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Contact Us

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Asheville, NC 28801

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Agriculture-Urban Horticulture

Check out Buncombe County Center’s website at:
http://buncombe.ces.ncsu.edu

Helping gardeners put knowledge to work.

“The world’s favorite season is spring. All things seem possible in May”
- Edwin Way Teale

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 Ave., Asheville

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

These volunteers are also available to answer questions at the Saturday Plant Clinics, the second and fourth Saturdays each month, April - October. You will find them set up at the WNC Farmers’ Market, in the breezeway between the retail buildings, 11:00 - 2:00.

Normal May Weather

Weather Averages
For Asheville, North Carolina

Normal May Average High 76°F
Normal May Average Low 53°F
Normal May Precipitation 3.5”

Hours of Daylight for Asheville, NC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sunrise</th>
<th>Sunset</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 1</td>
<td>6:38am</td>
<td>8:15 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 31</td>
<td>6:16 am</td>
<td>8:39 pm</td>
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</tbody>
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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 May

Lawns

• Mow frequently enough to remove no more than 1/3 of the grass blade at a time.
• Mow cool season grasses 2 1/2 to 3 inches high.
• Do not fertilize fescue and bluegrass lawns.
• Zoysiagrass lawns can be fertilized with 1/2 pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet 3 weeks after the grass has greened-up.

Ornamentals

• If you would like to rearrange some of your daffodils, the bulbs can be moved now. Dig deep so you don’t damage the bulb. Keep the leaves and roots in tact and replant at the original depth.
• Do not remove leaves from bulbs until they have turned brown.
• Organic mulch is the best tool for maintaining soil moisture and reducing weeds in the landscape. Mulch should be 2 to 3 inches deep, including the old layer. More than that is not only a waste of money, it can be detrimental to plant growth.
• Prune spring blooming shrubs soon after blossoms fade.
• 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

• Keep weeds out of the strawberry bed and put straw mulch around plants.
• Fruit trees may have set a good crop this year. But too many fruit on the tree is not a good thing. Thin apples, pears and peaches to about 6 inches apart when the fruit is the size of a nickel.
• Begin fungicide sprays, especially on peaches, plums and grapes.

Vegetables

• Plan the vegetable garden on paper. Keep the plan from year to year so you can plan crop rotations
• Check cabbage family crops for cabbage worms.
• Thin seedlings of radishes, carrots, lettuce and other early plantings when they have 2 true leaves. Carrots and radishes should be thinned to 1 to 2 inches apart, lettuce and other greens to 6 inches.
• Soil temperature should be warmed up to at least 65 degrees before planting beans, melons and okra - after May 5.

Other

• Honeybees may swarm in the spring. Swarms are not aggressive and not a cause for alarm. If you have a swarm of honeybees that takes up residence in an unwanted location, contact the Extension office for the names of beekeepers who may come and collect them.
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 look out for:

Ornamentals: slugs; lacebugs on azaleas, rhododendrons, pieris, pyracanthes; spruce mites on spruce, hemlocks, fir, euonymous scale; hemlock wooly adelgids.

Fruits and vegetables: slugs, asparagus beetles, cucumber beetles, cabbageworms, aphids.

TLC For Rhododendrons

The last 2 years have been really rough on plants like rhododendrons and their kin, azaleas, mountain laurels and blueberries. A lot of rhododendrons in particular have suffered significant dieback.

A common question heard in the Extension office this spring is “What disease or insect is killing my rhododendron?” The truth is dead branches in these plants can be due to several causes: a common fungus branch dieback, rhododendron borers, or simply drought stress. Usually it is a combination of problems because the drought stress makes the weakened plants more prone to the other problems.

For gardeners looking for treatments, the bottom line is: It really does not matter which is the cause. The treatment will be the same; prune out the dead branches. Try to prune back into live wood so the plant can start to regenerate new stems.

It is probably best NOT to fertilize these stressed plants. A soil test might be in order to make sure the pH and nutrient levels are within a desirable range for these plants. Surround them with mulch no more than 3 inches deep and water if we get into another summer of drought.

Tailgate Season

If you can’t grow all your own vegetables, the next freshest thing would come directly from a local farmer. In the Asheville area you have lots of options with the numerous wonderful tailgate markets opening now. For a thorough list of local tailgates, visit the website of the Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project’s Food Guide at: [http://www.buyappalachian.org/](http://www.buyappalachian.org/)

Manna Demo Garden

On Thursday mornings, between 9:30 and 11:30 am, you can visit with the Master Gardener volunteers at the demonstration garden at MANNA Food Bank. They will be happy to answer your gardening questions or explain their vegetable growing techniques while they take care of the garden. Of course, you can drop by to take a look and pick up a leaflet at any time.
**Dollar Wise Landscape**

No room for a vegetable garden? That doesn’t necessarily mean you can’t grow a least a few fresh fruits, vegetables and herbs. Perhaps you can tuck some vegetable and herb plants into a sunny flower bed or under-used border. You will hear this called an “edible landscape”.

