

IN THE GARDEN NOW

HELPING GARDENERS PUT KNOWLEDGE TO WORK

MAY/JUNE 2015



Beautiful Container Gardens



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Nothing adds color and beauty to your patio or porch like a beautiful container garden. Don't be intimidated by the containers you see at the garden center, you can put your own combination together with your personal spin and often for a whole lot less money!

First, select your container. You are limited only by your imagination. Choose a container that appeals to you. Just make sure it has adequate drainage. If you love a container that doesn't have drainage holes, use a power drill to add one or more holes to the bottom.

Once you have your container, fill it with a high quality potting mix. If the potting mix contains a slow release fertilizer, you are ready to go. If it does not, mix a slow release fertilizer in before planting. Slow release formulations provide nutrients over an extended period of time. Read the bag or container label and be prepared to provide additional fertilizer later in the season once the slow release is expended.

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Now it is time to add your plants. The number of plants that you need depends on the size of your container. If you start with plants in four inch cups, a good rule of thumb is that 3-4 plants will fill a 10 or 12-inch planter while 4-6 plants will fill a 14 to 16-inch planter. These planters will not look full all at once, but will start to fill out after 2-3 weeks of growth. These numbers are a great place to start but can be adjusted up or down based on the plant being grown. Vigorous sprawling plants like petunias will not require as many plants to fill a pot while slow-growing, upright plants like pansies can be planted more closely to make the pot appear more lush. If you start with smaller plants (say 6-count cell packs) you can add a couple of additional plants for each container.

You can fill your container with just one type of plant – say a bowl full of petunias or calibrachoa – or you choose a variety of plants for the container.

If you want to mix plants, a classic technique is to choose a “thriller”, a “filler” and a “spiller”. The thriller is an upright plant with dramatic structure and foliage for the center or back of the container. Fun thriller choices include spikes, cordyline, dwarf cannas, dragonwing begonias, ornamental peppers or sun coleus. Ornamental grasses like red fountain grass are another great accent plant. A filler is a more mounding plant that will fill in the center of the container. Fillers could include smaller coleus, mounding petunias, or geraniums. The spiller then cascades down the side of the pot, look for trailing forms of verbena, bacopa or calibrachoa.

Choose plants for their blooms but also for the texture or color of their foliage. When mixing plants together, look for a variety of growth habits, leaf and flower forms. So some may be large and leathery, others small and wispy, maybe another with silvery-blue foliage. This adds interest and variety to the container. If you are just getting started, use plants with the same color blooms – say all pink or shades of yellow – or one color plus white. These monochromatic color schemes are easy to achieve. As you

become more confident, play with analogous colors like yellow, orange and red. The boldest color combinations rely on complimentary colors like orange and blue or yellow and violet. These combinations will really pop, adding lots of energy to the arrangement. You can add a neutral like white or a pale creamy yellow to almost any pot.

I like to combine plants on my cart when I’m at the garden center. I’ll put different plants next to each other and play with the combination of flowers, form and foliage until I find a combination that appeals to me. This works well, just make sure your chosen plants have the same growing preferences – sun versus shade and moist versus dry soil conditions. Otherwise, they will not be happy growing in the same pot together.

Here are some classic container garden combinations. When you visit the garden center, you will notice that many planters are a combination of petunias, calibrachoa (“million bells”) and verbena. This combination works well with a combination of large, medium and small flowers. Play with bloom colors and consider adding a sun coleus, salvia or ornamental grass for height in the center of the container. If you want something a little bit different, trade out the verbena for bacopa, a trailing variety of lantana, euphorbia ‘Diamond Frost’ or sweet potato vine. These planters do well in a full sun location. For a shady spot, consider begonia, New Guinea impatiens and torenia (wishbone flower). Sweet potato vine and coleus perform in shaded locations as well.

Sun	Sun	Sun	Shade	Shade
Petunias	Coleus	Salvia	Begonia	Begonia
Calibrachoa	Calibrachoa or petunia	Calibrachoa	Coleus	New Guinea Impatiens
Verbena or bacopa	Sweet potato vine	Lantana or verbena	Torenia (wishbone flower)	Sweet potato vine

Once you have selected your plants, arrange them in the container together. Tease apart any overgrown root balls and work potting mix gently between the

plants. Make sure that there is at least an inch of room between the surface of the potting mix and the top rim of the pot when you are done. You need this room for watering. If the surface of the potting mix is too high, water will just run off the top of the pot rather than infiltrating in to the potting mix.

