

# MOUNTAIN GARDENER

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

Buncombe County Cooperative Extension Center

June 2015

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## Helping Gardeners Put Knowledge to Work

### School Garden Grants Awarded 2015-2016

The Extension Master Gardener Volunteer's School Grants program provides funds for school gardens in Buncombe County. It is a unique program in North Carolina as there are monetary grants (as well as volunteers) given to individual schools specifically to start and/or sustain a school garden. The first funds were given in 2007 with \$1,000 dollars for 3 schools. As of 2015 the Buncombe County EMGVs have granted 32 schools over \$24,000. Over 9,000 students have participated in these programs as well as hundreds of teachers, parents and community volunteers.

The following schools have been awarded grants (total of \$3810) for the 2015-2016 school year!

**A C Reynolds High School**  
**Cane Creek Middle School**  
**Charles Owen Middle School**  
**Charles Owen High School**  
**Erwin Middle School**  
**Fairview Elementary School**  
**Francine Delany**  
**Leicester Elementary School**  
**Vance Elementary School**  
**YMCA @ Beaverdam**



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

Normal June Average High 82.0°  
Normal June Average Low 61.0°  
Normal June Precipitation 3.39"

### Hours of Daylight for Asheville, NC

	Sunrise	Sunset
June 1	6:16 am	8:40pm
June 30	6:18am	8:50 pm

*Persons with disabilities and persons with limited English proficiency may request accommodations to participate in activities mentioned in this newsletter. Please contact Alison Arnold at 828-255-5522 during business hours at least 3 days prior to the event to discuss accommodations.*

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EXTENSION**

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## **Garden Chores for June 2015**

### **Lawns**

- Do not fertilize cool-season lawns until September.
- Regular rainy weather will produce good conditions for brown patch, a fungus disease. If brown patches begin to occur do not irrigate and do not mow the lawn when wet.
- Maintain the mowing height for fescue lawns at 3 inches. Try to mow frequently enough to remove no more than 1/3 of the blade at a time.

### **Ornamentals**

- To keep flower colors separated it can be useful to divide Irises and daylilies while in bloom or as they fade. Remove any remaining flowers, cut leaves half way back and replant the divisions as soon as possible.
- Prune out dieback from hybrid rhododendron, azaleas, mountain laurel and blueberry. Anytime is a good time to prune dead wood from trees and shrubs.
- Pinch chrysanthemums to encourage more blooms and stockier, bushier plants.
- Remember to check new plantings through the summer. During extended dry periods trees and shrubs may need a good soaking every week through their first growing season. Herbaceous perennials may need regular watering at least for the first couple of months as they get established.
- There is still time to plant seeds for fast-maturing annuals such as cosmos, zinnias, marigolds, and small sunflowers.
- This is a good time to repot houseplants that have been moved outside for the summer. Also remember to monitor the soil moisture because the plants will dry out faster outside.
- Check hanging baskets daily for water, especially that are exposed to the sun or winds. Plastic containers will dry out slower than those with coconut liners.
- Remove the faded flowers from Purple Coneflower, Rudbeckia, Phlox, and Shasta Daisy to encourage re-blooming.
- Trim hedges that have outgrown their shape. If needed, trim narrow-leaf evergreens such as Juniper and Arborvitae in late June.
- Late spring flowering shrubs can be trimmed back after the flowers fade.

### **Fruits**

- Stay on top of brown rot on peaches and plums, and black rot on grapes. Maintain regular fungicide sprays as a preventative; these diseases cannot be controlled once they have infected the fruit.
- This is a good time to remove excess sucker and water sprout growth from apple trees. Removing the excessively vigorous growth now will allow more of the plant's energy to go into fruit and desirable growth, and results in less re-sprouting than winter pruning.
- A healthy strawberry bed can be renovated after harvest. Beds more than 3 or 4 years old are often best removed and replanted in the fall or spring.

### **Vegetables**

- Vegetable crops generally need another dose of fertilizer about 5 to 6 weeks after planting, or when fruit starts to form.
  - Check and harvest cucumbers, squash and green beans regularly (daily) to help keep plants producing. They also mature quickly and are best harvested while young and tender.
  - Watch for dark brown spots in tomato leaves. This could be early blight and can be prevented with a fungicide spray.
  - Water the garden early in the day to allow the foliage to dry before nightfall. Wet foliage overnight can lead to disease development.
  - Use 2 hands to pull beans, cucumbers, squash, etc. to avoid breaking the plant.
  - There is still time to plant beans, tomatoes, cucumbers, and summer squash.
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## **Watering the Garden**

When you're given the recommendation to provide at least 1 inch of water a week the best way to accurately check is to examine the soil itself! Generally, if the soil is dry when scratched to a depth of 1 to 2 inches (for annuals and most vegetables), watering is necessary. If there's adequate moisture - watering can be delayed a day or two.