One ingredient you will need is plenty of sunlight. Large fruited tomatoes really need 8 hours of sun. You can get by with a little less for cherry tomatoes and other fruiting crops. With less than 6 hours you can still grow leafy things.

So here are some ideas. For that sunny flower bed, include ornamental looking Swiss chard, kale, carrots, onions, parsley, basil and other herbs. Strawberry plants could be added as groundcover or edging. If you have more sunny space, grow a cherry tomato plant on a trellis at the back of the border.

A lot of vegetables can also be grown in containers on a sunny patio. You don’t have to spend a lot of money on containers. Look around and see if you don’t have some old nursery pots, 3 gallons or larger. 5 gallon buckets or other large containers can be recycled by drilling holes in the bottom. Containers or 5 gallons or more can support a tomato or squash plant, 2 or 3 cucumber plants or several bush beans.

Just look around for your sunniest spots and think creatively.

**Back to Basics**

North Carolina Cooperative Extension’s Buncombe County Center has launched a web page called “Back to Basic$: Surviving (& Thriving!) Through Troubled Times”. You can find lots of valuable information here on stress management, managing finances, and a list of upcoming related programs. Visit the Buncombe County Extension web site at: [http://buncombe.ces.ncsu.edu](http://buncombe.ces.ncsu.edu), and click on the “Back to Basic$” link.

**Food Preservation Classes**

To learn more about canning or just to brush up on the newest information on food preservation, come to the Canning and Preserving Made Easy program on May 19th from 6pm to 9:30pm. This program will be an introduction to canning, pickling, making jams and jellies, freezing, drying and storage. 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.

Other upcoming hands on canning classes this season are:

- Making Strawberry Jam—June 4th, 9:00 am to 1:00 pm - $10
- Making Dill Pickles and Relish—July 9th, 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm - $10
- Canning Tomatoes—August 6th, 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm - $10

Call our office to pre-register at (828) 255-5522.

To receive this newsletter via email
Phone 255-5522 or email: joyce.plemmons@buncombecounty.org
CONGRATULATIONS, GRADUATES!!

Congratulations to the newest graduating class of Buncombe County’s Extension Master Gardener volunteers! These enthusiastic gardeners have completed more than 40 hours of training and are ready to join the 97 veteran volunteers to help answer your gardening questions.

This year’s graduates are:

Ann Ammons                                         Jane McCormick
Rita Barnwell                                         Gary Mills
DiAnn Bock-Feinroth                                        Tom Mills
Carol Corriveau                                         Sally Mundt
Katie Doan                                           Ananda Nordquist
Laura Fine                                           Esther Pardue
Jim Gordon                                       Ellen Shaw
Mary Beth Gwynn                                       Susan Spencer
Barbara Hayes                                Helen Sumerwell
Rosemary Kaschyk                                    Marie Tracy
Marilyn Lonon                                           Theresa Trebon
Carolyn Mann                                         Barbara Venos

Garden Tour is Back

The Extension Master Gardeners’ Garden Tour is back. This year’s tour will take place on Saturday, June 27 and will include the gardens of 4 Buncombe County Master Gardener volunteers and one school garden. In these wonderful in-town gardens you can see and learn about things like water conservation, composting, water features, ground covers, shade gardening, container gardening, and much more.

Tickets will go on sale in early May. Check the Buncombe County Extension web site for details and an order form at: http://buncombe.ces.ncsu.edu.

Tent Caterpillars

Eastern tent caterpillars are back for their annual visit. By now you may be seeing the webbed “tents” in the branch angles of trees such as cherries, plums and crabapples.

The good news is that although they are unsightly and the caterpillars can eat a lot of leaves, they are generally not damaging enough to worry about. If you have a small tree in which the tent is within reach with a long pole, just tear down the nest. If the nest is out of reach, just let it be. The caterpillars will be gone within a few weeks and the trees will put out some new leaves.
Coming Events

• **May 1 & 2**  **Days in the Garden:** Botanical Gardens at Asheville  
  Friday, 1 – 6pm, plant sales  
  Saturday, 8am - 3pm, plants, food, crafts, entertainment, guided walks.

• **May 1,2,3**  **Spring Herb Festival:** WNC Farmers’ Market  
  Friday and Saturday, 9am - 5pm, Sunday, 10am - 3pm  
  Plants, herbal products, crafts, garden information, educational programs.

• **May 12**  **Gardening in the Mountains Series:** “Gardening for Tough Times”, Presented by Extension Master Gardeners, NC Arboretum, 10:00am, Free.

• **May 9 & 23**  **Plant Problem Clinic**, by Extension Master Gardeners, WNC Farmers’ Market,  
  11:00am—2:00pm in the breezeway between the retail buildings.

• **May 16**  **Black Mountain Garden Show and Sale**, 9am-5pm, Sutton Ave. (near the train depot). Master Gardener info table, vendors with plants and garden items.

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