

The Clod-Hopper



Volume 27 Edition 8 Gardeners of Wake County, Inc. – Raleigh, NC

AUGUST 2011

JULY MEETING HIGHLIGHTS – TIPS ON WATER GARDENING

The water gardening enthusiasts in attendance at the July meeting sparked a lot of interest with their questions. They agreed with the speaker that most “pond gardeners” would be happier with a pond that is about 50% larger than the one they have.

The speaker was Jonathan Kidder of Southern Water Gardens in Wake Forest. Jonathan was a student of Dr. JC Raulston and he designed the water feature that is at the entrance of the McSwain Building where the club meets. You will want to check out his web site at www.southernwatergardensinc.com for pictures

of the type work he talked about.

The liners, and geo-fabrics installed under them, available in the trade today are easier to work with than some of the products that were used 10 years ago. They are available locally if you want to “do-it-yourself” rather than having a contractor build it for you.

Filtering systems have improved and Jonathan recommended using a skimmer rather than circulating pump for a cleaner pool. Other systems for improved water quality were biomass filters, ion



generators and UV sterilizers for algae control.

Another suggestion was to put netting over a pond in the fall to keep the leaves out. An added benefit is that it also protects the fish from birds and raccoons. The fish protection becomes more important when you are a collector of \$10,000 Koi.

Ed Ponek has some “prolific” koi in his pond and offered to share their offspring with club members who could use them in their water gardens. Ed’s telephone number and e-mail are in the membership directory.

CLUB MEETINGS

Meetings are at 7:30 pm at the JC Raulston Arboretum

August 16 Rufus Edmisten, Secretary General of Gardening

Sept. 20 Lee Calhoun, Calhoun’s Nursery “Heirloom Apples”

October 18 Attend NC State Fair

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UPCOMING MEETINGS

August Meeting

Rufus Edmisten, former Watergate counselor, NC Secretary of State and Attorney General will be the speaker for the August meeting. Mike Raley and Anne Clapp have dubbed him the Secretary General of Gardening when he appears as a guest on their WPTF Saturday morning show, The Weekend Gardener. He is an entertaining speaker and a very good gardener that thinks it is a great thing for gardeners to share plants with their friends.



December Meeting

The annual awards dinner/holiday party for the club will be held on December 13 at the NCSU University Club on Hillsborough Street. Additional information will be available later. From reports we are hearing, the food and service have improved since the last time the Club met there.

Ginny Parker is the Beautification Awards Chairman but Spencer Clark has resigned as Club Awards Chairman. Please let Ginny or any of the other Board members know of people or places that you think deserve awards this year.

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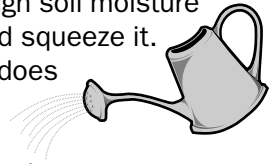
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Activities	Juliette LaBonte
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www.gardenersofwakecounty.org

WATERING TIPS

The general recommendation for watering is that most plants need about one inch of water a week. The easiest test to see if there is enough soil moisture is to grab a clump in your hand and squeeze it. If the soil is dry and falls apart it does not have enough moisture; you need to water or perfect your rain dance. If you can squeeze water out of it, it is too wet and plants may suffer root damage.



Water in the soil does not evaporate as quickly if plants are mulched with a 25 to 3 inch layer of organic material. Composted leaves and grass clippings, shredded or chipped bark and pine straw are readily available mulches. The leaves, grass and bark can be dug back into the soil at the end of the season to provide additional organic material. Pine straw works well when used around shrubbery and trees because it can be left in place for several years if it is “fluffed” and top-dressed with new pine straw each year.

Several of the thunderstorms this year have produced “downpours” that did not seep into the soil but the water did run into streams and local reservoirs for future use.



The most effective way to apply water is slowly and thoroughly. That usually means a trickling hose used for a couple of hours is more effective than one run at full blast for 10 minutes. Soaker hoses water the soil; oscillating sprinklers water the air and plant leaves as well as the soil. (Does it bother you when you drive down a major city street and see sprinklers running full force – sprinkling some grassy areas, sidewalks, driveways and the city street?)

If you use a sprinkler on a lawn, and occasionally I do, stick a rain gauge in the area getting watered to see how much water is getting applied. If you see water “puddling” on the ground, turn the sprinkler off and check the rain gauge. If there is less than 1/2-inch of water, leave the sprinkler turned off until the water seeps into the soil then turn the sprinkler back on. Remember you want to water deeply to encourage root development. Watering frequently

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New Members

Erin Bohner and Ed Williams
Raleigh

John and Sallie Everette, Raleigh

Brenda Strickland, Raleigh

Richard and Lucee Wallace,
Wake Forest

SUMMER ORNAMENTALS

More than 10 years ago Timber Press published a book entitled *Time Tested Plants* by Pamela Harper. (She also wrote *Color Echoes*.) It is a wonderful collection of photographs and descriptions of plants she had grown in her Norfolk, Virginia garden for over 30 years. The growing conditions in Norfolk and Raleigh are not identical but most of the plants included will thrive in our area.

Variegated foliage plants do not always do well in our hot summers but the *Cornus alba* 'Hedgerows Gold', a dogwood with yellow-variegated leaves, that Mrs. Harper describes has been successful. Another shrub that will brighten shady areas is Five-leaf *Aralia*. (It was labeled *Acanthopanax sieboldianus* 'Vareigata' when I bought it.) The botanical name is *Elutherococcus sieboldianus* 'Variegatus' in catalogs today. Variegated Solomon's Seal is available from Plant Delights and other local nurseries and "covers ground" well. The strawberry geranium (*Saxifraga stolonifera*) is another shade-loving ground cover.



