

Spring



HOME & GARDEN



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The *Franklin Times*



Turn your bedroom into a relaxing retreat

Bedrooms are more than places to lay our heads at the end of the day. Bedrooms serve different functions, and not all are conducive to relaxation.

People who use their bedrooms as a work space may find they're compromising their well-being by introducing activities into the bedroom.

The Sleep Foundation says having an office in the bedroom blurs the lines between work and personal life, which can have serious effects on sleep.

Rather, people should be looking to turn their bedrooms into relaxing retreats that offer a respite from the outside world.

- Remove blue-light emitting devices. Computers, tablets, smartphones, and other electronic devices emit blue light, which can compromise natural melatonin production in the body that contributes to sleep.

Such devices should not be used at night in the bedroom.

- Use a neutral color palette. Neutral color palettes evoke a spa feeling. Walls can be painted white, beige or a light shade of gray. This can help the room feel calming and welcoming.

- Declutter the room. A sense of calm can be achieved simply by removing excess clutter. There is some evidence that



RELAX. People should be looking to turn their bedrooms into relaxing retreats that offer a respite from the outside world.

the brain is more calm near an empty dresser, desk or clothes hamper. Therefore, removing excessive items from the room is a first step to making a nice retreat.

- Add soft lighting. Adjust the intensity and the color of the lighting in the bedroom. It should be subtle and warming. Dimmers enable homeowners to adjust lighting as needed.

- Install an electric fireplace. There is something to be said for the relaxing effects of gazing into the flames of a fire. A crackling (faux-wood) fire is an added layer of indulgence in a bedroom.

- Add an area rug. Even in rooms with carpeting, an area rug under the bed can further define the perimeter of the bed and add extra plushness underfoot.

- Invest in aromatherapy diffusers. Certain smells can create a relaxing mood. These may be sandalwood, lavender or jasmine.

Utilizing their preferred scents, homeowners can employ reed diffusers in their bedrooms to enjoy the aromas of natural oils.

- Used closed storage. Open shelves and visible closet interiors may not hide a mess. Exposure to clutter can contribute to feelings of anxiety. Store items that shouldn't be on display behind closed doors or drawers.

- Bring in luxury linens. Homeowners should not skimp on comforters, sheets, duvet covers, and pillows for their beds. A cozy bed to dive right into can serve as the centerpiece of a bedroom retreat.

Turning a bedroom into a relaxing space can help individuals sleep better and reduce anxiety.

Tips to revitalize a garden this spring

Gardening is a rewarding hobby that pays a host of significant dividends.

Many people love gardening because it allows them to spend time outdoors, and that simple pleasure is indeed a notable benefit of working in a garden.

But the National Initiative for Consumer Horticulture notes that gardening provides a host of additional benefits, including helping people get sufficient levels of exercise, reduce stress and improve mood.

With so much to gain from gardening, it's no wonder people look

forward to getting their hands dirty in the garden each spring. As the weather warms up, consider these tips to help bring a garden back to life.

- Discard the dead weight. Winter can take its toll on a garden, even in regions where the weather between December and early spring is not especially harsh.

Discard dead plants that have lingered into spring and prune any perennials that need it. Branches that fell during winter storms also should be removed at this point if they have not previously been discarded.

- Test the soil. Soil testing kits can be purchased at local garden centers and home improvement retailers. Such tests are inexpensive and can reveal if the soil needs to be amended to help plants thrive in the months to come.

- Mulch garden beds. Mulching benefits a garden by helping soil retain moisture and preventing the growth of weeds.

Various garden experts note that mulching in spring can prevent weed seeds from germinating over the course of spring and summer. That means plants won't have to

fight with weeds for water when the temperature warms up. It also means gardeners won't have to spend time pulling weeds this summer.

- Inspect your irrigation system. Homeowners with in-ground irrigation systems or above-ground systems that utilize a drip or soaker function can inspect the systems before plants begin to bloom.

