



STAFF PHOTOS BY SUSAN USHER

### Talent On Stage At West

Auditioning last Wednesday for the West Brunswick High School Talent Contest at 7 p.m. today (Thursday) were pianist David Walker (in photo at left) and (in photo above) gospel singers Terrell Jenrette, Zena Hankins, Barbara Johnson, Melissa Banks, Jenaine Pigotte, Crystal Stanley, Mark DeBoise, Michael Bryant, Shameko Hankins and Christy Stevenson. Sponsored by the FHA and DECA chapters, admission is \$2 at the door of the gym for an evening of dance, drama, comedy, and vocal and instrumental music.

## Local Births Are Announced

### Morgan

LaShanda Morgan and Bennie Stanley of Supply have announced the birth of a son, Deontray Rashon Morgan.

He was born Feb. 9 at 1:30 p.m. in The Brunswick Hospital, weighing 7 pounds, 13 ounces, and mea-

suring 19.5 inches long.

He joins siblings Shakeita and Latoya Morgan.

Grandparents are Edriena and Wade Brown of Gastonia and Rachael Stanley and James Gore of Thomasboro. Great-grandparents are Christabele and Hodges Morgan of Supply and Mary Stanley of Tho-

masboro.

### Sechrest

Bruce and Mary Sechrest of Long Beach are the parents of a son, Max Everett Sechrest, born Feb. 12 at 1:39 p.m. at The Brunswick Hospital.

Max Everett weighed 8 pounds

and was 19 inches long.

Grandparents are Ray and Arleen Krebs of Indianapolis, Ind., and Clifford Sechrest of High Point. Great-grandparents are Nona Smith of High Point, Virginia and Kenny Butler of Marco Island, Fla., and Pauline Louiscek of Indianapolis, Ind.

## Give Sandy Soils Extra Attention

Dear Plant Doctor: I see on television vegetables grown without soil, just water and nutrients. My backyard is practically beach sand. If I add proper nutrients and water, then I should be able to grow just about any vegetable, grass, or flower. Right?

How is the best way to get my soil tested to know how much nutrients to add and where can I get advice on what plants that grow best in this area?

Answer: Welcome to eastern North Carolina! You must be a newcomer to the coastal plains.

Vegetables, flowers, and even tobacco plants are successfully grown hydroponically (without soil) in numerous locations throughout North Carolina and the United States. If you have a very sandy soil, then you indeed have a situation similar to growing plants hydroponically.

Sandy soils require special attention in three areas: fertilizer, water, and organic matter. Here are several tips for successful gardening in a sandy soil.

■Adjust soil pH to 6.0 with dolomitic limestone according to soil test recommendations. Highly leached sandy soils tend to be very acidic and acid soils make it nearly impossible for plants to chemically extract nutrients needed for growth.

■Use a slow-release fertilizer. Research has demonstrated that standard fertilizers release nutrients very rapidly under normal rainfall conditions. On sandy soils, potentially all nitrogen and potash can be leached out of the root zone of most herbaceous plants after as little as two inches of rainfall or irrigation. Slow release fertilizers "meter out" fertilizer nutrients. This provides the plant with a "constant feed" of nutrients, which is critical for optimum growth on sandy soils with high leaching potential.

The frequent application of a low concentration of a soluble fertilizer also works very well. However, this is very labor intensive and is not practical for most home gardeners.

In addition, both these practices have been shown to reduce pollution to surface and ground water by fertilizer.

■Water is crucial for all life. Sandy soils have nearly no water holding capacity, therefore irrigation is essential for optimum plant growth during the hot summer season. Drip irrigation works best for ornamental and vegetable plants. Overhead irrigation does best for turf grass and other ground covers. In general, an inch of water a week is normally required during the growing season.

■Constantly incorporate as much organic matter into your soil as possible. Organic matter helps sandy soil hold more water and nutrients. High temperatures and micro-organism populations rapidly breakdown organic matter, so you will have to constantly add organic matter to your soil in the form of mulch, compost or manures.

■Soil test kits are available at any North Carolina Cooperative Extension office. Take the soil sample according to instructions provided and return to the Extension office for analysis. Each Extension office in North Carolina has professionals

### THE PLANT DOCTOR

C. BRUCE WILLIAMS  
Extension Area  
Turf Specialist



trained to help you interpret your soil test, make the needed amendments to your soil, and provide you with information to choose the right plants to grow.

Dear Plant Doctor: A few years ago I bought a handful of dried "popcorn berries" on a Charleston street corner. I was able to grow three or four plants from the berries. One of those plants has grown into a 15-foot tree.

The leaves are very much like an aspen leaf. The leaves turn yellow and brilliant red in the autumn. What is the real name of this plant? What can I do to make it produce more berries?

Answer: Sounds like a "Jack and the Beanstalk" story. Based upon your description and the pictures you sent me, I suspect your tree is a Chinese Tallow Tree or Popcorn Tree (*Sapium sebiferum*). This member of the Poinsettia family (*Euphorbiaceae*) has shown great economic importance in China for the wax on the white popcorn-like berries and the high oil content of the seed. Fast growing and well adapted to sandy soils, this small, short-lived (15 to 20 years) tree has almost become a weed in the coastal plains of the deep South.

Due to its fast growth, some scientists have investigated this plant for use as a biomass or pulpwood producer.

I suspect your plant will produce fruits in the next few years and then beware of the "giant". Seed are spread far and wide by wind and animals. Seedlings are likely to become a weed problem in ornamental beds.

Send your garden comments and questions to The Plant Doctor, P.O. Box 109, Bolivia, N.C. 28422.

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