

The Clod-Hopper



Volume 29 Edition 5 Gardeners of Wake County, Inc. – Raleigh, NC

MAY 2013

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

I continue to learn about life from my garden. A few days ago there was a huge sweet gum tree at the end of the driveway. Its trunk was almost 4 feet in diameter. I liked its gnarly appearance, though never much cared for the “pointy balls” it hurled at me. On balance, I figured that anything at least twice my age deserved respect so we continued our love/hate relationship.

That changed with an opening salvo of wind from a thunderstorm. In a moment, the roots of that tree saw daylight for the first time. My weekend plans were changed suddenly. Instead of weeding to get ready for the GWC picnic and my daughter’s wedding, I had to use a chain saw to deal with that sweet gum. While I was contemplat-

ing the tree, my son Jonathan (a part-time arborist) stopped by. He looked at the tree and said “you had a blessed fall.”

At first I wasn’t sure whether he said it because he disliked sweet gum trees or something else.

Then he explained that two feet to the right and the chicken house would have been history while going to the left would have caused the cars to become one with the asphalt – or even hit the house. Truly, the tree fell kindly. So when you come to the picnic and see a weed I should have pulled, I ask your pardon. I had a blessed fall.

– Mark Boone,
President



SPRING PICNIC

Our traditional summer picnic will be held on May 21 at the home of our president, Mark Boone. The party begins at 6pm at 4401 Dewees Court. If you did not sign up at the April meeting please contact Ginny Parker (919/832-5483 or vlp1006@aol.com) to make

reservations, indicate whether you will bring a “first course” or desert and make arrangements to pay for a meal if needed.

Remember that this is also a “plant swap” so bring something to share with other members. The plant exchange is much more civilized than it was in the early days. It is no longer true that all plants are put in a row and at a given signal you get to run and grab whatever you can carry away. You may select one plant at a time.



Inside This Issue

April Program	Page 2
Insect Alert	Page 2
In the Rose Garden.	Page 3
Raised Vegetable Beds . . .	Page 3
Iris.	Page 3

CLUB MEETINGS

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

- June 18** Dr. Dennis Werner, NCSU “Plant Breeding and New Plant Development”
- July 16** Anne Clapp “The Weekend Gardener Said What?”
- August 20** To be announced

NEW MEMBERS

Thanks to all of you who are encouraging visitors at our meetings to become members of the club. We welcomed 13 new members in the March *Clodhopper*. None were listed in April and now in May we have 14 names to add to our roster. We welcome Carol Farnham from Apex and Phil and Pat Hoffman from Holly Springs. New members from Raleigh are Nancy Fowler, Ernest Hahn, Jori Jordan, Trudi Kappel, Gabrielle Morrow, John Motley, Joe and Ann Retzer, Laine and Steven Thomas and Margaret Waggoner.

APRIL PROGRAM

It was a pleasure to have Mike and Pam Beck with us for the April meeting at the NCSU University Club. Pam's presentation on Best Garden Plants for NC made a lot of us rethink our choices for spring plants at local garden centers. The slides we saw were even better than the photographs in *Best Garden Plants for North Carolina* that Pam Beck and Laura Peters published in 2006. We all appreciated having Mike with us when the electronic projection system required "engineering correction" several times during Pam's talk.

The last slide in the presentation was taken at Betty Perry's garden in Louisburg. The "rest of that story" is that Betty Perry taught a lot of us "the fine art of gardening" when she was in charge of the gardens at the historic Mordecai House Gardens in Raleigh. The volunteer program she developed has been copied by many of the public gardens in our area and the quality of those gardens is something we are all proud of. Betty's obituary in late April reminded many of us how much we appreciate her mentoring—and remind us as well to share our gardening knowledge with others so that we will have another generation of Pam Becks.

Pam included a few trees in her program and with our recent storms you might be interested in some she suggested in the book. Arborvitae (*Thuja occidentalis*, *T. orientalis* and *T. plicata*) enjoy high humidity, partial shade and soil of average fertility. The

evergreen Kousa Dogwood grows in the same conditions. The towering Blue Atlas Cedar grows well in the sun and it has an elegant shape. Crape myrtles do well in full sun, have beautiful bark and summer flowers. The tall, columnar, evergreen *Cryptomeria* thrives in full sun. Ginkgo trees grow slowly but can reach a height of 60 feet. Male Ginkgo trees do not produce flowers with an unpleasant fragrance, and who can resist a tree that loses its leaves in one day in the fall? Magnolias are about as southern as you get. Oaks, maples and River Birch were covered in the book as well.

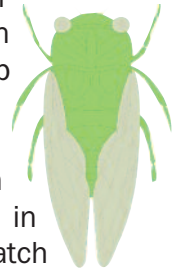
If you want a carnivorous plant to control insects in the yard you could add a pitcher plant (*Sarracenia*) to a spot with sun and moist, acidic soil. They will grow in a container. Your editor has grown a collection of pitcher plants and Venus fly traps in a large container next to the front door for over 20 years. The potting soil is a mixture of sand and peat. Be careful when watering because they are not fond of chlorinated water. Either catch rain water and use that or let tap water sit in a container in the sun for a few days before using it.

Two climbing plants that can be trained to a fence or allowed to climb through shrubs or small trees are the Climbing Aster (*A. carolinianus*) with lavender blooms and Climbing Hydrangea (*Schizophragma hydrangeonoides* 'Moonlight'). Other vines suggested were Carolina Jessamine, Cross Vine, Evergreen Wisteria, Passion Vine and Trumpet Honeysuckle.

