

The Clod-Hopper



Volume 28 Edition 12 Gardeners of Wake County, Inc. – Raleigh, NC

DECEMBER 2012

DECEMBER PROGRAM

Our annual Awards Banquet on December 11 is a great way to celebrate the end of a successful club year. By the time this gets to you by mail it will be too late to use "snail mail" to get a form in to Ginny Parker for a reservation so that space in the newsletter will be gardening information. After December 7 the only way you will be able to reserve a space will be to call Ginny and beg — nicely of course.

We've had interesting programs, earned the money to continue our scholarships for horticulture students and contributed our labor to community gardening projects. Our Tuesday night party gives us a chance to visit with our fellow club members, enjoy a good meal without having to cook or wash dishes

then honor club members and others in the gardening community for their service to others. We'll also install our new officers.

The officers elected at the November meeting are Mark Boone, President; Sherrill Johnson, Vice-president; Paula Hoffmann, Secretary; Mac Williamson, Treasurer; Will Farmer and CJ Dykes, Board Members. Charles Gilliam gets the plum job — past president.

If you have not renewed your membership for 2013, Carole Johnson would appreciate getting your renewal by the Awards Banquet. This will allow her to get the membership directory printed for distribution in January. The membership application is at the top of page 3 of this newsletter.

POINSETTIAS

We did not include information on the care and feeding of this holiday favorite the past two years so it may be time to remind you that Poinsettias do not like to be placed in a draft — either an outside door that is opened frequently or next to the heating vent. The plants have

large leaves and colored bracts that form the flowers so too much air moving over them will dry the plants very quickly. Keep the soil in the pot evenly moist; the plants don't like to stand in



water but if they are not receiving enough moisture the leaves and bracts will wilt. In a warm room the

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FORESTRY 101

Those of you who attended the October meeting learned about the importance of Christmas Trees as a "crop" in North Carolina. Forests, as well as Christmas tree farms, in North Carolina are a significant factor in our economy and they have a major impact on our environment.



The N.C. Division of Forest Resources (website at: www.ncforestservice.gov) has all sorts of interesting information. We rank in the top 5 states in terms of forestland with over 17 million acres, more than half the land in the state. About 3/4 of that land is owned by private, non-industrial landowners. Our four national forests, Pisgah, Nantahala, Uwharrie and Croatan, total about 1.2 million acres. Hardwoods, not pine, are the dominant trees.

One NCDF publication asked the question: Which of the following contains an ingredient from wood: glue, crayons, ice cream or chewing gum? The answer was — all of them. That helps explain why the average "daily wood consumption" for each of us is the equivalent of about 1.5 gallons.

Trees are also important for the environment. As they grow they take in carbon dioxide and release oxygen at a ratio of about 1.4 to 1. Young trees produce

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- Projects vacant
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www.gardenersofwakecounty.org

EDIBLE LANDSCAPING

The number of books and television programs on "edible landscaping" indicates that more of us are growing some of our own food. The December issue of "Horticulture" magazine has a 5 page article on growing potatoes. It covers "long row crops", small beds and growing in bags. Another article in the same issue is on the "Colorado Potato Beetle".

"Carolina Gardener" had an article on "A Drinkable Landscape". The plants they included were Camellia sinensis for tea; Chamomile, Valerian and Catnip for sedatives and pain killers; stevia as a sweetener; the mints, lemon grass, lemon verbena and lemon or lime basil for flavor in beverages. They included some words of caution that many similar articles omit. "Never eat or drink a substance without positive identification. Check with your medical practitioner or pharmacist before you use "herbals" if you are a diabetic, have high blood pressure or are on medication."



Rosalind Creasy's "The Complete Book of Edible Landscaping" was published by Sierra Club Books this past year. It is a good resource for gardeners who want to grow a lot of produce in a small space. Another recently published book on the topic is "The Heirloom Life Gardener" by Jere and Emilee Gettle. They own Baker Creek Heirloom Seed Company and sub-title the book "The Baker Creek Way to Grow Your Own Food Easily and Naturally." You might ask Santa Claus for one of them to add to your book collection!

