Organic Gardening

By Len Tufts

Who doesn’t like the taste of a luscious slice of ripe tomato in a sandwich or the crunch of a crisp cucumber in a lettuce salad? And, who can resist the sweetness of a fresh ear of corn? All these things are available to the home gardener who is willing to set aside a little garden space in which to grow some vegetables.

Any home vegetable garden provides a great pay-off, but if you make it an organic garden, your rewards will multiply. Not only will you be rewarded with the freshest possible produce, but when grown organically, those vegetables will possibly provide superior taste and nutritional value as well as greater safety and protection from unnatural chemicals. In addition, in these days of "green awareness," an organic garden satisfies our need to protect not only ourselves but our environment from dangerous chemicals.

While a non-organic gardener may reach for a can of poison spray when he finds a hole in a bean leaf, the organic gardener chooses safe organic sprays and dusts to complement Nature’s own arsenal of garden protectors. By avoiding chemicals, you can create a garden that is friendly to the many creatures that prey on your garden pests. If, for instance, the larvae of a bean beetle are eating a plant’s leaves, ladybugs can be introduced to eat the offending larvae. How great is that? Let Nature do the work for you. And if she needs an assist, look for the safe organic sprays and dusts that can be

(Continued on page 2)

Local Activities of Interest

Pen and Watercolor Floral Painting Class
Saturday, July 16, 9 am to 2:30 pm
Class conducted by artist Donna Whitman Steed Hall at SCC
Twenty participants maximum.
Call Tricia Mabe at 695-3882 to register and pre-pay.
Admission: $45 (Hort. Soc. Members); $50 (Non-members)

Peach Program — July 19, 2011
Sandhills Research Station—Tentative Plans
(2148 Windblow Rd. - Jackson Springs, NC)
4-7 pm—Led by NCSU Horticultural Science Extension Specialist and Associate Professor Dr. Mike Parker.

Volume 1, Issue 4
July 2011

Have Gardening Questions?
Call the MGV Hot Line
March through October
Monday through Friday
10 a.m. to noon
Phone: 910-947-3188
When it comes to fertilizing the garden, the thoughtful organic gardener avoids the chemical fertilizers that can adversely affect our environment. Many chemicals offer a quick and easy way to fertilize, but they also leach quickly through our sandy Moore County soils and are apt to wind up in the ground water. Organic gardeners solve the need for fertilization by first building up their soil with mulches and amendments. These components can also be found at local garden centers. When added to the soil, they build soil tilth and humus and increase the water- and nutrient-holding capacity of the soil. In turn, that improved soil quality helps keep organic fertilizers and mineral supplements in the root zone so that plants are fed in a steady, as-needed manner—a much more beneficial process than the quick, temporary growth spurt created by chemicals.

By now, you have probably realized that I am a dedicated organic gardener. I’ve been traveling this road for more than 50 years and along the way I’ve experienced both successes and failures. At times things in my garden may not look like the pictures in the seed catalogs, but the rewards have always been great. Keep in mind that you don’t need 50 years of experience to reap these kinds of rewards. All it takes is some wise organic practices. Go ahead, dig in, and if you’d like more information to get started, check out www.instantorganicgarden.com or www.ces.ncsu.edu/fletcher/programs/ncorganic/.

The website, http://organicgardening.about.com/od/startinganorganicgarden/a/newgarden.htm, has basic information on starting an organic garden.

What’s Bugging You?
By Alexis Pohlmeyer

If you’ve been out in your garden recently, odds are you’ve seen them—feasting away on your flowers and shrubs and engaging in other “extra-curricular activities.” Popillia japonica, or Japanese Beetles, first were reported back in the early 1900s. Now they are prevalent in most of the eastern US and are slowly making their way further south towards the Gulf states.

Though these pests can emerge as early as mid-May, they normally are most plentiful in late June through early July. While there isn’t much plant material Japanese Beetles don’t like, their favorites are crepe myrtle, roses, and ornamental trees.

So why are they usually seen in large masses? Because male beetles can’t help but respond to the alluring scent of the chemical secretions (pheromones) given off by female beetles. And, believe it or not, they can also be fooled by and attracted to a similar odor commonly released by damaged plants! So, they fly in en masse, munch away, and can quickly defoliate a plant. This defoliation will not actually kill the plant, but let’s face it, a defoliated plant is hardly an aesthetically pleasing sight. Odds are, you will want to eliminate the beetles to protect your plants.

Looking for an earth-friendly method of elimination? Resist temptation to buy a beetle bag or some other trap. Sure, you will ‘catch’ a lot of Japanese Beetles, but chances are the traps will just attract even more beetles that will then attack other plants in the vicinity of that trap. Instead, either dislodge the beetles each morning by shaking the plants or pick them off by hand and place them into a jar or bucket of soapy water. Remember, fewer beetles means less plant damage! Think of it as preventative maintenance—though it is not the end-all to these annoying pests, it will certainly help keep them in check.

