“When I go into my garden with a spade, and dig a bed, I feel such an exhilaration and health that I discover that I have been defrauding myself all this time in letting others do for me what I should have done with my own hands.”

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

**Resolving to Conserve Water**

Many of us would have given up gardening long ago if we were not optimistic that next year’s weather would be better. Just in case, here are some suggested New Year’s resolutions to help us use water wisely:

1. Use a rain gauge to monitor weekly rainfall as well as to measure sprinkler output.
2. Establish “water use zones” in the landscape. Group plants according to water needs so that irrigation can be restricted only to the least drought tolerant plants.
3. Incorporate organic matter when preparing planting beds. Plants are able to grow larger root systems in loose soil, making them more drought tolerant.
4. Mulch all plantings to retain soil moisture.
5. Use drip irrigation instead of sprinklers where practical.
6. Water only when the soil gets dry.

**Normal January Weather**

**Weather Averages**

**For Asheville North Carolina**

**Courtesy of Wikipedia**

Normal January Average High: 45.9°F
Normal January Average Low: 25.8°F
Normal January Precipitation: 4.06"
**CHORES FOR January**

**LAWNS**

- If the weather is mild and you want to go ahead and apply the spring fertilizer, you can.

**ORNAMENTALS**

- The live Christmas tree should be planted as soon as possible. Do not leave the root ball exposed to freezing temperatures after removing the tree from the house.
- Evergreen shrubs can be pruned now.
- Fertilize shade trees if they have not been growing well. See *Fertilizing Deciduous Shade Trees in the Landscape* ([http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/hil/hil-618.htm](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/hil/hil-618.htm)).
- Selective pruning may be done on shade trees. Make clean cuts at a branch collar. See *Trees, Flush Cuts and Wound Dressings* ([http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/hil/hil-602.html](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/hil/hil-602.html)).
- Liriope and ornamental grasses can be cut back if desired.
- Avoid pruning spring blooming shrubs as this will remove the spring flowers.
- Yellowing and dropping leaves on house plants can result from several possible causes: too much water, too little water, too little sun, cold temperatures.

**FRUITS**

- Plant fruit trees, grape vines and brambles.
- Prune grape vines and highbush blueberries.
- Pruning video tapes are available for loan at the Extension Office.
- Do not prune fruit trees until March.

**VEgetABLES**

- If the weather is nice and the soil is in good condition turn a bed for February planting of peas and kale.
- Start your garden plan on paper as you browse the garden catalogs. This will help prevent ordering more than you have room to plant.
- Check your supply of seeds as you are planning your seed orders. Seeds more than a couple of years old probably need to be replaced.

**OTHER**

- Clean out bird houses and put up new ones. Bluebirds and some other songbirds start scouting for spring nest boxes in February.
- Use deicing salt sparingly. Sweep excess salt off the pavement as soon as it has dried. Some newer salt products are less damaging to plants, but still need to be used with care.

Recommendations for the use of chemicals are included in this publication as a convenience to the reader. The use of brand names and any mention or listing of commercial products or services in this publication does not imply endorsement by the North Carolina Cooperative Extension nor discrimination against similar products or services not mentioned. Individuals who use chemicals are responsible for ensuring that the intended use complies with current regulations and conforms to the product label. Be sure to obtain current information about usage and examine a current product label before applying any chemical. For assistance, contact an agent of the North Carolina Cooperative Extension.
SPOTLIGHT: CAMELLIAS

Although camellias have been grown in China for centuries, it was not until the 20th Century that they became popular with American gardeners. For most of that time camellias were the domain of southern gardens, with gardeners in zone 6 having little luck unless one was fortunate enough to have a protected alcove. In recent years plant hybridizers have made progress in developing much more cold hardy varieties.

Camellias are of particular interest to many gardeners because they have dark green evergreen foliage and flower in winter or very early spring, depending on the cultivar. They grow best in well drained soil with pH of 5.5 to 6.5, in partial shade. They will grow fine in full sun, with adequate moisture, but will be more subject to leaf scorch in winter.

