

The Garden Path

Published by the Vance/Warren
Extension Master Gardener Volunteers



Interesting Tidbit

By Marty Finkel

[Note from the Ag Extension Agent: The cultivars listed below may not have been tested for production in Piedmont North Carolina. If you are planting apples, please see the recommended cultivars list here: <https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/north-carolina-production-guide-for-smaller-orchard-plantings>]

You may have noticed some new apples in the grocery stores this fall such as SweeTango®, SnowSweet®, Zestar!® and Frostbite™. They were developed by the University of Minnesota apple breeding program, the one that gave the world ‘Honeycrisp’ apple. *The Better World Report*, by the Association of University Technology Managers, recognized ‘Honeycrisp’ in 2006 as one of the top 25 innovations of the decade. This apple variety was introduced in 1991, and since then millions of trees have been planted. The apples are enjoyed world-wide.

The Minnesota Agricultural Experiment Station was created in 1887 with the aim of creating better apples on trees that would thrive in spite of severe winters and/or early frosts. Not only were early spring frosts a problem, but early killing frosts in the fall often kept apples from ripening. The plant breeders crossed favorite trees from the eastern part of the U.S. with those brought in from colder climates, and eventually ‘Haralson’ and ‘Beacon’ were introduced and have remained hardy favorites.

The U of Minnesota’s world-renown apple breeding program produces new varieties the old-fashioned way – by painstakingly cross pollinating until they are satisfied with a resulting new variety. The following descriptions of the four new introductions are quoted from a release from the Minnesota Agricultural Experiment Station, University of Minnesota.

“The **Zestar!®** Apple has a sprightly sweet-tart taste with a hint of brown sugar. It is an unusually crunchy, crisp and juicy early season apple.

SnowSweet® apple trees produce savory, sweet fruit, with a slight tart balance. An added benefit is the snow white flesh that is very slow to brown when cut and exposed to air.

SweeTango® has quite the “family tree” as a cross between two popular apples – ‘Honeycrisp’ (mom) and Zestar! (dad) – yet it delivers its own unique flavor plus the satisfying “crunch” of a ‘Honeycrisp.’

The **Frostbite™** apple tree fits a special niche. It is an extremely cold-hardy tree with small fruit tasting almost like sugarcane—tangy, very sweet, and juicy.”

Checklist for February

By Mary Jane Bosworth

- ✓ Mulch, water and protect your garden. The mulch helps keep the soil temperatures even.
- ✓ Damage done by hungry critters is not easy to prevent. There are many commercial repellents available. Read labels carefully before applying.
- ✓ Keep ahead of winter weeds by pulling them while they are still young.

- ✓ Take action against invasives. Remove and root out Japanese honeysuckle and English ivy while still leafless.
- ✓ If you have a compost bin...shake it up.
- ✓ Have a pruning party. Bushes that bloom in the summer may be sensibly pruned at this time. They include: Beautyberry, Abelia, hydrangea, gardenia, nandina, crepe myrtle and rose of sharon.
- ✓ Fertilize spring flowering bulbs when 1" of growth is seen.
- ✓ Ornamental grasses should be cut back before new growth starts.
- ✓ Plan for new garden beds, buy seeds and browse through catalogs to get ideas for the new gardening year.

Plant of the Month, February 2017 Cornelian cherry (*Cornus mas*)

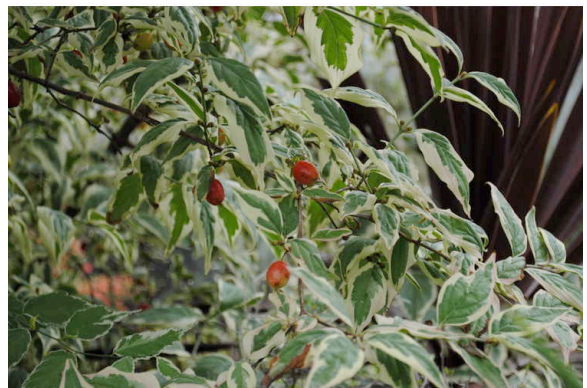
By Marty Finkel

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.



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 from the JC Raulston Arboretum website.



Pictured are C. mas 'Pioneer' and C. mas 'Variegata', courtesy JC Raulston Arboretum website

The Gift that Keeps on Giving

By Vivian Paynter

A few years ago I began forcing amaryllis to bloom around Christmas time. This year blooms were 2 weeks later than anticipated; but they have been so pretty.

The amaryllis bulbs pictured here were purchased in October 2016. Began forcing process November 2016.



In the next photos are some of my amaryllis bulbs from Christmas 2014. In late spring 2015 they were planted in various locations in my yard. These are some of the blooms in May 2016. These blooms were awesome. My husband & I enjoyed cut stems on our kitchen table. The blooms were pretty for about a week.



