By all these lovely tokens September days are here, with summer’s best of weather and autumn’s best of cheer.”

-Helen Hunt Jackson

Normal September Weather

Weather Averages
For Asheville North Carolina
Courtesy of Wikipedia

Normal September Average High 76°F
Normal September Average Low 55.4°F
Normal September Precipitation 3.72”

Hours of Daylight for Asheville, NC

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<th>Sunrise</th>
<th>Sunset</th>
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<td>Sept 1</td>
<td>7:01 am</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept 30</td>
<td>7:23 am</td>
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SEE YOU AT THE FAIR!

If you are planning to visit the NC Mountain State Fair, September 7-16 at the WNC Ag Center, be sure to visit the Flower and Garden Tent.

Drop by the “Ask A Gardener” table to talk to the Master Gardener Volunteers about your gardening questions.

While you are there, pick up soil test boxes, purchase a Gardener’s Almanac, and gather other information.

Also remember that entry days for the flower shows are September 6 and 11, and entries for fruits and vegetables should be delivered September 3 and 4.
CHORES FOR SEPTEMBER

LAWNS

- Fertilize fescue and bluegrass lawns. Use slow-release fertilizer to reduce risk of nutrient run-off.
- This is also the time to do any reseeding where you may have lost grass this summer due to drought or disease. Break up soil, cover seed with straw if the spot is more than a few inches across, and keep watered.

ORNAMENTALS

- Do NOT fertilize shrubs. Late season nitrogen can reduce cold hardiness of woody plants.
- Christmas cactus can be kept outside for a few more weeks. Naturally shorter days and temperatures down to 45 will start development of flower buds.
- Stop watering the amaryllis bulb and allow the leaves to die down. After the bulb has rested for several weeks you will probably see a new shoot begin to emerge in November or December.
- If some of the summer annuals are spent, go ahead and pull them out and replace them with pansies or ornamental cabbage.
- Start checking house plants for signs of insects so they can be treated a few times before moving back indoors.
- If you have houseplants outside they will need to come indoors when temperatures dip below 50 degrees F.

FRUITS

- Tend to the strawberry bed. Remove weeds and fertilize as the plants are forming next spring’s flower buds now. Also water if September rains are lacking.
- Prune blackberries and raspberries after harvest. Remove the canes that bore fruit this year.

VEGETABLES

- Transplant broccoli, cabbage, lettuce, and leafy greens.
- You can still seed kale, turnips and spinach.
- Keep an eye on cabbage family crops that may need insect control. A weekly application of B.t. bacteria spray will prevent cabbageworms. Use insecticidal soap for aphids if needed.
- Consider planting a cover crop on vegetable beds to build organic matter for next year’s garden. This is a good time to plant clover, vetch or Austrian winter peas. Mow and turn under in February or March before next summer’s planting.
- Dig sweet potatoes before frost.

OTHER

- Continue to tend the hummingbird feeder. Migrating birds will appreciate the food supply during their long journey.
SPOTLIGHT: HUMMINGBIRD MOTH

Sometimes the creatures in our gardens can be as interesting as our plants. Many types of butterflies and moths are quite plentiful in late summer. While most of us recognize the swallowtails and monarchs, another common visitor in my garden often goes unidentified.

The hummingbird moth, also called the hummingbird clearwing, is a delightful insect. It is often mistaken for a large bee or a “baby” hummingbird. The confusion is understandable, as this moth does bear a striking resemblance to a hummingbird. Unlike most moths, not only is it active in the daytime, it has the ability to hover as it sips nectar from a flower. It is actually a member of the sphinx moth family, known for their activity in the flower garden at night.

The moth’s 1 ½ inch long body is greenish on the upper part, similar to a hummingbird. It has “tail feathers” that move like a rudder as it hovers. The clear wings are a blur in motion. If you are lucky you may catch a hummingbird moth still asleep on a flower in the cool of a summer morning, allowing you to get a closer look.

The larva of this moth is a green hornworm caterpillar, similar to the tomato hornworm, but much smaller. It feeds on honeysuckle. Occasionally I discover one on the trumpet honeysuckle in the garden, though they are never numerous enough to damage the plant.

HEMLOCK WOOLLY ADELGIDS

If you have hemlock trees, fall is a good time to inspect trees and treat with organic sprays or insecticides.

Trees small enough to spray can be treated with horticultural oil or insecticidal soap. The period from September through November is a good time to spray. Be sure to spray thoroughly to cover all the insects.

Fall is also the best time to apply systemic insecticides. Products containing imidaclopid (Merit, Bayer Advance Garden Tree and Shrub Insect Control, some generic brands) can be applied as a soil drench at the base of the tree. Follow label directions carefully for calculating mixing and application rates.

Trees that can not be treated with a soil drench because of proximity to a stream or sloping or rocky soil, can be treated by trunk injections. This method would need to be handled by a professional arborist.

INSECTS TO WATCH FOR

Ornamentals: Spruce mites on hemlock, juniper and spruce; lacebugs on azaleas, cotoneaster and pyracantha; bagworms on junipers and Leyland cypress; hemlock wooly adelgids on hemlock.

