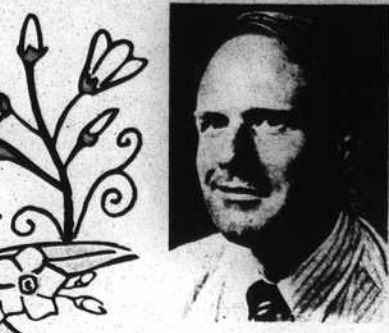


Plant Doctor

Bruce Williams Ph.D.



Don't allow your yard debris to 'go to waste'

By Bruce Williams, Ph.D.
Brunswick County
Cooperative Extension Service

This is the time of year I see neighborhood streets filled with piles of leaves, plastic bags full of leaves, and mounds of other garden debris. The weather is cool and yard work seems to be on everyone's mind.

What are you going to do with all those pine needles and leaves?

With pine straw selling for \$5 or more a bale, I have been known to fill up the back of my truck with pine straw thrown out by the homeowner. Pine straw makes a wonderful mulch for all kinds of plant beds.

In many locales the organic debris will cost thousands of dollars to bury in a landfill. The organic matter bundled up in the plastic bags will last decades, if not hundreds of years, buried deep within the landfill.

The recycling of organic matter (like pine straw, leaves, wood chips) into the landscape is becoming more common. New laws (eg. N. C. Senate Bill 111) require municipal governments to concentrate on ways to reduce the organic wastes going to the public landfill. You can help the environment and help defray the cost of disposing of organic wastes by composting or utilizing your own organic waste.

Utilizing your yard wastes by composting will save money and create a better soil for your plants to grow. Here are some tips that should help you better utilize the organic debris in your yard.

•Get those leaves off your lawn! Leaves on turfgrass spells future lawn problems. Diseases and insects have a field day in the moist environment created by heavy leaf cover on your lawn.

•In ornamental plant beds, leaves and pine needles make a wonderful mulch around all types of trees and shrubbery. Most experts feel that a mulch three to five inches in depth is optimum. However, recent scientific studies evaluating the effects of 16 to 18 inches of coarse textured mulch indicate the "super" deep mulches do not harm the root growth of shade tree species. However, heavy mulches around small shrubs can create serious problems. These coarse-textured mulches were generated by a commercial wood-chipping machine like those utilized by the tree maintenance operations. A potential bad side effect of deep mulches is the proliferation of rodents and tree trunk diseases, so be careful not to pile excessive mulch directly against the base of the tree.

•For rapid decomposition of your yard waste, try mixing grass clip-

pings with leaves in your compost pile. In addition, regular stirring (twice a month) of the compost pile will improve aeration which increases microbial activity, thus accelerating the decomposition process.

•Having a difficult time deciding what type of composter you want? I recently visited the American Horticulture Society in Alexandria, Va. This organization has set up a demonstration of just about every commercially available backyard composting apparatus known to mankind. The demonstration is on the River Farms property near Mt. Vernon and is well worth the time for a visit. For more information call the American Horticulture Society at 703-768-5700 and ask them about their research regarding backyard composting devices.

•Mulch will dramatically improve the water and nutrient holding capacity of your soil. This means a well-mulched plant bed will require less irrigation and fertilization for optimum plant growth. Also, healthy plants have fewer disease and insect problems.

•Utilize leaf or chip mulches in the same way you would use any ground cover. Consider it part of the landscape. Contact your local N. C. Cooperative Extension Service office for additional information on backyard composting or send me a SASE.

Send your gardening questions or comments to The Plant Doctor, P. O. Box 109, Bolivia, NC 28422.



Costumed in 18th century finery, these celebrants joined organizers Eleanor Smith and Susie Carson (left) at a Charter Tea in commemoration of Smithville-Southport's 200th anniversary on Sunday. A Bicentennial finale is planned for December.

Pets of the week

A blonde-colored mixed breed female dog named "Burt" is now available for adoption at the Brunswick County Animal Control Center. She is said to be extremely affectionate and "very sweet and pretty." The adoption fee is \$15 and the fee for a rabies vaccination is \$7.

A female mixed-spaniel dog with chocolate brown hair and a male mixed husky dog are also up for adoption. Both are said to be very good-natured. The adoption fee is \$15 each and the fee for a rabies vaccination is \$7.

A variety of "adorable" kittens are also available. The adoption fee is \$2 each and the fee for a rabies vaccination is \$7.

For more information, persons should contact the animal control center at 754-8204 or call toll-free 1-800-233-2169.

