So you want to grow grass!

If your main concern is water use, your best bet in the Sandhills is to cover your yard with Nature's bounty--pine straw. However, if you're like me, you not only want to be water-wise but also want the benefits a little grass can provide: It creates a great place for the kids to play, it adds curb appeal to your house, and it brings back childhood memories of running barefoot in the grass.

I've been trying to grow grass in the Sandhills since moving here in March of 1993. You'd think that with my fifteen years experience as a Master Gardener Volunteer I'd have the "best" grass in town. That is not always the case--some years are just better than others. The best-looking grass I ever had was the summer when a well-meaning neighbor reset the sprinkler system to water every day while I was out of town. The $800 water bill was a shocker, but the grass looked great. Obviously, watering at that level is not a good way (either for the pocketbook or the environment) to grow grass. But what is?

For the best success, you first need to choose the right grass for your location and then care for it in an appropriate manner. A wealth of information on these topics can be found on the NC Cooperative Extension website (www.ces.ncsu.edu), and I encourage you to look at that site. Several types of grasses are discussed there, but here I'll focus on only the two most commonly grown warm-season grasses--centipede and bermuda.

Apple-green colored centipede is often chosen because it is relatively low maintenance. It grows very slowly and is a great choice if you don't want to be a slave to your lawn mower. It loves sun but can take some shade. Centipede doesn't tolerate heavy traffic or compaction, so it would be a poor choice below trees or under the swing set. It doesn't like drought and you may need to add water in times when rain is scarce. What centipede and all other grasses do like is soil that has been amended for best growth. (If you're unsure about the condition of your soil, give the MGV Hot Line a call at 910-947-3188. Volunteers on duty can give (Continued on page 2)

Have Gardening Questions?

Call the MGV Hot Line

March through October

Monday through Friday

10 a.m. to noon

Phone:

910-947-3188

Local Activities of Interest

Creating A Colorful Container Garden Workshop

Wednesday, May 11, 10 a.m. to 12 p.m

Steed Hall, Sandhills Community College

Linda Hamwi, "the Plant Diva," will conduct this make-it-and-take-it workshop. Participants learn the basics needed to create an attractive container garden before making one to take home. All needed materials will be supplied. 24 participant maximum. Horticultural Society Members $25, non-members $30. To register, contact Tricia Mabe at 910-695-3882.

People's Choice Award; Art in the Garden

Thursday, May 26, 4 to 6 p.m

Ball Visitor Center, Sandhills Community College

The winner of the People's Choice Award (as voted on by garden visitors during April, 2011) will be announced at this reception at the Ball Visitor Center. Refreshments will be served, and the winning artist will be on hand to greet guests. Award presentation at 5:30 pm.
So you want to grow grass! (concluded)

(Continued from page 1)

you the easy steps needed to have your soil analyzed.) Once planted, it's easy to provide the proper nutrients for your centipede. To keep my centipede healthy, each May (after it greens up), and again in the August, I apply Ironite (6-6-26)* at the rate recommended on the bag. At Halloween I apply potash (0-0-22) for improved root growth.

If your yard will get more wear and tear than centipede can handle, you might want to consider bermuda. Bermuda grass is "true" green in color and, unlike centipede, it tolerates drought well. It also establishes quickly and recovers quickly from injury. It does not, however, like poorly drained soil. While most bermuda requires full sun, a shade-tolerant variety has recently been introduced to the market. (Zoysia grass may be an even better compromise than bermuda for shade. Information can be found at www.turffiles.ncsu.edu/ along with more answers to turf questions.) To care for my bermuda, I apply a 21-7-14 fertilizer in May after the grass has greened up. In June and at the end of August I apply a 22-8-16 fertilizer to encourage growth and color. As with centipede, Halloween is the time to apply potash (0-0-22) to stimulate root growth.

With a little effort, you can successfully grow grass in the Sandhills, without spending a ton of money on water. By choosing the right grasses and giving them the appropriate care, you can sit back and reap the benefits of your little patches of green. As I have said, some years are better than others. So I enjoy what I have and continue the adventure of growing grass in the Sandhills of North Carolina.

Helen S. Munro, MGV

*These numbers represent the percentage of nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium contained in fertilizer products. Please refer to www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/consumer/factsheets/trees-new/text/fertilizing.html.

Note: The fertilizers mentioned in this article can be found at full-service farm and garden suppliers in Aberdeen and Carthage as well as at Cardinal Chemical, also in Aberdeen.

More Local Activities of Interest

Composting 101
Thursday, May 5, 7:00 to 8:30 pm
McSwain Extension Education and Agriculture Center
2420 Tramway Road, Sanford, NC
Rhonda Sherman, Extension Solid Waste Specialist, NC State University, will teach you how to turn home and garden waste into rich compost by building your own compost pile. Contact the Lee County Center of NC Cooperative Extension at 919-775-5624 to register for this free workshop.