Damaged sprinkler heads or torn lines can deprive plants of water they will need to bloom and ultimately thrive once the weather warms up.

- Tune up your tools. Gardening tools have likely been sitting around gathering dust since fall. Serious gardeners know that tools can be expensive, so it pays to protect that investment by maintaining the tools.

Sharpened pruners help make plants less vulnerable to infestation and infection. Well-maintained tools like shovels and hoes also make more demanding gardening jobs a little bit easier, so don't forget to tune up your tools before the weather warms up.

It's almost gardening season, which means gardeners can start on the necessary prep work to ensure their gardens grow in strong and beautiful this spring.



SPRING GARDEN TIPS. As the weather warms up, consider these tips to help bring a garden back to life.

Simple strategies to create more storage space in the kitchen

If home is where the heart is, then the kitchen is where that heart spends most of its time.

Kitchens are where family and friends tend to congregate during holiday celebrations, and many a homework assignment has been completed at a kitchen island while parents prepare dinner.

The popularity of kitchens is reflected in the attention these rooms get from renovation-minded homeowners.

Data from the National Association of Home Builders indicates kitchens are the most popular room to remodel.

Upgrading kitchen storage is a popular renovation project, and it's also one that has practical appeal. Adding more storage in the kitchen gives the room a more organized feel, which can make preparing meals more enjoyable and create space when hosting and guests inevitably congregate around an island.

With those benefits in mind, would-be organizers can consider these strategies to create more storage space in the kitchen.

- Take stock of the spice rack. Creating more storage space does not necessarily have to involve tools like screwdrivers, hammers and nails. Spice racks can easily become overcrowded as amateur cooks expand their culinary repertoire.
- A crowded spice rack inevitably spills out onto the surrounding countertop. Take stock of the spice rack and discard any spices or seasonings you haven't used in a while. This can create a more organized look and free up extra counter space.
- Make a digital cookbook. If your go-to recipes are filling a binder or two, those binders are almost certainly taking up precious storage space. Scan printed recipes and convert your physical recipe collection into a digital cookbook you store on a tablet.
- Install roll-out shelving in the pantry. Roll-out shelving puts the entire pantry to use.
- Without such shelving, items are destined to be relegated to that nether region known as the back of the pantry. Some items never emerge from this area, as cooks forget they're there and then purchase duplicates, which inevitably contributes to storage issues.
- Roll-out shelving ensures all items in the pantry can be found and greatly reduces the likelihood that cooks will have lots of duplicate items taking up precious kitchen space.
- Remove single-use gadgets from the kitchen. Much like spices and seasonings vital to the preparation of specialty meals have a tendency to be used just once, kitchen gadgets that lack versatility have a way of gathering dust and taking up storage space.

Whether it's a popcorn maker, a seldom-used but space-needy wok or another gadget that's used infrequently, if at all, store single-use gadgets in the garage or another area of the house where they won't get in the way or contribute to a less-than-organized look in the room.

A handful of simple strategies can help anyone create more storage space in the kitchen.



OUT OF SIGHT. Removing single-use gadgets from kitchen countertops can make food preparation easier and create more storage space.

How to clear out home office clutter

Home offices have garnered more attention in recent years.

Restrictions implemented as part of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic forced many professionals to start working from home, which created a greater need for home office space.

Though millions of professionals have now returned to the office full-time, millions more have continued to work from home five days a week or are now working on a hybrid schedule.

As a result, home office spaces have maintained their utility even as restrictions related to the pandemic move further into the rearview mirror.

Since home office spaces remain vital for so many, it's important that these spaces are conducive to productivity. Conquering home office clutter is a step in that direction.

- Cut through the piles of paper. Home offices have a tendency to transform into paper depositories over time. Work files, notes, monthly bills, receipts, and junk mail can quickly overwhelm a home office.
- Professionals who spend ample time working from home can resolve to cut through the piles of paper. Use a paper shredder to discard documents with sensitive information, such as bank statements and utility bills.
- Signing up for e-statements can prevent the piling up of paper in the future. Invest in a small file cabinet to store important personal and professional documents.
- Discard old devices. Old devices are another space eater in many home offices.

