

Digs

SPRING GARDENING

& GREEN HOMES



INSIDE

Ken Moore's
plant selections

Go green
with Vicky Dickson

Local spots
to find plants



THE CARRBORO
CITIZEN

It's Easy to Produce a **GREEN** Label.
Looking Behind It Can Tell a Different Story.



Let Your Local Eco-Home Improvement Experts at
Common Ground Green Building Center
Help You Create a Truly Sustainable and Healthy Home

**Cabinetry • Countertops • Flooring
Tile • Paint • Insulation
Kitchen Design • And Much More**



New at Common Ground this Spring

- Two New Non-Toxic Paints From **Mythic®** Value Priced **Pro-Line** and the Self-Priming **Black Label**
- In-stock **EcoCork** Flooring at New Lower Prices
- Locally-Made, Recycled, and Recyclable **EnGuard®** Insulation
- Easy to Install Floating Woven Bamboo Flooring Now In-Stock
- New Tile Loft with Expanded Eco-Options
- Custom paint colors and new doors from **Executive Cabinetry** the only *GreenGuard® Children and Schools Indoor Air Quality Certified* wood cabinetry on the market

Showroom Hours: Monday—Friday 8 am—6 pm and Saturday 9 am—5 pm

www.commongroundgreen.com

326 West Geer Street • Durham • NC • 27701 • 919-688-1500

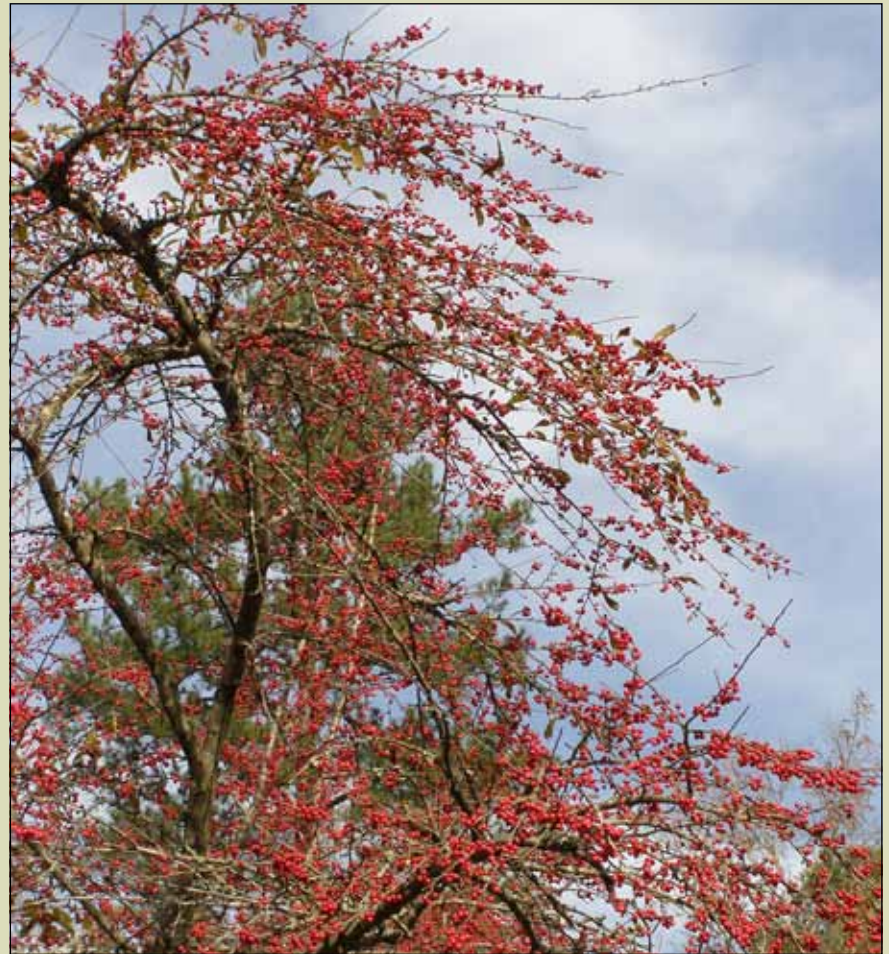
Woody selections

By Ken Moore

I've enjoyed sharing plant stories with N.C. Botanical Garden nursery manager and woody plant propagator Matt Gocke. We've come up with a list of shrubs and small trees we feel are "garden worthy" natives that will bring four seasons of joy to every home landscape.

