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Community Garden Update

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Community Gardens are growing all over the Piedmont-Triad. Thirty new gardens have been assisted by the Forsyth County Cooperative Extension this spring, bringing the total of community gardens to 72 in Forsyth County. Community Garden Mentors have been assisting in gardens, seeds and plants have been shared and educational classes have been held. Produce is being harvested and shared with food pantries. Want to become involved? Community gardening is a great way to become involved with horticulture and your neighbors.

People participating in community gardening are often new to gardening. You can join with a group and learn how to garden, eat more fresh produce, save money on the food budget and have some fun. There are numerous benefits to community gardening. Health benefits, social benefits, and economic benefits of community gardening have all been measured.

Health Benefits of Community Gardening include increased physical activity and increased consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables. Gardening not only burns calories, it tones muscles and increases flexibility. According to the Centers for Disease Control, fruits and vegetables contain essential vitamins, minerals, and fiber that may help protect individuals from chronic diseases.

Compared with people who consume a diet with only small amounts of fruits and vegetables, those who eat more generous amounts as part of a healthful diet are likely to have reduced risk of chronic

diseases, including stroke and perhaps other cardiovascular diseases and certain cancers. Adults who participate in community gardening eat 1.4 times more fruits and vegetables per day than those who do not. Community gardeners are 3.5 times more likely to eat five or more fruits and vegetables servings each day. Fruits and vegetables grown in a garden may be less expensive and more readily available than produce at a grocery store. Many community gardeners use organic practices, which provide pesticide free produce options from the garden. Planting and harvesting vegetables are great ways for adults and children to learn about new foods.

Social benefits include people coming together to work on projects and problem solving. Gardeners work for the common good in a garden, whether the garden is set up as a communal plot or as separate plots for individuals. A community garden is similar to a neighborhood, only there are no houses that people can disappear into. Gardeners, of varying ages and from diverse backgrounds, are outside working alongside one another. Often community gardens serve as seedbeds for the development of interest groups for neighborhood beautification and community advocacy projects. People get to know one another in the garden and have an opportunity to share meals, swap recipes, gardening ‘tricks’ and the local goings-on at garden meetings. Community gardening provides a great

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avenue for building social capital.

Financial benefits of community gardening include a savings on the food budget for gardeners. Savings can be accomplished by substituting produce grown in the garden for produce that would have been purchased in the grocery store. From research reported in 2009 “Impacts of Gardening in America-White Paper”, a well maintained food garden can yield an estimated ½ pound of produce per square foot of garden space over the course of a growing season. At in-season market prices, this produce is worth \$2.00 per pound. If you deduct for the average investment of \$70.00, you can see that a 600 square foot garden would produce a return of \$530.00 worth of fresh produce.



Photo by
Simon
Howden

The ‘Sustaining Community Garden Class Series’ will begin this month and run through early November. Attending classes with others interested in community gardening is a great way to learn more and network with gardeners across the county. If you would like more information about community gardens, please contact Mary Jac Brennan at brennamj@forsyth.cc or call 336-703-2869. The goal of the Community Garden Resource Program is to establish and support community gardens in Forsyth County for the long term.

Community Gardening Tip By Mary Jac Brennan

August is the time to start planning your fall garden. Planting a fall garden will extend the gardening season so that fresh produce may be harvested and enjoyed until almost Thanksgiving! Cool season vegetables are plants that grow best in cooler temperatures. Vegetables such as broccoli, brussel sprouts, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, collards, lettuces, mustard greens, spinach, swiss chard, and turnips grow best under the cooler conditions of fall and early spring. Start seeds now for your fall gardens. Broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, and collards are well suited to transplanting and may be started in containers using a sterile seed starting soil mix or direct seeded into the garden in a clean garden bed. Water will be critical to have success with starting seeds for the fall garden. When direct seeding into the garden, seeds should be planted deeper for the fall because the soil moisture level is lower in the soil and the soil surface temperature is higher. In many cases, the planting depth may be 1 ½ to 2 times as deep as for spring planting of the same crop. There are often less pest problems associated with fall gardens due to the seasonal cooling we experience. Be on the watch for the white butterfly which is the adult stage of the cabbage looper caterpillar. An excellent organic control of cabbage looper caterpillar is *Bacillus thuringiensis*, subspecies *Kurstaki* which is sold in commercial formulations that are readily available at your favorite garden center or hardware store.