In fact, a recent survey from Material Focus found that more than 20 million unused electrical items are currently hoarded in homes throughout the United Kingdom.

Old smartphones and laptops that users are afraid to throw out can be wiped clean and discarded in adherence with local laws.

Contact your local government to determine how to safely discard old devices rather than simply tossing them in the trash once they've been wiped clean.

- Buy a bigger bookshelf. Home offices often double as reading rooms, which makes them vulnerable to clutter associated with leisure time as well.

Books stacked in a corner or taking up space on your desk can create a cluttered look, but also compromise your ability to concentrate.

A 2011 study from researchers at Princeton University published in The Journal of Neuroscience found that clutter can make it difficult to focus on a particular task.

If books are strewn about your office, purchase a bookshelf that can hold them. Once books are shelved, the less cluttered space can make it easier to concentrate.

- Go digital. If space is limited, forgo traditional file cabinets in favor of digitizing important records and documents.

Scan important receipts and statements and store them on a desktop or backup hard drive so they're never out of each. This creates space and makes it easier and quicker to find important files.

Home offices can quickly become overwhelmed with clutter. Some simple strategies can help any professional transform their home offices into more organized spaces.

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CONQUER CLUTTER. Home office spaces remain vital for so many, so it's important that these spaces are conducive to productivity. Conquering home office clutter is a step in that direction.

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How DIY can be bad for homeowners' bottom lines

Homeowners know it can be tempting to go the do-it-yourself (DIY) route when starting a home improvement project.

Home repairs and renovations can be costly, and the notion of saving money on such projects compels many homeowners to try their hand at home improvements.

However, the DIY approach can be costly as well, and if things go awry, homeowners may end up with empty pockets and unfinished projects.

Online tutorials and advertisements for home improvement retailers can make DIY seem like a snap. However, there are potential pitfalls to consider that could make the ostensibly less expensive DIY route far more detrimental to the bottom line than homeowners may recognize.

• **Permits:** Permits ensure work is done in accordance with local codes, which are designed to ensure the safety of residents and their neighbors.

Licensed contractors know which permits are necessary for projects they're hired to work on, and many even procure permits for their clients (homeowners are urged to read estimates and contracts to determine who will be responsible for acquiring the appropriate permits).

DIYers may not know about local permits, and therefore go ahead with projects without procuring any. That can be harmful in the short- and long-term.

In the short-term, a failure to procure the appropriate permits can make a home less safe and potentially lead to costly fines and necessitate a complete do-over of the project.

In the long-term, homeowners who did not secure the appropriate permits may not be given a certificate of occupancy (CO) when putting their homes on the market, which can make it very difficult to sell the home.

• **Ancillary costs:** The ancillary costs of DIY are not often noted in online tutorials. However, such costs can dramatically increase the amount of money DIYers shell out in order to complete projects on their own.

Ancillary costs include but are not limited to the price of tools and equipment; disposal fees for materials that will need to be discarded; and the cost of permits. These costs are often included in estimates provided by contractors, but they're easily overlooked by novice DIYers.

• **Repairs:** Even experienced contractors make mistakes, so DIYers, particularly novices, can anticipate making a few errors along the way.

Minor mistakes may not prove too costly, but more significant mishaps can quickly negate any cost savings associated with DIY renovations.

The cost to fix DIY mistakes varies depending on the project, but a 2019 survey from Porch.com found that the average DIY mistake cost homeowners \$310 and added five and a half hours to the overall time spent to complete a project.

It's worth noting the Porch.com survey was conducted prior to the dramatic increase in materials costs related to inflation in recent years. So it's reasonable to assume that fixing DIY mistakes in 2024 could end up costing considerably more than a few hundred dollars.



