

THE GARDEN PATH, FEBRUARY 2016

A publication of Kerr Lake Extension Master Gardeners



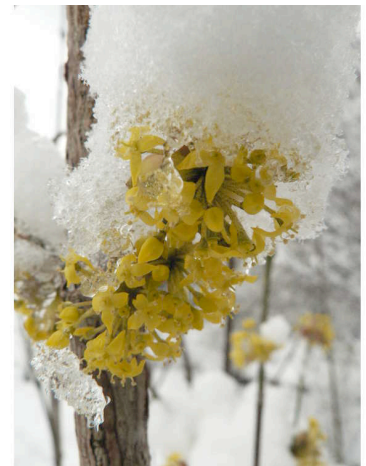
PLANT OF THE MONTH By Marty Finkel

Cornelian cherry (*Cornus mas*)

A fairly unknown and underused European dogwood that grows well here and lights up the February landscape, Cornelian cherry probably was brought to the U.S. before 1800. It was well-known to the Greeks and Romans for its edible fruit and its extremely dense wood. It was cultivated for thousands of years in Europe.

It's a very versatile plant because it can be left to grow in its natural form, which is shrubby with multiple trunks. It can reach 20' tall with a 20' spread and can be trained into a tree form. Its leaves are not as showy in the fall as our native dogwoods', but it does have some yellow, purple, and red colors. It has no significant pest problems. Give it afternoon shade if possible, although it will take full sun. It prefers rich to average, well-drained soil. Its small, Queen Ann's lace-like yellow flowers are borne in abundant and showy clusters. Another winter feature is its shaggy, grey, exfoliating bark on mature trees. Birds and other wildlife like the bright red berries, which are fairly good if very ripe when picked. The berries make excellent jams and, according to the Romanians, can be fermented into a tasty liqueur

These cultivars have larger fruit: 'Elegant,' 'Pioneer,' and 'Redstone.' Cornelian cherry trees are self-fertile but have more fruit if two different cultivars are planted. 'Golden Glory' has a good form and flowers beautifully. Photos are of *C. mas* 'Variegata' (top) and *C. mas* 'Pioneer' (bottom) and are from the J.C. Raulston Arboretum website.



MONTHLY CHECKLIST By Mary Jane Bosworth

Let's just back up a little bit and see if you have completed the gardening tasks for January.

- ✓ Check bulbs in storage and throw out any gladiolus bulbs or dahlia tubers that have been attacked by rot
- ✓ Fertilize and spring flowering bulbs

Now we can move on to February:

- ✓ Late February is the perfect time to prune most trees and ornamental shrubs. Remove diseased and dead wood. Cut the limbs at differing heights and lengths for a natural look. Spring flowering shrubs will bloom on last year's growth and should not be trimmed at this time. Wait until after they bloom to shape them.
- ✓ Overgrown plantings of established plants such as Burford Holly, Cleyera, Pittosporum and many other broad leaf evergreens can be cut aggressively if they are healthy and have grown vigorously in recent years. Or consider replacing them with something more appropriately sized for the site.
- ✓ Ornamental grasses should be cut back before new growth starts.
- ✓ Fescue lawns should be fertilized around Valentine's Day.
- ✓ Keep planning for the warmer weather, selecting new plants to add interest to your landscape.

GARDEN TO DO By Carl Shafer

NC Cooperative Extension publications on lawn and garden topics can be found at:

<https://www.ces.ncsu.edu/lawn-and-garden-publications>

During warm spells, dormant sprays can be applied to fruit trees and vines this month. For specific recommendations, check the 2016 NC Chemical Manual, (<http://ipm.ncsu.edu/agchem/agchem.html>), and always follow label directions. For more info see: Fruit Disease Fact Sheets, **Disease and Insect Management in the Home Orchard**, www.cals.ncsu.edu/plantpath/extension/clinic/fact_sheets/index.php?do=disease&id=7. For the dormant spray only, dormant oil and lime-sulfur may be combined. When leaves are present this combination will burn the leaves.

Finish pruning fruits if needed before spraying. Peach trees and grape vines normally need the most pruning. Check at the Extension office for pruning bulletins. * See *Training & Pruning Fruit Trees*, Also see *Producing Tree Fruit for Home Use, AG-028* and individual publications for grapes and barriers in the Fruits and Nuts section.

