



Sandhills
Horticultural Gardens

The Bloomin' News

Sandhills Community College

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The Sandhills Horticultural Society - dedicated to the support of the Sandhills Horticultural Gardens since 1987.

Who Me? A Docent?

Skip Ragland



Skip Ragland

I became fascinated with the SCC Horticultural Gardens about 14 years ago when I first walked through them. Many more visits were made in the years that followed. Spring, winter, fall, and summer all had something unique to offer. The Gardens were more than just beautiful. They were an outstanding source for me to actually see what plants worked best in the challenging Sandhills soil and climate. Many of the plants in my own garden were selected after first seeing them during strolls through the Horticultural Gardens.

A number of years later our local garden club arranged for a docent-led tour of the Gardens. I was even more impressed when I learned the history of the Gardens and the horticultural program at Sandhills Community College. The docent assigned to our group seemed to really enjoy himself which prompted me to inquire about becoming one myself. I contacted the Landscape Gardening Department and was invited to an orientation program for potential docents conducted by Dee Johnson who is the talented head of the horticultural program at the college.

Meeting Dee sold me. Her horticultural expertise is exceptional and her love of the SCC Horticultural Gardens is contagious. She explained that there is no mandatory commitment of time required once you become a docent. When a need arises for a docent to lead a tour he or she is contacted by Dee's office to check their availability. Over the past five or six years I have been assigned to anywhere from six to eight tours a year.

One doesn't have to be a plant expert to become a docent, but you do need to be enthusiastic and excited about touring people through the Gardens. That certainly doesn't present a problem for our docents! Each tour is special. People who visit the Gardens are always delighted to be there and come away impressed with this special place in the Sandhills.

Training to be a docent is fun as well. You learn a lot about the horticultural program of the College and the actual Gardens. Once you have become familiar with the Gardens and the tour procedures, you will be assigned to work with an experienced docent on actual tours so that you are comfortable with what takes place. I am pretty familiar with the plant material in the Gardens and enjoy guiding garden clubs and various Master Gardener organizations through the Gardens, but other docents have special interests of their own such as touring school classes and other young people groups. The Landscape Gardening Department is happy to accommodate docents' interests as much as possible.

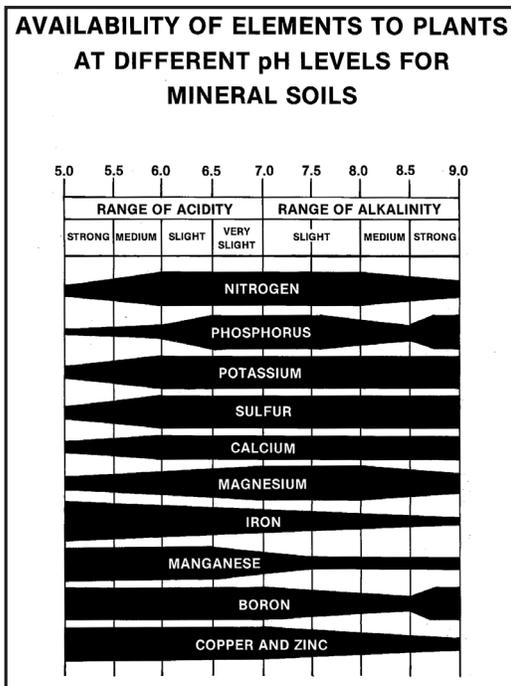
It is always challenging and exciting to take people through the Gardens. You meet wonderful people with similar interests and quite often have true plant experts among the groups who can share a lot of information about the trees, flowers and shrubs found there. Docents tend to become more knowledgeable about horticulture as a result of leading the tours.

If you have an interest in becoming a docent, contact Dee Johnson, Coordinator Landscape Gardening Sandhills Community College (910) 695-3883. Write her at 3395 Airport Road, Pinehurst, NC 28374 or email her at johnsond@sandhills.edu.



