

The Clod-Hopper



Volume 28 Edition 10 Gardeners of Wake County, Inc. – Raleigh, NC

OCTOBER 2012

OCTOBER MEETING

It's not too early to start thinking about the holidays! The registration form for the annual GWC Christmas Party is on page 3 of this issue of the *Clodhopper*. Return your registration form and check to Ginny Parker as directed on the form. Also remember that the nominating committee is finishing up the slate of officers to be voted on in November and installed at the December meeting. Additionally, our October Program is about Christmas

Trees. The speaker will be Dr. John Frampton, Professor at the NCSU School of Natural Resources. The state of North Carolina is a major source for Christmas trees in the United States and a tree from our state will grace the White House for the season. Come to the meeting to learn more about this important North Carolina "crop"



CLUB MEETINGS

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

- Oct. 16** Christmas Trees,
John Frampton,
NCSU School of
Natural Resources
- Nov. 20** Duke Gardens,
Jan Little, Director
of Education
- Dec. 11** Awards Banquet

GROWING CAMELLIAS

Camellias are native to China and Korea and have been grown in Japan for hundreds of years. The most important camellia in world commerce was *Camellia sinensis*, the tea camellia. Processed tea was imported to England in the 1600's.

Ornamental camellias made their way to England by the 1700's. The story is that the British sea captains wanted to import the tea plants to England so they could grow their own tea more cheaply than they could import it. The Chinese sold them ornamental plants that we now know as *C. japonica* and *C. sasanqua*. The blooms are beautiful but the leaves do not make a tasty cup of tea.



Another commercially important *Camellia* species is the *C. oleifera*. It has lots of small fragrant white blossoms that produce quantities of large seeds. The seeds are pressed for their oil content which is used in cosmetics.

We think of camellias as shade-loving plants. They prefer to grow and bloom under the shade of pines and deciduous trees, but they will perform well in sunnier conditions. The leaves will show signs of sun scald, especially plants with variegated leaves grown in full sun. Several plants in your editor's garden have grown well in full sun for over 25 years. They even won blue ribbons in camellia shows during those years.

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FIRE ANT CONTROL

For those who listen to *The Weekend Gardener* I'll include the "recipe" for fire ant control that has kept the phone lines busy for the last few weeks. Your editor prefers to purchase Amdro but this seems to be an acceptable substitute. You combine 5 pounds of white corn meal, 3 cups of sugar, 1 package of red cherry Jello and 3 tablespoons of acephate. The mixture can be stored in a plastic container in a dry space for several months. (Acephate is an active ingredient

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GROWING CAMELLIAS (continued from page 1)

Soil preparation is important for healthy camellia growth. The plants prefer a humus-rich, acid soil so amend the soil with organic material before planting. The camellia root system is fairly close to the soil surface so a good layer of mulch is important to keep the soil cool and moist. Plants grown in full sun will require supplemental watering during the heat of summer.

Many growers prefer to remove old mulch after the bloom season ends in the spring and replace it with fresh mulch. Pine straw is the preferred mulch. Replacing mulch is one way of preventing the spread of camellia diseases, especially for those gardeners who do not make it a practice to pick up the *C. japonica* blooms as they fall from the plant.

In general, the fall-blooming camellias are *C. sasanqua*, *C. sinensis*, *C. olifera*, *C. hiemalis* (usually a hybrid of *C. sasanqua* and *C. hiemalis*) and *C. granthmiana*. Spring blooming camellias are usually *C. japonica* and japonica hybrids and the very “showy” *C. reticulata* hybrids. Some camellias have variegated leaves, usually the result of a virus. Blooms may also be variegated by virus. The color of most blooms will be pink, red or white. There are a few yellow camellias — but it always wise to purchase the plant when it is in flower as many of them are more “off-white” than yellow. Your editor’s advice is never buy a camellia unless it is in bloom.

A good source for camellias in the area is Camellia Forest Nursery in Chapel Hill. The address is 620 Hwy 54 West. The fall open house dates are Oct. 5-7, 12-14 and 19-21. The nursery is usually open on Saturday from 10am to-4pm. There will also be a spring open house.

As promised at the September meeting, here are the directions for harvesting and using the leaves of your *Camellia sinensis* to brew a cup of tea. Pick tender young growth by hand. Select young shoots with 2 or 3 leaves. Allow them to wilt in the shade for a few hours. For green tea, heat the leaves in a covered pan for 2 minutes to prevent oxidation, then dry them in a 250F oven for 20 minutes. This stops oxidation and dries the leaves so they can be stored in a sealed glass jar for future use.

