

# IN THE GARDEN NOW

HELPING GARDENERS PUT KNOWLEDGE TO WORK

January 2019



## A Note From Lisa

Dear readers and clients,

I want to let you know that, as of the beginning of the year, I will no longer be serving Onslow County as your consumer horticulture agent. Instead, I will be moving to another position, serving commercial fruit and vegetable growers in Onslow, Lenoir, Jones and Craven counties.

It has been a privilege to work, learn and grow with you. Thank you for your support during my nearly eight years in this position. I will miss the opportunity to work with and serve the individual homeowners of Onslow County. Rest assured that my position will be filled quickly and you will soon have a new consumer horticulture agent based in the Onslow office.

Luckily, I will still be housed in the Onslow County office. If you want to stop by or say hi, you can continue to reach me at [lisa\\_rayburn@ncsu.edu](mailto:lisa_rayburn@ncsu.edu) or find me in my new office at the other end of the hallway. I will have four counties to cover, so make sure you drop me a line if you hope to catch me in the office!

Thank you again for your support. This position has been a great opportunity and afforded me a wonderful chance to learn, grow and share my love of gardening with you.

Sincerely,

Lisa Rayburn

Lisa Rayburn  
Extension Agent,  
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## New Year Resolutions for Gardeners

The New Year is a time for looking back on the past, and even more importantly, forward to the coming year. It's a time to reflect on the changes we want or need to make and resolve to follow through on those changes. As gardeners, there are steps that we can take to improve the ecology and sustainability of our landscapes. Consider adopting one or more of these resolutions for your garden in the New Year:

Commit to eating more seasonally and locally.

- Buy produce during its peak season. This is when a crop is at its freshest and most delicious and also when you can buy it from a local grower.
- Support your local farmers market, CSA (community supported agriculture) or farm stand. Find dates and locations for the Onslow County Farmers Market on their website at <http://onslowncfarmersmarket.com> or follow them on Facebook. The Onslow County Farmers Market will reopen for the 2019 season in April. Find local farms, farm stands and pick-your-own operations at <http://www.ncfarmfresh.com>.
- Plan your vegetable garden for year-round production. In Onslow County, you can grow some sort of vegetable almost year round. Nothing is more local than your backyard. Get started growing vegetables with these great references:
  - Vegetable Gardening: A Beginner's Guide <https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/home-vegetable-gardening-a-quick-reference-guide> and Vegetable Planting Guide for Eastern North Carolina: <https://pender.ces.ncsu.edu/files/library/71/VegPlantingGuide.pdf>
  - Incorporate fruit crops into your landscape. Fruit trees and blueberry bushes can be beautiful additions to the yard while also producing fruit.
  - Choose plants and varieties that are low maintenance and easy to grow in our area - figs, muscadine grapes, rabbiteye blueberries, strawberries, and blackberries grow well in Onslow County.

Be pollinator friendly. Protect honeybees, native bees and other pollinators by taking the following steps:

- Plant flowers that serve as pollen and nectar sources throughout the season. Check out this publication from the Xerces Society for a list of pollinator-friendly plants for the Southeast: [http://www.xerces.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/plants-fact-sheet\\_southeast.pdf](http://www.xerces.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/plants-fact-sheet_southeast.pdf)
- Use pesticides only when needed. Use cultural (crop rotation, early or late planting dates to avoid pests), mechanical (hand pulling weeds or handpicking insect pests, row covers) and biological control options (promoting insects and predators that prey on pests) as your first line of defense.
- Avoid planting crops that will require a lot of pesticide sprays (such as apples or non-muscadine grapes) to produce a quality crop.

## ASSOCIATION MEETINGS

### **Onslow County Farmers Market Association Meeting**

March 5, 4:30 pm

Contact: Marie Bowman, 910.455.5873, [mkschwei@ncsu.edu](mailto:mkschwei@ncsu.edu)

### **Onslow County Master Gardener Volunteer Association**

January 10, 11 am to 1 pm

Contact: Lisa Rayburn, 910.455.5873, [lisa\\_rayburn@ncsu.edu](mailto:lisa_rayburn@ncsu.edu)

### **Onslow County Beekeepers Association**

January 15, 7 pm (Farmers Market Building)

Contact: Curt Hildt, President, 910.545.8582

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We want your feedback! If you like our newsletter, or want to see something new, let us know! Give us a call 910.455.5873 or email [lisa\\_rayburn@ncsu.edu](mailto:lisa_rayburn@ncsu.edu). Speaking of new, we have a new volunteer working on our newsletter. If you see Jessie at our next Master Gardeners course, say hi!  
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## TIPS AND TASKS

January is the perfect time to begin a garden journal. Include tasks and information like copies of your garden plan, soil test results, varieties grown, fertilizers used, weather conditions, successes and challenges.

Keep an eye out for fungus gnats, mealybugs, aphids, and white flies. Make sure you get problem pests accurately identified before applying pesticides. If plants are pale and spindly, they may need more light. Provide supplemental lighting with grow lights for 10-12 hours a day or move to a moderately lit window.

The best way to control fungus gnats in houseplants is to modify the habitat to remove their breeding grounds. Fungus gnats require moist, organic soil so be careful to avoid overwatering your plants. The surface of the soil should dry out to the touch and the container should feel light for its size before watering. Do not allow any water to stand in saucers or decorative outer pots. Avoid using incompletely composted organic matter in potting soil and remove dropped leaves, flowers and other plant debris as they fall on the surface of the potting mix.

