

North State  
**Gardener**

SUMMER 2020



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A Message from Matthew

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Featured Landscape: Working  
with Mother Nature

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How We Compost – And Why!



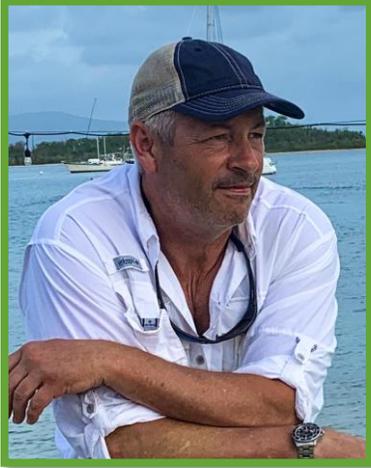
### Summer Focus

- Pruning shrubs
- Irrigation maintenance
- Turf maintenance
- Pest control including insects, weeds and diseases



### CELEBRATING NATURAL DIVERSITY EVERYWHERE

In our beautiful coastal area, we seem to be able to weather many different types of storms – from hurricanes to pandemics. Southeastern NC has a great capacity for change and rebirth built into its flora and fauna - and its people. The rich diversity in our communities – as in the natural diversity that surrounds us everyday – is one of our greatest gifts and strengths. Summer is in full swing, and while still being very safe and sensible, our cities are opening up to the sun like gorgeous southern flowers. Change is difficult and sometimes scary, but the results can be well worth our time and effort. Enjoy these long hot days of summer – believe it or not, we can see autumn coming!



Dear Friends,

I hope this newsletter finds you healthy and prospering during these strange times. I consider myself very fortunate that my family, friends and clients have remained healthy for the most part. At North State Gardens, we continue to work a normal schedule (between rain showers!) all the while taking every precaution we can to stop the spread of COVID-19 - including wearing masks in the office, in trucks and during meetings, using hand sanitizer extensively, and maintaining social distancing. I believe that this crisis is far from over, and we are operating accordingly in our business and in our personal dealings.

Earlier I mentioned “friends and clients.” It seems more than ever these days that clients are becoming friends. One positive effect of a crisis - such as a hurricane or now this pandemic - seems to be that we all take more time to ask about each other’s welfare, to check on our neighbors, and to think outside the box of our busy and complicated lives. There is more of a common ground as we literally are “all in this together,” more of a shared experience that strengthens ties and expands the understanding of our similarities beyond strictly business and onto a much more personal level. What a wonderful trait to sustain. Hopefully, we can all keep that empathy going forward as we recover from and adapt to this experience.

I have already mentioned rain, and we have had a lot of it! Cool and wet weather slowed down the growth of our warm season turf and flowers through the first half of July. The winter was mild with very few nights below freezing, and soil temperatures remained in the range that is conducive to turf diseases practically all winter long. The spores of the disease fungi are always present in the soil and flare up into active disease when conditions are right. In the past, we had to worry about combating these diseases a couple of months in spring and fall ... now we are on the lookout practically all year!

**Fall Flowers** - We are about to start planning and ordering fall flowers. Ben, our ultimate flower man, says to let him know if you would like to have fall flowers in your garden. Pansies, violas, snapdragons, lamium, and others perform beautifully all season, except in the coldest weather, and can brighten up the winter landscape.

This quarter’s featured project is a landscape renovation after severe damage suffered during Hurricane Florence. It’s a good example of another positive effect of a disaster, a truly lovely silver lining

In closing, please stay safe and continue to ask about each other. And as always, thank you for your support.

*Matthew*



## WORKING WITH MOTHER NATURE

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We all remember September 14, 2018 – the day that Hurricane Florence hit the Wilmington area and stayed for days. Thankfully, much of the property damage has been repaired, but some landscapes are still recovering. The good thing is the result after repairs is often better than the original. So it was with our featured landscape at Figure 8 Island. North State Gardens has worked with this gorgeous property for more than 20 years and through several owners. During that time, spectacular oaks and large cedars came to dominate the landscape, and the understory became very shaded and open. Hurricane Florence damaged many of the cedars to the point that they had to be removed. Luckily the Live Oaks survived, and there are some huge Pittosporum on this property that we were able to salvage after the storm.



The sunny east facing side of the house features a lawn of Zeon Zoysia grass which has become our favorite fine-bladed zoysia. Its thick growth habit and dark green color are tough to beat aesthetically and with proper watering, fertilization, and mowing we have been able to maintain consistently excellent turf quality over time ... something that has always been a challenge on the barrier islands. Near the front door, a treeformed *Vitex agnus-castus* provides year-round interest with its gnarly stem structure and seasonal interest with blue pannicle shaped flowers and attractive foliage in early summer.



The current owners, Woody and Melanie Coley, are extremely happy with the direction their landscape has taken. “I sat outside tonight and marveled at what you have done for us. Mother Nature gave us a great island and a great lot, but the North State Gardens team has put the icing on the cake!” wrote Mr. Coley.

*This is what makes our job worthwhile.*

# Making Trash Into Treasure: Sustainable Composting



At North State Gardens, our landscaping crews can accumulate many trailer loads of yard waste every week just in routine lawn maintenance. After a large storm or other natural weather event, the yard waste we collect moves into the tons. What happens to all of the waste we clear from your yard? We turn it into compost, of course! Yard waste is comprised of organic material such as dead leaves, twigs, and branches (called *browns*) and grass trimmings (called *greens*). Yard waste accounts for 6.2% of waste put in landfills these days, adding up to about 8.65 million tons annually (EPA.gov, 2020) However, organic matter can naturally decompose on its own and then be reused with beneficial results. To reuse yard waste

more responsibly and to continue our pledge to become as sustainable an organization as possible, North State Gardens composts and reuses the material in several beneficial ways.

**Compost as Soil Conditioner:** We mix the compost from leaves and grass clippings into topsoil as a conditioner to improve the native sandy mineral soil we have here on the coast - soil that is often devoid of vital organic matter. Composted soil conditioners can reduce soil compaction, improve infiltration and drainage which conserves water, and reduce runoff and erosion.



**Compost as Mulch:** We grind brush and limbs into a compost mixture to make a natural and chemical-free mulch. This mulch protects soil from wind and rain erosion, helps to cool planted areas, and reduces the herbicide and labor required for weed control. Using compost as mulch in your yard not only looks great, but it also improves soil biology and fertility.



◀ Our rich compost is used here to the left as mulch for a natural path through a wooded area. Beautiful and slightly springy underfoot, this mulch is the perfect compliment to a natural setting or as a backdrop for flower beds and shrubs. Composting is environmentally safe, keeps tons of material out of landfills every year, and replenishes soil from the top down.