



The Caswell Horticulture Club

May 2011 Newsletter

Plant Sale: As reported by Cathy and Janie our plant sale held on April 21st was a great success, despite cool, cloudy conditions. Cathy and Janie did a splendid job of promoting the sale! Many, many thanks to our fine committee and to all who participated and purchased. Splendid “esprit de corps”!

We are exploring options for purchasing and storing gardening equipment for our use in the gardens at the Courthouse complex. The jobs of the committees that care for the gardens are difficult enough without having to load all the tools of their trade, and perhaps you’re like I am, forgetting to bring what I need. If we had tools on site, for our personal use, what a difference it would make! Our wish list would include a small wheelbarrow, broom, shovel, garden and broom rakes, pruners, RoundUp and sprayer, a weedeater and gas, and deer repellent. It would also mean, for me at least, that I wouldn’t have to drive my pickup (a gas hog) or load that wheelbarrow by myself, or try to find someone to help! If you have suggestions for tools, or requests beyond those mentioned, please let me know. We’ll ask for club approval before a final decision can be made.

Pat Rowland and the Square committee report that the renovations to the Square are complete. With the club’s support, and Pat R’s tenacity, the old crape myrtles have been removed, eight new ‘Natchez’ planted, and the cut off valves that were sunken below grade raised and built up. Luke Bernard and three others worked hard one hot morning. We will give a copy of our statement to the County Manager for proof of citizen involvement in improvements. This will satisfy a requirement for a grant application they’re planning to write this winter. If awarded, the grant just may replace the old sidewalks with wider ones, replace the crumbling circle around the monument and improve the outside perimeter! I believe the application for the grant is due this fall or winter. We are grateful that the square committee stayed on this

project and that it is, for the most part, completed. I hope everyone will be pleased with the results. Pat R.

In March the Memorial Garden committee pruned the boxwoods around the parterres as well as those along the east side of the courthouse. I also applied lime to the boxwoods. Many thanks to Jo Ann Watkins who helped with the pruning and to Barbara Berger and Nettie Blackwell who assisted with the cleanup and spreading of the mulch. More housekeeping was done in April to clear the walks of debris scattered by the birds. Summer maintenance will primarily include weed control and keeping the walks clean. Nell

Practically every time I'm in Yanceyville at the gardens I see Pat E. or one of her committee members is at work in the Courtyard Garden. It is such a show stopper when the Knock Out roses begin their blooming season. Pat always carries a broom to sweep out the Alley. That lovely garden doesn't look that way without attention. Many thanks to the CY Garden committee!

Cathy reports that we have a new member. Ruth East came to the plant sale, bought plants and became a member. **Welcome Ruth!!** Contact information is as follows:

Ruth East, 420 Lake Pointe Drive, Yanceyville, NC 27379, tel. 694-1164, email: rlerof@embarqmail.com.

Our next meeting is May 19th at 10:30 a.m. for a visit to the rose gardens of Lyman and Carolyn Johnson in neighboring Person County. Known as the Rose Man, Lyman visited the arboretum one day last year when we were working, pitched in and gave out some of his lovely roses. If that sampling was indicative of his roses, we're in for a treat! BTW: I do believe that Lyman can be hired to tend your roses! As I'll be leaving from Semora, I'll go via highway 57. Perhaps a meeting of folks at 10:00 a.m. at the Civic Center for carpooling or driving in a caravan would work for those going via 158. These arrangements would need to be coordinated by you, or if you are going, please drive by the Civic Center to see if someone wants to ride with or follow you. Their home is on Hyco Lake and is about 15-20 minutes away. Carolyn sent me the following directions from 158 East:

Take NC 158 E through Leasburg. Go up a hill to a crossroad. Gordonton Road is to the right and Ralph D Winstead Road is to the left. Turn Left. Follow Ralph D. Winstead Road until it veers left. Stay straight to the right and road becomes Concord Church Road. Continue approximately 1/2 mile. Pass South Landing Road. Stonegate Drive is the next road to the right. [If you cross a bridge, you went too

far]. Go to the end to a driveway that has a white fence at the corners and sign 237 Stonegate. Drive down to a white house. Look forward to seeing you! The roses have started to pop now! Carolyn

