

Spring 2023

The Garden Path

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Extension Master Gardenersm Volunteers

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All the Buzz

Bea Leach

It's happening! Days are getting longer. Soil is warming. Plants are starting to stretch to the light. Daffodils are starting to bloom. Birds are wearing their finest feathers as they look for a partner. Spring is upon us.

Before you start cleaning up the messy garden you left last fall to protect and feed those that overwinter, take a close look at the beauty of the plants that are still putting on a show.

On a recent workday at the Memorial Garden at the Regional Farmer's Market in Vance County, I noticed so many plants that I see all the time, but their winter dress is so different.

There are two *Yucca filamentosa* "Color Guard" just as you enter the garden from the street.



Their colors are stunning and make a huge statement with everything else being gray or brown.

The dark green and yellow variegated leaves are a beacon to the gorgeous bronze leaves at the ground. These were planted in 2021 and they have settled into this spot nicely.



Ampelaster carolinianus, climbing aster, is another plant that grabs your attention. The tiny purple flowers that cover the climbing stems in the fall are now fluffy little puffs. This aster is considered a scrambler. It needs other plants or garden structure for support and it grows rapidly, needing frequent division. The one in The Memorial Garden was planted the summer of 2022 and has grown to cover a split rail fence.

The sedum in the pot has turned from a dark green to a dark orange over the colder seasons. It looks very much like one of its cousins, the house plant called burrow's tail.

In the Garden Path of Autumn, 2021, I declared a crush on *Itea virginica*, Henry Sweetspire. You can see a picture in that issue of the plant in its summer glory.



<https://vance.ces.ncsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Garden-Path-Autumn-2021.pdf?fwd=n>

Now in late February, it looks quite distinguished in its silvery gray cloak. He will soon shed that coat and be green once again.

Another color that stands out in the winter garden is the golden bronze fronds of the *Iris Sanguinea*, Siberian Iris. The Siberian Iris differs from the “flags” that grew in your grandma’s garden. Siberian Iris has grass like, hollow branched stems. This Iris reproduces through rhizomes and seed. The seeds appear in brown pods at the top of the long stalks in early fall.



Big shout out to the North Carolina Botanical Garden! Each year they choose a wildflower of the year. The Wildflower of 2023 is *Cephalanthus occidentalis*, Buttonbush. Such a cool plant! There is an article I wrote about my buttonbush last fall:

<https://vance.ces.ncsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Winter-2022-Garden-Path.pdf?fwd=no>

If you are interested in learning more about the North Carolina Botanical Garden and their programs follow these links.

[North Carolina Botanical Garden](#)

[NC Wildflower of the Year - North Carolina Botanical Garden](#)

There is a lot of great information on their website. Check it out!

Get out there and get your hands in the dirt. Until next time...

Past issues of The Garden Path are available at
<http://vance.ces.ncsu.edu/tags/gardenpath>

Checklist for Spring in the Piedmont

Mary Jane Bosworth

March:

Fertilizing:

- Now is the time to fertilize shrubs and trees. Follow the directions on the fertilizer. If your soil has not been tested, it is safest to use a balanced fertilizer, preferably one that is slow release.
- Asparagus beds should be fertilized in early March.
- Fertilize your vegetable garden prior to planting as recommended by your soil test.

Planting:

- March is a good time to transplant trees and shrubs, if you didn't get to it in October or November.
- New shrubs and ground covers can be planted this month.
- Other items that may be planted include: seeds of columbine, hollyhock, coreopsis, daisy and phlox; rose bushes; plants of broccoli, cabbage and cauliflower; beets, carrots, kale, and potatoes.
- Annual flowers and warm season vegetables may be started indoors for planting at a later date.

Pruning:

- Fruit trees and figs may be pruned now.
- Prune roses in late March.
- Prune nandina, mahonia and abelia, if needed.
- Overgrown shrubs can be pruned.

Spraying:

- Start your rose spray program just prior to bud break.
- Apple and pear trees should be sprayed with streptomycin for control of fireblight while the trees are in bloom.
- Begin fungicide spray for bunch grapes.

April:

Fertilizing:

- Fertilize azaleas after they bloom with a slow release fertilizer.