DIY PITFALLS. There are potential pitfalls to consider that could make the ostensibly less expensive DIY route far more detrimental to the bottom line than homeowners may recognize.

Signs your home might have a pest infestation

Individuals want a home that is welcoming and comfortable. Unfortunately many conditions that people find appealing also appeal to pests.

Pests may be more problematic at certain times of year, such as when weather is extreme and pests like rodents or even raccoons seek refuge in a home.

During times of year when temperatures are mild, certain insects may begin to hatch or swarm, becoming more problematic around the home.

Some signs of pests taking up residence may be readily apparent, while others may be less obvious.

The following are nine signs of pest infestation in or around a home.

1. **Droppings:** Small droppings may indicate that pests are nearby. Droppings will vary depending on the insect or rodent. It's good to familiarize yourself with the appearance of various droppings, from mice to termites to bed bugs.

2. **Footprints:** Footprints are another sign of pest infestation. Footprints left in dirt around a home, or in dusty areas in the attic or basement, may show that pests are tracking in and out of the house.

3. **Sawdust piles or trails:** Sawdust could be indicative of termites or ants. Insects like carpenter bees also may burrow into areas of wood and leave sawdust behind.

4. **Shed wings, skins and casings:** Many insects molt and, during this process, will shed certain parts of their anatomy to grow larger. Roaches, bed bugs and beetles are some pests that might be scattering sheds or egg casings in a home. Termite wings are discarded once the swarmers choose a new location for the colony.

5. **Foul odors:** Musty or foul smells, particularly in hidden areas, may indicate pests are nesting nearby.

6. **Unexplained noises:** Scratching or scurrying in walls or floors often indicates pests are present.

7. **Bites:** Waking up in the morning with welts or red areas on the skin might indicate the presence of bed bugs or other biting insects.

8. **Presence of nests:** Those who can see nests in corners or undisturbed areas of the home likely have pests present. Rodents often use chewed cardboard, insulation, paper, and other scavenged items to create nests, according to exterminators.

9. **Increased number of beneficial insects:** An influx of spiders and other predatory insects may indicate there are plenty of food sources in the home for them to feast on.

Pests can be problematic, but homeowners who recognize signs of infestation can take prompt action.





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Fertilizing trees in the landscape

Most trees exist in nature without much care, but transplanting trees into urban areas or man-made conditions can create problems.

Often these trees are planted in restricted root zone areas, such as along paved streets or in compacted soil.

You should keep in mind that the root system is just as important (and delicate) at the top of the plant.

Fertilizer or pruning will not help the growth of a tree if it stressed by one of these environmental conditions.

Fertilizer is only one factor that contributes to the growth of plants and health of plants.

If you pay close attention to trees, you can detect possible problems that fertilizer may cure.

For example, a nutrient-deficient tree will have a slow and low amount of annual growth on twigs and the trunk, smaller than normal foliage, off-color foliage, increased amounts of dead branches, tip die-back in branches, and increased rates of disease and insect problems.

The key is to make sure that nutrition is the problem. Other common tree problems to be aware of in urban situations would be poor planting techniques, moisture problems, construction damage, or girdling roots. Soil testing is highly recommended in these questionable situations.

Before selecting a fertilizer, it is always good to do a soil test. A soil test will reveal what the soil's nutrient capability is and give a recommen-



Charles Mitchell

Franklin County Cooperative Extension Director

amount of fertilizer, pour it in the hole, and backfill with mulch. This method allows you to aerate the soil and to get the fertilizer to the roots.

Another type of application method is surface apply. This method is the easiest and fastest. If your trees are located in your lawn then every time you fertilize your grass you are also fertilizing the tree.

Unfortunately, surface-fertilized trees develop shallow (sometimes above ground) root systems, which interfere with mowing, adversely affect grass growth, and makes the tree more drought susceptible.

