carolina Department of Agriculture provides this service free of charge. Scales must be a category III scale and have "CC" or "NTEC" certification. Call 336-401-8025 for further details.



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Help the Bees

This winter, local Surry County beekeepers have reported up to 80% colony loss. Bees are vital to our ecosystems. 80% of flowering plants require pollination and they are dependent on the honey bee. Think about it, one in every three bites we eat can be contributed to honey bees. A world without pollinators would be devastating for food production.

Many times it is not known why the bee populations are in decline. Research shows many factors may contribute: climate change, loss of habitat, pests, disease, and the use of insecticides. We must focus on making responsible environmental decisions. Spray insecticides sparingly and spray only when bees are not foraging. The best times are early morning and at dusk. Avoid using insect dusts. These products cling to the hairs on the honeybees and are carried back into the hive where numerous bees are affected and may die. Plant “bee friendly” plants. Plant in all seasons to provide a food source for the honeybee. An example would be to plant buckwheat in late summer or early fall.

Another option may be to plant wildflowers. There is some help available to you. Cheerios will partner with you to help plant wildflowers to help increase the bee population. Cheerios pledges to give away 100 million seeds to help boost global bee populations. They will send wildflower seeds to you in four to six weeks. People can visit the website: <http://www.cheerios.com/> to learn more about the issue and to order your own free wildflower seed packets. Join forces to help the bees!

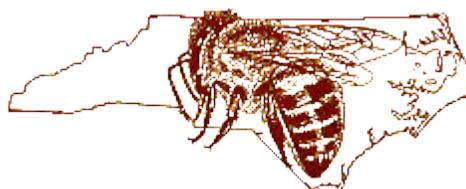


100 Year Celebration!

For ten or more years prior to 1917 there had been a desire to form a state beekeeping organization. However, since there was no official employed in beekeeping work in the state and no beekeeping public projects it was difficult to begin the organizational work. In 1916, an agreement was reached between the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the NC State Extension Service to employ a beekeeping specialist for the state. This led to a renewed interest in forming a beekeeping organization. Beekeepers came together and in 1917 the NC State Beekeepers Association was formed.

A 100 year celebration is planned at the 2017 NCSBA Summer Meeting scheduled for July 13-15 in Winston-Salem. The event will be held at the Embassy Suites Convention Center. There will be numerous workshops and trainings throughout the three days. Registration is \$50 for association members and \$65 for non-members. Families receive a discount.

More information and registration may be found at:
<https://www.ncbeekeepers.org/>



Disclaimer

Recommendations for the use of agricultural chemicals are included in this publication as a convenience to the reader. The use of brand names and any mention or listing of commercial products or services in this publication does not imply endorsement by North Carolina Cooperative Extension nor discrimination against similar products or services not mentioned. Individuals who use agricultural chemicals are responsible for ensuring that the intended use complies with current regulations and conforms to the product label. Be sure to obtain current information about usage regulations and examine a current product label before applying any chemical. For assistance, contact your county Cooperative Extension agent.

Backyard Tree Research

NC State is conducting a “backyard tree branding” research program where they are looking at the tree growth in response to global climate change. Urban environments are stressful places for trees to live, which can degrade their health. The urban heat island effect, water stress, and greater susceptibility to pests may all play a role. As the climate warms, we may see reduced growth rates of trees and reduced carbon sequestration (reduction). On the other hand, a longer growing season may benefit trees and increase carbon capture. Trees provide many services to our ecosystems: filter air and water, regulate local and global climates, provide habitat for many species, and reduce carbon dioxide in the air.

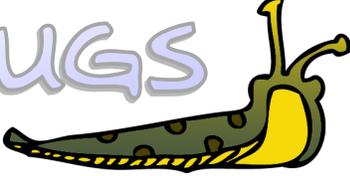


This study will help us to understand how local climate and urbanization affect tree growth and carbon reduction. Most scientific studies examine the effects of warming on young trees, but adult trees are important for carbon sequestration. NC State is asking citizens to help. They are starting a citizen science program that democratizes the study of tree growth in response to global change. Participants will not only advance scientific discoveries, but will also have the opportunity to advance their own scientific understanding of trees and global change.

