For anyone who has ever embarked on a springtime hike in search of trilliums and lady slippers:

“The flowers of late winter and early spring occupy places in our hearts well out of proportion to their size” - Gertrude S. Wister

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 until 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 74.3°F
Normal May Average Low 52.1°F
Normal May Precipitation 3.53”

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>6:39 am</td>
<td>8:16 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 31</td>
<td>6:17 am</td>
<td>8:39 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 May

**Lawns**

- Do not fertilize fescue and bluegrass lawns.
- Mow cool season grasses 2 1/2 to 3 inches high.
- Mow frequently enough to remove no more than 1/3 of the blade at a time. Leave clippings on the lawn to recycle.
- Try not to mow when grass is wet as you can spread disease problems.

**Ornamentals**

- Perennials can still be divided. Keep the new divisions well watered for a few weeks.
- It is fine to go ahead and sprinkle seeds in the flower bed for zinnias, cosmos, nicotiana, love-in-a-mist and other easy annuals.
- Flower and shrubbery beds can still be fertilized. Use a product with slow release fertilizer for extended feeding and to protect water quality.
- If you are growing roses that are susceptible to black spot, it is time to start fungicide sprays.
- Prune spring blooming shrubs soon after blossoms fade.
- Summer bloomers like butterfly bush, rose of Sharon and crape myrtle can still be pruned, even though it is a little late.
- 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**

- 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.
- Pick strawberries regularly. Pick and discard any moldy berries.
- Begin fungicide sprays, especially on peaches, plums and grapes.
- Grass is very competitive with the roots of fruit trees. To reduce stress on the trees, remove grass under the branch spread of the trees and keep mulched.

**Vegetables**

- Plan the vegetable garden on paper. Keep the plan from year to year so you can plan crop rotations.
- Allow the recommended space between plants, whether you are seeding or transplanting. Good air circulation is important for disease control and plant development.
- The old saying in the mountains is to wait until Mothers Day to plant warm season vegetables like tomatoes, beans and squash. That is pretty sound advice for avoiding frost damage to transplants. Seeds of beans and melons do not germinate well if the soil temperature is below 65.
- Check cabbage family plants regularly for cabbage worms. Spray with organic B.t.(Bacillus thuringiensis).

**Other**

- Give bird baths a good scrubbing with bleach to start the season off with clean water.
- It’s time to get the rain barrels in place if they are not already. If you left these in place during the winter you may want to empty and scrub them out as well.
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, pyracanthas; spruce mites on spruce, hemlocks, fir, euonymous scale; hemlock wooly adelgids.

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

Spotlight: Little Bluestem

Grasses are becoming more popular as accent plants in the perennial garden. Not only do they add an interesting element of tall form that moves in the breeze, most of the grasses are quite drought tolerant.

One of the low maintenance native grasses that can be selected for the landscape is little bluestem, Schizachyrium scoparium. A new variety called ‘Blue Heaven’ was selected at the University of Minnesota and would be a good plant for a dry, sunny location.

‘Blue Heaven’ grows over 4 feet tall. The foliage is blue-grey in summer. In September it turns burgundy red. Fall color persists into November, when the tan stems and seed heads can remain for winter interest.

Do not give little bluestem a lot of fertilizer. This prairie native is best adapted to well drained soil, dry conditions and low fertility. Cut the plant to the ground any time during the winter or early spring.

Brown Rot

If you have grown peaches, plums or cherries, you may be all too familiar with the fruit disease called brown rot. Brown rot is caused by a fungus. As the name implies, shortly before the fruit ripens the brown spot will begin to form and will grow into a soft, fuzzy rot, ruining the fruit.

The early spring stage of the disease can cause blossom or twig blight. Unfortunately this year’s April showers may have been wonderful for the flowers, but they were also just right to start the growth of fungus diseases like brown rot. In mid-April I saw some wild cherry trees around my yard with a lot of the twig blight. This would indicate to me that it will probably be a bad year for the fruit rot.

So far most fruit trees have excellent fruit set this year. But if you do not pay attention to keeping regular fungicide sprays on any of these stone fruits, you may have a disappointing season. The last 3 weeks before you expect to harvest are most important. Most gardeners will use a Home Orchard Spray containing captan as the fungicide. Organic growers can try sulfur or Bacillus subtilis (Serenade).

