

North State  
**Gardener**

WINTER 2019



PG. 2

A message from Matthew

PG. 3

Our Featured Landscape:  
Complementing the Existing  
Environment - Naturally

PG. 4

A Familiar NSG Face



Our focus this  
quarter will be:

- Pruning hollies and crape myrtles
- Planting bulbs
- Cutting back ornamental grasses
- Preparing lawns for the season with pre-emergent
- Continuing install and restoration

## WELCOME, 2019!

A Happy New Year from everyone at North State Gardens. We are very excited to begin this year and the new growing season. According to *Garden Design* magazine, one of the top landscaping trends for 2019 is for homeowners to find more ways to “enjoy a *staycation* in the comfort of their own backyard rather than waiting in airport lines and living out of a suitcase.” Now is the time to begin planning your summer landscape project: a patio area for grilling and al fresco dining, a place for games and entertaining, or simply a lush outdoor room for leisure and relaxing. Research shows that we all have positive reactions to natural environments, including reduced stress and improved mood. You can add tremendous personal and economic value to your home by creating beautiful and viable outdoor living spaces, and North State Gardens is ready to help!



Hello Friends,

The beginning of a new year is always a good time to reflect and also to look forward. When we remember 2018, the weather will be our first thought. What a wild ride, starting with record low temperatures along with snow and ice in January, record rainfall, and of course Hurricane Florence in September.

The amount of rain we experienced in the Cape Fear region is truly astonishing. Our total rainfall of 102.4 inches blew away our previous record set in 1877 by 18.75 inches! Even without the hurricane which dumped over 23 inches, this was the fourth wettest year on record. From a horticultural standpoint, too much

water can cause as many problems as not enough water. We experienced more severe weed problems than usual and also disease problems in shrubs and turf - especially St. Augustine grass.

On a positive note, 2018 was also significant for some great additions to our staff at North State Gardens. I don't think I have ever looked to spring with more confidence that we will meet our customer service goals. That being said, PLEASE contact us with your requests for spring work as early as possible! We want to have everyone's storm damage repaired and your landscapes looking good for the upcoming season.

As we mentioned on page 1, many homeowners are beginning to use the outside of their homes as extensions to overall living space, creating luxurious custom environments perfect to enjoy at their own pace. Some methods we use to create this outdoor experience include keeping trees and shrubs pruned and healthy, installing a quality irrigation system, creating hardscape pathways and 'destination spaces' such as a fire or water feature, planting an outdoor kitchen garden for those who love to cook, and installing strategic outdoor lighting to illuminate the new space for use well into the warmer late-spring evenings. Let us know your thoughts; we'd love to help you plan your next project.

Speaking of the upcoming season, we are expanding our successful Turf Geeks program this year. Our results in 2018 made a believer out of me, and I encourage all of you with lawns to consider trying the Turf Geeks method. There is an increased cost the first year, but over time this will be a money-saving technology. You will have a healthier, more beautiful lawn as well. Improved soil fertility makes the grass grow and makes thin spots fill in resulting in a lush lawn and eliminating the need for re-sodding every few years. I feel that this approach is a must for sustainably growing a healthy lawn in our coastal soils.

In this issue, we will be featuring a residential landscape project at Figure Eight Island. The homeowners wanted a low-maintenance and low-key landscape utilizing native plants and also an ecological permeable pavement parking area. This quarter, we also feature our Maintenance Manager and NSG fixture, Ben Kennedy.

So, hello 2019. And as always, thank you for your continuing support.

*Matthew*



## AN ENVIRONMENTALLY CONSCIOUS LANDSCAPE



The feature project this quarter is a new marsh-front residence at Figure Eight Island. Our environmentally conscious clients wanted a low-maintenance and simple landscape utilizing mostly native plants. One goal of the design is for the landscape to fit into and complement the natural environment and not compete with it.

We utilized such native plants as Live Oak, Yaupon Holly, Wax Myrtle, and *Spartina patens* as main features. The *Spartina patens*, or Saltmeadow Cordgrass, forms a “coastal meadow” that once established flourishes with little or no inputs of water, fertilizer, or labor. This native grass stabilizes the soil and fills large areas economically that would otherwise grow up in weeds or require mulching annually.



Another ecological feature of the project is a pervious pavement parking area, seen to the left. The client could have chosen to use an impervious material, but their commitment to the environment was enough to justify the extra expense. In this case, we used Turfstone which will be covered by turf eventually and look like part of the lawn.



As you can see from the before picture (bottom left), we had a blank slate to work with, and I am very pleased with the clean and simple result!



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## BEN KENNEDY: A NSG ORIGINAL

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One of the most recognizable faces of the North State Gardens team, Maintenance Manager Ben Kennedy, has been with us for 30 years. Many of you probably know Ben as the “go-to” person to call for your annual planting and organizational needs, and with very good reason. Ben’s love of nature and the outdoors started well before his time at NSG, from growing up on the family farm working with garden crops to owning a landscaping business in Greensboro, North Carolina, his experience and expertise span a lifetime. “I guess you could say I’ve had my hands in the dirt forever,” Ben says.

In 1976, Ben began working with NSG founder David Erwin and also came to know David’s close friend, Modernist architect Ligon Flynn. “The time that I spent with David and Ligon was a great learning

experience for me, as well as making great friendships.”

The company has seen many changes over the years, and Ben always played a very helpful role in the evolution of North State Gardens. “The company has grown a lot; it’s a bigger company now. As we grow, I want to try to remain accessible to everybody.” Summer is a very busy time for landscapers, and Ben says it’s the season when he can touch base face-to-face with most folks. “That’s what I really like, to see and talk to people. Something can seem like an easy fix or an easy project, but then sometimes it’s not. My job is to keep our clients happy and to make sure that they understand why we do things the way we do ... help them to understand that there may be a better way of doing something.”

Even though most of the devastation from Hurricane Florence has been cleared and most aspects of life have returned to normal, Ben urges clients who are thinking of new projects to call us early. “The hurricane caused a back-up, and there will be a lot more plant material being used this season. Some nurseries will have a delay getting certain plants. Especially this year, if you’ve got a project that you want to do, call me now or call Matthew so that we can schedule it and get it in the works. I want everyone to know that we are being as fair as we can with scheduling.”

Ben enjoys the new North State Gardens location on Highway 210 West in Hampstead, and says that we now have more room to expand our thinking about the way we do things. There could be an on-site greenhouse in the future, where Ben would oversee growing some of the fall flowers that we use in quantity, such as pansies and violas. “I see where we could have a greenhouse and maybe even grow some speciality and focal-point plants,” he says.

Fortunately for NSG and for our clients, Ben has no plans to stop doing what he loves best: helping to create beautiful outdoor living spaces. “This is something that I want to do forever!” he says. “I feel that I am continuing the beauty of the environment. I wish that everyone could see the landscape as something other than just another room to decorate. It’s our job to create something that makes you want to go outside and enjoy it.”