

Agriculture

Questions and answers on your spring garden

Q. How do I handle gerberas?
A. I'm so glad you want to. Gerberas have become quite popular in the summer border. Jewel tones of each daisy-like bloom stand out with particular brilliance. I winter-over gerberas in a cool greenhouse and replant them in the garden after the ground has warmed up. During summer feed them once a month with cow-manure tea or 5-10-5. Gerberas like soil that is a little on the alkaline side, so mulch with wheat straw, not pine straw. Last year, after a long period of drought (period? it never stopped!) my gerberas looked tired. I scratched some dried chicken manure into the soil around them, gave them a big drink of water, and they took right off.
Q. How long can I count on my 12 year old asparagus bed?
A. Pretty long. Now, if shoot production was reduced in your asparagus bed compared to former years, indications are you need to replant. With good management, however, asparagus beds should produce for at least 25 years. Fertilize bed after production has stopped, mulch well to keep out weeds, and provide regular moisture.
Q. Why does one of my crab apples have so many suckers?
A. First of all, crab apples sucker easily, and require gentle removal of sprouts from time to time. Since only one of yours is producing too many suckers, the problem may be root damage from compaction, or the trees may be too top heavy, which is unusual. You can prune judiciously, removing heavy boughs, and any that are making contact with another. Check the soil. Crab apples like a little acidity.
Q. What can I plant under my shade trees that will stay pretty and green?
A. Periwinkle, that's what. Vinca minor has dark green leaves with beautiful 'periwinkle blue' flowers in the spring. Some varieties have white or purple flowers, but I like the blue best. Periwinkle spreads by creeping roots that will soon blanket a whole area. NCSU horticultural specialists suggest planting nine plants to a square yard in soil that has been loosened with well-rotted manure. Keep watered while the plants are establishing themselves.
Q. My Red Bays have developed yellow tips on their leaves.
A. Not to worry, says Dr. Vince Bellis, biologist at East Carolina. Obviously your Bays had an overdose of salt spray lately. While on a field trip in March in Nags Head Woods, Dr. B. pointed out that Red Bay, a.k.a. Swamp Red Bay, Sweet Bay, Laurel Tree, has the ability to move salt content in its moisture ingestion to the end of the leaf and right on out. This ability makes Red Bays a fine specimen for the seaside garden, used as both a hedge and a wind-break.
Q. How large an area will a three cubic foot bag of bark mulch cover?
A. Dick Allen at State says that that much mulch will cover an 18



square foot area with two inches of mulch.
Q. I'd like to raise bees here in N.C. A. You'd be in good company, Dr. John T. Ambrose at State says there are about 20,000 beekeepers in the state. Two to three dozen are commercial operators, but the remainder are hobbyists. The number of colonies of honeybees is 190,000 third largest in the nation.
 Contact your county extension agent for information on this engrossing hobby. I don't do bees.
 But I can tell you what they like to eat. There are some plants that are so attractive to bees they are called "Bee Plants," says Dr. J. In North Carolina, the most important sources of nectar and pollen are the tulip, or yellow, popular. In the coastal plain gallsberries (Ilex glabra) are equally important.
 Other great bee plants are clover, goldenrod, black locust, sourwood, maple, tupelo, sweet corn, candellion, redbud, cherry, plum, peach, holly, bee balm (Monarda), aster, and sedum.
Q. When do I fertilize fescue?
A. You are too late, May was your deadline. Tsk, tsk. Fescue will stop growing when temperatures get too hot. If the plants are forced to grow by applying fertilizer at the wrong time, the lawn will become susceptible to various diseases, says Kim Powell at State. And it be all your fault.
Q. Can I prune my leggy nandina?
A. Only if you promise to do it right. Prune one stem at a time, some very low, some higher up, staggering the heights of the cuts so growth will fill in at different heights. Do this as soon as possible so you won't lose the advantage of showy red berries in the fall.
Q. Some suggestions, please, on white flowers to plant now for my garden wedding in July.
A. Sounds elegant. Horticulturist Joe Love suggests ageratum, begonias, petunias, portulaca, verbena, salvia, sweet allysum, cleome, globe amaranth, hibiscus, and asters.
 Plant white spires of gladioli in the background, along with some tall snapdragons. Fill shady areas with green and white caladiums and white impatiens. Incorporate silver-leaved plants such as dusty miller and lamb's ears. Cut back hybrid tea roses about 60 days before the nuptials, and check with other rose growers in your area for advice on getting roses to the "church on time."
 Best wishes as you walk down that long green aisle. Don't trip on the snapdragons.