Though "fall is for planting," most of us come charging into the spring lusting to plant and garden with energies that seem to have dissipated by the ideal

fall planting season. So for these woody plants that are best planted in the fall, make commitments to: select and plant small specimens, because they become established more quickly; take care to spread plant roots into the real parent soil in which they will eventually have to survive; provide temporary shade for the first week or two; and make certain your new plant gets an inch of water every week, clear into next fall (that means don't take vacations without leaving a responsible plant caregiver behind!).



Deciduous holly tree

PHOTO BY KEN MOORE

Digs

SPRING
GARDENING
& GREEN HOMES

Published by
The Carrboro Citizen

Robert Dickson
Publisher

Liz Holm
Art Director

Marty Cassady
Ad Director

Taylor Sisk, Susan Dickson
Editors

Ken Moore, Vicky Dickson
Contributors

THE CARRBORO
CITIZEN

Niche Gardens

locally grown
plants for
Southern gardens

**GROW WILD
WITH NATIVES!**

1111 Dawson Road
Chapel Hill, NC
(West of CH/Carrboro,
Off Old Greensboro Hwy)

open every day:
mon-sat 9-5, sun 10-5

919-967-0078

NicheGardens.com



*"After working
with your team, any
other agent will be a
disappointment..."*

For small town service with a global
reach, call Lynn Hayes Properties
where experience meets innovation.



**Conveniently located
in downtown Carrboro**
968-9989
lynnhayes.com



Blackhaw tree

PHOTO BY KEN MOORE

Deciduous holly, *Ilex decidua*, is my personal favorite plant! There are numerous cultivars, but I cherish every naturally occurring one. Lacking showy spring flowers, deciduous hollies go unnoticed until September, when the berries of the females redden against yellowing foliage. After leaf fall, there is no other plant to compare with the beauty of bare branches covered with brilliant red berries that persist until spring. It serves as a late-winter food source for numerous bird species, particularly cedar waxwings, robins, bluebirds, mocking birds and cardinals. Select two or three female hollies and one male to spread around your landscape, making certain to spot them where you can enjoy viewing them from indoors.



Blackhaw flower clusters

PHOTO BY KEN MOORE

purple-black berries provide a favorite treat for migrating and resident bird species.

Another favorite small tree is **blackhaw**, *Viburnum prunifolium*. The white flat-topped flower clusters have just faded from woodland edges, where ample sunlight produces heavy flowering. I have two in full sun, where I enjoy a full month of the flower-bud clusters forming at the tips of branches, appearing like hundreds of greenish flying saucers. Once in flower, those flying saucer-like clusters turn white and seem to fly about for two or three more weeks. Fall color is burgundy and the

Every landscape deserves at least one **big leaf magnolia**, *Magnolia macrophylla*, with umbrella-like whorls of leaves, the largest leaves of any tree in North America. Depending upon the contours of the landscape, one can enjoy looking down upon it or sitting beneath and peering upwards into the tropical-like canopy. This tree is one you can site beneath the shade of larger trees, but take care to position it so that it's not competing with the root systems of other trees.

Growing... Discovering... Inspiring

Visit the North Carolina Botanical Garden this spring to

- discover gardens and nature trails
- be inspired by a workshop or lecture
- buy beautiful native shrubs, trees, wildflower, and ferns to grow in your garden



Fordham Blvd at
Old Mason Farm Rd.
On the web at ncbg.unc.edu



Bigleaf magnolia

PHOTO BY KEN MOORE



Buckeye buds

PHOTO BY KEN MOORE

Painted buckeye, *Aesculus sylvatica*, one of Matt's favorite plants, is as engaging as a plant can be. When trout lilies announce the arrival of spring, the large buds of this sprawling shrub dramatically open to display deeply veined, copper-green palmate leaves surrounding a column of flower buds. Those buds slowly mature to clusters of yellowish tubular flowers in early April as pollinating hummingbirds arrive. In late summer, golf ball-sized capsules form where those flowers were; they slowly split to expose light-brown buckeyes that are fun to collect for good luck. Painted buckeye is adaptable to sunny and shady locations and is preferable in our region to the popular coastal red buckeye, which has an aggressive talent to freely move about, placing the red buckeye in the company of unwanted invasives.