Water gently to settle the potting mix around your plants and then sit back and enjoy. In two or three weeks, your container will fill in and look just as lush and gorgeous as any from the garden center. With a little bit of pinching and deadheading, you can have a beautiful container garden all summer long.

BECOME A MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEER!

**Onslow County
Master Gardener
Volunteer Class
Starts June 8**



The Onslow County Center of the North Carolina Cooperative Extension is offering a Master Gardener Volunteer class starting June 8. The Master Gardener Volunteer Program is a joint endeavor of the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service and volunteers who wish to learn how to be better gardeners and help other gardeners by sharing their knowledge. The program is designed to recruit and train volunteers to help meet the educational needs of the citizens of Onslow County.



Master Gardener Volunteer, Rebecca Ingram, answers clients questions in the Plant Clinic.

Class participants learn about a wide variety of gardening subjects including vegetables, fruits,

lawn grasses, shrubs, flowers and trees. The training focuses on developing diagnostic skills for insects and diseases of plants. Classes are also given on landscaping for water quality, soils, composting, propagation, wildlife control and much, much more!

Master Gardeners receive 40 hours of training and after graduation they provide 40 hours of volunteer work in the community. Master Gardeners are involved in a range of community projects including: answering homeowner inquiries at the Extension Office and Farmer's Market, mailing out information bulletins to homeowners, conducting plant clinics, working with school children on special horticultural projects, talking to garden clubs, working on community beautification projects and developing the new Discovery Gardens of Onslow.



Master Gardener Volunteer, Teri Welch, helps harvest vegetables at the Tarawa Terrace Community Garden.

The 2015 Master Gardener course will begin June 8 and run through August 10. Classes will usually be taught Monday and Wednesday mornings from 9:00 am until noon with the occasional field trip being held outside normal class hours. Cost for the course is \$100, which includes a comprehensive Master Gardener Manual.

If you are interested in the 2015 course, please call the North Carolina Cooperative Extension - Onslow County Center at (910) 455-5873, and request an application. Space in the class is limited.

Large Patch

We've seen a lot of large patch this spring. These giant patches of brown grass in bermuda, centipede, St. Augustine, and zoysia are most obvious in spring. This disease is large patch, caused by the fungus

Rhizoctonia solani, and if you've ever had an outbreak of this disease, you now know why the disease



was coined large patch. Once the fungus is established, the rings grow larger during favorable conditions.

What you may not know however, is what your control options are this time of year. You shouldn't worry too much if you have this disease on bermudagrass. Bermudagrass tends to grow out of the damage once the temperatures are consistently warmer and the daylight longer.

Damage tends to be most severe on centipedegrass and recovery may take all summer in extreme cases. Unfortunately, there isn't much you can do to make for a magical recovery. We rarely recommend fungicides for large patch in the spring of the year. Fungicide applications are best when applied preventatively in the fall. Also, remember that recovery will be even slower and tougher if you've applied a DNA type of herbicide as your pre-emerge for summer weeds. DNA herbicides include pre-emergents like pendimethalin, prodiamine, oryzalin, trifluralin, benefin and dithiopyr. Check the active ingredients on your herbicide label.

In most cases, the best thing is to stay the course with management practices that will encourage each type of grass to do well. In severe cases, treating damaged areas like a new establishment with light and frequent fertilizer and water inputs may help encourage faster lateral spread. This doesn't mean you should apply more fertilizer, just smaller doses

more often. Applying too much fertilizer will make the disease worse this fall!

Finally, be sure to map the affected areas now while they are clearly visible. You will save yourself some money this fall by spot treating these areas instead of having to make a whole property application, since the disease tends to reappear in the same areas. If you irrigate your lawn during the summer, plan to gradually cut the irrigation back and do not irrigate after the beginning of August to reduce the wetness needed for disease development in the fall.

For more information go to: http://www.turffiles.ncsu.edu/Diseases/Large_Patch.aspx

Association Meetings

Onslow County Farmers Market Association Meeting: First Tuesday of each month at 4 pm (May 5 and June 2). For more information about becoming a vendor at the Onslow County Farmers Market, contact the Market Manager, Caleb Benoit, at 910.388.5793.

