

The Clod-Hopper



Volume 28 Edition 6 Gardeners of Wake County, Inc. – Raleigh, NC

JUNE 2012

MAY MEETING

We thank Mark Boone and his family for sharing their home with us for the May meeting. Although there were some mean clouds the weather held and a good time was held by all. The guest of honor was a pig cooked to perfection. We'll try to get his picture on the website.

Mark is in the process of putting in two new garden areas and spent most of the day of the party getting mulch spread. We admired all his hard work and look forward to seeing

the completed gardens next time we visit.

There were so many plants at the plant exchange that not all of them found new homes.

That may mean we see picnic leftovers at the next meeting. Thank you to all those members who brought plants and food



for the party. Thank you, also, to those members who stayed to clean up after the party was over.

INSECT ALERT

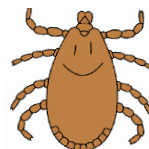
In case you missed the articles in the May 29 edition of the N&O there are several "new" insects bothering gardeners in North Carolina this year. The front page introduced us to the "Kudzu bug" (no scientific name provided) which has been used in some areas of the world to control the spread of the Kudzu vine. It evidently picked up a bacteria form on its way from Asia to the United States that is attracted to soybeans. This new form of the Kudzu bug is attacking soybean crops



in eastern North Carolina this spring. They are expected to spread through the state by the end of the year.

The article indicated they do swarm and will collect in groups on the sides of buildings. They do emit a chemical that will irritate skin and turn it yellow. The insects can be killed with insecticides but there are no specific recommendations for chemical control at this time.

There are also several new species of ticks appearing in our area. The Ixodes Affinis from South America first appeared in North Carolina in 2009. It does not bite humans but will bite animals and animals can be affected with a disease which may then



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CLUB MEETINGS

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

- June 19 Tim Alderton "JCRA Through the Seasons"
- July 17 Dick and Judith Tyler of Pine Knott Farms
- Aug. 21 Derek Smith "NC DOT Wildflower Highway Beautification"

JUNE MEETING

We are looking forward to Tim Alderton's talk at the June meeting. Tim is hard at work this summer supervising the 2012 Interns in addition to all the chores he does on a regular basis so we appreciate his making the time to meet with us. Tim's photographs are excellent but you may want to speed through dinner and get to the JCRA in time for a quick walk through the gardens before the meeting. You can see this season, whatever it is this year, and compare it to Tim's photographs. The new lath house has been planted. The Japanese garden is finished and the perennial border is full of interesting blooms. There are also lots of interesting new plants in the trial gardens behind the hedge border of the Mixed Border.



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INSECT ALERT *(continued from page 1)*

be spread to humans. The Gulf Coast tick is now in North Carolina and carries a disease similar to Rocky Mountain spotted fever. The Lone Star tick carries a flulike infection and is known to be carried by the deer population.

GARDENING FAUX PAS

Somewhere in my gardening career I found this list of the seven most common mistakes of beginning gardeners: starting too big, reinventing the wheel, starting things too early, planting only once, not keeping records, not fencing in a garden and letting gardening become work. It has served as a marker in one of my gardening books and occasionally I stop to think about those mistakes.

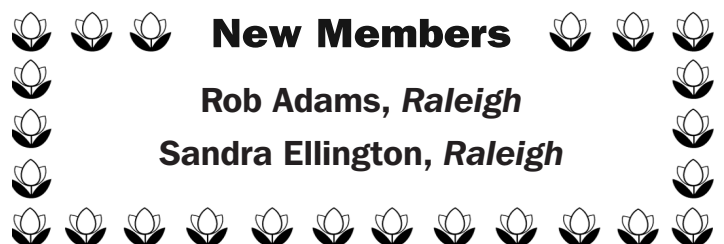
That part about starting out too big is a problem for most of us. We make our beds too large, we plant too many different kinds of plants and we try too many “new” plants the same year. People who have very small yards may not be faced with all these problems because there is not a lot of ground to till and plant. The rest of us may not have enough time to take care of what we plant. As John Harris used to say: “Never plant more than your wife can take care of.”

The positive approach is to take the time to plan garden activities. Limit the size of vegetable gardens to what you can easily care for. Think carefully before you add new perennials or shrubbery to the landscape and make sure you know what size the plant will become, how aggressively it will spread and how much care it will take. Choose plants that will grow well in the soil and light conditions on your property.

If you are trying something new, whether it’s a plant or a gardening technique, talk with some other gardeners to see if they have some advice. The reason most of us are in a garden club is to have friends who share our hobby and are willing to share both information and plants.

Many of us had problems with starting things too early this year. Mother Nature took advantage of warm winter weather and encouraged plants to put on new growth and bloom. We took advantage of warmer soil temperatures to put in vegetables, shrubs and flowers. Many of us got away with it but others did have a night

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New Members
Rob Adams, Raleigh
Sandra Ellington, Raleigh

GROWING IRIS

Most iris in this area have completed their bloom period so it is a good time to divide them. There are several species in the iris genus but the most popular one in this area is probably the bearded iris or German Bearded Iris. The three upright petals of the flower are called the standards and the three draping petals are called the falls. The beard is the tuft of "hairs" on the surface of the falls. The fan-shaped leaves come from a rhizome or root in the ground. In our area the leaves of German Bearded Iris are present all year long.

