

Food Safety Training Set For Fruit And Vegetable Growers

BROOKINGS — SDSU Extension is offering food safety training for growers of fresh fruits and vegetables May 23, from 1:30-5 p.m. CDT and 12:30-4 p.m. MDT at several locations across South Dakota. Farmers Market managers and other related professionals are also encouraged to attend.

- Topics will include:
- Recent state and national legislation, including the Food Safety Modernization Act;
 - Production and handling practices feasible for small-scale growers to reduce contamination risks;
 - Requirements of third-party safety certification; and
 - Developing a farm food safety plan.

The workshop will end with a presentation on regulations for processed foods such as salsas, jams and baked goods sold at farmers markets in South Dakota.

“Due to food safety outbreaks across the United States, consumers are demanding greater assurance that their fresh produce is free of harmful micro-organisms. This training will help South Dakota growers understand and meet that demand,” said Rhoda Burrows, SDSU Extension Horticulture Specialist.

The training will be held at the West River Agricultural Center in Rapid City, and will be available via closed-circuit DDN TV at SDSU Extension Regional Centers in Aberdeen, Watertown, Mitchell, Sioux Falls and Pierre.

Burrows and Sharon Guthmiller, SDSU Extension Food Safety Field Specialist, will present the information, and attendees will be able to ask questions via the DDN system. This training is offered free to producers thanks to funding from a specialty crops grant through the South Dakota Department of Agriculture. To receive training free, attendees will be asked to fill out a short survey during the event and later in the year.

Attendees need to register for the event by noon May 22. To register, contact Burrows at Rhoda.burrows@sdsstate.edu or 605-394-2236. Burrows may also be contacted with any questions on the May 23 event.

Keep Dogs Safe, Cool As The Days Warms Up

BY LISA MOORE

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Spring is here, and with it comes warmer weather and new considerations for our dogs.

I have a few dogs that love to ride in the car, so I frequently take one or more with me when I run errands. As fun as this is, it has to stop when temperatures rise. Finding a shady spot and rolling down the windows will not effectively lower the risk of your dog overheating in your vehicle, which can happen quickly. Better to leave your dog at home until cooler weather returns.

Longer days combined with higher temperatures cause dogs to start shedding their winter undercoat. Often the wooly undercoat gets caught in the guard hairs, resulting in matting and tangles, which, if not addressed, can become quite painful for the dog. The matted coat twists and tightens, painfully pulling on the skin, which can cause the dog to scratch and rub. This can cause the skin to ooze and become infected, which attracts flies. To make matters worse, flies will lay their eggs on the irritated skin, and this soon becomes a maggot problem — a real health risk. Fortunately, this can all be avoided with routine and frequent brushing, or regular trips to the groomer.

It's a good idea to do a “spring check” of your dog's outdoor environment. Foxtails that may have germinated in your yard need to be removed, because they have an uncanny

way of ending up in your dog's ears, between toes and even sniffed up the nose, all of which require veterinary attention. In addition to having access to fresh water at all times, make sure the water source is in a spot that will be shaded during the majority of the day. And forget about using any of the “automatic water” devices that screw directly onto your hose bib. During the day, water can heat up to scalding temperatures in your pipes and, as a result, will make drinking impossible for the thirsty dog. Daily “pooper patrol” duty will help keep the fly population down in your yard and help prevent the spread of disease.

How did your fencing survive the winter storms and recent winds? Check each fence board and make any necessary repairs before your dog discovers a breach in security.

For those of you with short-muzzled dogs — bulldogs, pugs, bull mastiffs, boxers, Boston terriers, Cavalier King Charles Spaniels, etc. — be aware that these breeds simply cannot adequately keep themselves cool outdoors in extreme heat.

These dogs need to be indoors during the day, and exercise should occur in the early mornings or evenings.

Finally, keep in mind that longer days and better weather give you greater opportunities to get out and get active with your dog, which is what they really want — more time spent with you!



NORFOLK BOTANICAL GARDEN/MCT
Les Parks, curator of herbaceous plants at Norfolk Botanical Garden, shows a Don's Variegated Azalea grown in the gardens.

Diggin' In

Try Azaleas For Lovely Color, Scent

BY KATHY VAN MULLEKOM

© 2013, Daily Press (Newport News, Va.)

Any azaleas flowering in your yard this spring are probably Asian in origin — not American species that offer different sights and pleasing scents.

