



The Bloomin' News

Sandhills Community College

Vol. 07, No. 2

Summer 2012

The Sandhills Horticultural Society - dedicated to the support of the Sandhills Horticultural Gardens since 1987. Please help the Gardens grow by becoming a Society member.

Love It or Bulldoze It?

Dee Johnson

I have become a fan of the show "Love It or List It" airing on the Home and Garden Channel. If you are not familiar with the series, I will give you a brief synopsis. Homeowners discuss with two professionals their wants and needs for a home. One professional tries to redo the couple's current residence to meet their needs within a limited budget and the other tries to find them a different house to buy in their budget. In the end they must look at their newly renovated home and decide if they will love it or list it and move into another home.

I think we gardeners should take this approach to our gardens. The show would be entitled "Love It or Bulldoze It." So many times we have a landscape that no longer meets our needs or has outgrown our needs. Should we just love it or should we bulldoze it and start from the beginning?

I think most times the answer lies somewhere in between. A lot of what we decide to do about an overgrown garden or a garden that has gotten a little tired will depend on the plants in that garden. If it is a garden of many conifers you will have to think about bulldozing.

Most conifers do not have what we call adventitious buds; these are buds that allow the plant to put out new growth after pruning in places other than at stem apex or leaf axil. Overgrown conifers will have to be replaced with smaller ones



or perhaps even new cultivars that are slower growing.

If your garden is primarily perennials or flowering plants, they can be renovated with pruning or division. Perennials are easily divided and this can be done in the early spring. This also gives you the opportunity to move them around to improve the blooming in your garden or to adjust plants based on heights. You will also have additional plants to place in new locations in your garden or give to friends.

Flowering shrubs are best pruned immediately after they have completed blooming. Examples of these are forsythia, azaleas, and spirea. In the case

of summer blooming plants, they may be pruned in the late winter. Examples of these plants are hydrangeas, crape myrtles and butterfly bushes.

If you have large broadleaf evergreen shrubs, you may want to think about training them into small evergreen trees or doing a major renovation pruning. Just remember— if you do major pruning on very large evergreens, it might take at least two years for them to return to a normal look.

"Love It or Bulldoze It" only addresses plants, but sometimes the first things that need to be renovated are structural elements in our gardens. Perhaps the garden you designed when your children were small is not the garden you want today. Perhaps a structure that you built is in need of major repair. This is what we are seeing in the Sandhills Horticultural Gardens.

In the past few months, new bridges have been installed over water features and the ramps to the Falls Overlook structure have been replaced. Two of the pools in the hillside stream have been redone with EPM fish grade rubber. As the liner

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continues to age out it, will be replaced. Irrigation in the Sir Walter Raleigh is being replaced. New raised beds have been placed in the Bea O'Rand Children Vegetable Garden. New brambles were planted in the Fruit and Vegetable Garden. Conifers were removed and replaced with smaller plants in the Falls Overlook area. Any garden that has reached fifteen or more years of age is probably in need of some type of renovation. It might not need bulldozing, but some type of major work is needed so that you may "Love It" again. Don't be afraid to redesign your garden it might even make you "Love It" more in the future.



Margaret Day Ball 1921 - 2012

Margaret Day Ball passed away recently. She and her husband Victor Ball, through their foundation, were instrumental in the construction of the G. Victor and Margaret Ball Garden Visitors Center for the Sandhills Horticultural Gardens. With her wonderful smile and gracious Southern manners and an accent that she never lost, she profoundly touched the lives of many people.

She is survived by three daughters, Katharine B. (Philip) Soper of Ann Arbor, MI, Esther B. (Walter) Hewlett of Palo Alto, CA and Margaret B. (Peter) Stace of Bronxville, NY, six grandchildren, Chris and Kate Soper; Ben, Flora and Mary Hewlett; and Eliza Stace, along with several nieces and nephews. We at the Sandhills Horticultural Gardens cannot express enough our appreciation for what she and her husband did for the Gardens, our students and the multitude of visitors to the Sandhills Horticultural Gardens. Her legacy will live on for many generations to come.

Perennial Propagation

Johanna Westmen

Most people are familiar with propagating perennials by division, but there is another fun way to propagate herbaceous perennials. That way is by using cuttings.