Other important factors for brown rot management include annual pruning to allow good air circulation in the tree, thinning fruit to 6 inches apart (except cherries), and good sanitation in the fall.
Master Gardeners’ Garden Tour

The Extension Master Gardeners’ Garden Tour only happens every other year, so you don’t want to miss it on Saturday, June 25.

Five private gardens will be opening their garden gates to the public for this one day, with the theme of "LOOK AND LEARN IN OUR GARDENS". All gardens are within Asheville. They will include a lush cottage style perennial garden, and a beautiful garden designed around the needs of the maturing gardener, planting ideas for vegetables and herbs that maximize the potential of compact spaces and water thrifty design, a private oasis of conifers and groundcovers that create low maintenance and year round interest, and a garden site that highlights the challenges of gardening on a hillside.

Tickets can be purchased in advance for $15 at the Buncombe County Cooperative Extension Center at 94 Coxe Ave., Asheville, or from the Buncombe County Master Gardeners’ web page at buncombemastergardener.org Tickets will be $20 the day of the tour, if still available.

Food Preservation Classes

Four hands-on classes on canning and preserving are scheduled this summer.

Each class is only $10 and does require pre-registration and registration is confirmed when payment is received. All classes will be held at the Buncombe County Cooperative Extension Office at 94 Coxe Avenue in Asheville.

June 2—9am to 1pm  Let’s Start with Jams
July 12—9am to 1pm  It’s Pickling Time
July 26—9am to 3pm  Canning Beans Safely
July 28—9am to 2pm  Putting Tomatoes By

Call our office to pre-register at (828) 255-5522.
CONGRATULATIONS, 2011 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:

Christopher Amato   Dennis Hill
Joanna Amato   Maryann Hubbard
Carol Barley   Abdul Kalam
Rose Bartlett   Brigitte Knauf
Laurie Bell   Mary Koppenheffer
Nancy Bowles   Beth Leonard
Pam Drew   Frann Love
Mary Farmer   Jenni Martin
Charles Gershon   Christina Muth
Ned Guardenier   Molly Peeples
Karen Herrell   Robin Stickney
Marsha Werst

Take The “40 Gallon Challenge”

As summer approaches we may again begin thinking about water conservation. Gardeners may think about rain barrels and drought tolerant plants, but may overlook practices we can implement inside the house. Since less than 1% of the Earth’s water is fresh water available for drinking, bathing and other uses, our water usage has implications globally as well as to our own water bill.

The 40 Gallon Challenge is a voluntary nationwide campaign to increase water conservation. North Carolina residents and businesses are encouraged to reduce our water use on average by 40 gallons per person, per day by adopting new water-saving techniques. The website: http://www.40gallonchallenge.org/ contains the pledge card outlining water-saving practices that you can put to use. By pledging new practices, you can see the total daily savings expected from your household.

Pledging to save at least 40 gallons of water adds up. Saving a minimum of 40 gallons a day adds up to more than 1,000 gallons saved per month. If you already have put into practice a water-conserving plan, then build on it to save more. For example, if cutting off the water while brushing your teeth is a practice you have already implemented, then don’t indicate that in your pledge because you are already doing that. This will not truly provide you with water usage savings. Implement a new practice to add to what you already do.
EVENTS

- **April 29-30** Days in the Garden: Botanical Gardens at Asheville
  Friday, 1 – 6pm, Saturday, 8:30am - 3pm, sales of plants and other items.

- **April 29-May 1** Spring Herb Festival: WNC Farmers’ Market
  Friday and Saturday, 9am - 5pm, Sunday, 10am - 3pm
  Plants, herbal products, crafts, garden information.

- **May 14 & 28** Extension Master Gardeners: Plant Problem Clinic - In the breezeway between the retail buildings at the WNC Farmers’ Market, 11am - 2pm.
  Backyard Composting Demo - Farmers’ Mkt. next to Jesse Israel's, 11am-2pm.

- **May 14** Black Mountain Garden Show and Sale, 9am-5pm, Sutton Ave. (near the train depot). Local vendors will offer plants and products. Master Gardener information table.

- **May 18** Gardening in the Mountains Series, “Roses and Friends—Companion Plants for Roses”, presented by Extension Master Gardeners, NC Cooperative Extension - Buncombe County Center, 94 Coxe Ave. Asheville, 10:00am, Free.