They are looking for people to measure the growth of red maple (*Acer rubrum*) trees in their yards. Large-scale data collection on tree growth is necessary to understand effects of warming and they need help. Participants will be provided with instructions and a plastic dendrometer band to measure the growth of the red maple. Participants will report yearly tree growth data and some environmental data. And, they will receive updates of the project’s progress.



Slugs



By: Eli Snyder, Extension Agent
Consumer and Commercial Horticulture,
Caldwell County

Make your garden less inviting to slugs. Five slug species occur in North Carolina. Like snails, slugs are mollusks, not insects, meaning they are more closely related to clams than they are to beetles or caterpillars. Slugs prefer feeding on tender young foliage, and can wreak havoc on seedlings and our prized garden treats, such as strawberries. Slugs create irregular holes from feeding and leave behind a silver trail of slime. Slugs thrive in cool, dark, and humid environments—such as underneath heavy mulch and other residues in the garden. Fortunately, important slug predators like ground beetles (*Carabidae*) also prefer these habitats. Slugs are most active at night in spring and fall. Monitor for slugs by looking under pots or wood in the garden, or place a flat 6-inch by 6-inch cardboard “trap” on the soil surface. Check under these locations in the early morning, and remove slugs. Make your garden less inviting to slugs by watering in the morning and by keeping your seedlings weed-free. Iron phosphate and other baits can be used for slug control, but be cautious about baits around pets. Always read the label for repellents and pesticides to ensure the product is labeled for slug control and to ensure safe use.

Sweet Corn



It is almost time to plant the ole garden. Personally, I cannot wait for that first bite of sweet, freshly cooked corn-on-the-cob and taste the sweetness of summer. There is nothing like it! As I dream of that first bite, I begin to think about the corn plant itself.

Corn has an interesting past. Although native to the New World, the exact origins of corn are uncertain. Most likely, corn

originated in the Central America and Mexico region. The original wild form has long been extinct, in fact, it barely resembled modern corn. Natural crosses with other grasses yielded the ancestral parents of modern corn.

Native Americans have been growing corn for thousands of years and have helped to perpetuate the species. Actually, corn does not grow in the wild and is wholly dependent on man for cultivation.

Sweet corn is a newer phenomenon, although it is hard to date its rise. Sweet corn was “born” when a mutation occurred in field corn. This mutation caused the storage area of the seed (the endosperm) to accumulate two times more sugar than field corn.

Modern corn has been further improved by other mutations. Corn with sugary enhanced (se) gene contains more sugars than normal sweet corn and will remain sweet for 2-4 days after harvest. Corn with shrunken gene (sh2), also known as super-sweet, is 2-3 times sweeter and it can be stored for up to 10 days with negligible decline in quality.

Corn is actually a large grass, so be careful using grass weed killers near the plant! On a corn plant, the tassel is the male part of the plant and produces pollen. Like many other grasses, corn is pollinated by the wind. The silk is the stigma (or the “landing pad” for the pollen) and is attached to tiny flowers within the ear; these will later become kernels. Each silk is attached to a single kernel. And every silk must be pollinated in order to have a milky kernel.



If planting corn in your backyard garden, plant in blocks of 3-4 short rows rather than one long row to ensure good pollination. Uneven kernel development is an indicator of poor pollination.

Sweet corn can be yellow, white, or bicolor. There are definitely regional preferences. Growing up, I thought the only corn

available to grow was “silver queen”. There is absolutely nothing wrong with “silver queen” corn but I find that I really like bicolor. There is no real relationship between color and sweetness.

