

# MOUNTAIN GARDENER

Buncombe County's Extension Newsletter for Home Lawn & Garden Enthusiasts

Buncombe County Center, 94 Coxe Ave. Asheville, NC 28801-3620

September 2014

HELPING GARDENERS PUT KNOWLEDGE TO WORK



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## EMGV Fall Plant Sale

Mark your calendar and make plans to visit the Buncombe County Extension Master Gardener Fall plant sale **October 4<sup>th</sup>, 9am-1pm**, rain or shine. Many quality plants from the gardens of our local Master Gardeners will be available. Roses will also be offered this year by Asheville-Blue Ridge Rose Society. Sale location is at 135 Coxe Avenue, Mike Byers Auto and Truck Repair, down the street from the Extension office. Master Gardeners and rosarians will be on hand to answer your gardening questions. Fall is a great time for planting. Allow us to share the bounty!

## Normal September Weather Weather Averages For Asheville, North Carolina

Normal Sept. Average High 76.9°  
Normal Sept. Average Low 55.8°  
Normal Sept. Precipitation 3.81"

## Hours of Daylight for Asheville, NC

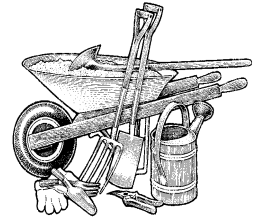
	Sunrise	Sunset
September 1	7:02am	7:59pm
September 30	7:24am	7:17pm



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## September Garden Chores



### Ornamentals

- Now is NOT the time to fertilize perennials and woody plants. Late season nitrogen can reduce cold hardiness and force growth that can be damaged by hard frosts.
- This is a good time to cut flowers for drying. Good candidates for air drying include celosia, yarrow, statice, globe amaranth, strawflowers, goldenrod and grasses.
- Leaving some of the few remaining seed heads of coneflower, sunflower and black eyed susan can be good for the birds to enjoy in the months ahead.
- Move houseplants indoors before temperatures drop below 50°F. Check for signs of insects and treat. Rinse off foliage, remove dead leaves and cut back long stems.
- Now is time to divide peonies that have not flowered well. Leave several “eyes” on each division and be sure to replant them with the eyes are no more than 2 inches below the soil surface. Keep them watered this fall.
- Check evergreens for bagworms. Removing them now prevents re-infestation next spring.
- Pull spent summer annuals and replace them with pansies or ornamental cabbage.

### Fruits

- To reduce the reoccurrence of fruit rot in peaches and grapes next year remove all plant debris including mummified fruit left hanging on the plant and lying on the ground.
- Remove weeds and fertilize in strawberry beds where plants are forming next spring’s flower buds. Also water if September rains are lacking.
- Prune blackberries and raspberries and remove the old fruit bearing canes from this year. Also thin new canes to leave only 4-8 canes per square yard.

### Vegetables

- Remove spent vegetable plants as soon as possible to reduce carry-over of insect and disease problems. Consider keeping a separate compost pile for diseased plants and do not use that compost in the vegetable garden.
- It may be difficult to successfully ripen green tomatoes indoors. If the plant is infected with late blight the fruit will usually rot before it ripens, even after washing with bleach.
- Plant fall vegetables by mid-month. Sow lettuce seeds every couple of weeks for a continual harvest. Cilantro and dill can also be sown during cooler weather.
- Insects can be a problem with all of the cabbage family crops. 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 sow clover, vetch or Austrian winter peas. Mark your calendar to mow and turn under in February or March before the next growing season.

## Mosquito Control

Rain helps boost mosquito populations! NOW is the time to get out into the yard and empty or discard objects that may be filled with rainwater, leaves and debris –all of which make ideal mosquito breeding sites.

Remove storm debris from gutters and make sure water does not pond beneath the gutter downspouts. Debris-clogged drainage ditches along roads will have water for days/weeks, clear these so the water flows and drains as quickly as possible.

Even with this effort, there will be unseen breeding sites. Use common sense when using EPA-registered repellents and follow the label instructions. When protecting children apply mosquito repellent to your hands and then rub it on the arms, legs, neck and other exposed parts of the skin (never under clothing). If you decide to treat your yard, remove or cover children’s toys, grills and cooking utensils, pet food and water bowls, etc. **before** you spray. Also avoid spraying flowering plants if bees are actively pollinating. If you spray around a vegetable garden, either use a product that is also labeled for use on those vegetables or direct the spray in a way that avoids drift onto the plants.

**From: Michael Waldvogel, PhD Extension Assoc. Professor & Specialist, Structural & Industrial Pests, NC State University**

## **Mountain State Fair September 5<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup>**

Visit the Mountain State Fair at the WNC Agriculture Center on Airport Road and be sure to check out the Flower and Garden exhibits in the “Expo Building” towards the back of the fairgrounds and below the livestock barns. If there are flowers, fruit and vegetables in your garden that are potential “prize winners” plan to enter in as many categories as possible. Entry dates are September 3<sup>rd</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>. Find more information at:

[www.mountainfair.org](http://www.mountainfair.org).