Buckeye fruit

PHOTO BY BETSY MOYER

When gardening and taking care of your lawn... Remember to care for our water, too.



Fertilizers, pesticides, loose soil, improperly stored chemicals, and cleaning agents can wash into our streams and Jordan Lake, causing algae blooms and killing aquatic life. That's not good for wildlife, recreation, OR drinking water!

Learn how you can protect our creeks and Jordan Lake:

Town of Chapel Hill, Stormwater Management Division, 919-969-RAIN
www.townofchapelhill.org/stormwater



Have property with a creek?
Plant and maintain stream buffers;
Know the rules for use & activity
in the buffer zones!



Build A Rain Garden!

**Test
Your Soils
For Free!**

Get the dirt on what
your plants need
before adding fertilizer!
Boxes available at
Southern States - Carrboro
and NC Botanical Garden
www.ncagr.gov/agronomi/soil/Home_files/frame.htm





Sweet bay magnolia

PHOTO BY LAURA COTTERMAN

Every spring, I look forward to the first flowers of **pawpaw**, *Asimina triloba*. I enjoy watching the round, dark velvet-haired flower buds slowly expand, appearing first as little green flowers and, surprisingly, enlarging to unusual, widely flared, burgundy-colored bells. Pawpaws are easily established in moist or well-drained soils in shade or sun. They tend to sucker, and soon you'll have your own little pawpaw patch, which makes quite an impression with its golden-yellow foliage in the fall. You'll have to have two separate plants if you hope to have tasty fruit in the late summer. In nature, along riverbanks, the

short banana-shaped fruit are quickly relished by wild critters as soon as they ripen and fall to the ground.

Though **sweet bay magnolia**, *Magnolia virginiana* has been in the nursery trade for many years, this small tree has not been so overplanted in urban landscapes to have lost appeal in more intimate home landscapes. It's suitable for moist or well-drained situations in shade or full sun. The miniature magnolia flowers are incredibly fragrant and they seem to sparkle against the glossy green foliage of this small statuesque tree.



Smooth sumac

PHOTO BY KEN MOORE

A vigorous shrub, **smooth sumac**, *Rhus glabra*, is engaging to observe, as the loosely open flower heads in early summer slowly pull into tightly clustered cones of red seed to remain architectural features throughout the winter months. Some folks make a tea from the seeds, and a diversity of wild critters rely on it as a dependable food source. The scarlet color of the compound, fern-like

leaves in the fall is spectacular. Give it lots of room in the sun, where it will naturally spread to form a thicket.

Spicebush, *Lindera benzoin*, the host plant for the spicebush swallowtail butterfly, is a fine plant for the home landscape. Rapidly losing ground to competition from invasive Chinese privets and Russian olives in floodplain forests, our gardens can be-

NEED MULCH? WE'VE GOT IT!

ORANGE COUNTY LANDFILL
EUBANKS RD. CHAPEL HILL
MON- FRI 8AM- 4PM
SAT 7:30-12 NOON

Conventional
Yard Waste Mulch
\$22.00 / 3 cubic yards

Decorative "Red" Mulch
& Organic Compost
\$28.00 / 1 cubic yard

Orange County Solid Waste Management
(919) 968-2788
recycling@co.orange.nc.us
www.co.orange.nc.us/recycling

We load, you tarp
Trucks and trailers only.
Delivery is available.



Trees * Shrubs * Perennials
Ground covers * Vegetables & herbs
Pottery * Yard art * Rain barrels

4536 Hillsborough Road, Near the Orange County line in Durham
Just a 15 minute drive from Carrboro/Chapel Hill **We're worth the trip!**
(919) 384-7526 • Mon-Sat 9-5 • durhamgardencenter.com
f Find us on Facebook!



Smooth sumac cones

PHOTO BY KEN MOORE



Spicebush flowers

PHOTO BY LAURA COTTERMAN



Spicebush berries

PHOTO BY LAURA COTTERMAN

come a refuge for this butterfly species. It will succeed in both shady and sunny locations, in moist and well-drained soils. Clusters of tiny yellow flowers on bare branches in early spring are a beautiful curiosity, as are the scarlet-red berries that provide a tasty treat for birds in the late summer. The leaves, both fresh and dried, have been used for centuries as an herbal tea. Yellow fall foliage provides a vivid backdrop for the vivid red berries.

