

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Ag Celebration

Farm Fellowship, Done Right

This coming August 2<sup>nd</sup> Cabarrus County Extension will host its 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Ag Celebration to celebrate those who work in agriculture right here in Cabarrus County! Members will enjoy fresh cooked local meat and produce grown in the county. The Horticulture program will highlight its Basil Downy Mildew Variety Trial by offering members sample sizes of Caprese Salad, which they will score. Data will be used by both Rutgers and NC State University to influence which variety will be released for commercial and homeowner use.

### Kannapolis Library Composting Workshop

Enhance your Garden Soil!

Our very own Patty Day plans to teach members of the public the nitty gritty basics of composting and vermicomposting (worm compost). Come learn how to make your own “golden” soil in your backyard! Patty presented this same class to the Cabarrus County Master Gardener Volunteers in June and they loved it! Be on the lookout for exact details on our Facebook page. Use the QR code on the back of this page to keep up-to-date on all things Cabarrus County Extension.

### Speakers Bureau

*We Speak to the People, For the People*

Our current catalog and team of speakers was recently posted in the Cabarrus County Extension website! You can invite experienced and knowledgeable Extension Master Gardeners to your gathering to present information on topics like, seed starting, container gardening, composting and more!

Visit <https://cabarrus.ces.ncsu.edu/extension-horticulture-speakers-bureau/> to book a visit now!

### Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Class 2023

Join Our Team!

The next 40-hour, 14-week, course offered at the Cabarrus County Cooperative Extension Office will be held in either January or February of 2023. In this course you will learn from local Extension Agents, Area Specialized Agents and Specialists. After completion, you can get involved in our many exciting projects, engage with members of the community, and further your knowledge as an Extension Master Gardener Volunteer! The minimum fee is \$50.

Visit <https://cabarrus.ces.ncsu.edu/becoming-an-extension-master-gardener-volunteer-in-cabarrus-county/>

### Thoughts on Cabarrus, An Agents' Perspective

First, let me say what an absolute privilege it is to be serving as your Horticulture Extension Agent. The vast diversity of plants grown in Cabarrus is mind-blowing. It would not be an off day to be assisting a homeowner in the morning, to being on a farm or nursery in the afternoon, and then talking to a garden club in the evening. I appreciate all that you share with me. Let's continue learning and growing together!

I have learned an incredible amount in my first five months on the job and know there is still a whole world of knowledge to wrap my mind around and better understand. One of my mentors truly said it best – “you will become a jack-of-all trades and a master of none.”

It really hit home for me when I was talking with our Director, Tracy, about a call-in I had received about the difference between garden and potting soil. “I really thought to myself. Who cares about that sort of thing? I do.” Even the smallest of things draw me in and keep me coming back *smiling* every day.

-Morgan Menaker

# Cabarrus Horticulture Extension Newsletter

Published by your Cabarrus County Horticulture Agent and Extension Master Gardener Volunteers

July 2022

## Third Friday Newsletter

Join us the 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday of each month to read educational content and more!



Cabarrus County Extension Master Gardener Volunteers and Horticulture Agent after successfully spreading 15 cubic yards of compost for a pollinator garden at the Extension Office.

While the month of July brings new heat waves, rainstorms and more wild weather, it also brings forth the endless blooms of Summer! From daylilies, dahlias, zinnia, crape myrtle and more, everywhere you look there is a splash of vibrant summer color. Just don't leave your water bottle at home!

The Cabarrus County Master Gardeners and I are excited about a few different projects we have going on here at the Extension office. For starters, we have begun preparing the ground for our 650 square foot pollinator garden. This site will host only native, endemic species of North Carolina perennial flowering plants, with the mission of increasing local biodiversity. The group will plant the flowers this October!

We have also begun learning and growing annual vegetables in our office greenhouse with the aim to sell native pollinating plants in the Spring of 2023. Keep a space in your home flower garden for: Achillea millefolium, monarda didyma, phlox divaricata, Stokesia laevis and more! More information will follow regarding a Spring 2023 plant sale.

A group of Cabarrus County Extension Master Gardeners are participating in a statewide Basil Downy Mildew Variety Trial. Cabarrus is one of nineteen (19) from across the state. The purpose is to collect Consumer Horticulture data from six different varieties of basil. The current popular variety 'Genovese' is susceptible to Basil Downy Mildew, a devastating disease the plant faces every Summer. By collecting data, both NC State and Rutgers University hope to present a new variety for homeowner use.

### INSIDE:

- Gardening Tip-of-the-Month
- Native Plant Highlight
- Your Problems, Solved!
- A Powerful Partnership

Started in the Summer of 2022, the Cabarrus Horticulture Extension Newsletter was formed for the purpose of informing you, the reader, of all things Horticulture-related going on in Cabarrus County. Join us every month as we explore the vast realm of Horticulture from plant pathogens and pests to composting and more! Current and future events will be advertised here as well.