Look under “Mountain State Fair” and then under “Competitions”. Look for Dept. DA for fruits and vegetables and Dept. M for Flower and Garden.

## **Extension Master Gardener Program 2015**

The next training class for the Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Program will be held January through April 2015. Classes will be held on Wednesday afternoons from Noon to 4:00 and focus on basic gardening topics such as annuals, perennials, fruits, vegetables, shrubs, trees, insects, diseases, weeds, soils, plant nutrition and plant diagnostics.

The training class concludes with a written examination and is followed by a 40-hour internship over the course of the remaining year. Once the 40-hour internship is completed the volunteer is eligible to become a Certified Extension Master Gardener Volunteer. In order to remain active in the program, the volunteer must meet re-certification requirements annually that include additional volunteer service and continuing education hours.

Application forms will be available in September and must be submitted no later than October 24<sup>th</sup>. Interviews are part of the application process and will be conducted in November. For an application please call 828-255-5522.

## **Dazzling Dahlias**

If you’ve ever looked at a Dahlia in the face you know how dazzling they can be. Ranging widely in height and foliage color, as well as bloom size, color and form (from daisies to dinner plates) there are 19 different forms and over 57,000 registered cultivars. Dahlias originate from the mountains of Mexico and grow well in our temperate climate. With bloom season starting in late July/early August and running through hard frost the cool mornings bright sunshine and good moisture create ideal growing conditions.

Easy to grow? Yes! Local gardeners say “plant the tuber at Mother’s day, put a stake in the ground, provide plenty of fertilizer and water and sit back and watch it grow!”

Did you know that bees and other pollinators love Dahlias too? All dahlias offer abundant pollen once their center opens up however the orchid and Collarette types have open centers from the minute they show color.

Check out the Carolina Dahlia Society display in the Expo Building at the Mountain State Fair September 5-14<sup>th</sup>.



Learn about dahlias and what’s happening locally at:  
<http://www.carolinasdahliasociety.org/>.



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## Fall Invaders

In addition to the Marmorated Stink Bugs.

<http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/ent/notes/O&T/trees/note148/note148.html> and Boxelder bugs  
<http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/ent/notes/O&T/houseplants/ort040e/ort040e.htm> Asian lady beetles will soon be making their appearance.

During the spring and summer, these lady beetles are effective predators and feed on aphids in field crops and gardens making them extremely beneficial for both agricultural and horticultural crops.

However as temperatures start to cool off the adult lady beetles begin their search for a place to overwinter. Using visual or physical cues beetles seek out locations that are sunny or warm or on exposed, light-colored buildings, not to rule out dark-colored siding, brick or log. Research suggests that, once the beetles arrive at the site, they use chemical cues to locate the specific crevice they want to inhabit within the structure. The sources of these chemical cues have not been clearly identified but may be beetle feces from the previous winter, the odor of beetles that died at the site, or an attractant pheromone. These factors may help to explain why beetles seem to pick the same sites (not necessarily every year, but perhaps more frequently than they pick nearby areas).

From the exterior of the house, they may move indoors by crawling under defective weather stripping or by crawling and flying in open doors on warm days. The beetles can fit through very small gaps or cracks in siding, masonry, around window and door casings, and even through attic and soffit vents. The beetles hibernate as adults, usually in wall voids. On warm days, they may become active and move towards light or bright surfaces. The Asian lady beetle does not reproduce indoors and in spring, they will move outdoors in search of prey.

Fortunately, multicolored Asian lady beetles are primarily a nuisance. They do not eat wood or furniture but if they are crushed they may stain fabric and painted surfaces.

Controls:

- **Spraying** - Pesticides have limited effectiveness. Repeatedly spraying the entire interior or exterior areas of a house isn't practical, economical or (most importantly) safe for humans and pets. Spraying kills on contact and doesn't address those that are hidden or have not yet arrived.
- **Exclusion** - While it is not 100% effective, preventing the beetles from entering the home is one of the best long-term approaches. Adjust or install tight-fitting sweeps or thresholds at the bottom of exterior doors.  
Install weather stripping around other parts of the doorframe.  
Seal utility openings where air conditioner pipes, phone, cable TV and other wires enter the foundation and siding. Holes can be plugged with caulk, cement, urethane foam or copper mesh. Steel wool may be used, but it may rust and possibly stain siding if it is exposed to the weather. Caulk around windows, door, siding and fascia boards.  
Keep window screens in good condition and install insect screening behind attic gable vents.
- **Vacuuming** – If you decide to vacuum up the beetles, empty the vacuum bag relatively soon afterwards. You can transfer the beetles to a container and keep them in a refrigerator over the winter (where many will die) or place them outdoors under a porch or in some other protected area and then release them into gardens next spring.

## Harvesting and Storing Pumpkins and Winter Squash

Harvest squash and pumpkin before frost and when the rind is hard enough to resist fingernail scratches. Additionally, as squash mature, the fresh, bright, surface sheen changes to a dull, dry-appearing surface. Pumpkins store better if you cut and leave 2-4 inches of stem. Handle them carefully to keep them in good condition. Avoid cuts and scratches that can allow disease to enter during storage. A dry well-ventilated storage area with temperatures between 50-55 degrees F is best.