Onslow County Beekeepers Association Meeting: Second Tuesday of each month at 7 pm (May 12 and June 9). For more information about the Onslow County Beekeepers Association, contact the President, Eric Talley, at 910.389.7709.

Onslow County Master Gardener Volunteer Association Meeting: Second Thursday of each month at 9 am (May 14 and June 11). For more information about the Onslow County Master Gardener Volunteer Association and how you can become a member, contact the extension office at 910.455.5873.

Canning and Preserving Series

Once again, Robin Seitz and I are teaming up to help you take your produce from garden to pantry. Learn how to preserve your garden harvest for enjoyment year round. We will cover different topics in each session, which will include hands-on participation and tasty treats. We are offering 5 classes – take one or all!



- **Fermentation** - June 4
- **Introduction to Canning** - June 25
- **Jams and Jellies** - July 16
- **Salsas** - July 23
- **Jerkies and Fruit Leathers** - July 30

Classes run from 6-9 pm; price is \$10 per session. **Space is limited, so registration is required.**

Location and registration: Onslow County Cooperative Extension Service, 4024 Richlands Highway, 910.455.5873.



IT'S STRAWBERRY SEASON!



Strawberry season

has arrived in Onslow County. You can find local strawberries at the Farmers' Market or pick your own. We have three pick-your-own strawberry farms in Onslow County:

Aman Family Farms

Jack Aman
2384 Belgrade-Swansboro Rd
Maysville, NC 28555
910.934.2938

Mike's Farm

Mike and Theresa Lowe
1600 Haw Branch Road
Beulaville, NC 28518(910) 324-3422

Lenoir County:

Putnam Family Farms

Steve Putnam
2044 Lightwood Knot Road
Kinston, NC 28504
252.520.3330

Call ahead for hours, pricing and picking information.

Protecting Your Plants From Deer

White tailed deer are one of the most recognizable wild animals in North Carolina. Whether it's a mature buck with spreading antlers or a graceful doe and her spotted fawn, deer are a beautiful addition to the landscape. Unfortunately, they can also be a significant pest for gardeners. Deer can wreak havoc on a flowerbed or small tree in a matter of a night or two. In suburban areas where hunting is not allowed, deer pressure can make gardening frustrating if not downright impossible. Luckily, there are some steps that we gardeners can take to minimize the amount of damage deer do.

Deer can jump over tall fences and slip through small spaces so excluding them from the garden can be challenging. A combination of plant selection, zoning and repellents can help you garden successfully despite the deer.



Before planting, determine what plants are favorites for deer. Deer prefer to eat some plants over others. In general, deer prefer not to eat plants with thorny or prickly leaves or stems. So spiny plants like Japanese barberries and yucca are less palatable to deer than more tender plants like pear trees and daylilies. This rule does not extend to roses though – roses are a tasty treat for deer.

Deer do not prefer plants with strong scents and pungent tastes such as rosemary, sage, oregano and thyme. Herb gardens can be quite attractive, useful in the kitchen and deer resistant. Many of the ornamental salvias are pretty and deer resistant as well.

Plants with hairy leaves are not preferred by deer. This makes the fuzzy, gray-green leaves of lamb's ear (*Stachys byzantine*) and dusty miller (*Senecio cineraria*) a perfect addition to the flower border.

Another deer resistant choice is palm trees. Make sure you choose a palm that is hardy in our area. Windmill, jelly and cabbage palms are tree form options while dwarf palmetto, needle palm, saw palmetto and Mediterranean fan palm are shrub forming palms that will grow in our area.

Since deer feed primarily by browsing – nipping the twigs and buds off of shrubs and bushes – ornamental grasses are typically unaffected by deer. There are lots of different types of ornamental grasses available. Two of my personal favorites are pink muhly grass (*Muhlenbergia capillaris*) and selections of panic grass (*Panicum virgatum*). Ornamental grasses make a nice contrast to shrubs and can be planted singly or in a mass as a ground cover.

Ferns are another deer resistant choice. Deer rarely browse fern foliage so ferns are a good addition to shaded, moist locations in deer country. Consider Autumn fern, Christmas fern or Florida shield fern for evergreen choices. Japanese painted fern and the native cinnamon fern are beautiful deciduous options.