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### ABOUT N.C. COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

North Carolina Cooperative Extension is a strategic partnership of NC State Extension, The Cooperative Extension Program at N.C. A&T State University, USDA-NIFA, and 101 local governments statewide. Extension professionals in all 100 counties and the Eastern Band of Cherokee translate research-based education from our state's land-grant universities, NC State and N.C. A&T, into everyday solutions. Extension specializes in agriculture, youth, communities, food, health and the environment by responding to local needs.

## Gardening Tip-of-the-Month

Hope Duckworth, Extension Master Gardener Volunteer

You can still sow seeds for many Spring flowers now! Plants like Milkweed, Yarrow, Purple coneflower, and Black-eyed Susan's start dropping their seeds over the Summer and Fall. Seeding them now mimics their natural process. Just don't forget and pull them up as weeds in the Spring! If you'd like to plant a Fall garden, start planning now – you'll want to plant most Fall plants sometime between mid-July and late-August. NCSU has lots of planting calendars and resources for growing vegetables, fruits and herbs. You can still pinch back Fall-blooming perennials for a few weeks. Deadheading (removing spent flowers) from Summer blooming perennials will prolong blooming times. Mulch to conserve water, but be sure to keep mulch at least 3-6" away from the base of trees and shrubs. Piling mulch around trunks smothers roots and causes insect and disease damage. Check out the image on the right for what Purple Coneflower or *Echinacea Purpurea* flowers look like.



## Native Plant Highlight

Dr. Mark Robinson, Extension Master Gardener Volunteer



*Phlox divaricata* commonly referred to as blue phlox or eastern phlox is a native perennial wildflower that may grow 6 to 12 inches in height and is often found on the forest floor in Eastern North America. Plant in partial to full shade in moist high organic yet well-draining soil. Their flowers are often the first to bloom in the Spring, with dense carpet like mats of flowers. They make an awesome border plant for raised beds or border beds around a home. The showy flowers attract pollinators, making it an excellent addition to a butterfly-bee garden. Some describe the fragrance as "incredible."

### Planting Information

The width ranges from 10-20 inches. They grow in clumps and spread horizontally. Space plants 1-3 feet apart depending on the amount of ground coverage you want.

## Your Problems, Solved!

Morgan Menaker, Horticulture Agent Cabarrus County

Every Friday, I post an article to the Cabarrus County Cooperative Extension/4-H Facebook page highlighting a different call-in clients plant predicament. I describe the issue, the pest pathogen or problem and the options for treatment or control.

Last month, I highlighted issues Cabarrus County residents were having with scale on their Japanese Maple, tomatoes suffering from herbicide damage, and blackberries being plagued by Japanese Beetles.

Visit our Facebook page to read the full stories by scanning the QR code on the right or visiting <https://www.facebook.com/cabarruscountyce>



## Feature Story

### Local Partnership Plans to Make a Big Impact

I was first approached by another Agent from Chatham County in my first month on the job about a project that involved Master Gardeners collecting data. As a new Agent, I literally had no idea how to even use our office printer, let alone begin to conduct a study with the Cabarrus County Extension Master Gardeners... I floated the idea out to them at a monthly meeting and was happily surprised to find a group of volunteers excited about the citizen-science opportunity. I was approached by Dr. Mark Robinson, a current Master Gardener and member of the All-Saints' Episcopal Church Garden. He volunteered a piece of the church garden to use for this study and become home to thirty (30) plants comprised of six different varieties. Mark then partnered with another Cabarrus Extension Master Gardener, Bruce Batman, to help manage the project along with four other volunteers: Becky Eudy, Emily Tate, Sarah Lewis, and Gerri Harris.

The varieties being observed are Rutgers, Passion, Devotion, Obsession, and Thunderstruck. Other varieties include Genovese and Prospera. The plants are observed weekly via teams of Cabarrus County Extension Master Gardener Volunteers. They rate the plants based on chlorosis or yellowing, and presence of spores. So far, Basil Downy Mildew (BDM) has not been reported in the state. Volunteers will also collect data from the general public on the taste, aroma and appearance of the plants in a series of blind tests. The aim of the study is to find a resistant variety that looks and tastes great.

The study focuses on a disease, BDM, that currently plagues the commercial and homeowner basil variety 'Genovese' or sweet basil. Once infected, plants quickly dieback and the once tasty basil leaves fade from yellow to brown and fall off, eventually resulting in plant death (**Figure 1**). The pathogen does not over-winter (live through the winter) here in North Carolina and is introduced to the state via northerly winds from the southeastern portion of the United States.



A photo of the test row from the All-Saints' Episcopal Church Garden

## Basil Downy Mildew



**Figure 1.** This basil plant is affected by Basil downy mildew and will. Note the non-uniform yellowing and black spots on the leaves. These symptoms and signs are strong indicators the disease is present.

Learn more about this disease at <https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/basil-downy-mildew>