



August Yard Offers Variety

A miniature windmill that turns in the breeze and a diverse array of plantings provide year-round interest at the home of Ruth Asmussen (above right), at 79 Magnolia, in Sea Trail, the August Yard of the Month for the Sunset Sands Garden Club. Presenting the sign was club representative Marie Summerlin (above left).

Zoysia Grass Lawns Demand Attention

Dear Plant Doctor: I sure hope you can help me with my lawn. I have a nice zoysia grass stand established 12 to 15 years ago. A section of the lawn has recently begun to die. The grass turns pale, yellowish and just dies out. The disease appears to be moving across the yard slowly...about 3 to 4 feet in six months.

I have sprayed twice with diazinon, twice with malathion and twice for fungus with the fungicide "Fore". Still no luck in controlling progression of the disease. It's had plenty of water. I have fertilized with a strong nitrogen base mixed with 8-8-8 fertilizer.

I have looked for ground pearls but did not see any. I am stumped. Please help.

Answer: Zoysia grass is the "king" of warm season grasses. Zoysia is the most tolerant of the warm season grasses to winter kill and many other problems that plague grasses.

On the other side of the coin, zoysia grass requires intensive maintenance and a very sharp lawn mower, preferably a reel type mower.

Until recently only about three cultivars—Emerald, Meyer and Cashmere—were generally available in this area, but this will probably change in the next several years.

THE PLANT DOCTOR

C. BRUCE WILLIAMS
Extension Area
Turf Specialist



I suspect your problem is due to either ground pearls or a fungus problem called "rust" or *Puccinia zoysiae*. Rust on zoysia grass is easily diagnosed by looking for a golden yellow dust or tiny yellow-brown lesions on the grass blades. These symptoms are most commonly found on the living grass at the interface of the diseased area.

Plants experiencing environmental stress, such as shade, dry or wet soils, hot, humid weather, too much or too little nitrogen, etc., tend to be more prone to this disease.

Fungicides will protect healthy grass from infection and allow superficially infected grass to regenerate new uninfected tissues. Fore (mancozeb) is among the fungicides recommended by the N.C. Agricultural Chemicals Manual for control of rust.

Other recommended turf grass fungicides that should also control

the problem are Banner (propiconazole), Bayleton (triadimefon) or Daconil 2787 (chlorothalonil). Be sure to follow label instructions when applying any pesticide.

Early this summer I inspected an Emerald zoysia grass lawn that was totally consumed by ground pearls. Just because you cannot find ground pearls does not mean that they are not the problem. Pearl bugs are extremely small and difficult to detect this time of year. There is no remedy for ground pearls at this time.

For positive identification of the problem, you will need to take a sod sample (from the edge of the infected area) to your county extension office.

N.C. State University Cooperative Extension Service has recently published an excellent publication on zoysia grass. Please send a SASE to me or see your local extension agent for a copy of *Zoysiagrass Lawn Calendar*—Publication AG432.

Readers, thank you for all the letters you have sent the past several weeks. I have received dozens of questions and/or requests for information. I'll reply as soon as possible. Thanks for reading the column.

Send your gardening questions to *The Plant Doctor*, P. O. Box 109, Bolivia, N.C. 28422.

United Way Agencies To Meet With Public

Agencies serving Brunswick County will participate in the Cape Fear Area United Way agency fair Friday, Aug. 30, at 11 a.m., at the Brunswick County Government Center in Bolivia.

Open to the public, the forum is held so agencies can answer the public's questions regarding services to Brunswick County residents.

Scheduled to attend are these agencies: the Cape Fear Chapter of the American Red Cross; Brigade Boys' Club; Brunswick Adult Day Care; Brunswick County Literacy Council; Brunswick County Volunteer and Information Center;

Cape Fear Council Boy Scouts of America; Children's Home Society; Cape Fear Substance Abuse Center; Elderhaus; Family Services of the Lower Cape Fear.

Also, Girl Scout Council of Coastal Carolina; Hope Harbor Home; Lower Cape Fear Hospice; Rx For Excellence; Southeastern Sickle Cell Association; Stepping Stone Manor/Pathway House; The Salvation Army; Wilmington Family YMCA; and Young Women's Christian Association.

