**Soil Amendments - What do They Do?**

**Gypsum** is calcium sulfate. Gypsum cannot be used to correct pH of soils. Gypsum adds calcium and some sulfur to the soil and is especially useful for those crops that require large amounts of calcium such as tomatoes. **Wood Ashes** contain potash (potassium), phosphate, boron, and other elements. Wood ashes raise soil pH with twice as much ash as applied by lime. Ashes should not come into contact with germinating seedling or plant roots as they may cause root burn. Spread ashes in a thin layer over the winter, and incorporate into the soil. Be sure to check soil pH yearly (through soil tests) when using wood ashes. Never use coal ashes or large amounts of wood ash (no more than 20 lbs. Per 1000 square feet) as toxicity problems may occur.

**Farmers Market**

Farmers Market at Market Station - Hours of operation are 7 am-1 pm on Saturday and Wednesday. Make this a family event as you select fresh fruits and vegetables to add to your weekly meal menus. For information about the Farmers Market contact Vicki Coggins at Albemarle Downtown Development - 704.984.9415.

**Tent Caterpillars**

Tent caterpillars have been feeding for a few weeks. These hairy caterpillars prefer plants such as cherry, crabapple and certain ornamental fruit trees. Eastern tent caterpillars hatch in spring just as the buds are breaking on wild cherry and crabapples. There is only one generation per year. This should not be confused with the fall webworm.

Eastern tent caterpillars build their silk nests in the crotches of host plants. The caterpillars then crawl down from the trees to search for a place to spin their cocoons. This is happening now here in Stanly County. I have had several calls with caterpillar nests in the crotches of cherry trees.

**Control**

Because eastern tent caterpillars spend the winter inside the egg masses, one effective method of controlling the caterpillars is to remove and destroy the egg masses before the caterpillars hatch. If the caterpillars have already hatched, the tents can be pulled down on a rainy day and the caterpillars crushed or otherwise destroyed. Never use fire to destroy eastern tent caterpillars, as fire is extremely dangerous. Fire damages the tree and endangers the operator and nearby property. Acephate(Orthene), carbaryl(Sevin), and bifenthrin (Talstar) are labeled to control tent caterpillars on ornamental plants.
Vegetable Weevils in the Garden

Be aware of the Vegetable Weevil. I have seen two cases this spring where Vegetable Weevils were feeding on young potato plants. The Vegetable Weevil feeding causes irregular shaped holes in the leaves. Young potato plants are the only vegetables I have personally seen them on this spring, however, vegetable weevils can also attack turnips, mustard, collards and tomatoes.

**Adults** - The female adult weevil is about 6.4mm long with a short, stout snout. It is a dull grayish-brown with a light V-shaped mark on the wing.

**Larvae** - The pale green, legless larva has a dark mottled head, and is about 1 cm long when fully developed.

**Pupa** - The pupa is pale yellow at first and later turns brown. It is similar in shape to the adult. Cultivation in fall and winter is important in reducing populations. Insecticides are also available for control of the vegetable weevil. For a complete listing of insecticides for controlling the Vegetable Weevil please contact the Stanly County Cooperative Extension Office.

What Can I Do with Extra Produce from My Garden?

Many of you have probably asked yourself this question - What do I do with all of this extra produce from my garden? By the end of the growing season we are tired of harvesting the produce from our gardens. If this is the case for you then don’t let the produce rot. Give it to someone who can use it. This is the job of the Society of St. Andrew. The Society of St. Andrew salvages fresh produce that would be wasted and donates it to feed the hungry. This group is made up of individuals of all ages who donate there time to helping to feed the hungry. The Society of St. Andrews consists of individuals who will come to your farm and harvest your remaining produce to then be donated. This group offers growers liability in the event anything happens to a gleaner while in the field, as well as offers a tax credit on the produce donated. If this sounds like something you would like to contribute to then please contact Janet Connor @ 704-517-9606.
Making Compost

Compost is organic material that has been broken down by bacteria, fungi and earthworms. For the homeowner, composting is a good way to recycle kitchen and lawn waste. This process allows form rich humus matter to be created which in turn can be used to improve soil texture in gardens.

Composting can be done in something as simple as a plastic garbage bag or five-gallon pail. Larger amounts of materials are easily managed in drums, barrels or bins. Structures can be made of plastic, wire, wood, or masonry blocks.

Try to place the recycling area where it is in the shade, near a garden hose, on a well-drained soil and out of sight. A garden corner is often ideal and very convenient for using the finished compost.

Any organic material can be composted, but some materials are more desirable than others. Yard wastes such as grass clippings and leaves decompose well, as do kitchen waste wastes such as vegetable peelings, fruit scraps, coffee grounds and egg shells. Avoid composting meat, bones, and dairy products as they may attract rodents and other animals.

Ideally, you should use 3 times as much high-carbon material (sawdust, pine needles, straw, and leaves) as high nitrogen material (fruit and vegetable peelings, coffee grounds, grass clippings and manure). In general, materials that have been shredded or cut into small pieces will decompose faster.

Although composting is more of an art than an exact science, there are a few basic rules. First, it is important to remember that decomposition depends upon continuous microbial activity. (Bacteria, fungi, and other microorganisms use the organic materials as energy sources.) Oxygen, moisture and temperature and the types of material affect the rate of decomposition.

Start by layering compost materials 6 to 8 inches deep and moisten with water to the consistency of a squeezed out sponge. Add more materials in layers.

Turn the compost pile weekly to create more available oxygen. Some decomposition occurs under anaerobic (without oxygen) conditions, but the process is slow and produces foul odors.

Maintain the moisture level of a squeezed out sponge. Too much water pushes oxygen from the air spaces and creates anaerobic conditions. Water the layers of materials as you add to them and water the pile during dry periods.

Temperature, both inside and outside the compost pile, affects decomposition. Inside temperatures between 90°F and 140°F help destroy undesirable weed seeds and diseases. Outside temperatures of 50°F or higher is recommended.

Follow these guidelines and in 6 to 12 months you’ll have rich organic material for improving your garden’s soil and mulching plants.

If you have any questions please contact the NC Cooperative Extension Service office by calling 704.983.3987 or sending me an e-mail shannon_braswell@ncsu.edu.
It is getting about time to think about putting out those flowering annuals. Here in Stanly County we often have dry summers. Keeping that in mind it’s a good idea to adjust your plantings to this. Here is a list of annuals that do well with minimum amounts of water.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Light Requirement</th>
<th>Plant Height</th>
<th>Plant Spacing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ageratum</td>
<td>Sun - Partial shade</td>
<td>6 - 24 inches</td>
<td>10 - 12 inches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vinca</td>
<td>Sun - Partial shade</td>
<td>6 - 18 inches</td>
<td>8 - 10 inches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvia</td>
<td>Sun - Partial shade</td>
<td>12 - 36 inches</td>
<td>8 - 10 inches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snapdragon</td>
<td>Sun - Partial shade</td>
<td>6 - 36 inches</td>
<td>6 - 10 inches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ornamental Kale</td>
<td>Sun - Partial shade</td>
<td>8 - 14 inches</td>
<td>12 - 18 inches</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>