Two ferns were included. The Autumn Fern (*Dryopteris erythrosora*) grows well with hosta and Japanese Painted Fern can add color to a shade garden. Another plant that will grow well in shade or light sun is the Cast Iron Plant, *Apidiistra elatior*. (Tony Avent has several beautifully variegated cultivars—spots, lines and leaf tips in white.)

INSECT ALERT

In case you missed the story in the *News and Observer* in April, the 17 year Cicada will make an appearance in eastern North Carolina this year. You also know them as the 17 year locust. They make lots of noise and devour a lot of leaves on their short trip through the state. They live a few weeks then leave their eggs in the ground to hatch and repopulate the area in 17 years.



The other plant pest that will make an appearance is the "Kudzu Bug" (*Megacopta cribraria*). They appeared in Georgia in 2009 and entered North Carolina in 2011. They have a "two generation life cycle". The ones born in the fall, Generation A, usually feed on Kudzu until it becomes an adult and moves into soybean fields. In May or June they lay a batch of eggs that hatch into Generation B which will eat either kudzu or soybeans.

There is some evidence that the insects may also be attracted to black eyed peas, snap beans and other legumes.

Their foray into "people food" will cause problems for North Carolina farmers and gardeners. Research on controlling the Kudzu Bug is being conducted by chemical manufacturers and academic research personnel in North Carolina.



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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

IN THE ROSE GARDEN

After the low maintenance “Knockout Roses” were affected by the “Rose Rosette virus” a number of rose gardeners started looking at alternative techniques for growing roses. Local ordinances that have banned the use of some fungicides and insecticides have made maintaining rose gardens even more difficult. Many of the hybrid teas and floribundas that provided color and fragrance in public and private gardens needed chemical treatments to resist damage from insects and diseases.



One solution is to purchase some of the “antique” roses that have been developed at the Antique Rose Emporium in Texas. Many of the plants are hybrids of the antiques and modern roses so they have the fragrance and disease resistance from one parent and the re-blooming characteristics of the other. The “Earth-Kind” roses are being trialed in several public gardens for performance and low maintenance and are receiving rave reviews.

Another hybridizer has introduced the “Easy Elegance”

cultivars that are also fragrant and “ever-blooming”. Some cultivars produce blooms with a classic hybrid tea form. Most of these newer roses are grown on their own roots. There is still not enough information on the adaptability of some of the root systems to the soils in our area since much of the evaluation has been done in Texas, California, Oregon and New York. For additional information you may want to find a copy of the book “*The Sustainable Rose Garden*”.

It was published by Newbury Books in 2010, and edited by Pat Stanley.

RAISED BED VEGETABLES

The South Carolina Electric Co-op’s publication “South Carolina Living” had an interesting article on raised bed vegetable gardening in the March issue. The advantages of raised beds are the ease of maintenance — soil preparation, planting and weeding are not as hard on backs. There is better drainage, especially when the ‘native soil’ is red clay.

Narrow raised beds also make sense when gardens must be constructed on sloped sites. They need to have at least 6 hours of sun for good yields and you need a convenient source for water. The soil in the beds needs to be at least 10 inches deep for good root growth and you need to have a

flat working area along the bed. The walk needs to be about 2 feet wide for wheelbarrows, garden carts and tillers.



You will improve drainage and soil quality if you “double dig” the soil at the bottom of the bed. Remove the top 12 inches of soil then use a spading fork to break up the soil at the bottom of the bed. Add a little compost, dig that in and then level the bottom of the bed. You then build the “retaining wall sides of the bed”. Add compost to the soil you removed and put that in place in the raised bed. Before you plant the beds you should have a soil test made to determine the fertilizer requirements prior to planting.

IRIS

This seems to have been a bumper year for iris in local gardens. The blooms on German Bearded Iris have been of good size and vivid color. If you do not plan on growing new plants from seed be sure to deadhead the plants as soon as blooms close. Removing spent blooms allows the secondary blooms on the stems to open more freely. When all blooms on the stalk have opened remove the bloom stalk so nutrients are more readily available to the foliage and emerging new growth.



If you are lucky enough to own some of the re-blooming (remon-tant) bearded iris you can expect

(Continued on page 4)

**GARDENERS OF
WAKE COUNTY**

5346 Lake Wendell Road
Zebulon, NC 27597

Change Service Requested

IRIS *(Continued from page 3)*

new growth and a second set of blooms in August or September. Some of the standard dwarf bearded iris will bloom off and on through the summer.

In our clay soil areas iris do need to be dug and divided every few years. The plants grow best in loamy, alkaline soils that are rich in calcium. They do not like a lot of nitrogen. With our mild winters the foliage is often green through the winter. Some gardeners have found that deer do not dislike the taste of iris foliage.

Most gardeners in this area prefer to dig, divide and replant iris in late July or early August and most gardening books recommend that planting time. Many of us prefer to purchase plants when they are in bloom so we can be sure of the color and bloom form. It is safe to dig and move them then. Container grown plants may be planted when they are available.

The best location for an iris planting is in a spot where there is good air circulation and at least 6 hours of sun daily. The more sun the plants get the

more blooms and larger blooms they seem to have. Most iris seem to be happier in a bed they don't have to share with other plants. If you are growing them in a perennial border they will probably be happier growing in a space they don't have to share with other plants.

New Members

			Carol Farnham, Apex								
	Phil & Pat Hoffman, Holly Springs										
	Nancy Fowler, Raleigh										
	Ernest Hahn, Raleigh,										
	Jori Jordan, Raleigh										
	Trudi Kappel, Raleigh										
	Gabrielle Morrow, Raleigh										
	John Motley, Raleigh										
	Joe & Ann Retzer, Raleigh										
	Laine & Steven Thomas, Raleigh										
	Margaret Waggoner, Raleigh										
											