

Spring Planting Tips for Eastern N.C. Gardeners

The winter of 1994 is nearly over, and now is the time to get your lawn and garden ready for the spring and summer. Many diseases, insect pests, and garden problems can be easily avoided with a little preventative maintenance. Here are several tips to help put you ahead of the pack for 1994.

■ Oleander, red tip, ligustrum and other cold-damaged plants should be pruned back. Be sure to remove all winter-killed branches—dead branches will often permit pathogenic fungi to enter the plant and cause severe future disease problems.

■ Calibrate fertilizer and pesticide application equipment.

■ Do not apply fertilizers to any warm-season grasses (Bermuda, St. Augustine, carpet, bahia, or zoysia) before April 15. Centipedegrass is best fertilized in May after a good root system is established.

■ Cut lawn grasses at the correct mowing height and leave the clippings. Cut no more than one-third (30 percent) of the height of the grass at any one mowing. Research by Texas A & M researcher Dr. Bill Knoop has demonstrated that the average homeowner will spend 30 percent less time mowing the grass when clippings were left, even though grass must be mowed more often!

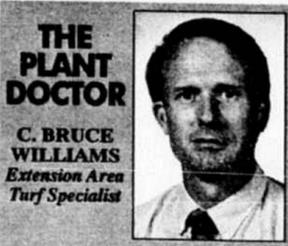
■ Get mower blades sharpened and mowers serviced.

■ Try daylilies. "Black Eyed Stella" is the first daylily named to the All-America Selection. This cultivar exhibits an extremely long bloom time. In one of the California trials, "Black Eyed Stella" bloomed for 300 days, but nearer to home you may only expect to see 100 to 130 days of bloom in a well-maintained garden.

■ I have already observed crabgrass seedlings as of March 10. Application of most pre-emergent herbicides will do nothing for emerged crabgrass. However these herbicides will prevent further emergence of new crabgrass. Check with your Cooperative Extension Service on the best crabgrass control measures for your lawn or garden.

■ The best time to improve your soil fertility is prior to planting because nutrients can be thoroughly incorporated into the root zone area. Phosphorus is the most important nutrient in this category.

Phosphorus does not leach through the soil under normal gardening practices. Incorporate fertil-



THE PLANT DOCTOR
C. BRUCE WILLIAMS
Extension Area
Turf Specialist

er) or organic phosphorus (bonemeal or composted turkey litter) into the planting bed. Usually 2 to 5 pounds of 0-20-0 incorporated per 1,000 square feet of plant bed is adequate for most garden flowers or shrubs.

■ You can modify soil pH by adding limestone or sulfur. Agricultural limestone reduces soil acidity. Sulfur increases soil acidity. Get soil test information from your N.C. Cooperative Extension office for the proper amounts to add to your garden or lawn soils.

■ Re-mulch all shrub or plant

beds. Allow 12 to 24 inches of mulched space between turfgrass areas and plants in the bed. New mulch should be 3 to 4 inches thick. Pine needles, pine bark, compost or hardwood bark make excellent mulch.

■ Clean out perennial beds. Cut-off the stems or flower stalks of last year's perennials at ground level.

■ Cut last year's growth out of ornamental grasses (e.g. Pampas, Northern Sea oats, Japanese Bloodgrass, Miscanthus, and Pennisetum species).

■ Now is a good time for heavy-

duty resizing of Ligustrum, Holly, Elaeagnus, Osmanthus, Photinia, Boxwood, or Aucuba. Prune before or soon after new growth begins. If you find yourself pruning the same plants drastically every year, then you need to consider removing the plant or creating some form of topiary form which does not require constant heavy duty prunings.

■ Use Integrated Pest Management for disease and insect control in your garden. Do not apply pesticides just because you think you may have a problem. First, identify

the problem and then take the necessary cultural and pest control measures.

■ Be sure to plant the best turfgrass for your landscape. Contact the N.C. Cooperative Extension office for a copy of "Carolina Lawns".

■ The fastest way to establish a new lawn is by sodding. Lawns established with turfgrass sod are up to 15 times more effective in controlling runoff than seed-established lawns.

Send your gardening questions and comments to the Plant Doctor, P.O. Box 1099, Bolivia NC 28422.

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Aquatic Weeds Management Is Topic Of Apr. Workshop

Dr. Stratford Kay, extension aquatic weed specialist at N.C. State University, will conduct a workshop on managing unwanted plant growth in the aquatic environment April 4 at the N.C. Cooperative Extension Office Brunswick County Center.

The program will begin at 1 p.m. and should end by 4, according to David L. Nash, agricultural extension agent.

Topics to be covered include aquatic plant identification, biological, mechanical and cultural control methods, and herbicide selection and use.

Three hours of pesticide recertification credits will be available in categories A, I, N and D.

To pre-register for the course, call the extension office at 253-4425.

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