Planning For Water Conservation

Starting into the growing season a few inches below normal on rainfall is worrisome. Let’s hope the dry spring is not a preview of the summer ahead. There are things we can do to plan ahead for summer water use.

1. Install rain barrels under downspouts.
2. Plan to water only plants that really need it. Vegetable gardens and fruits need on inch of water per week.
3. Allow lawns to go dormant.
4. Mulch. Use bark products in ornamental beds, straw in the vegetable garden.
5. Use fertilizer sparingly. Heavily fertilized plants need more water in summer.
6. Don’t plant more plants than you are prepared to water.

Normal May Weather
Weather Averages
For Asheville, North Carolina

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Normal May Average High</td>
<td>74.9°F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normal May Average Low</td>
<td>51.3°F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normal May Precipitation</td>
<td>3.66&quot;</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>May 1</td>
<td>6:38 am</td>
<td>8:16 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 31</td>
<td>6:16 am</td>
<td>8:39 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 May

Lawns

- Do not fertilize fescue and bluegrass lawns.
- Mow cool season grasses 2 1/2 to 3 inches high.
- Pull crabgrass seedlings while they are small.
- Pull broadleaf (non-grass) weeds before they spread, or they can be spot treated with broadleaf herbicide.
- Try not to mow when grass is wet as you can spread disease problems.

Ornamentals

- Sprinkle seeds in the flower bed for zinnias, cosmos, nicotiana, love-in-a-mist and other easy annuals.
- Select annual and perennial flowers according to their sun light requirements.
- Flower and shrubbery beds can still be fertilized. Use a product with slow release fertilizer for extended feeding and to protect water quality.
- Prune spring blooming shrubs soon after blossoms fade.
- Nothing perks up a patio or entry like a colorful container garden. You can create great looking containers without relying on flowers. Combine colorful foliage plants such as sweet potato vine, purple heart, coleus, wandering Jew, creeping Jenny, dusty miller, crotons, ivies and grasses.
- 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

- Pick strawberries regularly. Pick and discard any moldy berries.
- Begin fungicide sprays, especially on peaches, plums and grapes.
- If an April freeze did not thin your apple, pear or peach crop, this is the time to do it. Remove excess fruit so they are about 6 inches apart, before the fruit is the size of a nickel.

Vegetables

- Did you thin the early seedings of lettuce, greens and the like? Radishes and carrots only need to be 1 to 2 inches apart. Lettuces and greens should be closer to 6 inches.
- All cabbage family crops are now being attacked by cabbage worms. Spray with organic B.t. (Bacillus thuringiensis) about once a week.
- Seeds of beans and melons do not germinate well if the soil temperature is below 65. Use a soil thermometer or wait until about the middle of May to plant seeds in the garden.
- If you plant frost sensitive plants (all of the summer crops) before May 10, be prepared to use floating row cover or other material to cover plants if frost is in the forecast.
- Spindly tomato plants can be planted very deep as they will form roots on the buried stem. Remove leaves that will be below the soil.

Other

- Insects are essential for pollinating many crops. Honeybees and other pollinators are very vulnerable to insecticides used on flowering plants. Sevin dust (carbaryl) is especially toxic to bees.
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.

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

Plant Clinics

These volunteers are also available to answer questions at the Saturday Plant Clinics, two 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. See Events for this month’s schedule.

Spotlight: Kousa Dogwood

The last couple of springs, the Kousa dogwoods have really put on a show. Perhaps the trees planted in the landscape in the last decade have gotten large enough for folks to really take notice.

Kousa dogwood, *Cornus kousa*, also called Asian dogwood, blooms 3 to 4 weeks later than our native flowering dogwood, after the leaves have emerged. The flower size and shape is similar except that the white bracts are pointed rather than heart shaped. There are quite a few varieties of *Cornus kousa* available, including a few pink forms.

In the fall most varieties will produce red fruit, rather like a one inch raspberry, that has a very decorative effect. Fruit is edible, though I would not call it tasty. The leaves of some varieties turn red in the fall.

Kousa dogwood is considered a small to medium sized tree, quite similar in size and form to the native dogwood. As the tree ages, the bark begins to exfoliate, developing multi-colored brown and tan patches. This appealing bark combines with the horizontal branch structure to give good winter interest. The tree will bloom best with plenty of sun, but will tolerate partial shade. Try to give it well drained soil with a pH of 5.5 to 6.5.
Rhubarb
Ask a Gardener, by Glenn Palmer

Q: We planted rhubarb last year. It did well and we did not harvest any to let it build strength. Now some plants are producing tall stalks with growths that look like broccoli. What is that? Is it normal?

A: “Bolting” is the term used to describe a plant sending up a flower stalk. The “broccoli” that you’re seeing is the flower head. Those stalks are not edible.