In the Landscape Gardening program, one of the favorite summer semester gardening courses among our students is Perennial Propagation. In the lab, Professor Jim Westmen takes the class through the perennial border and allows them to take various cuttings of plants of their choice. It is an easy way to create new plants and one that you can do at home as well.

Most people wouldn't think of propagating during the summer, but it is a great time to take cuttings of herbaceous perennials. Since most plants are actively growing during this time, you should have ample material to work with.

A pair of pruners will be needed, a soilless media (we use Pro Mix), and a flat that will hold inserts or what is referred to as packs. You may even have these already available, just be sure to clean them well.

Taking a Cutting

- If possible, take your cuttings early in the morning. This will ensure that your cuttings are turgid and won't wilt too quickly.
- You will need at least a four-inch stem cutting with at least two nodes (region where stems or leaves originate). The cutting will have a better chance of rooting if you only use tip stem cuttings (removing the top four to five inches of new growth from the plant you are trying to propagate).
- We always recommend at least two cuttings from each plant; that way if one does not survive, you have a backup.



- Remove flowers or flower buds from the stem cutting in order for more energy to be focused on new roots forming.
- Strip off all leaves except for the top two.

Plant and Water

- In our gardening lab, each student has a 32-insert flat (8 four packs) and they are prefilled with Pro Mix, which is then watered well and allowed to drain.
- Place your cutting into one of the media-filled cells in the flat and water well.
- Place the flat in a semi-shade location and monitor the flat for watering needs.
- If you can keep the leaves moistened by misting them or wetting them with a watering wand, this will help speed along the process.
- Don't allow the media in the cells to dry out and depending upon the specific plant you are trying to root, you could have rooted cuttings within a couple of weeks.
- Once the stem cuttings have rooted out into the cells, you can either directly plant out your new plant or you can pot it up into a larger size and let it grow until you are ready to plant it in your garden.

I hope you get a chance to try this for yourself and that it will be as enjoyable experience for you as it is for our students. There is just something about propagating plants for ourselves that gets us excited, I'm not sure if it is the prospect of free plants or the pleasure we derive from actually growing a plant from something like a cutting. Either way, give it a try and reap the benefits, enjoy the rewards!



Snakes in the Garden

Jim Westmen

For some people, the simple phrase above is enough to send panic and terror through their body. I hope to expel a lot of the myths and apprehensions that some people have when it comes to dealing with snakes that can be found in the everyday garden.

Even in our own Sandhills Horticultural Gardens we deal with snakes. Snakes, of both the poisonous and non-poisonous types exist in our gardens. My goal is to educate our students so that they can recognize the difference. Whenever a snake is found in the garden, I try to encourage the students to first identify the species, rather than react with the old adage, "the only good snake, is a dead snake". We teach our students in the Pest Management Class that the first step in dealing with a pest problem is to first identify the pest because just like insects that can be helpful, there are snakes that can actually be beneficial to the garden. Snakes can have different markings when they are juvenile than when they become adults so identifying them becomes even more critical

One way to help identify snakes found in a garden is to have a snake identification book. There are many books available, but my favorite and the one we have here in our department as well as in my own book collection is "The Audubon Society Field Guide to Reptiles and Amphibians." This little book has wonderful information as well as great pictures for identification.

The Internet also has lots of information and images for snake identification.

Some of the beneficial snakes we often encounter in the Garden are black snakes, garter snakes, hognose snakes, king snakes and northern water snakes. There are many others, but these seem to be the most

recurring ones.

All snakes hunt prey to eat; therefore they could definitely be a beneficial creature in your garden. Many have diets that consist of rodents; so you do not have to worry about your vegetation being eaten. Probably the most worrisome of the aforementioned snakes would be the Northern Water Snake because his diet usually consists of fish. This could definitely be a problem in your water garden, especially if you like to raise Koi in your pond. This is the one snake that most people get confused with the Water Moccasin. The Northern Water Snake,



however, is not venomous.

The most important identifying feature of this non-venomous snake is the shape of the head. Non-venomous snakes do not have a triangular shaped head, as do venomous snakes. The other identifying feature would be the markings on his body, this is where your snake identification book would be very helpful, especially ones with photographs.

