



Northumberland County Extension
Office, PO Box 400
Heathsville, VA 22473
(804)580-5694
www.nnmg.org

Northern Neck Master Gardeners (NNMG) offer free advice and solutions for all your gardening questions. This includes diagnosing plant, insect and disease problems; promoting safe use of pesticides and fertilizers to protect water quality and our environment; and teaching proper care of lawns, trees, shrubs and vegetables.

Mission: Trained and supervised by Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE), volunteers provide the community with research-based gardening and horticultural information through educational projects and programs. Services include Help Desks, Plant Clinics, seminars and workshops.

HELP DESKS

Call or bring in samples:

Northumberland Extension Office

Tuesdays, 9am – 12noon
January through December
(804)580-5694

Lancaster Extension Office

Thursdays, 9am – 12noon
April through October
(804)462-5780

Westmoreland Extension Office

Wednesdays, 9am-12noon
April through October
(804)493-8924

PLANT CLINICS

Bring your questions and samples:

May through October

Irvington Farmer's Market

1st Saturday of each month
9am – 1pm

Heathsville Farmer's Market

April through October
3rd Saturday of each month
9am – 1pm

Gardening in the Northern Neck:

A Handbook for Responsible Gardeners - Written by local Master Gardeners, this is an invaluable reference for successful gardening in our area. Available for \$10 at Plant Clinics and Master Gardener events.

Please visit www.nnmg.org or call for more information.

Green Sleeves

Northern Neck Master Gardeners

April - June

NOW'S THE TIME

A Gardening Checklist for the Northern Neck

APRIL

Vegetables & Herbs

*The date of our last killing frost (about April 10-21) can be used to calculate the earliest and latest planting date for spring crops. See **Gardening in the Northern Neck**, page 54.*

☀ Some plants like cooler soils but most like the soil to be above 60 degrees, which means most plantings are done after mid-April. Bok choy, endive, kohlrabi, lettuce, and parsley can be planted out around April 1. Artichoke, asparagus, broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage head, cauliflower, chives, kale, may be planted out until mid-April. Tomato and tomatillo may be planted until mid-July.

Perennials

☀ Plant dahlia tubers as soon as danger of frost is past (about April 10-21). Stake at planting time to avoid injury to tubers.

☀ Extend the blooming season of gladioli by planting early, middle and late-season selections each week until the middle of June.

☀ Divide late season and fall blooming perennials such as phlox, asters, Shasta daisies, chrysanthemums, and liriop.

☀ When the leaves of spring-flowering bulbs emerge, apply any well-balanced fertilizer, preferably slow-release, to ensure quality blooms next year. Remove bulb foliage only after it dies naturally.

Lawns

☀ **Cool season grasses** (Kentucky bluegrass and tall fescue): Do not mow until grass has grown at least 2". Roots are renewed in the spring, and the grass needs vigorous top growth initially. Sharpen the mower blades to keep lawns healthy.

☀ **Warm season grasses** (zoysia, Bermuda): Fertilize if necessary according to your soil test. This may be done in April, May or June. Choose a fertilizer that contains "water insoluble nitrogen", a slow-release form that gives plants more time to use the nitrogen and thus helps prevent pollution in our Bay.

Trees & Shrubs

☀ Prune spring blooming shrubs after they bloom—camellia, azalea, wisteria, forsythia, weigela and spiraea.

☀ Fertilize azaleas and camellias after they bloom.

☀ Once new growth begins on trees and shrubs, cut back twigs affected by winterkill to green wood.

Don't Guess. Soil Test!

One of the best things you can do for your lawn or garden to save money, effort, and get the results you want is to get a soil test, which consists of collecting samples and sending them to a lab for analysis. Kits are available free at your local Virginia Cooperative Extension Office (and at some local nurseries); the cost for VCE analysis is \$7. Test results will indicate your soil's acidity and other soil properties, with specific recommendations and amendments for the site.

MAY

Vegetables & Herbs

☀️ Transplant peppers, celery and basil. Direct sow okra, corn and cucumbers.

Annuals

☀️ Set out marigolds, petunias, ageratums, and fibrous begonias—all are good border plants.

☀️ Put out transplants on a cloudy, calm day, or late afternoon and water in. Protect young plants from sun and wind for a couple of days until acclimated.

☀️ Pinch back annuals, such as zinnias, petunias, and salvia, when 4-6" high to promote bushy growth. Impatiens is a good annual for shade. Begonias, coleus, ageratum, salvia, and vinca prefer light shade.

Perennials

☀️ Pinch back tips of chrysanthemums, Shasta daisies and obedient plant.

Lawns

☀️ **Cool season grasses:** Lawns maintained at the correct height resist disease and weed infestation. Lawns should be kept between 2-3" in height. Mow frequently, removing no more than 1/3 of the blade at each cutting. May and June: apply lime at any time according to your soil test. Aerate. Water deeply as necessary. Control broad leaf weeds. Apply crabgrass post-emergence control.

☀️ **Warm season grasses:** Apply lime at any time according to your soil test. Aerate. Water deeply as necessary. Control broad leaf weeds. Apply crabgrass post-emergence control. Insect and disease identification and control is critical.



JUNE

Vegetables & Herbs

☀️ After your vegetable garden is well established, it's best to water thoroughly once a week rather than giving it a light watering every day. This encourages a deeper root system, which will later help the plants tolerate dry weather. Generally, an application of 1" of water to the surface will wet the soil to 6" to 8" deep.

☀️ Most herbs may be transplanted in June. Harvest just before flowering when the leaves contain the maximum essential oils; cut them early on a sunny day.

Annuals

☀️ When your early annual flowers are spent, replace them with summer annuals such as nicotiana, portulaca, or celosia. Before planting, rework and enrich the soil with compost.

☀️ Plant tropical water lilies in early summer.

☀️ Remove old flower heads from bedding plants to prolong blooming.

Perennials

☀️ Plant new perennials only if you are prepared to water regularly as the Northern Neck tends to be hot and dry during this time.

Trees & Shrubs

☀️ Mid- to late June is an excellent time to take softwood cuttings of shrubs to start new plants. Shrubs that can be propagated this way include spiraea, boxwood, and azalea.

☀️ Mulch around newly planted trees and shrubs to reduce weeds and fluctuations in soil temperature, retain moisture, prevent damage from lawn mowers and look attractive. Be sure to keep mulch several inches away from the trunks so air can circulate, discouraging diseases and rodents that may feed on the bark. Do not mulch above the root flair.

☀️ Regularly water newly planted trees and shrubs during the first year or two after planting to help establish a good root system. Water at least 1" per week. It's better to water deeply once a week than to water lightly every day.

☀️ Watch for and control blackspot and powdery mildew on rose foliage.

THUMBNAILS

☀️ Right Plant – Right Place: Don't buy a plant if you don't know its requirements.

☀️ When shopping for annual flowers, look for plants with plenty of buds but not yet in bloom. Plants that bloom in the pack are often root bound and can be set back for several weeks after being planted. Plants that are not yet in bloom will bloom sooner and become established and grow faster.

☀️ Fertilize garden plants with manure tea or fish emulsion every six weeks to keep them growing at a steady rate. Be aware that you may need to keep Fido away from fresh applications.

☀️ Weeds: Remove *before* they go to seed.