

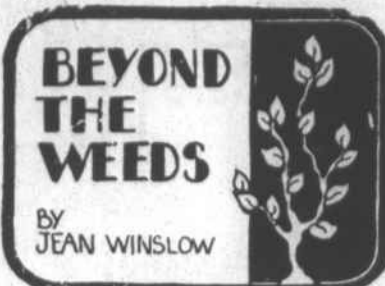
Farm and garden

April chores checklist will keep gardeners busy, plants beautiful

By: Jean Winslow

-Plant cannas outside.
-Pencil in planting dates on a calendar. This is particularly important for reminding ourselves of succession plantings, such as gladiolus.
-In fact—make a planting of glads right now, and repeat every ten days to two weeks until July.
-Bare-rooted ornamentals ordered through the mail or newly purchased should soak in water 24 hours before planting.
-Mark daffodils you really prefer during bloom. Use white plastic markers. After the foliage dies down, you will be able to locate the ones you want to divide.
-Prune forsythia AFTER you think about it awhile. No round

balls, please. A naturally weeping plant, forsythia is spectacular in bloom, and fits comfortably into the landscape during its green period.



-Save rain wrappers that package your newspapers and place them on poles in the garden. Breezes ripple the paper, frighten-

ing the birds.
-Discourage rabbits in the garden by sprinkling dry sulfur around its outer edges. Of the garden, not the rabbit.

-When you are strolling through the garden, take along a plastic grocery bag. Loop it over your wrist. As you check flowers and veggies, you can pick up debris, place it in the bag, and dispose of it at the end of your walk.

-If you haven't fertilized the lawn, hurry. After May 1 serious summer heat sets in, and fescue will go semi-dormant. Forcing the grass with extra fertilizer will only make it more susceptible to diseases.

-Feed azaleas immediately after blooming with cottonseed meal, 24

pounds per 100 square feet. Sprinkle over mulch and water in. Because of shallow roots, never dig the fertilizer in. Mulch is of vital importance to azaleas because of that shallow root system. It is also part of their nutrition. Use an acid mulch: pine needles, oak leaves, sawdust from oak, cypress and hemlock. Some gardeners apply seaweed once a year for trace minerals if they are not sure the plants are really healthy.

-Check plants for bagworms, those tiny little bags of twigs hanging from plant limbs. This is the time they become active, and are especially destructive to evergreens. Pick off what you see and destroy—drop them in a can of kerosene. Spray plant with malathion, Dursban, or Sevin if you don't mind

chemicals.
-Never put freshly cut daffodils in a vase with tulips or other blub flowers. Daffodil stems secrete a slimy substance that is toxic to most flowers. Put cut daffodils in their own vase for 24 hours. They will be neutralized enough to incorporate in flower arrangements by then.

By the way, there is a North Carolina Daffodil Society for daff fanciers. Write Ms. Alex Hightower, 2405 Glenwood Avenue, Raleigh, NC 27608 for information. Dues are \$5.00 a year.

-Cut lettuce from the garden with a very sharp knife, (it lasts longer). When preparing it for salad, use a tearing motion instead of steel.

-Plant about 20 radish seeds per hill of cucumbers or squash for good control of cucumber beetles and borers. Radishes definitely repel cucurbit pests.

-Divide perennials. Take a shovel and cut the plant into halves or quarters. Dig around the outer edge, keeping as much of the dirt around roots as possible. Make sure the new hole is big enough. Do

not place too deeply, or the crown will rot. Press dirt around the plant firmly with your foot.

Perennial herbs that should be divided now include Artemisia, Silver King, Silver Queen, Silver Mound, Bee balm, Comfrey, Lemon Balm, Lovage, Lamb's ears, Mint, Pot Marjoram, and Thyme.

-Perennials, newly divided or not, should be staked now so as not to interrupt the root system by inserting a stick into the ground later on.

Try "peastaking." This English method uses branches pruned from trees and shrubs instead of commercial stakes for a more natural look. I tried it last year, and was impressed at the esthetic difference.

