

# The Clod-Hopper



Volume 32 Edition 1 Gardeners of Wake County, Inc. – Raleigh, NC

JANUARY 2016

## WHAT TO DO WITH ALL THOSE SEEDS?

The January Seed Exchange is here!! We've been collecting seeds. My son has selected seeds from a butterfly vine, and lots of coneflower. He is looking forward to exchanging them for new plants. Last year we got a bunch of varieties but I didn't have very much success sowing them, although I do have a bunch of baby Echinacea. I didn't necessarily follow my own instructions.

I got distracted and left them on the counter too long.

So this year, instructions are going out early. I should have time to cool, and soak, and pamper as needed. The highlights of my research are included below. Perhaps the most important thing to notice is which seeds require cold, and for how long.

These will remain dormant unless triggered by moist, cold environmental conditions. In the case of Columbine and Japanese Iris, many gar-



deners recommend simply sowing the seeds outside, in fall or early winter. Otherwise, many seeds that require cold should be stratified prior to planting.

### Stratification

**Stratification:** *Mix seeds with an equal volume of moist sand or peat, enclosing them, and storing them in a refrigerator at approximately 40°F. Maintain the moisture level by checking occasionally, but don't allow the mixture to become wet.*

Other seeds require light to germinate, and should be left nearly uncovered. If you desire to cover them, use a very thin layer of vermiculite. If these are started indoors, in trays, water from below so as not to disrupt the seed, or mist the surface with a spray bottle. Hibiscus and Japanese Iris have a hard outer cover that will not allow the seed to germinate until it is punctured and softened. These seeds should be **scarified** prior to planting, and also benefit from soaking in water for a few days prior to planting.



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## CLUB MEETINGS

Meetings are at 7:30pm at the JC Raulston Arboretum every 3rd Tuesday.

### Annual Seed Swap January 19, 2016

The next meeting will be **January 19th** and will feature our annual **SEED SWAP**. You need not bring seeds as our many members will have extra to share with everyone. Seeds should be identified and placed in their designated locations: veggies, flowers, bushes, trees,

etc. They may be in individual baggies or containers to promote sharing. Feel free to bring your own empty bags or use the packaging bags and pens provided by members. The event will also have over 200 Mars seedless grape cuttings to plant and watch grow into a hearty vine. A short demo about mini-greenhouses assembled from recycled materials will also be presented.



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**The Clod-Hopper**

Published monthly by The Gardeners of Wake County, Sherrill Johnson, President; Laine & Steven Thomas, Editors.

Formatted and printed by Piedmont Litho, Inc.

For membership information or to change your address contact Barbara Brown, membership chairman at the address published in the membership directory.

Club Website:  
[www.gardenersofwakecounty.org](http://www.gardenersofwakecounty.org)

**WHAT TO DO WITH ALL THOSE SEEDS** (continued from page 1)

**Scarification:**

**Scarification:** Physically de-grade the exterior coating. The simplest way to do this is to nick the seed with a knife, or file it with a metal file or sand-paper.

Unless otherwise specified all of the seeds can be planted outside, after first frost (or in winter if they require cold). Zinnias, for example, are best sewn in the garden. Others have an option for indoor start, in order to have a longer growing season. Cleome, for example, can be started indoors, four weeks prior to first frost, in order to have a longer growing season, but this is not necessary. Some seeds germinate slower than others. For example, it is recommended



that hibiscus be started indoors, 10 weeks prior to last frost, whereas Four O'clocks only require four weeks. Indoor start times are noted in the table, measured in weeks prior to last frost.

Unique recommendations for germination and permanent planting are included in the table under Specific Instructions. Echinacea require

extremely well drained soil and even benefit from being in raised beds! With respect to soil, only Persicaria and Red Oleander aren't picky. The rest want loamy or rich soil.



**Loam:**

**Loam:** is a mixture of mostly sand and silt, and a lesser amount of clay (about 40%, 40%, 20%)

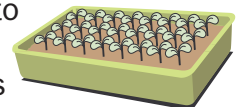
When you find a permanent home for your seedlings, it can be important to consider the soil pH. This can be tested for free, by the North Carolina Department of Agriculture. Their website provides more information:



<http://www.ncagr.gov/agronomi/sthome.htm>.

