

Garden/Farm

Hoke Agricultural Extension News

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Clean Wash -- Recent rainy weather may keep the streets of Raeford clean, but it has not done much for farmers in Hoke County. The wet weather has made early preparation and planting difficult here.

Rhododendron

One plant that gives homeowners a number of problems is the rhododendron. Probably one reason there are so many problems with them is the fact that homeowners have been unintentionally misled to believe that rhododendrons are as easy to maintain as azaleas.

The reason this article is being written is that I feel a few tips about the cultural conditions of rhododendron could prevent a lot of disappointment. First, and probably most important, is the fact that rhododendron have a high moisture requirement.

Today nurserymen have done such a good job growing the plants that the plants are loaded with foliage. This foliage in turn acts as a "pump" on hot sunny summer days. On newly (Spring) set plants, the roots have not had the opportunity to grow out into the native soil.

This allows the original root ball to be the only area for water uptake (a very small area). Another thing to note is that a large portion of container grown rhododendron are grown in pure pine bark. Once pine bark dries out it is extremely difficult to wet (something like dry peat moss).

Now for some additional rhododendron problems. The number 2 problem with rhododendron is phytophthora die back. Probably 70% of all calls on rhododendrons are die back or

lack of water. Die back's appearance is an entire link (old and new growth) wilting.

It is more common during hot humid weather. You can spray for die back, however, most homeowners had rather just cut back the wilting limb until they can see all green wood. This is probably a "primitive" control practice, but it works!

The next most common ailment is rhododendron stem borer. It too can be sprayed, but allow me to give you one other method. Gardeners should look for any wilted new growth.

Anytime one limb of new growth is wilted, look for small holes (little larger than pin holes) in the stem. If there are holes, then chances are it is rhododendron borer.

Removal of the limb until you hit all solid wood is an effective way to eliminate the problem.

The last problem is phytophthora root rot. It looks as if the entire plant is wilted. Usually if a homeowner has this problem, it is best to plant something else.

Finally, if you are interested in some rhododendron varieties that should do well in Hoke County, here are a few: reds-- America, Vulcan, Besse Howells, and Nova Zembla. pinks--Trude Webster, Ben Mosley, English Roseum, Holden, Roseum Elegans, Spring Dawn and Anna Rose Whitney. whites-- Gomer Waterer and Ice Cube.

Good Management Stops Beetles

Few forest pests have gotten the publicity in the South in recent years that can rival the "print" received by the southern pine beetle. But according to Robert Jones, Hoke County Forest Ranger, this beetle deserves all the attention it is getting and more, because it is the single most destructive pest in the southern forest.

Many forest landowners are asking "Should I beat the beetle to the punch by harvesting timber now before it is wiped out? Is there something I can do to lessen the likelihood of beetle attack?"

Thanks to some important forest research in recent years, there are now answers to these two questions. "The first is answered by 'NO.' The second by 'Yes,'" Jones said.

Foresters now know that the single most effective prevention measure is to keep timber stands healthy and vigorous. Dense

stands containing many slow-growing and weak trees are favorite targets of the hungry beetle.

"By carefully thinning out the smaller trees until the remaining trees have adequate space for expansion of their crowns," explained Jones, "the possibility of a successful attack by pine beetles will be greatly reduced."

Trees that are growing well usually have enough flow of resin up and down the trunk to "pitch out" any beetles that could get through the bark and enter the tree. Weak trees are more easily overwhelmed by attacking beetles. Mature and overmature trees seldom respond to thinning and consideration should be given to harvesting and replacing them with younger trees.

Damage to the remaining trees during logging should be controlled as well, according to recent

research information. It also helps to manage for good hardwood species. These trees, not bothered by the beetle, act as a buffer against pine beetle movement as it progresses through an infested pine stand.

Throughout the South, the odds of any property experiencing a southern pine beetle attack are small. However, by applying these management practices, the odds are greatly reduced in favor of the forest landowners.

"The key is to keep pine stands well-managed and growing so that the adage, 'an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure' will have an opportunity to be fulfilled," Jones said.

Additional information and help in managing timber stands to minimize the risk of southern pine beetle attack is available at NRCD-Forest Resources and your local N.C. Forest Service office.

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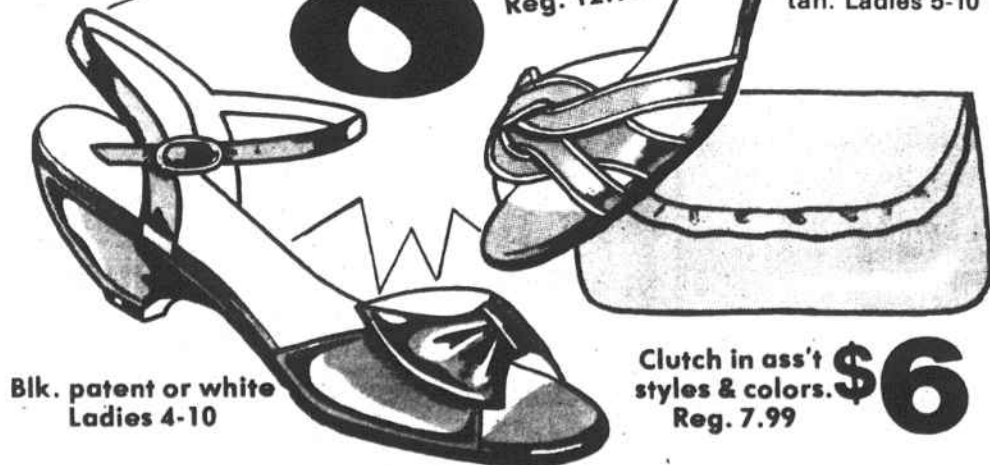
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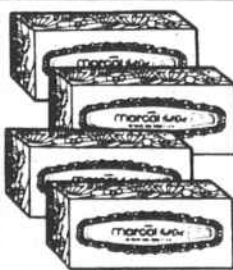
Ladies 6-11 Navy, red, natural, or green canvas

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Shoe Show

HOURS: Mon. thru Sat. 10-8 Sun. 1-6

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401 Bypass/Cole Ave.
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HOURS: Mon. thru Sat. 9-8 Sun. 1-6