Sandhills Horticultural Gardens

# The Bloomin' News

Sandhills Community College 50 Years 1963-2013

**Sandhills Community College** **Vol. 15, No. 3** **Fall 2020**

*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.*

## Pollinators in our Gardens

*Jim Westmen*

During the last several months we have been busy installing our new pollinator garden. While we all have been working through this Covid-19 virus, and in our case, without our Landscape Gardening students' participation it has set us back on our original timetable for completion. The six stone masonry beds in the shape of hexagons are completed and the irrigation for each has been mostly installed. We prepared the planting beds and incorporated compost in each. We have installed many plants for our pollinator friends to utilize this summer and they have visited them regularly. Many other items are still to be installed such as informational signage, walkway surfacing, and benches before it is all finished. In the meantime, the garden has been in full bloom attracting people with cameras and all kinds of pollinators.

I have included in this Fall issue an article I wrote about a year ago to continue awareness of the need for supporting our hard-working friends in our landscapes.

Pollinators have been in the spotlight for many years for good reason. Their numbers have been in decline for quite some time. They need our awareness and support to help them increase their populations.

There are so many ways that pollination occurs, but most of which require some other life source to accomplish. Honeybees, Bumble Bees, Wasps, Carpenter Bees, Beetles, Moths, Birds, Flies, Bats and Butterflies are all extremely important to carry out this mission. The loss in numbers of so many insects has really created heightened concern. They are a critical link in the food chain directly and indirectly affecting us. Pollinators are tremendously important in maintaining biodiversity and environmental health.

The decreased numbers of both domesticated bees and native pollinators is in direct relationship to many of our current landscaping and gardening practices. The loss of natural habitat by development, increased disease pressure affecting both non-native and native pollinators and our miss-use of many pesticides are all contributing factors. We can improve populations of these pollinators by reducing our use of pesticides, protecting their natural habitats, and creating areas in the landscape that supply their daily needs.

This past fall semester the students in our design 1 class each designed a pollinator garden to be considered for installation in the Sandhills Horticultural Gardens. The circle area in front of the Ball Visitor Center is the chosen site. During this design process we all researched and discovered the many needs and diverse relationships pollinators require for a healthy ecosystem.

*Continued on Page 2*

*Tithonia speciose*
Mexican Sunflower

*Ascepias tuberose*
Butterfly Weed

*Tithonia speciose*
Mexican Sunflower

*Agastache foeniculum*
Hyssop 'Golden Jubilee'

# Pollinators in our Gardens

*Continued on Page 2*

The selecting of plants that provide both nectar and larvae feeding sources as well as habitat and housing needs was investigated and incorporated into their garden designs.

The use of native plants in your design choices will not only add beauty to the garden but also help increase important habitats for our many native pollinators. Native plants have evolved along with our native pollinators. These pollinators have adapted over hundreds of years to seek out specific flower types to support their life cycle. Many of the non-native plants we typically use simply do not provide this symbiotic relationship. We can help support them by protecting the natural habitats in our gardens and planting more natives as well.

Bees are the most important pollinators due to their need for flowers for all their food sources. The nectar and pollen collected are both used for their survival and to feed their next generation.

Some of the 4000 native bees are social in their nest building like honeybees while 75% of them are solitary nesters.

These are some of the things to consider in your design of a pollinator habitat.

- Use more Native Plants
- Have a diversity of plants for a long season of blooms available
- Bigger groups of the same plant for easier foraging
- Provide specific host plants for caterpillars that feed on
- Restrict most pesticides and herbicides
- Leave areas in the landscape natural and undisturbed
- Leave things less cleaned up, old logs, stumps, and brush
- Water sources available, a low dish with slanted sides and pebbles

All of us can do more to help protect and encourage pollinators in our outdoor spaces. We will be rewarded in more ways than we can count. It is a vital part of our own existence. We can truly have a positive impact.

***"Bee Wise, Bee Considerate, Bee Aware, Bee Safe and Healthy"***

# Fall Garden Tips

- **Fall is a wonderful time to plant new plants in your landscape.**
- **Prepare interior plants for moving indoors before low temperature arrives.**
- **It's time to plant your cool season veggies.**
- **August into September is the time to over seed Bermuda for a green lawn throughout the winter.**
- **Good time to clean and tidy up your perennials garden.**

# Sandhills Horticultural Society Board of Directors



## Fall Plant Sale – CANCELLED

**The annual Sandhills Horticultural Society and Student Horticultural Club plant sale, normally scheduled for October, has been cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic.**

# Growing Garlic in the Sandhills

*Johanna Westmen*

Pretty much anyone who knows me knows that I am somewhat obsessed with growing garlic and onions. Every year since I started growing them, my experiences have led me to growing even more year after year. I'm not sure if it is the ease of growing or the fact that I love eating garlic and onions – but this is one crop that I do not miss planting.