From Nan Chase (www.eatyouryardbook.com) come these suggestions for edible landscape plants in our area. Crabapple is relatively pest free, easy to care for and bears fruit at a young age. Grapes, particularly muscadines, can provide shade on an arbor as well as supply fruit for you and the birds. Amelanchier or Serviceberry (known as "sarvis" trees, Juneberry or Shadbush to natives)

provides early summer fruit. PawPaw loves moist soil, has beautiful fall leaf color, tolerates shade and has a tasty, creamy textured fruit. Globe artichoke is an interesting "structural plant" for a flowerbed and it is very drought tolerant. Jerusalem artichoke has a nutritious seed that attracts birds and it has tasty edible roots that make excellent pickles. Leeks are an elegant garden plant in winter as well as providing "gourmet onions." Popcorn is an interesting vertical plant that is not too tall for a small flower bed.






New Members





Charlotte Blackwell, Raleigh



Prissy Sandy, Raleigh



Melvin Whisnant, Garner















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

POINSETTIAS

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plants may have to be watered daily to keep the soil moist, but do not let the pot stand in water for longer than it takes to moisten the soil.

Many gift plants come in foil pot covers with bows attached. The plant will be happier if you puncture a hole in the bottom of the foil and place the covered pot in a saucer or decorative container that will allow you to monitor the water content of the soil at the bottom of the container. Your antique table in the front hall will appreciate the protection from a damp plant.

Candles seem to be a part of holiday decorations for many of

us. Keep them a safe distance from holiday plants. The heat can dry plants and dry plants burn more easily.

If you want to try keeping a plant until next Christmas these tips may help. Keep the plant in a sunny area inside and keep it watered until all danger of frost is past. Some people prefer to wait until the first of May to take the plant outside. Put it in an area where it gets morning or afternoon, but not mid-day, sun. It will need to be fertilized with a liquid fertilizer to keep it green and growing.

The first week in August, cut the stems of the plant back to a manageable height but be sure there are 3 or 4 leaves on the stem. New branches should form

at the leaf axels by September. Bring the plant back inside about October 1 — and before the first frost. You have the best chance of getting colored bracts by regulating the hours of exposure to light. Day time temperatures should be about 70 and night temperatures closer to 60 F. By October 1 light exposure becomes critical. The plant needs light for 10 hours and complete darkness for 14. You can put the plant in a dark closet every "night" or you can find a large box to cover it.

Hopefully the colorful bracts will form for the second holiday season. Then treat the plant just as you did for its first holiday season in your home.

Change Service Requested

POISONOUS PLANTS

Edible landscaping is becoming more popular and with all the berries, flower bulbs and sap producing plants we use for decorating in the winter there is always some concern about what plants are poisonous and which are not. Every year there are thousands of cases of people eating plants they should not and getting sick enough that they end up in an emergency room. Very few deaths are reported. Children can be at risk because of their smaller size and their curiosity that often includes sticking things in their mouths to see what it tastes like.

Poinsettias used to be listed as a poisonous plant but that claim is now disputed. The sap may cause skin discomfort to a few people but Erv Evans ate leaves of it several times during his tenure as Wake County Extension Agent to dispel the myth that it was poisonous.

Datura (Jimsonweed) and Poke -

weed are usually at the top of poisonous plant lists. Both the berries and roots of Pokeweed are poisonous. (Some Southerners do eat the leaves of Pokeweed, "Poke Salat", but the instructions for cooking it are to bring the leaves to a boil, drain off the liquid, rinse the leaves, add water and boil to cook) Some mushrooms are poisonous.

Wisteria and lantana pods can cause "stomach distress" as can the bulbs of daffodils and hyacinths and iris roots. Calla lily, Difenbachia and elephants ear will cause swelling of the tongue and nausea. Mistletoe berries upset stomachs and cause an irregular heartbeat as do the leaves and flowers of lily of the valley. Laurel (leaves, stems and berries) can cause vomiting and paralysis. The berries and foliage of Yew produce similar symptoms and can cause difficulty breathing.



FORESTRY 101 *(cont. from page 1)*

more oxygen because they are "growing more wood" in their early development. We may be more "eco-friendly" buying a North Carolina grown Christmas tree than putting up an "artificial" tree.

A "living Christmas tree" is a growing plant. It may be potted in a container or "balled and burlaped". In either case the plant will need to be watered to keep the roots viable. Limiting the number of lights on the tree and reducing the number of hours the tree is in the house and lighted increase the chances of the tree surviving after it is planted outdoors.

Cut Christmas trees also need water to survive the season. (Your editor is a chicken and unplugs the lights when she adds water to the tree stand.) After the holidays the "real" trees can be recycled for mulch — either in your own mulch pile or in the city recycling program.