



# HOME GARDENING



## NEWSLETTER



### *New Horticulture Agent*

WRITTEN BY: JESSICA WEBB, THE SMOKY MOUNTAIN TIMES

The first thing Minda Daughtry, the new horticulture agent for the N.C. Cooperative Extension offices of Swain and Jackson counties, noticed when she visited my office was the row of plants soaking up the sunlight from the large window.

"This is going to be a great hanging plant," she said of the spider plant. "Have you had blooms on these?" she pointed to an Easter cactus, then corrected me about my Christmas cactus that is in fact a Thanksgiving cactus. Look, there are the four points, so you can remember it like a fork for Thanksgiving," she noted.

Daughtry is a fast talker and loves sharing her knowledge and resources when it comes to plants. She comes to Western North Carolina after having served as the Horticulture Agent in Lee County, North Carolina. While she originated on Long Island, summers were spent in Johnston County where her mother's family is from.

Her background began in business administration, then as a paralegal before she found horticulture after taking a few community college classes. Her husband and children wondered at her interest, you kill everything, but that era is long behind her.

"I went to the classes, and I loved it, and I discovered there's something I really got about plants," she said. "It's a question of knowledge, the more you know the better you can grow, that's how I approach it with folks."

Since her family has spent vacations in the mountains over the years, she said, the plan was always to end up in this region somewhere.

She's looking forward to hearing from the community with their plant questions, whether it's the backyard gardener or commercial grower.

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# *Carolina Lawn Care: Weed Management Workshop*

Learn about types of weeds and their life cycles, how to identify weeds, and how to manage weeds through integrated pest management and pre-emergent herbicide programs. Presented by: Minda Daughtry, Extension Horticulture Agent.

SEPTEMBER 8

- Marianna Black  
Library, Bryson City
- 5:30 PM - 7:00 PM



## *Native Tree ID Walk*

**Identify native trees, shrubs and invasive plants!**

Enjoy a nice leisurely stroll as we walk the wooded trails of Pinnacle Park (Sylva) and Deep Creek (Bryson City). Learn the identity of specific trees along with topography and other site information related to why we can expect to find certain species in these locations. Study the unique creatures that call this area home such as reptiles and amphibians that require special habitats to live.

Guest Speaker is Andrew Danner with EcoForesters. EcoForesters is a non-profit professional forestry organization dedicated to conserving and restoring our Appalachian forests through education and stewardship.

- Limit: 15 participants
- Wear suitable footwear and clothing for trail walking.
- Insect repellent recommended.

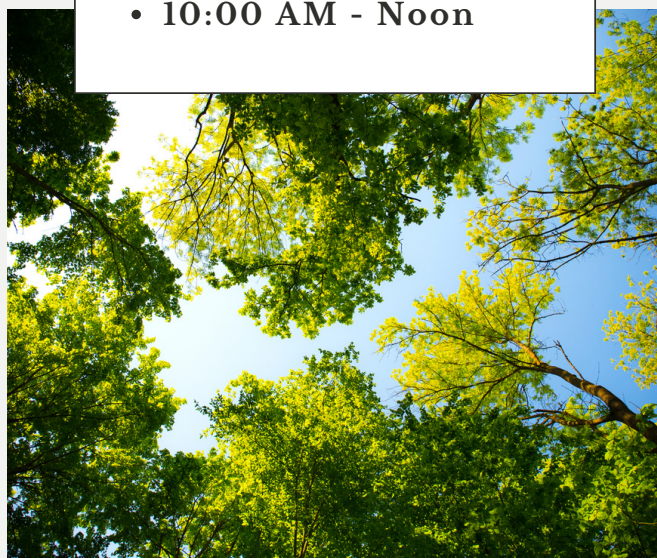
**Call (828)488-3848 to  
register for these programs**

AUGUST 27

- Pinnacle Park, Sylva
- 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM

SEPTEMBER 16

- Deep Creek, Bryson  
City (Picnic Area)
- 10:00 AM - Noon





## *New Horticulture Agent . . . continued from page 1*



"I'm very interested in hearing folks' experiences and what they love about the area, what they want to do, and what's giving them grief; about what's not working and helping them learn the right plant, at the right place, at the right time, so they can be successful," Daughtry said.

