“I love spring anywhere. But if I could choose, I would always greet it in a garden.” - Ruth Stout

Normal May Weather
Weather Averages
For Asheville North Carolina
Courtesy of Wikipedia

Normal May Average High 76°F
Normal May Average Low 53°F
Normal May Precipitation 2.9”

Hours of Daylight for Asheville, NC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sunrise</th>
<th>Sunset</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 1</td>
<td>6:38 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 31</td>
<td>6:15 am</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

HOTLINE IS OPEN

The Extension Master Gardener Hotline is open for the season. Volunteers are available to answer your gardening questions on the phone, or bring problem samples in to the office for diagnosis.

CALL: 255-5522
or visit 94 Coxe Ave., Asheville

Monday – Thursday: 8:30 – 4:30
Friday: 8:30 – 12:30

Inside:

Garden Chores For May .................. 2
Perennial Plant of the Year ............. 3
Rain Barrel Sale .......................... 3
Rain Barrel Kits .......................... 3
Insects to Watch For ........................ 3
17 Year Cicadas – Again .................. 4
Tips for the Water-Wise Landscape ... 4
Learn About Composting .................. 5
Congratulations, Graduates ............... 5
Coming Events ............................ 6
GARDEN CHORES FOR MAY

**LAWNS**
- Do not fertilize fescue and bluegrass lawns.
- Pull crabgrass seedlings before they turn into large plants.
- Broadleaf (non-grass) weeds can be pulled or spot treated with broadleaf herbicide.
- Mow cool season grasses 2 ½ to 3 inches high. Mow frequently enough to remove no more than 1/3 of the blade at a time.

**ORNAMENTALS**
- Perennials can still be divided. Keep the new plants well watered for a few weeks.
- It should be safe to plant annual bedding plants after the first week in May. Plant in groups for greatest impact or tuck annuals into vacancies in the perennial bed.
- Prune spring blooming shrubs soon after blossoms fade.
- Nothing perks up a patio or entry like a colorful container garden. Combine something tall, something trailing and some plants for continual color.
- You can create great containers without flowers. Foliage plants will be colorful all summer. A few include elephant ears, caladium, ivy, Heuchera, sweetpotato vine, Setcreasia (purple heart), polka dot plant, Joseph’s coat, croton, artemesia, and grasses.
- Flower and shrubbery beds can be fertilized with a slow release fertilizer.
- If you move house plants outdoors for the summer, wait until nighttime temperatures are above 50 degrees. Do not place plants in direct sunlight.

**FRUITS**
- Pick strawberries every day or two, remove and discard berries with gray mold.
- Fruit trees may have set a heavy crop this year. Thin apples, pears and peaches to about 6 inches apart when the fruit is the size of a nickel.
- Begin fungicide sprays, especially on peaches, plums and grapes.

**VEGETABLES**
- Check cabbage family crops for cabbage worms.
- Thin seedlings of early plantings when they have 1 to 2 true leaves (the ones that form after the “seed leaves”).
- Spindly tomato plants can be planted very deep as they will form roots on the buried stem. Dig a shallow trench and gently bend up the top six inches of the plant. Remove leaves that will be below the soil.
- Put in tomato stakes at planting, especially if you buried those stems.
- Soil temperature should be warmed up to at least 65 degrees before planting beans, melons and okra. Use a soil thermometer to ensure good germination.

**OTHER**
- Turn the compost pile. With warmer weather the microorganisms will kick into high gear.
- Insects are essential for pollinating many crops. Honeybees and other pollinators are very vulnerable to insecticides. Sevin dust (carbaryl) is especially toxic to bees.
Perennial Plant of the Year

The Perennial Plant Association has awarded the title of Perennial Plant of the Year to *Geranium* ‘Rozanne’. If you are one of those gardeners who can never find enough blue flowers, here’s one for you. This hardy geranium has flowers that are described as “2 ½ inch, iridescent violet-blue, saucer-shaped flowers with purple-violet veins and radiant white centers.” Bloom time is from late spring to mid fall.

The plants reach about 20 inches tall and spread to 2 feet. Hardy geraniums do fine with full sun to half shade and prefer moist, well-drained soil. ‘Rozanne’ could be used as a single specimen plant, or planted in mass. It could also be used in containers.

RAIN BARREL SALE!

You only have another week to order your rain barrel! Check last month's newsletter for more details about the barrel.

80 gallon barrel $110  
Payment by May 9  
to Master Gardener Project Fund

**Pick Up Day**  
Saturday, May 17  
9:30-1:30  
WNC Farmers Market

To order your barrel, call Buncombe County Cooperative Extension 255-5522, or mail your payment to: NC Cooperative Extension, 94 Coxe Ave., Asheville, NC 28801

DO IT YOURSELF KITS

Extension Master Gardeners are also selling do-it yourself kits for those who want to make their own barrels. Kits include a brass faucet, an overflow valve and all necessary washers and fittings and a flexible downspout connection. They are available for $20 at the Cooperative Extension office at 94 Coxe Ave., Asheville.

