“Just remember in the winter far beneath the bitter snows lies the seed that with the sun’s love, in the spring, becomes the rose.” - from The Rose

Opportunities to Learn

Before we really get busy in the garden, March offers numerous opportunities to learn about gardening. See inside for more details:

March 22 Backyard Small Fruit, Extension Office, 94 Coxe Ave., Asheville
March 29 Starting a Vegetable Garden, Ext. Office, 94 Coxe Ave.
March 30 Starting a Vegetable Garden, Ext. Office, 94 Coxe Ave.

Also check out offerings at the following:

Botanical Gardens at Asheville: http://www.ashevillebotanicalgardens.org
The NC Arboretum: http://www.ncarboretum.org
The Bullington Center: http://bullingtoncenter.org

Normal March Weather
Weather Averages
For Asheville, North Carolina

Normal March Average High  57°F
Normal March Average Low  35°F
Normal March Precipitation  4 ”

Hours of Daylight for Asheville, NC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>March</th>
<th>Sunrise</th>
<th>Sunset</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mar 1</td>
<td>7:00am</td>
<td>6:24 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar 31</td>
<td>7:18am</td>
<td>7:50 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 March

Lawns
- Considering February’s weather, it was difficult to get the spring fertilizer application out on time. That does not mean it is a good idea to just do it late. If the lawn does not get extra nitrogen this spring, it’s no big deal, especially if you fertilized in the fall. If you don’t get slow release nitrogen out by the first week in March, just go with a half pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet with a garden fertilizer such as 10-10-10 before the end of the month.
- Have you had the mower tuned up and the blade sharpened? Mow frequently enough to remove no more than 1/3 of the blade at a time.

Ornamentals
- This is a good time to treat hemlock trees for Hemlock Woolly Adelgids. For information see: [http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/ent/notes/O&T/trees/note119a/note119a.htm](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/ent/notes/O&T/trees/note119a/note119a.htm)
- It is time to make repairs to damaged trees and shrubs.
- Plant trees and shrubs, but be cautious about digging in clay soil until it dries out a bit.
- When the snow melts off of the plant beds, you may be surprised to find winter weeds such as bittercress and chickweed. Pull them now, before they go to seed.
- House plants that have gotten leggy can be cut back. Cut above a leaf node far down on the stem so the plant can regain a bushier form.
- Check house plants for insect infestations that can build up during the winter. Insecticidal soap or horticultural oil sprays can be useful for controlling aphids, spider mites or whiteflies.

Fruits
- This is still a fine time to plant all fruit crops.
- Prune fruit trees, blueberries and grapes. The Buncombe County Extension office has videos available for loan on pruning grapes, blueberries and fruit trees.
- If you covered the strawberry bed with straw, plan to remove it late in the month when plants begin to flower.

Vegetables
- Planting can begin in early March, if the soil is not too wet to prepare a seed bed. Plant green peas, kale, spinach, turnips, carrots and onions.
- In the middle of the month you can direct seed lettuce and plant potatoes.
- Transplant broccoli, cauliflower and cabbage late in the month.
- Late March is a good time to start transplants for tomatoes, peppers and eggplants. It takes about 6 week to have plants ready to set out in early May.

Other
- Order seeds and plants for the summer garden.
- Check garden tools and equipment. Clean, sharpen and repair everything before you need it.

Almanac Gardener

The popular Almanac Gardener program returns to UNC-TV on April 10 at 12 noon, and will run weekly through August 28. This production of North Carolina Cooperative Extension and UNC-TV has been providing timely gardening advice for North Carolina gardeners for 27 years.
Spring Garden School

The Annual Spring Garden School is offered by Extension Master Gardeners of Buncombe County. This all day Saturday event will offer a series of classes on “Eat Local– Grow Your Own Vegetables” And will be held on the AB Tech Campus. The program is $10 and you must pre-register and pre-pay by March 17. See below:

**Eat Local – Grow Your Own!**

When: SATURDAY, MARCH 20, 2010
8:30 – 9:00 AM  REGISTRATION
9:00 AM – 3:30 PM CLASSES
Where: Ferguson Auditorium, AB-TECH, Asheville Campus
11:45-1 PM Lunch Break – Bring a bag lunch and enjoy the campus!

Classes will cover:
- How to locate and plan your garden space to maximize yields
- Container vegetable gardening basics
- Organic growing options and integrated pest management (IPM) for the home garden
- When and how to plant vegetables in this region – special focus on growing tomatoes
- Unusual edibles to include in your garden – Malabar spinach, ramps, mushrooms, more!

Questions? Contact us at (828) 255-5522

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**Home Grown Fruits and Vegetables**

If you can’t get to the Spring Garden School, here are a couple of other opportunities. Each class is $5 and pre-registration and pre-payment is required.
See: [http://buncombe.ces.ncsu.edu](http://buncombe.ces.ncsu.edu) or call 255-5522.