Cabbage looper caterpillar and moth

Triad Farm to Table Plans Fall Season

Due to popular demand, Triad Farm to Table will offer a six week fall season running from September 7th until October 13. The fall season subscription cost is \$22 per box (same as the summer season). Fall produce offerings may include: squash, tomatoes, okra, greens, cabbage, collards, turnips, head and leaf lettuce, green beans, beets, eggplant, sweet potatoes, peppers, apples, peas and cucumbers.

For a weekly subscription, the cost will be \$132 and bi-weekly will be \$66. Current subscribers may sign up on the website or by sending a check to Triad Farm to Table at 1450 Fairchild Rd, Winston-Salem, NC 27105. News subscribers will need to include the \$25 membership fee with their payment. Sign-ups should be in by August 15 for the fall season.

Upcoming Programs

Canning & Freezing the Bounty of Your Garden - Nothing's better than a fresh-from-your-garden veggie and enjoying that wonderful taste of summer throughout the year is possible by canning or freezing the treasures you harvest from your garden. Join us as Jennifer Brown from the Forsyth County Cooperative Extension Service teaches us the best practices of food preservation.

August 9th at 3pm at the Clemmons Library - OR - August 17th at 10:30am at the Reynolda Manor Library

Preen for Garden Weed Control -- Just what's in that stuff anyway?

Joseph C. Neal

Professor and Extension Specialist -- Weed Science
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Preen herbicide has long been used in home gardens for preemergence control of many annual weeds. The active ingredient, trifluralin, is labeled for use around many woody and herbaceous ornamental plants as well as many vegetable and fruit crops. Although not the most efficacious herbicide, Preen controlled many of our most common landscape weeds including henbit, chickweed, oxalis, crabgrass, and annual bluegrass without injuring landscape plantings. This product is still widely available in garden centers throughout the country. However, look closely at the label – the Preen you purchase today may not be the same product you previously used.

Today the Preen name is used to identify a diverse product line that includes preemergence and post emergence herbicides. Several Preen products contain 2,4-D for broadleaf weed control in lawns; these products should not be used in landscape beds. The active ingredient in Preen Weed Preventer for Southern Gardens is dithiopyr – the same ingredient found in the herbicide Dimension. This is safe on most ornamentals but should not be used around any food crops. There is Preen Mulch Plus Premium that contains isoxaben plus trifluralin (think Snapshot TG); not to be confused with Preen Plus Mulch Midnight Black that contains trifluralin (but no isoxaben). The isoxaben-containing mulch will damage pansies but the trifluralin-containing product will not. Confused yet? There is also Preen Brush Weed Killer that contains 2,4-DP + 2,4-D + dicamba; Preen Weed and Grass Killer that contains glyphosate (same ingredient as Roundup); and an organic product for vegetable gardens, Preen Vegetable Garden Weed Preventer, that contains corn gluten meal. Many different active ingredients, all sold under the Preen name can lead to confusion.

So, if you go to the garden center to purchase Preen for weed control in your garden or lawn – **READ THE LABEL.** Make sure you purchase the right product for the job.

Deter Pests from your Surroundings By Wendi Hartup, Environmental Extension Agent

The most ask questions this time of year relate to keeping pest populations at a minimum around the home and garden. The most important way to detract what you don't like (ex. snakes), is to learn about what attracts and keeps it in the landscape. Critters need three things to survive: food, water, and shelter. If you are providing any of these, why would they want to leave? So the key is to assess the problem and remove one of these factors to keep those pests in control. Some of the key areas are listed below:

