

GGG

Granville Gardeners Gazette

Promoting Education and Recreation through Gardening Activities

Oxford, North Carolina

www.thegranvillegardeners.org

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Four-horned sphinx caterpillar



Spice bush caterpillar



Stinging Rose caterpillar

CATERPILLAROLOGY

By Mike Dunn, Educator and Naturalist

Monday, January 26 at 7 p.m., Granville Co. Expo Center, 4185 U.S. Hwy 15 S, Oxford, NC

About the Program

Join local naturalist Mike Dunn as he shares some of the secrets of the lives of local caterpillars. Learn about their journey from egg to pupa, what they eat, and how they try to survive the many things in their environment that are out to get them. Find out how you can find and raise caterpillars, and what plants will attract some of our more interesting local species.

The caterpillar does all the work but the butterfly gets all the publicity

~George Carlin

About the Speaker

Mike is a lifelong naturalist-educator in Chatham County, NC. He retired after 36 years working with the North Carolina State Parks System, the N. C. Museum of Natural Sciences, and the N. C. Botanical Garden. During that time, he had the privilege of traveling to some incredible natural areas throughout North Carolina and beyond to observe and photograph wildlife and share his love of nature with thousands of people from kindergarteners to retirees.

by Mike Dunn and Marty Finkel

President's Notes

WOW – just WOW!

For those of you who were not able to attend the January club meeting, you missed a fabulous one.

First, David Southwick did a fantastic job in his program and then the Hospitality Committee put on a 5-star banquet. No one should have left the building hungry. It was wonderful to see so many folks at our meeting -- a blend of members, new members and guests.

One of the signs of a good and engaging presentation is the follow-up questions folks ask, and David fielded many good questions after his presentation. As a past Toastmaster, I know how hard it is to pull off humor in public speaking. Humor in a natural way – not staged, is very hard. David's dry sense of humor was as good as it gets, and if you weren't really listening to him, you missed some great lines.

While the program topic could be viewed as a bit disheartening – our Declining Bird Population in NC – he discussed strategies we all can use to help our backyard feathered friends. Maybe I once knew this, but the bird migration and importance of habitat is a good reminder of how humans impact the life of birds, and some of the small things we can do in our backyards to make a difference.

I hope members take David up on some of the walking tours he told us about. I found these to be very interesting. There are many and the offerings across the week make it workable for anyone's schedule.

Rob delivered some great plants from the Arboretum and we had spirited bidding for all of them.

And then there was the food!! I just don't know how the February meeting is going to equal what our hard-working Hospitality Committee did for us in the January meeting, but I'm already looking forward to it!

Until Next Time,

David Quinn

Results of the January 22, 2024, JCRA Plants Auction

The Monday night auction added \$295 to our scholarship fund! And these lucky folks took home the cream of the crop in the plant world:

Camellia 'Anacostia'	Winning bid by Dan Bender
Peruvian lily (<i>Alstromeria</i> 'Red Valley')	Winning bid by Ellen Sadovy
Campbell's maple	Winning bid by Joyce Cifers
River Lomatia	Winning bid by Judy McHugh
Evergreen dogwood (currently unidentified)	Winning bid by David Quinn



Camellia 'Anacostia'



Alstromeria 'red Valley'



Campbell's maple



River Lomatia



Evergreen dogwood, currently unidentified



Q & A

Q: *I'm thinking of planting some sweet corn this spring and want to be sure I don't get seeds for a super sweet variety since those are too sweet for me (unless eaten as dessert). Silver Queen is as sweet as I want to get. How do I know which corn is how sweet?*

A: Tomatoes may seem to provoke the greatest controversy, but **CORN** is right up there with tomatoes!

From Victory Seed Company: "[Sweet corn](#) is presumed to be the result of a natural spontaneous mutation of field corn that occurred sometime before recorded history. Predating the arrival of Europeans in North America, it was cultivated by several Native American groups. A variety named 'Papoon' was raised by the Iroquois, and subsequently by settlers, by 1779.