A standard rule of thumb is to apply 3 to 5 pounds of fertilizer for each inch of trunk diameter measured at 4 ½ feet above the ground.

Another way to determine fertilizer amount is by the square footage of the canopy spread. Apply 1 to 2 pounds of actual nitrogen per 1,000 square feet of soil surface under the canopy.

For trees less than 8 inches in trunk diameter, use one-half the above recommended rates.

Also, keep in mind that newly transplanted trees need plenty of water during their establishment and less fertilizer.

You can fertilize them the next year after establishment.

If you have further questions about fertilizing trees in the landscape do not hesitate to call your local Franklin County Cooperative Extension Office at 919-496-3344.

You can also visit our website at franklin.ces.ncsu.edu.



North Carolina Vegetable Planting Guide									
VEGETABLE SEED OR PLANT	AMOUNT FOR 100 FT. ROW	RECOMMENDED VARIETIES	PLANTING TIMES FOR N. C. PIEDMONT*	DEPTH TO PLANT (INCHES)	DISTANCE BETWEEN PLANTS	DISTANCE BETWEEN ROWS	BEST SOIL pH	DAYS TO MATURITY	
ASPARAGUS (roots)	65 roots	Jersey Knight	Nov. 15 - Apr. 15	2 - 6	18 in.	3 ft.	6.0 - 7.0	2 years	
BEANS, Bush Snap	1 pound	Tenderette, Contender, Blue Lake Bush	Apr. 15 - July 15	1 - 2	4-6 in.	18 - 30 in.	6.0 - 6.5	50 - 55	
BEANS, Pole Snap	½ pound	Kentucky Wonder, Blue Lake	Apr. 15 - July 1	1 - 2	6 in.	3 - 4 ft.	6.0 - 6.5	65 - 70	
BEANS, Bush Lima	½ pound	Early Thorngreen, Eastland, Fordhook 242, Henderson Bush	May 1 - July 1	1 - 2	6 in.	24 - 30 in.	5.5 - 6.5	65 - 80	
BEANS, Pole Lima	½ pound	Carolina Sieva	May 1 - June 15	1 - 2	6 in.	30 - 36 in.	5.5 - 6.5	75 - 95	
BEET	1 oz.	Detroit Dark Red	Feb. 15 - Apr. 1; Aug. 1 - Sept. 1	½ - 1	2 in.	12 - 18 in.	6.0 - 6.5	55 - 60	
BROCCOLI (plants)	65 plants	Italian Green Sprouting, Premium Crop	Feb. 15 - Mar. 15; July 15 - Aug. 15	1 - 2	18 in.	24 - 30 in.	6.0 - 6.5	70 - 80	
