June 2008

“A perfect summer day is when the sun is shining, the breeze is blowing, the birds are singing, and the lawn mower is broken.”

-James Dent

GARDEN SAFETY

Sun Protection. The most rapidly increasing type of cancer is skin cancer. Before going out to the garden remember to spread on a sun screen and put on a wide-brimmed hat.

Pesticide Safety. Read and follow label directions. It will tell you what plants the product can be used on, time to wait until harvest or reentering the area, mixing rate, safety equipment, storage, disposal, etc.

Lawn Mower Safety. Lawn mowers are among the most frequent causes of injury in the landscape. Walk over the lawn before mowing to check for hazards such as branches, rocks or toys. Keep children out of the area while mowing. Even mulching mowers can throw out rocks or other missiles. Wear sturdy shoes with good tread and long pants.

Normal June Weather

Weather Averages
For Asheville, North Carolina
Courtesy of Wikipedia

Normal June Average High 80°F
Normal June Average Low 58.3°F
Normal June Precipitation 4.38"

Hours of Daylight for Asheville, NC

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sunrise</th>
<th>Sunset</th>
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<tr>
<td>June 1</td>
<td>6:15 am</td>
<td>8:39 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 30</td>
<td>6:17 am</td>
<td>8:49 pm</td>
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North Carolina State University and North Carolina A&T State University commit themselves to positive action to secure equal opportunity regardless of race, color, creed, national origin, religion, sex, age, veteran status or disability. In addition, the two Universities welcome all persons without regard to sexual orientation. North Carolina State University, North Carolina A&T State University U.S. Department of Agriculture, and local governments cooperating.
CHORES FOR JUNE

LAWNS

- Do not fertilize cool season lawns until September.
- Practice “grasscycling”. Use a mulching mower and leave clippings on the lawn.

ORNAMENTALS

- Some trees and shrubs are still showing the damage from last year’s late freeze. Dead branches should be pruned back to live wood. It may take an artistic eye to start reshaping a damaged plant into a desirable form.
- Prune rhododendrons, azaleas, mountain laurel and pieris if needed.
- Late blooming perennials that tend to get too tall, such as Joe-Pye-weed, tall asters, chrysanthemums, can be cut back by half.
- It is not too late to start container gardens. Remember to check containers every couple of days for water needs. Use liquid fertilizer every few weeks or apply slow release granules early in the season.
- Irises can be divided after they have bloomed. Remember to plant the rhizomes shallow, so some of the top of the rhizome is exposed to sunlight.
- House plants and hanging baskets can use more fertilizer now. If you use liquid fertilizer with each watering, be sure to flush the containers with plenty of water occasionally to remove excess salts.

FRUITS

- Most fruit trees have set a heavy crop of fruit this spring. Thin the fruit of peaches, apples, plums to 6 inches apart.
- A healthy strawberry bed can be renovated after harvest. Beds more than 3 or 4 years old are often best removed and replanted in fall or spring.

VEGETABLES

- You can still plant many warm season vegetables – squash, cucumbers, beans, pumpkins, tomatoes etc.
- Side dress (fertilize) vegetable plants about 6 weeks after planting, when they have begun to set fruit.
- Cucumbers, green beans, edible pod peas, summer squash and some other vegetables are at their prime for a short time. Check the garden daily and harvest regularly while the fruits are small and tender.
- Keep watermelon and cantaloupe plants well watered while growing. But best flavor will develop if the plants are dryer during the last week or 2 that fruit is ripening.
- If you want more tomato plants, those suckers you remove now will root easily in moist potting soil.
- My favorite method for watering vegetable plants like tomatoes, peppers and squash is to sink a 2 gallon nursery pot about 6 inches deep between 2 plants. Use the pots with several large holes around the sides of the bottom rather than one hole in the center. Put a shovel full of soil into the bottom to anchor it and slow water movement. You can put rotted manure, compost, or a little fertilizer in the pot to add nutrients while watering.

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.
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.

Ornamentals: slugs; lace bugs on azaleas, rhododendrons, pieris, pyracanthas; bagworms on junipers, cedars, cypress, arborvitae; spruce mites on spruce, hemlocks, fir; spidermites on many flowers and shrubs; euonymus scale.

Fruits and vegetables: slugs, asparagus beetles, cucumber beetles, cabbageworms, tomato fruitworms, aphids, spider mites.

AVOID BLOSSOM-END ROT

For some gardeners blossom-end rot is a regular problem on tomatoes, and can affect peppers, squash and watermelons. If you have tested your soil and brought the pH and calcium levels up if needed, the problem is probably either irregular watering or the fertilizer being used.

Although some blossom-end rot is usually most severe during dry weather, fluctuating soil moisture can cause it as well. To avoid this, mulch the garden to retain moisture and water deeply when needed. Do not allow plants to wilt between waterings. Also avoid using high nitrogen fertilizer, especially ammonium nitrate. Use calcium nitrate or a more slowly released organic fertilizer instead.

FOCUS ON FLOWERS: The 4 Season Landscape

NC Cooperative Extension, Extension Master Gardeners and the North Carolina Arboretum are once again teaming up to offer this special day-long symposium. This year’s theme will be planning the landscape for year-round interest. For registration information call the Arboretum at 665-2492.