Two of the oldest surviving white sweet varieties are '[Stowell's Evergreen](#)' and '[Country Gentleman](#).' The yellow sweet corn [Golden Bantam](#) was released in 1902 and has been popular ever since."

Country Gentleman



Photo by Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds

True Gold



Photo by Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds

Silver Queen



Photo by Pinetree Garden Seeds

I remember that as a young child at my country grandmother's in east Tennessee, she had the corn in the pot for lunch or supper a few hours after it was picked – and it was simply delicious. When I was older, I learned that varieties of corn had names: Country Gentlemen and Golden Bantam are two I remember. I remember shoe peg, too, but learned it is a type that doesn't produce rows of kernels, and Country Gentleman is an example.

Modern varieties have initials that indicate sweetness level and storage life.

The initials **su**, **se**, **se+**, **sh2**, and **sy** (or **syn**) indicate a variety's sweetness and how long it will be in prime condition for eating or freezing. Chatham County Extension agent Matt Jones explains:

“**Su (standard)** varieties have around 5-16% sugar content, imparting a classic ‘old timey’ corn flavor you may remember depending upon your age. The sugars convert to starch rather quickly so shelf life is reduced. These corn varieties may be hybrids, but many are open pollinated or heirloom, meaning you can save some of your corn from the year before to plant the next year.

Se varieties have between 14 and 35% sugar content. These sugar enhanced hybrid corn varieties have increased tenderness and sweetness compared to Su varieties. They also have a longer shelf life (typically 4-6 days when stored at 34-40°F). Since Se corn varieties are a hybrid of other Se varieties and Su varieties, the seeds do not breed true, so saved seeds will not exhibit the same characteristics as the mother plant.

Se+ varieties are the result of hybridizing (traditional cross breeding, not GMO molecular breeding) two Se parents (called homozygous corn). These varieties are sweeter yet!

Sh2 varieties have between 28-44% sugar content and may also be called supersweet corn. The Sh refers to the appearance of the kernels when dried and these varieties are the sweetest and have the longest shelf lives (typically 9-10 days). These are again hybrids, so no seed saving here. However, they do need to be pollinated by the same variety to impart all of the beneficial characteristics, so make sure plantings of these varieties are isolated from other varieties spatially (at least 25 feet) or temporally (a few weeks).

Syn is a newer hybrid that contains genes from su, se, and sh2 varieties, giving syn corn the tenderness of the se and the shelf life of the sh2 varieties. Tender, supersweet and long shelf life is a combination that sounds more like a confection than a vegetable! You need to let kernels plump out before picking and keep isolated from other types of corn just like the sh2.

Follow the planting instructions that come with your seed but generally I plant treated seed about 1.5” deep on 12” centers with the rows about 28” apart. Some people prefer to overplant and plant corn every 6 inches and thin it out after it sprouts to avoid having empty spots in their rows if germination goes poorly. I prefer to wait until the soil temperature 2” down is at least 65°F to help ensure that doesn’t happen and I don’t waste seed on plants I am just going to throw away. I plant in a minimum block size of 5 rows a minimum of 12-15 feet long. Plant on a weekly basis if you want to extend your picking or to keep one variety from pollinating another.

The soil pH should be between 5.5 and 7 and well drained or at least they shouldn’t have their feet standing in water all season. While the plants are young keep the weeds down, but the corn will begin to shade them out as it gets bigger. In an ideal situation you would like to have about an inch of water a week during the growing season. Look for the silks to appear (not the tassel at the top) and count down approximately 20 days for ear development. You should feel the ear swelling in the husk and when you can’t stand waiting anymore, pull back a husk and press your fingernail into a kernel. If you feel a little resistance and then the kernel burst, yielding its sugary delight, start picking!”

Nearly all seed catalogs have the above abbreviations by the corn’s name or in its description. Catalogs listing only heirlooms usually don’t have one of these designations, but some assign **su** to heirlooms. As a general rule, **su** corn varieties will be sweet as Silver Queen, not candy.

