From the Agent

Hi Folks,

An Extension Master Gardener™ class is scheduled for Jan. 29 – Apr. 30, 2009. If you’re interested, please turn in an application by January 5. You can get one by going to http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/consumer/masgar/ or contacting our office. I plan to be out of the office between Dec. 22 and Jan. 2, but someone should be there to help you on weekdays, except Dec. 24 – 26. There is a $70 fee for the class. Bilingual applicants are sought. For accommodations for persons with disabilities, contact me no later than five business days before the classes start.

We’re trying to wrap up the year here at the extension office. December is typically the month when we complete our year-end reports. In that respect, I have a favor to ask: If you’ve changed the way you do things based on something you’ve read in one of these newsletters, been told by me on the phone, learned in a class we sponsored, etc., please let me know as soon as you can (preferably by e-mail). If making such a change has saved you money, please let me know that, as well.

As 2008 winds down, I’ve been thinking about plans for 2009. I have tentative plans to focus largely on home food production next year, as a way to help people eat healthily in times when budgets may be tight. Look for information on related classes/demonstrations early next year. Other ideas are a lawn care equipment demonstration, a grafting workshop, and a blueberry pruning demonstration. Please let me know what you think of these ideas, and share others with me.

Regards,

Mary Helen Ferguson
Extension Agent, Horticulture
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Notes

Winning Butterfly Bushes
‘Blue Chip’ and ‘Miss Ruby’ cultivars of Buddleja were recently selected as winners of the Royal Horticultural Society’s European Buddleja trials. NC State University’s Dr. Dennis Werner bred these butterfly bushes here in NC. Dr. Werner, former director of the JC Raulston Arboretum, spoke in Asheboro in 2007, at a lecture sponsored by NC Cooperative Extension and the NC Zoo.

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Soil Testing
If you want to get your soil tested for winter, spring, or summer vegetable gardening or yard fertilizing, consider doing it soon, before the soil testing lab gets very, very busy with farmers’ samples. If you think your soil may need lime, it is advisable to test soil early anyway, since it takes lime a while to become available to plants. Soil test boxes, forms, and instruction bulletins are available at our office. There is currently no fee for soil testing.

Winter Vegetables
You may not think much about vegetable gardening in the winter, but January and February are the recommended months for planting garden/English and edible-podded peas in this area. Here are some other vegetables with planting times just around the corner: cabbage (Feb. 1- Apr. 1), carrots (Feb. 15 – Mar. 1), head lettuce (Feb. 15 – Mar. 15), onions (seed - Jan.15 – Mar. 31, sets/plants - Feb. 1 – Mar. 15), Irish potatoes (Feb. 15 – Apr. 1), radishes & rutabagas (Feb. 1 – Apr. 1), and turnips (Feb. 1 – Apr. 15).

Don’t forget to sign up for the Randolph Gardener e-mail listserv for more frequent updates and newsletters in color [and to help us save tax dollars on postage costs].

E-mail Mary Helen (maryhelen_ferguson@ncsu.edu) to get on the e-mail list.