One of the most delightful things about a garden is the anticipation it provides.”
-W. E. Johns

Normal May Weather
Weather Averages (1895 – 2007)
For Central and Southern Mountains
Courtesy of the National Climatic Data Center

Normal May Average High  73.5°F
Normal May Average Low  50.6°F
Normal May Precipitation  4.42"

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>6:16 am</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Inside:

- Garden Chores For May……………………… 2
- Spotlight: Fringe Tree……………………… 3
- Successful Container Gardens……………… 3
- The Organic Way: Use Manure Wisely………. 4
- Insects To Watch For………………………… 4
- Ground Bees…………………………………. 4
- Hotline Is Open…………………………….. 4
- Plant Problem Clinics & Garden Tour……… 5
- Rain Barrels…………………………………. 5
- Coming Events…………………………….. 6

PLAN AHEAD

We never know what the coming year will bring in the garden. This year for example, first it was too warm too soon. Then it got too cold. What else could go wrong?

The Easter weekend blast of frigid weather reminded us that we can have frost and even a freeze on up into May. We also can not predict how hot and dry it may be this summer. So it is wise to plan ahead in case watering becomes an issue.

Once soil has warmed in May, select a time when the soil is moist to apply a couple of inches of mulch to flower beds and vegetable gardens. Although gardens do best with on inch of water each week, if the beds are well mulched they can usually make do with watering less often.

Rain barrels installed under downspouts can be useful to save water for dry periods. Drip irrigation or soaker hoses are good systems for applying water directly to the soil. Sprinklers often waste water by putting water where it is not needed and by evaporation.
CHORES FOR MAY

LAWNS

- Do not fertilize fescue and bluegrass lawns.
- Zoysiagrass can be fertilized with ½ pound of actual nitrogen per 1,000 square feet.
- Mow cool season grasses 2½ to 3 inches high; mow zoysia one inch.

ORNAMENTALS

- Prune spring blooming shrubs soon after blossoms fade.
- Do not remove the leaves from spring bulbs until they have died down at least half way.
- Look for disease resistant varieties where possible: roses, garden phlox, bee balm, zinnias.
- Most rose varieties should be sprayed weekly with fungicides to prevent black spot and powdery mildew.
- 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.
- Even though you may not have fruit on fruit trees, maintain fungicide sprays as needed to keep the foliage healthy.
- With no fruit, some apple and pear trees will be prone to excessive growth of suckers. Prune them out in May and June to reduce the excess vigor.
- Also, do not fertilize mature fruit trees that do not have fruit, as it will likely encourage even more sucker growth.

VEGETABLES

- Plan the vegetable garden on paper. Keep a copy from year to year so you can plan crop rotations.
- Wait until about May 5 to plant tender crops like tomatoes and squash.
- Thin seedlings of radishes, carrots, lettuce and other early plantings that should be up by now. Carrots and radishes are typically thinned to 1 to 2 inches apart, lettuce, spinach and kale to 6 inches.
- 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.
- Put in tomato stakes and bean trellises soon after planting.
- If you are short on space, grow cucumbers on a trellis.

OTHER

- Insects are essential for pollinating many crops. Honey bees and other pollinators are very vulnerable to insecticides. Sevin dust (carbaryl) is especially toxic to bees.

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: FRINGE TREE

Fringe Tree, Chionanthus virginicus, can be classified as either a large shrub or a small tree. It is deciduous and can grow to about 20 feet when mature. It is native from New Jersey to Florida, especially along stream banks.

The special feature of fringe tree is the fluffy fragrant flowers produced in spring. The airy flower clusters also give it other names such as Old Man’s Beard or Grancy Greybeard. This species, like hollies, has separate male and female plants. Interestingly, the flowers of the male tree are showier, but the female tree produces small black berries which are a good food source for birds in late summer.

Fringe tree prefers moist, fertile, well-drained soil. It will grow in full sun to partial shade. It is suitable for the native garden, large shrubbery border, or perhaps even a specimen plant.

SUCCESSFUL CONTAINER GARDENS

Container gardens have become very popular for entries, patios and decks. Here are a few tips for planting a successful garden in a container:

- Choose containers with drainage holes or drill holes if needed. Anything that holds soil can be used as a container. Container gardens have been made from gloves, boots, pocketbooks, suitcases, pots, pans and mailboxes.

- Use containers larger than the root ball of your plant, considering the size of the mature plant.

- Use a good potting soil. To save money, fill the bottom of large containers with pinecones, aluminum cans or small plastic nursery pots before filling with soil.

- Select plants that suit your light conditions. Full sun means your plant will receive a minimum of six hours of sunlight daily.

- Consider mixing herbs and flowers, vegetables and flowers, or bulbs and grasses.

- Combine mounding, trailing and upright plants for striking container garden.

- Another formula for containers is to use a silvery gray foliage plant, a green plant, a colorful foliage plant and a flowering plant with flowers that match or complement at least one shade of the colorful foliage. The green and silvery gray foliage allows quite a range of colors to work together, but most people seem to prefer either a blue, pink and lavender color scheme, or a red, orange and strong yellow color scheme. A red, white and blue color scheme may work on the 4th of July but make sure you have a place to hide it the other 364 days of the year.

- A thin layer of mulch or decorative pebbles will help conserve moisture.