Bottom line – cheat sheet: If you're as picky about sweet corn as I am, here's a cheat sheet you can take with you to the farmers' market (if ordering seeds, use the catalogs to find varieties to suit your particular sweet tooth). Ask the vendor the name of the corn, then refer to the sheet for sweetness. I typed these lists from Wikipedia, leaving out descriptions.

Cheat sheet for corn varieties: (from Wikipedia) NOTE: Newer varieties should be added

su yellow

Early Sunglow
Sundance
Early Golden Bantam
Iochief
True Gold
Golden Cross Bantam

su white

True Platinum
Martian Jewels
Luther Hill
Country Gentleman
Silver Queen
Stowell's Evergreen

su bicolor

Double Standard
Butter and Sugar
Honey and Cream

su multicolor

Hookers
Triple Play
Painted Hill
Black Mexican/Aztec
Double Red

se yellow

Painted Hill
Bodacious
Sugar Buns
Kandy King
Bodacious R/M
Incredible
Miracle
Kandy Korn

se white

Spring Snow
Sugar Pearl
Whiteout
Cloud Nine
Silver King
Argent

se bicolor

Silver N Gold
Sugar Baby
Bon Jour
Trinity
Bi-Licious
Temptation
Luscious
Ambrosia
Who Gets Kissed
Precious Gem
Peaches and Cream Mid EH
Delectable R/M

sh2 yellow

Extra Early Super Sweet
Takeoff
Early Xtra Sweet
Summer Sweet Yellow
Krispy King
Challenger

Passion
Excel
Jubilee Supersweet
Illini Xtra Sweet
Crisp 'N Sweet

sh2 white

Summer Sweet White
Treasure
How Sweet It Is
Camelot

sh2 bicolor

Summer Sweet Bicolor
Honey 'N Pearl
Aloha
Dazzle
Hudson
Phenomenal

sy, (sng) yellow

Applause
Inferno
Honey Select

sy (sng) sng white

Illusion
Mattapoissett
Avalon

sy (sng) bicolor

Sweetness
Pay Dirt
Revelation
Renaissance
Charisma
Synergy
Montauk
Kristine
Serendipity/Providence
Cameo

Wikipedia gives another designation, **augmented supersweet**, no initials. Here are these varieties:

Yellow: Vision

White: X-tra Tender, Devotion

Multicolor: Wild Violet

Bi-Color: Kick-off, Anthem, X-tra Tender 2573, X-tra Tender 274A, Fantastic XR, American Dream, Obsession, X-tra Tender 282 A

By Marty Finkel

Sources: "Choosing Sweet Corn Varieties" by Matt Jones, Extension Agent, Agriculture - Commercial Ornamental and Consumer Horticulture N.C. Cooperative Extension, Chatham County Center, last updated 4 years ago. Other sources as cited.

Q: *When should I start looking in the woods for spring wildflowers?*

A: You should see some around the end of this month and into March and April. These are the spring ephemerals – plants that come up, produce leaves, flowers, and seeds before the trees leaf out. They have a short window of time to do all this so are called ephemeral because this is a transitory lifestyle – they disappear but their roots and/or corms, bulbs continue to grow while they are dormant.

We can find a good number of the ephemerals in some of the deciduous woods around Oxford and other near-by communities. They like the rich, moist soils high in organic matter that have a deep cover of leaf litter and often form large colonies. .



<https://www.pinterest.com>

Colonies of Dutchman's breeches



<https://www.pinterest.com>

Trout lily



conservingcarolina.org

White Trillium



Bloodroot seedpod

About 40% of woodland ephemerals (including trillium, bloodroot, dutchman's breeches, trout lily, wild ginger, violets, hepatica, bleeding heart and squirrel corn) have an oil and nutrient-rich structure (elaiosome) on the seed that ants can't resist. The white bits on the seeds in the photo at left are elaisomes.

They take the seeds to the nest, and after their larvae have eaten the elaisomes, the cleaned seeds go on the trash heap. This is a major way the plants are spread, and it's called ant mutualism.

I have seen most of these spring ephemerals in Granville County, and some were on our property bordering Fishing Creek and/or the Tar River.

