Hello and welcome to the first ever Robeson County Home Horticulture Newsletter! I would like to take this first newsletter to give you a little background on myself and to share some exciting events happening in Robeson County.

Happy Gardening,

Kerrie Roach
Extension Agent
Agriculture – Urban Horticulture

Inquiring Minds …

My name is Kerrie Roach, and I am the new Extension Horticultural Agent in Robeson County. I have been here for about three months now, and I am loving every minute. I grew up in Kendall, a very small town in upstate New York. My family owned and operated a small apple production business, and we had a hobby livestock farm. I was actively involved in school sports and 4-H.

Through my experiences with the family farm and 4-H, I decided to obtain a degree in horticulture. As many of you may know, upstate New York is infamous for its snow and cold, so south I went. I settled in South Carolina at Clemson University. After about five and a half years, I finished at Clemson with a Bachelor of Science in Horticulture and a Master of Agricultural Education. Upon my second graduation, I took a job at the local Lowe’s in the garden center to bide my time while I made wedding plans and searched for a career. My husband Zack and I were married in July, and I continued to work my way up the corporate ladder at Lowe’s while he was finishing his turfgrass degree at Clemson and working at a local golf course.

By the new year, my husband and I were both becoming restless in our jobs and ready to chase our dreams. It was about that time that doors opened, and we both were able to find positions not far from each other here in North Carolina. We moved into our first home in Raeford at the beginning of April. Zack began his position at Little River Golf and Resort, and I started my career with Cooperative Extension in Robeson County.

So far, I have had a wonderful experience with my position and the people I have interacted with. Each
day brings something new and exciting. As a matter of fact, my first day on the job I went traipsing through a field in Pembroke to take a soil sample in heels. I now have a pair of boots on hand at all times! I love being out of the office meeting the farmers and homeowners who I am here to help. But there are the days when I have to lock myself in the office to return homeowner calls and work on upcoming projects. I am excited about the possibilities for Robeson County and very happy to be involved with them!

Robeson County Farmers Market

The summer is here in full force! Sunshine and warm weather mean an abundance of fresh vegetables in North Carolina. The Robeson County Farmers Market in downtown Lumberton on the corner of 8th and Elm Streets is the place to be on Wednesday and Saturday mornings. The Market officially opens at 7 a.m. and closes about 1 p.m. or before if the vendors sell out of produce. All the produce sold at the market is certified grown in Robeson County and fresh from the growers’ fields. Beans, blueberries, corn, cucumbers, honey, okra, onions, peppers, potatoes, squash, tomatoes, and much more are all available on a regular basis. Come join the early morning crowds and get your fresh vegetables!

Robeson County Master Gardeners

Have you ever wondered what happened to your lawn or why your flowers died? If you have an interest in home horticultural problems, practices, and treatments, then you will enjoy the Robeson County Master Gardener Program. There will be an upcoming Robeson County Master Gardener class beginning in January of 2010. The course will be a series of evening classes held at the O. P. Owens Agriculture Center, 455 Caton Road, in Lumberton. It will cover everything from soils and fertilization to how to properly grow tree fruits. If you have an interest in the course and would like to be notified when the scheduling begins, please contact the Extension Center.

Centipede Lawn… What do I do!?

If you are one of the many homeowners in Robeson County with a centipede lawn, then read on! Centipede is a warm-season grass that is very common in southeast North Carolina. It is slow growing, requiring very little maintenance and even less fertilizer. Early summer is the best time to fertilize your centipede lawn. Centipede requires about a half of a pound of nitrogen per thousand square feet with a fertilizer that is high in potassium, such as a 5-5-15.

July and August are notorious for being hot and dry in this area, so make sure you are properly watering your lawn. Centipede does not tolerate drought conditions and will quickly show signs of stress. Watering should take place in the early morning to reduce the time the water droplets stay on the grass. About an inch of water per application once a week should keep the centipede with its apple green color. If your lawn begins to have a bluish appearance, and upon closer inspection the blades of grass are curling or folding lengthwise, it needs water! With warmer weather and less rain, you may need to bump up the watering to every third day with about a half inch of water. Use a cup placed under the spray of the sprinkler to measure the time it takes to fill it to a half inch. Continue that time regulation until the entire yard is watered.

Weeds are always a problem during the summer months. Dandelions, knotweed, lespedeza, and spurge are just a couple of the broadleaf weeds common in centipede lawns. A postemergent herbicide that contains 2,4-D and/or dicamba should be effective on most broadleaf weeds. Make sure to read all labels and directions as centipede is sensitive to certain herbicides. Do not apply any herbicide on a lawn that is showing signs of drought stress.
Proper fertilization, water, and weed control are vital in keeping your lawn looking great. If a good management schedule is followed, centipede can provide a beautiful apple green lawn with very little maintenance.

Questions, Comments, Concerns, and Neighbors

If after perusing this newsletter you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please feel free to contact me at North Carolina Cooperative Extension, Robeson County Center, by phone at 671-3276 or by E-mail at Kerrie_Roach@ncsu.edu. I enjoy getting to know the residents of Robeson County and love talking about anything horticulture!

Also, if you enjoyed reading this newsletter as much as I liked writing it, please pass it along to a friend! Encourage them to contact Cooperative Extension and be added to the horticultural mailing list.

Last but not least, keep an eye out for future issues of the Robeson County Home Horticulture News!

Recommendations for the use of agricultural chemicals are included in this newsletter as a convenience to the reader. The use of brand names and any mention or listing of commercial products or services does not imply endorsement by North Carolina Cooperative Extension nor discrimination against similar products or services not mentioned. Individuals who use agricultural chemicals are responsible for ensuring that the intended use complies with current regulations and conforms to the product label. Be sure to obtain current information about usage regulations and examine a current product label before applying any chemical. For assistance, contact your county Cooperative Extension agent.

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