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

Garden Tour

Don’t miss this opportunity to learn gardening techniques from Buncombe County Extension Master Gardeners. On Saturday, June 27, four Master Gardeners’ gardens plus a great school garden will be open for the tour. Visitors will have the opportunity to learn about things like water saving techniques, gardening in shade, water features, designing container gardens, use of ground covers, raising orchids, and much more.

Tickets are $10 and may be purchased at the Buncombe County Extension office at 94 Coxe Ave. or may be ordered by mail. Download an order form at: http://buncombe.ces.ncsu.edu

Normal June Weather

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

Hours of Daylight for Asheville, NC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sunrise</th>
<th>Sunset</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 1</td>
<td>6:15 am</td>
<td>8:39 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 30</td>
<td>6:17 am</td>
<td>8:49 pm</td>
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Persons with disabilities and persons with limited English proficiency may request accommodations to participate in activities mentioned in this newsletter. Please contact Linda Blue at 828-255-5522 during business hours at least 3 days prior to the event to discuss accommodations.
Garden Chores for June

Lawns

- Maintain the mowing height for fescue lawns at 3 inches. Try to mow frequently enough to remove no more than 1/3 of the blade at a time.
- Do not fertilize cool season lawns until September.
- Regular rainy weather will produce good conditions for brown patch, a fungus disease. If brown patches begin to occur in the lawn do not irrigate and do not mow the lawn when wet.

Ornamentals

- Prune spring blooming shrubs soon after blooms fade.
- Irises and daylilies can be divided even while in bloom. This is useful if you need to keep flower colors separated. Remove any remaining flowers, cut leaves half way back and replant the divisions as soon as possible.
- Early spring rains have encouraged many of us to do a lot of planting. Remember to check new plantings through the summer. Trees and shrubs will need a good soaking every week through the first growing season. Herbaceous perennials will need regular watering at least for the first couple of months.
- You can still plant seeds for fast maturing annuals such as cosmos, zinnias, marigolds, and small sunflowers.
- If you have moved house plants outside for the summer, this is a good time to repot if you have not done so. Also remember to monitor the soil moisture as plants will dry out faster outside.

Fruits

- Wet spring and early summer weather is especially bad for developing brown rot on peaches and plums, and black rot on grapes. Maintain regular fungicide sprays as a preventative as these diseases can not be controlled once they have infected the fruit.
- Since most fruit crops escaped freeze injury this spring, many will need to be thinned to prevent tree damage from too much fruit and to increase fruit size. Apples, pears and peaches should be thinned before the fruit is larger than a nickel. Remove excess fruit until fruits are 4 to 6 inches apart.
- This is not a bad time to remove excess sucker and watersprout growth from apple trees. Removing the excessively vigorous growth now will allow more of the plant’s energy to go into fruit and desirable growth, and will result in less re-sprouting than winter pruning.

Vegetables

- Vegetable crops generally need another dose of fertilizer about 5 to 6 weeks after planting, or when fruit starts to form.
- Once cucumbers, squash and green beans begin to fruit, check them daily. The fruits mature quickly and are best harvested while young and tender.
- Be careful when harvesting. Use 2 hands to pull beans, cucumbers, squash, etc. to avoid breaking the plant.
- Through the month of June you can still plant tomatoes, cucumbers, squash, green beans, winter squash, and pumpkins.
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; lacebugs on azaleas, rhododendrons, pieris, pyracanthas; bagworms on junipers, cedars, cypress, arborvitae; spruce mites on spruce, hemlocks, fir; spider mites on many flowers and shrubs; euonymous scale.

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

Choosing the Right Herbicide

We seem to have had a lot of questions this spring about using herbicides. The use of weed killers in gardens and landscapes can be tricky. It is especially important to read labels carefully to make sure that: 1) The product is safe to use around the intended plants, 2) It can be expected to control the problem weeds, 3) It is the right type of chemical for the stage of growth.

Here are some basic categories of herbicides:

**Pre-Emergence** herbicides are weed control chemicals that are applied to the soil before the weed seeds sprout. They must be applied preventatively. Once weed seedlings are present, it is too late to apply most of these chemicals, although some are effective on very small seedlings. Crabgrass preventer is an example of a pre-emergence herbicide.

**Post-Emergence** herbicides are applied directly to the weeds when they are actively growing.

**Contact** herbicides burn the part of the plant contacted, but do not circulate within the plant. They are useful for small annual weeds, but perennial weeds will re-sprout.

**Systemic** herbicides are absorbed into the plant and circulated to kill the root system. These are particularly useful for perennial weeds.

**Selective** herbicides kill some kinds of plants and not others. They are commonly either **Broadleaf** herbicides, which kill broadleaf weeds without harming the lawn; or **Grass** herbicides, which kill grasses without harming your shrubs or flowers.

Vinegar Weed Killer

With more home gardeners looking for organic options for pest control in the garden, it seems that information has been circulating about using vinegar to kill weeds. So here’s the scoop:

Vinegar is acetic acid. Some organic herbicides are now available that contain about 25% acetic acid (Burnout). The common kitchen vinegar you purchase at the grocery is only 5% acetic acid.

So, can you use household vinegar to kill weeds? Maybe. Straight vinegar sprayed on small annual weeds on a hot sunny afternoon will burn the plants down. The stronger commercial products will work much more effectively. In either case, perennial weeds will be knocked back, but will come back from the root.

