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Glen Frey of Eagles fame had a song on the original Beverly Hills Cop movie soundtrack entitled “The Heat is On”. More than 30 years have passed since its 1984 release and we just recently lost Mr. Frey. Who would have known that Axel Foley – Eddie Murphy’s beat up Chevy Nova-driving Detroit cop character – would become so iconic? And, few thought Mr. Murphy had already reached the pinnacle of his movie career so early.

What does any of that have to do with gardening? Absolutely nothing. But, the heat surely has been on lately.

Typical silly movies always have the good guys and the bad guys – the winners and losers. You knew Axel would shut Victor Maitland’s drug smuggling operation and Bogomil would come around to Axel’s unconventional police work. But, which plants are the winners and losers when the thermometer is registering triple digits?

Our lawns absolutely love this kind of weather. Nineties during the day and upper 70’s at night has them loving life. And, they sorely need some good growing conditions. My little patch of centipede has only recently begun to look “normal” from the late freezes of early spring.

This is the time of year when you really need to mow your lawn often, supplement rainfall with enough irrigation to keep the grass from stressing and apply the recommended fertilizer. Cooperative Extension has lawn maintenance calendars for all of the popular grasses. You can find them on-line or at any of the local offices.

If you haven’t sampled your soil in the last couple of years, this is a great time to take care of that chore. And, there’s no extra fee right now.

Tomatoes aren’t so fortunate. Hot temperatures reduce fruit set and put lots of stress on the plants. That’s why we talk about spring and fall crops of tomatoes. If yours are looking rough, wait until the end of the month and start a new crop from transplants.

Not all of the vegetables are unhappy, though. That old, southern staple okra never gets too much heat. Even though newer selections don’t develop the stringy fibers as quickly, daily harvesting will yield the tastiest okra. A “sidedressing” of fertilizer containing nitrogen will keep the plants growing and bearing through the summer.

If you have plenty of space and planted the glorified morning glory we call sweet potato, you’ll notice that the heat is not slowing it down. Relatively easy to grow and packing a nutritious punch, sweet potatoes should be in your larger garden.

One look at the rose garden at the Arboretum and you can see them struggling through their summer of discontent. This is a challenging environment to grow cutting roses with the heat and disease pressure.

Don't expect lots of roses until the nights cool off in September and October. Stick with the disease control measures though the summer so you'll have enough foliage to produce the fall blooms.

Even if you don't have Billy Rosewood's tropical jungle apartment or his arsenal, you can find help with your garden problems at your local Cooperative Extension center. Just stop by our Plant Clinic which is open Monday through Friday from 10 am to 4 pm, 6206 Oleander Drive in Wilmington. Be sure to check out our website <http://ces.ncsu.edu>, where you can post your questions via the 'Ask an Expert' link. The Brunswick center can be reached at 910 253 2610. In Pender call 910 259 1235. You can also find great local information at www.nhcarboretum.com and on Facebook. Just search for "New Hanover County Arboretum