While no plant is deer proof, planting deer resistant plants can help encourage deer to move on to other, more inviting meals.

Deer pressure varies depending on the season and location. Feeding is usually heaviest in the spring, when new growth is starting and deer are hungry from a long, cold winter. It can be beneficial, although time consuming, to protect particularly vulnerable plants with a deer repellent during this time. Look for a formula containing albumin or egg whites and reapply after rain events.

In areas with large deer populations and little food, even relatively deer resistant plants may be eaten.

If you want to grow a plant that is a favorite treat for deer – such as daylilies, hosta or roses – plant them closer to the house where they are easier to protect and where deer pressure is usually lower.

For more information on protecting your garden from deer, including detailed lists of which plants are more or less likely to be damaged by deer, check out this publication:

<http://carteret.ces.ncsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Deer-Resistant-Plants2.pdf>.

This information can help you reduce the amount of deer damage in your garden next spring.

UPCOMING CLASSES AND EVENTS

Common Garden Problems (Tarawa Terrace)

May 1st, 10 a.m. – noon

We will discuss common garden problems focusing on insects, diseases and how to control them. We will also go out to the community garden for some hands on activity.

Location and registration: Tarawa Terrace Community Center, BLDG TT44, Tarawa Terrace Boulevard. There is no fee to attend, but pre-registration is requested. For more information call 910.450.1687.

Growing and Using Culinary Herbs

May 9th, 10 a.m. – noon

Learn to grow and use your own culinary herbs. We will discuss how to grow, when to harvest and how to preserve herbs for later use.

Location: Onslow County Cooperative Extension Service, 4024 Richlands Highway. **There is no fee to attend, but pre-registration is requested.** For more information call 910.455.5873.

Lawn Maintenance (Camp Lejeune)

May 15, 1 pm

We'll discuss lawn maintenance including common lawn problems, with a focus on how to diagnose and control.

Location and registration: Harriotte B. Smith Library, Corner of Holcomb Blvd and Birch St., Camp Lejeune. **There is no fee to attend, but pre-registration is requested.** For more information call 910.451.6196.

Protecting Pollinators

May 18, 5:30 – 7:30 pm

We'll discuss the importance of pollinators. We will focus on how to attract them to the garden and protect them once they are there. We will also go out the Discovery Gardens for some hands on activity.

Location and registration: Onslow County Cooperative Extension Service, 4024 Richlands Highway. **There is no fee to attend, but pre-registration is requested.** For more information call 910.455.5873

Lawn Care Workshop

May 16, 10 am – 12 pm

Master Gardeners will cover the basics you need to know to have a successful lawn this year. They will also be available to answer your gardening questions. Stop on by and see us!

Location: Lowe's Home Improvement, 425 Yopp Road

Propagating Cuttings for Fun

June 20, 10 – noon

Master Gardeners will show you how to propagate a variety of plants from cuttings. This is an excellent way for you to create more plants for use in your garden or to share with friends. Students always walk away with some fun new cuttings to add to their collection.

Location: Onslow County Cooperative Extension Service, 4024 Richlands Highway, 910.455.5873.

Follow us on Facebook at

www.facebook.com/gardeninginonslowcounty.

For additional classes check out on the Onslow County Cooperative Extension website at <http://onslow.ces.ncsu.edu/events/>.

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Find Gardening Information on the Radio



I host the Garden Journal on Public Radio East. The Garden Journal airs Friday at noon on all PRE Stations and Saturday at noon on News and Ideas. In Onslow County, that is 91.5 FM and 89.3 FM on Fridays and 91.5 FM Saturdays. Tune in and join me. Is there a topic that you would like me to address on the show? If so, email me at lisa_rayburn@ncsu.edu and you may hear your answer on the air.

You can also find me on WJCV once a month as

Melvin Bland and I discuss all things garden and yard related. You can join us at 98.3 FM and 1290 AM. We'll be on air March 19 and April 21 at 8 am.

CONTACT US

If you have questions about lawn, landscape or garden problems, contact your local Cooperative Extension office. In Onslow County call 455.5873, Mon - Fri, 8 am and 5 pm, or visit us online anytime at <http://onslow.ces.ncsu.edu>. While you are there, you can post your questions to be answered by email using the 'Ask an Expert' widget (in the upper left hand corner).