**March 22 - Backyard Small Fruits.** Many small fruits are not difficult to grow in western North Carolina. Learn about strawberries, blackberries, blueberries and grapes suitable for backyard production, 5:30—7:00 pm at the Buncombe County Extension office, 94 Coxe Ave., Asheville.

**March 29 - Starting a Vegetable Garden.** The freshest, most nutritious vegetables come from your own garden. You don’t need a lot of space to grow your own vegetables. 5:30—7:00 pm at the Buncombe County Extension office, 94 Coxe Ave., Asheville.

**March 30 - Starting a Vegetable Garden.** Same as evening class. 10:00—11:30 am at the Buncombe County Extension office. 94 Coxe Ave., Asheville.
2010 Perennial Plant of the Year

The Perennial Plant Association’s selection for the 2010 Perennial Plant of the Year is false blue indigo, *Baptisia australis*. This North American native sports blue flowers in early summer. It grows well in USDA Plant Hardiness Zones 3 to 9, so would be quite comfortable in western North Carolina.

If you have wanted to grow lupines, but found they struggle to survive here, you may like this plant as a substitute. The 36 to 48 inch tall flower spikes look quite similar. The seed pods, which turn charcoal black in late summer add another interesting feature and can be used in flower arrangements.

Plant *Baptisia* in full sun and well drained soil. Once established it is reportedly quite drought tolerant.

Repairing Damaged Trees

Winter may not be over and already many trees and shrubs have suffered damage due to the weather. What do you do when plants are bent or broken by ice and snow?

Be careful when removing snow and ice from bent branches. In the cold temperatures they may be brittle enough to snap easily. Use a rake or broom to gently brush up on branches to shake off snow. Some of the bent branches will recover their form in the spring when the sap starts to flow. If the plant is not too large and you can tie the branch up until mid-summer, you may want to try it.

For branches that are broken or do not recover their form, pruning will be needed. Follow good pruning practices to cut back to a branch collar right above a side branch. For more information see: [http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts./hort/consumer/agpubs/ag-071.pdf](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts./hort/consumer/agpubs/ag-071.pdf).

Garden Almanacs

According to the results of our annual newsletter survey conducted last fall, most of you find the most useful feature in this newsletter to be the monthly list of garden chores. In addition to this newsletter, another handy reference is our Gardeners’ Almanac. Our Extension Master Gardener volunteers sell this publication as a guide for gardening in Buncombe County. You can pick up a copy at the Extension office at 94 Coxe Ave. for $5.00. Volunteers usually have them available at events like the Saturday Plant Clinics and information tables as well.
Water—Wise Gardener

The amount of precipitation we have had this winter is not a predictor of how much rain we will have this summer. Gardeners are already wondering if we are getting all of the year’s rain now, leading up to a dry summer. Even in a year of “normal” rainfall, there will be periods of wet and dry. To keep the garden going without using municipal or well water, rain barrels and cisterns allow you to recycle rain water.

Rain Barrel Sale

Because people are still asking about rain barrels, we are offering one more sale.

80 gallon barrel $ 110
Payment by March 22, 2010
(Make checks payable to: Rain Barrel USA)
Pick up day
Saturday, March 27, 2010
9:00—1:00
WNC Farmers Market

To order your barrel, mail your payment to: NC Cooperative Extension, 94 Coxe Ave., Asheville, NC 28801. An order form can also be found on the web site at: http://buncombe.ces.ncsu.edu.

Plan for Pollination

If you are planting fruit crops, remember that they need pollination. Some will need to be cross pollinated by a different variety. This is the case for most apple varieties, as well as sweet cherries, pears, Japanese plums. Of the tree fruits other plums, peaches and sour cherries are “self fruitful”.

Most of the small fruits we grow in western North Carolina do not need cross pollination—raspberries, blackberries, strawberries, highbush blueberries and bunch grapes. Types that do need crossing are not recommended for growing in the mountains anyway: rabbiteye blueberries and some of the muscadine grape varieties.

Whether they are self fruitful or need cross pollination, all do require good activity on the part of bees and other pollinators to transfer pollen. Be particularly careful with pesticide use during bloom season.

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


• March 22  Rain Barrel order deadline. Pickup date is March 27 at the WNC Farmers’ Market.

• March 22  Backyard Small Fruit, 5:30—7:00 pm at the Buncombe County Extension office. 94 Coxe Ave., Asheville.

• March 29  Starting a Vegetable Garden, 5:30—7:00 at the Buncombe County Extension office. 94 Coxe Ave., Asheville.

• March 30  Starting a Vegetable Garden, 10:00—11:30 am at the Buncombe County Extension Office. 94 Coxe Ave., Asheville.

• April 30  Days in the Garden, Botanical Gardens at Asheville, Friday, 1 - 6 pm, plant sales. Saturday, 8 am - 3 pm, plants, products, crafts, garden information, programs.

• May 1  Days in the Garden, Botanical Gardens at Asheville, Friday, 1 - 6 pm, plant sales. Saturday, 8 am - 3 pm, plants, products, crafts, garden information, programs.