

GGG

Granville Gardeners Gazette

Promoting Education and Recreation through Gardening Activities

Oxford, North Carolina

www.thegranvillegardeners.org

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A HEAD START FOR A BOUNTIFUL VEGGIE HARVEST

By Gerald Adams, Plant Vendor, NC Farmers' Market, Raleigh

Monday, March 25 at 7 p.m., Granville Co. Expo Center, 4185 U.S. Hwy 15 S, Oxford, NC

About the Program

One of our favorite speakers is back to tell us how to get the best yields yet from our vegetable gardens – even if it's in containers. It all starts with seeds of course, and Gerald is the one to go to for expert advice on varieties, how to plant them, when to transplant into the garden – with instructions all along the way. He has some growing tips and advice which probably aren't in the textbooks, but they get results: strong, robust plants ready to take off as soon as their roots hit the garden soil.

About the Speaker

Gerald Adams grew up in Knightdale, east of Raleigh, on a tobacco farm, and he's a graduate of UNC, Chapel Hill. He was grounds supervisor at the Governor's Mansion from March 2004 until September 2014, a job that included planning, growing and managing beautiful ornamental gardens as well as expanding the mansion's vegetable beds. He was nursery manager at Campbell Road Nursery, which included building and planting public demonstration gardens. He was Grounds Maintenance Supervisor and Horticulture Supervisor at NC State's Centennial Campus from October 2018 until his recent retirement on December 21, 2023. He is a vendor at the NC Farmers' Market and has an unbelievable variety of sturdy vegetable plants for sale starting in late March.

By Marty Finkel and Gerald Adams

President's Notes, March 2024

What make a great garden club experience?

I think most folks would agree that it includes great activities, programs with relevant meeting content and fellowship at the meeting.

To make all this and more happen, did you know our club is made up of 14 committees?? It really is!

The committees below are what makes our wonderful club happen. A special thanks to Kat for putting the list together. However, many of the committees aren't committees because there is only one member, the chairman, or in the case of co-chairs, two members. Consequently, they have a huge workload and are under a lot of stress. So please choose one (or more) that you would like to help with.

The Committees of the Club

Awards Committee – Chaired by Kay Nutt this committee is active in the fall when we close out our year and recognize club members.

Finance & Audit – Danny DeVito is a committee of 1 and manages all things financial for the club.

Expo Committee – Chaired by Christina Henthorn and possibly our most important committee for fundraising, she is supported by a wonderful group of folks that makes the Expo the success that it is.

Grants Committee – Chaired by Brenda LaFayette, this committee reviews small grant applications received by the club and makes recommendations regarding acceptance of each application to the GG board. (The board makes the final decision.)

Hospitality Committee – Chaired now by Vicky Johnson, this group has helped make the wonderful after program snacks and tasty items we all enjoy.

Membership Committee – Co-Chairs Robin Word and Yvonne Word, this committee supports the active recruitment and manages the club membership.

Newsletter Committee – Chaired by Marty Finkel, I think everyone would agree we have an amazing monthly newsletter. She is helped by Kat Ravenel who does the formatting.

Nominating Committee – Chaired by Robin Word, this committee's work starts in late summer to recruit candidates for the end of year slate of officers that all together help run our club.

Projects / Activities Committee – Chaired by Casey Blalock, this committee organizes field trips, workshops, and other activities throughout the year for our enjoyment and enrichment.

Program Committee – Chaired by Joyce Cifers (along with great work by Marty Finkel), this committee brings us the fantastic monthly programs we all look forward to. Most of the work is done in December and January when committee members select program topics and speakers.

Publicity Committee – Chaired by Christina Henthorn, this committee makes sure that all club functions are appropriately publicized through print and social media.

Scholarship Committee – Co-Chaired by Jim Nutt and Kay Nutt, it might be said that this is the foundation of the club's financial purpose. Our primary fundraising activity (the GG Expo) helps support our annual NC State Agricultural scholarship for a student in horticulture. The chairman (or co-chairs) is the liaison between NCSU and the GG.