By Marty Finkel, Sources: Conserving Carolina, New York Botanical Garden

Photo Credits: Top left: and middle: [pinterest.com](https://www.pinterest.com); top right: [Conserving Carolina](http://conservingcarolina.org)

Bloodroot seedpod and some text: "Bloodroot: An Understandable Misnomer" by Carol Gracie, Science, April 30, 2013, Archives of the New York Botanical Garden

Other credits indicated by photos.



Bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*) Beneath the soil, it sprouts from a reddish root-like rhizome with bright orange sap. Its petals are quickly shed within a day or two of pollination, so the flowering display is very short-lived.

Photo: <https://conservingcarolina.org/>



Toothwort (*Cardamine concatenata*) Growing on the forest floor or wooded slopes, its flowers range from white to light purple or light pink. It is most easily identified by its dissected and coarsely toothed leaves. The underground rhizome also resembles an animal tooth, in reference to its name. This probably is not the species I've seen locally but is similar.

Photo: <https://conservingcarolina.org/>



The flowers of **Dutchman's breeches** (*Dicentra cucullaria*) resemble white pantaloons that appear to be drying on a clothesline. Its reproductive fate relies on a symbiotic relationship with queen bumblebees, in which they exchange nectar for pollination.

Photo: <https://conservingcarolina.org/>



Squirrel corn (*Dicentra Canadensis*) is a look-alike of Dutchman's breeches as it resembles the same white pantaloons drying from a line; however it differs by its more heart-shaped flowers and does not have a yellow waistband like Dutchman's breeches.

Photo: <https://conservingcarolina.org/>



Fire pink's (*Silene virginica*) principal pollinator is the Ruby-throated Hummingbird, which is attracted by the flowers' bright red petals and sugary nectar.

Photo: <https://conservingcarolina.org/>



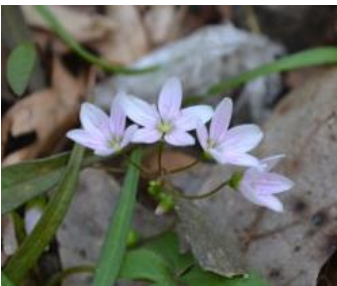
Foamflower (*Tiarella cordifolia*), is a charming, shade-loving groundcover. This flower is tolerant to both deer and rabbits. The Genus name comes from the Greek word *tiara*, meaning a small crown, in reference to the form of the fruit. It made a beautiful ground cover in my shade garden, as the leaves are attractive after the flower disappears.

Photo: <https://conservingcarolina.org/>



The seeds of **great white trillium** (*Trillium grandiflorum*) have double dormancy – taking at least two years to fully germinate! Like most species of *Trillium*, growth is very slow in nature. It can take between seven to ten years to reach flowering size! There was white trillium on our property in Granville Co. but I don't know the species. The NC Extension Gardener Plant Toolbox says it's native to the piedmont and to the mountains, so it could have been the great white.

Photo: <https://conservingcarolina.org/>



Spring beauty (*Claytonia virginica*) -- usually seen in loose clusters of 5 or more flowers, the white and pink stripes on its petals direct pollinators inward for pollination. It is rooted in a corm, which is an edible base referred to as a 'Fairy Spud,' said to taste like boiled chestnuts. There was an extensive colony of spring beauty paralleling the Tar River on our property.

Photo: <https://conservingcarolina.org/>



Yellow trout lily (*Erythronium americanum*) can be identified by its nodding flower and mottled leaves that resemble the speckled scales of a trout. They can take upwards of eight years to flower! There were large patches on our property along the Tar River and Fishing Creek.

Photo by Fritz Flohr Reynolds plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/erythronium-americanum



Part of what makes the **Virginia bluebell** (*Mertensia virginica*) so admired is its naturally blue flowers. Blue flowers in nature are so rare that only 10 percent of the 280,000 flowering plant species worldwide have blue blooms. The buds are pink and the flowers have a pink cast before turning blue. I have not seen these in the county, but the NC Extension Gardener Plant Toolbox says they are native in NC. I bought roots and planted them in my shade garden and had a stunning display that slowly spread by seed and rhizome.