Pictured above is Brenda Allen, Leadership Development Specialist of North Carolina State University. Ms. Allen is pictured here as she makes her presentation during the recent Minority Leadership Development Seminar. The seminar was held last weekend (April 25) at the Perquimans Extension Service building in Hertford. The seminar was viewed as a big success by all who attended.

Correction

The outline under the first picture on page one of last week's Perquimans Weekly read incorrectly. The lady making the presentation in the picture was not Gloria Mitchell, but

Dr. Brenda Allen, Leadership Development Specialist, North Carolina State University. We regret the error.

Caterpillars

By STANLEY J. WINSLOW
 County Ext. Director

The nearly annual visitation of the Eastern Tent Caterpillar is upon us. The Extension Office is being bombarded with calls concerning this nuisance. Don't be alarmed—while this pest is very noticeable and annoying, it is fairly short lived and will be gone soon.
 The Eastern Tent Caterpillar has been observed in America since 1646. In recent years, it has made an annual appearance in Perquimans County; stripping shade trees, swamps and generally bothering everyone who has any trees in their yard. It will attack wild cherry, apples, peach and plum, but it seems to love our tupelo gum; so much so that it has been known to completely strip all the gum trees in a swamp of their leaves. It will also feed on oak, willow and maple, but only as a second choice.
 This insect passes the winter as a dark-brown collar-like mass of eggs attached to and often encircling small twigs. These egg masses are about 3/4 inch long by 1/2 inch in diameter and contain several hundred eggs. They have a shiny varnished appearance. The eggs hatch in early spring as soon as the tree leaves begin to unfold. The caterpillars gather

Continued on page nine.

Bases of U.S. affluence

The farmer and the abundant supply of food he produces is the basis on which we have been able to build the world's highest standard of living.
 How have farmers done this? There are several basic reasons:
 First, farmers have freed manpower. At the time of the American Revolution, this was a nation of farmers. Even 50 years ago, over one-fourth of all Americans were farmers. At present, less than three percent feed our nation while sharing around a third of their production with other countries. The remaining millions of people in America have been freed to produce other goods and services.
 Second, farmers have freed time. The average work week around 50 years ago was 50-60 hours compared to 35-40 hours now. Many things have helped, but you can be sure that if food, fiber and shelter were still costing 80 percent of consumer spending, workers could not have reduced their work week.
 Third, farmers have freed income. Fifty years ago the average American had to spend around 70-80 percent of his income on the basic requirements of life—food, clothing

and shelter. Today these essentials take approximately 60 percent.
 Fourth, farmers have freed space. When we were a nation of 107 million people, 350 million acres were required to grow our food and fiber. In recent years, we have harvested less than 300 million acres and our population has more than doubled.
 These benefits—income, time, space and better use of manpower—have all been vital to improving the quality of life for every member of society.
 Who benefits most?
 Generally, we in America feel that he would make progress possible should be rewarded for it. But the farmer—the man who has really made our improved level of living possible, often does not share proportionally in the profits.
 The real beneficiary of our great agricultural progress in the American consumer...the average American who feeds himself only about 16 percent of his after-tax income. In this world in which we live, this is indeed a miracle. Surely, the one who produced the miracle should share more equitably in it.

Homemakers calendar

May 13 and 14—Country Painting Class—County Extension Office—9:00 a.m.-2:30 p.m. Instructor from Currituck County. For information and if interested call 426-7697.
 May 28—Quick Point Christmas Ornament—Instructor—Mrs. Midge Stuller.

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NOTICE OF RIGHT TO NOMINATE BY PETITION

The Farmers Home Administration (FmHA) is accepting nominations for County Committee elections for Perquimans/Chowan Area Committee. This notice is issued to inform eligible voters of the rights to nominate candidates by petition. Copies of the petition and instructions on its completion can be obtained from your local FmHA office.

Persons nominated should be currently engaged in the operation of a farm, have their principal farming operation within the County or area in which activities of the County or area Committee are carried out, derive the principal parts of their income from farming (that is more than 50 percent of their gross income must come from (agricultural production), be a citizen of the United States or an alien lawfully admitted to the United State for permanent residence, not have an FmHA insured or guaranteed loan, and be well qualified for committee work. Nominations must be received in the Hertford Office no later than June 10, 1987. FmHA committee elections are open to all eligible voters without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, age, political affiliation, marital status, sex, and/or handicap.

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