-Fertilize annuals and containers with water soluble 5-10-5 or cow manure tea or fish emulsion.

-Pinch tums to encourage bushiness.

-Put some pretty fish in the lily pond. Tell the cat that the pretty fish are a no-no. You may have to tell him more than once.

4-Hers will blast off to summer space camp

By: Juanita T. Bailey
Home Economics Extension Agent

Five-four-three-two-one... B-LASTOFF! to an exciting summer of hands-on learning about space science and technology at the 1989 North Carolina 4-H Space Camp. Perquimans County Extension 4-H Agent Juanita T. Bailey states that 4-H Space Camp is designed to allow young people between the ages of nine and thirteen to study high-tech textiles, space-age foods, the physics of the space shuttle and model rocketry, and basic or advanced computer science. The 1989 Space Camp will be held the week of July 9 - 15 at the Penn 4-H Educational Center near Reidsville.

space campers will learn how nylon is made for use in a space suit, how foods are processed and packaged for shuttle missions, how computers are used to simulate space flight, and the physics and logistics of a space shuttle launch. In addition to these and other learning opportunities dealing with space technology, two periods daily will be devoted to recreational activities and classes.

On Wednesday, the junior astronauts will travel to the Moorehead Planetarium in Chapel Hill, the Shearon-Harris Nuclear Plant near Raleigh, and the NASA Mars Mission Research Center at North Carolina State University. Also during the week, the NASA Space-

mobile from Langley Air Force Base will visit the camp. On Friday, parents are invited to join their space campers at a banquet featuring a special guest speaker. Each Space Camp participant will receive a free 4-H Space Camp t-shirt as a memento of their adventure-packed week.

The cost of 4-H Space Camp '89 is

\$150; horseback riding instruction is available to a limited number of campers for an additional \$15 fee. Space Campers will be closely supervised by trained professional and volunteer staffs.

For more information on 4-H Space Camp '89, contact the Perquimans County Agricultural Extension Office at 426-5428.

1989 farm programs outlined

There are only a few days left to decide whether or not to participate in the 1989 Wheat, Feedgrain, and Cotton Programs. Program sign-up ends April 14. For those of you who are still uncertain, I have some very good computer programs to help in the decision making. These programs help compare net returns to not participating to those of alternative levels of participation in the program of each commodity.

Basic participation means that you must reduce plantings to 90 percent of base acreage (95 percent for oats, and 75 percent for cotton). No optional paid diversion is available this year. The 50-92 program is again an option for cotton. Under 50-92 you must plant at least 50 percent of permitted acres and receive payments on 92 percent of permitted acres. 0-92 is again available for wheat and feedgrains. Under 0-92, you must plant any portion up to 92 percent of permitted acreage and receive payments on 92 percent of permitted acres. Payments on the unplanted portion of permitted acres are guaranteed at the expected deficiency rate. All released acreage must be maintained in a conserving manner and that released 0-92 can be grazed except for the period May through September.

You may request 40 percent advanced deficiency payments at sign up. The entire advance will be made in cash at sign up. Payment will be made as soon as possible after the application has been approved.

These statistics are based only on a February survey of farmer's planting intentions. Actual planted acreage could change drastically in the next 6 weeks as a result of the weather and commodity prices. It could be concluded the Conservation Reserve Program and the ASCS farm programs are helping to hold down excessive plantings. This, along with a strong interest by the Soviet Union in our feedgrains, will hopefully result in profits for eastern North Carolina farmers this fall.

Like last year, the \$50.00 payment limitation applies to a deficiency payment. It applies to all such payments on a per person basis. If you would like to see these programs, please call your local extension office.

1989 Crop Enterprise Budgets are also available on disk and hard copy. These budgets will give you an indication of net returns that can be expected per commodity. These budgets are good planning tools and will aid you in developing your own budgets based on your own operation. It appears the nation's farmers are planning to increase corn and soybean plantings less than expected following 1988's drought. USDA says farmers intend to increase corn plantings 8 percent, far less than the 11 percent to 12 percent gains expected by processors, merchants, and traders. Soybean acreage is expected to increase by 5 percent, less than the 5.5 percent to 6 percent expected increase.