Moore County Farmers Market
Producer only ~ fresh and locally grown
Market Manager~Harry Webster

Mondays
FirstHealth (Fitness Center)
170 Memorial Dr. Pinehurst, NC 28374
2:00pm-6:00pm~April 19-October 25

Thursdays
Morganton Rd (Armory Sports Complex)
Southern Pines, NC 28388
9:00am-1:00pm~April 15-October 28
Winter Season~November thru March

Saturdays
Downtown Southern Pines
SE Broad & NY Ave. Southern Pines, NC 28388
8:00am-noon~April 17-October 30

Questions call 910-947-3752; 910-690-9520
moorecfm@embarqmail.com

Website: Moore County Farmers Market Local Harvest

Sandhills Farmers Green Market
"Fresh and locally grown fruit and vegetables at a convenient location"
Market Manager~ Gary Priest

Wednesdays
Campus of Sandhills Community College
Beside Aristotle Parking Lot
3395 Airport Rd. Pinehurst, NC 28374
3:00pm-6:00pm~April 14-October 27

Thursdays
Homegrown on the Village Green
In the sandlot on the Pinehurst Village Green
3:00pm-6:00pm ~ June 17-August
Facility Courtesy of Pinehurst

Fridays
Aberdeen Train Depot
S. Poplar St. Aberdeen, NC 28315
3:00pm-5:30pm~ May 7-October 29

Questions call 910-949-3590
Deer-Resistant Flowers for Moore County

Botanical Name | Common Name
--- | ---
Ageratum spp. | Ageratum
Allium spp. | Onion/Chives
Asclepias tuberosa | Butterfly Weed
Begonia spp. | Begonia
Buddleia davidii | Butterfly Bush
Cleome Hasslerana | Cleome
Coreopsis spp. | Coreopsis
Dianthus spp. | Sweet William
Dicentra exima | Bleeding Heart
Echinacea purpurea | Purple Coneflower
Epilobium angustifolium | Barrenwort
Eupatorium purpureum | Joe Pye Weed
Eupatorium coelestinum | Blue Mist Flower
Gaura | Whirling Butterflies
Helleborus spp. | Lenten or Christmas Rose
Heuchera spp. | Coral Bells
Iris spp. | Iris
Monarda didyma | Bee Balm
Narcissus spp. | Daffodil
Nepeta cataria | Catnip
Origanum spp. | Oregano
Osmunda cinnamomea | Cinnamon Fern
Pachysandra procumbens | Allegheny Spurge
Rudbeckia spp. | Black-Eyed Susan
Sempervivum spp. | Sedum
Senecio cineraria | Dusty Miller
Solidago spp. | Goldenrod
Stachys byzantina | Lamb's Ear
Thymus vulgaris | Thyme
Tradescantia | Spiderwort
Verbena spp. | Verbena
Yucca spp. | Yucca
Zinnia spp. | Zinnia

Ornamental grass spp.

This list does not include all plants that are deer resistant in Moore County. For instance, it does not include plants, such as some ornamental grasses, that are known to be overly aggressive spreaders in the home landscape or in the natural environment. It is always advisable to research plants before planting.

For information on how to prevent deer damage please see [www.ces.ncsu.edu/nreos/wild/pdf/wildlife/deer.pdf](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/nreos/wild/pdf/wildlife/deer.pdf). This site also includes a list of deer-resistant woody plants.

What’s Bugging You?

By Alexis Pohlmeyer

Often mistaken for bumble bees, carpenter bees are usually seen in spring hovering around deck and porch railings or other wooden garden structures. True to their name, they excavate round, half-inch diameter tunnels into the underside of the wood. Unlike termites, they do not actually consume the wood. Instead, carpenter bees excavate the tunnels for nesting. The female will build a large pollen ball and then deposit an egg beside it; her offspring will later use the ball as a food source. Once the egg is deposited, the female bee walls off the compartment with chewed wood and then repeats the process. She can build up to six compartments depending on the length of the tunnel.

Though the adult carpenter bees will die within weeks of excavating tunnels and laying eggs, their grown offspring will begin to emerge in the summer. These offspring will later over-winter in the old tunnels.

More of a nuisance than a threat to people, only the female carpenter bees have stingers and they are not likely to sting unless severely provoked. The male, distinguished from the female by the white spot on its face, is territorial and will try to keep other bees and people from its area. Carpenter bees do not usually cause any serious damage to wood structures and actually play an important role in pollination of flowers and agricultural crops.

For more information, visit [www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/ent/notes/](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/ent/notes/)

His labor is a chant,
His idleness a tune;
Oh, for a bee’s experience
Of clovers and of noon.

The Bee

Emily Dickenson

Plant of the Month

Gazania

Looking for a plant that will laugh in the face of the hot Carolina sun and grow in our sand as if it were the highest-quality compost? How about gazania? A member of the daisy family, gazania loves sandy, well-drained soil and can tolerate one of our most common problems—drought. Gazania blooms in late spring to fall. Hybrids come in shades of bronze, orange, pink, yellow, white, red, brown and green. They can be up to a foot in height and 8-10 inches wide.
Spring is a good time to renew and add variety to your landscape by planting annuals and dividing established perennials.

When purchasing bedding annuals this spring, choose plants with good color and a well-developed root system. Roots should be vigorous but not too large for their pots. Roots should be white. Buy plants that have yet to bloom or are just beginning to bloom. If you have to buy a plant in bloom, pinch off any flowers at planting time.

It is best to plant and transplant in the late afternoon. This allows the plant to establish overnight and not be stressed by immediate hot sun.

Spring is also a good time to think about butterflies and birds. Some plants they particularly enjoy are salvias, butterfly bush, coneflower, sedum, Miss Huff lantana, and bee balm. Grasses, parsley and fennel are sure to attract butterfly caterpillars.

Finally, don't forget to include some herbs in your garden. They will thrive if you plant them in a neutral soil and give them full sun, a moderate amount of fertilizer and sufficient moisture.

Don't miss our next edition due out June 1st!

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 MGV do not represent that that information is accurate or complete.

Additional copies of Dig This can be found at:

http://moore.ces.ncsu.edu/files/library/63/May%20MGV%202011.pdf

MGV Information Hot Line: 910-947-3188