Rhubarb is a cool season crop that requires a certain number of chilling hours before growth starts in the spring. Normally bolting would occur much later, triggered by long day length in summer. Early bolting can be a reaction to weather conditions, poor soil fertility or over-crowding. The plant “feels” threatened and decides perpetuation of the species is more important than producing leaves. Older plants and, according to Purdue Extension, red-stalked varieties, are more likely to bolt early than green-stalked.

In any case, you generally want to remove the flower stems so that the plant does not waste energy producing seeds. The general recommendation is not to harvest leaves until the third season anyway, so after removing the stalk water well and fertilize with nitrogen to encourage leaf growth, which will build energy for future production. Normally you might fertilize before new growth starts in early spring with a good dose of composted manure or one pound of 10-10-10 per hundred square feet. In the fall let the plant die back naturally from cold weather to help it go completely dormant.

WE HAVE RAIN BARRELS!

The NC Cooperative Extension, Buncombe County Center, has rain barrels available for sale. The 80 gallon barrels come complete with fittings and installation instructions. Barrels may be purchased for $110 + tax at the Extension office at 94 Coxe Ave., Asheville. For more information call 255-5522.

Tailgate Season

If it is in season and you are not growing it in your garden, you can probably find it at one of our wonderful local tailgate markets. So many new markets have opened in the last couple of years, I am not going to try to list them all here. You will find listings in the local papers, or check Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project’s Local Food Guide. You can pick up a copy at our office, or check it online at: www.buyappalachian.org.

To receive this newsletter via email
Phone 255-5522 or email: joyce.plemmons@buncombecounty.org
CONGRATULATIONS, 2012 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 over 100 veteran volunteers to help answer your gardening questions.

This year’s graduates are:

Mike Arnott  Nancy Humphries  Mary Anne Richards
Debbie Breck  Carmen James  Joe Roberts
Nancy Butler  Elaine Lacy  Terry Scholl
Janet Doellgast  Greta Langhenry  Nora Sheehan
Laura Dotson  July Lemanski  Meredith Sims
Ajani Eagledove  Sherrie Mahowald  Anne Stafford
Myra Fuller  Paul Marsters  Julialynn Veach
Mary Hill  Gene Rainey  James Wade

Let’s Start with Jams! - Supported by the Extension Community Association

With an abundance of berries in season, now is the time to preserve some of those local strawberries and other berries as jam. Come to this hands-on class and learn how to make berry jam. We will cover making jams with and without added pectin. We will also discuss ways to make sugar free, freezer and other refrigerated jams. You will be able to take home a sample of what we make. Pre-registration is required and a fee of $10 will cover costs supplies for the classes.

Date and Time: Tuesday May 22\textsuperscript{nd} from 9am to 1pm

Successful Container Gardens

Container gardens have become very popular for entries, patios and decks. Here are a few tips for planting a successful garden in a container.

- Choose a container with drainage holes or drill holes if needed. Anything that will hold soil can be used as a container: boots, pocketbooks, suitcases, mailboxes, bathtubs….
- Use good potting soil. If the container is very large, you can fill some space in the bottom with pine cones, empty soda bottles, or other light weight items.
- Select plants that suit the light conditions were the garden will be located. Full sun means your plants will receive a minimum of six hours of sunlight daily.
- Consider mixing herbs, flowers, foliage plants, bulbs and grasses.
- For a striking container select a combination of upright, mounding and trailing plants.
- In addition to creating a garden in one large container, you might also make groupings of plants in different size containers and on stands of varying heights. This even allows you to change the selection and arrangement during the season.
EVENTS

- **May 4-6**  
  **Spring Herb Festival**: WNC Farmers’ Market  
  Friday and Saturday, 9am - 5pm, Sunday, 10am - 3pm  
  Plants, herbal products, crafts, garden information, educational programs.

- **May 9**  
  **“Tomatoes II”**, talk by EMG John Hew, Extension Office, 94 Coxe Ave., 1:30pm, Free, Repeated again on Sat. May 12 at Manna Demo Garden, 9:05am

- **May 12**
  **Extension Master Gardeners: Plant Problem Clinic** - In the breezeway between the retail buildings at the WNC Farmers’ Market, 11 am - 2pm

- **May 12 & 26**
  **Backyard Composting Demo** - by Ext. Master Gardeners at Farmers’ Mkt. next to Jesse Israel’s, 11am - 2pm.

- **May 16**
  **Gardening in the Mountains Series, “Planting for Pollinators: Infinite Possibilities”**, presented by Extension Master Gardeners, NC Cooperative Extension - Buncombe County Center, 94 Coxe Ave. Asheville, 10:00am, Free.

- **May 19**
  **Black Mountain Garden Show and Sale**, 9:00 - 4:00, on the grounds of the Monte Vista Hotel. Local vendors will offer plants and products, Master Gardener information table.