Though **Virginia sweetspire**, or Virginia willow, *Itea virginica*, is frequently seen growing at the base of cypress trees in knee-deep water, it is a fine ornamental shrub for sunny or shady garden sites. It's perfect for naturally wet spots and accommodates normal garden-growing conditions. Drooping white spikes of flowers enhance the mid-spring garden and burgundy-colored foliage lingers into the late fall. I like the pure species, but most nurseries offer cultivars.

Another fine white-flowered shrub is **sweet pepperbush**, *Clethra alnifolia*. In mid-summer, the flowers fill the air with fragrance and attract a great diversity of pollinators. Like *Itea*, *Clethra* is common down east in the coastal swamplands, and it too is happy in a naturally moist spot in the garden, but can be established in normal garden cultivation in sun or shade. And, as with *Itea*, cultivar selections are available.

Another of Matt's favorites is **possumhaw viburnum**, *Viburnum nudum*. Like so many coastal wetland species, this large shrub is content in normal garden situations in both shade and sun. The flat-topped clusters of white flowers in spring are followed by a wild, simultaneous display of pink, lavender, blue and black berries that are a real treat for birds. The real appeal of this plant is the glossy burgundy-colored fall foliage. Again, you'll most likely find cultivars.



Virginia Sweetspire

PHOTO BY LAURA COTTERMAN

GET YOUR ORGANIC PLANT STARTS HERE!

Shop Fifth Season for organic vegetable and herb plant starts, including basil, tomatoes, peppers, and many more as they come in season. Beginning at \$1.99 each, our organic starts are not only local, we grow many of them ourselves using certified organic seeds and soil.

Pick up your own organic seeds, soil, fertilizers and more to get on your way to a successful vegetable garden.

GARDEN SMART THIS SPRING.



CARRBORO

106 S. Greensboro St. ★ 932.7600

www.fifthseasongardening.com

ORGANIC GARDENING ★ HYDROPONICS ★ BEER & WINE MAKING



Sweet pepperbush

PHOTO BY LAURA COTTERMAN

I love to happen upon the **swamp rose**, *Rosa palustris* in naturally wet situations in the wild. There is no more beautiful, perfect, single-petaled pink rose. It can be easily grown in a sunny garden bed, where one should allow it room to spread and become a casual thicket. A single picked flower placed on a kitchen windowsill or by

one's reading lamp makes it worth having the swamp rose in your garden.

There are so many "garden worthy" native woodies, and nurseries are now offering more and more of them. Hopefully, the ones I've described here will bring you as much joy as they do to Matt and me.



Swamp rose

PHOTO BY KEN MOORE

Sources

Not surprisingly, just about all of these recommended plants will be found on the plant sales shelves at the N.C. Botanical Garden (ncbg.unc.edu). In addition, these plants, and more, are found at other area nurseries that specialize in native plants.

Check out Niche Gardens (NicheGardens.com), Mellow Marsh Farm (mellowmarsh-farm.com) and Cure Nursery (curenursery.com) for a surprising diversity of native plants. Carrboro's Southern States garden center (southernstates.com) also features some natives and cultivars of natives.

Other local nurseries and garden centers include: Fifth Season Gardening Co. (fifth-seasongardening.com), Piedmont Feed & Garden Center



Pawpaw flowers

PHOTO BY KEN MOORE

(piedmontfeed.com), Camellia Forest Nursery (camforest.com), The Unique Plant (theuniqueplant.com), Dickinson Garden Center (dickinsonsgardencenter.com), Green Hill Farm, Inc. (hostahosta.com), For Garden's Sake (fgsnursery.com), Durham Garden Center (durhamgardencenter.com) and Sarah P. Duke Gardens (sarahpdukegardens.org).



Frank Cole
Art Kaplan
Principals

BUILDING GREEN
SINCE 1984

*Real Building Science
Full service General Contractor
New Home Construction
Remodels & Renovations*

101 center street • carrboro, nc 27510
919.942.3392 • fax 942.5771
frankcolebuildingcompany.com

Old Pittsboro Preserve Carrboro



1+ acre lots less than one half mile from Carrboro downtown area.