Planting:

- Summer bulbs can be planted now.
- After the last frost (approximately April 20), warm weather vegetables can be planted. These include: green beans, cucumbers, squash, tomatoes, sweet potatoes, peppers, melons, cantaloupe and corn.
- Plant strawberries, but don't expect much harvest until NEXT spring.

Pruning:

- Butterfly bushes should be cut back to 30".
- Prune azaleas after they bloom.
- Ornamental grasses should be cut back to the ground before new shoots start.
- Pinch chrysanthemums to promote later bloom.

Spraying:

- Spray insect oil on fruit trees.
- Check plants and bushes for insects and treat accordingly.

May:

Fertilizing:

- Fertilize summer flowers.
- Side dress long term vegetables.

Planting:

- Plant vegetables: snap beans, pole beans, lima beans, okra, hot peppers, pumpkins.
- Gladioli bulbs can be planted.
- Summer annuals can be planted.

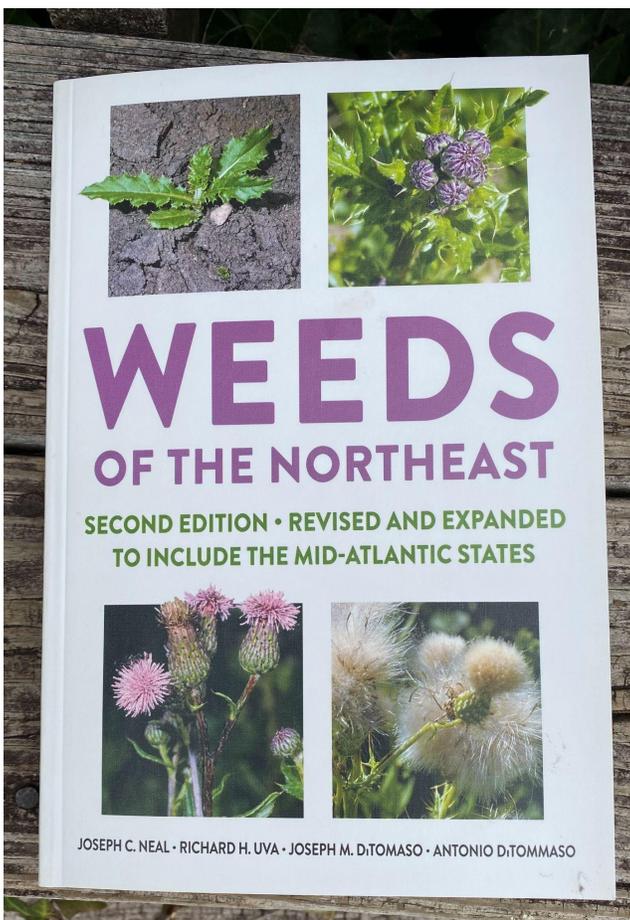
Pruning:

- Spring bulb foliage should not be cut back until yellowing has occurred.

Spraying:

- Continue checking for insects and borers and treat appropriately.
- Start fungicide spray on tomatoes that show signs of blight.

WEEDS OF THE NORTHEAST



A Book Review, by Juel Duke

Field Guides, which this book is, have been an obsession of mine since my first book in the *Golden Guide Series*, acquired when I was about 8 years old. My mother was an avid birdwatcher and had several bird guides so I was delighted to have my very own. I've gone on to amass a few shelves full, well over 50 and many of them have been used in the field. Much has changed in the world in the 60 years since I started learning about the natural world around me. Now, there are any number of internet applications that strive to identify plants just by taking a picture with your mobile phone. I've tried a few of these and found them to be disappointing. Field Guides and dichotomous keys are still my preferred method, perhaps from familiarity or habit.

