Xeriscape Gardening

"Drought." "Below normal rainfall." "Conserve before it's gone." Words such as these fill our newspapers and TV reports. Scare tactics? Or, truth? What does it all mean for gardeners?

The Master Gardener Volunteers Xeriscape Project was begun because of a concern that the increasing population of Moore County was severely straining water resources. Water is necessary for food production, health and sanitation, and commercial use, but excessive use of water for ornamental plants is a problem. Although frequently recurring droughts have necessitated both voluntary and mandatory water restrictions, most people will continue to beautify their properties with ornamental plants and need information about plants that do not require much water.

Newcomers to Moore County are frequently unaware that the population in the area has greatly increased. In 1990 the population was 59,000; 20 years later, in 2010, the population was 88,247, an increase of nearly 50 percent. The projected population figure for 2030 is 114,610, an increase of 94 percent over the 1990 figure and an increase of nearly 30 percent over the 2010 figure. Where will the water come from to serve the needs of this growing population?

The purpose of the Xeriscape Project is to encourage residents of Moore County to con-

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Local Activities of Interest

Non-native and Invasive Forest Plants Workshops for Landowners
(Six workshops throughout NC sponsored by the NC Forest Service and hosted by NCSU Department of Forestry and Environmental Resources).

Sandhills workshop: Moore County Extension Center, 707 Pinehurst Avenue, Carthage, NC 28327
August 19, 2011 8:00 am–4:30 pm
For more information see http://www.ncsu-feop.org/NNI or contact the NCSU Forestry and Environmental Outreach Program at 919-515-9563 or by e-mail at forestry_outreach@ncsu.edu.
Admission is free, however, a $15 handling fee will be charged for CE credits.
serve water by using drought-tolerant plants, including native plants, for ornamental horticulture. The Project has two goals: (1) To establish xeriscape demonstration gardens in various easily-accessible locations throughout Moore County, and (2) To conduct programs to inform the public about using drought-tolerant plants.

The first goal is moving right along. To date, five demonstration gardens have been planted and each will give you an idea of some of the drought-tolerant plants that work well in Moore County. The gardens are located at the Ag Center in Carthage, at the Weymouth Center for the Arts and Humanities in Southern Pines, at the Moore County Senior Enrichment Center on 15-501, at Aberdeen Elementary School, and surrounding the Moore County Historic Courthouse in Carthage.

Even though it’s now August in the Sandhills—when temperatures soar and rains seem to be too few and far between—the demonstration gardens are in bloom, even without constant watering. The key—each was planted with the principles of xeriscaping in mind—using only drought-tolerant plants and plants well suited to our climate.

When the dog days of summer arrive, many perennial plants wilt and then shrivel up. There are two common causes for that. First, the plants probably are not getting as much water as they need, and, second, they were never intended to survive in our torrid, humid summers. Well, just as there are two common causes for summer plant failure, there are also two, very easy solutions. First, choose plants that don’t require lots of water, those labeled drought-tolerant, xeric, or water-wise. Second, choose plants that actually enjoy the heat and humidity of the South. Give native plants a try and choose plants marked as suitable for Zone 7. Moore County is in zone 7-8A.

By choosing plants that love our summer heat and humidity and that were created to survive with minimal water after their first year in the ground, we are creating not only gardens that will reward us with color throughout the season but gardens that will reward our community by doing their part to conserve our precious water reserves.

**What’s Bugging You?**
*By Alexis Pohlmeyer*

So your garden has survived Japanese beetles, whiteflies, aphids and a whole slew of other insects this summer. You’re feeling pretty invincible until one morning, while walking around your yard you notice that one of your azaleas seems to have “disappeared.” Only bare branches and a few brown, semi-skeletonized leaves clinging sporadically here and there are left. You would swear just the other day it looked fine. So what’s going on? You have met yet another pest—the azalea caterpillar.

The female moths deposit 80-100 eggs on the undersides of leaves in late spring. The larvae feed constantly and can soon consume the leaf on which they have been deposited. In their early stages, the larvae skeletonize leaves then later, as they age, they can devour the leaf entirely.

Unfortunately, these pests can go undetected until their voracious appetites have all but defoliated the azaleas.