- **Lighting:** Outdoor lights lure bugs and insects, so porch and patio lights can be a perfect invitation for pests to enter your house. KEY: If you see lots of spiders, there are insects going to this area. Knock spider webs down each day to force spiders to rebuild elsewhere. Have yellow exterior lighting rather than white so you don't attract the bugs and insects and use motion-sensing lighting rather than permanent light to keep lighting to a minimum.
- **Gutters:** Clean out gutters regularly to prevent wood rot, and to prevent insects nesting in the rotting leaves. Modify downspouts to channel water farther away from the foundation (several feet if possible). Make sure downspouts are not clogged and water flows freely through the piping. Clogged gutters hold plenty of water for mosquito breeding sites.
- **Foundation:** After it rains, check the drainage patterns in your yard. Water should not be collecting near or running under your foundation. Obviously this is bad for your structure but moisture problems also attract pests (earwigs, sugar ants, mice, snakes, etc.).
- **Vegetation:** Make sure vegetation is cut back 1 foot away from structure to prevent habitat and safe travel paths for critters. Make

sure any mulching is 1 inch in depth 1 foot away from structure to prevent moisture issues and hidey holes. Raised beds sometimes act as dams that pool water near your foundation. Keep plants and shrubs pruned away from foundation vents.

- **Rubbish:** Keep your garden and the area around your house free of rubbish. Tree limbs should be pruned away from the roof. The movement of the branches across the roof can damage the shingles and allow water to damage the wood supports. Insects, especially carpenter ants, use limbs as bridges to enter your home.
- **Stacked Firewood and Compost Piles:** Keep firewood a decent distance from your house and make sure it's kept off the ground. Turn compost weekly to help the decomposition process.
- **Bird Feeders:** Don't leave spilled birdseed under feeders and bird tables - it could attract mice, rats, pigeons and squirrels. Better yet, plant vegetation that provides natural food for birds.
- **Dumpsters and Trash Cans:** Keep lids and doors closed. Make sure holes are plugged and not dripping ooze out of the bottom. Have them emptied regularly.
- **Drips and moisture:** Check the soil beneath window AC units for dampness. Condensation can sometimes be the source of unwanted moisture near your foundation. Make sure sprinkler systems and faucets aren't leaking. Springtails, earwigs and mosquitoes are an indicator of moisture issues.
- **Unsealed entry points for pipes:** Many times the areas where pipes enter the house are not properly sealed. Insects, like roaches and termites, are attracted to dampness caused possibly by condensation on the entry pipes, and pests can crawl right up the pipes into your structure. Make sure the entry points are closed with an appropriate sealant.

From the Master Gardener Hotline - Blossom End Rot

Bertram Lantz, Master Gardener Volunteer

The Master Gardener Hotline is staffed by volunteers from 9am-noon and 1pm-4pm, Monday-Friday. You can reach an Extension Master Gardener Volunteer by calling the Forsyth Cooperative Extension at 336-703-2850 and ask to speak to a Master Gardener.

A recent call to the Master Gardener Hotline was in reference to Blossom-end rot of tomatoes. Blossom-end rot of tomatoes is a physiological disorder caused by a lack of sufficient calcium in the blossom end of the fruit. This disorder is usually most severe following extremes in soil moisture (either too dry or too wet).



Question: I had a soil test done in the spring, and Cation exchange capacity (CES) was 23.4 and the Calcium percent of the CES was 82%, The PH of the soil was 7.2, which would indicate there was sufficient Calcium available for the plants. I have never had blossom-end rot before, but this year the first tomatoes had this problem. I know it has been dry this year, but I have watered the plants on a regular basis and in all other respects the plants seem to be healthy.

Answer: You seem to have done all the right things. Normally tomatoes require about 1-1/2 inches of water per week, and it is also important that the plants are fertilized. A pH of 7.0 or slightly lower is recommend for a vegetable garden, and this may be a clue as to the problem you are having. The normal recommendation for tomato blossom-end rot is to treat the plants with a calcium chloride solution, but in your case this may not be the best solution. The first thing you should do is refer to your soil test and determine the ratio of Calcium (Ca %) and Magnesium (Mg %). It is recommended that this ratio should be approximately 3 to 1 (Ca to Mg). If this is out of range, it may mean your soil is out of balance and your tomato plants can not absorb enough magnesium. Try mixing 2 TBS of Epsom Salts (Magnesium Sulfate) per gallon of water and watering the plants. Tomatoes, roses, potatoes and peppers are magnesium hungry plants and need a sufficient amount of this element to prosper. The good thing about an Epsom Salt solution is that it has proved to be effective for blossom-end rot in the past, and it will not raise the PH of your soil.

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