

# The Clod-Hopper



Volume 29 Edition 4

Gardeners of Wake County, Inc. – Raleigh, NC

APRIL 2013

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

I enjoy flowers. I particularly enjoy the flowers that bloom in my yard. The trouble is, I can never remember from one year to the next what is planted where and when a particular flower will be in bloom. This year I decided to do something about cataloging what is in the yard. For Christmas, my mother-in-law gave me \$100. I used it to buy a flower press. A professional press is really a nice tool; compared to a newspaper and a cinderblock, it is a wonder. It came with a big stack of blotter paper, blank newsprint and corrugated cardboard that do a great job of pressing flowers. So far this year I have pressed camellias, snowdrops, flow-



ering quince, daffodils, hyacinths; and this week, peach, pear, plum and cherry blossoms.

I am looking forward to pressing the flowers that will bloom from the myriad of seeds I got from the seed exchange at our last meeting. New year we will move the seed exchange to our first meeting in January so that those who wish to get a head start by planting the seeds in a cold frame or starting them inside under a grow light may do so. I am going to be more diligent in collecting seeds this year and hope to be able to show a pressed flower along with the seeds that produced that flower.

– Marc Boone

## PLANT SALE

The dates for our annual plant sale are April 11-13. (The 11th is officially our members-only event.) We will have membership applications available at the sale. We will be at the NC State Fair Grounds, inside Gate 6. Hopefully you have volunteered to help get ready for our major fund-raising event. Unloading over 3,800 plants begins on Monday the 8th. While

there is “heavy lifting” involved in unloading plants and pushing loaded wheelbarrows there are less strenuous jobs. Plant labels have to be put in place, plants need watering and dead blooms and leaves need to be cleaned up. It is never too late to volunteer because there is always “clean-up” work that has to be done after the sale. Please contact the chairman, Bob Jackson to offer your help.



Over 100 cultivars of azaleas, rhododendrons and gardenias will be available. Bags of Black Kow composted cow manure and Holly

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## CLUB MEETINGS

Meetings are at 7:30 pm at the  
JC Raulston Arboretum

- April 16** Pam Beck:  
Best Garden  
Plants for NC
- May 21** Picnic at 6:00 pm  
at 4401 Dewees  
Court

## APRIL PROGRAM

There is a change of location for our April 16 meeting. We will be at the NCSU University Club (The Faculty Club on Hillsboro Street) because the JCRA Auditorium is being used by another group that day. The speaker for our 7:30 meeting is local gardener and garden-writer Pam Beck. Her topic is Best Garden Plants for North Carolina. There was a book by the same title published by Lone Pine Press in 2006. It profiles 160 different plants. The co-authors were Pam Beck and Laura Peters. You might want to find a copy to add to your collection because I don't think Pam will be able to cover them all in one evening.

## THE EARTH'S SKIN

**D**r. David Crouse, a soil scientist from NCSU, entitled his March talk to GWC "Soil: Skin of the Earth". After hearing his talk some of us felt we might need to help the earth take a little bit better care of its skin. It's similar to the feeling after we slather sun-screen and skin creams on over our own skin on a trip to the coast. We should have prevented the problem to begin with.

To clear up our understanding of terminology, Dr. Crouse reminded us that dirt is what we track into the house on our shoes while soil is the living, breathing skin of the earth. If you look at a map of the world you realize that 75% of the earth's surface is water and ice. There are also large portions of the surface that are sandy deserts without top soil. Over the remaining small portion of the globe that "skin" will range from 3 to 10 feet. There really is not a lot of soil at our disposal.

Not all soil is the same. There are at least 450 distinct soil types in North Carolina alone. We make up a very small portion of the earth's surface. People also view soil differently. Many engineers think of soil as something



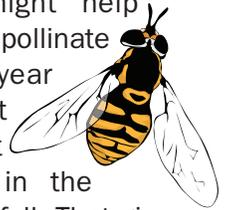
you excavate and compact for buildings or dams. Farmers and gardeners view it as a vessel for "growing things". Ecologists often define it as the support for the web of life. However we use or define it, soil formation is a long process. If my notes (taken in the dark by an elderly gardener) are correct, it takes about 500 years to make an inch of soil. We need to take better care of it.

The sediment from the soil erosion along our creeks, rivers and streams is the major source of our pollution. Rain picks up air pollution, deposits it on pavement and grounds; the polluted water and soil flows into streams and moves along our waterways. Excess fertilizers are applied to lawns and gardens. "Over-fertilized" soils become part of that sediment.

Those of us who garden depend on healthy soil to produce safe, tasty produce. We need it for prize-winning camellias, cannas, daffodils, iris, roses and zinnias. It is the foundation for a beautiful turf lawn, football field or children's play-ground. It may be time for "hobby gardeners" to become environmentalists as well.

## HAPPY BEES

**A** South Carolina Extension publication included some information that might help attract bees to pollinate your gardens year round. The best time to put most of the plants in the ground is in the fall. That gives them a longer time to establish a root system before new growth starts in the spring. If you can find container-grown plants they will bloom this year and provide the encouragement the bees need to get on with their work. A good layer of mulch around the plants and careful attention to watering will probably keep the plants healthy.



Red Maple and Redbud trees bloom in February so they might increase production of garden peas.