The corn earworm is the most notorious and difficult to control insect pest of sweet corn (the infamous caterpillar found at the tip of an ear). Commercial growers must spray corn with an insecticide every three days or so to avoid caterpillar development. In the backyard, you will need to be vigilant as well or deem the caterpillar acceptable and pick them out before eating the corn.



Although everyone looks forward to early-season corn, later maturing cultivars are usually of higher quality. Sweet corn is picked in the milk stage, meaning if you press a fingernail into the kernel, a milky liquid will exude. Harvest is essential at the optimum time; a sweet corn planting can quickly change from peak ripeness to overripe and starchy in two days or fewer.

Harvest sweet corn at night or in the early morning, so the internal temperature will be the lowest. Then, refrigerate immediately. If you buy sweet corn, also refrigerate immediately. Do not allow sweet corn to sit in a hot car for any period of time.

Wait to husk corn until you are ready to prepare it. This will help prevent quality degradation. Storage time depends on the type of corn purchased. Over-stored, or overripe corn will taste starchy instead of sugary.

Sweet corn is a summer delicacy. You can grow your own or buy fresh, locally grown sweet corn from local farmer at their stands or at one of the Surry County Farmer’s Markets. Enjoy!



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Fruit Tree Production for the Homeowner

April 4, 2017 / 6:00 pm
 NC Cooperative Extension, Dobson

Gardening Panel II

April 18, 2017 / 6:00 pm
 NC Cooperative Extension, Dobson

Farmer's Market Application Deadline

May 26, 2017

Surry County Beekeepers Monthly Meeting

April 10, 2017 / 7:00 pm
 NC Cooperative Extension, Dobson

Dobson Farmer's Market Opening Day

April 20, 2017 / 3:00 pm
 Dobson Square Park, Dobson

Volunteer Appreciation Event

June 6, 2017 / 6:00 pm
 SCC Viticulture Center, Dobson

Raised Bed Gardening Workshop

April 11, 2017 / 6:00 pm
 NC Cooperative Extension, Dobson

Vinedresser Workshop

April 20, 2017 / 6:00 pm
 NC Cooperative Extension, Dobson

Gardening Tour

June 10, 2017
 Mt. Airy

Master Gardener Monthly Meeting

April 12, 2017 / 12:00 Noon
 NC Cooperative Extension, Dobson

Organic Gardening and Composting

April 25, 2017 / 6:00 pm
 NC Cooperative Extension, Dobson

Recipe Gardening

June 12, 2017 / 6:00 pm
 SCC Pilot Center, Pilot Mountain

Elkin Farmer's Market Opening Day

April 15, 2017 / 9:00 am
 Town Hall Parking Lot, Elkin

Growing Herbs

May 2, 2017 / 6:00 pm
 NC Cooperative Extension, Dobson

Surry County Beekeepers Monthly Meeting

June 12, 2017 / 7:00 pm
 NC Cooperative Extension, Dobson

Planting with Purpose

April 17, 2017 / 6:00 pm
 Pilot Center of SCC, Pilot Mountain

Surry County Beekeepers Monthly Meeting

May 8, 2017 / 7:00 pm
 NC Cooperative Extension, Dobson

Master Gardeners Monthly Meeting

June 14, 2017 / 12:00 Noon
 NC Cooperative Extension, Dobson

Mt. Airy Farmer's Market Opening Day

April 18, 2017 / 9:00 am
 Mill Creek General Store, Mt. Airy

Vinedressers Vineyard Field Day

May 18, 2017 / 1:00 pm
 TBA

Vinedressers Meeting, Insect Management

June 15, 2017 / 1:00 pm
 NC Cooperative Extension, Dobson

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Accommodation Statement: If you are a person with a disability or desire any assistive devices, services or other accommodations to participate in this activity, please contact the Extension office during business hours of 8:15 AM—5:00 PM at least two weeks before the event to request accommodations.

Special Note: Registration for events listed in this calendar are required unless otherwise noted. Register by calling (336) 401-8025.

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