“Spring is nature’s way of saying, “Let’s Party!””
- Robin Williams

April is Garden Month

Is it any wonder that April is Garden Month in North Carolina? It may not be quite time to plant the summer vegetables, but what a great time to start to get outdoors and clean up the landscape and prepare for spring planting.

Gardening is an activity that can be enjoyed by young and old alike. It is an excellent form of physical exercise as well as a good way to reduce mental stress. Celebrate Garden Month by introducing a friend or a child to the joys of gardening. Encourage them to dig in the dirt or just take them for a stroll in a public garden.

Normal April Weather

Weather Averages
For Asheville North Carolina
Courtesy of Wikipedia

Normal April Average High 68°F
Normal April Average Low 45°F
Normal April Precipitation 3.3”

Hours of Daylight for Asheville, NC

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<tr>
<th>Sunrise</th>
<th>Sunset</th>
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<tr>
<td>April 1</td>
<td>7:16 am</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 30</td>
<td>6:39 am</td>
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The information in this newsletter is intended to provide general guidelines and recommendations for home lawn and garden care. For specific advice, consult with a local Cooperative Extension Service agent or a reputable commercial horticulturist. The North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service provides this newsletter as a service to the community. The content is based on the best available information at the time of publication and is subject to change as new data becomes available. The information should not be considered as legal or financial guidance. Always consult with a qualified professional before making any decisions or implementing any actions based on the information presented in this newsletter.
CHORES FOR April

LAWNS
- Consider aerating the lawn with a core aerator as early as possible. This will allow spring rains to soak into the ground more readily.
- DO NOT fertilize cool season lawns (fescue and bluegrass). Nitrogen applied this late is an invitation for brown patch fungus disease in June.
- Maintain mowing height for fescue lawns at 3 to 3 ½ inches.
- Even though it is a bit late, you might still try seeding those bare areas left by last summer’s drought.

ORNAMENTALS
- Apply a fresh layer of mulch to landscape beds before summer weeds germinate. Pull the winter weeds first. Only add enough mulch so that the total depth of mulch is no more than 4 inches.
- Try planting those spent Easter lilies in the garden. Keep them indoors until May, then plant them about 5 inches deep in a sunny location. They probably will not bloom again this year, but should be back next summer.
- Let the foliage of the spring bulbs die most of the way down before cutting the leaves. The bulb needs to absorb that energy for next spring.
- As soon as spring blooming shrubs have finished blooming, it’s time to prune if they have gotten too large.
- Do not plant frost-tender flowers before May unless you will be able to cover them in case of frost.

FRUITS
- Pull weeds in the strawberry bed and put straw mulch between the rows.
- Fertilize fruit trees, blueberries, grape vines, and brambles.
- Finish pruning brambles, grape vine and fruit trees.

VEGETABLES
- When the soil is not too wet to work, till or turn over the soil for May planting, incorporate lime and phosphate according to soil test recommendations.
- Set out transplants for cool season crops such as cabbage, broccoli and lettuce. Make sure they are hardened off before planting into the garden.
- You can still start transplants for warm season vegetables.
- Begin “hardening off” warm season transplants a week or two before planting in early to mid-May.
- Have row cover fabric handy if frost sensitive crops are planted before May.

OTHER
- The first hummingbirds arrive in our area between April 10th and 15th. Get the hummingbird feeders cleaned and ready to go out.
SPOTLIGHT : Eastern Redbud

This was the very first plant I selected for a “spotlight” feature, back in 1994. Eastern Redbud is still one of my favorite harbingers of spring.

Redbud trees, *Cercis canadensis*, usually start to bloom about a week ahead of our native flowering dogwoods. What great companions they make when the purple-pink of the redbud is mingled with the bright white dogwood blooms. In nature, both are found as small understory trees in moist wooded areas.

The bloom habit of redbuds is interesting because they produce flowers along the length of the major limbs, not just at the branch tips. If the flowers look reminiscent of pea blossoms, it’s for good reason. Both belong to the legume (pea) family.

*Cercis canadensis* is native to the eastern US, ranging from New Jersey to Florida and west to Oklahoma. There are several cultivars available, including “Forest Pansey” which has purple leaves, and some with white flowers. Closely related varieties of Oklahoma redbud and Texas redbud are also found in the nursery trade.

Tips for the Water- Wise Landscape

What’s that old saying? “You don’t know the value of water until the well runs dry?” This year I want to spend a little time each month thinking about protecting our water supplies.

