Helping gardeners put knowledge to work.

“It would be worthwhile having a cultivated garden, if only to see what Autumn does to it.” - Alfred Austin

2010 Extension Master GardenerSM

Applications are being accepted through November 20, 2009 for the Extension Master Gardener volunteer training program for 2010. Classes will be held on Wednesdays, 12:00 noon until 4:00 from January 13 through April 21.

If you want to learn more about this volunteer training program, plan to attend the Introduction to the Master Gardener Program on Thursday, October 15, 1—3 pm, at the Buncombe County Extension Center, 94 Coxe Ave. Asheville.

For an application, please call us at 255-5522, or email joyce.plemmons@buncombecounty.org.

Normal October Weather

Weather Averages
For Asheville, North Carolina

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Normal October Average High</td>
<td>67.1°F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normal October Average Low</td>
<td>43.3°F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normal October Precipitation</td>
<td>3.18”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Hours of Daylight for Asheville, NC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Sunrise</th>
<th>Sunset</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October 1</td>
<td>7:24am</td>
<td>7:14 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 31</td>
<td>7:50 am</td>
<td>6:36 pm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 October

Lawns

• This is still a good time to core aerate compacted soils. (See September Mountain Gardener).
• If you have reseeded the lawn, it will be important to keep the tree leaves from accumulating. A leaf blower would be gentler on the seedling grass than the rake.

Ornamentals

• If you have hemlock trees, inspect them for signs of hemlock woolly adelgids. This is a good time of year to treat smaller trees with insecticidal soap or horticultural oil. Fall is also a good time to apply a systemic soil drench treatment on larger trees. See: http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/ent/notes/O&T/trees/note119a/note119a.htm
• Purchase spring blooming bulbs. Plant late in October or in November.
• Limit pruning of shrubs to snipping stray branches and removing dead or damaged stems.
• Move house plants indoors before temperatures drop below 50°F. Start checking house plants for signs of insects so they can be treated a few times before moving back indoors. While you are at it, go ahead and give the plants a good bath with the garden hose, remove dead leaves and cut back long stems.

Fruits

• There have been a lot of diseases in the gardens and orchards this year, making good sanitation especially important. As you rake leaves, also remove any fruit left in the trees and pick up all fruit from the ground.
• Most blackberries and raspberries produce fruit on second year canes. An exception is ‘Heritage’ red raspberry, which will produce two crops each season if pruned in the traditional manner. But they can also be managed by simply cutting all of the canes to the ground in late fall to produce one larger crop in late summer.

Vegetables

• Good sanitation is important here as well. Remove spent plants to the compost pile or turn them into the soil to rot.
• If tomato plants were infected with late blight, it is best to destroy those plants by burying deeply or bagging them and sending them out in the trash.
• Harvest pumpkins and winter squash before frost.
• Spray all crucifers (cabbage family crops) with organic B.t. (Bacillus thruiingiensis) every 7 to 10 days to kill the various caterpillars that eat the plants.

Other

• In addition to cleaning up the garden, fall is a good time to clean up the garden supplies. Pesticide labels will tell you how they should be stored for winter. Clean and repair tools.
Insects to Watch For

Ornamentals: Check evergreens for bagworms. Half of those bags contain eggs which will hatch in the spring, so remove and destroy them. Spruce mites are cool weather mites that become active now. Shake a branch vigorously over white paper to check for them.

Vegetables: Aphids and several species of caterpillars can be a problem on broccoli, cabbage, collards and other cabbage family plants.

Spotlight: Oakleaf Hydrangea

This month landscape interest is mostly about fall color. Don't just think trees. There are also some great shrubs, such as oakleaf hydrangea, *Hydrangea quercifolia*.

The first thing that comes to mind with the mention of hydrangeas is the showy flower clusters. But late in the fall, after most other leaves have turned, the large leaves of oakleaf hydrangea will turn bold shades of purple and scarlet. The extent of color depends on the location and variety, with named varieties performing better than the native species.

Oakleaf hydrangea has not always been the easiest plant to fit into every landscape plan as the typical specimen is a large, rangy shrub reaching 6 to 8 feet. The long stems and large leaves give it a coarse, wild texture, probably best suited to the informal shrubbery boarder.

A couple of new dwarf varieties should fit a bit more easily into many landscapes. However both ‘Pee Wee’ and ‘Sikes Dwarf’ can still reach 4 to 5 feet. I planted ‘Pee Wee” by my front door a couple of years ago and am quite pleased with it. I can see, though, that I may soon have to do a bit of selective pruning to keep it to an appropriate size for the location.

In addition to the great fall foliage, the large white flower panicies give a good summer show. The dark brown bark of the older stems peels, giving an interesting effect during winter months if the shrub is well placed.

This native plant is not difficult to grow. It will grow best in fertile loamy soil, but will tolerate poor soil conditions. Although oakleaf hydrangea is generally listed as needing moist soil conditions and partial shade, there is a large planting on I-40 west of Asheville, that seems to be holding its own quite well, even on a dry sunny ridge. Perhaps this plant is tougher than given credit.

For best performance, plant oakleaf hydrangea in good soil with a half day of sun. Work in organic matter at planting and mulch well to keep the roots moist. If it needs pruning, do so right after flowering in mid-summer.
Stinging Caterpillars

In late summer and fall the occasional unfortunate gardener has an encounter with one of the stinging caterpillars. There are several species of moths in North Carolina whose caterpillars are covered with stinging hairs. Fortunately reports of allergic reactions are quite rare—but the stinging sensation is never-the-less uncomfortable. Often the offending caterpillar is hiding up under a leaf that it is feeding on and the gardener does not even see it—at least until he notices the pain in his hand. These caterpillars may feed on a variety of plants, from trees, to shrubs, to hanging basket plants.