What is Soil pH and Why is it Important

Dee Johnson



What does that funny pH symbol actually stand for? Remember chemistry class when you learned the periodic table. That capital H stands for Hydrogen and the small p stands for “potenz” means “the potential to be” so pH stands for potenz Hydrogen. The pH of a soil is a measure of the hydrogen ion concentration in the soil solution. The pH scale runs from 1-14. Soil solution pH usually ranges between 4 and 9 with 6-7 being in the neutral range. The lower the number the more acidic the soil is and the higher the number the more alkaline the soil. It is important to note that the pH scale is a logarithmic scale, meaning that each whole number is a factor of 10 larger or smaller than the one next to it. For example, a soil with a pH of 7.5 is ten times more alkaline than a soil with a pH of 6.5. The soil pH is not an indicator of soil fertility but it is an indicator of the availability of fertilizer nutrients. Your soil pH can best be determined by a soil test. There are home kits to test pH but they are not always as accurate as a soil test done by a laboratory.

Soil pH is important because it influences several soil factors affecting plant growth, such as (1) soil bacteria, (2) nutrient leaching, (3) nutrient availability, (4) toxic elements, and (5) soil structure. If the soil solution (the mixture of water and nutrients in the soil) is too acid or too alkaline, some nutrients won't dissolve easily, so they won't be available for uptake by roots. Most nutrients that plants need can dissolve easily when the pH of the soil solution ranges from 6.0 to 7.0. Below a pH of 6.0, some nutrients, such as nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium, are less available. When pH exceeds 7.5, iron, manganese, and phosphorus are less available. (See chart)

Most crops grow best in a neutral soil with a pH between 6 and 7.5. Some plants like blueberries, potatoes, azaleas, and rhododendrons prefer moderately acid soil. That is why these plants do so well in our area with our naturally occurring acid soil.

Based on a soil test you will be able to determine if you need to add lime to the soil to raise the pH. The soil test will give you an amount of lime to use for your particular plant based on a 1,000 square feet. If you were in an area where the pH was high the soil test would indicate how much sulfur to place in the soil to lower the pH. That is not a problem in the Sandhills.

I hope this brief chemistry lesson will help you better understand why soil pH is so important for healthy plants. One final interesting thing about pH is that the inventor of the pH scale developed it to determine the acid content of his beer not the acidity or alkalinity of his soil. With all this new knowledge on pH you might want to grow some hops and make some beer.

Horticultural Society Events & Workshops

Dolores Muller

I hope you have been staying cool during this hot humid summer. Fall should bring cooler temperatures. Speaking of hot...Our workshops have been a hot ticket and we are thrilled with the turn out of the Society members and non-members.

In May, Norma Burns returned and held a fabulous workshop on Growing and Using Herbs - A Culinary Workshop. Everyone was able to

taste six different dishes, prepared by the participants, using herbs. And everyone took home a collection of herbs to plant. Three more Lunch and Learns were held, one each month on the last Monday. The topics were Planting for Success in the Sandhills with Janet Peele, Water Gardening with Joe Granato and What's New in the Plant World with Adele Kushe and Peggy Hudson from Big Bloomers.

Linda Hamwi and Dolores Muller (me) conducted a workshop called Strawberry Pot on Steroids - Anything but Begonias. Each participant planted a huge 17" glazed strawberry pot with annuals to take home. The class was so popular a morning and afternoon session was held. Repurposing Found Items Into Garden Art was taught by Matt Hollyfield in June and in July Curt Shelvey of Curt's Cucina restaurant did a cooking workshop. Besides cooking tips, participants sampled tomato bruchetta, a chicken and rigatoni pasta dish and a tiramisu dessert that Curt prepared.

Lots of fun and interesting workshops are on the horizon so check out the schedule and sign up. See you in the fall.



Karen Fogle
Strawberry Pot Workshop



Matt Hollyfield

Prolonging Booming in your Garden

Dee Johnson

It has been a hot, dry summer and many of the plants in the garden are showing the stress. Fall should bring some relief from the heat and you want to prepare your plants to produce additional color before frost. Remember our first frost date is not usually till after Halloween so you have several weeks to enjoy some color in your garden.

With annuals and perennials that re-bloom one of the best ways to continue color in your garden is to deadhead, remove spent blooms so the plant does not go to seed. With certain perennials like coneflower and rudbeckia I stop dead heading at the end of September so they may set seeds for the birds. The finches especially like the seeds on these two plants.

Watering is the next thing that will help keep your plants blooming for longer periods of time. I know I become lazy as it gets hotter and I do not water my containers as much as I should. This puts the plants under stress and they will slow down or stop blooming. Keep the water flowing because many of the plants grown in containers have become very root bound and require additional water.