Blueberries are blooming in March and by planting several bushes in different locations in the yard you can have better cross-pollination. Jessamine vines are also blooming in March, and they are fragrant to humans as well.



April and May bring blooms on Ajuga, Red Clover, Skip Laurel, Tulip Poplar and Honeysuckle. Persimmon trees bloom in late May and June. Nandina, Bee Balm and Chaste Trees bloom in June. Sourwood trees bloom in June and



July. The plants that bloom from June through August when we need them for many of our vegetables are Butterfly Bush, Crapemyrtle, Abelia, Coneflower and summer phlox. Milkweed does a good job of attraction in late summer and goldenrod in early fall.

### The Clod-Hopper

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For membership information or to change your address contact Carole Johnson, membership chairman at the address published in the membership directory.

Club Website:  
[www.gardenersofwakecounty.org](http://www.gardenersofwakecounty.org)

### PLANT SALE *(cont. from page 1)*

Tone fertilizer will also be for sale by the club. The 4-H Club members will be selling camellias and The Raleigh Garden Club will be selling a variety of ornamental plants—not azaleas, camellias, gardenias or rhododendrons.

Last year our Club awarded \$12,000 in scholarships to horticulture students at NCSU. The students were Shawn Beam, Lauren Gragg, Dominic Gillooly, Sarah Leach Smith, Laura Kaderabeck and Jeremy Machacek. The funds for scholarship awards are generated from our plant sale profits.

## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (h) \_\_\_\_\_ (w) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

Gardening Special Interests \_\_\_\_\_

Other Hobbies \_\_\_\_\_

Membership dues are \$15 for individuals and \$25 for families for the calendar year January to December. Make checks payable to Gardeners of Wake County. Application form and check are to be mailed to:

Gardeners of Wake County  
Carole Johnson, Membership Chairman  
5346 Lake Wendell Rd.  
Zebulon, NC 27597

## APRIL IN THE GARDEN

If you did not put out pre-emergent weed killer earlier your first April chore is probably going to be weed control. Weather conditions seem to have been perfect for bitter-cress, chickweed and henbit. If they are in the lawn you can spray with broadleaf weed-killers. When they are in vegetable or flower gardens they will probably need to be pulled because the chemicals in those bottles usually do not know the difference between a weed and a flower. (Some gardeners can't tell the difference either.)



The threat of cold weather and freezing temperatures is probably over. Larkspurs have finished blooming and gone to seed. You can collect the seed

and store it for fall planting or you can do what your lazy editor does and just pull up the plants and shake the seed over the beds where you want them next winter. There may also be some seedlings of last year's annuals coming up in the beds. They can be transplanted, but they may not be identical to the plants you had last year. You may pull them as weeds if you don't have an adventurous spirit.

Cannas have just started coming out of the ground. If the plants in your yard have become overgrown, now is a good time to dig and divide them. Do it as quickly as you can; there is a higher success



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## HERB FEST

If you have not been to Wake Forest in April for Herb Fest you have missed one of the largest herb sales in our area. There are hundreds of varieties of plants, all grown in the area. Culinary and medicinal herbs — and fragrant ones for sachets — are available. They have both annual and perennial plants for sale — from very small sizes to large containers. There are even some “containerized herb gardens” for sale.



The *Weekend Gardener* will broadcast from there from 8 to 11 am on Saturday, April 20 this year. The plants usually get set up on Friday but the major sale is Saturday beginning at 8am. Check for the exact location this year. It is usually south of the old down-town area near the water tower. Their prices are “very competitive”.

# GARDENERS OF WAKE COUNTY

5346 Lake Wendell Road  
Zebulon, NC 27597

Change Service Requested

## April in the Garden *(continued from page 3)*

rate for new growth and bloom if the new growth is about an inch tall. Each division should have a short piece of the old stem attached so you know you have a blooming size clump. Dusting some fungicide on the open wound from dividing the clump will protect the new clump from rotting when it is replanted.

If you would like to have gladiolus for cutting flowers throughout the summer try “successive plantings” about every 2 weeks from now until the 4th of July. The corms (bulb-like structures) need to be planted at least 4 inches deep so the stems don’t tip over and pull out of the ground as the flower heads form. If you can’t tell “which side is up” (it has a very



subtle “point”) on the flat corm you can plant it “on-edge” and let Mother Nature figure it out.

If you had problems with heavy peony blooms flopping over last year you may want to provide a bit of support to the plants as they begin to come up. Some gardeners use single stakes and tie up each bloom separately. Others prefer “peony rings” that surround the entire plant. By putting the supports in place when the plants begin to emerge the foliage will cover the supporting system.

This is also a good time to get hand pruners and pruning shears sharpened. Wisteria and Carolina jessamine have finished blooming and need to be pruned so they do not set seed. The plants also need to be trimmed to fit the



space that is available for them in the garden. Roses need to be cut back and shaped for their blooming period that starts at the end of this month.

Camellias bloomed prolifically for us this winter and some plants put on more growth than usual last fall so they may need to be reduced in size. They can be pruned drastically at this time if they have gotten overgrown for the space available. Azaleas also get cut back after their spring bloom. Encore azaleas get pruned after their first blooming. They will put on new growth to bloom later in the year and growth with blooms for next spring.