The saddleback is one of the more distinctive and most common of the stinging caterpillars. Its short, stout body is brown on each end with a green saddle blanket and a brown spot in the center. This caterpillar grows to about an inch long when fully grown.

The lo moth larva is pea-green and has greenish spines tipped with black. A reddish stripe edged with white extends down the entire length of the body. The lo moth caterpillar is about 2 inches long when fully grown.

The puss caterpillar is roughly pear-shaped and densely covered with urticating hairs, which means that they can irate the skin. The hairs may be pale yellow, gray, reddish-brown or light brown. This larva is about an inch long when fully grown.

Growing From Seeds

Adventurous gardeners sometimes enjoy the challenge of growing trees or shrubs from seeds. Some of these seeds require special treatments germinate cold treatment, warm treatment, breaking the seed coat, or a combination of these.

Some examples of plants requiring a cold treatment include dogwood, oak, barberry, lilac, buckeye, magnolia and walnut. Although you can do this by mixing the seeds into damp peat moss in a plastic bag and storing in the refrigerator for a few months, it is often easiest just to do what Mother Nature would do—plant them in the ground in the fall.

Prepare a nice seed bed or fill flats with potting mix, plant seeds at the proper depth for the species. Then perhaps the most important step is protecting the seed bed from squirrels and other rodents. The most practical method is to cover the bed securely with screening or hardware wire. But don’t let the covering interfere with the emergence of the seedlings in spring.

Some seeds require both a cold treatment and a warm treatment, meaning in nature they take 2 years to germinate. For more information see: http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/hil/hil-8704.html.

To know which plants require which kinds of treatments, additional references include: The Reference Manual of Woody Plant Propagation by Michael Dirr and Charles Heuser or Richard Bir’s Growing & Propagating Showy Native Woody Plants.
**Spots and Dots**

After a period of rain, homeowners are sometimes perplexed by the sudden appearance of tiny black dots all over the side of the house, the car, or the lawn furniture. Because the pinhead sized spots can occur on the roof of the car, or high on the side of the house, the assumption is that trees are to blame. In this case the culprit is a tiny mushroom growing in the mulch.

Commonly called artillery fungus or cannon fungus, this little mushroom actually shoots out and “egg” or spore packet. The “egg” which may be ejected up to 14 feet from the fruiting body has an oily or sticky surface that enables it to adhere to most surfaces it encounters. Once stuck to a surface the “egg” dries to a disk shape and adheres tenaciously. Unfortunately, the spots can be very difficult to remove, often requiring a lot of scrubbing or scraping. There is no chemical treatment effective in killing this fungus. The only solution seems to be to remove the mulch (most often hardwood or wood chip) and replace it with pine bark or pine needles, which seldom seem to support the growth of this fungus. For more information see: [http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/pe/notes/oldnotes/gp1.htm](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/pe/notes/oldnotes/gp1.htm).

**Planting in Poorly Drained Soils**

Heavy clay soil is a fact of life in many western North Carolina landscapes. This can result in poorly drained sites that hold water too long once saturated. Many types of plants can die from drowning, root suffocation or root rot, even on a hillside.

One solution to planting in poorly drained or compacted soils is to build raised landscape beds. A good method of doing this is to spread a 4 to 5 inch layer of pine bark soil conditioner (example: Nature’s Helper) and turn it in with a rototiller or garden fork. If desired, add some compost or composted manure for additional organic matter. Working in the organic amendments will result in a bed 8 to 10 inches high.

![Tree Planting Diagram](image)

When planting an individual tree or shrub into difficult soil, it is best to loosen the soil with a tiller, shovel, or garden fork in an area several feet larger than the diameter of the root ball. This will help improve the ability of excess water to move away from the roots as well as providing a better aerated soil for new roots to grow into. Then plant the tree with 1/4 to 1/3 of the root ball above the soil grade. Cover the top of the root ball with well-amended soil or mulch. Keep well watered for the first year until roots can grow out into the surrounding soil.

**Basic Home Maintenance Course**

The Buncombe County Center of North Carolina Cooperative Extension is offering a five-series Basic Home Maintenance Course beginning Monday, November 2nd, through Monday, November 16th on Monday and Thursday afternoons from 5:30—7:30pm at our office, 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 pest, etc. The registration fee is $20 (includes all materials) and must be prepaid with registration. Make check payable to Buncombe County. You may drop off the payment at our office, or mail to NCCE, 94 Coxe Ave., Asheville, NC 2880. Please specify “Basic Home Maintenance Class” on the memo line of your check.
EVENTS

- October 10  **Plant Problem Clinics**, by Extension Master Gardeners at the WNC Farmers’ Market. 11:00am—2:00pm in the breezeway between the retail buildings.

- October 10  **Backyard Composting Demonstration**, by Extension Master Gardeners at the WNC Farmers’ Market, beside Israel’s Garden Center, 11:00am—2:00pm.

- Oct. 13  **Gardening in the Mountains Series**, “Preparing the Garden for Winter”, presented by Extension Master Gardeners, NC Arboretum, 10:00am, Free, no registration required.

- Oct. 15  **Introduction to the Extension Master Gardener Program**, 1—3pm at Buncombe County Cooperative Ext. Office, 94 Coxe Ave., Asheville.

- Oct. 18-Nov.1  **Analyzing Your Mountain Homestead** at Botanical Gardens at Asheville. Sundays, 9:00am—12:00 noon, for more info: [http://www.ashevillebotanicalgardens.org](http://www.ashevillebotanicalgardens.org).

- November 10  **Gardening in the Mountains Series**, “Heathers for the Garden”, presented by Extension Master Gardeners at the NC Arboretum, 10:00am. Tuesday is free admission, no registration required.

- November 20  **Deadline for applications for 2010 Extension Master Gardener training.**