Focus on Flowers: The 4 Season Landscape

July 19, 2008
9:00 am – 4:00 pm

Designing the Year-Round Garden        Pam Beck
The Summer Garden          Hunter Stubbs
The Fall Garden           Linda Blue
Winter into Spring        Pam Beck
Flower Arranging          Becky Lance

$ 44 Arboretum members, $ 50 non-members
SPOTLIGHT

Blueberry bushes are a natural choice for an “edible landscape”. Highbush is the type of blueberry that grows wild here in the mountains, and is generally the best choice for this area. There are many good varieties available.

Highbush blueberry varieties usually get 4 to 6 feet tall. Their brilliant red fall color can be a wonderful asset to a shrubbery border, or use them as a deciduous hedge. Although they do not need cross pollination, it is often a good idea to look for a couple of varieties that do not all ripen at the same time.

Your blueberry plants will be most productive if planted in full sun. But they will do well with as little as a half day of sun, making them one of the more shade tolerant fruit crops.

Highbush blueberries need an unusually low soil pH of 4.5 to 5.0. This means it is especially important to do a soil test to check the pH before you plant. They are also particular about soil drainage. To ensure your plants are happy, it is best to amend the planting site with plenty of organic material such as pine bark soil conditioner.

Blueberries are well suited to the organic garden because they rarely need to be treated for disease or insect problems and require little fertilizer. A light application of fertilizer can be applied soon after the new growth appears each spring.

For more information on selecting blueberry varieties see:

http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/hil/hil-201.html

GOING NATIVE

Many western North Carolina gardeners are interested in using native plants in the landscape. This is especially true if you are interested in supporting local wildlife populations. Increasing human populations have greatly reduced wildlife habitat. Native animals are best adapted to native plants for food and cover, so a well-planned landscape of native plants can help you attract more wildlife to your property.

Native plants can also be low maintenance, as long as you pay close attention to placing them in the right location. Match their needs for sun or shade, soil type and moisture.

NC State University has developed a new web site to help you select native plants. It also includes information on invasive exotic plants to avoid.

Visit: http://ncsu.edu/goingnative/index.html
TIPS FOR THE WATER-WISE LANDSCAPE

After you have selected plants best suited to the growing conditions, good soil preparation is the next key in developing a drought tolerant plant. Think of it this way: the healthier, deeper and more extensive the root system, the better the plant can use the available water.

Of course, soil testing is the first step. Only if the soil pH is within the best range for the plant and the phosphate and other nutrients are at good levels, can the root system develop well. Of equal importance is good soil aeration. Before planting is your only real opportunity to work in organic material to loosen and aerate the soil. This allows roots to extend into the soil much faster and easier. When it rains, the water can soak into the soil more readily rather than running off the surface. The organic matter soaks up the water, both preventing the roots from being too wet, and holding it for future use.

Taking more time and effort at planting time will pay dividends for years to come.

WATCH OUT FOR POISON IVY

Along with the arrival of summertime and outdoor activities, comes the risk of an itchy case of poison ivy.

Poison ivy always has three leaflets at the end of a long stem. These three leaflets make up one leaf. The leaflets can vary quite a bit in their exact shape. Although poison ivy is usually thought of as a vine, it will often grow as a weak shrub, standing up 2 to 3 feet tall. Old vines climbing trees are easily recognized by the extremely hairy stem.

An established patch of poison ivy can be quite difficult to eradicate. The plant spreads by underground runners, so the root system can be very extensive. Individual small plants can be dug up or pulled when the ground is soft. A heavy infestation is best controlled with repeated herbicide applications.

Several herbicides are available for use on poison ivy. Products that are readily available for home use include the following ingredients: 2, 4-D (Weed-B-Gon, Southern Lawn Weed Killer, Wipe-out, others), glyphosate (Round-Up, KleerAway, Kleenup, others) and trichlopyr (Brush-B-Gon, Power Force Brush Killer and others). Products containing dicamba are also very effective, but should not be used over the root area of trees and shrubs. Be sure to follow label directions carefully for use and mixing rates of all herbicides. These products should be considered “non-selective” and will damage other plants.
COMING EVENTS

June 14 & 28

Plant Problem Clinic by Extension Master Gardeners at the WNC Farmers Market, 11:00 am – 2:00 pm in the breezeway between the retail buildings.

June 14 & 28

Backyard Composting Demonstration by Extension Master Gardeners at the WNC Farmers Market, beside Israels Garden Center, 11:00 am – 2:00 pm.

June 10

Gardening In The Mountains Series, “4 Seasons of Flowers”, presented by Extension Master Gardeners at the NC Arboretum, 10:00 am. Free, no registration required.

July 8

Gardening In The Mountain Series, “Xeriscaping”, presented by Extension Master Gardeners, at The North Carolina Arboretum, 10:00 am. Free, no registration required.

July 19

FOCUS ON FLOWERS: The Four Season Landscape. The North Carolina Arboretum, 9:00 am – 4:00 pm. For registration information call the Arboretum at 665-2492.

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.