From 2000 through 2003, researchers at the Mountain Horticultural Research and Extension Center in Fletcher tested numerous Camellia hybrids. Plants were rated in late winter for the amount of winter injury and flowering. Below are the varieties recommended based on their observations.

Most recommended for cold hardiness: ‘Spring Promise,’ ‘Winter’s Interlude,’ ‘Pink Icicle,’ ‘April Blush,’ ‘April Remembered’ and Snow Man.’


BECOME A BEEKEEPER

If you have ever wanted to learn about keeping bee hives, this is the opportunity. The Buncombe County Chapter of the NC Beekeepers Association and NC Cooperative Extension will be offering a free 4 session course in beekeeping. There will be opportunities to purchase educational materials and win a free hive.

The classes will be held at the Folk Art Center on the Blue Ridge Parkway. Dates are Feb. 2,3, 9 and 10.

Classes are free, but you must pre-register. To register, go to the web page at www.wncbees.org, or if you don’t have a computer you may call 255-5522.

JUST A MOUSE CLICK AWAY

If cabin fever leaves you yearning for gardening information, there is lots available, just a couple of mouse clicks away. Go to the Buncombe County Cooperative Extension web page at buncombe.ces.ncsu.edu. The Lawn and Garden link will bring you in touch with many publications from NC State University. Or use the search option if you are looking for something specific.
### Basic Home Maintenance

The Buncombe County Center of NC Cooperative Extension is offering a Basic Home Maintenance Course. Topics include: saving on your heating and cooling bills, basic plumbing repairs, interior and exterior maintenance, landscape and lawn care, indoor air quality, and more.

Classes will be:

**Tuesday and Thursday from 5:30 – 7:30**

**on February 26,28 and March 4,6,11**

**NC Cooperative Ext. Center, 94 Coxe Ave., Asheville, NC 28801**

Cost is $20 and includes all materials. Space is limited so pre-registration is necessary.

To register, call the Buncombe County Center at 255-5522
Benefits of Gardening

When you start thinking about your plans for a new gardening season, do you ever think, “Why do I keep doing this?” When you start to have second thoughts, remind yourself that gardening provides numerous physical and mental health benefits:

1. **Burning Calories**
   To the non-gardener or hard-core athlete, gardening may seem like a sedentary activity. But carting mulch around in a wheelbarrow, digging in the soil, and all the bending and lifting involved in planting really do burn calories. Studies show that depending on the activity, gardening can burn between 250 and 500 calories per hour.

2. **Reducing Stress Levels**
   For many people gardening is a creative outlet, for others it’s the change of scenery from the daily grind that makes a difference. Still others find that the satisfaction of reaping the rewards (those tasty fruits and vegetables and beautiful flowers) of your efforts is what helps to reduce stress levels.

3. **Gardening Keeps You Limber**
   All that bending, lifting, kneeling and twisting go a long way toward maintaining flexibility as well as strength. It’s a good idea to warm up, pace yourself, and do some stretching.

4. **Gardening Provides a Regular Source of Exercise**
   If you enjoy an activity then you’re more likely to do it. Even if you’re only a weekend gardener, you’re still getting out there moving around on a regular basis.

5. **Connecting with Nature**
   Isn’t it lovely to hear the birds chirping on a late summer afternoon, or to watch a butterfly flutter around your flowers in the early morning sunlight? Just try not to think about that pesky groundhog.

6. **Connecting with Community**
   Spending time in the yard and garden is often the best way to connect with your neighbors across the fence.
COMING EVENTS

Feb. 2-10  WNC Beginners’ Beekeeping School at the Folk Art Center. For more information and registration: wncbees.org

Feb. 26  WNC Clean Streams: Landscaping and Water Quality. 9 am – 5 pm at The NC Arboretum. Sessions for landscape professionals and home gardeners.

March 1  Spring Garden School. Presented by Extension Master Gardeners of Buncombe County at the Folk Art Center

March 8  Organic Growers School, at Blue Ridge Community College, Flat Rock, NC. For information and registration: organicgrowersschool.org.

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.