Expert tips for serious gardeners

By: Jean Winslow

Two great American schools of horticulture are in our neighborhood - North Carolina State University and VPI. Their publications are invaluable to serious gardeners. Here's what they say about some subjects my readers have asked me about.

Sterilize Soil Indoors
All you need, says State Horticulturist Larry Bass, is a standard microwave oven, soil, and a container.

For two pounds of soil, two minutes of heating at maximum power should wipe out worrisome pests like nematodes and fungi that cause damping off in young seedling.

Soil has a strong odor, he reminds us, but don't be bothered by it. Bass' recommendations are based on the use of mineral soils with a fairly low organic matter content. Soils with more than 20 percent of organic matter might require longer treatment times. Just keep experimenting until you get it right.

Hanging Baskets
Hanging baskets thrive outdoors in summer if a few requirements are taken care of, says State Horticulturist Millicent White.

Wait until the night air is 50 degrees. Avoid placing the plant in excessive heat. Direct sunlight can cause severe damage or plant death.

When watering the basket, apply enough water to completely moisten the soil. The amount of water, of course, depends on the size of the container. Do not apply small portions of water to the plant every day, as this procedure prevents good root development.

A plant growing in a wire basket can be irrigated by placing the basket in a bucket of water. After the soil is thoroughly wet, hang the basket so the excess water can drain off. Increase watering during summer and decrease during winter.

A basket growing in a cool environment requires very little fertilization. As weather becomes warmer, it will be necessary to increase fertilizer.

Liquid fertilizers are the easiest to use. There are many fine fertilizers on the market, or you can use cow manure teas and liquid fish emulsion. Flowering baskets should be fed a formula with a higher phosphorus number, since this is the mineral that encourages blooming. (Example: 10-15-10 on a bottle label means 10 percent nitrogen, 15 percent phosphorus, and 10 percent potash.)

Epiphytes like staghorn ferns should be treated a little differently, says Diane Relf at VPI. Keep epiphytes in a shady area. Since staghorns are planted in sphagnum moss attached to wood, take the plant down and soak the roots in a bucket of water until it is thoroughly moist. Use a very weak solution of liquid fertilizer in the soakings during the summer. Fertilize every two months in winter.

Potted Plants
N.C. State Agricultural Extension specialist Woody Upchurch hopes you won't forget your potted houseplants once it is nice enough to go play in the yard.

Now is the time to repot plants that have outgrown their containers. A good potting medium is a mixture of three parts loamy soil, two parts peat moss and one part coarse sand. To this mixture add one cup or 20 percent super phosphate per bushel of soil. Bone meal can be substituted for the phosphate if it is easier to obtain. Just remember that bone meal is not what it used to be. Sifted, washed, bleached, packaged and stored, commercial bone meal may not pack the nutritional wallop it used to.

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Wash fresh produce

Washington—U.S. Department of Agriculture officials advise consumers to wash fresh fruits and vegetables with plain water, not soap and water, to remove surface pesticide residues and other impurities.

USDA Consumer Advisor Ann Chadwick said that consumers recently have been advised by a private organization to use soap in washing fruits and vegetables. In some cases, this recommendation has been attributed to government sources.

"In fact, USDA, the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U. S. Food and Drug Administration—the three federal agencies with regulatory responsibility for foods—all recommend washing fresh fruits and vegetables with just plain water," said Chadwick. "We do not recommend washing food with soap. Soap residues may be difficult to remove from some foods, and soap is not intended to be consumed."

"Washing with water helps remove soil particles and other debris that may be hard to see, especially on leafy green vegetables," Chadwick said. "Washing with water also will help remove any existing surface pesticide residues. Thick-skinned produce may be scrubbed with a brush if desired." Consumers who have questions about handling food safely may call the toll-free USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 800-535-4555 (477-333 in the Washington, D. C., metropolitan area), or their local Cooperative Extension Service office. CES offices are listed under county government in local telephone directories.

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