After the last expected freeze, set out the transplants of herbs and vegetables you started inside. Acclimate them by bringing them out slowly, a few hours each day and then gradually increase the time you’re leaving them out.

While garden centers have tomato and pepper plants, along with lots of herbs available, it is still a little early. These warm weather plants really don’t start to take off until the soil temperatures warm so setting them out even May 1 will not set you back on your harvest.

When choosing your tomato cultivars look to see that they have the letters VFN. These letters indicate that the particular cultivar is resistant to Verticillium wilt, Fusarium wilt, and nematodes. Also make sure NOT to purchase tomato and pepper plants that are in bloom. Once the plant starts flowering, it is forced into dual responsibility of maintaining flowers and trying to produce roots. Tomato cultivars are usually described as “indeterminate” and “determinate”. Indeterminate continue to grow and set fruit all season and usually require a sturdy cage or stakes. Determinates stop growing and flowering when they reach a certain height. They are often earlier to mature and may not require caging but they also produce fruit for a shorter period of time.

Now is time to sow seeds for beans, corn, cucumbers and squash. Try succession sowing to ensure a continuous harvest. For example, sow the same variety of beans at several locations at 10-14 day intervals until the last harvest would approach the season’s end. Do not plant okra seed at this time. The soil temperature needs to be above 70 degrees Fahrenheit and okra seed will need to be soaked overnight before sowing as well.
Do you have areas in your lawn where grass is wilting or dying? When you walk across your lawn, does it have a soft spongy feeling? If so, then your lawn may be infested with white grubs. White grubs are turf pests found throughout North Carolina. These pests can cause serious damage to your lawn by feeding on the roots of your grass. All grasses are susceptible to the white grub; however, bluegrasses and bent grasses are the most seriously attacked.

Grubs will have cream-colored bodies with yellow to brownish hind parts and six legs. Mature grubs vary in size from $\frac{1}{4}$-1/2 inch. White grubs usually lie in a curled or c-shaped.

All of the important species of white grubs in North Carolina have a one year life cycle and spend about 10 months of that cycle in the ground. The life cycle of the Japanese beetle is typical for white grubs of North Carolina. Eggs are laid in late June and early July and larvae hatch out in July. These larvae feed on grass roots until cool weather arrives in October. In November the grubs burrow deeper into the soil to overwinter. The grubs return to the root area and begin feeding in March. Larvae pupate and adults emerge in May and early June.

White grubs can be controlled in a timely and economical manner if proper controls are correctly applied at the right time. To prevent serious damage, examine all turf in April and again in August for the presence of grubs. Do not wait for brown patches to appear in the turf before inspecting the soil. Birds, skunks, and raccoons all feed to some extent on grubs, and their digging in the lawn may be a sign of white grub infestation.

The timing of the insecticide application is critical if control is to be effective. There are two approaches, preventative and curative.

**Preventative:** Some of the newer products on the market today are preventative. These include *Merit* and *Mach 2*. These insecticides are most effective when applied prior to when eggs are laid. This approach should only be used in areas that have a history of grub infestations.

**Curative:** The Curative approach is used when an existing infestation is detected. The best time to apply curative insecticides (*Sevin*) is when the grubs are actively feeding near the soil surface (usually mid-June). Pesticides applied any other time will be ineffective.
What’s That on My Euonymous?

Does your Euonymous plants appear to be covered with an unusual looking insect? Does this insect appear to be immobile, with no visible legs? If this sounds like what you’re seeing on your plant then you probably have **Euonymous Scale**. Euonymous Scale is the most common and most serious pest found on euonymous. The protective armor covering of an adult female scale is dark, oyster-shaped and about 1/16 inch in length. Adult males are very small, winged insects that leave their narrow white armored covering for mating. The eggs laid by the female are yellow and found beneath the female’s covering. When the eggs hatch, the crawlers (immature forms) move around before forming their own protective covering. Males typically outnumber females. With a heavy infestation, clusters of white males can be easily seen on leaves and stems. Initial symptoms of euonymous scale infestation are yellow spots on leaves. With a heavy infestation, branches and possibly the entire plant may die.

**Prevention and Control:** Euonymous scale is difficult to control. With light infestations, scale can be scraped off by hand and destroyed. Pruning out heavily infested branches is helpful. Avoid using insecticides unless the plant is very valuable and in serious danger from scale. Insecticides will often kill the naturally occurring enemies of scale.

Adult scales are relatively protected from insecticides by their waxy covering; however, their immature form, called crawlers, are susceptible. Horticultural oil can be used as a dormant spray before new growth begins in the spring. It kills many adults and eggs by smothering them. Spray again when crawlers are present in the spring.

Monitor the crawler emergence with sticky cards, double-faced tape wrapped around a branch, or by putting an infested shoot or leaf in a baggie and watching for crawler movement. Crawler activity often coincides with the flush of new plant growth in the spring. However, some scale species may have overlapping generations with an extended crawler emergence period, such as along the coast.

If insecticides are necessary, the following are effective against crawlers: acephate, malathion, cyfluthrin and carbaryl. Make sure that crawlers are present before using them. Apply three sprays at 10-day intervals.

How to Read a Seed Tag

Before buying seed, you’ll want to know what’s actually in the bag. Seed tags (required by law) will tell you the facts about seed quality.

**% Pure Seed:** This figure tells how much of the contents are actually seed. The higher the percentage, the better the value.

**% Other Ingredients:** Amount of other crop seeds, inert matter, and weed seeds included. The higher this number, the less seed you are getting.

**% Germination:** How much of the grass seed in the bag really grew under actual testing. The higher the percentage, the better the quality of germination.

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**Recommendations for the use of chemicals are included in this publication as a convenience to the reader. The use of brand names and any mention or listing of commercial products or services in this publication does not imply endorsement by North Carolina State University, North Carolina A & T State University or North Carolina Cooperative Extension nor discrimination against similar products or services not mentioned. Individuals who use chemicals are responsible for ensuring that the intended use complies with current regulations and conforms to the product label. Be sure to obtain current information about usage regulations and examine a current product label before applying any chemical.**

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Time to do some spring cleaning! Bring your household hazardous waste and electronics to this once a year collection event on Saturday, **May 6, 2006, from 9AM to 1PM** in the rear parking lot of the Stanly County Agri-Civic Center. For more information on materials accepted for recycling you can visit the NC Cooperative Extension Website [http://stanly.ces.ncsu.edu/](http://stanly.ces.ncsu.edu/) and view the news story about this event or contact Jerry Morton, Facilities Management/Solid Waste, by calling 704.986.3698.

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**Plants to Prune in April**

- Bayberry
- Boxwood
- Camellia
- Evergreen Euonymous
- Forsythia
- Winter Jasmine
- Mugo Pine
- Privet (Deciduous & Evergreen)