

# Beware Miracle Cures For Ailing Soil

A friend recently asked me to look over a new product that claimed to add vitamins and beneficial bacteria to the soil. The product had no chemical analysis of the contents nor any detailed information about its effect on the environment.

I have seen numerous products like the one he showed me. Without exception, all of these products are nothing more than a "snake oil" remedy for plants. Do not waste your gardening budget on such nonsense.

Adequate light and water, a healthy soil, and a reasonable fertilization regime are required for good plant growth. "Snake oil" remedies are no substitute for good cultural practices.

Plants require 16 essential nutrients for growth. Over 90 percent of the dry weight of the plant is made up of carbon (C), hydrogen (H), and oxygen (O). The plant obtains these three nutrients from carbon dioxide in the air and water.

The remaining 13 nutrients are supplied by the soil and are classified according to their importance to plant growth.

Nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P), and potassium (K) are called the primary nutrient elements because they are used in the greatest quantity for plant growth. The fertilizer grade (like 8-8-8 or 5-10-15) describes the relative percentages of N, P and K.

The secondary nutrient elements are calcium, magnesium and sulfur. Calcium and magnesium are supplied to the plant through soil applications of dolomitic agricultural limestone. Sulfur is contained in

## THE PLANT DOCTOR

C. BRUCE WILLIAMS  
Extension Area  
Turf Specialist



many fertilizers as by-product of the fertilizer manufacturing process.

The trace elements, or minor elements, essential to plant growth are manganese, zinc, copper, boron, molybdenum and iron. Trace elements are needed in extremely small quantities and rarely are needed in the home garden.

Iron is the exception to the rule. Azaleas and centipede grass often show iron deficiency in the new leaf growth (yellow between the veins) when planted in a soil with a pH value above 6. Iron deficiency can be quickly remedied through a foliar application of chelated iron.

The sandy soil and high rainfall of the Cape Fear region make conditions ideal for rapid leaching of nitrogen and potassium from the soil profile. Phosphorus is chemically bound in the top several inches of the soil and does not normally leach into the soil profile.

The ideal fertilizer for this area is one that supplies the correct quantity of nutrients and is slowly introduced over the entire growing season. Most commercial fertilizer formulations of nitrogen or potassium are leached out of the soil after sev-

eral inches of rainfall.

I have found three practical solutions to maintaining high soil fertility:

1. Use huge quantities of well-rotted animal manures. Optimum results are achieved with early spring applications on vegetable and flower beds.

2. Apply commercial grade fertilizers frequently, but in small quantities. The application of a quarter cup of 8-8-8 per 100 square feet after every two to four inches of rainfall (or irrigation) will work wonders on the vegetable or flower garden. Double that amount for leafy vegetables.

3. Incorporate slow-release fertilizers into the soil. Osmocote and some of the locally produced sulfur-coated urea nitrogen fertilizers will produce excellent results with most vegetable and flower crops. These products are usually more expensive, but the saving of time and labor is well worth the cost. Most commercial nurseries and greenhouse producers use this method of fertilization.

Unfortunately, there are no simple formulations or easy solutions to solve the problem of soil infertility. A gardener is best prepared for the coming growing season by learning more about the soil, the nutrients and the plants during those cold winter months.

For more information on soil fertility and soil testing, contact your local N.C. Cooperative Extension agent.

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



## Hunters Receive Monthly Award

Edith and Robert Hunter received the October Yard of the Month award from the Sunset Sands Garden Club. Two profusely blooming mandevillas provide bright pink accents along the corner rail fencing of their well-groomed landscape at 38 Indigo Circle, Sea Trails. The two will have lived in Sea Trails nine years come December.

## Interpreters Will Share Carolina Heritage

Costumed interpreters will demonstrate 18th century crafts and chores for Brunswick County fourth grade students at Brunswick Town State Historic Site Oct. 22-24 from 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

The program is designed to give area students a hands-on approach to local history, said Brenda Marshburn, assistant site manager. It is sponsored jointly by the

Brunswick County Schools and Friends of Brunswick Town.

Leland Middle School is scheduled Tuesday; Southport and Bolivia schools, Wednesday; and Shalotte and Waccamaw schools, Thursday.

Local volunteers and site staff donned in garb from two centuries past demonstrate such colonial

crafts as candle dipping and molding, foodways, woodworking, broom making, toys and games, drop spindle, stenciling and rope making.

Brunswick Town State Historic Site is an agency of the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources. It preserves the site of a bustling colonial port and political center and a Confederate fort.

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

### Lower Cape Fear Hospice Seeking Children's Festival Land Helpers

Lower Cape Fear Hospice is seeking volunteers to help with Children's Festival Land, to be held at Coastline Convention Center in Wilmington in conjunction with the Festival of Trees at the Wilmington Hilton, Nov. 30 through Dec. 8.

All proceeds from both events will benefit Hospice, an organiza-

tion that provides a medically-directed program of care and support for terminally ill patients and their families in Bladen, Brunswick, Columbus, New Hanover, Onslow and Pender Counties.

Children's Festival Land will offer a creative, hands-on Christmas experience complete with crafts and

a visiting Santa.

Beth Schedler, project chairperson, is seeking individuals, groups or businesses as Festival Land volunteers. Anyone willing to help is asked to call her at 919-799-7146, the Wilmington Hospice office, 919-762-0200, or 1-800-733-1476.

## Reunion Set

Alumni of Waccamaw School will hold a reunion Friday, Oct. 25, at Capt. Nance's Restaurant on the waterfront in Calabash, starting at 6 p.m.

Attendees will order from the menu.

More information is available from Crystal Stanley Meares, secretary, of Wilmington, 919-686-0405.

### Yarns OF WILMINGTON

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### ALL SUMMER MERCHANDISE

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### NICE SELECTION FALL DRESSES

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All charge card purchases will be charged an additional 5%.

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**SALE ENDS 10/23/91**

*Linda and Gwyn's Boutique*  
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Thomasboro Road, Calabash, 579-7848

## IT'S THE HALLOWEEN CLEARANCE SALE

### DON'T LET THESE LOW PRICES SCARE YOU!

There is so much to see at J. Livingston's Halloween Sale! Our many dining and bedroom sets, occasional tables and accent pieces-all in stock-are ready for immediate delivery. You'll be pleasantly surprised at our large selection of living room and family room furniture. Come in today and save!

	List	Sale
Rattan Arm Loveseat	\$699.00	\$299
Oriental Bedroom Group	\$1,999.00	\$999
4 Pc. Lacquer Bedroom	\$749.00	\$429
Pastel Stripe Sleeper Sectional	\$2,499.00	\$1,370
National Mt. Airy Bedroom	\$4,600.00	\$2,600
Pink Boudoir Chair	\$499.00	\$249
Rattan Swivel Rocker	\$339.00	\$189
French Chair	\$599.00	\$329
Bachelors Chest	\$169.00	\$99
Assorted Loveseats	Start \$669.00	Start \$299
Assorted Tables	Start \$179.00	Start \$99
All Spring Air Bedding	Start \$279.00	Start \$139
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