

April 2011



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**Forsyth County Center**  
 1450 Fairchild Road  
 Winston-Salem NC 27105  
 336-703-2850  
 Fax: 336/767-3557  
 www.forsyth.cc  
 forsyth.ces.ncsu.edu

*R. Craig Mauney*

R. Craig Mauney  
 Extension Agent  
 Horticulture

## Gardening in April

### Lawn Care

- ◆ Get your lawn mower ready for regular mowing by sharpening the mower blades, changing the oil and tuning up the motor.
- ◆ Apply pre-emergent herbicide to your lawn this month for crab grass control.

### Edibles

- ◆ Rotate vegetable crops to help control pests and diseases. Don't use the same family in one location but once every three years.
- ◆ If not done in March, prune stone fruit trees such as peaches and nectarines.
- ◆ Begin spraying fruit trees with a home orchard spray as soon as the flower petals begin to fade.
- ◆ After danger of frost is past (around April 15th) you can start direct seeding crops in the vegetable

garden such as sweet corn, pole beans, lima and snap beans, cucumbers and summer squash.

### Ornamental and General Plant Care

- ◆ Check shrubs for winter damage and prune the dead and weakened wood.
- ◆ You can still prune summer flowering shrubs such as crape myrtles and butterfly bushes but wait till the spring blooming shrubs have bloomed.
- ◆ Speed up decomposition in your compost pile by turning once each week.
- ◆ When selecting your summer annuals look for short bushy plants with good color on the leaves and more buds than flowers.
- ◆ Divide, repot and fertilize house plants before moving them outdoors if needed.

## UPCOMING FREE GARDEN PROGRAMS AND EVENTS

- ◆ April 4, 2pm—**Growing Mushrooms in the Home Garden** at Carver School Road Library
- ◆ April 5, 6pm—**Low Maintenance Gardening** at Historic Bethabara Park
- ◆ April 12, 7pm—**Advanced Curb Appeal** at Rural Hall Library
- ◆ April 19, 6pm—**Rain Gardens** at Historic Bethabara Park
- ◆ April 20, 2pm—**Shade Gardening** at Reynolda Manor Library
- ◆ April 20, 5:30pm—**Rain Gardens** at Old Salem
- ◆ April 30, 10am—**Butterfly Gardening** at Old Salem

**Registration is required for programs held at all libraries.**

**Please call Kathy Hepler at 703-2852 to register.**

## Organic Gardening Tips

- ◆ Add compost starter or good garden soil to a new compost pile to help jump-start the decay of organic materials.
- ◆ Mulch your flower beds and trees with 2-3" of organic material - it conserves water, adds humus and nutrients and discourages weeds. It gives your beds a nice, finished appearance.
- ◆ Do you have aphids on your plants? Spray infested stems, leaves and buds with very diluted soapy water (6 drops per 2 liters), then clear water. It works even on the heaviest infestation.
- ◆ When buying plants for your landscape, select well-adapted plant types for your soil, temperature range and sun or shade exposure.
- ◆ The best organic matter for bed preparation is compost made from anything that was once alive, for example leaves, kitchen waste and grass clippings.
- ◆ Think "biodiversity". Using many different kinds of plants encourages many different kinds of beneficial insects to take up residence in your yard.
- ◆ Less than 2 percent of the insects in the world are harmful. Beneficial insects such as ground beetles, ladybugs, fireflies, green lacewings, praying mantis, spiders and wasps keep harmful insects from devouring your plants. They also pollinate your plants and decompose organic matter.
- ◆ Don't run for a can of pesticide when you could pick off and mash a few harmful insects. A blast of water can strip aphids from your plants.
- ◆ Is birdseed sprouting under your bird feeder? To kill the germ of the seed so it can't sprout, spread the seed about 1" deep on a cookie sheet and bake it for 8 minutes in a 300 degree oven. Let it cool before using.



## Pruning Needle Bearing Evergreens

Evergreen trees and shrubs with needle-like foliage, called conifers, usually need pruning only to remove the dead, damaged or diseased limbs. You can also prune to keep their growth compact. Pruning methods vary greatly depending on the conifer's branching habit.

Conifers with whorled branches, such as pine, spruce and fir, have layers of branches around the trunk. Species with random branching, such as arborvitae, juniper, yew and false cypress, have limbs that occur all along the trunk. Decide the reason and the season before pruning your conifer as each is different. First remove the dead, damaged, or diseased limbs at any time of the year regardless of the branching habit. Cut just outside the raised rings on the base of the limb. The branching habit matters most when pruning for compact growth, although both types should be pruned in the spring before the soft, new growth matures.

New shoots, called candles, are seen on most conifers. To promote dense branching and shorter limbs, pinch the candles before their needles lengthen and harden. One species with whorled branches,

take care not to cut into older wood below the candle because these conifers have few or no dormant buds that can become new limbs (white pine).