Lilium canadense will grow well in sandy soils in this area and the cultivar 'Destiny' has a dark-spotted yellow flower. For a reliable white lily try *L. formosanum*, the white Formosa lily.

Hydrangeas are easy to grow in our area. They do need a mulch layer to keep the soil cool and moist during the heat of summer. Giving them protection from hot afternoon sun seems to help.

Daylilies can be planted close to where daffodils bloomed; they hide the spent foliage. Their peak bloom is June and July but several re-blooming and late blooming cultivars are available. There are several good daylily nurseries in North Carolina. The local daylily club members often sell their plants at the club plant sale.

A bright red bloom for July is the Eastern Coral-Bean (*Erythrina herbacea*). It is a perennial that blooms for about 4 weeks and the red seed pods remain on the dark red stems until autumn.

Clethra alnifolia (Summersweet or pepperbush) is a shrub that produces fragrant blooms in July and August. There are several cultivars at the

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OCTOBER FLOWER SHOW

It is not too soon to start thinking about entries for the Flower Show at the State Fair. For information on the competitions check out the website <http://ncstatefair.org/2011/competitions/howtoenter.htm>

The prize levels are the same as last year but there are a few changes in the entry categories. A major change was made for hybrid tea rose entries that will make more ribbons available. They have divided each color class into names beginning with A-J and K-Z.

With the hot, dry summer weather you may want to plant late crops of some of the annuals for better quality entries. You may also want to try growing some of the perennials in containers so they can be protected from "critters" and bad weather. A late planting of herbs such as basil and mint will have better form than those that have been growing all season. You can enter online or you can get an entry form and enter by snail mail or hand delivery of your form to the State Fair office. Keep track of your winnings and enter the "bragging rights" competition at the November meeting.

JULY / AUGUST GARDEN CHORES

Summer annual weeds are growing actively. It is easier to pull them out after a soaking rain. Be sure to get them out before they set seed for next year's crop. If you choose to use an herbicide to kill weeds read the label carefully to see if there are temperature restrictions listed. Most organic chemicals volatilize more quickly at higher temperatures so they are less dangerous to plants and more dangerous to humans. Sometimes it is safer to spray early in the morning before the temperatures climb.

If you did not get around to severe pruning earlier you can still prune most plants until the end of July. There is just enough time for new

growth to develop and harden off before the first frost.

July is the month that scale insects, spider mites, lace bugs and spittle bugs are active on hollies. Organic solutions include a stream of water from the hose, spraying a soapy water solution or an oil spray labeled for use at temperatures above 90F. Orthene is labeled for use on holly but do not use Cygon because it can damage holly plants.

Warm season annuals can be planted from seed and still have time to bloom before frost — if you have a water supply to keep them growing. Container grown annuals and perennials can be put in the ground if you can provide water.

If you planted new trees or shrubs this spring they probably need

watering after the heat and low rainfall in July. Watering weekly through August, and even into September, will help them thrive. Be sure to maintain a layer of mulch under the tree to maintain soil moisture and keep the soil temperature lower. If some of your older, mature trees are showing signs of heat stress you may want to invest in a watering spike and water the tree deeply at the outside edge of the tree canopy.

Encore Azaleas may benefit from a light application of fertilizer. It helps to water the plant well before you fertilize to prevent root burn. Some gardeners think it helps if you apply the fertilizer on top of the mulch then water it in.



**GARDENERS OF
WAKE COUNTY**

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Summer Ornamentals

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JCRA. Check the plant listings there for their locations. The plant that blooms for “the hundred days of summer” is Crape Myrtle. Buy your plant when it is in bloom so you know exactly what color the bloom is. White is white but pink, red and purple come in many variations. Bark color can also add interest to the landscape.

Phlox paniculata has suffered in some Raleigh gardens this summer but it is a long-blooming perennial when it is kept deadheaded. The white-flowered cultivar ‘David’ is mildew resistant but ‘Fujiyama’ is more “voluptuous” according to Mrs. Harper. The cultivar ‘Norah Leigh’ has yellow variegated foliage and a light blue-pink bloom. (Mildew is less noticeable on variegated foliage.)

Cannas are also a good summer perennial. They have a long bloom period and many have variegated fo-

liage. Remember to treat for Canna leaf-rollers to keep the foliage attractive. If you have a good specimen in flower in mid-October you should enter it in the State Fair.

There are also some good night-blooming plants for the summer. Vesper Iris (*Pardanthopsis dichotoma*) has a fragrant lavender bloom. *Mirabilis jalapa* (four-o-clock) starts blooming after 4:00 pm. It is perennial in the Raleigh area and fragrant at night. Moonvine is a member of the same family as morning glories. It took me a long time to discover I needed to plant the seeds in a pot in February for a longer bloom period. The plants can go in the ground after the last frost instead of putting the seed in the ground a couple of weeks later than that.

You can get all-day fragrance from gardenias and *Nicotiana* (flowering tobacco). Both seem to be more fragrant in the evening.

Watering Tips

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and to a shallow depth keeps roots at the surface of the soil. Deep roots help plants survive our hot summers

If we don’t have rain some gardeners like to use a hose or sprinkler to wash off the leaves of plants when they water. If you use an overhead watering system that sprinkles the blades of grass or leaves of plants it is wise to water in the early morning so the water does not evaporate as quickly. If you “sprinkle” late in the day the leaves do not have a chance to dry off . The cooler evening temperatures and water droplets encourage the development of fungus and plant disease.

The most important thing to remember is to use water wisely. Keep watering systems repaired. Be sure you know your local watering ordinances and guidelines and follow them carefully.