BROCCOLI (seeds)	½ oz.	Italian Green Sprouting, Salad, Premium Crop	Dec. 1 - Mar. 15; July 1 - Sept. 1	½	18 in.	24 - 30 in.	6.0 - 6.5	80 - 85	
BRUSSEL SPROUTS	½ oz.	Long Island Improved	July 15 - Aug. 1	½	14 - 18 in.	24 - 30 in.	6.0 - 7.0	90 - 100	
CABBAGE (plants)	100 plants	Early Jersey Wakefield, Stonehead Hybrid, All Seasons	Feb. 1 - April 1; Aug. 1 - Sept. 1	2 - 4	12 in.	24 - 30 in.	6.0 - 6.5	63 - 75	
CABBAGE (seeds)	½ oz.	Early Jersey Wakefield, Stonehead Hybrid, All Seasons	Dec. 1 - Mar. 15; July 1 - Sept. 1	½	12 in.	24 - 30 in.	6.0 - 6.5	90 - 120	
CANTALOUPE	½ oz.	Edisto 47, Burpee Hybrid, Hales Jumbo	Apr. 20 - June 10	½ - 1	2 ft.	4 - 6 ft.	6.0 - 6.5	85 - 90	
CARROT	½ oz.	Danvers Half Long, Imperator	Feb. 1 - Mar. 1; July 15 - Aug. 15	½	2 in.	14 - 24 in.	6.0 - 6.5	75 - 80	
CAULIFLOWER (plants)	65 plants	Snowball	Mar. 1 - Mar. 15; July 1 - Aug. 15	1 - 2	18 in.	30 - 36 in.	5.8 - 6.5	55 - 65	
CAULIFLOWER (seeds)	½ oz.	Snowball	Feb. 1 - Mar. 1; June 1 - July 1	½	18 in.	30 - 36 in.	5.8 - 6.5	85 - 95	
COLLARDS	½ oz.	Vates, Morris Improved Heading, Georgia	July 15 - Aug. 15	¾	18 in.	24 - 30 in.	6.0 - 6.5	90 - 120	
CORN, Sweet	4 oz.	Silver Queen (white), Kandy Korn (yellow), Golden Queen (yellow)	Apr. 15 - June 1	1 - 2	12 in.	30 - 36 in.	5.5 - 6.5	85 - 90	
CHINESE CABBAGE	½ oz.	Michihli	Aug. 15 - Sept. 1	½	12 in.	18 - 24 in.	6.0 - 7.0	75 - 85	
CUCUMBER, Slicing	½ oz.	Ashley, Poinsett 76, Hybrid Sweet-Slice	Apr. 20 - May 15	1	12 in.	4 - 6 ft.	6.0 - 6.5	60 - 65	
CUCUMBER, Pickling	½ oz.	Early Green Cluster, National Pickling	Apr. 20 - May 15	1	12 in.	4 - 6 ft.	6.0 - 6.5	56 - 60	
EGGPLANT	65 plants	Black Beauty	May 1 - June 30	¾	18 in.	3 ft.	6.0 - 7.0	80 - 85	
ENDIVE	1 oz.	Green Curled	Feb. 1 - Mar. 15; Aug. 15 - Sept. 15	½	12 in.	12 - 24 in.	6.0 - 7.0	80 - 90	
KALE	½ oz.	Dwarf Curled Scotch, Early Siberian	Feb. 15 - Apr. 1; Aug. 15 - Sept. 15	½	2 in.	18 - 24 in.	6.0 - 7.0	50 - 60	