Conifers with random branching habits can sprout new limbs from older, foliage-bearing wood. Prune into this wood, if needed, to make the conifer more compactly branched or to change the direction of the branch. To redirect growth, prune back to a side branch that is growing in a more desirable direction.

If two central shoots or leaders exist at the top of a pyramid-shaped conifer, remove one of them to maintain a straight, non-forked trunk. If the central leader has died, create a new one by bending an uppermost limb into an upright position and securing it in place with a splint. Remove the ties in a few months when it can stand on its own. Allow pyramid or column-shaped conifers to retain their natural shape by leaving the lower limbs. Instead of pruning the lower limbs, just mulch around the tree to reduce mowing conflicts. Place the conifer in the right place for natural growth, so choose slow growing dwarf conifers for small spaces.

# Bring Back the Buffer and Protect the Waterfront

-Wendi Hartup, Natural Resources Extension Agent

Most people that live by water resources like to remove all the landscape for a clear view. Why not, if you live near the water, you want to see it! Did you know that this typical landscaping practice could actually harm rivers and creeks? Landscaping around a waterway with lawn and mowing all the way to the banks increases stormwater runoff. This runoff carries fertilizer, pesticides, sediments, and pet waste from lawns directly into waterways, polluting the aquatic environment. Landscaping to the water also increases bank erosion, increases the potential for flood damage, and decreases the available habitat for wildlife. Scenic natural views are eventually lost as well.

Some people would not believe their window or deck views, as well as those from the water, would be enhanced by putting plants back along shorelines. By retaining or restoring native shoreline plantings we improve our immediate environment as well as the overall health of our waterways. Riparian buffers are areas next to waterways filled with a mix of native trees, shrubs and perennials.

## Benefits of Buffers

- Slows stormwater runoff
- Absorbs excess nutrients from fertilizers/pesticides as well as other pollutants
- Allows sediments to settle out before clouding up a waterway
- Costs less to maintain than turf (no need to fertilize, water, prune or chemically control)

-Stabilizes shoreline soil to reduce erosion along the banks

-Cools stormwater runoff heated by sunlight on hard surface.

-Shades the ground to reduce surface heating

-Provides habitats for many types of wildlife (butterflies, hummingbirds, frogs, dragonflies)

A homeowner can plan a landscape to frame desirable views, screen unwanted views, and enhance what others see from the water. With buffers on both sides of the water, the view from each bank is primarily of trees and other vegetation and not of lawns and houses. So now you are creating a sense of privacy and atmosphere that helps to reduce noise pollution. Outdoor activities can be more enjoyable and healthful in the shade beneath trees.

So how can you plan a backyard buffer? Think about possible concerns associated with a buffer along your waterway.

- **View:** Consider the views you want to maintain and frame a "view corridor" from your home with plantings composed of small trees, shrubs, and/or native grasses (but not lawn) that won't obstruct your view.
- **Attractive Foliage:** Do you want to attract certain animals to your backyard buffer, such as hummingbirds or butterflies? Do



you want to keep nuisance animals, such as deer, geese, and mosquitoes away?

- **Plant Type:** Do you want flowering plants and/or evergreens? What time of year do you want to see blooms?
- **Plant Location:** Determine where you want different plant types. Where do you want shrubs and where do you want trees, flowering plants, or native grasses?
- **Area:** Plant a 10-20 foot border of low-maintenance plants between your lawn and shoreline to absorb nutrients and provide habitat. To really reduce stormwater runoff impacts and help aquatic life, make the area a 30-foot buffer.

Once you've considered the area to put in a buffer, get to work removing grass, preparing the soil and planting natives. The efforts made at each home can lead directly to increased property values, lower yard maintenance costs, and less chance for property damage from the elements. Remember our municipal drinking water comes from our surface

# Arboretum at Tanglewood Spring Plant Sale



Mark your calendar and bring a friend to the 2011 Spring Arboretum Plant Sale! We will have lots of annuals, perennials, native wildflowers, ground covers and vegetable plants for sale. **New this year: Carnivorous Plants!**

The dates of the sale are:

Thursday April 14

Friday April 15

Saturday April 16

Thursday April 21

Friday April 22

Saturday April 23

9:00am to 1:00pm each day

At **11:00am** each day of the sale, we will also feature a free educational seminar led by different speakers from the Triad area as listed below:

April 14 – **Moss Gardening:** Sheilah Lombardo, Master Gardener

April 15 – **Pesticides for Homeowners:** Karen Neill, Guilford County Extension Agent

April 16 – **Square Foot Gardening:** Michael Rahman, Master Gardener

April 21 – **Wildflower Walk:** Anne Hester & Peg Simm, Master Gardeners

April 22 – **Weed Identification:** Tim Hambrick, Forsyth County Extension Agent

April 23 – **Plants Preferred by Butterflies:** Jim Nottke, Master Gardener

For accommodations for persons with disabilities, contact the Forsyth Extension Office at 336-703-2850, no later than five business days before the event.

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