Cutting back on calories

If you're planning to cut back on fattening foods after overeating during the holidays, you may want to try these recipe substitutions offered by extension food and nutrition specialists at NCSU.

•Use skim milk with 90 calories a cup instead of whole milk, which has 170 calories a cup.

•Evaporated skim milk at 220 calories a cup can be whipped into cream while regular whipping cream has 830 calories a cup.

•Low-fat yogurt with 140 calories a cup can be substituted for sour cream which has 412 calories a cup.

Planting the idea of a garden gift may unearth possibilities

The frantic holiday shopping season is upon us. But for those choosing gifts for gardeners, a wide variety of easy-to-find items can make shopping almost tranquil.

New tools, gardening books, how-to videos and subscriptions to gardening magazines are appropriate for nearly every home gardener, and one size usually fits all.

"In this age of computerization, you may want to consider software or computer programs that will aid in garden recordkeeping and troubleshooting," said Larry Bass, a horticulturist at North Carolina State University.

For the more serious gardener, a

chipper/shredder or a compost bin may be a good investment, said Bass, also a specialist with the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service at NCSU.

"The chipper/shredder and compost bin will provide the gardener with excellent soil-enriching material and will help reduce yard wastes," Bass said. "Before purchasing a chipper, it's important to get information on the features offered by different models and to be aware of all the safety considerations."

A new state law requires public landfills to handle yard wastes separately, beginning in January, 1993. Bass said that removing branches,

grass clippings and similar wastes may become more difficult or costly after the deadline. A shredder will decrease the amount of yard waste and will prepare it for composting.

Manufactured compost bins are available in a variety of types and price ranges. However, homemade versions are effective, cheap and easy to build.

Those looking for big-ticket gifts might also consider roto-tillers and lawn mowers.

Many discount and department stores offer smaller, less-expensive gardening gadgets, such as tools, hoses and sprayers. Be sure to purchase quality products that will be durable.

You may even consider creating your own gardening gift pack, filled with small but necessary items such as gloves, hats, hand tools and stakes.

Still unsure what to buy? "How about a gift certificate from your gardener's favorite gardening center or supply store?" said Bass. "It makes a great stocking stuffer."

SENIOR ACTIVITIES

Pottery shoppers' destination

A senior day trip to the Carolina Pottery at Smithfield is scheduled for Wednesday, December 9. The trip will include a day of shopping at the pottery along with supper at Holt Lake Barbecue and Seafood.

The cost is \$7 a person and covers transportation. Space is limited. Reservations can be made by calling Kelly Fields at the Brunswick County Parks and Recreation Department.

Holiday shopping, show set

Monday, November 30, is the deadline for reservations for a holiday shopping trip to Barefoot Landing and the Christmas special at the Dixie Jubilee in Myrtle Beach.

The trip is scheduled for Wednesday, December 16. The cost \$20 a person, which includes transportation.

More information can be obtained by calling Kelly Fields at the Brunswick County Parks and Recreation Department, 1-800-222-4790 or 253-4357.

January cruise to Bahamas

A Disney/Bahamas cruise for seniors is being planned by the Brunswick County Parks and Recreation Department.

The trip, scheduled for January 18-25, includes hotel accommodations, admission to the Walt Disney World Epcot Center, a cruise to Nassau and meals. The cost is \$648 per person based on double occupancy.

Business Hours
Monday-Saturday 10:00-6:00

Boat House Gifts Inc.

5606 E. Oak Island Drive
Long Beach, N.C. 28465



The Grape Vine

by Jim Hinkson



California vintners are bragging about the 1990 chardonnays. The vintage was "a winemaker's dream," said one. Critics rate the vintage the best since 1985 and 1986. It is expected to improve with age.

Some winemakers are following the lead of Burgundy and using partial malolactic fermentation, a secondary fermentation that softens the texture of a new wine, plus barrel fermentation and aging on the lees (the spent grapes from which the wine is made, and the used-up yeast).

Another good vintage available now: the 1989 Bordeaux. One New York retailer put away a sampler case of the premier crus worth \$1,495 now - for his baby grandson to open on his 21st birthday in 2013.

Wine industry sources are considering a new "Pacific Coast" appellation that would permit blending of grapes from Washington, Oregon and California. Now such blends can only be called "American."

Do you know why turkeys have both dark and light meat? So you can enjoy the red or white wine you prefer for Thanksgiving.

Stock up for your Thanksgiving party at...

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6235 E. Oak Island Dr., Long Beach

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