INSECTS TO WATCH FOR

Inspect plants periodically so you can tackle pest problems before they get out of hand. Pesticides should never be applied randomly “just in case” there might be some insects in the garden. You may end up killing off more beneficial insects than pests. Here are some insects to be on the look out for:

**Ornamentals**: slugs; lacebugs on azaleas, rhododendrons, pieris, pyracanthas; spruce mites on spruce, hemlocks, fir; euonymous scale; hemlock wooly adelgids.

**Fruits and vegetables**: slugs, asparagus beetles, cucumber beetles, cabbageworms, aphids.
17 YEAR CICADAS – AGAIN

How can it be that it has only been four years since we last saw the 17 Year Cicadas? Well, not all 17 year cicadas are on the same cycle. There is probably a “brood” hatching out some place every summer. This year many of us will be visited by Brood XIV.

We know they are coming because the Extension office started receiving numerous phone calls in April about mounds of mud appearing in yards. These mounds have a half inch hole in them, and if you go digging you will find a cicada nymph. This immature cicada will be ready to emerge as an adult later this month.

The adult males can make quite a racket for a few weeks as they sing to attract females. Otherwise the only problem caused by cicadas is the damage they cause to small tree branches while laying their eggs into the twigs. If you have a valuable small tree you may want to wrap it in something like mosquito netting or a light weight fabric if you have a large number of cicadas. The insects fly readily so spraying is of little use.

Since the insects have been living underground for the last 17 years it is hard to predict exactly which neighborhoods will have them, unless of course you have already seen a lot of mud mounds or ½ inch holes in the yard.

For more information on cicadas see: http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/ent/notes/O&T/shrubs/note17/note17.html

TIPS FOR THE WATER-WISE LANDSCAPE

Although it may be ideal to never do any watering in the landscape, some of the plants you may want to grow may not grow well without occasional irrigation. You can still have a water-efficient landscape with some good planning.

The trick is to group plants according to their water needs. If you have plants that need more water, put them all in one bed, paying attention to sun/shade requirements of each plant. When watering is needed it can be applied efficiently in a single bed.

Likewise, segregate the most drought tolerant plants into beds. That way you won’t be wasting water on plants that do not need it while watering the ones that do. Logically the most drought tolerant beds can be farthest from the water source and the high water need beds closest to the water.

Take some time now to evaluate your plants’ needs. It may be worth relocating some plants or replacing some to better suit the location.
LEARN ABOUT COMPOSTING

Want to learn more about back yard composting? While you are visiting the Extension Masters’ Plant Clinic at the WNC Farmers’ Market on the 2nd and 4th Saturdays, you can also cross the street to visit the compost demonstration, just below Israel’s Garden Center. Volunteers will be available to offer advice from 11:00 until 2:00. Or stop by any time to visit on your own.

Congratulations, Graduates!

Congratulations to the newest graduating class of Buncombe County’s Extension Master Gardener volunteers! These enthusiastic gardeners have completed more than 40 hours of training and are ready to join the 97 veteran volunteers to help answer your gardening questions.

This year’s graduates are:

Nell Armstrong          Cheryl Morrison
Linda Beach             Tom Mosher
Julian Biller           Patsy Norwood
Ali Cook                Paula O’Hara
Lelia Cort              Chris Pratt
Sheila Dunn             Mary Tavolacci
Brian Greenwood        Lucy Tirk
Suzanne Henry           James Tucker
Daniel Holladay         Sue Wahlquist
Bonnie Judkins          Bob Wardwell
Linda Medeiros

The Mountain Gardener is a newsletter produced by the Buncombe County Center of North Carolina Cooperative Extension. The purpose of this newsletter is to inform and educate Buncombe County residents about issues related to home lawns and gardens.

Editor:

Linda G. Blue
Extension Agent – Agriculture – Urban Horticulture

Check out Buncombe County Center’s website at…..

http://buncombe.ces.ncsu.edu
COMING EVENTS

May 2 & 3  Days in the Garden, Botanical Gardens of Asheville, Friday 1-6 - plant sales; Saturday 8 am – 3 pm, plants, food, crafts, entertainment, guided walks.

May 2-4  Spring Herb Festival, WNC Farmers’ Market, Friday and Saturday 9 am – 5 pm; Sunday 10 am – 3 pm. Plants, herbal products, crafts, garden information, educational programs.

May 6  Gardening in the Mountains Series, “Growing Culinary Herbs”, presented by Extension Master Gardeners, NC Arboretum, 10:00 am, Free.

May 10 & 24  Plant Problem Clinic, by Extension Master Gardeners, WNC Farmers’ Market 11:00 – 2:00 in the breezeway between the retail buildings.

May 24  Gardening for Butterflies, Talk by Linda Blue at BB Barnes Garden Center, 10 am Free, Call 650-7300 to sign up.

June 10  Gardening in the Mountains Series, “Four Seasons of Flowers”, presented by Extension Master Gardeners, NC Arboretum, 10 am. Free.

Individuals with disabilities who would like to participate in any program mentioned in this newsletter, but who need special assistance to do so, should call the Extension Center at 828-255-5522 at least five days prior to the event.