New Educational Resources for Durham Gardeners (NERD Gardeners)
Gardening Tips for Green thumbs and Gardening Enthusiasts
Durham County, NC Horticulture http://durham.ces.ncsu.edu/

Upcoming Events December 2006

Successful Gardener Seminars

Choosing a Live Christmas Tree and Great Garden Gifts for the Holidays
Saturday, December 2, 2006, 10-12 am
Michelle Wallace, Extension Agent, Consumer Horticulture
Durham County
Free; please call (919) 560-0526 to register.
Location: East Branch Library,

NC State Floriculture is part of a national poinsettia program that tests poinsettia cultivars to determine which ones are best for consumers and for producers. You will have a chance to see these cultivars yourself and vote for your favorites. Over 110 different cultivars of poinsettias - including new experimental cultivars - will be on display. Stop by to see our famous 9' tall poinsettia tree and other displays. Help us decide which poinsettias are North Carolina's favorites.

Friends of the Arboretum Lecture
"A Virtual Tour of the Oak Genus" (Alan MacIntyre) and "Artistic Morphology of Trees" (Guy Sternberg)
1:00 pm and 2:30 pm, December 10

General Gardening Information

Poinsettia

This year instead of tossing your poinsettia plant, keep it. It will make a great indoor plant and can be forced to bloom again each year with a little coaxing. When the holidays pass, prune the poinsettia back to 1/3 its size then place it in a cool dry place (such as a crawl space) until around Valentine's Day. Then bring it indoors to a sunny location with indirect light making sure to keep the environment around the plant humid through misting. Begin feeding the plant a water soluble fertilizer. Let the soil completely dry out between feedings. Once there is no chance of a late frost the poinsettia can be taken outdoors and repotted with fresh soil. Cut the poinsettia back around August by 1/3 leaving 3-5 stems. If too many stems are left the plant will produce smaller flowers. In
order to force the poinsettia to bloom it should be placed in a cool space (like a garage or crawls space) in complete darkness for at least 12 hours a night for 10 weeks and placed in the sunlight during the daytime hours. This forcing process should begin in late September or early October to ensure bloom in time for the holidays.

* Some people have an allergic reaction to the plant’s leaves, wear gloves if necessary.

**Buying a live Christmas Tree**

If you are planning this year to purchase a living Christmas Tree, which you intend to plant at the end of the holiday season, there is extra care measures needed to insure a successful transplant of the tree into your landscape.

1. Choose a Christmas tree that is well adapted to our area. Frasier firs are not. Canadian Hemlocks, Colorado Blue Spruce, and Deodora Cedars will all perform well in our area.

2. Wait as long as possible before bringing the tree indoors. A live tree should not remain indoors longer than 10 days and ideally no more than 4 days.

3. Place the container or B & B in a large galvanized tub, use bricks or rocks to keep the tree in place. Water into the trees container just enough to keep it moist. If possible place ice on the top of the tree’s container and the water will slowly seep into the container.

4. Place the large galvanized tub with tree onto a base with rollers. This will allow you to transport the tree indoors / outdoors with greater ease. It will also reduce the risk of damage to your floors.

5. Do not leave the lights on the tree glowing for extended periods of time.

6. When the holiday is over, the tree will need to be transitioned to outdoors gradually before planting. This should be done in a protected environment, such as a garage or a screen porch. This transition phase should last 2-3 days prior to planting.

7. Once a plant and location have been selected dig a hole to the depth of the plant container or root ball. The planting hole should be 2-3 times the width of the container or root ball. Loosen the edges of the hole. The backfill soil should be broken up as well to increase the porosity of the soil. If planting a container grown plant, make sure to break the outer roots up before replanting. This will prevent the roots from becoming root bound. If planting a balled and burlapped plant remove all ropes and fold back the burlap once the plant is in the hole. If the root ball is in a cage, cut up the cage as much as possible once the plant is in the hole using wire cutters. Make sure that the trunk of the plant is not covered in soil.

Face the plant to show the plant’s best angle, backfill with native soil halfway, water in good, then backfill with the rest of the soil. Top dress the plant with 2-3" of mulch.

Research studies have shown that trees are more likely to thrive when planted in native soil with no amendments. For more information refer to Extension’s Successful Gardener Tree Planting Guide [www.successfulgardener.org](http://www.successfulgardener.org)

**Canadian Hemlock**

![Canadian Hemlock](image_url)