
POD Wake Co Newsletter- April 2018

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Natural Learning Initiative: POD Wake Co Newsletter- April 2018



Pollinating Our Environment: Planting Flowers for Pollinators



To celebrate earth day, plant some flowers for pollinators! What are pollinators? Pollinators are insect and animals that assist plants in their reproduction. According to United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), pollinators are responsible for helping over 80% of the world's flowering

plants. In addition, it is estimated that one out of every three bites of food is contributed to insect and animal pollinators. Without these tiny creatures, humans and wildlife would have little to no fruit and vegetables to eat or anything to look at.

What is Pollination?

Pollination is the transferring of pollen grains from the male anther of a flower to the female stigma. This helps plants produce offspring (or seeds), helping to create the next generation.

Animals and Insects That Are Natural Pollinators:

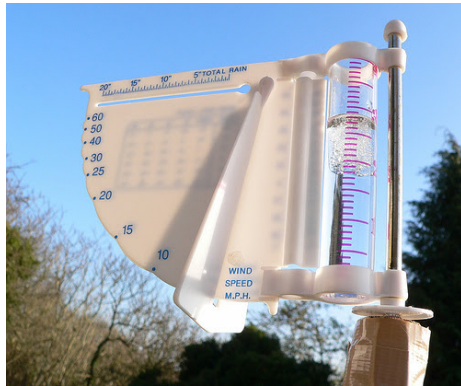
Ants, Bats, Bees, Beetles, Birds, Butterflies, Wasps, Moths, and Many Others

Here are some resources for pollinator friendly plants both exotic and native to North Carolina:

1. [Natural Learning Initiative: More on Bees and Other Pollinators](#)
2. [United States Department of Agriculture: Forest Service](#)
3. [United States Department of Agriculture: Natural Resources Conservation Service](#)

Rain, Rain, Come And Stay!

Creating a Rain Gauge



This spring season why not measure the April showers that bring May flowers with a rain gauge? All you need is a plastic bottle, which you have peeled the plastic label off of. Then you cut the top off the bottle flipping it to make a funnel into the bottom of the bottle. Using a permanent marker make a mark on the bottle every $\frac{1}{2}$ an inch. Have children fill the bottom of the bottle with sand to weigh it down or cut a hole at the bottom and bury it in the ground. After it has rained take a trip outside to visit the rain gauge.

Growing and Harvesting Cool-Season Vegetables





Here's What You Can Grow:

Radishes, spring onion/scallions, swiss chard, tomatoes, cantaloupes, watermelons, lettuce, onions, potatoes, spinach.

Here's What You Can Prepare:

Roasted broccoli and red peppers & sautéed spinach

April Activity



Insect Safari

Spring is here and what a great time to explore the life in your garden! Now is the time to go on a insect safari around the garden. Talk to children about the benefits of pollination and how insects contribute greatly to the health of the garden. Have children learn, and identify insects around the outdoor learning environment. To celebrate the spring season, have a safari party to learn more about plant pollinators and other insects. Encourage children to act out their favorite insect or pollinator.

Plant of the Month

Potato

A warm-season crop, potatoes are one of the leading vegetables in the United States. A tubercous crop grown from the perennial plant *Solanum tuberosum*, they contribute about 15 percent of farm sales for vegetables. According to North Carolina Potato Association,

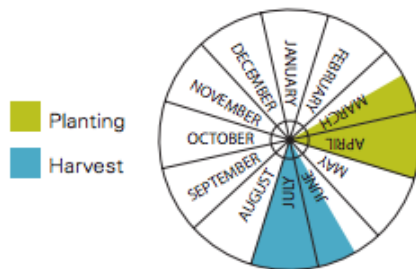
North Carolina alone produces approximately 16,000 acres of potatoes, most notably in the coastal plain counties of Camden, Hyde, Pamlico, and Washington to name a few.



To learn more about potatoes...

[Click Here](#)

Planting Potatoes



A fun way for kids to understand how potatoes grow is to plant them in the school garden. Potatoes are started by planting potato "seeds," which are pieces of potatoes that have sprouts on them called "eyes." Have children plant to a depth of 5 inches in rows 10 to 12 inches apart in mid March to April in deep, loose soil or in containers or grow bags. "Hill up" or add soil on top of the potatoes as the leaves first emerge. Repeat as the leaves emerge again to create a "hill" or mound for the potatoes to grow in.

Tips: If red, white, and blue varieties are grown, the tubers can be harvested in late June or early July, just in time to make patriotic red, white, and blue potato salad! For more information check out our [Childcare Production Garden Series](#) or your local cooperative extension agent.

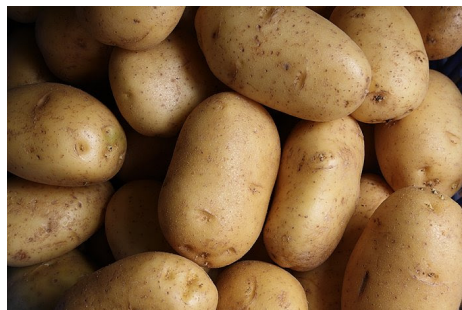
Recipe

Garlic Mashed Potatoes

Prep time: 10 mins **Cook time:** 25 mins **Total time:** 35 mins **Servings:** 4

INGREDIENTS:

- 8 Potatoes, peeled and quartered
- 2 Garlic cloves, minced
- 1/2c Milk
- 1/4c Butter
- Pinch of pepper (optional)
- Salt to taste



INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Boil potatoes in a large pan, until they become soft but firm. Drain the water and let them cool.
2. Add milk, butter, garlic cloves, salt, and pepper to the potatoes and mash them using a masher or an electric mixer. Mash it to your desired consistency.
3. Serve.

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