Only two lots available:

- Lot#3 \$145,000 1.324 acres
- Lot#4 \$115,000 1.221 acres

Go to www.logancarter.com and click on "My Featured Land Listings" for more info. Call **Logan Carter, Fonville Morisey Realty, at 919-418-4694** for appt. information.



Thinking green

By Vicky Dickson

Energy audits are one of those “shoulds” that tend to stay on a homeowner’s back burner. You know you should look into getting one; you have every intention of doing so ... later, when you don’t have quite so many demands on your time. But look at it this way: If you could, by taking some simple steps, help prevent another nuclear plant disaster, oil well blowout or coal mine collapse, wouldn’t you do it? Every step each of us takes to save energy is a step away from building another nuclear power plant, drilling another oil well or digging another coal mine. And if those same steps would save you money down the road, wouldn’t that make scheduling an energy audit even more of a no-brainer?

Easy fixes

Homeowners might think that, because they don’t have the thousands of dollars to upfit their homes with new geothermal systems or photovoltaic panels, an audit would be a waste of money. But as Carrboro green builder Frank Cole points out, the first priority in energy conservation is an “enhanced thermal envelope.” In layman’s terms: Buildings need better insulation and caulking to prevent the waste of the expensive energy that’s heating and cooling them.

Mark Marcoplos of Marcoplos Construction does energy audits locally, and says he’s never performed one without finding something that could be done to increase energy efficiency.



Solar installation on a recent Hartley Construction project

PHOTO COURTESY OF HARTLEY CONSTRUCTION

Compost Bins for Sale

Orange County Solid Waste
Management Administrative Office

1207 Eubanks Rd.
Chapel Hill, 27516

Monday - Friday
8 a.m.- 5 p.m.

**\$50 each
tax included**

Cash or checks only!



You do not have to be an Orange County
resident to purchase bins, and
there is no purchase limit.

Questions?

(919)968-2788

recycling@co.orange.nc.us

www.co.orange.nc.us/recycling/news.asp



**For almost 30 years, we’ve helped people
plant their roots and join our community.**

WeaverStreetRealty.com

116 E Main Street, Carrboro • (919) 929-5658



Tom Wills

Some of those fixes are inexpensive: Sealing holes with a caulk gun and a can of foam can be a do-it-yourself project that yields \$10 to \$20 a month in energy savings, and leaky ductwork can often be easily fixed. Ductwork inspection should be a high priority, Marcoplos says, because there's leakage in 30 percent of

heating ducts countrywide. That leakage can lead to health problems as well as energy waste, since leaky ducts can pull in car exhaust fumes and microscopic bits of asbestos insulation that are then mixed in with the air a family breathes.

Major insulation upgrades can be expensive, but according to local architect, green builder and developer John Hartley, new insulation materials and techniques can ease the bite. Some insulation materials can be installed on a house's exterior, and there are ways to punch holes in siding and blow in cellulose. However new insulation is installed, though, it's important to make sure you work with an experienced contractor. As Jeff Reilich, Frank Cole's heating-systems designer, points out, poorly installed insulation and poor choice of materials can lead not only to energy waste but also to health problems from mold and toxic fumes.



Mark Marcoplos

Another easy fix to a household's energy drain, according to Cole, Hartley and Marcoplos, is the shielding of west-facing windows with awnings, deciduous trees or trellises. Because the west side of a house gets intense summer sun in our area, anything that can be done to block that sun will save energy – and money – by lowering air-conditioning usage.

valuable selling point. Realtors now, much more than just a few years ago, are giving energy-saving features prominence in their listings and developers are hyping the greenness of their neighborhoods as never before.

So when it comes time to replace that aging water heater, you need to give serious consideration to going solar. According to Tom Wills with Solar Consultants, a typical solar hot-water installation serving a household of four should pay for itself in decreased energy costs within seven to 10 years. It can also add an extra \$12,000 to your house's value in the marketplace.

Wills doesn't advocate putting in solar hot-water systems everywhere, though. For households or businesses that don't use much hot water, he sees on-demand water heaters as a better choice. Such systems heat water only when it's needed, and have been used successfully in Europe for years. The design of most water heaters used in this country is inherently wasteful – since they heat 80 gallons of water for hours, and perhaps days, when it won't be used – so it makes sense to replace even a relatively new conventional water heater with a solar or on-demand system if you can afford it. As Wills points out, "You're gonna pay those costs one way or another."