Watering often and for short periods of time promotes shallow root development, in the top 1 to 2 inches of soil. When the weather gets hotter and the top few inches of the soil dries out watering more frequently may be needed just to keep the plants from wilting.

Watering less often and for longer periods of time on the other hand encourages roots to grow deeper which helps plants withstand dry periods. After awhile it will become easier to know how long it takes for the water to reach the desired depth. Of course for larger trees and shrubs the water will need to go deeper since they have larger root systems and so this will take more time than with smaller plants. Dig into the soil with a long trowel or shovel to see if the soil is moist in the vicinity of the root zone.

If you use a portable lawn sprinkler, be sure to keep the application rate low enough that water does not run off the soil. Water applied too fast will not soak into the soil. Also make sure that the vegetable plants do not interfere with the application pattern. Often this requires mounting the sprinkler on a small platform above the plants.

A variety of drip and trickle irrigation systems are available through garden centers and mail order catalogs that operate at low pressure and deliver small amounts of water to the soil slowly, allowing a good slow soak. A soaker hose is the least expensive and maybe easiest to use but they can provide uneven water distribution if they get clogged or lie on uneven ground. Also they can be easily cut when digging in the soil.

## **Canning and Preserving Workshops This Summer!**

Canning season is here and it's time to get prepared. You want to check your equipment to make sure it is ready for use. Buy new lids to replace the lids used last year. Check your bands and jars to see that they are in good condition. You need to check your gaskets and pressure gauges. You can call our office to set up an appointment for checking the pressure gauge. To learn more about canning or just to brush up on the newest information on food preservation from Canning to Freezing to Drying come to the ***Canning and Preserving Made Easy*** program offered two times on **July 7, 2015 at 5:30pm – 9:00pm at the Buncombe County Cooperative Extension Center and on July 8, 2015 at 1pm – 4:30pm at the Madison County Cooperative Extension Center**. Pre-registration is required, and a \$5 fee will be charged to cover costs for materials. Call Buncombe County Cooperative Extension Center at (828) 255-5522 or the Madison County Cooperative Extension Center at (828) 649-2411 to register or for more information.

### **Putting Up Jams and Fruits!**                      **Thursday, July 2, 2015 - 10am to 2pm**

We will make a jam from a seasonal fruit and learn ways to can our high acid fruits using a water bath canner. Cost \$10.

### **It's Pickling Time!**                                      **Friday, July 10, 2015 - 10am to 2pm**

Come learn how to make a simple dill pickle and preserve those little pickling cucumbers for the long fall and winter months. This class will also discuss how to make relishes and other pickled products. Cost \$10.

### **Canning Beans Safely!**                                      **Tuesday, July 21, 2015 - 10am to 3pm**

One of the most popular foods to can is beans, but it can also be one of the most risky to eat if not canned safely. Come can beans together with us and learn the latest recommendations for canning your beans to use later in those wintertime casseroles. This class will cover using weighted and gauge pressure canners as well as discuss the importance of adjusting time for canning at higher altitudes. Cost \$10

### **Putting Tomatoes By!**                                      **Thursday, August 13, 2015- 10am to 3pm**

In this hands-on class we cover canning tomatoes with a water bath canner and a pressure canner. Because we cover both methods of canning, this class allows you to experience both techniques. We will also discuss freezing and dehydrating tomatoes as other options for preserving them for future use. Cost \$10.

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## **Deadheading Large Flowered Rhododendrons**

To remove the fading flowers from any plant is called 'deadheading'. This is done to help appearance and in some plants encourages new flowers. For rhododendrons removing the withered flower clusters helps reduce disease, prevents heavy seed set, and encourages new growth, which in turn can create more densely grown plants. Deadheading also can allow for a better flower bud set the following season. It isn't detrimental if a plant isn't deadheaded since it can be labor intensive and may not even be necessary say with the smaller flowered rhododendrons and azaleas.

To deadhead a rhododendron cut or quickly snap the stem where the flower cluster (also called "truss") attaches to the plant. Look for the new shoots emerging from below, and be careful not to break these off in the process.



Deadhead by breaking off spent flowers. Be careful of buds underneath the flower.

## **Early Season Problems in the Landscape**

Calls coming into the Extension Master Gardener volunteer Garden Helpline tell us what is showing up in gardens and landscapes throughout the Buncombe County area. Fortunately some of these are not of any great significance and are often related to early season conditions. Other times they can indicate an emerging problem that needs to be monitored and even treated. As always it's important to get a correct identification and diagnosis in order to know how to treat and if a treatment is even warranted. Here are a few highlights of the calls coming into our clinic.

Azalea and Rhododendron Gall and Wool Sower Gall on Oak – Plant galls are formed either by diseases (the former) or insects (the latter) and are often strange alien-like deformed growths on stems and leaves. They are commonly seen early in the season, in small numbers and are rarely problematic. Remove by hand if within reach to prevent reinfection.

