



**FRIDAY**  
0% Chance of Precip  
54/28 °F



**SATURDAY**  
20% Chance of Precip  
57/32 °F



**SUNDAY**  
0% Chance of Precip  
46/28 °F



With help from birds, nandina will invade local forests.  
PHOTO BY KEN MOORE

FLORA BY KEN MOORE

Being aware

National Invasive Species Awareness Week is Feb. 26-March 3! Events are scheduled throughout the week in our nation's capital (nisaw.org), and in North Carolina, the annual meeting of the North Carolina Exotic Pest Plant Council, open to the public, is Feb. 23-24 at the North Carolina Arboretum in Asheville (nceppc.weebly.com).

Right here at home, “awareness” is scheduled at a special event, “Plant This, Not That: Alternatives to Invasives,” at the N.C. Botanical Garden on Saturday, Feb. 25, at 1 p.m.

The program, reception and art exhibition is free, but reservations are required (962-0522).

It will surprise most folks that the ever-popular *Nandina domestica* is the poster child of this year's awareness activities statewide. T-shirts are available for those seriously aware.

I remember years ago planting this lovely exotic for my mother-in-law, and I'm still digging seedlings out of the local forest. Like some other exotic ornamental garden plants (and not all exotics are invasive), it has been around a long, long time and only now is beginning to be an aggressive “bully,” displacing our native flora.

Recently, and irresponsibly, this dazzling, red-berried plant has been promoted in local gardening publications and newspaper columns. However, on a positive note, some nurseries do offer fruitless, non-invasive varieties of nandina.

Many gardeners simply don't want to understand how exotic plants may be invasive, resulting in biological damage to our environment and millions of dollars lost to local economies.

How well I remember a response from a local gardener when I was describing how

SEE **FLORA** PAGE 10

No more camping in Peace and Justice Plaza

BY SUSAN DICKSON  
Staff Writer

**CHAPEL HILL** – The Chapel Hill Town Council voted 8-1 on Monday to approve regulations that make it illegal to camp overnight at Peace and Justice Plaza and other public spaces.

The discussion stemmed from a January memo from Town Manager Roger Stancil stating that the Occupy movement brought to light the need for the town to review its enforcement of ordinances regulating the use of public spaces and facilities. Though

previous regulations also prohibited overnight camping, town officials decided not to enforce that and other rules while the Occupy Chapel Hill movement camped at the plaza.

“I was a little troubled during the Occupy experience because I personally had sympathies with the message, for one; but two, I also knew we had regulations,” Mayor Mark Kleinschmidt said. “I didn’t want those regulations enforced because I had sympathies with the message, and that’s a problem. ... We have to have rules that ... apply to anyone who wants to

use that space.”

Occupy Chapel Hill took down its encampment at Peace and Justice Plaza on Jan. 10, but tents occupied by homeless individuals remained on the plaza. As of last week, one tent remained, displaying a sign that indicated the occupation was a political protest. But by Wednesday, that tent had been taken down.

The approved ordinance, which applies to Peace and Justice Plaza

SEE **PEACE & JUSTICE** PAGE 7

Council tightens towing rules

BY SUSAN DICKSON  
Staff Writer

**CHAPEL HILL** – Responding to concerns about predatory towing practices, the Chapel Hill Town Council on Monday voted to approve changes to the town's towing ordinance that will tighten regulations, requiring towing companies to accept credit cards and limiting towing fees to \$125 town-wide.

Residents have argued that towing fees for cars towed from areas outside the central business district – where regulations limit such fees to \$100 – were too high, with some companies charging as much as \$200, and that the cash-only policies of most companies are unfair. In addition, residents have complained that storage locations in remote areas are unsafe and that “walk-off” towing, which occurs when a driver parks at one business and visits another while parked there, is a predatory practice.

Towing companies have said they have to recoup costs lost by the limited downtown towing fees by charging higher fees outside of the downtown area and that those who pay towing fees with a credit card could cancel the charges later.

The ordinance, which will go into effect on May 1, requires towing companies to accept multiple forms of payment, including credit and debit cards; requires that companies have storage lots located no farther than 15 miles from the point of tow; creates a system of graduated fines for companies that violate the ordinance; requires that one sign be posted at every third parking space and a sign be posted notifying drivers of video surveillance, in addition to signage previously required at the entrance to the lots; and requires companies to notify the police department before towing a vehicle. Previously, towing companies were required to notify police within 30 minutes of bringing a car to their lots.

The ordinance will also require that storage lots be secured and lighted appropriately, to be inspected annually by the police department.