Get a copy of the Extension Services *Home Vegetable Gardening* AG-06, to use to plan your garden this year. Also see *Central North Carolina Planting Calendar for Annual Vegetables, Fruits, and Herbs* (<http://content.ces.ncsu.edu/central-north-carolina-planting-calendar-for-annual-vegetables-fruits-and-herbs.pdf>). Notice that many cool season, direct seeded, vegetables can be planted starting in February, some even in January. These include: garden and edible-pod peas, beets, carrots, lettuce, onions (seeds, sets, and plants), radishes, Irish potatoes, and spinach. Note also that some of the cool season vegetables can be transplanted starting in February. These would require starting seeds in December/January or buying transplants. If you use the earliest dates, you will need to have row cover or other season extension products available if a hard freeze is predicted. Be careful to not work the soil when it is too wet. For planning purposes, note that the average last frost date (32°F) for the Henderson area is April 21 and average last 28°F date is April 6.

Start seeds early this month of broccoli, cabbage, and cauliflower for transplanting in mid to late March or sooner. Start seeds of eggplant, pepper, and tomato later this month for transplanting in late April and early May. See *Growing Vegetable Transplants for the Home Garden*, HIL 8104, (www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/hil/pdf/hil-8104.pdf). Buying a bag or two of seed starting mix is preferable to trying to make your own mix. Buying a “Seed starting heat mat” to provide bottom heat will result in quicker and more complete germination. To provide the bright light that is needed to grow stocky transplants a 4 ft 2 tube shop fluorescent fixture works well. Use one “cool” and one “warm” bulb. You could instead use a LED 4 foot shop light. This is much lighter and does not get hot like the fluorescent fixture. A simple timer allows you to set the time for the light you want – 16 hours is usually recommended. I found the following extension plans for adjustable light stands: (www.gardening.cornell.edu/factsheets/growlite/index.html) and (<http://umaine.edu/publications/2751e/>). I find that I need to start eggplants and peppers about two weeks before the tomatoes.

Still time to check seed catalogs/web sites for the “Newest”, “Best”, Exclusive, All-American Selections, or just different varieties to try this year.

THE TYROS' CORNER By Eileen Novak

It is deep mid-winter, like the carol says, but somehow the cold has not found us yet. Not that I'm looking for it but I think something should discourage those magnolia trees from blooming in January. Since it's supposed to be down time for gardening, and I have my “you went to see the grandchildren” cold, I decided to do some other preparatory work for the planting season. I looked at seed tapes for things I don't generally thin and should, like carrots and lettuce, but the number of seeds you get seems silly for the price. Not to worry, I'm CRAFTY! I can improvise something.

So I did, but let me tell you about the pitfalls to save you the trouble.

First off, I saw an article that discussed making them from paper towels, but that seemed more difficult than I was ready for. What other paper product comes in long sheets conveniently wound on cardboard spindles? You got it, bathroom tissue. Since that was too wide for my purposes, I pulled off a long section, rewound it loosely and cut it in fourths, giving me a long, thin piece of paper for a seed tape.

Wonderful, now to affix the seeds to the paper and wind it up. My chosen adhesive was the honey that the waitress brought me to put in my tea one breakfast. She heard me coughing and took pity on me. Since I don't normally sweeten my tea, I took it home to use it later. This is later, folks. To apply the tiny dab of honey, what

else but a toothpick! Can you imagine the gall of those seed companies? This is so cheap there is no reason to charge that much!

Ah, to start!! Unroll some of the paper.... Oops – it's a bit long and the table is round so it's falling down to the floor. And the cats believe that anything that hits the floor is a toy. Wait, no, come back with that! Unroll the second paper since the first was unusable after the 3 cats finished gleefully dragging it around the house. <sigh>

Begin touching the honey, touching the seeds and gluing them to the strip of paper. After ensuring that the seeds are about an inch apart the process gets tedious... and repetitive, and –oops don't tip over the honey. Cat, you are not invited up on the table to see what I'm doing with the new piece of paper, shoo! And there go the seeds, skittering across the table. Sweep them up gently and put them back in the dish. What? It's lunch time? Ah, ok, I'll fix you your lunch and get back to this. Let's just measure and see how much I have accomplished. Hmm, about a foot. And the rows I plant in the garden are 35 feet long. It appears I have a bit more work to do. Let's see if I have appreciably lowered the amount of seeds in the dish. Nope. It seems like in that one package of carrot seeds there were about a million and there appear to be that many left.

Ok, back again after lunch and let's get going – need 34 more feet to sow a row of carrots. Ah – ah CHOO. Oh, dear. Sweep the seeds back up and make a note that making seed tapes while suffering from a cold is chancy.