**More on Seeds from the Triangle Gardener, Master Gardener Amy Hill**

Perfectly in line with our interest in seeds, the *Triangle Gardener* website has a current article on how to start seeds in the winter. It is written by Amy Hill who is a Master Gardener from Durham. She write her own blog about gardening ([missinghenry mitchell.com](http://missinghenrymitchell.com)). It is a fun blog with lots of pictures, and some recipes for preserving garden fruit. The article on seeds includes a long list of plants that need winter sewing and an easy way to get them going, with step. Check it out!



<http://www.trianglegardener.com/main/perennial-plants/start-your-garden-early-by-winter-sowing/>

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR PLANTING SEEDS

Plant	Require Cold	Depth	Indoor start	Special Instructions	Soil	pH	Sun	Water
<b>Foxglove</b>		light	10* 5 wks	*Start early for flowering in the same year	Rich	6.5	P-Sun	moist
<b>Hibiscus</b>		1/4"	10 wks	Scarify seeds and soak for 1 day, prior to planting	Loam	6.5	Sun	moist
<b>Persicaria</b>	6 wks	light		Keep cool through winter, sew after first frost	Clay		P-Shade low heat	moist
<b>Cleome</b>	5 days	light	4 wks	Can sew outdoors in winter. Be sure to thin seedlings		6.6-7.5	Sun	
<b>Echinacea</b>	4 wks	light	8 wks	Raised beds recommended for drainage, especially with clay	Loam	6-7	Sun + heat	dry
<b>Zinia</b>		1/4"		Watering leaves will cause mildew	Loam	5.5-7.5	Sun	
<b>Four O'Clocks</b>			4 wks	Can sew outdoors just before last freeze. Soak seeds for 1 day	Rich		Sun	
<b>Columbine</b>	3-6 wks	< 1/2"		Sew outside in winter, expect a long germination period	Loam		Shade*	moist
<b>Sedum</b>		light	6 wks	Mist planted seeds	Loam		Sun	dry
<b>Japanese Iris</b>	12 wks	1/4"		Scarify seeds and soak 2-4 days prior to planting, outside in early winter	Rich	5.8-6.5	Sun, P-Sun	moist
<b>Tree Peonies</b>	12 wks	2"		Start in part shade, transplant in autumn, 1 year later to full sun		7	P-Shade Sun	moist
<b>Red Oleander</b>		light	6-8 wks	Mist planted seeds	any	any	Sun	

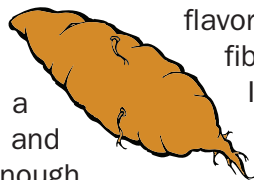
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## Gardening Questions & Answers

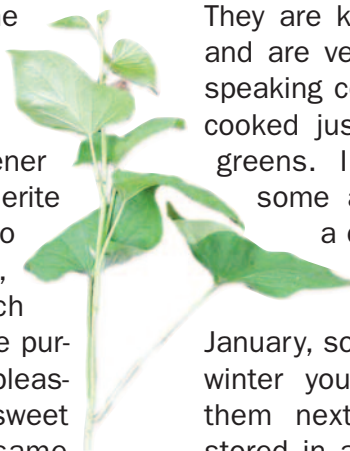
**Question:** Mac was cleaning out a planter box that had purple ornamental sweet potato plants and discovered a number of “sweet potatoes”. Are they edible? Or can they be used to cut slips and start new plants for next Spring? If so, how do we store for the next few months?

– Vivian Williamson

**Answer** What a cool question!! I found some very funny answers online, making it clear that ornamental sweet potatoes are edible, in the technical sense, but not in the enjoyable sense. Some suggested they would provide a month’s supply of fiber, and could be choked down with enough



sugar and butter. The most common, green ornamental sweet potato is called Marguerite. One gardener microwaved the Marguerite tubers, and claimed to enjoy eating them, photographing each bite. It sounds like the purple varieties are less pleasant. The ornamental sweet potatoes are the same species as the edible variety, but they have been bred for attractive color and shape, rather than flavor. They tend to be more fibrous and less sweet. Interestingly, you can also eat the leaves of the sweet potato vine.



They are known as camote tops and are very popular in Spanish speaking countries. They can be cooked just like other forms of greens. I think I just bought some at Trader Joe’s under a different name. Clearly we don’t have any greens left in January, so you may want to over-winter your tubers and replant them next year. They can be stored in a paper bag, in a cool dry place, and then replanted in spring, by cutting chunks, each with an “eye” for root growth. Here is a great blog on the topic: <http://mrbrownthumb.blogspot.com/2007/11/storing-sweet-potato-vine-tubers.html>