Photo: <https://conservingcarolina.org/>



Heart leaf ginger (*Asarum arifolium*) is one of the 12 species in NC, according to the NC Native Plant Society. I have seen several species in all the woods I've been in, but I can't identify them. The flowers of those I've seen are called little brown jugs and grow at ground level under the leaves. The leaves stay attractive through the winter – the photo shows new spring foliage.

Photo: <https://conservingcarolina.org/>



Round-lobed hepatica (*Hepatica americana*) is found in several shades of lavender, and closes at night and on rainy days. The 3-lobed leaves persist in winter but are fairly ratty by spring. I found them on our property and in other Granville Co. woods but never in masses or colonies, just here and there.

Photo by Fritz Floh Reynolds plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/hepatica-americana/

To-Do List for February

- If you didn't get your garden assessment done last month,
 - continue planning where you want to put new beds,
 - put a stake in plants you that didn't do well that you want to take out or that you want to relocate,
 - look around for shrubs and trees that need thinning and/or pruning. Broken limbs and limbs that cross and rub against each other should come off
 - plan color combinations of annuals and perennials that look great with the colors of your shrubs.
 - On nice days this month, consider making raised beds for growing vegetables (many good plans on the Internet) and filling with soil.
 - Consider making a cold frame to extend the season before and after main-season gardening
- Direct seed snap and snow peas, beets, carrots, lettuce, onions (seed, sets, and plants), radishes, Irish potatoes, and spinach this month. Start broccoli, cabbage, and cauliflower seeds early this month for transplanting in late March.
- Plant strawberries.
- Plant asparagus crowns now through early March.
- If you're making a new bed, till the whole bed – don't only dig individual holes - get a soil test, and till all the recommended amendments in. Kill the weed seeds (check with your county extension agent) and life will be easier. Don't work the soil if it is too wet: get a handful of soil and squeeze it. If it stays in a lump after you open your hand, it's too wet. It should crumble through your fingers.
- To get the central NC planting calendar for annual vegetables, fruits, and herbs from the Extension service – search online for “AG-756 NCSU. Download the chart and keep it handy.
- If you want to use a pre-emergence herbicide for control of summer weeds (spurge, mulberry weed, oxalis, Japanese stilt grass and others, read label), it should be broadcast this month (remember Minda Daughtry's January 2017 program “Yes, You Can Control Weeds.”
- Prune fruit trees later this month and/or early March as they begin to grow.
<https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/training-and-pruning-fruit-trees-in-north-carolina>. Prune blueberries can be pruned now through early March.
- Cut back butterfly, abelia, rose of Sharon, hibiscus, and beautyberry bushes. Bush and tea roses can be pruned now. Find excellent brochures on late winter pruning online and at the Extension Centers.
- If you have hardy lantana, wait until you see new growth appearing before cutting back.
- Cut back ornamental grasses anytime this month. Divide large clumps & replant. Mow liriop and mondo and divide if needed.
- Plant bare-root roses.
- Clean up camellia blooms.
- Lawns: Control cool-season weeds – chickweed, hairy bittercress, henbit -- & treat by removal or post-emergent herbicide (above 40 degrees). Pre-emergence crabgrass herbicide can be used about the time forsythia blooms. Fertilize cool-season grasses with 1 lb. 30% slow-release nitrogen per 1,000 sq. feet (or follow soil sample instructions if you had one done).
- Spray fruit and other trees and shrubs with horticultural oil when temperature is 40 degrees or higher for a 24-hour period to control scale, mites, and aphids and will suffocate their eggs. It is one of the safest controls available. Always follow the label for mixing and spraying instructions. Lime sulfur can be combined with the oil to spray dormant trees/shrubs; if leaves are present, the combination spray will burn them.

Did you know that the JC Raulston Arboretum has a national reputation as a major source for information?