VEGETABLE SEED OR PLANT	AMOUNT FOR 100 FT. ROW	RECOMMENDED VARIETIES	PLANTING TIMES FOR N. C. PIEDMONT*	DEPTH TO PLANT (INCHES)	DISTANCE BETWEEN PLANTS	DISTANCE BETWEEN ROWS	BEST SOIL pH	DAYS TO MATURITY	
KOHLRABI	½ oz.	White Vienna	Feb. 15 - Apr. 15; Aug. 1 - Sept. 15	½	4 in.	18 - 24 in.	6.0 - 7.0	55 - 60	
LEEK	1 oz.	Large Flag	Sept. 1 - Sept. 30	½	4 in.	12 - 18 in.	6.0 - 7.0	120 - 150	
LETTUCE, Leaf	½ oz.	Salad Bowl, Buttercrunch, Black Seeded Simpson	Feb. 15 - Apr. 1; Aug. 15 - Sept. 15	¼ - ½	4 in.	12 - 18 in.	6.0 - 6.7	45 - 50	
LETTUCE, Head	½ oz.	Great Lakes, Iceberg	Feb. 15 - Mar. 15	¼ - ½	12 in.	18 - 24 in.	6.0 - 6.7	75 - 85	
MUSTARD	½ oz.	Southern Giant Curled, Tendergreen, Florida Broadleaf, Old Fashion	Feb. 1 - Apr. 1; Aug. 1 - Sept. 15	½	2 in.	12 - 18 in.	6.0 - 7.0	30 - 40	
OKRA	2 oz.	Clemson Spineless, Perkins Long Pod	May 1 - June 1	1	12 in.	28 - 36 in.	5.5 - 6.5	50 - 60	
ONION (sets)	1 quart	Silver Skin, Yellow Danvers	Feb. 1 - Mar. 15; Sept. 1 - Oct. 15	1 - 2	4 in.	12 - 24 in.	6.0 - 6.5	60 - 80	
PEAS, Garden	1 pound	Super Sugar Snap (edible pod), Early Alaska, Wando, Laxton's Progress, Green Arrow	Feb. 1 - Mar. 1	2	2 - 3 in.	18 - 30 in.	6.0 - 6.5	65 - 70	
PEAS, Field (cowpeas)	½ pound	Dixielee, Mississippi Silver, Queen Anne, Browneye Six Week, Pinkeye Purple Hull	Apr. 15 - July 1	1 - 2	4 in.	36 - 42 in.	5.5 - 6.5	55 - 65	
PEPPER, Sweet	65 plants	California Wonder, Banana, Keystone Gt.	May 1 - May 30	½	18 in.	3 ft.	6.0 - 6.5	75 - 80	
PEPPER, Hot	65 plants	Long Red Cayenne, Jalapeno M	May 1 - May 30	½	18 in.	3 ft.	6.0 - 6.5	75 - 80	
POTATO, Irish	120 plants	Kennebec, Pontiac	Mar. 1 - May 15	4 - 6	10 in.	36 - 42 in.	4.8 - 5.4	100 - 120	
POTATO, Sweet	100 plants	Puerto Rico, Centennial Jewel	May 15 - June 15	3 - 6	12 in.	36 - 42 in.	5.4 - 6.0	105 - 135	
PUMPKIN	½ oz.	Mammoth Gold, Sugar or Pie, Big Max	June 15 - July 15	1 - 2	4 ft.	6 - 10 ft.	6.0 - 6.5	115 - 120	
RADISH	1 oz.	Early Scarlet Globe, Cherry Belle, White Egg	Feb. 1 - Apr. 15; Aug. 1 - Sept. 15	½	1 in.	6 - 12 in.	6.0 - 7.0	20 - 25	
RUTABAGA	½ oz.	American Purple Top	Feb. 1 - Apr. 1; Aug. 1 - Aug. 15	½	4 in.	18 - 24 in.	6.0 - 7.0	90	
SPINACH	1 oz.	Dark Green Bloomsdale, Hybrid 7	Feb. 1 - Mar. 15; Aug. 1 - Sept. 1	½	4 in.	12 - 14 in.	5.6 - 6.0	45 - 50	
SPINACH, New Zealand	1 oz.	New Zealand	Mar. 15 - Apr. 30	1	12 in.	24 in.	6.0 - 6.5	55 - 60	
SQUASH, Summer	½ oz.	Early Summer Crookneck, Goldbar, Zucchini, Early Prolific Straightneck	Apr. 15 - May 15	1	2 ft.	3 - 5 ft.	5.5 - 6.5	50 - 60	
SQUASH, Winter	½ oz.	Waltham Butternut	Apr. 15 - May 15	1	4 ft.	8 - 10 ft.	6.0 - 6.5	85 - 95	
TOMATO	50 plants	Homestead, Marion, Better Boy, Big Beef	Apr. 10 - July 15	¼ - ½	2 ft.	3 - 5 ft.	6.0 - 6.5	75 - 85	
TURNIP	½ oz.	Purple Top White Globe, Seven Top (greens only), Just Right Hybrid	Feb. 1 - Apr. 15; Aug. 1 - Sept. 15	½	2 in.	15 - 18 in.	6.0 - 7.0	55 - 60	
WATERMELON	1 oz.	Congo, Charleston Gray #133, Crimson Sweet, Jubilee	Apr. 15 - June 1	1	3 ft.	5 - 8 ft.	5.8 - 6.2	90 - 100	

