



Winter 2020

Stanly County Gardener Quarterly



Winter Garden with Low Tunnels pulled back for photo purposes

(Photo courtesy of www.montgomeryvictorygardens.com)

Editors Note

The winter solstice signals Mother Nature to start slowing down. Winter is coming. As the days become shorter and the nights become longer, plants and animals alike become dormant so they can conserve their energy through the long winter nights. Bumble bee queens begin preparing for hibernation, honey bees begin eating their stored honey because flowers have reduced their production of pollen and nectar.

While many birds have migrated south for the winter, others will use their stored fat to stay warm during the day and fluff up their feathers at night for warmth. Besides, they know the best places to perch through the cold winter nights.

Successful gardeners have learned to work with Mother Nature. -- she's going to win anyway. Winter is an excellent time to sharpening your tools, planning for next year, and updating your Garden Journal.

The same goes EMG Projects, many are in their planning stage. This month **EMG Projects** include two: School Garden Workshop written by Richard Morton, and EMG Demonstration Garden by Diane Furr, who is managing the garden's progress.

Getting to Know your EMGs introduces Laura Krug, EMG, another dedicated EMG who loves gardening. Reading about her interests explains her zest for life.

Native Plants is by Laura Krug,EMG, what can I say, Laura loves all types of gardening! She's our Energizer Bunny.

Mystery Plants is by Wanda Tyner, EMG. Wanda is our local sleuth who is always sniffing around looking for remarkable plants that deserve notice.

This month we have **two Feature Articles**; One by Anne Houck, EMG who gives us cooking tips as well as health benefits on Shiitake Mushrooms herbs; and Garden Planning by Dustin Adcock; he includes several time and money saving tips when planning your early spring vegetable garden.

Enjoy your winter,
Pat Allen, EMG and Editor

EMG Projects



School Garden Workshop

Stanly County Master Gardener Volunteer Richard Morton participated in a School Garden training and, along with other EMG Volunteers, has engaged in youth garden education.

If you're interested in having N.C. Cooperative Extension and Extension Master Gardeners work with your local school, contact us at 704-983-3987 or email jdadcock@ncsu.edu



Stanly County EMG Demonstration Garden

The wall replacement is complete. Moving on to step 2, which is grading. Come check out the progress of the Demonstration Garden at the Stanly Agri-Civic Center.

If you're interested in working on the Demonstration Garden, contact Dustin Adcock at Dustin_Adcock@ncsu.edu or call 704-983-3987.



Getting to Know Your EMG



Laura Krug, EMG

1. **What made you decide to become a Master Gardener?** It all started with the deer. We built a timber frame home on Valley Drive near Morrow Mountain State Park and decided to be good stewards of the environment by planting two acres of red oak trees under a Forestry

Service program. Red Oak trees are one of white-tailed deer's favorite foods. I read a book about colony collapse disorder about honeybees called *The Fruitless Fall* by Rowan Jacobsen and thought we might have better luck raising bees than red oak trees. We planted a lot of expensive trees and shrubs as bee friendly plants and half of them died. My friend Pat Allen told me about the Master Gardener class and I decided that I could take the class and learn about why all the plants died. I've always loved working outdoors and watching things grow.

2. What is the most important lesson you learned during your EMG training? You don't need to know everything; you just need to know where to look for the answer. And, soil preparation is key.

3. What are your main gardening interests? Are they the same as before you became an EMG. I enjoy landscaping and growing vegetables. My grand kids eat my canned green beans straight out of the jar.

4. What have been the greatest gardening changes you've made since taking the EMG course? I'm very keen on putting native plants on our property. The oak trees were a good start as they are home to a large number of native insects.

5. What do you hope to bring to the Extension Master Gardener program this year to help us reach our objectives? I'm hoping to help raise funds for the Demonstration Garden Project.

6. When you're not gardening, what are your other interests? My volunteer hats are many and varied. I'm a beekeeper and active with the Stanly County Beekeepers. I was active with therapy dog work until recently when my dog went to heaven. I'm active with the Friends of Morrow Mountain State Park, I work with two quilting groups every month. I am active with the Hospice of Stanly County and I'm a devoted grandma of a five-year-old boy and a two-year-old girl.

7. What would you like your fellow EMG'ers to know about you? That it is an honor and a thrill to work alongside so many talented and devoted people.

8. Where are you originally from? I grew up in the Philippine Islands (my parents were missionaries) and moved to Buffalo when I was 10. I met my husband in high school in Western New York We migrated south via Hershey PA, and Wilson NC and are happy to be damn Yankees.

9. Where do you currently live? (not your address but your general area). I am fortunate to live in a beautiful spot (with all the deer) on Valley Drive and get to see the sun rise over Morrow Mountain every day.

Native Plants

The Cardinal Flower

by Laura Krug, EMG



The Cardinal Flower, *Lobelia cardinalis* is native to the North Carolina mountains, Piedmont and coastal plain.