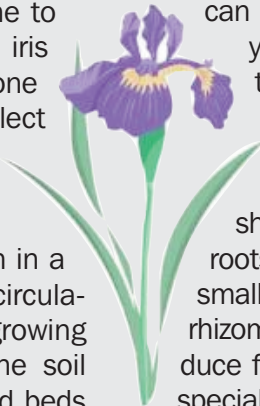
Catalogs are arriving in the mail now from iris nurseries. The plants are being divided now and plants will be shipped in July and August. This is a good time to start preparing a bed for iris you may purchase from one of these nurseries or collect at the monthly "give-away" table at our meetings.

Iris should be planted in a sunny site with good air circulation. Unless you are growing some of the water iris the soil needs to drain well. Raised beds are usually successful. A single iris rhizome should be allotted a 2x2 foot space to allow growth with blooming for 4 year's growth before dividing and replanting. Dwarf iris will not need as much space. The soil should be neutral to slightly alkaline. Soil is best worked to a depth of just less than a foot for good root development. Adding dolomitic limestone to adjust the pH adds magnesium to the soil and seems to encourage better blooms but any lime product may be used. Water the soil well after adding the lime. Phosphate may

be the more important nutrient for iris. The plants deplete it from the soil as they grow so quickly. If you are replanting iris in the same bed you will probably need to add phosphorus. Too much nitrogen will encourage lush growth and encourage foliar diseases. A 4- to 6-inch layer of compost should be spread over the bed and dug in. The prepared bed may be left unplanted for several weeks before your new plants arrive.

These are suggestions for those who would like to divide and share their iris. Dig and divide clumps about a month after flowering. It is easier to work with the plants if you cut the foliage back before you dig and divide. (They can be cut straight across; you do not have to cut them into fans.) Use a spading fork to remove the clump from the ground and shake the soil from the roots. Break the clump into smaller plants. Only those rhizomes with leaves will produce flowers but if it is a very special plant you can plant an old rooted rhizome without leaves about 2 inches deep in a bed and grow a new plant in about 2 years.

After the rhizomes have been separated wash the soil off with a hose then place the rhizomes with their attached foliage on newspaper in a dry, shady place with good air circulation to dry. The plants should be allowed to callus over before they are replanted. Use a felt tip marker and write the name of the cultivar on the leaves of the plant. Don't use one of the markers with water-soluble ink!



JUNE GARDEN CHORES

This appears to be a year for heavy insect crops. The mosquitoes don't damage plants but they damage the gardener so use a repellent or one of those clip-on devices that seem to keep them at bay when you are working in the yard.



Spider mites seem to be more prevalent this year. Sometimes they can be controlled by washing them out of plants with a strong spray of water or using insecticidal soap and water spray. Orthene and Cygon are also labeled for use on spider mites.

Keep plants mulched to conserve moisture. Temperatures have been a bit above normal and soil moisture has evaporated. Make sure mulch is kept away from the trunk of trees and the stems or canes of shrubs and roses. It encourages disease and boring insects.

Spring blooming shrubs may be fertilized after they finish blooming. They may also be pruned. Be careful fertilizing Encore azaleas. Too much fertilizer will reduce blooming in the summer and fall.

When blackberries finish bearing remove the canes to encourage new growth from the crown. The new growth formed this summer provides the fruit for next year.



Japanese beetles are appearing in some gardens now. Sevin will control them but it is harmful to bees. The liquid form is less harmful than the powdered formulation because the bees do not take it back to the nest. Beetle traps are effective but remember to keep them "downwind" of the plants you wish to protect.

Remember to remove spent blooms from plants you do not want to go to seed. Removing spent blooms from flowering annuals will encourage development of new growth and flower buds for a longer color display. Removing spent blooms from perennials will reduce the number of weeds you pull next spring. You can have too much ageratum and salvia in the garden!

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GARDENING FAUX PAS

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of cold weather that damaged new growth. Some shrubbery may have to be pruned to remove damaged tips and encourage new growth. Rain has been adequate to date for shrubs and lawns but we may need to mulch carefully to give plants protection if there is a hot dry summer.



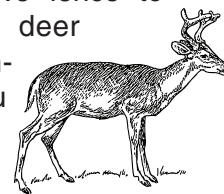
The “planting only once” really applies to putting in vegetables and annual flowers. Instead of planting all the seeds at one time we can extend the season for produce and cut flowers by planting in succession. We can have a vegetable garden of smaller dimensions if we pull out plants as they finish producing, amend the soil

and plant another crop. As flowers go to seed they can be removed, composted and replaced with seedlings. If there has been a disease or insect problem it is best not to plant the same species in that area. Amend the soil with additional organic material when you replant.

Keeping a garden diary provides a good reference for what we did in a garden on what day in what year. We know what plants grew well and the approximate dates that certain diseases or insects appear in our garden. It allows us to keep a list of the perennials and shrubs on our property and their location. You can even include information on where they were purchased and how much they cost. In the age of digital cameras and computers it is much easier to keep these

records. You can even file pictures and names of plants you purchase to help identify them later.

Anyone who grows vegetables knows, you have to have some sort of protective fence to deter rabbits, deer and the neighbor’s dog if you are living in an area where they are present.



Even those of us living in the city face those problems. The fence may not provide complete protection but you may save most of your plantings. When hobby gardening becomes a burden and is no longer fun it is time to change hobbies or find a way to simplify our garden chores. Most of us garden for relaxation and fun. We need to keep it that way.