The following United Way representatives will also discuss the services available to Brunswick

County residents and the 1991-92 campaign and allocations process: Joseph Stevenson, Brunswick County campaign chair; Polly Russ, allocations chair; and H. Lee White-side Jr., campaign chair.

VFD Slates Dinner

Bolivia VFD Auxiliary will hold a chicken or ham dinner Saturday, Aug. 31, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the fire station on Green Lewis Road in Bolivia.

Plates are \$3.50 each, said spokesman Ann Bowling.

Teen's First Novel Wrapped In History Of Fort Caswell

BY TERRY POPE

Alicia Conn's first book was written in secret. She presented it to her mother as a surprise Christmas gift.

Since then, Alicia has become a published writer at the age of 15.

The Oak Island teen-ager has published a 65-page historical romance based on the fall of Fort Caswell, a Civil War fort bombarded by Union soldiers in 1865. The old fort is now the site of the N.C. Baptist Assembly retreat near her home.

She began writing *Till Caswell Fell* in the summer of 1990 and captured first place with it in the Robert Ruark Foundation short story contest in Southport.

The story mostly involves conflict, as war and separation confront two teens who discover they love one another.

"My favorite writers do have a lot of conflict in their stories," she said. "It's fun to write. It's a part of life and a little more realistic."

The main character, Georgia Fosset, is 15 and falls in love with a Confederate soldier, Johnny Slate. Georgia's twin brother has joined the Confederate forces, but another brother has sided with the enemy.

When the Confederates evacuate the fort, she and Johnny flee in different directions, only to be reunited in the end.

Georgia was developed from a combination of persons Alicia has known, including one of her best friends and a little bit of herself.

"Georgia Fosset does have some of my traits," she said. "She doesn't exactly follow all of the rules."

Alicia consulted history texts before writing her novel. She had the ending in mind before she even started, which is a little different from how she usually writes. After winning the short story contest, she added several chapters before sending the work off to be published.

"Usually, I don't know how it's going to end, except when I get to the end," she said.

Three other works are finished and several others are in the planning stages. The home-schooled author began writing at age 12, during an illness that kept her confined.

That first book, *Lost Love*, she describes as one "written by a Christian to troubled teens."

For there is a lot of love that does not necessarily involve romance, said her mother, Nancy.

"It's about a girl that's suicidal, with everything going down at once," said Alicia. "I want to reach out to teen-agers that have problems like this, to let them know there is an answer to some of these questions."

During the illness, she says, "It seemed like everything was happening at once. Things were not exactly going well."

Writing a historical romance was a change from her usual teen-age



STAFF PHOTO BY TERRY POPE

INTEREST IN THE Cape Fear region during the Civil War led to Alicia Conn's first published book, *Till Caswell Fell*.

The book is dedicated to Melanie Cox, a longtime friend.

"She has been a great source of encouragement," said Alicia.

She enjoys writing in late evenings and in private, occasionally testing chapters with her sister, Kristen, 13, whom Alicia says is honest in saying what parts she likes and doesn't like about a particular work in progress.

While writing late at night, she says, she becomes absorbed with the story that unfolds, never knowing where the next chapter will lead. In finishing *Till Caswell Fell*, she kept looking over her shoulder at nights, sensing that a character from her novel would be there.

"You get so involved," she said.

A break becomes a walk on the beach just outside her home. In the novel, Georgia also took walks along the beach to relieve stress from her job helping nurse Confederate soldiers, just long enough to do some thinking.

"When you go to the beach, it's very inspiring," she said. "You have to love this area to be able to appreciate it."

Her other talents are in drawing and designing jewelry, and she has plans to attend a Bible college.

Till Caswell Fell has entered a second printing and Alicia has spent the summer meeting people, young authors like herself, at book signings. The book is available at local stores.

"The community has been very

supportive," she said. "People seem interested in reading about their area."

There are plans to publish other works in the future, but she said there is no rush. She will take time to polish some works already in her portfolio. Her parents believe that patience is the best approach.

"She's learned a lot from this book," said her mother. "I don't want her to grow to dislike writing."

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