You'll see it in wet areas throughout the state, and it is a wonderful choice for a backyard rain garden according to the NC Cooperative Extension Service. (I have seen this flower growing on river banks in Eastern North Carolina.)

Lobelia flowers are tall perennials that thrive in USDA plant hardiness zones 1 through 10. Tall spikes of brilliant red, trumpet-shaped flowers rise above the dark green foliage. The plant can grow to a height of between three to four feet and will spread to about three feet in diameter.

Beautiful but deadly, this plant has been used as a medicine but is also highly poisonous. It contains fourteen alkaloids similar to those in nicotine; extracts of the leaves and fruit produce vomiting, sweating, pain, and finally death. The Cardinal Flower is a member of the Bluebell Family, Campanulaceae.

Since most insects find it difficult to navigate the long tubular flowers, Cardinal Flower depends on hummingbirds, which feed on the nectar, for pollination. Its common name alludes to the bright red robes worn by Roman Catholic cardinals.

This perennial flower blooms in the summer and into the fall.

Source:

wildflower.org

Garden Revolution Larry Weaner and Thomas Christopher

moissouribotanicalgarden.org

The Living Landscape Darke and Tallamay

Mystery Plant

Can You Identify This Plant?

by Wanda Tyner, EMG

This plant is an annual and commonly found flowering from fall until early spring. It is a showy beauty during the winter season when not a lot of bright and bold colors are abundant. This plant is available in many flower colors and patterns. Plant sizes vary with some plants being upright or with a more trailing habit. The mystery plant is an excellent plant for bedding and containers. Plant in the fall for late winter and early spring blooms.

The plant needs six or more hours of direct sunlight per day. It also will grow well in partial shade with two to six hours of direct sunlight for part of the day. Soil texture recommended is high organic matter with a neutral (6.0-8.0) soil pH. Soil should be consistently moist with good drainage. The mystery plant grows well in the Coastal Plains, Piedmont and Mountain regions of North Carolina. The USDA Plant Hardiness Zones are 6a-10b.

Leaf characteristics are semi-evergreen with rounded and spreading form. Leaves are green with enlarged, lobed or pinnate stipules. Flowers are orbicular and one - two inches across. Some flowers have an eyespot. Flower colors are blue, gold/ yellow,



purple/ lavender, red/ burgundy and white.

The mystery plant is of value to the gardener due to its showiness and is edible. This plant is great for containers, small spaces, borders, small groups and walkways. It is ideal for Children's Gardens, Edible Gardens and Winter Gardens. This plant is frequently damaged by deer.

This plant is often confused with *Viola sororia* and *Viola tricolor*.

Source: <https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu>

Photo credit: Michelle a. CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

Feature Article

Edible Herbs: Shiitake Mushroom (*Lentinus edodes*)

by Anne Houck, EMG



Shiitake are edible mushrooms native to East Asia. They are tan to dark brown, with caps that grow between 2 and 4 inches.

While typically eaten like vegetables, shiitake are fungi that grow naturally on decaying hardwood trees. Around 83% of shiitake are grown in Japan, although the United States, Canada, Singapore, and China also produce them.

Native to East Asia, shiitake gets its name from a pair of Japanese words meaning tree (*shii*) and mushroom (*take*). Commercially grown shiitake mushrooms are raised on short logs that have been injected with mushroom spores. This simple, soil-free method of agriculture has allowed the production of shiitake to take hold worldwide.

Tasty and nutritious, shiitake mushroom heals as well as nurtures. This amazing fungus has been used for medicinal purposes in Asia for many years, where it has become celebrated as the Far East's symbol of longevity.

Categorized in Traditional Chinese Medicine as *Fu Zheng*, or "Supreme Tonification" shiitake is used to preserve health. In modern technology, these types of herbs are called adaptogens, because they increase the body's ability to adapt to the external environment.

COOKING WITH SHIITAKE

Shiitake mushrooms are often sold dried. Before cooking, soak them in hot water to soften them. To select the best specimens, look for ones sold whole rather than sliced. The caps should be thick with deep, white gills.

When cooking with fresh shiitake mushrooms, remove the stems, which remain tough even after cooking. Save the stems in the freezer for making veggie stock.

You can cook shiitake as you would any other mushroom. Here are a few suggestions:

- Sauté shiitake with greens and serve with a poached egg.
- Add them to pizzas, salads, pasta dishes or stir-fries.
- Use them to make a flavorful soup.
- Roast them for a crispy snack or side dish.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS

(1) Shiitake are low in calories. They also offer good amounts of fiber, B vitamins. In addition, shiitake contain many of the same amino acids as meat.