### **Garden**

- Plan beds for spring planting and order seeds. Cut back ornamental grasses in late January or early February before new growth begins. Stack cut grass loosely in the compost pile or along the edge of the wood line to allow pollinators and other beneficial insects that might be in them to emerge later in the season. Rake up and compost fallen blossoms from camellia bushes to discourage petal blight.

- Set out asparagus crowns in January or February but wait a year before harvesting spears from this perennial crop. Sow seeds of garden peas, snow peas and sugar peas directly in the garden from mid-January through late February. Start seed for spring crops of broccoli, cabbage, collards, kale and swiss chard to have transplants ready for early March. These crops grow best in direct light and cool temperatures.
- Prune blueberry bushes in January or February. Remove dead, diseased, weak or crossing stems. On mature bushes, removed one or two of the oldest, thickest canes each year. Apply horticultural oil spray to fruit trees to control mites, scale and other overwintering insects.
- If starting indoors, provide supplemental light for sturdy, healthy seedlings. If you have not soil tested in the past three years, send off samples now to determine which nutrients your garden needs. Soil samples are currently subject to a peak season sample fee.

### **Lawn**

- Don't apply fertilizers to dormant lawns. Apply lime only if indicated by soil test results. Centipede naturally likes a lower soil pH than other grasses.

### **Trees and shrubs**

- Broken, dead or diseased limbs can be removed from trees and shrubs anytime during the year.

### **Planting Plans!**

- February is an epic month for planting vegetables. Here's a list of dates so you can start sorting seeds and planning transplants. Remember: gardeners on the coast can often start a week earlier in the spring!

Lettuce 2/1 - 4/10  
 Arugula 2/15 - 3/31  
 Asparagus 2/15 - 3/31  
 Broccoli 2/15 - 4/15  
 Cabbage 2/15 - 4/15  
 Carrots 2/15 - 3/31  
 Cauliflower 2/15 - 4/15  
 Collards 2/15 - 6/30  
 Kale 2/15 - 6/31  
 Kohlrabi 2/15 - 6/30

Leeks 2/15 - 6/30  
 Mustard 2/15 - 6/30  
 Parsley 2/15 - 4/15  
 Parsnips 2/15 - 4/15  
 Peas (English/Garden) 2/15 - 4/15  
 Potatoes 2/15 - 3/31  
 Radishes 2/15 - 6/30  
 Rutabagas 2/15 - 4/15  
 Spinach 2/15 - 6/30  
 Turnips 2/15 - 6/30

## Black-Eyed Pea Stew with Fried Bread and Salsa Verde \*

This recipe, by Amiel Stanek of Bon Appetit, reminds us that black-eyed peas aren't just for New Year's Day. One pot serves 8-10, so it's perfect for a crowd or just a few days of delicious leftovers. He says, "If you don't want or didn't have time to soak the black-eyed peas overnight, simply power-soak them. Place the beans in a medium saucepan and add water to cover. Bring to a boil over high heat, cover, then turn heat off. Let them sit for 45 minutes to an hour, then drain and proceed with recipe."

1 cup olive oil, divided, plus more for frying (about 3 tablespoons)  
1 lb hot Italian sausage, casings removed  
10 garlic cloves: 8 smashed, 2 grated  
2 medium onions, chopped  
1 head of celery, exterior ribs and heart separated, chopped; plus tender leaves, chopped  
1 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes

Kosher salt, freshly ground pepper  
2 bunches of curly kale, center ribs and stems removed, leaves torn into bite-sized pieces  
1 lb dried black-eyed peas, soaked overnight, drained  
1 8-ounce piece Parmesan, with rind attached  
Zest and juice of one lemon  
½ cup parsley, finely chopped  
10 slices crusty country or sourdough bread

Heat ¼ cup oil in a large Dutch oven or pot over medium-high. Add sausage and cook, breaking up with a wooden spoon and stirring occasionally, until browned, 10–12 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer sausage to a small bowl, leaving rendered fat and oil in pot. Reduce heat to medium. Add smashed garlic and cook, stirring, until golden brown, about 1 minute. Add onions, chopped exterior celery ribs, and red pepper; season with salt and black pepper. Cook, stirring occasionally, until onion is very soft and golden brown, 8–10 minutes.

Increase heat to high; add 1 cup water. Working in batches, add kale, covering pot and allowing it to steam between additions, until kale is wilted (it will look like an impossible amount of kale, but it shrinks like crazy). Season with salt and black pepper. Add peas along with cooked sausage and 11 cups water. Cut away rind from Parmesan and add rind to pot. Cover, bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer, uncovered and stirring occasionally, until beans are tender, 45–60 minutes. Season generously with salt and black pepper.

While stew is cooking, combine lemon zest and juice, parsley, chopped celery heart and leaves, grated garlic, and ¾ cup oil in a medium bowl; season with salt and black pepper.

Heat a few tablespoons of oil (enough to cover bottom of skillet) in a large skillet over medium until oil is shimmering. Add as many slices of bread that can fit comfortably and cook until bottoms are deeply browned, 1–2 minutes. Flip, season with salt, and cook other side until deeply browned, 1–2 minutes. Transfer fried bread to a plate. Repeat with remaining slices of bread.

Place slices of fried bread in bowls. (Bread can be broken in half to fit, but don't worry about pieces sticking out of bowl.) Fish Parmesan rind out of stew and discard, then ladle stew over bread. Drizzle with salsa verde and pass Parmesan at table for grating over each serving.

\* Bon Appetit, March 2017

### CONTACT US

If you have questions about lawn, landscape or garden problems, contact your local Cooperative Extension office. In Onslow County call 910.455.5873, Mon. – Fri., 8 am – 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.