Tar Spot on Maple – This is an early season disease that forms raised black spots closely resembling droplets of tar on the leaf surface, and this is unsightly more than life threatening. Early Leaf Drop can Occur, rake and remove leaves from the area to prevent reinfection the following season.

Powdery Mildew on Dogwood – This shows up when the combination of rain, cool nights and warm days occurs. First symptoms appear as a whitish film or growth on the surface of actively growing leaves later more severely damaged tissues may become dwarfed, curled, or otherwise deformed. The disease may occur throughout the growing season depending on seasonal conditions. Maintaining health, increasing air circulation and sun can help dogwoods survive infection.

Cottony Camellia Scale on Rose of Sharon and Holly – Found on stems and on the undersides of leaves this scale is cream to tan in color, elongate oval and relatively flat. Like most soft scales this one sucks sap from the plant and excretes honeydew, a sweet sticky liquid. Since there is one generation a year the best time to treat is early summer during the "crawler stage. Try horticultural oils or insecticidal soap first to knock down infestations. Repeat applications again in 6 weeks and monitor.

## **Refreshing Foliage**

Sometime in early May hail damaged Hostas in the Fairview area of Buncombe County leaving shredded or heavily damaged foliage. Since it was early in the season cutting and removing the most severely damaged foliage can allow new foliage to grow back, leaving healthy looking foliage for the remainder of the season. This can be done on a variety of perennial plants – as long as the plants are healthy and adequate water is provided.

Cutting back daylily foliage after they have completed their bloom cycle can provide nice green foliage for the remainder of the season and prevent the typical slow decline and yellowing foliage typically tolerated once the flowering season is over.

## **Invincibelle® Spirit Hydrangea**

Recently I asked a colleague what flowering shrub stood out this season and without any hesitation he said 'Invincibelle Spirit' Hydrangea. Having seen it in it's full glory his remarks included "hard to miss, clean foliage and simply amazing".

Growing 3-4' tall and 3-5' wide this full sun summer flowering shrub begins with dark pink buds that open hot pink and mature to a soft pink and finally to green late in the season. Reliably hardy and a consistently heavy bloomer it is adaptable to most well drained soils and can be pruned to shape in late winter/early spring. Our own Dr. Tom Ranney and his team of graduate students and staff developed this plant at the Mountain Horticultural Crops Research and Extension Center at North Carolina State University in Fletcher NC.

Since its introduction in 2009, \$1.00 from every Invincibelle® Spirit hydrangea sold has been donated to [The Breast Cancer Research Foundation®](http://www.breastcancerresearchfoundation.org). With these funds and those from Pink Days, fundraisers hosted by garden centers across the U.S. and Canada, over \$829,552 has been donated so far. It even has it's own website. Check it out at <http://www.invincibellespirit.net/>.



## **Something New for Garden and Plate**

If you are looking for something new to grow in your garden consider the Armenian Cucumber. Also known as the Yard-long melon or Snake Melon this unusual summer garden plant is botanically classified as a melon, is a member of the same family as muskmelons and honeydew melons and has a cantaloupe-like aroma when sliced.

Often growing up to several feet long (straight if trellised and crooked if grown on the ground) they are at their best flavor when harvested at 12-18 inches. High yields, mild tasting, thin skin and great for slicing or pickling. The only complaint is that a little goes a long way!



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## UPCOMING NEWS

### **Gardening In The Mountain Series – June 18<sup>th</sup> 10:00 am**

Join us on June 18<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 AM for a presentation by Extension Master Gardener Debbie Wood on Container Gardening. Lack of space does not have to prevent you from growing flowers, herbs and vegetables. Container Gardening is the answer. Debbie will provide guidelines for soil, containers, plant selection and maintenance. After this session let your imagination go wild. Although this program is free registration is requested. Call (828)255-5522. Location: Buncombe County Cooperative Extension Center, 94 Coxe Avenue, Asheville, NC. Free parking is across the street (Lot 16) but **please ask for a parking pass from the office.**

### **Backyard Composting Demonstration – June 27<sup>th</sup> 11:00 am – 2:00 pm**

Learn how to compost, see several composting set ups perfect for home use, pick up written instructions, ask questions and get a small sample to take home. A perfect way to spend an afternoon!  
Location: WNC Farmers' Market beside Jesse Israel's Garden Center.

### **Thank You for Your Support!**

Sending out a heartfelt THANK YOU to those of you who came and supported the Extension Master Gardener volunteer May 9<sup>th</sup> Spring Fling Plant Sale. It was our best spring sale ever and helped raise funds to support the Master Gardener activities that in turn help grow better gardeners in our community. We couldn't do it without you.

Did you know you could receive this newsletter via email? [Sign up on the website!](http://buncombe.ces.ncsu.edu/)  
<http://buncombe.ces.ncsu.edu/>

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