Tyro's Corner

By Eileen Novak

To all the enthusiastic beginning gardeners out there who might be wondering why we have to have the winter season. I know you are probably about to go bonkers with cabin fever from the ice storm and I empathize with you there. But really, can you dig and weed and grow and harvest all year? Don't you think you deserve some time off for good behavior? Or just time off if your behavior wasn't all that splendid.

We get winter as a time to plan for a new year, to ruminate on the mistakes we have made in the past and figure out how to correct them. We get winter as a time to read all of the many full-color seed catalogs that found their way to our mailboxes. We get winter as a time to count all the seeds that we didn't plant last year, hopefully before we hit the computer and order even more of the same from all those delightful mail-order seed sources. We get winter to do all the reading we didn't manage to do during the growing season: those gardening magazines that fill our mailboxes and pile up on the coffee table when we are weeding, planting, watering, tying up, harvesting and putting up the harvest. We get winter as a time to clean off and rust-proof our tools. We get the slightly warmer days of winter to prune our bushes and trees.

If you think about it, there's as much work to do in winter as there is during all the other seasons, but we're stuck inside houses, encased in ice, buried in snow and feeling sorry for ourselves. The only way to feel better is to point out the positivity, realize the requirement for rest, ponder our plans,

Or maybe we could take a trip to somewhere further south so we can watch someone else working in their garden and smile to ourselves and think "I'm on vacation".

PERENNIAL PLANT OF THE YEAR

By Edna Gaston

Horticulture Magazine has just released its selection for 2017. It's *Asclepias tuberosa*, more frequently called Butterfly Weed. *Asclepias* comes from the Greek god of medicine Asklepios and *tuberosa* refers to its root system.

Frequently seen growing along the side of the road or in abandoned fields, it's a butterfly magnet. Beautiful orange flowers attract the Monarch. Other pollinators such as bees and hummingbirds frequently stop by to sample the nectar. It doesn't seem to be fussy about its soil – I've seen it in sunny locations, part shade, dry areas, slightly damp areas. Once established it is drought tolerant. But in reading about it, overly moist areas are not good. Supposedly deer don't like it. There are some growing outside our yard and they are thriving so maybe this is true. Another thing I read said that the plant has a long taproot and doesn't like to be transplanted. My first plant was dug up when very small and continues to be happy in its new location.

Mature height is about 2', blooms occur during the summer. If seed pods are not picked the plant should self-seed but mine hasn't so far. This is a great addition to the landscape – relatively carefree, attractive foliage and flowers, beneficial to pollinators. Butterfly weed is worthy of being Plant of the Year and an asset to our gardens.

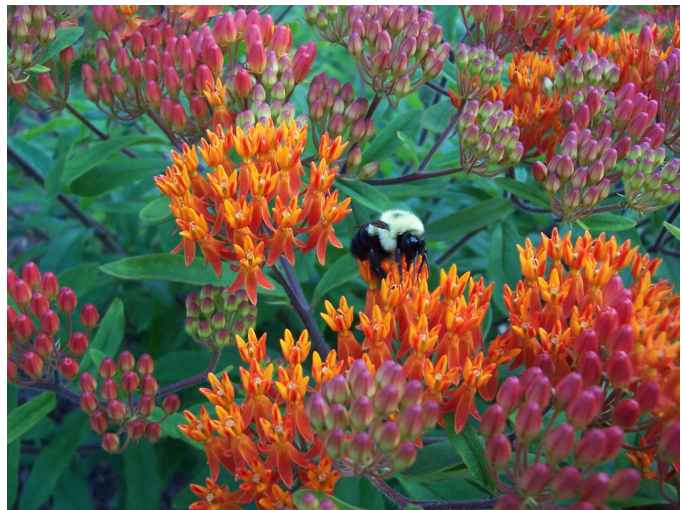


Photo by Paul McKenzie

Extension Agent: Paul McKenzie
305 Young St., Henderson, NC 27536
252-438-8188 or 252-257-3640
paul_mckenzie@ncsu.edu
<http://vance.ces.ncsu.edu>
<http://warren.ces.ncsu.edu>

Recommendations for the use of agricultural chemicals are included in this publication as a convenience to the reader. The use of brand names and any mention or listing of commercial products or services in this publication does not imply endorsement by North Carolina Cooperative Extension nor discrimination against similar products or services not mentioned. Individuals who use agricultural chemicals are responsible for ensuring that the intended use complies with current regulations and conform to the product label. Be sure to obtain current information about usage regulations and examine a current product label before applying any chemical. For assistance, contact your county Cooperative Extension Agent.

North Carolina State University and North Carolina A & T State University commit themselves positive action to secure equal opportunity regardless of race, color, creed, national origin, religion, sex, age, veteran status, or disability. In addition the two universities welcome all persons without regard to their sexual orientation. North Carolina State University and North Carolina A & T State University, U. S. Department of Agriculture, and local governments cooperating.