If you are lucky enough to detect them earlier, these caterpillars can be removed by hand as they are not dangerous to humans. And if it’s too late? Then know that come spring, your azaleas will recover and this is only a temporary, aesthetic setback.
This month, the Moore County Farmers Markets are again offering a great array of fresh vegetables, fruit, honey and meat. Here are a few recipes using the available fresh, local produce. Enjoy!

**CREOLE CORN SALSA**
In a large bowl, mix together 2 c. corn, 1 c. chopped tomatoes, 1/2 c. chopped onions, 1/2 tsp. minced garlic, and 1/4 c. chopped green pepper. In a separate small bowl whisk together 2 Tbsp. olive oil, 2 Tbsp. lime juice, 2 Tbsp. cider vinegar and 1 tsp. Creole seasoning. Pour dressing over the vegetables and blend well. Cover and refrigerate for 1-2 hours before serving with tortilla chips. (Source: Mary Shivers, Ada, OK)

**OKRA FRITTERS**
In a medium bowl mix together 1 c. thinly-sliced okra, 1/2 c. chopped onion, 1/2 c. chopped tomatoes, 1 beaten egg, 1/4 c. flour, 1/4 c. cornmeal, and salt and pepper to taste. Drop tablespoons of batter into hot oil and cook until golden brown. With a slotted spoon, remove the fritters, and drain on a dish covered with paper towels. Serve immediately. (Source: Linda Buckingham, *A Taste of Heaven Cookbook*, United Methodist Church, High Falls, NC)

**PEACH POUND CAKE**
Preheat oven to 350°F. Grease and flour a 10” fluted tube pan. Cream together 1 c. softened butter and 2 c. granulated sugar in a large bowl. When light and fluffy, add 6 eggs (one at a time), beating after each addition. Stir in 1 tsp. each of almond and vanilla extracts. In a separate bowl, combine 3 c. all-purpose flour, 1/4 tsp. baking soda, and 1/4 tsp. salt. In separate steps, add 1/2 of the flour mixture, 1/2 c. sour cream, and the remaining flour mixture to the creamed butter mixture. Fold in 3 c. diced peaches. Do not over stir. Spoon into pan and bake 55-65 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Cool 15 minutes and invert onto a plate. Dust with confectioners sugar or top with a light lemon glaze. Serves 12-14. (Source: Dorothy Droneburg, Frederick, MD)

**VERY VEGGIE LASAGNA**
Preheat oven to 350°F. In a large skillet heat 2 Tbsp. vegetable oil over medium-high heat (1 minute or so). Add 2 julienned medium carrots; 1 yellow summer squash and 1 medium zucchini, both cut into 1/4” slices; 1 sliced medium onion; 1 cup broccoli florets; 1/2 cup sliced celery; 1/2 cup each of julienned sweet red pepper and green bell pepper; 2 minced garlic cloves; and 1 tsp. salt (or to taste). Stir-fry until crisp-tender. Cook and drain 14 lasagna noodles. To assemble, spread 3/4 c. prepared tomato-based pasta sauce in a greased 13x9x2 baking dish. Layer 7 lasagna noodles on top, overlapping as needed; half the vegetables; 1-1/4 c. pasta sauce; and 2 c. shredded mozzarella cheese. Repeat with the remaining ingredients. Cover and bake for 60-65 minutes or until bubbly. Let stand 15 minutes before cutting. Serves 12. (Source: Judy Middaugh, Moore County Master Gardener Volunteer)

Finish pruning maples and dogwoods

Deadhead flowering annuals and perennials

Plant mums and autumn blooming bulbs in late August

Watch for pests, especially azalea caterpillars

Consider using drip irrigation* and soaker hoses in your gardens.

Take soil samples** to find out what nutrients are missing from your soil.

* Drip irrigation minimizes water loss through evaporation and helps concentrate water at the root zone where it is needed. Drip systems can also help prevent fungal diseases. They are not appropriate for lawn areas.

** The boxes needed for soil sample collection are available at the Cooperative Extension Service and Carthage Farm Supply in Carthage as well as Gulley’s Garden Center in Southern Pines.

Don’t miss our next edition due out September 1!

Additional copies of Dig This can be found at http://moore.ces.ncsu.edu/index.php?page=lawngarden Scroll down to Newsletters

For more information on any of the topics covered herein, contact the MGV Information Hot Line: 910-947-3188

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