



# HORTICULTURE HAPPENINGS

Serving Halifax & Northampton Counties

## Content

Wreath Making	Page 2
Mistletoe	Page 3
Food Production	Page 4

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## Let your leaves lay?

This has definitely been a fall filled with warm weather that has us wondering if we are actually in the right season. If you are like me, then you love when the leaves finally start to change color and we live in a natural beauty of yellows, oranges, and reds. With the weather finally cooling down the trees have finally got the message! Of course though, as quick as they change colors they also seem to fall into our yards. Before you go raking them into bags for pick up, maybe think about what benefit they might be to your yard.

Mulched leaves, when added to gardens, provide essential minerals to soil and increase soil moisture retention. Using leaves in this way provides many other benefits as well, not to mention diversion of "green waste" from our landfills.

- Mulch fallen leaves with a mower and bagger attachment. An initial pass without bag, followed by a second pass with a bagger, will ensure that leaves are finely chopped and ready to add directly to garden beds or a compost bin. There are also reasonably priced leaf mulchers available.
- Apply 3 inches to 6 inches of mulched leaves to garden and vegetable beds, being careful not to completely cover exposed root crowns.
- Mulching leaves on turf grass is a fantastic way to get lawns ready for winter. Aside from the benefit of organic material, some reports indicate a reduction in occurrence of winter weeds after three years of mulching leaves onto lawns.
- Avoid using leaves or clippings that may have recently been treated with herbicides.



## Fresh Wreath Making

**Saturday,  
December 2, 2017**

Halifax County  
Agriculture Center

359 Ferrell Lane  
Halifax, NC 27839

Pick the sessions that  
works best for you:

Morning: 9 a.m.- 12 p.m.  
Afternoon: 2 p.m.- 5 p.m.

To reserve a space please  
call (252) 583-5161

Drop off payment at the  
Agriculture Center or  
mail to  
Halifax County  
Agriculture Center  
P.O. Box 37  
Halifax, NC 27839

# Wreath Making Workshop

**December 2, 2017**

The Roanoke Valley Master Gardener Volunteers are hosting their first ever fresh wreath making workshop to the residents of Halifax and Northampton Counties! The fresh wreath will be made from local greenery found in our counties. The greens, wreath, and instruction will be provided to you. No experience is necessary, come as an experienced crafter or as a newbie. Everyone is welcome! They will guide you on how to make a beautiful wreath for you and your family to enjoy this Holiday season. Bring your friends and spend a few hours learning and having fun!

The cost will be \$20, and we will be offering two sessions. Pay ahead of time or the day of. Space will be limited to please call and sign-up to reserve your space. Sign-up instructions are provided on the left.

**Morning session: 9 a.m. - 12 p.m.**

**Afternoon session: 2 p.m. - 5 p.m.**

**Bring a pair of gardening gloves and your favorite  
pruners!**







## Mistletoe

First let's learn a little more about mistletoe and where it comes from. This time of year mistletoe can be found hanging in hardwood trees. Most commonly found on pecan, hickory, oaks, red maples, and black gum in North Carolina. Mistletoe is an evergreen perennial shrub that has female plants that produce white berries. These white berries are a favorite food of birds who help to reseed the sticky seeds that adhere to tree branches. These seeds will then form roots underneath the bark of their host and start to grow. Thanks to the birds a tree can become highly infested with mistletoe.

The cause for concern for an infested tree is because mistletoe is actually considered a parasite. This means that the mistletoe depends on its living host for the majority of its nutrients. While some mistletoe on a tree is not harmful, and infestation can cause harm. Mistletoe takes water and other important nutrients from its host, so a high infestation could cause health decline and stunted growth. Total death is possible if a tree is already stressed by condition such as drought, insect, or disease damage. Mistletoe is easy to spot this time of year once leaves have fallen from their host, this would be a good time to check if you have mistletoe in your yard and if you may have an infestation. If you do have mistletoe, it can be controlled by pruning your landscape trees that have infected branches. Contact me for more

information on mistletoe control before starting.

Back to our other important question, where did the kissing tradition start? Well some say the mistletoe folklore comes from Norse mythology. The god Odin had a son Baldur that was prophesied to die. Baldur's mother Frigg, the goddess of love, secured an oath from all the animals and plants of the natural world that they would not harm him. Frigg neglected to consult with mistletoe, the scheming god Loki decided to make an arrow from it and kill the invincible Baldur.

According to some versions of the myth, the gods were able to resurrect Baldur from the dead. Frigg then declared that mistletoe was a symbol of love and vowed to kiss all those who passed beneath it. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century it became part of Christmas celebrations. The kissing tradition stated that men were allowed to steal a kiss from any women standing under the mistletoe, and any who refused would have bad luck.

While the tradition may just be a myth, it seems to have stuck for many generations. So keep an eye out and you may be able to find some fresh mistletoe to hang right here in Eastern North Carolina. Please remember that mistletoe is poisonous if consumed, both the berries and leaves. Keep it out of reach from pets and children. Have a very Merry Christmas and remind your sweetheart it is bad luck to refuse a kiss under the mistletoe!





## Food Production

Garlic is a popular herb that can be used for culinary and medicinal purposes. There are two main types of garlic: softneck and hardneck. Softneck is the type typically available in grocery stores because it stores well and has excellent flavor. Garlic is planted in November through December in eastern North Carolina. Plant cloves pointed side up, 1-inch to 2-inches deep and 2- to 6- inches apart. Cloves must be planted early enough for a root system to develop before winter. Buy cloves for planting from a garden center or online. Garlic purchased from grocery stores may sprout poorly. The plants will grow rapidly as spring temperatures rise. For the largest bulb possible, break off flower stalks. These young, unopened flower buds, called scapes, are edible and often used in salads. If you plan to store some bulbs for planting the following year, leave them whole and wait to break apart into individual cloves until just prior to planting.

Harvest garlic when the tops begin to discolor and dry, around early June. Bulbs unsuitable for storage (small or deformed ones) can be peeled and eaten fresh. When properly cured, garlic keeps well under a wide range of temperatures. Optimum storage conditions are 32°F to 35°F with

60-70 percent humidity. Other storage options for garlic include freezing, in wine (dry white or dry red), or in vinegar (including wine vinegar). Try adding spices to the wine-and-garlic mixture by using peppercorns, chili flakes, cumin or bay leaves. Garlic can also be roasted. Storage life can be up to three to five months depending on the storage option. For detailed storage information, refer to this University of California Davis publication: [ucfoodsafety.ucdavis.edu/files/250352.pdf](http://ucfoodsafety.ucdavis.edu/files/250352.pdf).

**By Cyndi Lauderdale, Commercial  
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Center.**



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