Sunshine Coordinator – Cindy DeVito leads this activity. She sends a card to anyone in need of a kind word or consolation.

Webmaster – Another committee of one, Brenda LaFayette manages our club's Web site and content.

And one more: The Post Office Garden – While not a standing committee, this effort is managed by Peter Gumaer. His team takes care of the beautiful flower garden in front of the Oxford Post Office.

JCRA Plants for Auction at March 2024 Meeting

Those of you who collect new, exotic, or unusual plants, will not want to miss our March meeting! Finding information about the plants up for auction was fun, and I discovered a couple of new (to me) nurseries. The first, Nurseries Caroliniana, was a favorite of the N. Augusta, SC, area for 50 years before shuttering the in-person shop last fall. They now have only online sales, and judging from the website and descriptions, have great service and share their expert knowledge freely. Their selection of tea olives is huge. They have sold the Blonde Envy elderberry and the Kansai Sunburst pittosporum which are in this month's auction, though they are sold out at the moment. Check them out at <https://nurcar.com>.

Another veteran nursery I found is in Merryville, La: Almost Eden. They have a large selection of exotics and natives, and also answered promptly when I wrote to them. They have a good description of this month's auction item, the ruffly Hiryu sasanqua, on their website, www.almostedenplants.com. It is currently out of stock, so be sure to come bid at the meeting!

Pittosporum tobira 'Kansai Sunburst' (Kansai Sunburst Pittosporum) This evergreen shrub is an unusual new introduction from Japan. The new growth emerges with cream-white variegated margins to its leaves which later fades to green. As each flush emerges, it contrasts beautifully with the darker green older leaves. It does not have the soft cream white variegation of the more common Variegated Pittosporum. As it ages, this plant will begin to have terminal clusters of fragrant white flowers which slowly turn from white to yellow. This selection is compact in growth habit, height 5 ft. Grow in full sun to shade, giving it good drainage and ample moisture. Zones 7b-10. ___ per Ted Stephens of Nurseries Caroliniana, <https://nurcar.com>



Pittosporum tobira 'Kansai Sunburst' (Credit: JCRA Collection)



Camellia vernalis 'Hiryu'
(Credit: almostedenplants.com)

Camellia vernalis 'Hiryu' (Hiryu Sasanqua Camellia) "Small, semi-double, crimson red to rose red flowers with wavy and twisty inner petals, and may have white spots, are centered by a boss of contrasting gold stamens atop white filaments. Flowers are produced early in the season, October to December, attracting bees and other pollinators. Hiryu Sasanqua Camellia, a *Camellia x vernalis* hybrid, is a vigorous growing heirloom Sasanqua with an upright, well-branched, spreading habit and medium-textured small, dark green, glossy foliage that can exceed 12 ft. high at maturity (6-8 ft. wide). Its vigor lends it to use as a screen, hedge, or specimen plant as well as tree forms. The Sasanqua Camellias are much more tolerant of growing conditions than standard Japonica Camellias and can tolerate less than perfect soils and full sun to light shade conditions. Optimum conditions would be an acidic, humus rich

soil with an organic mulch and average moisture in hardiness zones 7b, 8, or 9. Once well-established they need little additional care and will continue to perform for years to come. Most Camellias do best where they get light shade or morning sun and the light filtered shade of pines seems to be perfect. ___ per Almost Eden, www.almostedenplants.com

***Chamaecyparis obtusa* 'Kosteri' (Koster's Hinokae False cypress)**

'Kosteri' is a dwarf, loosely pyramidal form that matures slowly, growing 2 to 4 feet tall and wide. This cultivar prefers moist but well-drained soil in full to part sun and has moderate drought tolerance once established. It remains compact without pruning. The ascending branches are large, with bright green, horizontal fans of lush dense foliage.

