



Home & Consumer Horticulture Newsletter



Yancey County Center



September 2022

Welcome to the September 2022 Home & Consumer Horticulture Program Newsletter from N.C. Cooperative Extension, Yancey County Center. If you haven't visited, or contacted the office in awhile, you may not know that Sara Runkel, formerly the Yancey County Agriculture Extension Agent, has taken a new position. I am happy to announce that moving forward, I will be taking on the duties that Sara previously covered as the NC State Agriculture Extension Agent. As you have questions that come up related to the home lawn, landscape, or garden, please feel free to reach out to me.

Sincerely,

David Davis
County Extension Director
N.C. Cooperative Extension
Yancey County Center

Dealing With Unwanted Chemicals

Do you have unwanted chemicals laying around that you would like to dispose of? The Yancey County Extension Center takes most unwanted garden or household pesticides as part of the NC Department of Agriculture Pesticide Disposal Program. The only pesticides taht we cannot take are those in aerosol spray cans or pressurized containers. The pesticides should also be labeled as to what they are. We take in household and farm pesticides for disposal the 2nd Tuesday of each month from 10 am until 4:30 pm. We can take in pesticides on other days by appointment.

September Pesticide Drop Off Day:

September 13

10 am - 4 pm

What About Non-Pesticide Wastes?

All Yancey County Convenience Center locations take in bagged household wastes in addition to recycling newspapers, cardboard, aluminum cans, glass containers and plastics. A shipping container is located at the Riverside Convenience Center location to recycle empty triple rinsed pesticide containers with the lids and labels removed. The East Yancey/Burnsville location will receive used motor oil and tires.

Some items such as latex based paints can be dried out, and then placed into the regular garbage. Cat litter or sand can be used to absorb paint remaining in containers to speed up the drying process. Yancey County does not currently have a household hazardous waste program to receive car batteries, household batteries, fluorescent bulbs or other household hazardous wastes.



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Checkout our website:

yancey.ces.ncsu.edu

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Fall Tasks for Lawn Care and Maintenance

Having a beautiful lawn can add aesthetic value to your property and bring much enjoyment. For those that are lawn enthusiasts, consider a few things that you can do over the next couple of months to make it look and grow much better.



Taking a soil test is one of the easiest ways to meet lawn nutrient requirements, avoid unnecessary expenses, and protect the environment.

Consider soil testing. Soil testing is free through the North Carolina Department of Agriculture from April until Thanksgiving. A soil test will give an idea of the soil pH and other key soil nutrient levels. A soil test report will also give an idea if lime application is needed to raise the soil pH and what type of fertilizer can be applied to meet nutrient needs. By soil testing your lawn, you can avoid unnecessary expense while still getting the results that you want.

Consider fertilizing your lawn in the fall, not the spring. Fertilizing the lawn in the fall is better for the longevity of the lawn since fall applied fertilizer goes to building up the carbohydrate root reserves of your lawn grasses, and it is also a better practice for the environment.

Spring applied fertilizer primarily results in top growth and simply means more mowing. In turn that also means more gasoline usage for those that use gas powered lawn mowers, more time spent on

maintaining the lawn and ultimately more money out of your pocket. Over fertilizing lawns could also possibly contribute to more lawn weeds, an increase in herbicide applications or other weed control practices and could possibly result in nitrogen leeching into water run-off. A stronger, healthier lawn will also have less disease presence, and having a healthier lawn will minimize the potential need to apply fungicides to control lawn diseases.

Begin increasing your mowing height to 3 inches. If possible, mulch fallen leaves instead of raking them. This adds nutrients back to the soil. If there are a lot of trees present, as is the case with most properties in our area, there may be a need to remove some of the falling leaves. Early fall, as temperatures begin to cool and if moisture is present, is a great time to consider seeding the lawn. This can be done by aerating or dethatching, broadcasting seed, and then lightly aerating or dethatching back over the top to initiate better seed to soil contact. The best option is to mow down to 2-2.5 inches, then use a handheld lawn slit seeder if one can be rented from a local rental company. A slit seeder places grass seed directly into the soil so it has a better chance of germinating.



Mulching leaves with a mower instead of removing them adds nutrients back to the lawn.

If you have any questions about practices that you can implemented to make your lawn better, please feel free to contact the NC Cooperative Extension Yancey County Center by calling **828-682-6186**, or send an email with questions to David Davis (david_davis@ncsu.edu).

Start Working Toward A Successful Garden for Next Year Now!

