

# The Clod-Hopper



Volume 27 Edition 3 Gardeners of Wake County, Inc. – Raleigh, NC

MARCH 2011

## MARCH MEETING

We look forward to having Debbie Roos, extension agent in Chatham County, as our March speaker. With so many gardeners interested in planting fruits and vegetables in the landscape it will help to



know more about what we can do to improve the pollination of our crops. There is also more interest in “heirloom” ornamentals so some gardeners want to have better seedset on some of their ornamentals. Join us to learn more about attracting and keeping pollinating insects in our gardens.

## CLUB MEETINGS

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

- March 15** Debbie Roos  
“Pollinator Gardens”
- April 11-14** Set-up for Azalea Sale
- April 15-17** Azalea Sale open to public

## COMMUNITY VEGETABLE GARDENS

With the success of our Plant-a-Row-for-the-Hungry garden in 2010, our club president has been looking for additional opportunities for our members to garden in 2011. There is a community garden site available near the corner of Tryon Road and Gorman Street. Another opportunity is available near Newbern Avenue for contributing to an

“Edible Landscape Garden”. We need chairmen and gardeners for both projects, and if there is additional interest there are some other sites that are available. Please contact Charles Gilliam if you are interested in participating.



## AZALEA SALE

Bob Hartgrove needs your help for a successful 2011 Azalea Sale. There were lots of spaces open on the sign-up sheets when they were picked up at the end of the February meeting. If you will not be at the March meeting to volunteer please call Bob to offer your help. A postcard to announce the sale will be mailed to those who bought plants in years past but you could also help by telling your friends about the sale.



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## RALEIGH GARDENER'S SAMPLER

In 1977 the Wake County Medical Auxiliary published a book by this title as a fundraiser. Several of the authors were members of The Men's Garden Club. If you can find a copy you might enjoy reading it. The information is still helpful.

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**SPRING GARDENING INFORMATION**

**BULB BASICS**

When you have 170 slides of incredible plant combinations with bulbs the audience gets enthusiastic about adding bulbs to their own landscapes. For those who thought you planted daffodils in straight rows along the sidewalk, or a row in front of the shrubbery for early spring color it was an eye-popping experience.

At the end of her presentation in February Becky Heath found out how many people were paying attention to her lecture. She distributed door prizes by asking questions. The first one with the correct answer got a door prize.

What is the proper depth for planting a daffodil? It's not 6 inches, but 3 times the height of the bulb. Large bulbs go deeper in the ground than small ones.



When do you fertilize daffodils? Sprinkle fertilizer on top of the ground in the fall after bulbs are planted. The best answer is to use compost rich soil. Composted leaves, pine bark, peanut hulls and cotton seeds added to the soil at the time of planting are more kind to streams and lakes than chemical fertilizers sprinkled on top of the ground.

What bulb should you soak before planting? Anemones are flat and wrinkled. Soaking them in water for an hour or so before planting does improve your chances of getting them to grow. Because the bulbs are flat it is difficult to tell which side is the top of the bulb. If you are not sure, plant it on its side and let the roots develop to pull it down into the ground.




**New Members**





**Thomas Pope, Raleigh**



**Maggie Larson, Cary**



**Johnny & Sherrill Johnson, Garner**



**Will & Donna Farmer, Wake Forest**



**Kent Cline Earnhardt, Raleigh**













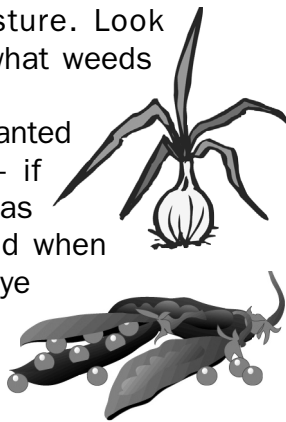

When do you plant most summer flowering bulbs? Soil temperatures need to be 60 degrees for most summer flowering bulbs. That means you can slip them in among perennials that are already up or plant them with your summer blooming annuals for a mixed planting.

Check [www.brentandbeckybulbs.com](http://www.brentandbeckybulbs.com) for information on bulbs, tours and programs and a podcast. You might also be interested in going to the Gloucester Daffodil Festival and the Daffodil Show on March 26 and 27. The show is open to the public on Saturday from 2-5pm and Sunday from noon to 4pm. It is being held at Ware Academy on Rt. 14, 2 miles east of Gloucester Courthouse.