'Kosteri' is resistant to browsing by deer. Use as a specimen in small spaces, in a container, or in rock gardens. Mass planted it can be pruned into a small hedge or planted along a foundation. The foliage becomes an attractive bronze color, providing winter interest in the landscape. It is deer resistant and hardy from zones 4a to 8b. ___ per NC Extension Gardener Plant Toolbox, <https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu>



Chamaecyparis obtusa 'Kosteri'
(Credit: JCRA Collection)



Sambucus canadensis 'Blonde Envy'
(Credit: plantdelights.com)

***Sambucus canadensis* 'Blonde Envy' (Blonde Envy Elderberry)**

This is a found (natural) cultivar of our native elderberry. When grown in full sun, the foliage is a stunning gold. It does just as well in part shade, but the foliage color is more chartreuse. ___ per Ted Stephens of Nursery Caroliniana <https://nurcar.com/>

“Blond Envy” thrives in full sun, heat, and humidity. This amazing discovery forms a giant clump to 6' tall x 8' wide, clothed with brilliant yellow foliage. In late summer the winter-deciduous clump is further adorned with terminal clusters of tiny white flowers, followed by purple fruit.

Ideal growing conditions are full sun and moist to average soil moisture, although it is fairly drought tolerant for a short time.” ___per Plant Delights Nursery, plantdelights.com

***Pittosporum illicioides* (Anise-leaf pittosporum)** This evergreen shrub grows up to 8 ft. tall and is hardy to zone 8. Plant it in sun to part shade. The leaf shape is different from the old standby pittosporum which has long been a favorite for hedges in the south. Like the familiar one, this is a good screening or hedge shrub.

Origin: Central and Southern China, southern Japan, and Taiwan. ___ JC Raulston Arboretum, <https://jcra.ncsu.edu>



Pittosporum illicioides (Credit: JCRA Collection: <https://jcra.ncsu.edu>)

Did you know that crape myrtle bark scale is now widespread in NC? What to do?

In April 2020 I saw in an NCSU Extension Entomology post Dr. Steve Frank's "Time to Scout for the Crape Myrtle Bark Scale." When my 2023 Winter Issue of the JCRA newsletter came, I read the article by horticulture director Greg Paige warning that " . . . crape myrtle bark scale has quickly become a major issue for this popular flowering tree."



Heavy infestations of crape myrtle bark scale (CMBS) on crape myrtles



Stab a scale with a toothpick or knife point and it will "bleed" pink

When I was at the north Raleigh post office, I noticed that the branches of two small crape myrtle trees at the edge of the sidewalk were absolutely covered with little white fuzzy-looking insects. I knew they were some kind of scale and wrote Dr. Frank January 31 asking if crape myrtle bark scale's population had increased since that 2020 advice. He replied "Yes, the time has arrived! A couple years ago this pest was occasional and isolated in pockets around the state. As of this past summer it is everywhere. I received calls every day from every part of the state. It is also now in nurseries so I see it at all the big box stores, etc., which helped it spread."

Dr. Frank sent me a fact sheet he wrote for homeowners, and I will send it to GG members as an attachment to an email since I can't copy and paste a PDF document to this article.

The CMBS is not native to the US and was first noticed in Texas in 2004, in Mississippi in 2015, in Charlotte and in other, isolated areas in NC in 2020.

CMBS have mouthparts that pierce the bark to get to the sap, which they suck up. As they feed, they poop a sugary liquid called honeydew, a perfect bed for sooty mold to grow on. This black powdery mold soon covers anything under the tree – bushes, mulch, grass -- and twigs, branches, and trunks of the tree. Heavy infestations reduce growth and flowering resulting in weakened and unhealthy trees.

CMBS have a white or gray waxy cover, and their egg cases look like cotton swabs. The nymphs live with the adults on bark and are pink or orange with white wax. They have at least two generations a year, and unfortunately, in many parts of NC they reproduce throughout the year.

An article from Mississippi State University says the simplest and most effective control is to avoid buying and planting infested trees. Carefully inspect trees as low-level infestations are hard to see. Even one live female or a single egg sac filled with eggs is still an infestation. New home buyers should inspect all crape myrtles.