An investment for the future

Cole and his associates state that every dollar spent on energy conservation will eventually save \$3 to \$4 in energy costs. So if you intend to stay in your house a while, the dollars you spend on energy upgrades now are an investment in your future. And if you expect to sell your house within the next few years, those upgrades will be a



BIRDSONG DESIGN






🌿 Garden Design 🌿 Landscape Contracting 🌿

landscape materplans contemporary naturalistic style
waterwise gardens native plant design edibles
deer-resistant gardens stonework watergardens
lawn alternatives perennial borders garden crafts

**NC LANDSCAPE
CONTRACTOR #1647**
919.444.1958
pete@birdsongdesign.com

Expand your outdoor space into living space

SCREENED PORCHES AND DECKS

Walter Lane
Office 919.933.4044
Mobile 919.730.3124
Fax 919.933.4044

Ask about Outdoor Kitchens!



The production of hot water accounts for 25-35 percent of domestic energy use, so if you can't afford to replace your system right now, Marcoplos suggests looking into programmable thermostats for your water heater, and if you're going on vacation, remember to turn off your water-heater circuit breaker.

Energy policy

It's important to remember that the path to more efficient energy use nationwide involves government policy as well as individual action. As Hartley puts it, "We need to mandate energy efficiency for the benefit of everybody." Lamenting the energy policy that results when "we're listening to politicians instead of scientists," he stresses that government needs to get more involved in helping the young companies that are now working on energy innovation. "There's so much great stuff coming out of garages," he says. "We need to encourage and help them along."

Taking action

So talk to your elected representatives about energy policy. And schedule that audit. For Chapel Hill residents, now's a particularly good time to do so, since the town has a new stimulus funds-based program that subsidizes the cost of a residential audit and may also help pay for improvements suggested



Art Kaplan and Frank Cole, owners of Frank Cole Building Company, with heating-systems designer Jeff Reilich

PHOTO BY SUSAN DICKSON

by that audit. Apply for a free audit at townofchapelhill.org/wise, or for more information, call 969-5075 or email sustainability@townofchapelhill.org.

Carrboro town staff also expect to launch a residential energy audit program within a few weeks and hope to include subsidies for home improvements by late summer or early fall. For more information on Carrboro's program, contact Nora Barger at 918-7334 or nbarger@cleanenergysol.com



Native plants and ecological design

Invasive Plant Control
Deer Fences
Organic Fertilizer Programs

Piedmont Environmental Landscaping and Design

Gardens and landscapes for the birds, bees, butterflies and the people who cherish them.

MATTHEW ARNSBERGER
919-960-6856
matthew@piedmont-environmental.com

6th Annual

green HOME TOUR

May 14-15 & 21-22, noon-6 p.m.

Pick up your Free Tour Guidebook at this kick-off event:
Friday, May 13, 5-7 p.m.
 Sample organic wines and gourmet cheeses at Chapel Hill Whole Foods

919.493.8899
www.TriangleGreenHomeTour.org

TRIANGLEGREENHOMETOUR.COM

Mobile Website & iPhone App
FREE! AVAILABLE IN APRIL

 **HOME BUILDERS ASSOCIATION**
 OF RALEIGH - WAKE COUNTY





Sponsored by
STOCK Building Supply

A diverse group of green homes open to the public for touring, with a green building professional on site to answer questions and describe their home's green features.

Don't miss this unique chance to see first-hand the renewable energy and green building practices at work in our area!

The Carrboro Growing Healthy Kids Project



The Carrboro Growing Healthy Kids Project is an initiative to start community gardens to help young children learn the importance of growing and eating fresh fruits and vegetables.

The project is currently in its fourth growing season and has worked with more than 40 different local families. The project has started three gardens located at: Carrboro Elementary School, the future site of Martin Luther King Jr. Park, and on James St.

Young children and their families also take part in cooking classes and training on the best use of fresh produce they are growing. The project is run by the Orange County Partnership for Young Children with additional funding for research provided by a grant from the Salud America! Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

We would like to thank all past and present participants of the Growing Healthy Kids Project for their hard work and dedication throughout the year. We are excited about continuing this great work and bringing families together so that they may live happier, healthier lives.



Supported by a grant from the Health & Wellness Trust Fund

For more information about Growing Healthy Kids and other Partnership health initiatives please visit www.orangesmartstart.org