Here in the Sandhills, I think people are surprised how well garlic and onions perform, particularly garlic. The recommended soil pH for growing garlic is between 6.2 and 6.8. My vegetable garden receives more organic matter than lime, so for sure I am growing it at a lower pH. I have planted garlic in unprepared soil, as well as soil that has had compost and cover crops at one time. I have observed the more prepared soil, the larger the harvested bulb size.

I recommend purchasing your garlic bulbs from a reputable bulb grower or if possible, from the local feed/agricultural store. Bulb growers will tend to have many more cultivars to choose from with descriptions and performance information. Sometimes when purchased from a local store it may simply read garlic. I have grown both types and they have both done well for me. The biggest difference is trying to determine if you are growing hard-neck varieties or soft-neck varieties. If you are purchasing your bulbs through growers, this information is easily stated. I usually end up buying whatever is local, but I think I will branch out this fall and look for particular cultivars I have never grown before. A few of the differences between soft-neck and hard-neck varieties are:

- Soft-neck - This is mostly what is found in grocery stores. Easier for braiding and storage - perform better in warmer climates
- Hard-neck - Produce scapes for harvesting - perform better in cooler climates

We grew the hard-neck variety Music this year but did not harvest our scapes early enough for cooking. It was an interesting variety. The cloves had beautiful purple coloration and each one had a stem (or scape) attached to it. We also grew the European garlic variety as well as Elephant Garlic and what was labeled as just 'garlic'. Elephant garlic is by far the largest but lacks that garlic flavor I love so much. Just know that both soft-neck and hard-neck varieties are known to perform well in North Carolina.

Planting time for garlic is October in the Sandhills. Make sure you are ready to plant -bed prepared, etc. - before then, to ease the planting stage. I have only grown garlic, at home and at school, in long vegetable rows. I have not planted garlic in any sort of raised planter or container, but the results should be the same. Break your garlic apart, leaving individual cloves. No need to remove the outer paper covering! Place each clove approximately 2-3" into the soil and cover. I typically plant mine close together because they are vertical growers. Plant them anywhere from 6-8" apart with rows at least 18" apart. Our rows are typically 18-24" wide so we are able to plant at least two rows of garlic, sometimes three, in each row. Once planted, water is critical to bulb development early on, supplement any rain with at least an inch of water each week until you see them start to emerge from the ground. During the spring, make sure to keep watered as needed.

Garlic does not like to compete with weeds for nutrition, light, water, etc. This is probably the one that hits me the hardest in my home garden. Weeding is always my nemesis! This year, in the gardens at school, we planted our vegetable garden in landscape fabric. This was done in an effort to control the weeds and so far it has worked for us. It's not the most attractive vegetable garden, but the benefits of not weeding over at least twenty-five rows of garlic has been a back and time saver. You do have to cut holes in the fabric to plant, but we reuse the same holes when planting the next crop. Hopefully, this will sustain us for a while as the fabric can last many years. The fabric comes in various widths and lengths and needs to be pinned down with some type of staple. In the gardens we use sod staples. The one downfall is that you don't get to amend the soil in anyway unless it is pulled up, amended and then placed back down again. If it's a small area it's doable, but in a large space it's a little more daunting.

I love growing this crop for several reasons, but the ease of production is by far my favorite. After they emerge, they really do not need a lot of care. I have yet to have an insect problem and deer didn't touch them at home this year. Even at school we planted some outside the deer protected student veggie garden and not even a nibble. I tend to place some type of organic fertilizer around them once they emerge. Using a soluble organic fertilizer, such as fish emulsion has always benefited everything growing in my garden. I have had great success with Sea Kelp formulations, if you can find it. The hardest part of growing garlic is the waiting to harvest. You harvest garlic the following summer and that is a long time to wait! When you harvest garlic make sure you dig them up rather than pull out so that you do not damage their coverings. Place the harvested garlic on cardboard under a covered but not enclosed area. Let sit for 2-3 weeks. Then clean by brushing off the dirt, cutting off the root and braided for storage. Depending on temperature and humidity this could take longer.

If you have the space and the patience to wait for the harvest, growing garlic is an excellent choice for the home vegetable garden. It's an easy crop to grow and it's a great crop to eat! If you plant too many, as I tend to do, you can always share with family, friends, neighbors and especially volunteers.

Happy gardening and here's to a great Fall!

Sandhills Community College
3395 Airport Road
Pinehurst, NC 28374
www.sandhills.edu

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 55
PINEHURST, NC

**Find us on:**

SCC Landscape Gardening, Horticultural Society & Horticultural Gardens

scc_landscape_gardening

*As always, any contributions to the Sandhills Horticultural Gardens will help us with these upgrades and continued improvement of the Gardens.*

***Thank you for your support.***