

# ‘Trees Talk’ and garden advice before spring

## Lloyd Singleton

Director of the N.C. Cooperative Extension Center for New Hanover County, located at the Arboretum

A few sunny, warm days of early March in Wilmington, NC, and our attention turns to outdoors in the garden. The colors of late winter beg our attention. It's delightful pinks and purples of Flowering Cherry and Redbud trees at eye-level and above. Ground level yellows and creams emerge as daffodils, narcissus and jonquils trumpet that spring is near. And the browns of last year's stems, foliage and seeds should remain undisturbed for a few more weeks until the threat of freeze is past. Stem-nesting native bees are yet to emerge, and chrysalis and eggs of this spring's butterflies and moths are resident under fallen leaves as winter protection. Remember, brown is a color too and worthy of our respect.

Don't push for a green lawn yet with an early fertilization; this can result in disease problems and cold damage. For the turf monoculture crowd, now is the time to apply pre-emergence herbicides for weed control. Avoid the well-marketed "Weed and Feed" products; our warm-season grasses (centipede, St. Augustine, Bermuda, Zoysia) need separate schedules for fertilization and weed control. For more information, check out [www.turffiles.ncsu.edu/](http://www.turffiles.ncsu.edu/).

Late winter is the right time to prune summer-blooming shrubs like Knock-out roses but not spring bloomers such as azaleas. Summer-blooming shrubs produce flower buds on new growth. Pruning them now can result in lots of flowers. Knock Out roses should be cut back to around 18" each year to promote vigorous healthy growth. This type of drastic pruning is okay for vigorous summer blooming shrubs. Less vigorous shrubs can be pruned by cutting the ends of the branches back by several inches. If they are too dense, remove some of the stems completely by cutting them out at ground level.

As you have questions about proper care of your landscape environment, we encourage you to reach out to our plant clinic by sending an email to [NewHanoverEMGV@gmail.com](mailto:NewHanoverEMGV@gmail.com). Include digital photos with your questions if needed, and we'll do our best to assist you with research-based information.



Daffodils offer late winter color in the garden. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The most valuable component of landscapes are trees, and The Friends of the Arboretum are excited to offer education on the topic via a live webinar, "Trees Talk" on Saturday, March 20, 2021, from 9 a.m. to noon. Nancy Ash will leverage her 37 years in the nursery business to share care of the Japanese Maple tree: how to select a maple tree; how to maintain it in terms of cultural practices and disease management; and, the pruning style for uprights and dissectums. Richard Johnson will focus on the preservation of the genetic heritage of our native live oaks. The keynote speaker, Basil Camu, will take a deep dive into proper tree care as a means to support planetary health. Basil is a certified arborist and operates a tree service business in Raleigh that has committed to care for trees but refuses to cut



Dorothy Gillespie art exhibits at the Arboretum provide lots of winter color. COURTESY OF JEFF HALL

them down. As a self-proclaimed tree-ecologist, this engaging speaker will invite us on the journey to care for our planet by caring for trees.

Register for "Trees Talk" at <https://thefriends.wildapricot.org/event-4178576/Registration>. The fee is \$15 for nonmembers, so consider joining the Friends of the Arboretum in support of our beautiful grounds and educational programs.

As we march on towards spring together, also enjoy the colors of Dorothy Gillespie art in five locations at the Arboretum, free and open every day from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Hear the story of this incredible artist via QR codes at each exhibit.

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