

PLANTS FROM

Another Planet?

A selection of strange-looking plants you've grown and known



Out-of-state spuds

When I was growing up in Burke County, gardening and canning took up a lot of our time in the summer. My grandmother, Ruby Dameron, grew this potato in her garden. She said, "That's what happens when you grow Idaho potatoes in North Carolina."

Red Blanton

Dobson, Surry-Yadkin EMC



Looks good, smells bad

This is a fascinating plant called a stapelia that my friend Edith Page gave me several years ago. Each year in late summer we eagerly await the appearance of large "pods" which open into strange flowers that feel like human skin, have fine hair all over, and smell like rotten meat. The only insect interested in them is the green botfly (if you

look closely they can be seen near the centers of the flowers), who find their stench irresistible.

Every time she goes out, my pug also has to stop to cautiously sniff them (and quickly pull her head back in distaste). Our husbands cannot understand why we love our bizarre stapelias and insist on starting more and more plants until our porches are filled with them. And with botflies!

Lisa Hlavnicka

Fayetteville, South River EMC



Sunflower tower

We didn't plant the sunflower seed, but we guess the birds dropped it. It is about 17 feet tall. Our granddaughter, Dara Rasnake, is standing beside it.

Betty and Harry Blume

Concord, Union Power



Rooster combs

My mother calls these "rooster's combs," because they are the color of the combs on the roosters we raised on the farm.

They are very big and tall. The tops are red and full of seeds. They have no odor to smell. They are easy to grow, and they multiply. And oh so pretty!

I love watching them grow and the response of insects when they land on them. Children and adults always try to smell them and feel the hard red tops. People driving by will stop and want information on the rooster combs. I share plants and seeds when available.

Betty W. Gurley

Goldsboro, Tri-County EMC



Thanks to all who sent us pictures and stories. More that couldn't fit here are on our Web site. Next month we'll publish your "road trip horror stories" in our annual North Carolina touring guide. [Deadline was Feb. 15.] See the remaining themes and rules of our "Nothing Could Be Finer" series on page 20.



Grey's potatoes

This is a picture of my husband, Grey Cain, and a potato that he grew. It was the first year my husband had planted a garden. He planted eight rows of potatoes, both red and white. He planted 100 pounds, and it turned into around 500. He had no idea how many 100 pounds would make. I thought we would never finish picking potatoes.

They came out all shapes and sizes. He gave a lot away to family, friends and to the needy. This one potato has a real odd shape.

*Darlene Cain
Pilot Mountain, Surry-Yadkin EMC*



Seymour

This is a night-blooming cereus named "Seymour" from "Little Shop of Horrors" fame. The carnivorous, alien plant in that show was always demanding, "Feed me, Seymour, feed me!"

I have found that with plenty of food and water, this erratically-foliaged plant almost has a mind all its own with its aggressive blooming tendencies. During blooming season, you can almost see and hear the flowers open right before your very eyes.

This plant is relatively easy to grow

and yields spectacular blossoms. Its foliage grows in random directions with new shoots sprouting everywhere. It is reported that these plants can bloom with as many as seven to nine blossoms at one time.

My plant first bloomed with one magnificent blossom about 8 inches in diameter. To my surprise, later that same year, this pot-bound plant produced four more beautiful blossoms. The four flowers began unfurling about 7 p.m. one night and by 10 were fully open and gorgeous. By the next morning, the blossoms had closed up and were wilted. This usually happens only once a year, so if you blink, you just might miss its spectacular show.

*Lois M. Kelly
Morehead City, Carteret-Craven Electric*



Redbud gone wild

This is a regular eastern redbud. Stewart Clark, a friend of mine, called me over to look at it one day because that year it had blooms as big as softballs, as well as normal blooms, all up and down the trunks.

*Terry Holdsclaw
Terrell, EnergyUnited*



A riot on the porch

I nominate my wife's out-of-control impatiens plants. We plant seven planters full of seedlings every spring. Wind and children pop the seed pods as soon as they are ripe, and the plants multiply rapidly during the summer. By the end of August, we cannot even walk on our porch without risking stepping on a riot of colorful, blossoming plants. They soon begin to take over the porch.