She's enthused about hosting Master Gardener Program classes as well as Garden Life series programming.

"Absolutely, one thing I'm looking forward to as I meet people is creating educational programs for the consumer and commercial grower," she said. Daughtry encourages people to call with their questions and said she wants to be a familiar face.

County Extension Director, Rob Hawk, said it's good to have a Horticulture Agent on staff again to serve the county. "Horticulture and plant agriculture, the agribusiness, is so important in both Jackson and Swain counties with specialty crops tomatoes, strawberries and the backyard and kitchen gardener and helping these folks continue the practice and heritage of gardening here," Hawk said.

Daughtry described the local climate as a warm, wet hug, one that has its own challenges for growers in the form of pests and fungal diseases, among others. Plus, Hawk said, there are a lot of microclimates here in the mountains, which allows for the ability to grow different things but also to bring challenges.

"We try to bring the latest, researched-based information from the N.C. State University," Hawk said when it comes to solutions. "We work with conventional growers and organic growers; we work with all the different ones."

**To reach Daughtry, call the Swain County Extension Office at (828) 488-3848 or email at [minda\\_daughtry@ncsu.edu](mailto:minda_daughtry@ncsu.edu).**

### *Take the Gardening Survey*

The survey URL below will take you to an easy to answer questionnaire that you can complete in less than a minute. Please click on each response as you share with us the areas of interest, frustration, and need for learning as far as your own personal gardening is concerned. Thank you in advance! We are grateful for your willingness to share your time as we attempt to make our program suited to your individual needs. In this case, the old adage, "There are no wrong answers!"

**[go.ncsu.edu/gardening-survey](https://go.ncsu.edu/gardening-survey)**



# Chiggers, Ticks and Other Bloodsuckers

WRITTEN BY: MINDA DAUGHTRY

The great outdoors is nowhere more beautiful than here in Western NC. It beckons like the siren's call and there are so many choices from picnics to hiking, biking, birding, and more that when the weather's nice it's almost an insult not to get outside.

But we are not alone, and to some of the other critters we share the world with we look like a banquet. Chiggers, ticks and mosquitos are out and about living large this summer. While some are merely annoying and uncomfortable, some can really cause problems by vectoring in disease. Learning more about them will help you make better informed decisions so you can still enjoy the outdoors knowing you have taken care of protecting yourself.

A **CHIGGER** is a tiny parasitic mite, scarcely visible to the human eye. It attacks people, birds, reptiles, and other animals, causing red welts and severe itching. They spike at dawn and dusk and on overcast and humid days in woodlots, briar patches, uncut grass, and weeds, but may also infest well-kept shrubbery and lawns. Chiggers hatch from eggs into larvae that are so small they are almost invisible – “the no-see-ums”.

These larvae are the parasites that lunch on humans and other vertebrates. Blood is not what they're after. They actually scrape the skin, then inject a fluid to dissolve our tissue so they can suck it up for their meal, feeding where the skin is thin and the clothing is tight. That irritation is the cause of the itch. The good news is that chiggers here are not known to transmit disease, although secondary infections may occur as a result of scratching. Another great reason for diligent hand washing and fingernail care. Insect repellents can prevent chigger bites. Among the best are those containing diethyl toluamide (DEET) and permethrin. Apply the repellent to clothing around the ankles, waist and arms.

**TICKS** are most active in the spring, summer, and fall. Some species are even active in the winter! Ticks are related to spiders and mites – they have eight legs. Ticks occupy leaf litter, foundation cracks, and other secluded places until they need a blood meal. They then move to tall grass or shrubs where the humidity is higher before they attach themselves to the next source of a blood meal.