Other controls include removing heavily infested branches and stems. Or use a pressure washer to blast the scale. Spraying with horticultural oil offers some control – spray **before** the leaves bud, when there is no wind, and when temperatures will be above freezing for at least 24 hours.

Ladybugs and lacewing larvae are natural predators, and spraying for mosquito control kills them. This can lead to pest outbreaks. Now go inspect your crape myrtles **before** their buds show green.

By Marty Finkel

Sources: Dr. Steven Frank, NCSU Other: Clemson U. & Mississippi State University

Photos: Dr. Blake Layton, Extension Entomology Specialist, Mississippi State University

Q & A

Q: *Is there an easy to make dispenser for nesting materials for birds?*

A: *This one seems to fit the bill. I found it on a Mud and Bloom blog; see Sources at end of this page.*

Birds are still building nests (although many started in February), and they would appreciate a handy dispenser so they wouldn't have to spend time and energy gathering the materials.

To make the dispenser, you'll need pliable branches or vines, natural twine, scissors, a straight stick, and nesting materials. Gather a pile of any of these: sticks and twigs, moss and grass, tree bark, leaves, mud, feathers, untreated sheep wool, pine needles, fluff from plants, lichens, and even spider webs. Spider webs are often used as 'glue' to stick the nest together, and if this appeals to you, find old webs the spiders have abandoned. Some plants that provide "fluff" are cattails and the seeds of cottonwood and milkweed.

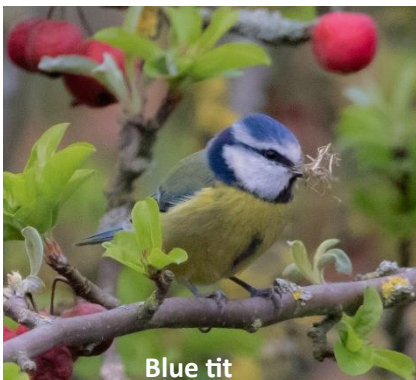


Photos courtesy of <https://www.mudandbloom.com/blog>

Some materials are **not** recommended: yarn and string because they can tangle and cut through bird legs or wings, dryer fluff because it contains detergent and/or fabric softener chemicals – it also crumbles after it has been rained on, leaving a space which may undermine the structure of the nest. Do **not** use pet hair if your dog or cat has been treated with medications that kill fleas and ticks – it remains in the hair.

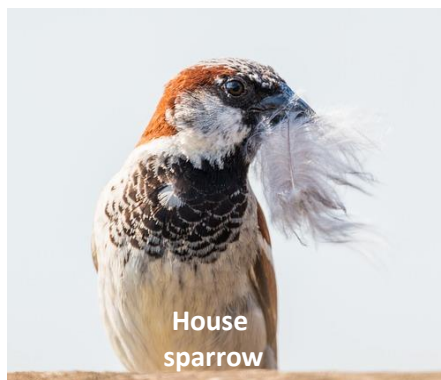
It's also useful to know what local birds use in their nests, e.g. chickadees and phoebes use lots of moss (I know firsthand about phoebes, because one built a very mossy nest between a floodlight and the roof overhang and my moss garden was noticeably holey). Bluebirds and robins make nests using grasses, straw, and pine straw. Untreated chicken feathers are used by swallows, wrens, and flycatchers.

Of course, birds don't really need any help finding nesting material, but if you have a dispenser hanging where you can see it, it's fun watching the birds select the different bits.



Blue tit

Pixabay – <https://www.instagram.com/theotherkev>



House sparrow

Pixabay, Teefarm – <https://teefarm.ch/>



Blue tit

Pixabay – <https://www.instagram.com/theotherkev>

By Marty Finkel,
Source "Making A Natural Nesting Material Dispenser"

Q: Do any plants repel bugs?

A: Many plants, especially herbs, will help reduce bug populations in the garden. Also, you can make a personal repellent from many of them.