One thing that is on the minds of a lot of gardeners right now is collecting rain water to keep landscape and garden plants flourishing without tapping in to your household water supply. For many home gardeners installing rain barrels is an option. Rain barrels can be made from recycled food grade (or other clean sources) drums, usually about 55 gallon size. Heavy duty garbage cans can be used, but they are less sturdy and so do not hold up as long. Barrels can also be purchased, generally in sizes from 55 to 80 gallons.

Water collected from the roof can be used to water landscape plants or things like washing the car. There are differing opinions as to watering vegetable gardens. Many people feel it is fine, while others have concerns about asphalt shingles producing petroleum by products or other contaminants, or metal roofs leaching too much zinc or other metals. So you’ll have to use your own judgment on this topic until we find a more definitive answer.
RAIN BARREL SALE!

The 80 gallon barrel measures 37 inches high and 28 inches wide. It is made of 20% recycled high density polypropylene. The heavy concave lid channels water flow into the barrel. The screened entry blocks leaves, debris and insects and the dark green color discourages algae growth. There are two coverflow ports to move water away from your home. It comes complete with fittings and installation instructions.

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 at 255-5522, or mail your payment to: NC Cooperative Extension, 94 Coxe Ave., Asheville, NC 28801

Annuals from Seeds

Even if your flower garden is mostly perennials, you can probably still use some annuals in the garden. Try using them to fill in bare spaces between perennials and provide continuous color to augment the shorter bloom seasons of perennials. Some annual flowers are quite easy to grow from seeds. If you are not comfortable seeding directly in the garden, you can start some in a sunny window sill now for planting in mid-May, or simply scratch up some swatches of bare soil and plant the seeds in the garden in late April or early May. Some good ones to try direct seeding into garden spaces include cosmos, marigolds, sunflowers, zinnias, gomphrena, cleome and strawflower.

Direct - Seeding Tips

- Cover seeds lightly, unless otherwise directed on seed packet.
- Keep the seedbed evenly moist until seeds germinate.
- Thin seedlings to correct spacing when they are 1 to 2 inches tall. If you are careful you can move some to other locations.
- Do not fertilize until plants are 2 to 3 inches tall. A couple of light fertilizations during the growing season is better than too much on small seedlings.
Gardeners’ Almanac

Can’t remember what garden chores to do when? Our Gardener’s Almanac is available to supplement the newsletter. This “Guide to Environmentally Friendly Gardening in Buncombe County” provides lists of garden chores for each month, a garden lesson each month, a guide to planting vegetables in western North Carolina, a garden glossary, and references to lots of helpful leaflets.

Pick up your copy at the Buncombe County Extension Center for only $5.

The Newest Insect Repellent

Researchers at NC State University have developed a new insect repellent that should be available in stores this year. In 2007 the US EPA approved BioUD™ as a safe active ingredient in insect repellent for direct skin application, with no child restrictions. BioUD™ sold under the name BiteBlocker, is a naturally occurring compound found in wild tomato plants. Research demonstrated that the product was at least as effective as DEET in repelling a variety of insects. It was found to be 100% effective in repelling mosquitoes for up to three hours and 99% repellent after 4.5 hours. It also worked as well as DEET in repelling ticks.

Plant Problem Clinics

Through the summer, Extension Master Gardener volunteers will be available to look at plant problems and answer gardening questions the 2nd and 4th Saturday of each month. The Master Gardener Plant Clinics will be set up at the Western North Carolina Farmers’ Market, in the breezeway between the retail buildings from 11:00 am until 2:00 pm. Stop by and visit.

Almanac Gardener is Back

The Almanac Gardener program on UNC-TV will begin its 25th season Saturday, April 5 and will run through August 16. This popular NC Cooperative Extension program will air Saturdays at 12 noon and rebroadcast Sundays at 11:30 pm. Tune into UNC-TV for weekly updates from North Carolina Extension agents.
April 8    **Gardening in the Mountains Series**, “Gardening for Butterflies,” presented by Extension Master Gardeners, NC Arboretum, 10:00 am, Free, no registration.

April 12 & 26    **Plant Problem Clinic**, by Extension Master Gardeners, WNC Farmers’ Market, 11:00 am – 2:00 pm in the breezeway between the retail buildings.

April 26 & 27    **Grove Arcade “Downtown in Bloom”**, Lectures, book signings, special exhibits and vendors.

May 2 & 3    **Days in the Garden**, Botanical Gardens at Asheville
Friday, 1 – 6 pm plants 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, no registration.

**COMING EVENTS**

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.