*James Singleton
Hillsborough, Piedmont EMC*



Mushroom bouquet

What a surprise my wife found when she went for her early morning walk last September in rural Orange County. As she passed by a large, rotting, white oak stump, she noticed what she thought was a bouquet of lovely orange flowers. When she stooped to inspect them, she yelled for me to come and see the "mushroom bouquet."

Trish and I have always loved flora and fauna, but she is particularly fascinated by the various mosses, lichens and mushrooms that can be found in the woods near our home. This discovery was such a treasure that we took several photos of the bouquet to prove that it was real and to show our friends what we find in our spare time.

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Having retired from Piedmont EMC and my wife from Orange County Schools, we now have more time to really enjoy the beauty of God's creation. We no longer miss special things that have been right under our noses.

*Bob and Trish Randall
Hillsborough, Piedmont EMC*



Snoopy Potato

This is "Snoopy Potato," a potato I harvested this past fall from my Ashe County garden. It looked strikingly like Snoopy and then developed strategically placed potato "eyes," making the spud look even more like Charlie Brown's beloved dog.

*Douglas Butler
Crumpler, Blue Ridge Electric*



The mutant cone

I have long prided myself as a gardener, an art passed down from my mother. Several summers ago I got a surprise amidst my coneflowers. Instead of the usual pink flowers, I had one plant where the flowers were all green with

what looked like miniature green flowers shooting off the main cone like fireworks. I was delighted with my "mutant cone." All my friends and neighbors loved it. Year after year we awaited its return.

However, disappointment struck when I was reading my hometown paper this past summer online, The Courier Journal out of Louisville, Ky. What I thought was one of nature's pure works of art turned out to be a serious plant disease. In no uncertain terms, the article instructed readers to dig up and burn any such infected plant before it infected the rest of your garden, where some plants could not battle the disease.

With a heavy heart, I went to the garden and dug up my precious mutant. Sure enough, I could see on other plants telltale afflictions that were described in the article. It was a sad day indeed.

*Kathy Buckmaster
Wake Forest, Wake EMC*



Bottle tree

I have always been fascinated by bottle trees. I researched to find that ancient folklore believed glass bottles attracted spirits and could trap them inside (ever wonder why glass bottles moan in the wind?). The Encyclopedia of Southern Culture describes a bottle tree as "the poor person's stained glass window."

*Linda Boyette
Windsor, Roanoke Electric*

Send us your best Earn \$50

Here are the themes in our "Nothing Could Be Finer" series. Send us your stories and pictures about these themes. If yours is chosen for publication, we'll send you \$50. You don't have to be the best writer. Just tell it from your heart.

May 2005

Safety Lessons

Accidents and mishaps that taught you a safety lesson.

Deadline: March 15

June 2005

On the Farm

The best things about growing up or living on a farm.

Deadline: April 15

July 2005

The First Meal I Ever Made

What was it and how did you like it?

Deadline: May 15

August 2005

What I Learned From My Kids

Sometimes children can teach grown-ups a thing or two.

Deadline: June 15

September 2005

Celebrity Look-alikes

Photos of people who are dead-ringers for someone famous. Digital ones must be 300 dpi and at least 4 by 6 inches.

Deadline: July 15

October 2005

My Favorite Photo

North Carolina people, places, things. Digital ones must be 300 dpi and at least 4 by 6 inches.

Deadline: August 15

November 2005

It's the Thought That Counts

The dumbest gift you ever received.

Deadline: Sept. 15

December 2005

Holiday Mishaps

Those holiday plans that just didn't work out as you hoped they would.

Deadline: Oct. 15

The Rules

1. Approximately 200 words or less.
2. Only one entry per household per month.
3. Photos are welcome. Digital photos must be 300 dpi and actual size.
4. E-mailed or typed, if possible. Otherwise, make it legible.
5. Include your name, electric co-op, mailing address and phone number.
6. If you want your entry returned, please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope. (We will not return others.)
7. We pay \$50 for each submission published. We retain reprint rights.
8. We will post on our Web site more entries than we publish, but can't pay for those submissions. (Let us know if you don't agree to this.)
9. Send to: Nothing Finer, Carolina Country, 3400 Sumner Blvd., Raleigh, NC 27616
Or by e-mail: carolina.country@ncemcs.com.
Or through the Web: www.carolinacountry.com