Plants have been used to repel bugs for thousands of years in the form of bruised leafy bundles hung in houses, laid on floors to be walked on, made into crude fumigants, and/or made into oil for use on skin and clothing.

Most plants have certain essential oils in tiny globules, and high temperatures cause the oils to evaporate as vapors that are repellent to many insects. A good example is rosemary, which has many such globules on the undersides of the leaves. We usually aren't aware of these odors (unless we brush by lavender, rosemary, mint, or other heavily-scented plant), but insects are. The vapors attract beneficial insects, too.

I once asked a professor at a symposium how squash bugs find squash in a garden where it has never been grown before, and he said that it, as well as pumpkins, gourds, watermelon, and cucumber give off a scent that attracts them. If I was growing any of these other vegetables, they could be drawing the squash bugs.

Some common herbs with strong bug-repelling oils:

Basil: Can deter flea beetles, cabbage webworms. It doesn't even need to be crushed to be effective. It's also a **personal repellent:** put 4 to 6 oz. of fresh basil leaves/stems into a container and cover with 4 oz. boiling water. Steep for several hours and squeeze the liquid from the plants into the container and add 4 oz. vodka. Use as a spray, keeping away from eyes, nose, and mouth. Keep in the refrigerator.

Rosemary: Plant several throughout the garden to repel aphids, bean beetles, cabbage moths, and carrot flies. Rosemary attracts ladybugs, lacewings, and chickadees – all eat bugs. However, it also attracts some pests: spittlebugs, whiteflies, leaf hoppers, thrips, and spider mites. So you have to decide if it repels more damaging bugs or attracts bugs you don't want.

Alliums (ornamental alliums as well as chives, garlic chives, leeks, shallots) repel aphids, slugs, cabbage worms, and carrot flies. Plant them among tomatoes, peppers, potatoes, cabbage, broccoli, kohlrabi, and carrots to help reduce damage.

Dill: Repels aphids, spiders, mites, cabbage loopers, tomato hornworms, squash bugs.

Petunias when flowering: Confuses asparagus bugs, tomato hornworm, squash bugs, aphids, leaf hoppers.

Thyme: Discourages whiteflies, ants, maggots, stink bugs, corn earworms, cabbage loopers, cutworms, tomato hornworm – also attracts many pollinators.

Marigold: Strong smell repels gnats, mosquitos, thrips, flies, whiteflies – pollinator attractor too.

These are but a few to get you started. Planting these all through your vegetable garden will help, but it won't keep your plants from being eaten. You will have a more colorful garden, and you can scatter the petals of the flowers over salads, desserts, and other dishes.

By Marty Finkel,

Sources: Dre Campbell Farm blog, Treehugger, Suzanne Williams Rooted Revival and many other articles that cited these herbs and flowers for their insect repelling (and attracting) volatile oils.

To Do in March

Frost dates have been revised. Frost dates are calculated based on data from the NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information. The probability of a frost occurring after the spring date or before the fall date is 30%. The last spring 2022 frost date for Oxford, NC is **April 8**.

The seed starting and transplanting dates listed below are based on a last frost date of **April 15**. The suggested starting time of March 1 for seeds will give a 6-weeks old transplant to be set out April. To set out earlier, seeds can be started the last week in February.