Labor Day is just around the corner. Before you know it, the leaves will be falling from the trees and the summer garden seasons will soon come to an end. However, there is a lot that can be done now that will help increase the success of next year's gardening efforts. Here are a few things to think about:

1. Minimize garden plant debris. Those left over garden plants can harbor diseases and other pests. It is best to minimize them by taking them out of the garden, or by mowing them off and tilling them in as much as possible. If removing garden plants, and placing them into the home compost pile or bin, make sure that this compost is not reapplied to the vegetable garden. Most home compost piles do not heat up to high enough temperatures to kill most of the disease pathogens. However, since most diseases are fairly host specific, that compost could be good to add to the lawn, or landscape.

2. Take care of the soil. Go ahead and soil test the garden for traditional tilled garden plots, or raised bed gardens containing "natural" soil. Pay particular attention to the soil pH results. It takes 6-12 months for lime application to benefit the soil. If the pH is too low, applying lime now in the fall will make things better for the garden in the spring.

3. If raised beds that are filled primarily with garden or potting soil are used (i.e. miracle grow potting soil, or pro-mix), it is usually best to change out the soil, and to do that prior to winter to avoid moisture damage to the raised bed materials. Most potting soils are not designed for long term gardening. In the greenhouse, potting soil mixtures allow for a high degree of nutrient control through multiple applications of water soluble fertilizer (often weekly or more frequent applications). Salt accumulation is avoided thanks to the design of good potting soils. They are designed to leech salts, but unfortunately also means that they will not retain necessary nutrients as they are lost from the potting soil mixture with frequent watering. So it is best to plan to discard old potting soil, and start from scratch the next spring if that is what is being used in raised beds as the old potting soil will retain very little soil nutrient content. It is more likely that the soil will contain unwanted pathogens that may cause issues to next year's garden.

4. Another way to get more out of a garden is to consider fall, winter, or early spring gardening. Certain garden crops such as greens, lettuce, brassicas such as broccoli or cauliflower, and carrots can be grown in the cooler months with a little protection. Consider constructing a "cold frame" or covered bed for some of these crops. Traditional gardens can also be planted with cover crops such as crimson clover (great for early spring pollinators), or even winter wheat to add organic matter to improve soil health.

If you have other specific questions related to gardening practices for this time of year, please feel free to contact the Yancey County Extension Center.

Avoid Tree Topping, Prune Them Properly!

One of the most commonly misunderstood practices is how to properly prune a large landscape tree. Many times in the fall or the spring of the year, a common site will be someone completely removing most of top of the large trees located in the landscape. Many believe that this is the way reduce the size of trees, reduce falling branches, avoid structural issues, and to reduce the risk associated with falling trees. However, these outcomes are actually often increased by the practice of topping trees.

After several years, trees that have been topped will often become problematic due to an increase in falling branches. When trees are topped, and not pruned in properly, this will result in out of control growth the following year. On the end of each "topped" branch will grow a vast number of small branches that develop. None of these branches will grow at structurally sound angles making them more prone to being damaged by adverse weather events. Also, the outcome of the increase in foliage is an increase in disease, branch rot, insect problems, and disease. Many of the branches often die and fall out of the tree creating falling branch hazards, and unnecessary clean up work. Topped trees will be more stressed, and the practice of topping often results in the shortened life of the tree.



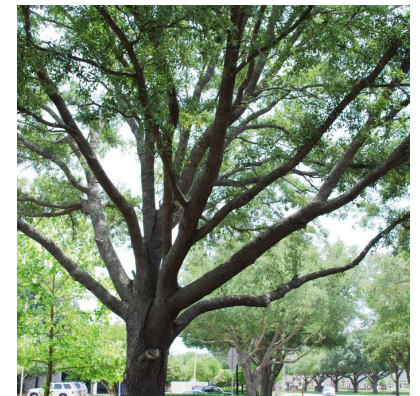
Trees pruned by topping not pruned properly. Trees pruned this way are at a greater risk for many unwanted problems.



Topped trees 1-2 years after being pruned. The regrowth is worse than the original growth, and topping creates many potential issues for the tree.

So what does a properly pruned tree look like? A properly pruned landscape tree will actually retain much of its original shape. Someone that does not have a trained eye probably wouldn't be able to see the difference at all as these differences should be very subtle. For starters, the canopy of the tree should be reduced by 20% or less.

My best advice would be to find a trained arborists that is certified by the International Society of Arborists (ISA). You can find a nearby arborist using the search function on the ISA website



A properly pruned oak tree. When properly pruned, the tree will retain its original shape. Branches will be removed to promote structural soundness and promote airflow.

www.treesaregood.org. A trained arborist will usually charge a little more than an uncertified landscaper with a bucket truck and chainsaw. However, for those that really like their trees, and would like to keep them around for awhile, the expense of hiring a trained arborist is probably worth it.