The tick searches for a place on the skin to attach – so covering up that skin and using appropriate repellents can be helpful. Know that some products work against both mosquitoes and ticks, while others work to repel mosquitos or ticks. Permethrin products containing 0.5% permethrin can be used to treat boots, clothing and camping gear and remain protective through several washings.

Lastly, but certainly not the least is the **MOSQUITOES**. Remember the phrase “Tip & Toss”. All mosquitoes need water to complete their life cycle. The females bite and most are a nuisance, but some can spread disease like West Nile or Zika and cause heartworm in dogs. Male mosquitoes do not bite; they feed strictly on plant nectar.

Most mosquitoes are active during twilight hours and at night. but the mosquitoes that breed in rain-filled objects, ditches, and tree holes are often active during the day. Hence the “Tip & Toss” standing water tactic.

Pesticide applications are only a short-term solution to long-term nuisance mosquito problems. Modifying or eliminating breeding sites is the long-term solution to severe mosquito problems. Learn more about mosquito control.

**Read more at: [go.ncsu.edu/bloodsucker-insects](http://go.ncsu.edu/bloodsucker-insects)**



# *Leyland Cypress Lamentations*

WRITTEN BY: MINDA DAUGHTRY



So many Leylands. So many problems. Tall, elegant Evergreens are often used for aesthetic borders for privacy barriers and relatively quick screening because a healthy specimen can grow 3-4 feet tall and 2-3 wide in one year. Key in on the term healthy. This species has been planted A LOT in the landscape, often incorrectly. Add stress to an already disease-susceptible organism and it's a pretty sure bet that you will be looking at a problem in the not-too-distant future. Two points to emphasize: (1)-Know Before You Grow and, (2)-Plant the Right Plant in the Right Place at the Right Time. Meet these two criteria and you will see significant progress in saving your wallet and your very last nerve.

As with any tree, shrub, perennial or annual, plant it in the garden according to what space the adult plant will be, not how they look in the containers you've brought them home in. Leyland Cypress (*X Cupressocyparis leylandii*) trees must be planted at least 10 to 15 feet apart, and they STILL will need thinning out due to the trees' rapid growth. A well-placed and correctly planted Leyland in the appropriate environment can grow to be 100 feet wide and 50 feet tall. When they are planted as a privacy screen, they are placed close together to

grow into one another. That reduces the air circulation needed in the canopy to dry the branches and leaves and increases the tendency toward disease. Several different kinds of diseases like *Phytophthora* root rot, *Armillaria* root rot, Cypress (*Seiridium*) canker, *Botryosphaeria* canker/dieback, *Passalora* needle blight, algae on foliage, and internal browning, as well as other problems.

Leyland cypress need full, all-day sun to be their best self. They will struggle in shade and their vigor will suffer, causing them to thin out and become more susceptible to diseases and pests. Soil water management is another essential criterion. Internal soil drainage, not just surface water drainage, is an important factor for this plant. Too much water inside the soil leads to root rotting fungal diseases, and too little water leads to stress. And stress leads to – you guessed it – disease.

I often get the question, "What can I spray on it?", when disease takes hold to the point that the plant owner notices that their treasure is succumbing to a problem. With Leyland cypress, often using chemical controls at this point isn't realistic because the application isn't going to be effective, and control of the disease isn't really going to occur. Severely infected trees are not going to recover and should be removed. If an infected plant is closely placed in a row of the same species of plants, disease can and does spread right through the row. It's like offering up a smorgasbord to pests and pathogens to "come an' get it".

If your design goal is privacy screening, consider moving away from identical rows of the same plant toward the diversity of mixed screens. That means planting multiple species, preferably with different leaf shapes, textures, growth forms and characteristics in clusters of threes and fives, in varied layers to break the smorgasbord lunch line and control the spread of disease.

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## *Agriculture at the Swain Fair*

Among other attractions, the Farm Produce and Honey Exhibits were a much visited display at this years Swain County Agricultural Fair.

Plan now for the 2023 Fair: [go.ncsu.edu/swain-fair](https://go.ncsu.edu/swain-fair)



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