But also keep in mind that if you spray the vinegar on a regular basis, you will be applying an acid to the soil, eventually making the garden soil more acid.
Spotlight: Creeping Thyme

Creeping thyme, *Thymus vulgaris*, can be quite useful as an ornamental groundcover in small garden spaces. It works well between stepping stones, among rocks in a rock garden, or as an edging plant. Since it is really a small woody shrub, you would not want to walk on it a lot, but occasional stepping on the tips that crawl over stepping stones will not cause much damage.

Plant thymes in full sun. Like most of the Mediterranean herbs, they need well drained soil, so amend clay soil with organic matter, pine bark soil conditioner or gravel. After the first year, established plants are quite drought tolerant.

Some varieties of creeping thyme are more cold hardy than others. Unfortunately, the wonderfully fragrant lemon thyme often does not survive western North Carolina winters. But I have had excellent results with the caraway, golden, silver and woolly varieties.

My favorite is the caraway thyme, especially planted between stepping stones. It is a carpet of pink flowers in late May and early June. After flowering all of the thymes will go through a case of “the uglies”. The best approach is to shear the plants back to about an inch or two in height as soon as flowers fade. Give them a few weeks to fill out again.

Food Preservation Workshops

Canning season is just around the corner and it’s time to get prepared. Check equipment to make sure it is ready for use. Buy new jar lids to replace the lids used last year. Call our office to set up an appointment for checking your pressure gauge. (828) 255-5522.

To learn more about canning, or just to brush up on the newest information, our Hands on Canning Classes this season are:

- Making Strawberry Jam - Thursday, June 4, 9am to 1pm
- Making Dill Pickles and Relish - Thursday, July 9, 1 to 4 pm
- Canning Tomatoes - Thursday, August 6, 1 to 4 pm

Pre-registration is required and a fee of $10 will cover costs for materials ($15 for couples). Call our office to register or for more information. (828) 255-5522.
Your Own Backyard

NC Cooperative Extension, Extension Master Gardeners and the North Carolina Arboretum are once again teaming up to offer this special day-long symposium. For registration information call the Arboretum at 665-2492.

Focus on Flowers: Your Own Back Yard
July 18, 2009
9:15—4:30

$44 Arboretum members, $50 non-members

Gardens of NC                  Peter Loewer
Great Plants for the Cutting Garden   Judy Garry
Bulbs for Four Seasons             Julie Vidotto
Saving Seeds From the Garden       June Williams
Vines and Trellises               Linda Blue and Alison Arnold
Habitats for Pollinators             Diane Almond
Functional & Fabulous Containers     Renee Fisher

Spring Diseases

Some years certain diseases will be particularly prevalent, especially when we have frequent rains in the spring. This year we have been seeing fire blight and some fungus diseases.

Fire blight affects apples, pears and occasionally cotoneaster and pyracantha. There is a great variability in susceptibility among apple and pear varieties. The disease is recognized as dying branch tips in May and June. In very susceptible varieties the disease can spread far down the branch.

Fire blight is caused by a bacteria that enters the plant mostly while the tree is in bloom. Other than planting resistant varieties, the only prevention is spraying agricultural streptomycin during bloom. Once the disease appears, the only treatment is pruning out the affected branches, being sure to sterilize the pruners with alcohol after each cut. For more information go to: http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/pp/notes/oldnotes/fd3.html.

Brown patch will be starting to show up on home lawns. This disease is easily recognized as roughly circular brown patches, which increase in size. The fungus thrives in grass that has been fertilized heavily or late (after March 1).

Although the lawn can be treated with fungicides, the entire lawn must be treated several times. This becomes time consuming and expensive. For most home owners the best approach is to avoid mowing when the grass is wet, keep mowing height about 3 inches, and do not irrigate. If the grass has a healthy root system (think correct pH and phosphate levels) it should recover in the fall. If it does not, reseeding bare areas is less expensive than fungicide treatments.

For more information on brown patch go to:
http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/pp/notes/Turfgrass/turfgrass_contents.html
and click on Managing Brown Patch in Tall Fescue.
EVENTS

• June 9  Gardening in the Mountains Series: “Flowers for the Cutting Garden”, Presented by Extension Master Gardeners, NC Arboretum, 10:00am, Free.

• June 10  SmartWater Workshop. AB Tech. Program for architects, contractors and homeowners addressing water conservation techniques. For registration and information call (828) 254-1921, ext. 5858 or go to: http://www.abtech.edu/ce/schedule/gist.asp.

• June 13 & 27  Plant Problem Clinics, by Extension Master Gardeners at the WNC Farmers’ Market, 11:00am -2:00pm in the breezeway between the retail buildings.

• June 13 & 27  Backyard Composting Demonstration, by Extension Master Gardeners at the WNC Farmers’ Market, beside Israels’ Garden Center, 11:00am -2:00pm.

• June 27  Master Gardeners’ Garden Tour, 9am-4pm, Purchase tickets at: Cooperative Ext., 94 Coxe Ave., Asheville, or print an order form from http://buncombe.ces.ncsu.edu home page under Buncombe County Extension Master Gardeners’ 2009 Garden Tour.

• July 14  Gardening in the Mountains Series, “Growing Mushrooms”, presented by Extension Master Gardeners, NC Arboretum, 10:00am, Free, no registration required.

• July 17  Focus on Flowers: Your Own Back Yard, The NC Arboretum, 9:00am-4:00pm. For registration information call the Arboretum at 665-2492