For Oolong tea the wilted leaves should be allowed to oxidize: roll the wilted leaves in the palm of your hands to bruise them and allow them to oxidize in the shade for 30 minutes to 2 hours. The leaves are sufficiently oxidized when the edges and veins of the leaves have started to turn dark. Then oven dry and store the leaves as directed for green tea.

2012 AWARDS BANQUET

The 2012 Awards Banquet will be Tuesday, December 11 at the NCSU University Club (Faculty Club) on Hillsborough Street in Raleigh. The Social Hour will begin at 6:00pm with nuts, cheese straws and a cash bar. The buffet dinner will follow at 7:00 pm. Dessert and coffee will be served. The price for each member and their first guest is \$20/person which includes tax and gratuity. The cost of each additional guest is \$35. Please complete the following form and return it, with your check made payable to **Gardeners of Wake County**, to Ginny Parker at the address given at the bottom of the form.

Reservation Form – Awards Banquet December 11, 2012

| | |
|------------------------|---------|
| Member's Name _____ | \$20.00 |
| Guest's Name _____ | \$20.00 |
| Additional Guest _____ | \$35.00 |
| Total Amount \$ _____ | |

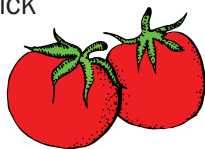
Return form and check no later than December 7 to: Ginny Parker, 1801 Ridley Street, Raleigh, NC 27608

OCTOBER IN THE GARDEN

Vegetables. The season for vegetable gardening is not yet over for most of us in Wake County. Some gardeners are sowing seeds for chives, cilantro and parsley for late harvest. Garlic can be planted for harvest next year. There is probably time for leaf lettuce and spinach to produce a crop, and you can certainly grow them if you can cover them with a cold frame as temperatures drop. If tomatoes are still producing, listen to weather forecasts and cover the plants when frost is predicted. Our second frost may be a week or more later. When daytime temperatures are below 65F for several days it is time to pick the fruit that is showing color of ripening and bring it inside to ripen. The less-developed fruit can be used or fried green tomatoes or relish.



If you are picking ripe pumpkins or winter squash you will find they will last longer if you dip the vegetables in a solution of 4 teaspoons of chlorine bleach per gallon of water. Allow them to dry at room temperature for several days until the skin hardens then store for later use. Do not rinse the vegetables until you are ready to use them.



Lawn Care. Cool season lawns have grown well this summer with the rain and slightly cooler temperatures than usual. Fescue and other cool season lawns will need to be fertilized in early November. Leaves have started falling so keep the leaves blown or raked off the lawn. When you mow remember,

remove no more than 1/3 of the blade height.

If you are going to reseed a fescue lawn get weed problems taken care of before reseeding; especially if you are going to use a herbicide to kill the weeds.



Composting. As vegetable gardens get cleaned up for the winter, leaves cover the lawn and stilt grass covers the gravel drive and woodland gardens it is time to think of compost piles. Leaves and "twigs" will break down more quickly if they get run through a shredder before they are added to the compost pile. If you don't have a shredder it is easy to run the lawn mower over the leaves on the lawn and collect them to add to the pile. Some lawn mowers will even process some small twigs.

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GARDENERS OF WAKE COUNTY

5346 Lake Wendell Road
Zebulon, NC 27597

Change Service Requested

OCTOBER IN THE GARDEN

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There is a small electric chipper that will process twigs and small limbs as well as leaves and “spew” the ground up material directly at the pile.

Stilt grass (*Micro-stigium*) is beginning to form seed heads so get it pulled up as quickly as possible. You do not want the seeds to over-winter in a compost pile. This weedy grass has invaded many of the lawns that border the greenways and streams in Wake County. It thrives in shady areas and can “smother” some of our shade loving ground covers. It does add lots of “green material” to a compost pile though, if it does not have seed capsules formed.

Roses. The roses in the JCRA garden got their last fertilizer and pest control treatment the first week of October. We used the Bayer All-in-One granular product to avoid spraying. The plants will probably continue blooming until close to Thanksgiving if temperatures are similar to last year.

When you cut blooms at this time of year just cut the stem at the first 5-leaf leaflet below the flower. You will not have a long stem but you will not encourage new growth as much as you would if you cut a longer stem. Wait until after our first hard freeze to cut back roses and clean up the garden.



FIRE ANT CONTROL

(continued from page 1)

in Orthene but you'll have to look for acephate at garden centers or farm supply stores.)

To use the mixture, spread an inch-wide ring of the mixture around the fire ant mound, no more than 18 inches from the sides of the mound. If there are a lot of fire ant mounds in your yard it may be easier to broadcast the product over the lawn to reduce the number of active mounds than treat the remaining mounds individually. I don't think we have gotten to that point in Wake County yet though there are some areas east of us that have a more serious infestation.

