

# The Dirt



Carroll County Master Gardener Newsletter

July, 2008

## From the Editor's Desk:

Please accept my apologies for this month's newsletters being late. I had 11 kids between the ages of three and 14 staying with me. Each one thought my computer should act like the one they have at home. It died in self defense. Then, four mothers decided it could be revived using their methods. I had to wait for everyone to go home and a tech to come out and perform his magic. Yes, it was all fun (and worth it), and we are doing it again next week! ~Lynn Reiss

If you have questions or concerns about anything contained within this newsletter, please feel free to contact me at 870.423.2958.

Sincerely yours,

Leon Duncan  
County Extension Agent-Staff Chair

### INSIDE

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## Fun Things to plan and do:

July 12      6:00 p.m. Shell's Nob family picnic

July 31      Night Gardening Workshop <http://www.garvangardens.org/>  
Garvan Woodland Gardens, Hot Springs, AR 800.366.4664

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# The Dirt for Carroll County Master Gardeners

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## The Heat is On...Take Care of Yourself!

Periods of extremely hot weather can cause serious health problems, including death.

Normally, the body cools itself by sweating; however, when temperatures and humidity are extremely high, sweating cannot maintain the body's normal temperature.

When the body's core temperature rises, the blood chemistry can change and internal organs, including the brain and kidneys, can be damaged.

Heat exhaustion and heatstroke are the most serious heat-related conditions.

Heat exhaustion is the body's response to excessive loss of water and salt contained in perspiration. Its warning signs include heavy sweating, dizziness, headache and nausea or vomiting. Left untreated, heat exhaustion may progress to heatstroke, which displays the following symptoms:

- Core body temperature above 106°F.
- Extreme fatigue
- Mental confusion
- Nausea
- Profuse sweating (sometimes)
- Severe headache
- Unconsciousness

The person's body

temperature must be lowered immediately, or he or she must seek medical attention.

People can do this by drinking a cool, non-alcoholic beverage, moving to the shade or inside an air-conditioned building, resting and taking a cool shower, bath or sponge bath.

As always, prevention is the best medicine. Use the following advice to guard against heat exhaustion:

- Avoid drinks that contain caffeine, alcohol or large amounts of sugar.

- Avoid very cold drinks, hot foods and heavy meals.

- Cut down on outdoor exercise during peak daytime temperatures.

- Drink two to four glasses of liquids each hour during exercise.

Consider a sports drink to replace salt and minerals.

- Drink more liquids, even if not exercising.

- Limit outdoor activities to early morning and evening hours.

- Wear lightweight, light-colored and loose-fitting clothing.

For more information on avoiding heat-related illness, contact the Extension office at 870.423.2958.

## Free Organic Gardening Workshop

**At Nitron Industries, Johnson, Arkansas**  
**Saturday, July 19, 2008**

**Session # 1 starts at 9:00 a.m.**

**Session # 2 starts at 10:30 a.m.**

**(Same material is covered in each session.)**

**Topics are:** Measuring Nutrient Density, Paramagnetic Rock and How to Use It, and Soil Testing.

Organic gardening instructor, Calvin Bey, will be on hand to talk about gardening issues, with emphasis on growing nutrient-dense produce and how to measure it using a refractometer.

If interested, bring with you any fresh, ripe produce that you are growing, and we will test the Brix level—for index of nutrient density.

Also, bring a representative soil sample, and we will test it for paramagnetic value.

If you have a soil test report, bring it in too. We can help to interpret what fertilizers your garden might need.

## Learn How to Grow Your Own Veggies

**Biological/Organic Gardening and More**  
**Class #1. August 22–23, 2008,**

**Friday, 1–4 p.m.; Saturday, 9 a.m.–4 p.m.**

**Class #2. September 6, 2008,**

**Saturday, 8 a.m.–5 p.m.**

Late August and early September is the time to prepare garden beds and plant a fall vegetable crop or a cover crop for excellent soil protection for the winter. Classes will be held at Harmony Gardens at 8779 W. Forest Hills Dr. in Fayetteville. Class #1 and Class #2 cover the same material. Pre-registration is required. Each class is limited to 15 people. The cost is \$75 per person and includes the gardening book, *How to Grow More Vegetables* by John Jeavons, and 60 pages of material prepared by the instructor. If you have the Jeavons book, deduct \$15. For couples who want to share the book and other handouts, the cost is \$125. You can register by sending a check to Calvin Bey, 8779 W. Forest Hills Dr., Fayetteville, AR 72704.

**(Continued on page 4)**

## Taking Care of the Garden

Make time to do your gardening chores early in the day, and don't forget to water. If you are planning on being gone on vacation, make sure you have someone who can check on your garden.

Container plants in particular can't go too many days without water during these hot, dry months. If you have a sprinkler system, set the timer and try to group as many of your containers as possible where they can get water while you are gone.

If you have a vegetable garden, it is important that you also have someone check on it and harvest as needed. If left to rot on the vine, disease and insect problems will be a huge problem. Scout all your gardens at least weekly and try to spot the problems quickly before they take over.