Vegetables: Cabbage worms and aphids on cabbage, greens, broccoli; squash vine borers in squash and pumpkins, pickleworms in squashes and pumpkins.
THE ORGANIC WAY: Scouting for Bugs

By the time you get the fall vegetable garden in, insects have been out there multiplying all season. Still we rarely recommend spraying an insecticide, organic or otherwise, “just in case” there might be some bad bugs out there. By now you probably realize that even organic pesticides can kill as many beneficial insects as harmful ones.

The first step in defending your vegetables from insects is keeping the plants vigorous and healthy. The next step is what we call scouting – checking your plants regularly for any sign of a problem. A pest population is much easier to get under control if you catch it early. Of course it helps if you learn to tell the good bugs from the bad bugs.

In the fall garden the two most likely unwanted invaders are the several species of caterpillars that attack anything in the cabbage family, and aphids. If you don’t have too many plants you may be content to control cabbageworms by inspecting regularly and removing the caterpillars by hand. If this is too daunting, use a B.t. (Bacillus thuringiensis) spray once a week.

When you scout for aphids, also pay attention to any beneficial insects you might also find in the vicinity – ladybugs and their larva and syrphid fly larve. If you don’t find a supply of beneficials and don’t want to risk the aphid population getting out of hand, a thorough application of insecticidal soap may be in order.

FALL GARDEN SCHOOL

Saturday, September 29
Folk Art Center
Blue Ridge Parkway, Asheville

This year’s garden school will be free, but you must pre-register. You may sign up to attend the morning session, afternoon session, or both. Lunch is on your own.

Morning Session – 9:00 am -12:15 pm

• “Work in the Not-So-Dormant Season”, Joyce Weinberg and Janice Kennedy.
• “Meeting Our Mountain Challenges: Climate, Weather Extremes, Soil, Slopes and More”, Norbert Artzt and Diane Almond.
• “Extend Your Growing Season – Veggies, Fruits and Herbs”, Nina Fox-Holladay and Steve Holladay.

Afternoon Session – 1:15 – 4:30 pm

• “Putting PIZAZZ in your Winter Landscape”, Peggy Calenda.
• “Fall Makeovers”, Four MGV’s, TBA
• “Native Options to Exotic Invasives”, Debbie Green
GET YOUR CANNER GAUGE CHECKED HERE!!!!

Canning season is here. It’s a good idea to check your equipment before use. Buy new jar lids to replace the lids used last year. Check your bands and jars to see that they are in good condition. Check your gaskets and pressure gauges, as well. If you would like to have your gauge tested, call our office to set up an appointment. We will be testing most Friday mornings, but may be able to fit in testing at other times.

Basic Home Maintenance

If you are either a new homeowner or a long timer, this course could be for you. The Buncombe County Center of NC Cooperative Extension is offering a five-session Basic Home Maintenance Course beginning Thursday September 27. The two-hour class will be held from 5:30-7:30 pm on Sept. 27, October 2, 4, 9, & 11 at the Extension Center, 94 Coxe Ave., Asheville. Some of the topics to be covered are: saving on your heating and cooling bills, basic plumbing repairs, interior and exterior maintenance, landscaping and lawn care, indoor air quality, common household pests, etc. The fee is $ 20.00 and includes all materials. Space is limited so pre-registration is necessary. To register call the Buncombe County Center at 255-5522.

2008 Extension Master Gardener Training Applications are Being Accepted
Call 255-5522 or e-mail joyceplemmons@buncombecounty.org

2008 Extension Master Gardener Training
Wednesdays, 12 noon until 4:00 pm
January 16 through April 16, 2008
NC Cooperative Extension Center, 94 Coxe Ave., Asheville, NC

The deadline for applications is November 16. The training fee for 2008 is expected to be $ 75 (though that could change). Interviews are generally scheduled during late November or early December.

About Extension Master Gardener Training

So you think you might want to become an Extension Master Gardener volunteer? Learn about training requirements, volunteer activities and meet some volunteers. You may fill out an application form and even schedule an interview that day if you like. No pre-registration required.

Introduction to the Master Gardener Program
Friday, October 19
1-3 pm

Buncombe County Extension Center
94 Coxe Ave., Asheville
COMING EVENTS

September 7-16
NC Mountain State Fair, WNC Ag Center

September 8 & 22
Extension Master Gardeners Plant Clinic, WNC Farmers’ Market (Breezeway)
11 am to 2 pm.

September 8
Botanical Gardens at Asheville Fall Plant Sale, 9 am to 3 pm, in the gardens.

September 11
Gardening in the Mountains: “Heaths and Heathers”. Presented by Extension Master Gardeners at the North Carolina Arboretum at 10:00 am. Tuesday is free admission. No pre-registration.

September 29
Fall Garden School, presented by Extension Master Gardeners at the Folk Art Center on the Blue Ridge Parkway at Asheville. Free, but register by calling 255-5522

October 9
Gardening in the Mountains: ”Ways to Overwinter Tender Plants”. Presented by Extension Master Gardeners at the NC Arboretum at 10:00 am

October 19
Introduction to the Extension Master Gardener Program. 1 to 3 pm at the Buncombe Co. Cooperative Extension Office, 94 Coxe Ave. Asheville

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.