Upcoming Events

- Wayne County Master Gardener Plant Clinic
  - March 14-September 16:
  Clinic is open Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 10AM till 1PM. On these days Wayne County Master Gardener Volunteers are available to answer homeowner’s gardening questions. The clinic is located at the Cooperative Extension Center in Goldsboro at the corner of George and Chestnut Streets, Room 100. Questions can also be answered by phone or email. The telephone number to the clinic is (919) 731-1433 and their email address is wcmgva@gmail.com.

- Wayne County Master Gardener Spring Plant Sale
  - April 16: 9AM-Noon
  Its time to think about gardening again! Come out and shop! The 2011 Spring Plant Sale will take place at the Wayne Center on the corner of George and Chestnut Streets. A variety of plants, trees, and shrubs will be available for purchase provided by Wayne County Master Gardeners. Bring your gardening questions; a mini plant clinic will be open during the sale. For more information call (919)731-1525.

- Plum Tree Market Place
  - Opens April 8 – November 4
  This market is located on S. George Street, between Walnut and Chestnut Streets. Hours of operation are Fridays from 4PM-7/8PM. Market specializes in local and pesticide free produce.

Beneficial Bugs

Contrary to popular belief there are more good bugs than bad in the landscape. Only 10% of all insect species are considered to be plant pests. Good bugs are often referred to as beneficial since they help gardeners keep plant pests under control. A healthy garden maintains a balance between pests and beneficial species. So get ready to roll out the welcome mat for the following insect friends:

**Parasitic Wasps**

Parasitic wasps range in size from very small to large. They use plant pests as a food source for their young. The female wasp typically lays her eggs into host insects, such as caterpillars, beetle larvae, and aphids. The young develop on or near the host insect, killing it. You will often notice parasitized hosts with silky, white cocoons attached to their bodies. If you find a parasitized insect in the garden, be sure to leave it, so that the young parasitic wasps are able to complete their life-cycle and continue to control pests in the future.

**Assassin Bug**

These moderately large insects feed mainly on soft bodied insects such as caterpillars and aphids. You can identify assassin bugs by the long beak at the front of their head. They use this long beak to stab and kill prey. Assassin bugs feed by injecting a toxin into the body of their prey that dissolves tissue, allowing the Assassin bug to suck up the juices. Common assassin bugs found in the garden, include the Wheel bug which feeds on tomato hornworms and the Spined Assassin bug which feeds on Mexican bean beetles.

**Carolina Mantid**

Mantids are well known for their predatory abilities. They feed on a wide range of insects including other beneficials. The Carolina mantid is our only native mantid. The two other mantids found in our county, the European mantid and the Chinese mantid, were both introduced in hopes of controlling native insect pest populations. Unfortunately these introductions have started to displace our Carolina mantid, therefore the purchase and release of European and Chinese mantids into the garden is no longer recommended. To encourage mantids and other beneficials, you should limit broad-spectrum insecticide use.
Plants That Attract Beneficials

Like all animals beneficial bugs need food, shelter, and water to reproduce. It is important to provide plants in the landscape that attract and sustain beneficial insect populations. Here are some NC natives that do an excellent job of providing nectar and shelter to our insect friends.

**Cardinal-flower**

In mid to late summer, this herbaceous perennial produces dense 2ft spikes of flaming scarlet flowers. Each flower looks like a bird in flight and stays in bloom for up to 3 weeks. This plant prefers full sun or partial shade and grows best in rich, moist soils. It reaches 2-4 feet in height. This low maintenance plant needs to be divided regularly in order to extend its life span. Divide in spring or fall. In addition to providing nectar to adult beneficial insects, this plant also attracts hummingbirds.

**Spotted Bee Balm**

This aromatic, herbaceous perennial reaches 16-40 inches in height. It is less aggressive than other bee balms and is less prone to powdery mildew. It has pale yellow, red-spotted flowers that bloom July-September. This plant grows best in full sun to dappled shade in well drained sandy soil. It is very drought tolerant and grows well in eastern NC. This plant may be difficult to find at a local nursery, however it is easy to grow from seed, which can be mail ordered. To encourage a long flowering period be sure to deadhead.

**Narrowleaf Mountain Mint**

This herbaceous perennial with small slender leaves makes a wonderful border plant for the garden. The mildly mint scented foliage reaches 1-3 feet in height and spreads vegetatively by rhizomes, forming dense clumps. This is a good plant for sloping sites. White tubular flowers bloom early to mid-summer and last about 1 to 1 1/2 months. The flowers attract beneficial insects and pollinators. Grows best in full sun and tolerates a wide range of soil conditions. It is a very easy plant to grow and is deer resistant. Old foliage will need to be pruned back in early spring before new growth appears.

For a list of native plant nurseries in the NC: [http://www.ncwildflower.org/natives/sources.htm](http://www.ncwildflower.org/natives/sources.htm)

We are pleased to be able to provide you this educational information.

Karen Bladew
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Agriculture and Natural Resources
Horticulture

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**Centipede Grass**

**Spring Maintenance**

Centipede grass is a slow-growing low-maintenance turfgrass. It grows best in full sun to moderate shade. It does not tolerate high foot traffic, heavy shade, or a high pH. Follow these spring maintenance practices to keep your lawn happy & healthy.

- **Mowing**: Mow grass to 1 inch. Do not let grass get taller than 1 1/2 inches.
- **Fertilization**: DO NOT apply nitrogen this time of year. Yellow appearance may indicate an iron deficiency. Add iron as needed. Read label directions.
- **Water**: Actively growing grass needs 1 inch of water per week.
- **Weed Control**: Apply postemergence herbicides in May for control of summer annual and perennial broadleaf weeds. CAUTION: centipede grass is sensitive to certain herbicides, for example 2, 4-D. Always read product labels.
- **Thatch Removal**: If thatch is thicker than 1/2 inch, power rake in May.
- **Reseeding**: Replant bare areas in May using seed (1/2 lb of seed per 1,000 square feet). Seeds germinate in 28 days. During germination keep the seed constantly moist by lightly watering several times a day for 28 days. Establishment from seed is slow; it takes up to 3 years.