The moral of this story? The early bird gets the worm . . . or the beetle as the case may be!

For more information or tips on other methods of intervention and control, visit http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/ent/notes/O&T/flowers/note44/note44.html.
Great Food, Great Cooking in Moore County
By Judy Middaugh

The Moore County Farmers Markets continue to offer a great array of fresh vegetables, fruit, honey and meat. Here are a few recipes featuring available produce such as eggplant, sweet peppers, cucumbers, onions, peaches and blueberries. Enjoy!

**CAPONATA APPETIZER**

Cut 1 lb. eggplant into 1/2” cubes and mince 3 large garlic cloves. Heat 1/4 c. olive oil for about 1 minute over medium/high heat and add vegetables. Cook for 5 minutes. Season with salt and pepper (if desired). Add 1 14.5 oz. can diced tomatoes with basil, garlic and oregano; 1 finely chopped medium green pepper; 1 2-1/4 oz. can chopped and drained black olives; 2 tsp. lemon juice; and 1 tbsp fresh basil (or 1 tsp. dried). Cook uncovered until thickened (about 10 minutes). Cover and chill for approximately 2 hours. Serve as a topping for 1/4” slices from a French baguette or similar bread. Makes 4-1/2 cups. (Source: Country Italian Cooking)

**PEACH SALSA**

In a medium bowl, whisk 1/4 c. lemon juice, 2 tbsp. sugar, and 1 tsp. grated ginger root. Stir in 2 c. diced peaches, 1 c. blueberries or raspberries, and 1-2 tbsp. finely-snipped fresh mint. For best flavor, serve immediately (can be refrigerated in a covered bowl for up to 1 hour). Serve with grilled pork or chicken. Yield: 6 1/2 c. servings. (Source: American Heart Association’s Meals in Minutes Cookbook)

**BLUEBERRY PUDDING CAKE**

Preheat oven to 350°F. Toss 2 c. fresh blueberries with 1 tsp. ground cinnamon and 1 tsp. lemon juice. Place in a greased 8” square pan. In a medium bowl combine 1 c. all-purpose flour, 3/4 c. sugar, 1 tsp. baking powder, 1/2 c. milk, 3 tbsp. melted butter OR margarine, and spoon over the berries. Mix together 3/4 c. sugar and 1 tbsp. cornstarch. Sprinkle over batter and then slowly pour 1 c. boiling water over all. Bake for 45-50 minutes or until the cake tests done. Yield: 9 Servings. (Source: Jan Bamford, Sedgwick, Maine)

The Farmers Markets are open from now until the end of October.
For information about the Moore County Farmers Markets (Monday, Thursday, Saturday) please call 910-947-3752; 910-690-9520.
For information about the Sandhills Green Market (Wednesday, Friday, Saturday), please call 910-949-3590.
Detailed information on both markets can be found at http://www.co.moore.nc.us/index.php/farmers-market?lang=
**Plant of the Month**

Known both as butterfly weed and butterfly milkweed, *Asclepias tuberosa* is native to many areas of the country, including the Sandhills of the Southeast. It is a good choice for attracting butterflies to your garden, particularly the familiar monarch. Butterfly weed is also good for the environment as it is host to many beneficial insect pollinators. This hardy plant has the added benefit that it works well in a xeriscape (low water use) garden. Once established, it is extremely drought tolerant, and it has no disease problems. Typically reaching a height of about one foot, the plants are topped in early summer with vivid orange or yellow blooms. Its intense color combines easily with other strong- or neutrally-colored perennials. For a special blast of color, give this easy-care plant a try either in your formal garden or in a naturalized area. *(Photo Courtesy of Dennis Walker)*

---

**Monthly Gardening Activities**

*by Susan Strine*

- Finish all major pruning.
- Prune to shape and deadhead flowering plants.
- Fertilize annuals and perennials; discontinue use of slow release fertilizer.
- Watch for whiteflies, Japanese beetles, fungus and weeds.
- Lightly fertilize camellias with a balanced fertilizer.
- Stake tomato plants to give their stems extra support.
- Plants need an inch of water a week.
- Supplement rainfall with irrigation and try to water deeply and not as often. Roots will grow deeper and be less susceptible to drought conditions.

---

**Extension Master Gardener Volunteers**

Taylor Williams  
Extension Agent, Agriculture  
Moore County Extension Office  
PO Box 1149  
Carthage, NC 28327

Staff:  
Susan Strine  
(lowstrine@aol.com)  
Alexis Pohlmeyer  
(acifelli@hotmail.com)  
Helen Munro  
(hsmunro@ac.net)  
DeeDee Forehand  
(nctutu@yahoo.com)

---

**Disclaimer:** *Dig This* has been produced by the Moore County Master Gardener Volunteers (MGV) in conjunction with the North Carolina Extension Service. Its purpose is to share with the general public some of the MGV’s enthusiasm for gardening and some of their activities. The information contained herein is based on sources that the Master Gardener Volunteers believe to be reliable, but they do not represent that that information is accurate or complete.