Managing Household Pests

Now that spring is here… so too are all kinds of buzzing, biting and crawling insects and critters! Learn how to prevent or potentially control the most common household pests such as ants, ladybugs, carpenter bees, mice, boxelder bugs and much more!

The NC Cooperative Extension Service is holding a How to Manage Your Household Pests Seminar at the following dates, times and sites:

May 17th from 6:00-7:30 p.m. at the Swain Extension Center (Almond)
May 18th from 2:00-3:30 p.m. at the Jackson Extension Center (Sylva)

This is an informative series (free) with great pictures handouts and tips. To register for this class or for more information contact your local Extension Center at 488 3848 or 586 4009.

Managing Garden Pests

The N.C. Cooperative Extension Service is holding an in-depth Organic Pest Management Seminar for gardeners and farmers who desire to learn more on how to control (organically) insects, diseases and weeds that plague their vegetables. Seminars will be held at the following dates and locations:

May 24th from 2:00-4:00 p.m. at the Swain Extension Center (Almond)
May 25th from 6:00-8:00 p.m. at the Jackson Extension Center (Sylva)

This is an intense seminar (free) with great pictures (courtesy of Debbie Roos), handouts and a plethora of tips. You won’t want to miss it! To register for this class or for more information or directions contact Christy Bredenkamp at your local N.C. Cooperative Extension Center at phone # 586-4009 or 488-3848.
Think Crop Rotation!

Spring is back! As day and night time temperatures continue to rise and flowering buds begin to break, the desire to till and sow in our gardens follows suit! Like thoroughbred horses chomping at the bit, gardeners can’t wait to get their fingernails dirty and smell the aroma of freshly turned soil. Before you leap out of the winter gate into your garden, ask yourself, have you developed a crop rotation strategy?

In a nutshell, crop rotation is planting vegetables and cover crops in new locations from year to year. It is one of the oldest and most effective cultural control strategies to protect your soil and prevent insects and diseases from getting out of control. Because crop rotation is so effective, it is the key to successful gardening.

Why use rotation?

Reduced insect and disease incidence
Vegetables and herbs in the same family are typically grouped together when planning a rotation. Related crops are prone to the same soil-living pests and diseases. Moving them around in a methodical fashion helps to reduce potential pest problems.

Helps maintain soil fertility
Plants require nutrients in varying amounts and at different soil depths. Rotating plant families along with cover crops in designated areas helps to amplify the overall use of the soil.

Weed control
Vegetables such as butternut squash, cabbage and lettuce have leafy foliage that suppresses weeds by preventing light from reaching the soil. Alternating plants with these different growth habits reduces the amount of labor for weed control.

How long should the rotation be?
The longer the rotation the better! I suggest a minimum of four years. This means that crops return to their original site after 4 years. If the soil is already infected with persistent problems such as fusarium wilt or clubroot, try to extend the rotation of susceptible crops even longer. Many organic farmers boast of seven, eight or even twelve-year rotation cycles.

At first glance, crop rotation may appear complicated. In reality, it’s like fitting pieces of a puzzle (crops families) together in your garden. Consider the following principles of crop rotation:

- Make a list of the number and types of vegetables that you desire to grow.
- Group the plants together in botanical families (below).
- Draw a plan of your garden and divide into equal sections. Plan on having as many sections as the number of years you want the rotation to last.
- Work out where each crop goes in its specific bed or area. Families should be together, but if you have more than one crop for an area, then choose plants with similar growing needs.
- Keep records! Use this information when planning for next year.

Botanical Families:

