

Gaston Grower Spotlight- March & April 2023

It has been a while since our last spotlight update. This Spring has been a busy season for Gaston County Cooperative Extension. This spotlight will bring you up to speed on some of the things we have been working on in our community. We experience a diverse array of growers and challenges to help them overcome. We have tried to capture this diversity in this Spring spotlight.

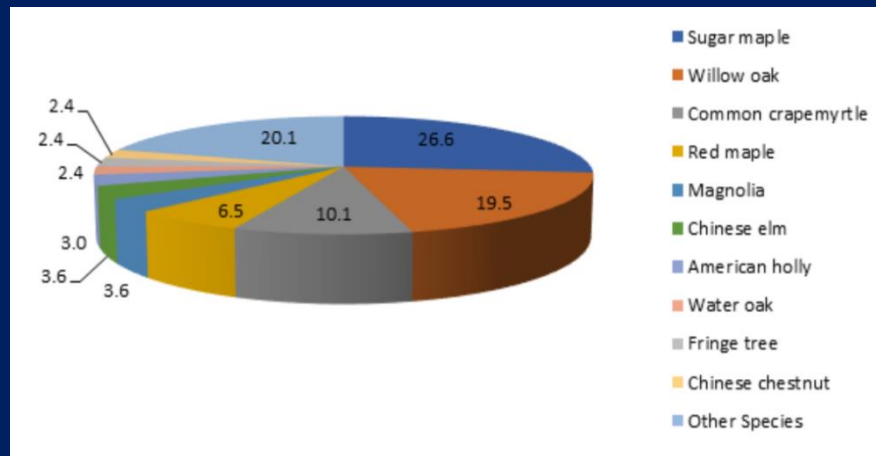


Getting it Growing

Our agriculture agents have been up to something on a local hay farm. In the middle of March our agents set up a trial to aid hay and pasture fertility management decisions. With the record high fertilizer prices last year this trial aims to show producers how to optimize yields in the most affordable way. In just a month we are seeing the grass respond to the treatments. A spring application of fertilizer was selected as it best mimics what producers are doing locally. It is important to note that tall fescue's growth potential also peaks again in the fall around September.

Who Wood Have Known?

Students from Gaston College have been working with Gaston County Cooperative Extension to inventory trees in Dallas Park. The pie chart highlights tree species distribution within the park. No invasive Bradford pears (bottom picture) have been observed so far. Willow oaks and sugar maples have been the most prevalent. However, the inventory is more than just monitoring for species. The data collected allows for a monetary value to be placed on the trees based on their ecosystem services. This data will be beneficial for the continued maintenance of park trees and future planning. 169 trees have been inventoried thus far which provide approximately \$18,000 in annual benefits.



More Than Just Soil Testing

Yes, NCDA & CS is offering soil testing for free from April to Thanksgiving and boxes are available at our office. Producers and hobbyists have reported more issues with purchased compost. Waste/Compost Analysis is available through NCDA & CS for NC growers at \$8 a sample. Our office is happy to give you guidance on those samples as well.

Pesky Pond Pest

We have had a couple of interesting pond calls already this spring. One from a golf course with Bermudagrass damage around a pond from muskrat feeding. Most of our pond visits each year involve aquatic vegetation management. Filamentous algae has already begun to appear in ponds. The sooner we are able to help pond owners get on top of these issues the more effective control will be. While algae and other surface weeds can be mechanically removed it often fragments and creates a larger problem later. Extension can point you in the direction of chemical and biological control measures to aid managing pond vegetation. For filamentous algae Diquat and/or Copper complex are recommended for control at label rates.





Swarming Season

Through March and April, we field many phone calls concerning bees. It is best that folks call us to confirm they are truly witnessing a swarm. When honeybee populations within a hive are no longer sustainable the queen will leave and signal about half the workers within the colony to cluster around her while scouts search for a new suitable home. A queen will emerge in the old hive and resume rebuilding the workforce. Often honeybees or native bees are foraging, and folks confuse this activity with swarming. If we confirm a swarm of honeybees, we can point you to a beekeeper for the appropriate relocation of those bees.



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