*In Mountain areas, delay spring planting date 2-3 weeks; plant 2-3 weeks earlier in Fall. In the lower Coastal Plain, plant 2-3 weeks earlier in Spring and delay Fall planting 2-3 weeks. In Virginia, delay spring planting date 2-3 weeks; plant 2-3 weeks earlier in Fall. In South Carolina, plant 2-3 weeks earlier in Spring and delay Fall planting 2-3 weeks.



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Compost: The best soil conditioner

Composting is a way of recycling organic waste materials that you would ordinarily discard. Many questions that are asked are: What kind of organic waste? How old should it be? How much should I use? What works best: leaves, grass clippings, pine bark, pine straw, hardwood chips, or manure?

There is really no right or wrong answer to these questions. Generally, the question asked most often is: How do I get started?

Before starting a compost pile, let's look at a statistic. A typical 1,000 square-foot lawn can produce 200 to 500 pounds of grass clippings each year. These mountains of grass clippings can easily be composted.

You also can discharge your grass clippings instead of bagging them. This concept is called grass-cycling.

By leaving the grass clippings on your lawn you are recycling the nutrients you added in the Spring and Fall through fertilizer applications.

This cuts down on the need for applications of large amounts of nitrogen and other nutrients.

Another common source of organic matter are all those leaves that are bagged up and left on the curbside or piled up and burned.

Neither of these methods are environmentally friendly. If you do not want to compost them then spread them in a wooded area because they will decompose rapidly as the temperature increases.

The organic materials most often composted are leaves, grass clippings, straw, weeds (before they have gone to seed), manures, and plant parts from vegetable and flower gardens.



The texture of organic material generally determines its rate of decay. For larger material like limbs from trees it is better to run them through a shredder to reduce their size.

So how do you start? Your compost pile will require four things: a source of organic matter, water, a source of nitrogen, and oxygen.

Locate the compost pile in an unused part of your yard. Start the pile by putting a 6 to 8-inch layer of organic material (leaves, straw, or grass clippings) on the bottom. Sprinkle the layer with water and add about a one-inch layer of soil.

Next, add one cup of 10-10-10 fertilizer and one cup of ground limestone for every 10 square feet of surface area. One or two inches of manure can be used instead of commercial fertilizer.

Continue these steps until the materials are used up. If you do not have enough soil, go ahead and pile up the material and add soil later.

The speed of decomposition is greatly influenced by temperature. The microorganisms that do the work function best at around 90 degrees. Water is a key ingredient, so make sure the pile stays moist.

Some even make a saucer-shaped depression in

the top of the pile to catch rainwater. A good way to get oxygen in the pile is to lay sticks down and start your pile on top of the sticks.

The addition of earthworms adds to the decomposition rate and aeration of the pile as well. It is also important to turn your pile every three to four weeks.

When the compost is ready in about 6-8 months it should be dark brown in color, with a chocolate cake appearance, and it should crumble readily in your hand.

By the addition of this organic matter to your soil you are allowing better water infiltration, better aeration, and you are also adding a source of plant nutrients.

You can also use compost as a mulch around trees, shrubs, and it works extremely well in your garden as a mulch.

Many gardeners like to use compost bins to keep the compost area organized.

There are many different types of compost bins available to purchase. You can even make your own bin out of wire or wood.

The way you determine to compost your organic



WORTH THE EFFORT. Composting organic matter helps get rid of waste material but also is a huge help in improving the soil.

For more information about composting, or if you have other gardening questions, contact the Franklin County Cooperative Extension Office at 919-496-3344, or visit our website at franklin.ces.ncsu.edu.

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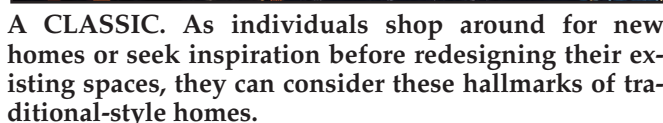
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For more information, contact your local Cooperative Extension Office in Franklin County at 919-496-3344.

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