

GGG

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Promoting Education and Recreation through Gardening Activities

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HABITAT GARDENS

By Dale Batchelor, Swiftbrook Gardens, Raleigh, NC

Monday, June 24 at 7 p.m., Granville County Expo Center, 4185 U.S. Hwy 15 S, Oxford, NC

About the Program

The way we manage our residential landscapes is increasingly important to the survival of pollinators, songbirds, and other wildlife. As acres of farm fields and woodlands are lost to suburbanization, our landscapes must play a vital role in connecting parks and greenways and helping wildlife flourish. Dale will describe how even a tiny backyard can be turned into haven for a variety of species.

Using examples from her own and clients' gardens, Dale shares basic strategies for creating landscapes that reflect the surrounding ecosystem. These gardens support biodiversity while also meeting the needs of the humans who inhabit them.

About the Speaker

After 20 years working in communications and adult education, Dale began a second career in the green industry. Her company, Gardener by Nature LLC, offers residential landscape consultations focused on native plants and sustainable practices. She is a regular contributor to Triangle Gardener Magazine and frequent speaker to Master Gardeners, garden clubs and other groups. She is an active member of several plant and wildlife conservation organizations including the NC Native Plant Society and the Friends of Plant Conservation.

Over the past 30 years, Dale and her husband, John Thomas, have created Swiftbrook Gardens, a certified native plant and wildlife backyard habitat. She holds a Certificate in Native Plant Studies from NC Botanical Gardens, a BA in English Literature from UNC-CH, and a Certificate in Writing and Editing from NCSU.

By Dale Batchelor and Marty Finkel

Photos: Dale Batchelor

Did you know that there is a predatory stink bug?

Don't squash that stink bug! At least not until you're sure it's not the Florida predatory stink bug (*Euthyrhynchus floridanus*), because this one gobbles up other bugs – news to me. . . .

Juniper Level Botanical Garden sends a paragraph about a plant with photo each day, so I was surprised to see one of a mass of eggs and hatching nymphs. They were on a damaged maple in the garden, and their staff entomologist identified them. Turns out they eat beetles, weevils, caterpillars, and other pests.



Hatching nymphs on left and adult Florida predatory stink bug on right: **DO NOT SPRAY OR SQUASH** – these are good bugs! The orange spots on the dark, metallic blue background of the Florida predatory one makes it easy to identify.

The Florida predatory stink bug overwinters in wood piles or some other dry, sheltered place, and eggs are laid the following spring. They hatch in 19 to 33 days, and the nymphs go through 5 developmental stages. The females are ready for mating in just 5 or 6 days after hatching and lay their eggs 23 to 67 days later. The nymphs like to bunch together (sometimes adults join them) to attack large prey as a single unit. The bugs jab their proboscis into prey and inject a poison that slowly immobilizes it, then they suck out the predigested insides. If you notice the unusual movements of one rocking its body from side to side, it's probably defensive behavior.

Feel free to knock these stink bugs off your tomatoes and other plants and squash!



Brown marmorated



Green



Brown

By Marty Finkel sourced from Juniper Level Botanical Garden and NCSU Extension Publication "Florida Predatory Stink Bug" PDIC Factsheet

Photos: Top row, left: Juniper Level Botanical Garden; right: J.R. Baker from the cited NCSU Extension Publication. Bottom row: all by Debbie Roos, Chatham Co. Extension agent.

