“The first day of Spring is one thing, and the first Spring day is another. The difference between them is sometimes as great as a month.”
- Henry Van Dyke

CELEBRATE NATIONAL GARDEN MONTH

Every April communities, organizations, and individuals nationwide celebrate gardening during National Garden Month. Gardeners know, and research confirms, that nurturing plants is good for us: Attitudes toward health and nutrition improve, kids perform better at school, and community spirit grows. Join the celebration and help to make North Carolina a greener, healthier, more livable place—spruce up your landscape, plant a garden, start a community garden in your neighborhood, volunteer to help with a school garden.

Normal April Weather

Weather Averages

For Asheville, North Carolina

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Normal April Average High</td>
<td>67°F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normal April Average Low</td>
<td>44°F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normal April Precipitation</td>
<td>3.16”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hours of Daylight for Asheville, NC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Sunrise</th>
<th>Sunset</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 1</td>
<td>7:17am</td>
<td>7:50 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 30</td>
<td>6:39am</td>
<td>8:14 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 APRIL

Lawns
- Didn’t get the lawn fertilizer out on time? Wait until September. Nitrogen applied this late is an invitation for brown patch fungus disease in June.
- Maintain mowing height for fescue lawns at 3 to 3 1/2 inches.
- It is too late to expect good results from applying crabgrass preventer now. Much of the seed has already begun to germinate.

Ornamentals
- April is a great time to plant shrubs and perennials. Keep them watered this summer.
- Do not plant frost-tender annuals before May unless you will be able to cover them in case of frost.
- Ample winter moisture has produced plenty of winter weeds. Get on top of them now and pull them before they go to seed.
- As soon as spring blooming shrubs have finished blooming, it’s time to prune if they have gotten too large.
- Many perennials can be divided now—hostas, Japanese anemone, black-eyed-Susan, yarrow, chrysanthemums, etc.
- If you want to relocate daffodils, it is ok to dig them after they have bloomed. Do not remove leaves. Replant them as you would any other transplant and leave the leaves to die down on their own.
- Renovate house plants. This is a good time to repot and cut them back as needed.

Fruits
- Plant any fruit crops.
- If you did not get fruit trees pruned in March, it is better to prune late than to miss a year of pruning.
- Fertilize fruit trees, blueberries, grape vines, and brambles.
- Strawberries will flower later in the month. You might want to have row cover fabric handy in case you need to protect the blooms from a late frost.

Vegetables
- Consider growing some vegetables in containers. This is often a good option if the only sunny space you have is the deck or patio.
- You can still plant potatoes as well as plant seeds for lettuce, beets and leafy greens.
- Set out transplants for cool season crops such as cabbage, broccoli, lettuce. Make sure they are hardened off before planting into the garden.
- Have row cover fabric handy if frost sensitive crops are planted before May 10.
- Perennial herbs such as rosemary, thyme and lavender can be planted later in the month.

Other
- Add ornamental features to the entry, patio or garden with container gardens. Select plant combinations according to the sun or shade in the intended location.
**SPOTLIGHT: BLUEBERRIES**

There is no better plant to add to the edible landscape than blueberry bushes. Highbush blueberries are native to western North Carolina and they are the type recommended for growing here. Some gardeners enjoy rabbiteye varieties, but they are not reliably winter hardy in the mountains, especially above 2500 feet elevation.

Blueberry bushes can get 8 feet tall in time, but can be pruned as needed. They develop a wonderful burgundy red color in fall, adding to the landscape value. Think about a hedge of blueberry bushes if you need a screen that does not require an evergreen.

Highbush blueberries require very acid soil—ph 4.2 to 4.8. They also need well drained soil, so amend the clay soil with pine bark soil conditioner when planting. Full sun will give best berry production, but don’t count them out if you can only give them 6 hours of sun. In addition to good soil preparation, the other important step in establishing healthy blueberry plants is removing all the flowers for at least the first 2 years. Allowing the plant to bear fruit the first few years stunts the growth of the plants and will result in the plant taking several years longer to reach mature size and full production.

**GARDENING IN THE MOUNTAINS**

Due to organizational changes at The Arboretum, Extension Master Gardeners will no longer be offering the free monthly programs at that location. This year free talks will be provided one Wednesday each month at the Cooperative Extension office, 94 Coxe Ave. Asheville. Talks are scheduled for 10:00—11:00am.

- **May 19**—Growing Hostas.
- **June 16**—Gardening Near Black Walnut Trees.
- **July 21**—Roses for WNC.
- **August 18**—Ground Covers
- **September 15**—Trees in the Landscape

**ASK A GARDENER TABLES**

You will frequently find Extension Master Gardeners staffing an Ask A Gardener information table at area events. This year they will also be available to provide gardening information at the Asheville City Tailgate Market the 1st Saturday each month, beginning May 1.

**PLANT PROBLEM CLINICS**

Through the summer, Extension Master Gardener volunteers will be available to look at plant problems and answer gardening questions the 2nd and 4th Saturday of each month. The Master Gardener Plant Clinics will be set up at the Western North Carolina Farmers’ Market, in the breezeway between the retail buildings from 11:00am to 2:00pm. The first clinic for 2010 will be April 10.
50 YEARS AT THE BOTANICAL GARDENS

In 1960, a group of local citizens had the vision of establishing a public garden to showcase plants native to the Southern Appalachian area. Even at that time they were concerned about the loss of biodiversity and the dwindling number of native plant habitats. Thanks to their efforts the 10 acre Botanical Gardens at Asheville was born on land owned by what is now UNC-Asheville.