- For those starting seeds for vegetables to be set out after frost, plant the seeds **indoors March 1st** through **the 15th** for transplants to be ready to set in the garden April 15 through May. Most require a temperature of around 70 degrees to germinate, so put them in a warm place or provide bottom heat. When seedlings break ground, transfer to shelves about an inch under fluorescent lights or put against a window that receives direct sun all day (south exposure).
- Plant these seeds directly into the ground **March 1st**: arugula, beets, carrots, cauliflower, cilantro, kale, kohlrabi, leeks, lettuces, mustard, bulb & green onions, parsley, parsnips, snow, snap, and green peas, radishes, rutabaga, spinach, Swiss chard, turnips
- Plant these seeds directly into the ground **March 15th** : arugula, snap beans, beets, Chinese cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, Swiss chard, sweet corn, dill, kale, kohlrabi, leeks, lettuces, mustard, bulb & green onions, parsley, parsnips, snow, snap, & green peas, Southern field peas, radish, rutabaga, spinach, sunflower, turnips
- You can **transplant** into the ground: collards, kale, kohlrabi, leeks, lettuces, green onions, onion bulb sets, parsley. Set out broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, celery, Swiss chard, Chinese cabbage plants about mid-month.
- Use a pre-emergent herbicide to control weeds
- After danger of freezing temperatures, plant crocosmia, dahlia, gladiolus, and lilies
- Re-pot houseplants that need larger pots so they will be ready to move outside after danger of frost
- Continue to monitor houseplants for mites, aphids, soft brown scale, and white fly. Insecticidal soap is effective and safe to use. Follow label directions and spray both upper and lower leaf surfaces, stems, and trunks.
- Remove winter mulch from subtropicals (ginger, crinum, lantana), clean area, and apply new mulch
- Remove old foliage from hellebores and epimediums (fairy wings, barrenwort)
- Divide and transplant or share with others: asters, astilbe, ajuga, oxalis, bleeding heart, phlox, hostas, Shasta daisy, daylily, and coral bells
- Keep plenty of food and clean water out for the birds
- Fertilize perennials, shrubs, and trees with an organic slow release fertilizer. **Note:** Most well-established plants do not need fertilizer. Those planted this past fall will benefit from fertilizer as well as any that you noticed weren't growing as expected last year.
- Cut back ornamental grasses **early** this month if you missed doing so in Feb. Many started new growth in February.
- Shrubs that bloom on new wood should be cut back and shaped
- Continue to plant cool season vegetable seeds: kale, kohlrabi, leaf and butterhead lettuce, mustard, onions, radishes, spinach, beets, turnips.

By Marty Finkel



Wild Ginger (*Asarum arifolium*). Photos from NC Extension Gardener Plant Toolbox

PLANT OF THE MONTH

This evergreen plant is native to the southeastern US and is commonly found in deciduous woods in Granville County. The flowers, commonly called Little Brown Jugs or maybe Pigs, are under the leaves. Their bell-shaped petals are leathery, and pollination is done by ants, flies, and ground beetles. It's clump-forming and makes a beautiful groundcover in light or dappled shade in moist soil. The leaves may look ratty by the end of the winter, but in April the new leaves are up and bright green. The leaves, stems, and roots are aromatic – similar to rootbeer. Some native plant nurseries sell this and other varieties, and it does well in the woodland garden.

By Marty Finkel

SOME OF THE PLANTS IN BLOOM THIS MONTH



Double-take hybrid flowering quince



Netted iris 'Harmony'



Yellow daphne



Hardy cyclamen



Chinese sassafras



Contorted flowering quince

Photos: JCRA Showtime for March Photo Collection



Mount Noko camelia



Portuguese squill



Green-flowering cherry



Star anise



Kirigami mountain columbine



Variegated primrose jasmine 'Gold Tip'



Photos: JCRA Showtime for March Photo Collection

Some other plants 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). Compiled by Marty Finkel

Native and Japanese maples
 Buckeyes
 Serviceberry trees
 Wind flower
 Italian arum
 Barberries
 Camellias
 Redbuds
 Glory of the Snow
 Fragrant winterhazel
 Sea kale
 Crocus
 Daphne
 Persimmon
 Fairy wings (Epimedium)
 Dogtooth violet
 Beech trees
 Yellow bells (Forcythia)
 Snowdrops
 Witchhazel

Variegated sweet flag
 Ajuga
 Columbine
 Cobra-lily
 Pawpaw
 Boxwoods
 Hornbeam trees
 Japanese and hybrid flowering quince
 Cornelian cherry
 Fumewort (Corydalis)
 Henry Lauder's walking stick
 Cyclamen
 Dianthus
 Edgeworthia
 Winter aconite
 Pearlbush
 Spicebush
 Fothergilla
 Silverbells tree
 Hellebore