## **Take Note and Take Heart**

As you pick the last of your few remaining peppers or pull late blighted tomatoes or summer squash decimated by squash beetles grab a note pad and make a note. Write down the location of these plants (“X” marks the spot is fine!) and how they performed, doing this now will help you remember next year when it comes to laying out the garden. It’s a measure of prevention to rotate your plants and important in preventing crop-specific pests and diseases from building up and carrying over from one season to the next in the soil and debris that you may have overlooked. Ideally, rotate a vegetable (or vegetable family) so it grows in a particular spot only one year out of three.

## **Cool Season Grasses in WNC**

Cool season perennial grasses such as Tall Fescue, Kentucky bluegrass and fine fescues – such as creeping red, chewings, and hard – are better adapted for lawns here in the mountain and piedmont regions of North Carolina. Unlike warm-season grasses, cool-season grasses actively grow in the fall and spring months, remain green throughout most of the winter and are dormant during the heat of the summer. Early fall is a good time for renovating or over seeding cool-season grass lawns if the stand is thin.

Using a blend of two or three cultivars rather than just a single cultivar is recommended. This broadens the genetic base and gives the turf a better chance of withstanding a variety of challenges and varying site conditions. Whether you are using sod or seed to establish a lawn do not short cut good soil preparation and follow up care. Good root growth and turf establishment is critical.

When seeding a new lawn use a seeding rate of 5-6 pounds per 1,000 square feet or 2-3 pounds if over seeding an existing lawn. Don’t assume more is better. Higher seeding rates can result in weak, thin stands that are more susceptible to disease and high temperature stress. Do not use pre-emergent herbicides (weed Preventers) at the time of sowing seed since this will also prevent your grass seed from germinating!

Apply fertilizer, aerate or core the lawn in two directions and then broadcast the seed. Core aeration is good this time of year to break up compaction in the soil and help moisture, lime and fertilizer to penetrate into the root zone. Large bare areas in the lawn can be tilled or raked.

Lightly cover the seed by hand raking and roll the soil lightly to firm the surface and provide good seed-to-soil contact. Mulch with weed-free small-grain straw using 1-2 bales per 1,000 sq. ft. to help conserve moisture, control erosion, and reduce surface crusting. You want to be able to see the seed and provide 50% cover. Once in place, stabilize the mulch by rolling or watering. If applied evenly and lightly, these materials need not be removed.

To prevent drying, keep the top 1.5 inches of the soil moist. This may require light watering two or three times a day for the 7 to 21 days it takes for seed to germinate. As the seedlings grow and root, water less often but for longer periods.

Begin mowing as soon as the grass is 50% higher than the desired height. For example, mow tall fescue back to 3 inches when it reaches 4.5 inches. The frequency of mowing is governed by the amount of growth, which depends on temperature, fertility, moisture conditions, the season and the natural growth rate of the grass.

Established cool season lawns benefit from approximately 1 pound of nitrogen per 1000 square feet in September and again in November.

See: [http://www.turfiles.ncsu.edu/PDFFiles/004175/Carolina\\_Lawns.pdf](http://www.turfiles.ncsu.edu/PDFFiles/004175/Carolina_Lawns.pdf)

## **Tackling Woody Invasive Plants**

Many perennial weeds are most effectively controlled by glyphosate (Roundup and others) in late summer or early fall. When deciduous plants are getting ready to go dormant, they translocate sugars from the leaves down to the root system, so good movement of the herbicide to the root system occurs. If plants are drought stressed they do not absorb herbicides well through the leaves and the cut stump treatment can be effective. This treatment also cuts down on the amount of product that is needed and provides a more targeted and therefore safe approach, avoiding non-targeted plants.

So if you have invasive plants such as Oriental bittersweet, Multi flora rose, Privet, Paulownia, etc. try cutting the stem closed to the ground and immediately treating it (within minutes) with concentrated glyphosate. Refer to the label for “cut stump treatment” for mixing.

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## **EVENTS**

- Sept. 6 - City Tailgate Market**, 8:30am – 12:30pm, info table, 161 S. Charlotte St., Asheville
- Sept. 13 & 27 - Plant Clinic, and Compost Demo.**, WNC Farmer’s Market, 11am-2pm.
- Sept. 16 - Gardening in the Mountains**, ‘Getting Ready for Winter’, Ext. Office, 94 Coxe Ave. Asheville – 10am and 5:30pm, pre-register, Free.
- Oct. 21 - Gardening in the Mountains**, ‘Building Soil’, Ext. Office, 94 Coxe Ave. Asheville – 10am and 5:30pm, pre-register, Free.

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Newsletter compiled and edited by:

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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 828-255-5522 during business hours at least 3 days prior to the event.

*Recommendations for the use of agricultural 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 North Carolina Cooperative Extension nor discrimination against similar products or services not mentioned. Individuals who use agricultural 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 regulations and examine a current product label before applying any chemical. For assistance, contact your county Cooperative Extension agent.*