Even non-venomous snakes I have encountered are known to strike if you corner them. The Kingsnake is a snake that eats other snakes, including venomous

ones. They have also been known to eat lizards and rodents as well. My first encounter with a Kingsnake was in my own garden and, at the time, he was swallowing a Copperhead snake. Needless to say, I had no problem letting him coexist with my family and me.

Identification of the Scarlet Kingsnake is very important since its coloration is very similar to a Coral Snake, which has the second most potent venom after the rattlesnake. The rhyme "red on yellow, kill a fellow; red on black, venom lack" can be important if you were to run across a snake which had a tri-color pattern of black, red and yellow bands.

The Southeast is home to many difference species of snakes and yes there are ones that are venomous. In the approximate forty-five species of snakes found in the southeast, six are actually poisonous.

Even the Sandhills Horticultural Gardens are not immune to poisonous snakes. The most common venomous snake we encounter is the Copperhead Snake. This is a relatively small snake, but venomous nonetheless.

Studies are showing that snake population numbers are declining in the Southeast as well as worldwide. Factors such as loss of habitat, high mortality on roads and pollution are contributing to their decline. Even persecution from humans from a lack of misunderstanding or knowledge regarding snakes has contributed to their decline.

Take a few steps to identify and learn about the species before you automatically grab a shovel to eliminate it. Who knows, perhaps the fear monger can be of assistance to you in maintaining the beautiful garden you work so hard to achieve.

Gardening Tips



- ✿ Run your irrigation system for a longer period of time and less frequently to encourage deep rooting.
- ✿ Mulch your plants well to help discourage weeds, reduce soil temperatures and help preserve soil moisture.
- ✿ Fertilize warm season turf.
- ✿ Aerate warm season turf while it is actively growing.
- ✿ Remove spent blooms on annuals for continued bloom during the summer.
- ✿ Liquid feeding of annuals on a regular bases during the growing season will improve their quality.



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Sandhills Horticultural Society SUMMER/FALL 2012 EVENTS

Contact Tricia Mabe at 910-695-3882 to register. Pre-payment required in order to secure your registration. Send payments to: Sandhills Horticultural Society, Attention: Tricia Mabe, 3395 Airport Rd., Pinehurst, NC 28374

Cooking with Herbs 🌿

Saturday, June 30 • 10:30 AM to Noon
Ball Visitors Center
\$5 Horticultural Society Members; \$10 Non-members



In conjunction with Learning to Grow Herbs, this workshop by Shawna Smith will teach participants how to use herbs in cooking. Participants will learn which herbs go best with what food and sample several dishes prepared that morning by Shawna using the herbs grown. Recipes will be distributed.



Taking Better Photographs in the Garden 🌿

Saturday, July 7 • 8:30 AM to 12:30 PM
Ball Visitors Center and Gardens
\$10 Horticultural Society Members;
\$15 Non-members

Photographer Laura Gingerich will lead participants from a drab snapshot to a stunning photograph by better understanding the modes, symbols and dials on your digital camera. She will discuss composition, colors, close ups and landscapes so you can better capture the image that is in your minds-eye. There will be plenty of time to practice in the Gardens. Please dress accordingly. No experience is necessary, just a desire

to better capture Mother Nature. Space is very limited. Please bring your digital camera (preferably new within the last four years), a charged battery, a notepad and pen/pencil.

Aldena Frye's Flower Arranging with Natural Materials 🌿

Tuesday, July 17 • 10 AM
103 Van Dusen Hall
\$10 Horticultural Society Members;
\$15 Non-members Waiting List Only



This is a summer version of the January workshop. Aldena Frye will give a summer flower-arranging demonstration using natural plant materials easily found in a yard. Participants will also make a heart from natural materials to take home.



Picnic in the Gardens 🌿

Thursday, Sept. 20 • 5:30 to 8:30 PM
Garden area near Ball Visitor Center
\$30 Horticultural Society Members;
\$35 Non-members
\$15 for Children 10 and Under of Horticultural Society Members; \$18 for Children 10 and Under of Non-members.

Come enjoy a picnic supper catered by Pik n' Pig and music for your listening and dancing pleasure by Glen Davis. A portion of the proceeds will benefit the College's Landscape Gardening Department.