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A Message from Matthew

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Featured Landscape: Updated
Classic Elegance

PG. 4

A Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary



Our Spring Focus

- Fertilizing trees & shrubs
- Planting summer color
- Mulching & pruning
- Applying fertilizer & pre-emergent on turf



FINDING SOLACE IN TROUBLED TIMES

Many studies show natural spaces – a garden surrounded by beautiful plants or even just a window looking out onto a natural scene - have the power to decrease stress and impact mood in a positive manner. The simple act of planting herbs into pots for your kitchen garden can be very comforting and satisfying now when so much seems uncertain. An extended stay-cation is a good opportunity to connect with nature right in our own backyards, giving us more energy and ultimately making us feel happier. North State Gardens is here with you, and we are continuing to move forward into the springtime while keeping our families, employees and clients safe.



Hello Friends,

As I sit here writing this, the sun is shining, the azaleas are in full bloom, there are birds on my feeders ... for all appearances, it's a normal spring day, right? Watching this idyllic scene, you could almost forget about the COVID-19 crisis unfolding in our country and around the world. I think that the outdoors is about as safe and healthy a place to be at any time, but that sentiment is doubly true these days - and I intend to partake of nature as much as possible! Stress and anxiety levels can run really high with everything that we are all facing, but even just a quick 15 minute walk

outside can help clear the mind and ease the soul. It may seem counterintuitive, but striving for a sense of normalcy in the middle of all this upheaval can help to lessen stress overload. Being outside also gives us a much-needed break from the constant social media and news feeds that are an incessant reminder of how abnormal things really are right now. While it is important to stay informed with reliable information, it is also springtime in our coastal home, and the natural world is giving us an incomparable show.

At North State Gardens, we are operating as normal – crisis-mode normal – and practicing social distancing and extreme measures of hygiene for personnel and equipment. As always, the safety of our employees, our clients, and our community is of top priority, and we will continue to rigorously follow the guidelines set forth by the New Hanover County Health Department as well as the Center for Disease Control. Our industry is considered essential by state authorities, and we have no plans to stop working to prepare for spring and the coming summer months. One notable exception is that contractors at Figure Eight Island are no longer allowed to work at occupied homes, so we are contacting these clients to establish a revised servicing schedule. As long as we are allowed to work and as long as everyone remains well, we will be servicing our accounts as normal during this critical time of year.

Our feature project this quarter is a renovation of an established landscape. Renovations have always been a significant part of our work, and they are usually very satisfying. I think in this case we were able to make a great improvement to the curb appeal of the home, imparting classic style with an updated twist.

Later in the newsletter we have some information on attracting life to your garden while creating a much needed place for food and shelter. Birds and pollinators provide us with so much pleasure, it is natural to want to create healthy outdoor living spaces for them as well.

In closing, please stay home and stay safe. And as always, thank you for your support.

Matthew

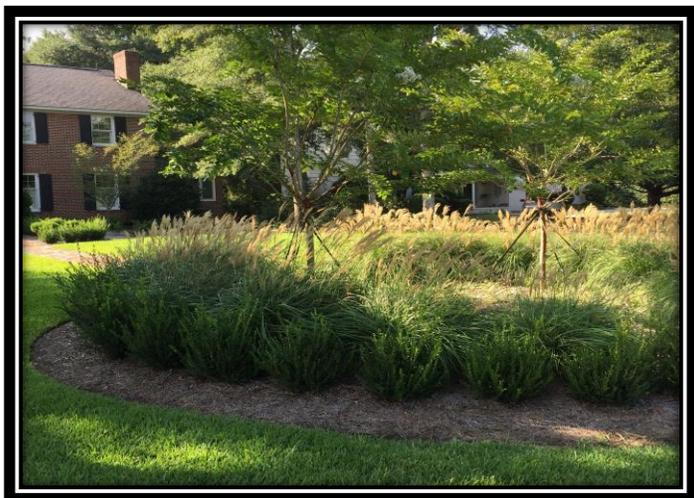
CLASSIC ELEGANCE - REBOOTED



 Sometimes, a change is called for ... a different hair-do, a new outfit, and even a refreshed and updated landscape! As time passes, a landscape transforms just like hair or fashion; trees expand and create shade where it never existed before, shrubs become overgrown and weary as they near the end of their lifespan, and outdoor space usage transforms with human activity. Any of the above can signal that perhaps it's time for a landscape do-over.



Renovations can be some of the more challenging jobs from a design standpoint as compared to the blank slate of a new home. In the case of our feature home this quarter, the front area had large existing trees that were disruptive to the yard space. As you can see in the before picture, (*middle left*) there was a group of large trees that dominated the right side of the front yard. Having a lawn area with any kind of symmetry and maintaining a pleasing relationship with the house was impossible without removing these trees. So remove them we did, and as a result we were able to install a lawn area that frames the house, while adding a lovely circular focal point to the front entrance. I love trees, and removing them is a decision that I do not arrive at lightly, but in this case I think it paid big dividends.



On the other hand, replacing shrubs is often a much easier decision. We updated practically all the ornamental plants on the property to complete our facelift. The new garden has something going on all year long starting with cherries in the early spring, summer blooming hydrangeas and ornamental grasses, and ending with Camellia sasanquas in the late fall.

Updated with seasonal beauty and now easier to maintain, this rebooted landscape - with all of its former elegance and its new modern curves - is ready to move forward into the 21st century.

Building a Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary



In our rapidly developing society, there are increasing pressures on wildlife populations. Native plants – those in our area that evolved along with the local fauna – are slowly being overrun by popular and invasive ‘alien’ or exotic species. Interestingly enough, native plants should be better adapted to resist destruction by insects than exotic plants and therefore require less pesticide. Native plants also require less water, fertilizer and maintenance than exotic plants. And the local insects love them – creating a healthy buffet for all sorts of wildlife!

The good news is that there are many ways to turn portions of your yard into a wildlife sanctuary. In his iconic book *Bringing Nature Home: How You Can Sustain Wildlife With Native Plants*, Douglas Tallamy discusses the indisputable link between native plant species and native wildlife, and he also writes about what we can all do to create biodiverse gardens that support wildlife and their ecosystems. Here are three suggestions:

#1 Plant an oak tree. The Southern live oak can support over 280 different species of insects. It produces acorns that are eaten by many birds and mammals. These acorns are also the preferred meal of hundreds of moth and butterfly larvae. Oaks give shelter and beautifully provide a foothold for the Spanish moss that many coastal birds use to construct their nests.

#2 Add water. Providing a source of water is important for creating a wildlife friendly place in your yard. Add an inexpensive bird bath to provide drinking and bathing water. Remember to keep the water shallow; birds do not like to use a bath where the water is deeper than their legs. A larger pond can support frogs, turtles, and small fish, bringing even more life and color to your garden.



#3 Use native plants. Add beauty and a food source by installing native plants like this Beautyberry bush (*bottom left*) The Beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*) is a wonderful example of a native plant that serves many purposes. It is uniquely adapted to our coastal environment, and like many other native plants, requires less pesticide, fertilizer, and water than alien species. Here’s the bonus: the Beautyberry also produces gorgeous purple fruit clusters from early summer into late winter that are loved by many bird species. Find more native plant choices at the North Carolina Wildlife Federation, ncwf.org and audubon.org.

The bottom line is this: our landscaping choices have meaningful effects on the bird populations and the insects they need to survive. With care, we can create beautiful outdoor living spaces that benefit everyone.