The Botanical Gardens is still thriving and this year will be celebrating the 50th anniversary. Look for special events, educational programs, and special themed guided garden walks. The first big event will be the 50th Anniversary Party on April 18.

For more information, visit the BGA web site at: http://www.ashevillebotanicalgardens.org

SMALL FRUIT FOR THE GARDEN

Grapes and berries are more adaptable to the average home garden than fruit trees. They require less space, start producing in a shorter period of time, and generally need less care.

All fruit crops will produce best with full sun and fertile, well-drained soil. Here are the most popular small fruits for growing in western North Carolina.

Strawberries: They bear fruit the second year and a bed may produce for 3 to 4 years. Plant strawberry plants in March or April. When plants begin to flower, remove all flowers the first year. Keep the bed weed free. Mulch will help.

Blueberries: Highbush blueberries are native to western North Carolina. Blueberries need a very acid soil—ph 4.2 to 4.8, so it is important to do a soil test before planting. Well maintained blueberry bushes may produce berries for 20 years.

Blackberries and Raspberries: Brambles are also fairly easy to grow. They will begin to bear the second season and the patch may last several years if maintained. Annual pruning is important and some varieties require a trellis.

Grapes: American bunch grapes can be grown in western North Carolina, though they require more care than the other small fruits. Vines can produce for many years if pruned annually and with regular pest control. Muscadines are not reliably cold hardy. Wine grapes (viniferas) are difficult because they are very prone to diseases.
SURVEY RESULTS

Thanks to all who responded to our annual Mountain Gardener survey. Several of you did offer suggestions for items you would like to see in future newsletters. Those topics mentioned by several readers included: organic gardening, native shrubs, vegetable gardening, fruit crops and shade tolerant plants. I will work on getting many of those topics included this year.

GROW SOME HERBS

Most herbs are easy to grow in the home garden. And it is so handy to have fresh rosemary, thyme, parsley and dill right outside the kitchen door.

Most herbs should be grown in full sun for best development of flavor and fragrance. Try to place them where they will receive at least 6 hours of sun each day. Well drained soil is important for most herbs, especially those originating in Mediterranean climate. When planting in clay soil, amend well with pine bark soil conditioner or small gravel to improve drainage.

Herb plants can easily be incorporated into landscape beds or the vegetable garden. Try planting sage, lavender, rosemary, fennel, dill or parsley into the flower garden. Creeping thymes may work well as edging plants or cascading over a wall. Golden creeping oregano makes a fine ground cover.

Of course, most herb plants can be grown in containers as well. Fragrant plants like scented geraniums, lemon verbena, lavender and rosemary are so nice around the patio where you can brush the leaves and release the fragrance.

A great inspiration to get started with herbs is to visit the annual Spring Herb Festival at the WNC Farmers’ Market. This year’s event will be April 30, May 1 and 2.

ALMANAC GARDNER 2010 SEASON

Almanac Gardener begins its 27th season on Saturday April 10 at noon on the statewide UNC-TV network. The Saturday show will be repeated at 11:30am on Sunday.

Almanac Gardener is a half-hour home horticulture program telecast for 20 weeks from April through August. It is one of the longest running series on UNC-TV and is a co-production of UNC-TV and Cooperative Extension at N.C. State University.

Viewers send questions to Almanac Gardener and horticultural experts from the North Carolina Cooperative Extension answer them on the air. The show also airs how-to horticultural features that are produced in the field.

Regular Extension panelists include, Karen Neill, Horticultural Agent, Guilford County; Linda Blue, Horticultural Agent, Buncombe County; Bill Lord, Environmental Agent, Franklin County; and Lucy Bradley, Urban Horticultural Specialist, NCSU. Mike Gray is a co-producer and host of Almanac Gardener.

Recommendations for the use of 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 the North Carolina Cooperative Extension nor discrimination against similar products or services not mentioned. Individuals who use 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 and examine a current product label before applying any chemical. For assistance, Contact an agent of the North Carolina Cooperative Extension.
COMING EVENTS

• **April 10 & 24**  Plant Problem Clinic. by Extension Master Gardeners, WNC Farmers’ Market. 11:00 - 2:00 in the breezeway between the retail buildings.

• **April 30—May 1**  Days in the Garden. Botanical Gardens at Asheville  
  Friday, 1-6 pm, plant sale  
  Saturday, 8am—3 pm, plants, food, crafts, entertainment, guided walks

• **April 30—May 2**  Spring Herb Festival. WNC Farmers’ Market  
  Friday and Saturday, 9am—5pm, Sunday 10am—3pm  
  Plants, herbal products, crafts, garden information, educational programs.

• **May 15**  Black Mountain Garden Show and Sale, Local vendors will offer plants and products  
  Master Gardeners will staff an Ask A Gardener information table, 9:00am—5:00pm

• **May 19**  Gardening in the Mountains Series, “Growing Hostas” presented by Extension Master Gardeners, NC Cooperative Extension—Buncombe County Center, 94 Coxe Ave., Asheville. 10:00am