June To-Do List

- Roses: Spray weekly with fungicide to control black spot and powdery mildew. To keep them blooming, cut for arrangements and keep others dead-headed. Give a boost of liquid fertilizer and keep well-watered.
- As crops mature, compost or till in plant material that is not diseased. Diseased material should be discarded in the trash. For recommendations on disease control, see “Managing Diseases in Home Vegetable Gardens,” (www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/consumer/agpubs/ag-436.pdf). Always read and follow label directions.
- Make repeated plantings of vegetables based on available space: There is still time for a last planting of many warm season vegetables. These include beans, corn, cucumbers, okra, squash, and tomatoes. Select early maturing varieties and provide water if needed. Note that “Days to Maturity” in the fall will be as much as 14 days longer due to the shorter day length and cooler nights. A fast and easy way to obtain more tomato plants is by using suckers: remove suckers and let them root in water or stick them in a mixture of perlite and vermiculite and keep moist until they root.
- If rain does not fall, you need to provide one inch of water per week to keep the garden growing well. Use of soaker hoses or drip irrigation will keep foliage dry and help reduce disease.
- Control weeds by mulching and hand weeding.
- If planning to raise your own transplants for a fall garden, start some at the beginning of the month and others the middle of this month to have plants ready for setting out in early Aug. Plants to try include Brussels sprouts, broccoli, cauliflower, and cabbage.
- If insects continue to eat your vegetable plants and/or ornamentals, see “Insect Control for the Home Vegetable Garden” in the N. C. Chemical Manual for insecticide recommendations. You can find the Manual at: <http://ipm.ncsu.edu/agchem/agchem.html>
- To stop the fall flop of mums, Joe Pye weed, sunflowers, asters, garden phlox and other tall growers (refer to the notes you took in the GG program on maintenance for other perennials), cut back by half their current growth. Some are easy to root to share with friends.
- Stake summer blooming plants that will flop because of their height and the weight of their blooms, e.g. dahlias, hollyhocks, asters, lilies, etc.
- Late June and early July are the times to take cuttings from many of your favorite shrubs. Cuttings should be hard enough that the stem breaks when bent; if not, it is too young to use.
- Bulbs such as tulips, Dutch iris, narcissus, and daffodils need to be divided. Over-crowding reduces flower production. When the leaves have turned brown, dig the bulbs and replant immediately.
- Deadhead flowers in the garden to promote continued blooming.
- Snap off the tips of chrysanthemums when the plants are about 6” tall for more blooms and a fuller plant.

Compiled by Marty Finkel

Q: *Is there a way to grow corn in a small space that will yield enough ears to eat? I have a typical suburban lot and limited space but love corn on the cob.*

A: Yes. You can grow corn in a small backyard garden, a raised bed, or even a container as long as you have full sun (6 or more hours/day). And by selecting early, middle, and late varieties, you can enjoy eating corn longer. Charlie Nardoizzi’s article “Growing Corn in Small Spaces” in the National Gardening Association’s Learning Library has excellent instructions:

Corn is in the grass family and loves heat and moisture, so wait to plant seeds of old-fashioned varieties until the soil temperature is at least 55 degrees F, and for sugar-enhanced and supersweet varieties, wait until it’s at least 60 degrees F. *Refer to the GGG February 2024 article on comparing the sweetness of corn varieties: su, se, sh2, and sy(sng). The article is archived on the GG website.*

Plant seeds in beds of at least 4 rows, no more than 4 feet long, spaced 1 foot apart – think short thick rows. Short rows close together will make pollination more likely, because here’s how it works: “. . . Each kernel of corn is connected to a corn silk. These fine hairs help transport the corn pollen to the kernel for proper development. The pollen drops down onto the silks from the tassels at the top of the plant. In order to have properly filled out ears, pollen needs to fall on all the corn silks. . .” It’s more likely this will happen in close together, short row planting. If growing in containers, plant 4 – 5 plants per container.

“You can start with shorter varieties that mature early and then experiment with taller, mid- and late-season varieties to extend the harvest season.” Maturity varies from about 55 days to 120 days, and stalk height from about 4 feet to over 9 feet.

“For proper growing, keep your corn well watered, weeded, and fertilized. Spread compost in small beds before planting and side-dress with 3 pounds of 5-10-5 fertilizer per 100 square feet before tasseling. Keep containers well watered and fertilized every few weeks with a balanced fertilizer.”

Examples of early-maturing varieties are Yukon Chief su 55 days, 4’tall, 6-7” light yellow ears and “Sungold” su, 64 days, 4’tall, 6-7” yellow ears. For more choices, see Andrew Zubek’s “Early Corn Varieties – List of 30 Fast-Maturing Options” at <https://rennieorchards.com/early-corn-varieties/> with varieties maturing from 55 to 70+ days.

Find midseason and late varieties on the internet, or refer to seed catalogs. Nearly all the catalogs are online. Some, such as Johnny’s, have detailed growing instructions.



by Marty Finkel from sources cited

Photos: Left – Pinterest, Angelique Demaray Right – Outdoor Designs kitchengardendiy.com

May Covered Dish Social

In spite of the Monday holiday, our annual covered dish social drew a crowd. Who could resist with all the good cooks in this club, right!? Vickie, with help from Linda and Reuben, Joyce, JoAnn, Kay, and Jim and many more, pulled it all together beautifully.