Reviewing the cost per foot of the seed tapes, they now seem like quite a bargain!

Well, fellow beginning gardeners, you can judge the value of your time and make your own decisions, just don't make my mistakes!

INTERESTING TID-BITS By Marty Finkel

- North Carolina ranks in the top ten nationally in the production of fresh market sweet potatoes, cucumbers, strawberries, tomatoes, cabbage, snap beans, watermelons, sweet corn, bell peppers, peanuts, squash, blueberries, grapes and Christmas trees. (From Debbie Roos, Chatham County Extension agent)
- The Heirloom Marriage Hybrid tomato series, appearing in many seed catalogs again this winter, are supposed to be better than either parent – earlier, more prolific, fewer blemishes, and all around better garden performance while keeping superior heirloom flavor. All are indeterminate. If you are curious and didn't try them last year, they are:
 - a. 'Cherokee Carbon' -- hybridized by crossing Cherokee Purple with Carbon; 78 days, fruit size 10 – 12 oz. Robust purple beefsteak with rich flavor
 - b. 'Genuwine' – a cross between Brandywine and the ribbed Italian heirloom Costoluto Genovese; 72 days, fruit size 12 to 14 oz.
 - c. 'Big Brandy' -- a cross between Big Dwarf and Brandywine; 75 days, fruit size 12 to 15 oz. Big, pink, meaty beefsteak
 - d. Perfect Flame? – a cross between Peron and the French heirloom Flamme; 65 days; fruit size 3.5 – 4 oz. orange saladette with sweet-tart fruitiness, the earliest-ripening Heirloom Marriage variety.
- Most blackberries bear fruit once a season on second-season canes, called floricanes. In 2012, Dr. John R. Clark, fruit breeder in the Department of Horticulture at the University of Arkansas, announced the development of the world's first thornless primocane-fruited blackberry and named it Prime-Ark Freedom. The previous three releases in the Prime-Ark line also flowered and fruited on primocanes, but they are all thorny. Other attributes of this cultivar are its potential to produce two crops each year, its being early to very early ripening, and its very large berries with good flavor. Dr. Clark said the initial evaluations of postharvest storage potential indicate that it is not a good candidate for storage and shipping. It is, however, very desirable for home gardeners and for local markets. A list of nurseries from which Freedom will be available for propagation is available from Dr. Clark via email at jrclark@uark.edu See the very cool video: http://youtu.be/rgF0hADq_8c

In February 2015, Fred Miller, Division of Agriculture Communications at the University of Arkansas, released the news of the development of the second thornless primocane-fruited blackberry, this one suitable for storage and shipping to commercial markets. It is called Prime-Ark Traveler, and it also offers two harvests per year.

HERB OF THE MONTH By Edna Gaston

Quoting from Allan Armitage in *Manual of Herbaceous Perennial Plants* “To collect them all is impossible but the trying is not.” Salvias are part of the mint family, but don’t despair – they are not as prone to spreading. Most salvias are nice shrubs and plants, wonderful additions to our gardens in groups or as a specimen. Most of us are familiar with Garden Sage, Tri-color Sage, Purple Sage and Golden Sage used for cooking. A hummingbird garden is not complete without Scarlet Sage, both red and white. But there are many others to consider. Here are a few:

- *Salvia microphylla*, ‘Hot Lips’ is my favorite cultivar. Evergreen shrub supposedly not hardy in our Zone 7 but mine is thriving
- *Salvia greggii*, shrub hardy in our area with red flowers that attract hummingbirds
- *Salvia guaranitica*, also hardy in our area but has blue flowers
- *Salvia leucantha*, Mexican Bush Sage, shrub with beautiful purple and white blooms. I grow this in a pot and put in the greenhouse over winter. It is a wonderful plant and I hardily recommend it.
- *Salvia azurea*, very hardy and heat tolerant, perfect for our zone with blue flowers
- *Salvia reptans*, another deep blue flowers but not hardy for Zone 7.
- *Salvia viridis*, Clary Sage, a short-lived but well-known biennial or annual
- *Salvia farinacea*, beautiful white flowers, very tender
- *Salvia elegans*, Pineapple Sage, another tender herb but worth growing. Again I grow this in a pot and move inside during the winter. Hummingbirds love it.

All salvias need sunny locations, good neutral soil, excellent air circulation. High humidity may cause powdery mildew. They are definitely worth the effort.

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