“Azaleas native to the United States are colorful and well adapted to our challenging climate,” says Les Parks, curator of herbaceous plants at Norfolk Botanical Garden in southeastern Virginia.

“Some are sweetly fragrant and worthy of a place in your garden. There are species suited for the southern coastal climate, but there are many others that prefer cooler climates.

“It's possible for gardeners from southern Canada to Florida, from the Mid-West to the Northwest to grow some variety of native azaleas.”

Azaleas have a lasting legacy at the botanical garden in Norfolk, Va., where 200 women earned 25 cents an hour, clearing 75 acres and planting 4,000 azaleas as part of the \$76,000 Works Progress Administration grant in 1938. By 1941, the garden showcased 5,000 azaleas and five miles of walking trails in what was then named The Azalea Garden; in the late '50s, the botanical garden became known by its current name.

Today, azaleas of all kinds, which are members of the genus Rhododendron, can be seen throughout the botanical garden — 850 different types among 50,000 plants. The botanical garden is also host to camellia, rose, crape myrtle, holly, hydrangea and champion tree collections. The latest garden is devoted to children.

6 NICE NATIVE AZALEAS

Coast Azalea (*Rhododendron atlanticum*). Fragrant, pinkish-white flowers in April; attractive blue-green foliage, 3-6 feet tall and wide, suckers; sun to part shade with even moisture; cold hardy zones 5-8 (9).

Florida Azalea (*Rhododendron austrinum*). Showy flowers that can be yellow, creamy white, orange or red, blooming mid-spring with fragrant scents; 7-15 feet tall and slightly narrower; light shade with consistently moist, well-drained soil; dislikes soggy soil, tolerates heat and humidity. Cold hardy zones 5-8.

Flame Azalea (*Rhododendron calendulaceum*). Large flowers can be yellow, orange or pink early May with no fragrance; 4-6 feet tall and 8-10 feet wide, or larger; light shade in moist, well-drained soil; drought tolerant once established. Cold hardy zones 5-7.



NORFOLK BOTANICAL GARDEN/MCT
Les Parks, curator of herbaceous plants at Norfolk Botanical Garden, shows a Don's Variegated Azalea grown in the gardens.

Piedmont Azalea, Hoary Azalea, Florida Pinxter (*Rhododendron canescens*). Pink, rose-to-white flowers with sweet scent in spring; 6-10 feet tall and wide, suckers; part shade in moist, well-drained soil; keep moist during drought. Cold hardy zones 5-8.

Pinxterbloom Azalea (*Rhododendron periclymenoides*). Fragrant, white-to-pink flowers mid-spring; 4-6 feet tall and wider, suckers; drought tolerant once established; part shade in moist, well-drained soil. Cold hardy zones 4-8.

Swamp Azalea (*Rhododendron viscosum*). Fragrant white flowers mid- to late spring, 2-8 feet tall and 3-8 feet wide, variable; part shade in moist soils; tolerates flooding and occasional drought once established. Cold hardy zones 4-9.

PLANTING AZALEAS

- Locate in the correct amount of shade or sunlight for the particular species of azaleas you plant. Soil should also be well drained and light, unless your species tolerates otherwise.

- Dig hole twice width of the root ball — but only the same depth. The azalea should not be planted too deeply; they can even be raised up some to insure better drainage, if needed. Backfill hole with existing top soil amended with rich organic matter — compost or manure. If the existing top soil is poor, add new. The ratio of top soil to organic matter should be 2-to-1.

- Spread the roots out for proper growth.
- Water new azalea in well and make sure it

stays moist, particularly the first summer and during periods of heat or drought. One or two deep soakings per week is better than more frequent, but less thorough watering. Avoid using irrigation water high in soluble salts, and avoid areas prone to flooding from salt water.

- Cover planting area with 2-3 inches of mulch to help retain moisture, reduce weeds and moderate soil temperature.

CARING FOR AZALEAS

- Feed your azaleas small amounts of organic fertilizer, preferably one labeled specifically for azaleas. If you use a chemical fertilizer, cut the rate in half. Azaleas are easily burned by overfeeding.

- Several insects feed on azaleas, particularly lace bug and azalea caterpillars. If you notice insect damage, try to control with organic or physical solutions first — before you grab a bottle of something stronger.

- Prune azaleas within the first six weeks following bloom time. Any pruning after that lessens next year's flowers.

- Work carefully around azaleas when they are budded — some varieties have buds that easily snapped off.