The selection of mouth-watering food, as alluded to, was inspired. There were so many vegetable dishes – the old favorites and some delicious new creations – as well as several meat dishes to satisfy those cravings. If I had tasted everything on the table, I might not have fit in the car to go home, but of those I dishes I did try, I must mention that the collards were excellent! – how can you not like collards, especially cooked like that? – the rice in the chafing dish was divine, and the lentil salad (with cardamom in the seasoning) added a truly delicious and exotic taste to the meal.

Kay provided an eye-grabbing arrangement from her garden, Judy brought arrangements for all the tables – we had fun at ours identifying the flowers (larkspur and others). The auction of the Raulston Arboretum plants, led by Rob, Jim, and Kay, brought in \$360 to add to the Granville Gardeners' NCSU scholarship fund. Photos of the plants and their winners are below the photos of the gathering.





Kerry C's bid won the fabulous Holly Fern.



This rare Toad Lily went to Kay N.



The equally rare wild artichoke belongs to Judy M.



So does the incredibly desirable hibiscus.



Winning the paperbush was Diane H.



Jan J's bid won 'Sky View' hydrangea.



¡Arriba! Hydrangea is now Joyce C's.

By Marty Finkel and Kat Ravenel

Photos: Holly fern by NCECGT Gardening in a Minute CC BY-NC 2.0; toad lily from JCRA Photo Collection; artichoke from Plants of the World Online Kew Science; hibiscus by Star® Roses and Plants; paper bush and hydrangeas by Marty Finkel.

A Natural Garden in Southern California

Recently on a trip to Riverside, California, I was expecting dry desert conditions with little to no color in the landscape. As it turns out, there had been an unusual amount of rain, plus, it was the season when the desert blooms! And, I learned that Riverside is not actually on the desert, but rather it is in a “chaparral biome,” that is it has mild winters and hot, dry summers – a Mediterranean type climate -- and native plants are adapted to drought and heat. Just as many in our state garden with plants from other warm, humid areas, a lot of people in California use plants native to other areas with a Mediterranean climate. Many of the plants I saw were native to South Africa, western Australia, western South America, and the Mediterranean countries.

On my first day out on my own, I headed for Sycamore Canyon Wilderness Park, fourteen hundred acres of wilderness right in the city of Riverside. Of course, I consulted at the visitor center to make sure no large, dangerous wildlife would be around. The receptionist assured me that even though there were mountain lions, you could see them from so far away that you didn’t need to worry, but that I should stay on the paths to avoid rattle snakes. Snakes I can deal with, but mountain lions are another story!

I stayed right by the visitor center and busied myself taking photos of the plants – while individually, the plants are not necessarily gorgeous, in their wild setting on the hill slopes with the rocks, the numbers and variety of plants, the shades and textures are breath-taking! After a while, two men came tearing down a path on dirt bikes. I asked at the parking lot if they had seen any mountain lions. You probably know the answer: there are no mountain lions there. I was free to wander. The photos are nothing compared to being there:



The predominant color is yellow.



Cylindropuntia bernardina,
Cane Cholla



Eschscholzia californica,
California Poppy



Sambucus cerulea,
Blue Elder



Genus *Amsinckia*,
Fiddlenecks



Eriogonum fasciculatum,
California Buckwheat



Encelia farinosa,
Brittlebush



Hirschfeldia incana,
Shortpod Mustard



Euphorbia polycarpa,
Smallseed Sandmat



Genus *Solanum*,
A Nightshade



Johnstonella angustifolia,
Narrow-leaved Cryptantha

By Kat Ravenel sourced from “What’s Chaparral?” California Chaparral Institute, <https://www.californiachaparral.org/chaparral/>. Plant identifications, suggested by iNaturalist, have not been verified. Photos by Kat Ravenel.

Some Native Seeds to Collect in June

Collecting native seeds at the correct time, storing them in a way to keep their viability, planting them with the correct treatment (in many cases) to mimic nature, and finally seeing them germinate and start the cycle over is a great way to understand plants and our native environment better. There are numerous books to guide you (see a few below), but you can also find some information from reputable sites online.