FYI: Forgive my harping on a subject, but we gardeners have to take the lead, become educated and inform others about the dangers of non-native invasive species. Despite knowing that certain plants can be a problem, the nursery trade still balks at control and restrictions. At the very least a plant should be labeled invasive so it can be avoided. Some states are better at taking action than others and North Carolina is not one of those leaders. Here are a few particularly aggressive plants from the US Arboretum website (I'd include bamboo, nandina, burning bush, mimosa and Chinese privet):

Danger! Don't plant it...

Purple Loosestrife, *Lythrum salicaria*, has long been a prized perennial. Its pinkish-purple flowers appear over a long period in summer. The seeds of this plant easily wash into waterways, and can be carried in the mud on the feet of waterfowl. Stands of loosestrife spread exponentially in wetlands and along stream beds. This plant should be removed by hand only if it is very young. Attempts to dig it out usually backfire because purple loosestrife resprouts from root fragments; disturbing the soil just provides more room for it to spread. Cut established plants to the ground periodically to prevent flowering. Other invasive plants such as Tartarian honeysuckle, *Lonicera tatarica*; Russian olive, *Elaeagnus angustifolia*; and Siberian elm, *Ulmus pumila*, are still available for planting even though they have become invasive over large areas. This category is threatening because gardeners who are unaware of problems with these plants may still be planting them in areas that have not yet been colonized.



Warning: If you see it, remove it...

Tree-of-heaven, *Ailanthus altissima*, is one of the few trees that can grow in abandoned alleys, gutters, and broken sidewalks, or just about anywhere that is not in shade. It grows very quickly, and competes aggressively for sunlight in newly developing forests. Disturbed sites are often dominated by tree-of-heaven. Pull these seedlings whenever you see them; once they have grown for a few years they are extremely difficult to get rid of. Reducing the number of trees will reduce the yearly output of seeds. Other common weeds which are invasive plants are multiflora rose, *Rosa multiflora*; garlic mustard, *Allaria petiolata*; and lesser celandine, *Ranunculus ficaria*. Although these plants are not often planted intentionally in gardens or offered for sale, they have the ability to spread if not controlled.

Caution: It's not a problem if you manage it wisely...

English ivy, *Hedera helix*, is one of the most popular ground covers in North America. However, its potential for escape is notorious. In the Pacific Northwest, English ivy invades the forest floors. Its evergreen leaves smother other native forest plants by denying them light. Interestingly, English ivy only reaches maturity and goes to seed after it has grown up a vertical surface. If you are willing to prune it regularly to contain it, it does not pose a threat. English ivy is not a good choice, though, if you want a low maintenance garden. You may want to replace it with native plants such as lowbush blueberry, *Vaccinium angustifolium*; alum root, *Heuchera americana*; or partridge berry, *Mitchella repens*. Some other invasive exotics aside from English ivy that fit this category are common daylily, *Hemerocallis fulva*; butterfly bush, *Buddleia* spp.; wintercreeper, *Euonymus fortunei*; and lilyturf, *Liriope muscari*. Although these plants are invasive, they can still be enjoyed by gardeners who want to grow them if they are willing to devote the time and effort to careful stewardship to prevent their spread.



Where are they a problem?

Invasive plants disrupt many natural habitats. They are most threatening in ecosystems such as wetlands, sand dunes, fire prone areas, and serpentine barrens where rare native plants are found. Invasive plant species thrive where the continuity of a natural ecosystem is breached and are abundant on disturbed sites like construction areas and road cuts. Even foot traffic can create a temporary void that is quickly invaded—some national parks have restricted the areas where visitors are allowed to walk with the warning, "we can watch purple loosestrife grow from people's footsteps."

<http://www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/plants/main.shtml>

<http://www.invasive.org/eastern/srs/>

<http://www.ncsu-feop.org/NNI/>

(The above-referenced website is for a series of workshops that you may find of interest, and maybe even attend. The workshops I've attended was time well spent.)