ABOUT NORFOLK BOTANICAL GARDEN

- Norfolk Botanical Garden represents a collection of more than 40 themed gardens encompassing 155 acres along Lake Whitehurst in southeastern Virginia's coastal city of Norfolk. The botanical garden is accredited by the American Association of Museums, recognized as a Virginia Historic Landmark, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, cited as a Virginia Green attraction, and is managed by the Norfolk Botanical Garden Society supported by the City of Norfolk. For more information, visit www.norfolkbotanicalgarden.org or call 757-441-5830.

- The botanical garden's summer exhibit — “Reflections of Nature” — features 30 glass sculptures inspired by nature, and designed and created by glass artist Craig Mitchell Smith. The Michigan resident recently produced colorful glass poppies for Disney World to promote the new Disney movie “Oz the Great and Powerful,” according to a news release. Thirty red glass poppies will also adorn the botanical garden's hummingbird garden; the exhibit opens May 1 and closes Aug. 18. Smaller glass pieces will be sold in the garden gift shop. Look for the exhibit's largest 14-foot sculpture in NATO Vista. Free with garden admission.

Weed Patch

Springtime, Here We Come!

BY LINDA WUEBBEN

It's Spring!

Really, I know it's Spring. Even though the snowflakes thick as the gusting winds throw them against my patio doors, I believe.

Somedays, like today, I need to keep remembering and repeating those few simple words.

I wonder if anyone set foot in their gardens on the traditional first day of vegetable plantings. There was still frost in the ground in my garden on Good Friday but I wasn't too worried. I don't plant potatoes anymore but would have tried throwing some radish or lettuce seeds in some short rows. Certainly Bob would not have been able to till the soil yet.

At any rate we still have about 15 feet of carrots growing on the west end of our garden and they have to be dug before Bob can get to turning the soil or even spread some manure on the top. Those carrots have an amazing taste and we're surprised how much they continue to grow over the winter months. Before Easter he dug a shove full and one was four inches in diameter. It wasn't hollow and tasted so sweet. We have been supplying our kids with carrots all winter. He did worry during one of the last digs about the orange tubes getting frozen but they were fine.

I only ordered my sweet corn and other select garden seeds two weeks ago. When the box arrived, there was a longing to be digging in the soil but the return of winter weather squelched that pang.



Linda WUEBBEN

three-fourths a mile south of us, in our neighbor's field, as a large, dark-colored flock of several somethings moving northwest. Soon a couple individuals walked out of their grove of trees surrounding their place and, Bang! We watched the flock keep moving but the shooters walked forward and picked up one something and head home.

Yep, it was a turkey shoot! The turkeys moving through my garden were probably cousins. After finding little to feast on, they headed back west through my grove of trees and we noticed later when we left to find food for dinner (Bob's turn to cook — tee-hee!), there was a large group of somethings in the neighboring wheat field.

It was also interesting to have a red-tailed

We were casually laz-ing around Sunday morning, when we noticed three wild turkeys strolling through the garden. I was shocked! My garden is only 30 feet from the house. I have never seen a wild turkey that close other than the view of a flock in a ditch from the windshield as I passed by.

Then I remembered Holy Saturday, sitting on the deck with my kids, as we watched about

hawk living in our treeline by our house earlier this Spring. I would see him circling high and low behind my house, looking and maybe finding something good to eat. I lost my faithful and old Siamese tomcat Bobby in the last few months and wondered if that hawk had maybe feasted on him. Bob assured me sure cats were not on hawks' menus but still, Bobby never missed a meal. It was sad to know he was gone.

So far I only have had one cardinal visit the side view mirror on my car. I'm hoping it's several of a family just making single appearances although Bob is locating the gun and still searching for the bullets. I also have several smaller birds with soft dark gray feathers, white belly and pinkish-yellow beak. A birding friend told me they are Juncos from the sparrow family. They are so cute I almost want to pet one — almost but not quite. I don't like birds or feathers too close — give me the willeys!

Even though the weather is more like winter than spring, it is satisfying to know we are finally getting some type of precipitation. It would have been really hard to go into my dry, cracked garden and be optimistic about a successful bounty.

I did have a burst of positivity when Bob and I went shopping for a grandson's birthday present last weekend. Yep, I purchased three 12-inch tomato plants so when Spring finally decides to wake up, I will be garden-ready, raring to go and hoping for fresh, red, ripe, juicy tomatoes for the Fourth of July.

Springtime, here I come!

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