Weeds of the Northeast (Neal, Uva, DiTomaso and DiTommaso, Comstock Publishing

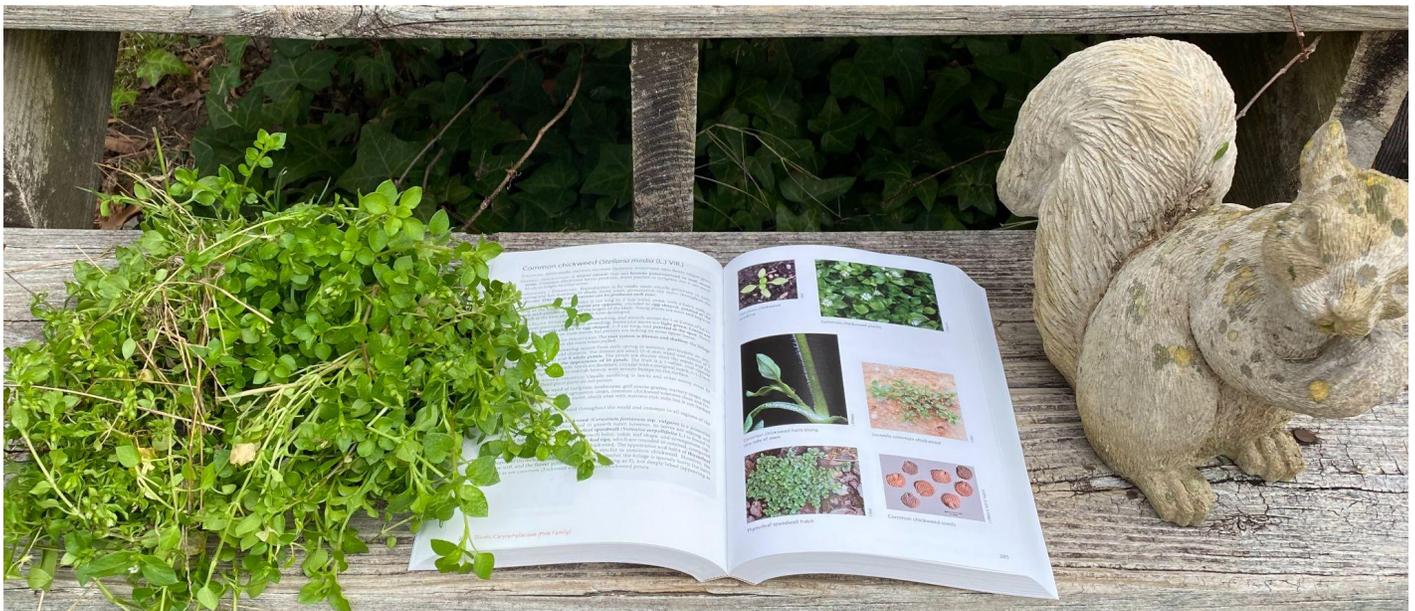
Associates, 2023) promises to be a valuable resource, though it's a bit large and heavy for a chest pocket in a field coat. The new edition was just published and it comes highly recommended by North Carolina Extension Agent Paul McKenzie. Knowing that Paul and I share a love for the natural world and field guides, I didn't hesitate to order.

I haven't spent much time with the book yet, nor taken it into the field, though I have leafed through and looked at every page. So, I've seen that it has many features that

are helpful to both the seasoned and the novice person who wants to learn the plants they encounter. There's a helpful glossary! The book starts with About This Book and an excerpt, from page 1 is shown below. If you're in the Mid-Atlantic States, note that the second edition now includes that region.

This second edition of *Weeds of the Northeast* is a practical guide to the identification of common, ecologically, and economically important weeds of the northeastern United States, mid-Atlantic states, upper midwest, and southern Canada. It is also a reference book for those aspects of weed biology and ecology important to weed management. Since first publication of *Weeds of the Northeast* in 1997, many weeds have expanded their range or prevalence... These and many other species of importance have been added to this second edition... Additionally, since the publication of the first edition there have been many changes in plant nomenclature. In this second edition we have followed the naming conventions used in the *Flora of North America*.

There are many different definitions of "weed" and you may or may not find the plant in question but you will find information and pictures that I find very helpful, though often lacking, from my other field guides.



Plant descriptions are thorough. I appreciate that names of similar species are listed. The pictures for each often includes pictures of seedlings and other life stages that may vary from what is expected. Flowers, fruit and seeds are usually pictured, as well. For me, the seed can often be a very important part of the identification. Even if you don't want to carry it into the field, this book is a good one to have at hand

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Recommendations for the use of chemicals are provided as a convenience. User is responsible for reading and following all instructions. For more information, contact your local Agricultural Extension Agent.

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