Autumn 2020
The Garden Path
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ALL THE BUZZ!

Belinda Leach

Summer is winding down at the Memorial Garden at the Vance County Regional Farmers Market. The plants and flowers have been doing what they do for our pollinator friends. But there are more warm temperatures ahead and our pollinators still have much work to do. Enter the amazing plant, *Eutrochium dubium*, a.k.a. Joe-Pye Weed. Joe has been hanging out in the garden all spring and summer with his handsome large, dark green leaves patiently awaiting his time on stage. In late summer, Joe starts producing his large, airy clusters of inflorescences that range from light pink to dark purple and provide important late season nectar to the bees and butterflies.

Joe-Pye Weed is a plant that is almost always happy where you plant him. He likes a variety of soils, enjoys wet feet, but can endure some drought conditions, and will take full sun or part sun. Deer do not bother him, nor do other insects or diseases. Because Joe-Pye gets tall, six to eight feet in height, he is most suited for the back of a garden bed and needs plenty of room to spread out. He can be made less leggy and become stockier by cutting back the plant by half in early summer. Joe spreads through self-seeding and can be divided in the spring. As interesting as the plant, so too

is the way it got its name. The legend is that a New England medicine man, Joe Pye, used the plant to cure typhus.

The Memorial Garden is home to three cultivars of Joe-Pye; *Eutrochium dubium* "Baby Joe" and "Little Joe" and *Eutrochium maculatum* "Phantom". These plants will have another life this winter as the dried flower head will be left for the birds.

Another spectacular display in the late summer garden is *Solidago rugosa* 'Fireworks', Fireworks Goldenrod. This beauty looks like a huge display of bursting skyrockets with small, narrow, dark green leaves and tiny yellow or gold florets on long rigid stems.

Goldenrod is just now becoming used frequently in gardens. It has often been mistaken for ragweed which is hated by allergy sufferers. Unlike ragweed, its pollen is not windblown, but the pollen has to be moved from plant to plant by our wonderful pollinator friends who are looking for late season nectar. Goldenrod is easy to grow as it is a sun to part shade loving plant that will tolerate drought and poor soil, has few disease and insect problems and is deer resistant.

Salidago is wonderful as an accent in the back of a garden or border as it will get three to four feet tall. Since it blooms in late summer, it provides a beautiful backdrop for late summer bloomers such as purple and blue asters and fall blooming flowers like chrysanthemums. Goldenrod will stay blooming until frost and its droopy stems will provide interest to the garden in winter.

Adding Joe-Pye and Goldenrod will add a dazzling season finale to any garden.

Editor's note: If you are familiar with Joe Pye Weed being in the genus Eupatorium your memory is correct. Taxonomists have reclassified it as Eutrochium as correctly used in Ms. Leach's article.

The GardenTyro

Eileen Novak

When we first arrived in North Carolina, I knew I wanted to have things growing, I wanted to pick my fruit off the tree, knowing it had not been sprayed with chemicals. So we planted trees…. Lots of trees.

We had a line of trees about 10 feet away from the property line marching to the front of the lot. Nine trees, about 15 feet apart. If you do the math, that's a long front yard. And it doesn't go all the way to the road. In order, from the house to the front, it goes Peach, nectarine, peach, apple, pear, pear, cherry, cherry, cherry. In back, we also planted trees, but we put those in for the deer. Eight apple trees, two pear trees and four crabapples for pollination, marching in a double row toward the back of the property.

All looked good the first two years, I was not expecting them to bear fruit so young, they looked lovely in the spring when they bloomed. And for several years after that, they looked awful in the spring, when they bloomed and there was a frost which turned all the flowers brown. So it wasn't 'til last year that we had any significant fruit ripen. We had lots of peaches and nectarines, but they turned black and fell off due to some kind of fungus disease, which since I don't spray chemicals, is kind of unchecked. The cherries that survived the cold looked almost ripe so I thought I should give them another week… The crows liked them just fine in the almost ripe state. But the pears were ok.

JOIN THE MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEERS FOR THE NEXT SERIES OF WEEKLY ON-LINE CHATS

Join the Extension Master Gardener volunteers of Vance, Warren, Granville & Person Counties for a weekly chat, each Thursday afternoon at 2 pm, September 10 through October 15, 2020. Each week they will share timely gardening tips, a featured topic and NCSU horticultural resources. There will also be a question and answer period each week. Registration is required. Get all the details at http://go.ncsu.edu/mastergardenerchat.