## PLANTING TIMES

**D**id you know that weeds can give you a timetable for planting some of your garden seeds? Most seed packets have information about planting after March 15 or some other date. Rather than use a specific month and date use “Mother Nature’s” calendar that relies on soil temperature and moisture. Look around your yard and see what weeds are blooming on that date.

Onions and peas can be planted when chickweed blooms — if the soil is not too soggy. Peas and carrots go in the ground when henbit is in bloom. If your oxeye daisies are blooming most spring and summer annuals can go in the ground.



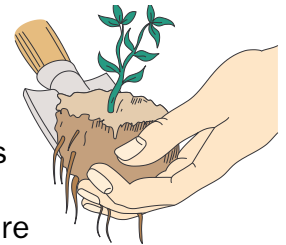
## SELECTING NURSERY PLANTS

**M**ost gardeners are searching through nurseries at this time of year looking for a few plants to add to their collection. Some of us want something new and different while others are looking for a safe, comfortable replacement for a favorite plant in the landscape. All of us want a healthy plant.

Look at plants carefully for signs of stress or damage. Broken stems, scraped bark and “smelly roots” usually mean the plant has not been well cared for. Stippling or spots on leaves may be a sign of disease or insect damage. Check the trunk of the tree or shrub at the soil line of the pot. You

should not see roots girdling the trunk. Do not pick potted plants up by lifting the plant; lift the pot. The stems of the plant should be fairly symmetrical in the pot and you should be able to see small feeder roots at the edge of the pot.

Plants may still be dormant if they are outside in February and March. Check the new growth buds to make sure they look firm and healthy. If leaves look dry or withered the plant may not have been watered correctly or it may not have been given adequate protection from the cold. If the plants are in a protected greenhouse they may be healthy but be sure you will be able to plant them outside or provide a warm place for them until it is safe to plant outdoors.



Some bare root plants are available at this time of year. They should be dormant but the roots should be wrapped with moist packing material or set in moistened bark to keep the roots moist. If the tip buds are dried out or the roots are damaged and withered the plant may not have been stored properly. If you purchase a bare-root plant trim off damaged roots and if feeder roots are developed cut an inch or two from the end of the main roots and soak the plant in a bucket of water for a few hours (no more than 24) before planting.

## CLEMATIS

**S**ome clematis get heavily pruned in February and March. They are the plants that bloom late in the summer or early fall. C. Jackmanii, Sweet Autumn and Tangerine. They may be cut back to one foot from the ground to keep them from getting leggy or overly aggressive.

The large flowered cultivars that bloom mid-season (Henryii and Nelly Moser among others) bloom on last year’s wood so remove only weak or dead stems and cut back the remaining stems to a pair of strong buds. After the plant blooms you may pinch back the stem to stimulate branching.

The early blooming, evergreen clematis (C. armandii and Montana) are pruned after they bloom, but no later than July.

If you are planting clematis this spring remember that they prefer more alkaline soil so

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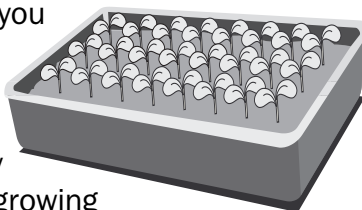
**Spring Garden Information – Clematis**

*(continued from page 3)*

adding lime prior to planting will improve their performance. To avoid cold damage it helps to plant the clematis with the lowest pair of buds just below ground level. Remember that the plants produce the best blooms with “their heads in the sun and their roots in cool soil.” Keep the soil cool by adding mulch around the base of the plant, or you may plant low growing groundcover or other flowers at the base of the plant to keep the sun off the soil.

**SEED STARTING 101**

If you are starting seeds indoors be sure to provide enough light to keep the seedlings from becoming too leggy. If you are using sunlight at a window as your light source you will need to turn the seed tray daily to keep the seedlings growing



upright. If you use a grow-light keep it close to the seed trays to keep the seedlings from stretching to the light. Keep the potting medium moist, not wet, to prevent disease problems.

Read labels carefully. Some seeds have a heavy seed coating and need to be soaked for 24 hours before planting. Start with warm, not cold or hot water. If the directions say scarify the seed, use a sharp knife break the seed coat or abrade an opening in the seedcoat with a nail file or piece of sandpaper.

Some plants have a “cold dormancy” period. Place the seeds in a plastic bag with damp peat moss, sand or vermiculite. Close it tightly and leave it in a refrigerator for 3 months before planting.

Remember that cool weather is a shock to plants that have been started indoors. It usually helps to gradually acclimate seedlings to a cooler temperature by letting them stay outdoors for a few hours a day, gradually increasing the time until they have adjusted to a full day of exposure before putting them in the ground.