- Make groupings of container plants on different size stands.
THE ORGANIC WAY: USE MANURE WISELY

Animal manures are a mainstay for organic gardeners, both for the organic matter benefits in the soil and the nutrient content. The most commonly used manures are cow and horse, although that of other non-meat eating animals can also be used. It is recommended not to use waste from dogs, cats, or other meat-eaters since there is some risk of parasites or disease organisms that can be transmitted to humans.

It is best to apply manures after they have composted for several months. If manure is applied to the soil fresh, it should be worked in during the fall for spring planting. Even aged manure should be spread a few weeks before spring planting. Fresh manure can burn plants and inhibit seed germination.

One of the biggest disadvantages to the use of manure is the introduction of weed seeds. A hot composting process will destroy many seeds, but not all. There is also the potential for water pollution when rain or irrigation carries nitrogen out of the garden, especially when fresh manure is spread on the soil surface.

Fresh manure should also be handled with caution because there is a small chance it could contain pathogenic bacteria such as *E.coli*, *Listeria* and *Salmonella*. Wear gloves and wash well after handling fresh manure. Manures vary in nutrient content depending on type, age of animals, age of the manure, what the animals ate, the type and amount of bedding included, and other factors. Manures contain some nitrogen and potassium, but little phosphate. A general guideline for application would be to spread 25 to 30 pounds of aged cow or horse manure over 100 square feet. Use half that amount of sheep, rabbit or poultry manure. If you want to go about things more scientifically, it is useful to know that for $4 you can have a sample analyzed for nutrient content through the NC Department of Agriculture.

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 lookout for:

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

**Fruits and Vegetables**: slugs, asparagus beetles, cucumber beetles, cabbage worms, aphids.

GROUND BEES

Ground nesting bees, often called digger bees, may be plentiful this month. Although seeing many bees hovering over the ground may seem intimidating, these bees are pretty harmless. Each female bee digs an individual hole so there will be many holes in an area. These are not social bees and do not protect a hive. You can continue to mow and walk through the area without fear of being stung.

With honeybee colonies declining, these native pollinators are particularly important. So attempting to eradicate them is discouraged. Just be patient as they will be gone in about 6 weeks.

Ground-nesting bees are usually found in areas with bare soil or very thin turf, so improving the lawn is one way to discourage them from nesting in the future. If the soil or location is not conducive to a healthy lawn, using ground covers or heavy mulches may be an alternative solution. Mulches may be used on bare patches caused by heavy traffic where grass will not grow.
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 you may bring problem samples into the office for diagnosis.

Call: 255-5522 or visit: 94 Coxe Avenue, Asheville

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

PLANT PROBLEM CLINICS – Through the summer, Extension Master Gardeners will be available to look at plant problem samples and to answer gardening questions the 2nd and 4th Saturdays of each month from 11 am until 2 pm. Look for the volunteers at the WNC Farmers Market in the breezeway.

GARDEN TOUR – Have you been wanting to see how some “real Master Gardeners” garden? Your opportunity to learn from the best is right around the corner. On Saturday, June 30, Extension Master Gardeners of Buncombe County will host their first ever garden tour. Five private gardens of Buncombe County Master Gardeners will be open as well as the two demonstration gardens. There will be large gardens, small gardens, sunny sites and shade. Visitors will have the opportunity to learn about plants for shady sites, flower gardens, gardening for wildlife, plant selection, plant propagation, water features, fruit trees, vegetables, and more. Cost of tickets will be $15.

Tickets will go on sale May 1 and may be purchased at the NC Cooperative Extension, Buncombe County Center at 94 Coxe Avenue. For more information call 255-5522.

RAIN BARRELS

If the summer turns dry, you may be glad to have a rain barrel or two to save up some of the free water for your gardens. You can find rain barrels sold at some local garden centers and hardware stores, or find them through online sources. You might also consider making your own.

A rain barrel can be made from recycled food grade plastic barrels, large trash containers or whiskey barrels. Besides the barrel, you will need a lid to keep out mosquitoes and other things, an overflow spout, and a spigot or hose connection. Some sources for instruction include:

http://www.unctv.org/gardener/rainbarrel.html
http://sarasota.extension.ufl.edu/Hort/Pubs/Rainbarrel.htm
http://www.dnr.state.md.us/ed/rainbarrel.html

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

Linda G. Blue
Extension Agent – Agriculture – Urban Horticulture
Check out Buncombe County Center’s website at…..
http://buncombe.ces.ncsu.edu
COMING EVENTS

May 4 – 5  Days in the Garden, Botanical Gardens at Asheville. Friday, 1:00 – 6:00 pm, Plant Sales. Saturday, 8:00 am – 3:00 pm, plants, food, crafts, entertainment and guided walks.

May 4 – 5  Spring Herb Festival, WNC Farmers’ Market. Friday and Saturday, 9:00 am – 5:00 pm. Sunday, 10:00 am – 3:00 pm. Plants, herbal products, crafts, garden information and educational programs.

May 8  Gardening in the Mountains Series, “Favorite Perennials”, presented by Extension Master Gardeners, at The North Carolina Arboretum, 10:00 am. Free, no registration required.

June 12  Gardening in the Mountains Series, “Native Plants”, presented by Extension Master Gardeners, at The North Carolina Arboretum, 10:00 am. Free, no registration required.

June 30  Master Gardener’s Garden Tour, 9:00 am – 4:00 pm. For more information call the Extension Office at 255-5522.

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.