The council voted unanimously to approve the ordinance changes and 6-3 to approve fee regulations, which

SEE **TOWING** PAGE 9



Last week, CVS Caremark installed fences around properties it owns at 201 N. Greensboro and 104 Center streets, which are part of proposed plans for a CVS development. Officials cited the recent occupation of the 201 North Greensboro building in its decision to secure the properties.  
PHOTO BY ALICIA STEMPER

LOCKDOWN  
CVS fences in its properties

BY SUSAN DICKSON  
Staff Writer

Reversing a previous decision, CVS Caremark officials last week boarded up and installed chain-link fences around properties it owns that are proposed for a future CVS development, citing the recent occupation of the former WCOM building at 201 N. Greensboro St. in the decision.

“We had initially decided not to put a chain-link fence around the property because it would make it even more of an eyesore in the community. But in light of this weekend’s events, we will be securing the property as soon as possible,” said Leigh Polzella,

development representative for CVS Caremark, at a neighborhood meeting about the project last week.

CVS Caremark has filed for a conditional-use permit and a rezoning to allow it to build a two-story 24,000-square-foot building with a 24-hour CVS on the ground floor, office space above it and a 64-space parking lot on land occupied by the former WCOM building, two homes on Center Street and the offices of dentist Debra Seaton.

In December, Polzella said officials were considering putting fences around and boarding up the building at 201 N. Greensboro St. and the house at 104

SEE **CVS** PAGE 9

County postpones transit tax decision

BY ROSE LAUDICINA  
Staff Writer

Before the Orange County Board of Commissioners decides on adding a half-cent transit tax to the November ballot, they say they need more time to nail down details and receive public input.

The commissioners heard in-depth presentations at their work session on Tuesday about the next steps for constructing light rail, Chapel Hill's development plans as they correspond with a future light-rail line along the N.C. 54 corridor and reasons for pursuing both light rail and bus improvements instead of just an expansion of bus transit.

While the commissioners agreed they had a better understanding of the light-rail plan, they said they still needed to work out the details of agreements between the Triangle Transit Authority, the county's municipalities and Durham.

However, if the county wants to add the transit tax – which would help fund the light rail and bus improvements – to the November ballot, the commissioners are going to have to work quickly to determine specific language for the agreements, cost-sharing ideas between Durham and

Orange County and how to ensure that the transit program benefits the entire county.

“I think we are being highly optimistic to think that we can nail down three agreements in the time necessary to put this on the ballot,” Commissioner Barry Jacobs said.

Commissioner Alice Gordon agreed with Jacobs, adding that it might be more practical simply to create the outlines of the agreement so the project can continue to move forward on schedule.

If the commissioners don't add the transit tax to the fall ballot, it could have serious repercussions for the New Starts grant application that could provide federal-government money to help fund the plan.

“If we do not put the sales tax on the ballot, that would be a negative for the New Starts application, because they want to see a commitment of local monies,” Chair Bernadette Pelissier said.

In his presentation about Chapel Hill's development plans in relation to the construction of a light-rail system, Chapel Hill Mayor Mark Kleinschmidt ensured the commissioners that the economic growth light rail

SEE **TRANSIT** PAGE 4

Farming community celebrates gains

BY ROSE LAUDICINA  
Staff Writer

Despite the country's struggling economy, Orange County has seen tremendous growth in a major industry in the area in recent years. That industry is agriculture.

At the Orange County Agricultural Summit on Monday, a group of about 70 farmers gathered at the Big Barn Convention Center in Hillsborough to hear about changing agricultural policies, share ideas and learn about new services.

“This is one of the only districts in the country that has more farmers now than it did 10 years ago,” Rep. David Price said.

In its 14th year, the summit draws farmers from all over the county who specialize in different types of agriculture.

The summit gives the county's growing community of farmers a place to come together alongside county and state officials not only to learn about the new trends in local agriculture but also to celebrate its place in Orange County.

“This summit is as relevant today as it was 14 years ago, when it was started,” said Bernadette Pelissier, chair of the Orange County Board of Commissioners.

“It is something where all of us come to learn the trends of local agriculture.”

One of the biggest trends discussed at the summit was the increasing demand for locally produced food.

“The community is driving the demand for locally grown food,” Pelissier said, noting how people are realizing that buying local helps both the local economy and the environment.

Price also discussed the growing national trend of restaurants promoting the use of local ingredients and how farmers' markets are increasing in popularity and profitability.

“This is no longer just a Carrboro thing,” Price said about interest in locally grown food.

Jack Tapp, founder of Busy Bee Apiaries, also spoke to the group about the demand for locally produced products while telling the story of his business.

“I am a living example of the American dream,” Tapp said, explaining how he started beekeeping as a hobby, but it turned into a profitable business.

In addition to selling his line of Vintage Bee Creamed Honey both nationally and internationally, he sells and ships bees to help farms with

SEE **AG SUMMIT** PAGE 7

INSIDE

Filing season underway

See page 3

INDEX

Music Calendar .....	2
News .....	3
Community .....	5
Opinion .....	6
Schools .....	8
Classifieds .....	9