Now, in my own defense, I planted all these darlings BEFORE I took the training as a master gardener and my selection of fruit trees from the big box store was based on the picture on the tag and what fruits I liked. I did NO research on what kinds of things prospered in this climate. I'll bet you veteran gardeners are snickering behind your seed catalogs right now. Peach trees are not entirely fond of the humidity. The apple trees are displeased with the proximity of a cedar tree which

Apple Rust, a.k.a. frog-eye leaf spot

Cedar Rust

shares its cedar/apple rust every spring. The Deer didn't get the memo that the trees in the front are mine, and they eat down the cherry trees gleefully every winter. I replant them with whatever I can find from the box stores because local nurseries are smart enough not to try to sell these trees to me because they don't do well here.

That leaves me with pears. Now the problem is how do I tell when they are ripe? I picked a small basket full of low-hanging fruit in July when I noticed the crows paying significant attention to the trees. However they were far from ripe – the seeds were white in the one I cut, leading me to decide that they might ripen up on the kitchen counter. Heaven knows, when I bring pears home from the store, they turn to overripe mush in three days! Three weeks later, the pears had shriveled down to nubs and they took a final trip out to the compost pile. So I am guessing that the crows were incorrect about the state of ripeness of my pears.

Three weeks later, I picked more pears, these were actually a little better. I cut out the bad spots and made pear sauce (like applesauce but with pears, you know?) and pear butter (like apple butter but pear) and I found a recipe for mango chutney and

thought "what the heck?!?" All of my attempts to use the pears this year turned out quite tasty, so I am glad to report that the Garden Tyro's fruit orchard is not a COMPLETE disaster.

If you want to live off the land, though, do the research first, find out what trees the Extension folks recommend (because they actually DO RESEARCH) and one last bit of advice: nobody needs 4 pear trees unless you have a table at the farmer's market!

North Carolina
Extension Gardener
Plant Toolbox

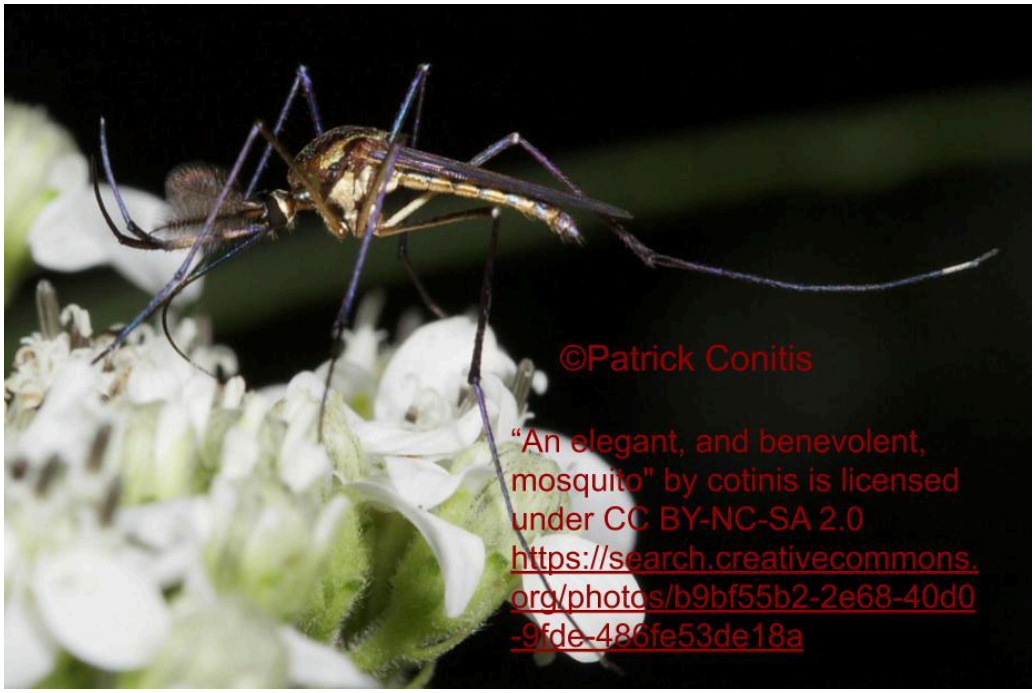
Please visit at https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu
For information on native plant gardening visit
https://gardening.ces.ncsu.edu/native-plant-resources/ and https://projects.ncsu.edu/goingnative/

NOW THAT'S A MOSQUITO!