Mint Family: mint, basil, rosemary, lavender. Anise and summer savory
Malvaceae (mallow family): okra
Convolvulaceae (morning glory family): sweet potatoes
Asteraceae (composite family): artichokes, chicory, endive, escarole, lettuce, salsify and sunflower
Brassicaceae (mustard family): arugula, cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, kohlrabi, turnip, kale, collards, mustard, radish, rutabagas, watercress and bok choy
Liliaceae (lily family): asparagus, onion, garlic, ramps, leeks, shallots and chives
Chenopodiaceae (goosefoot family): beets, Swiss chard and spinach
Cucurbitaceae (gourd family): cucumber, cantaloupe, muskmelon, water melon, summer squash, winter squash, pumpkins, gourds, honeydew melons, candy roasters and luffa gourd
Fabaceae (legume family): English peas, snap beans, green beans, October beans, peanuts, butter beans, soybeans, edamame, lima beans, cowpeas, field peas, clover and alfalfa
Apiaceae (carrot family): carrots, parsley, parsnip, dill, celery, cilantro, chervil and angelica
Solonaceae (nightshade family): tomato, eggplant, peppers, potatoes and tomatillos
Poaceae (grass family): sweet corn, feed corn, popcorn, Indian corn, oats, rye, sorghum, wheat, barley, millet and rice
**Lawns**

- Do NOT fertilize cool season lawns (fescue and bluegrass). Nitrogen applied this late is an invitation for brown patch fungus disease in June.
- Maintain mowing height for fescue lawns at 3 to 3 1/2 inches.
- It is too late to expect good results from applying crabgrass preventer now. Much of the seed has already begun to germinate.

**Vegetables**

- You can still plant potatoes as well as plant seeds for lettuce, beets and leafy greens.
- Set out transplants for cool season crops such as cabbage, broccoli, and lettuce. Make sure they are hardened off before planting into the garden.
- Asparagus should be coming up soon. Cut spears when they are about 4 to 6 inches long.
- Have row cover fabric handy if frost sensitive crops are planted before May.
- Perennial herbs such as rosemary, thyme and lavender can be planted later in the month.
- Plan the vegetable garden on paper. Keep it from year to year so you can plan crop rotations.
- Check cabbage family crops for cabbage worms.
- Thin seedlings of radishes, carrots, lettuce and other early plantings when they have 2 true leaves. Carrots and radishes should be thinned to 1 to 2 inches apart, lettuce and other greens to 6 inches.
- Soil temperature should be warmed up to at least 65 degrees before planting beans, melons and okra - after May 5.

**Fruits**

- After flowering is finished, consider beginning your fungicide spray program to prevent black rot on grapes and brown rot on peaches and plums.
- Fertilize fruit trees, blueberries, grape vines, and brambles.
- Finish pruning brambles, grape vines and fruit trees.

**Ornamentals**

- As soon as spring blooming shrubs have finished blooming, it’s time to prune if they have gotten too large.
- Evergreen shrubs can be pruned now through June.
- This is still a good time to plant shrubs and herbaceous perennials. Remember to keep them watered this summer.
- Do not plant frost-tender flowers before May unless you will be able to cover them in case of frost.
- Winter annual weeds such as chickweed and henbit should be addressed before they go to seed. Hand pulling is the best option in landscape beds. Broadleaf herbicides can be used as long as the chemical will not contact landscape plants.
- If you would like to rearrange some of your daffodils, the bulbs can be moved now. Dig deep so you don’t damage the bulb. Keep the leaves and roots in tact and replant at the original depth.
- Do not remove leaves from bulbs until they have turned brown.
- Organic mulch is the best tool for maintaining soil moisture and reducing weeds in the landscape. Mulch should be 2 to 3 inches deep, including the old layer. More than that is not only a waste of money, it can be detrimental to plant growth.
- Prune spring blooming shrubs soon after blossoms fade.
Now is the time to start scouting your Hemlock trees for the Hemlock woolly Adelgid! If you normally treat your shorter trees with a foliar spray, I encourage you to spray now and again in August with products such as insecticidal soaps, horticultural oil, Malathion or liquid Sevin. Avoid spraying with Soaps and oils after bud break to prevent needle burn.

Large trees may be treated with systemic insecticides such as Safari or imidacloprid (Merit, Bayer Advance Garden Tree and Shrub Insect Control) in April or May. If the tree is not too close to a stream, a soil drench can be applied by digging a shallow trench one foot away from the trunk. Follow label directions carefully. For more information see website publication at www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/ent/notes/O&T/trees/note119a/note119a.htm

Sincerely,
Christy Bredenkamp, Extension Agent
Agriculture-Horticulture

NC STATE UNIVERSITY

Jackson County Center
538 Scotts Creek Road, Suite 205
Sylva, NC 28779