(2) In addition to protein and fiber, shiitake mushrooms provide a rich source of selenium, iron (important

news for vegetarians) and potassium. D-Eritadenine is a compound found in shiitake that reduces blood cholesterol levels while supporting cardiovascular wellness.

(3) This highly revered plant also boosts the immune system with its lofty level of lentinan, believed to slow or even stop tumor growth.

(4) Shiitake mushrooms may also help fight infections and promote bone health. Mushrooms are the only natural plant source of vitamin D, however in an inferior form, D2, compared with vitamin D3, which is found in fatty fish and some other animal foods.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Shiitake have a long history of use, both as a food and a supplement. Given the chewy texture of most mushrooms, this class of foods is considered the “meat of the vegetable world.” As such, shiitake provides a bridge for those health enthusiasts and weight watchers who seek to adopt a plant-based diet.

While the research on the health benefits of these mushrooms is promising, very few human studies exist. However, being low in calories and containing many vitamins, minerals, and bioactive plant compounds, shiitake is an excellent addition to your diet.

Sources:

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Feature Article

Planning for Next Year's Vegetable Garden

by Dustin Adcock, County Extension Agent- Field Crops and Horticulture

This time of year, the seed catalogs start filling gardeners' mailboxes with a constant reminder that the planting season is soon approaching. How do you know what to plant and when? This is a learned skill, but here are a few pointers to help you along the way.

Less is more. In fact, it is a common mistake of the most seasoned gardeners to purchase hundreds of different seeds with high hopes to grow a smorgasbord of vegetables, flowers and herbs. It is best to start with what you know you will use and

limit yourself to just one or two varieties of that food. For example, two types of lettuce, one early and one more heat tolerant for a later planting.

Know how much you need. The average family of four will eat far less than the typical gardener plants. The table below is a good start at estimating how much to plant per person. If you plan to preserve your harvest, it is likely that more will need to be planted.

How much space do you have? Consider the value of the space you have. If your favorite food is fresh tomatoes in summer, then a large portion of your garden should be devoted to that crop. Likewise, growing fresh onions may not be a priority. There are local farmer's markets with fresh local produce for those crops you just do not have room for in your garden.

How much time do you have? Some crops, like radishes, grow so fast they can be worked in to any garden plan and schedule (just 20-28 days). However, crops like peanuts, parsnips, pumpkins, and rutabagas can take around to 120-130 days! That is a lot of space and time to devote to a single plant.

Should you seed or transplant? Many garden plants start readily from seed and produce a crop nearly as fast as transplanted crops. For example, research shows that many times squash will produce just as fast from seeding as it will from transplants. However, starting peppers, eggplants, and tomatoes, in the garden, from seed is not a viable option. To have a good crop of tomatoes, peppers, and eggplant, those seeds need to be started at least six weeks prior to the last frost (late February to early March). This gives them a chance to get a good root system and size to begin flowering and fruiting near the peak of the season. Unless you have a heated greenhouse or other germinating space, it is likely a better option to purchase transplants.

During this cold, wet weather of winter, spend some time planning your garden before ordering seeds and plants. Stick to a good plan and budget. Know your space, time, needs, and abilities. If you have more plants or seeds than you need, share with a friend. No matter what, get gardening!

Written by:
Dustin Adcock
County Extension Agent- Field Crops and Horticulture

How Much to Plant Per Person?

Vegetable	Use Fresh	Preserve
Beet	10 ft	20 ft
Carrot	10 ft	15 ft
Corn (at least three rows)	15 ft	50 ft
Green Beans (Bush)	15 ft	25 ft
Green Beans (Pole)	5 ft	15 ft
Greens	10 ft	10 ft
Lettuce	10 ft	n/a
Okra	6 ft	10-12 ft
Onion	5 ft	10 ft
Pepper	2-3 plants	5 plants
Radish	5 ft	n/a
Squash (Summer)	2-3 hills	4 hills
Squash (Winter)	2 hills	3 hills
Tomato (Slicing)	3 plants	5 plants
Tomato (Cherry)	2 plants	n/a
Turnip	10 ft	15 ft
Broccoli	4 plants	10 plants
Cucumber	2 hills	5 hills
Collard	5 ft	10 ft
Eggplant	2 plants	n/a
Melon	2 hills	n/a
Potato	6 ft	12 ft
Cabbage	5 ft	10 ft
Peas (Sugar)	8-10 ft	20 ft
Peas (Cowpeas/Blackeye)	10 ft	25 ft

(Answer to the Mystery Plant: Viola x wittrockiana; Common names: Lady's Delight; Pansy)

Stanly Gardener Quarterly is a newsletter supplying gardeners with unbiased, research-based information on gardens, lawns, and landscapes.

Written by Stanly County Extension Master Gardener Volunteers (EMG), who have been trained and certified by NC State University and NC A&T State University horticulture faculty, our goal is to offer informative and timely articles on plants, gardening, garden design, pest management

and gardening products.

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