Mulch is a vital part of any garden right now. Mulch not only keeps the weeds down but it helps to moderate soil temperature and moisture, all of which are needed now. There are numerous materials available, from organic leaves, straw and bark, to newspapers and plastic. If using a black plastic in your vegetable garden (and that is the only place it should be used) you may want to cover the black plastic with mulch during these hot days. Black plastic can help warm up the soil early in the season but can make it even hotter when it gets hot outside. Putting shredded leaves or newspaper

over it can cool it down a bit.

### **Containers:**

Container gardens vary in their moisture needs by the amount of sunlight they get, the plants that are growing in them and the container size. To make your job easier on watering, use the largest containers you can handle. The more soil volume, the stronger the root system and the less water they will need. You still need to water often, but not several times a day that can occur in small pots.

### **Flower Gardens:**

If you chose the right plant for the right location, your seasonal color should be at its peak now. Warm season annuals that have been watered and fertilized are growing well. Whether you have sun or shade there are great choices for both. If the plants have seen better days, replace them. Nurseries don't just carry seasonal color in the spring—they have it year round.

### **Lawns:**

Watering and mowing are the primary tasks for lawns. Warm season grasses will continue to grow throughout the summer as long as they have water enough to stay green. Use caution if you are applying any fertilizer or herbicides when the weather is hot and dry. Plants look for moisture in any available form and could get burned.

Effective and efficient irrigation is the goal when it comes to lawn and landscape maintenance. Unfortunately, how often to irrigate a lawn is not a simple question. Water

requirements vary by grass species, time of year, geographical location, soil conditions, amount of shade and overall lawn maintenance.

Believing that more is better, most homeowners over-water their lawns by 30 percent. This often ends up damaging or killing the lawn. Excess watering causes roots to stay shallow so the lawn is more prone to stress and damage. It can also increase disease, promote weed or insect infestation, and reduce drought tolerance.

Three key signs will tell you if your lawn needs water:

- . Grass blades are curling.
- . Your lawn is blue-gray instead of green.
- . Footprints stay visible on your lawn long after they are made.

Experts recommend irrigating lawns when 30 to 50 percent of the lawn shows signs of wilt. However, a lawn can be trained to become more drought tolerant. Water it only when needed. Water deeply to encourage strong, deep root growth. Try to avoid watering during the peak demand period of 5:30 a.m. – 7:30 a.m. That is the time when everyone is getting ready for the day with showers, laundry and dishes. Do try to water early in the day to allow for good penetration of water before the plants get stressed for it.

Mow regularly at the recommended height for your grass type. As the summer progresses, gradually raise the height of your lawn mower.

# The Dirt for Carroll County Master Gardeners

## Taking Care. . .continued

### **HERBS:**

Calendula (*Calendula officinalis*) is the 2008 Herb of the Year! Calendula with its bright yellow and orange flowers, is a familiar sight in country and cottage gardens. The plant is a native of southern Europe and the Canary Islands but flourishes in cool, temperate climates. The petals have a pungent, spicy flavor and the leaves, a bitter aftertaste. Calendula is used more for medicinal and crafting than culinary purposes. Dried flowers, however, are ground and used in place of saffron in rice, stews and soups. The flowers dry nicely and add a beautiful burst of color to herb and flower arrangements. The hardy annual grows to a height of 9 to 20 inches and blooms from spring through the fall.

The plant prefers a rich, light soil in a sunny location. Add compost to the soil, if necessary, then side-dress with additional compost when the plants are well established. Water deeply during dry spells. Calendula re-seeds readily.

### **VEGETABLES:**

I hope everyone is enjoying the fresh produce of the season. Once again my garden was not to be. However, for those of us who look forward to the delights of fresh vegetables, the farmers markets supply an amazing array of tempting produce.

Thank you to the many industrious gardeners in this area. One of my favorites this time of year is:



### **Mixed Grilled Vegetables**

Cut vegetables in small, bite-size chunks such as: yellow squash, zucchini squash, green peppers (for delightful color add any of the colored peppers), and onion (add any other vegetables you might enjoy).

Spritz with olive oil, salt and pepper to taste. Add your favorite herbs and seasonings and place in a dish or grilling rack. (I use a glass dish covered with foil.) Cook on the grill until tender crisp, about 20 minutes.

It is also the time of year to plan your fall plantings. (I still hope to have a garden this year.)

## Learn How to Grow. . .cont'd

Please provide name, address, telephone number, and email. Call Calvin at 479-527-6951 or email [cfbey1936@cox.net](mailto:cfbey1936@cox.net), for more information.

The course includes concepts and practices on how to establish and maintain your garden, with emphasis on growing nutrient-dense vegetables. The concepts apply to flowers and yards. Course material is well documented and includes many practical tips from 50 years of gardening experience. Topics include soils, soil testing, soil biology, selecting the garden site, tools, double-digging, composting, plant spacing, fertilizing, watering, companion planting, mulching, vermiculture, compost tea, green manure crops, nitrogen fixing crops, winter cover crops, winter gardens, pest management, weeds, paramagnetic effects and organic gardening resources. See <http://harmonygardens.blogspot.com>

Who should attend: The course is designed for those with little to considerable gardening knowledge and experience. Call if you have questions. Get your AR soil test done before the course. Calvin will assist students with soil test interpretations, and provide help on fertilizer recommendations.