The seeds of some of the spring blooming natives can be collected in June:

- Some *Coreopsis* species - collect June-Sept., store dry at 40°, 1-2 weeks to germinate at 70° with light soil covering
- *Heuchera americana* - collect seed 3-4 weeks after flowering when capsules turn brown, can be sown immediately uncovered, but will germinate better after 90 days moist cold stratification
- *Philadelphus inodorus* (mock orange) – collect after capsules dry, give 60 days of cold moist stratification, light required for germination
- *Ceanothus americana* (New Jersey tea) – collect seed when beginning to turn brown (at some point, capsule ejects seeds violently, so watch carefully), keep capsules in sealed paper bag until all the popping has stopped, scarify with hot water or sandpaper, then give cold moist stratification for 90 days. Best is to scarify with hot water soak and fall sowing.

Compiled by Kat Ravenel, sourced from Midgley, Jan A.W., *Native Plant Propagation* (5th ed), self-published, Lakeland, CO, 2022; Cullina, William, *Native Trees, Shrubs and Vines*, 2002 New England Wildflower Society; and Cullina’s *Growing and Propagating Wildflowers of the United States and Canada*, 2000, New England Wildflower Society.

Brie Arthur's May Open Garden and Plant Sale

You may have heard of Brie Arthur, aka Brie the Plant Lady, who lives in Fuquay-Varina and occasionally writes articles for *Triangle Gardener*. In fact, she has given us programs on “Fragrance in the Garden” (August 2015) and “Foodscaping” (March 2017). Brie has a degree in horticulture from Purdue and has a YouTube channel and several social media accounts to encourage others to garden, and garden sustainably. Most recently, she has begun promoting gardening with natives, so I was happy to accept Kay and Jim’s offer to ride down with them for Brie’s open garden on May 11.

We were among the first to arrive in the residential neighborhood and parked right next to Brie’s driveway between her house and her bed-and-breakfast – both with fabulous gardens, as you would expect. Brie had published a list of plants and sizes that would be available for very reasonable prices. All were set up on tables in the back yard in sun or shade, and several helpers were milling around answering questions or referring us to Brie, who after a while was off to one side signing copies of her latest book. Having done our research and made our own lists, Kay and I headed right to the tables – I think both of us were after plugs, but there were larger sizes and seeds for sale, too. After securing our plants, the three of us enjoyed walking around the gardens and talking with people. We left for lunch in Pittsboro before driving home, and as more people were coming in. It was a delightful day.

Brie will have another open garden and sale in the fall, which I recommend. The date is Saturday, September 21, from 12 noon to 4 p.m. It is free and requires no registration. Just show up. You can find more information on the website: <https://www.briegrows.com>.



Plant of the Month: Swamp Cyrilla (*Cyrilla racemiflora*)



This small tree (12-30' x 12-15') is found naturally in backwater swamps and along streams in moist to wet sandy, acidic soils. It grows in full sun to part shade and is extremely beautiful in the garden in average soil. Once established, it can tolerate dryer soil. It has fragrant, showy, creamy-white flowers in June that transform into golden yellow seeds turning to brown in fall and winter. Leaves turn a mix of yellow, red, and green. It attracts birds, bees, and other pollinators.

Also in Bloom this Month

* denotes native plant

Note that bloom times vary, depending on climatic and meteorological conditions, and many plants bloom several months in a row (and sometimes rebloom)

Ornamental oregano *
Mountain mints *
Yarrow
Several milkweeds *
Prairie Poppy Mallow *
Carolina wild petunia *
Skullcap *
Stokesia *
American beautyberry *
Bee balms *
Obedient plant *
Agastache *
Mimosa
Crocsmia
Cardoon
Dahlias

New Jersey Tea *
Hydrangeas
Mealycup sage *
Lesser Calamint *
Tickseeds *
Bronze fennel
Firepink *
Culver's root *
Gaura *
Catmint *
Lily of the Nile
Agaves *
Alliums
Gardenias
Crinum lilies

Some other plants in bloom this month: *Red asterisk denotes a native plant



Hydrangea febrifuga, James Gaither CC BY-NC-ND 2.0



Carolina lily * imcotter CC BY-NC 4.0



Native honeysuckle * Debbie Roos



Rusty blackhaw viburnum * Jay Sturner CC by 2.0



Carolina phlox * peganum CC-BY-SA 2.0



Blue-eyed grass * Kristine Paulus CC BY 4-D



Spider lily * Scott Zona CC BY-NC 2.0



Lance leaved blanket flower * Debbie Roos



Button bush * 4.0 Al Riordan CC BY



Rattlesnake master *



Sundrops *



Mexican hat *

Compiled by Marty Finkel

Photos: As captioned. Last row: Debbie Roos, Chatham Co. Agriculture Extension Agent