We know the excellent learning opportunities the arboretum provides: There are educational programs both on site and online, and most of the latter are on the JCRA YouTube channel. There are symposia for beginners to experts. There are hands-on workshops including propagation where you take cuttings, learn how to propagate them, and go home with lots of special plants, and wreath-making where you make and take home a fabulous wreath, and more. There are informal tours where you learn about plants. There are unparalleled children's classes that make learning fun and exciting.

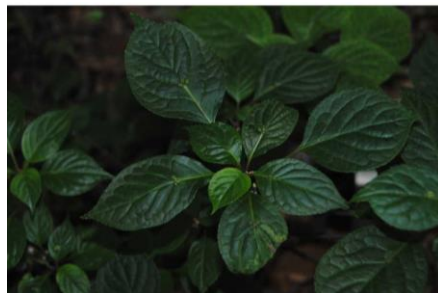
The whole arboretum campus is a learner's paradise – it has “. . . one of the largest and most diverse collections of landscape plants adapted for landscape use in the southeast United States. Plants especially adapted to Piedmont North Carolina conditions are collected and evaluated in an effort to find superior plants for use in southern landscapes.” Quoted from the website home page.

The website www.jcra.ncsu.edu is a great way to discover what the arboretum offers.

You may not know that JCRA articles are sought for other publications – in Mark Weathington's Director's Letter in the Winter 2023 issue of the JCRA Newsletter, he gives a few examples:

“. . . some of the citations and references we've received from recent publications.

The electronic journal *Palm Arbor* from the University of California cited the JCRA for an article on the hackberry relative *Aphananthe aspera* noting that we had ‘. . .one of the larger specimens in the United States.’ The International Dendrology Society highlighted the JC Raulston Arboretum as one of the two featured gardens in their recently published yearbook. The Dutch publication, *Dendiflora*, used information from the JCRA for an article they published on *Helwingia*. They also proposed naming two *Helwingia* cultivars in J. C.'s honor: *H chinensis* ‘Raulston King’ for the broad leaf form he distributed and *H. chinensis* ‘Raulston Queen’ for the narrow leaf form. A publication from the Atlanta Botanic Garden titled “Dangerous Discoveries” recounted a recent joint collecting trip to Asia. Two different *Fine Gardening* articles came from us in 2023.”



Chinese helwingia (*Helwingia chinensis*) shrub (left), leaves (middle), and flowers (right)

Photos: JCRA Photo Collection

By Marty Finkel

PLANT OF THE MONTH



Allegheny Spurge (*Pachysandra procumbens*) Flowers (right), winter leaves (left)

This beautiful NC **native** forms a dense mat that happily grows under trees and shrubs and other shady places. Its natural environment includes moist rich woods. It is not invasive. The old leaves take on a pale silver-green mottling. Fragrant blooms occur in spring in 2-4 inch spikes. The new leaves are bright green and fade to medium green summer through fall.

Also in Bloom This Month

Note that bloom times vary, depending on climatic and meteorological conditions, and many plants bloom several months in a row (and sometimes rebloom).

Camellia

Snowdrops

Wintersweet

Crocus

Cyclamen

Candytuft

Winter daphne

Fairy wings (Epimedium)

Fritillary (Guinea hen
flower)

Spirea

Viburnums

Japanese flowering apricot

Cherry trees

Trailing arbutus (native)

Winter aconite

Hellebores

Plum trees

Mahonia

Japanese pieris

Redbuds

Japanese flowering quince

Glory of the Snow

Cornelian cherry

Forsythia

Blue isu

Witchhazel (native)

Partridgeberry vine (native)

Skunk cabbage (native)

by Marty Finkel

Some More Plants in Bloom this Month



Daphne genkwa



Fritillary



'Sunbeam' daffodil



Star anise



Witchhazel



'Christmas Snow' Viburnum



Japanese flowering apricot



Paperbush (Edgeworthia)



Fairy wings (Epimedium)



Wild ginger (Asarum spp.)



Spirea 'Ogon'



Magnolia 'Rose Marie'

Photos: Daphne genkwa, witchhazel, Japanese flowering apricot, paperbush, fairy wings, and wild ginger
by Marty Finkel

All other photos: JCRA Photo Collection