Juel Duke

The idea for this insect article literally landed on my hand. I've lived near water most of my life but I was not prepared for the enormous mosquito that landed and stayed long enough for me to study it a bit. Not a mosquito hawk or crane fly, but a mosquito I was sure. His big fuzzy antennae told me it was a male so I was relieved that I didn't need to worry about him using his enormous proboscis. The internet provided many images of "giant mosquito" but the descriptions weren't right. One hit that I happened to read in a bit more detail mentioned the Elephant Mosquito and it fit the bill right down to being very metallic and colorful. In fact, the rainbow sparkle was the second most memorable feature, after the size. The body of my visitor was easily a half inch long.

Turns out that the elephant mosquito, Toxorhynchites rutilus, is one of the good guys and we should be excited to have it in our yards. The larval stage feeds on the larvae of other pest mosquitoes, a very good thing.



Adults, both males and females are active only during the day and they use that proboscis to reach nectar in the blooms of plants. I couldn't find any information on numbers of these mosquitos but they appear to be wide spread though infrequently found over much of the southern United States. Therefore, it's unlikely that they are important pollinators but they are welcome to a share of the nectar from my plants.

EXCITING NEW INFORMATION TOOL

Edna Gaston

Thanks to the efforts of NC State there is a new way to get inspiration and ideas for gardening. There is now a Design Gallery feature at the North Carolina Extension Gardener Plant Toolbox. This new tool offers pictures and descriptions for all the landscape design ideas your heart may desire. Links are provided for additional information about each plant featured. This site is as good if not better than the best gardening magazine or plant catalog. Try it, you'll like it!
https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/

Checklist of Things To Do in the Garden in the Autumn

By Mary Jane Bosworth

September

- Many flowers have now set seeds and they may be collected and saved for the following year. Annuals and biennials are among the easiest to grow from seeds. Some you might want to consider for this project would be: marigolds, zinnias, spider flowers, strawflowers, larkspur, and sunflower. Store seeds in a cool, dry place in a paper envelope or bag.
- If you will be considering planting spring bulbs for the following year, now is the time to order them, so get out your catalogs or go on-line now.
- Plant pansies for splashes of winter color.
- Apply a pre-emergent herbicide to shrub beds to control winter annual weeds.
- Divide and replant overgrown perennials such as hostas, coneflowers, daylilies.
- This is a good time to get your soil tested for next year's plantings.
- Remove spent annuals from your garden and cut the tops of perennials.
- Bring houseplants indoors when temperatures dip below 50. Give them a good bath with soapy water or spray with insecticidal soap. Move plants to shade for a week to condition them to the lower light levels they will receive when they are returned to the house.

October

- Now is the time to look for bargains at nurseries.
- Keep watering so that plants don't get stressed.
- Finish cleaning up garden beds by pulling out annuals and vegetables. Cut off tops of perennials.
- Just before frost, dig up sweet potatoes and pick all the green tomatoes which can be wrapped in newspaper and will continue to ripen.
- Most flowering shrubs can be propagated by hardwood cuttings. Make cuttings 6-8" long and dip in rooting hormone before setting in growing media.
- Store the bulbs of Dahlia, Canna, Caladium, Gladiolus and Tuberous Begonia as they may not overwinter. Lift the roots, tubers or corms about the time of the first killing frost and store in a garage until the soil dries and then shake it off. Cutoff the dried stem and place in sawdust or peat moss and store in a basement or other cool, dry place. These plants cannot withstand freezing.

November

- Plan now for spring color and plant spring flowering bulbs.

- Prepare your vegetable beds by tilling or double digging the beds and adding organic matter.
- Test your soil.
- Keep up your garden care and harvest your cool season vegetables.
- Plant asparagus this month. If you already have some, now is the time to cut back the ferny tops as they turn yellow and brown.
- Mulch well around figs, pomegranates and other warmth loving fruits.
- Pick, divide and share perennials.