Fertilizing on a regular bases, especially with a phosphorous type of fertilizer, will help blooms continue till frost. Phosphorus is the key for bloom production. Phosphorus is the middle number when you are looking at fertilizers. The first number is the amount of Nitrogen and the last number is the amount of Potassium. With a fertilizer labeled 10-20-20 you have 20% phosphorus. With it being late in the season I recommend that you use a liquid fertilizer every 7-14 days to get the best affect. Remember you are watering more so that fertilizer will not stay in the container for very long. If your annuals or perennials are planted in the ground you could stretch the time to 14 days.

You can also brighten up your garden with color in the fall by adding fall blooming shrubs or plants that produce colorful fruit. Below is a list of some perennials, shrubs and bulbs that have good color in the fall.

Aster novi-belgii – A compact Aster that blooms white, pink, purple or blue

Eupatorium dublum ‘Little Joe’ – A relative to our native Joe Pye Weed with mauve flowers.

Helianthus angustifolius – A perennials sunflower that makes a great yellow show of color.

Solidago – There are several types of goldenrods that have been developed from our native one that make great shows of bright yellow in the fall.

Dendranthema grandiflorum – Don't forget those chrysanthemums that come in so many different colors and bloom shapes to add that splash of color

Colchicum – Are great fall blooming bulbs known as autumn crocus.

Pyracantha coccinea – Scarlet firethorn is a shrub that adds color with its bright berries of either red, orange or yellow.

Viburnum opulus – European cranberrybush produces translucent red fruit that the birds love.



Big Sky *Echinacea*

Coming Next . . .

Fall Wreath Making Demonstration

September 10 (Thursday) 10AM to 11:30AM – Ball Visitors Center

Get a head start on the holiday season. Join the ever-popular flower and plant design instructor Aldena Frye for a fall wreath making demonstration.

Horticultural Society Members \$15 – Non-members \$20.

Space is limited to 40. Payment due at registration.

Growing and Making Your Own Herbal Tea

September 23 (Wednesday) 10AM to Noon – Ball Visitors Center

When you make your own herbal teas the flavor far excels that from the store. Learn how to grow, harvest and dry herbs to create your own special recipes taught by instructor Norma Burns. The workshop includes culinary demonstration and tastings. Take home a plant and your personally created herbal tea.

Horticultural Society Members \$30 – Non-members \$35

Space is limited to 40. Payment due at registration.

Fall Plant Sales

October 3 (Saturday) 8AM to Noon – Steed Hall

Woody plants (azaleas, hollies, camellias), daffodils, pansies and spring flowering bulbs will be available. This is the annual Sandhills Horticultural Society and Student Horticultural Club plant sale. Call Johanna Westmen 910-246-4959 to pre-order or you may purchase plants the day of sale.

Star Gazing & Picnic in the Gardens

October 17 (Saturday) 6PM – Outside the Ball Visitors Center

A FREE family event in the gardens. Bring the family, a picnic supper, blanket or chairs and a flash light. Join Cindy Bingham Director of the Planetarium at Neuseway Nature Park for a look into the night sky to identify stars. Sunset is at 6:41PM – dark at 7PM.

To register: call Tricia Mabe at 910-695-3882 or, email: landscapegardening@sandhills.edu

Making Botanical Prints

November 6 (Friday) 10AM to Noon – Ball Visitors Center

Learn to make botanical prints using leaves and plant material. Amanda Begins is the instructor. Take home 3 to 5 prints on fine paper for yourself or to give as holiday gifts.

Horticultural Society Members \$35, Non-members \$40. Cost includes all materials. Space is limited to 24. Payment is due at registration.

Managing Fire Ants in the Landscape

November 12 (Thursday) 1PM – Owens Auditorium, Sandhills Community College

Dr. Peter Hertl will discuss a common problem for everyone living in the South – fire ants in your landscape. This program is part of the Lecture Series sponsored jointly by the Sandhills Horticultural Society and the Council of Garden Clubs.

FREE – but registration is required by emailing: landscapegardening@sandhills.edu



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Fall Gardening Tips

- Sow a cover crop such as clover, winter rye or buckwheat in your garden to improve your soil if you are not growing vegetables throughout the winter.
- Fall is an excellent time to plant new shrubs or trees. Don't forget to continue to water after planting.
- Bring in your houseplants before temperatures drop to 50's at night. Make sure you check for pests before bringing them indoors.
- Remove all old leaves and spent blooms that might harbor diseases or pests. You want to start with a clean garden in the spring.