HERE COMES THE SUN…

Juel Duke

As someone who has been a "serious hobbyist gardener" for decades I get frustrated by how many new gardeners (and there are many joining the hobby right now) make posts that show they don't understand the "right plant in the right place" concept, especially the role that the sun plays in the health and vigor of a plant. Then I remember "sun exposure" was one of the hardest concepts for me to grasp, as well. Despite classes and copious reading, it was a couple decades before I really understood that I needed to know how the sun moved over the potential planting spot and how that translated to the basic terms used to describe what spot meant "right place" as far as sun exposure.

Knowing how the sun passes over your property and observing the shadows of trees and other structures along that path is an excellent start. Note the difference in the size of the shrubs from the far left to the far right in the picture above. I pass this spot frequently so I know they are all the same type of plant, Vitex, planted at the same time when they were all basically the same size. The vitex on the far right is half the height and much less vigorous than the one on the far left. The two in the middle are like stair steps down to the smallest one.You can also see that there are trees to the

right. There are no trees nearby to the left. I now understand that sun exposure is the likely cause for the differences. No amount of fertilizer can make up for the lack of sun, especially to a plant that thrives in full sun.

The following link will take you to an article from Penn State Extension that provides a guidance on measuring sun exposure in your landscape: https://extension.psu.edu/planting-in-sun-or-shade.

Why is it important to know your sun exposure? You've seen those phrases on plant tags at the nursery. Phrases like "Full sun", "Partial shade/full shade" and others. Even if you have to look up the growing information about a plant, because there's nothing but a name tag, it's important to know the plant's preference. There are standardized meanings for those terms that experienced gardeners know and rely on when choosing plants. Combine the understanding of those terms with the info about the plant and you're one step closer to "Right Plant, Right Place".

Here's a handy reference that I've excerpted from the Chatham County NC Extension Service. The full presentation, which is excellent, is available at https://chatham.ces.ncsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/FallPlantingOnlinept2.pdf.

Exposure: Sun versus Shade

- **Full sun: at least 8 hours direct sunlight each day**
- **Part sun: at least 4 hours direct sunlight each day**
- **Morning sun: gentler, shade plants are usually okay with morning sun**
- **Afternoon sun: hotter, harsher – choose sun tolerant plants for sites that get direct afternoon sun**
- **Light Shade: a bright shade such as that cast by pine trees – as opposed to a dark shade cast by buildings or hardwood trees**

Of course, some plants are a little more forgiving than others about exposure but this gives you a place to start when trying to determine if a plant is likely to thrive where you want to plant it.

For a bit more in-depth explanation, I give you this excerpt from the North Carolina Extension Gardener Handbook (**ISBN-13:** 978-1469641256).

Sunlight

"Examine the type of light available, from full sun to partial sun, and heavy shade. How many hours a day is the site in full sun? When evaluating light exposure, note the duration and intensity of sunlight the site receives. Four hours of full sun during the morning is very different from 4 hours of stronger, more intense afternoon sun. There are also many types of shade, and the amount of light in a shaded location varies with the type, number, and size of trees in the area. If the site receives more than 3 hours of unfiltered midday sun, treat it as a "full sun" site. "Partial shade" is defined as receiving unfiltered morning sun but shade during the afternoon hours, or moderate shading throughout the entire day. A "heavily shaded" site would receive very little direct midday light and less than 60% of the sun's intensity during the remainder of the day. Few flowering plants do well in deep shade. Introducing more light to a shaded location can greatly increase flower production. Removing some tree limbs can allow more light to reach the ground below. Plants preferring partial shade may tolerate more sunlight if temperatures are moderate and adequate water is provided."

North Carolina Extension Gardener Handbook on page 19-16.

This excellent book is available to reference online at https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/extension-gardener-handbook. It can also be purchased through numerous retailers.

If you are interested in adding a vegetable garden, this article will be helpful. https://www.buncombemastergardener.org/sunlight-vegetable-garden/

Please, take the time to learn about the various sun exposures in your space. It's a great way to save money by not killing as many plants as I did before I learned the basics.

Selected articles from The Garden Path are published as blog posts at https://gardenpathnews.blogspot.com. Please share links to articles that you find helpful.

The Garden Path is published by the Extension Master Gardener volunteers of Vance and Warren Counties, a program of NC Cooperative Extension.

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