In planning our landscapes we garden, either accidently or on purpose, for the wildlife. While the birds and bees cannot express their gratitude except by visiting our plants and letting us enjoy their antics, there is an organization that will acknowledge these efforts – National Wildlife Federation. This group has created a process whereby the planning and implementation of a “nature preserve” is recognized. The end result is a NWF Certified Wildlife Habitat. The entire process is explained on the website http://www.nwf.org/gardenforwildlife/certify.cfm but following is a brief summary.

The main considerations for a wildlife habitat are food, water, protection, nesting, and green gardening. First step is identifying the property on the application, including location, size and type of habitat and becoming familiar with what is already in the area along with what might migrate through the area. Assistance is provided in selecting plants to attract specific wildlife if that is what is desired.

Next take an inventory of the property then use the checklists on the application to indicate what the wildlife can eat, both planted and feeders along with how they can obtain water. Then the various suggestions for habitat and nesting area are listed. Finally conservation practices are listed.

While this may sound complicated and time consuming, it really isn’t. Just fill in the application, send in the check for $20 and after review hopefully your yard is now certified! Additionally it’s a great opportunity to view the NWF website which provides great gardening and plant suggestions.

Besides the knowledge that provisions are being made for wildlife and the enjoyment of watching them partake in your labors, the certification fringe benefits are greater now than when I certified my yard in 1995. These include not only a certificate (which is all I received) but also a yard sign and a year’s subscription to the wildlife magazine along with the e-newsletter among others.

Even if you don’t plan to certify your yard, I think you will enjoy the website and evaluation process for general knowledge. The evaluation process is also a good neighborhood or school project. Check it out!
JULY TO DO!

Fruits and Veggies
By Carl Shafer, Master Gardener, Vance County

- If rain does not fall, you need to provide one inch of water per week to keep the garden growing well. Use of mulch will help conserve moisture. Use of soaker hoses or drip irrigation will keep foliage dry and help reduce disease.

- Continue your spray program on fruits if needed. Observe the time period required between the last spray and harvest. Read the label.

- As crops mature, compost or till in plant material that is not diseased. Diseased material should be discarded in the trash.

- There is still time for a last planting of many warm season vegetables. Note that if you want pumpkins for Halloween or winter squash maturing in late fall for winter storage, they should be planted in early July.

- If you are considering a fall garden, see the July 2007 issue of this newsletter, or pick up a copy of HIL 8001, Growing a Fall Vegetable Garden, or on the net see: www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/hil/hil-8001.html. Note some of the cool season crops can be set out or seeded in July.

PESTS!!

By Cynthia Dickinson, Master Gardener, Warren County

Do you have squash bugs? This hard, oval-elongated bug is dark brown, mottled with light gray, and has needle-like mouth parts. With their needle-like mouth they pierce the vines to feed, while feeding they inject a toxic substance into the plant that will resemble bacterial wilt.

Good gardening practices will help prevent serious squash bug damage. Proper fertilization, planting bug resistant squashes and removing debris after harvest will help eliminate potential overwintering sites for squash bugs. In the home garden adult squash bugs and leaves with egg masses can be handpicked and destroyed. The eggs are on the underside of the leaves. The bugs can also be trapped by placing small boards near the host vines. Squash bugs gather under the boards at night and are easily collected and destroyed the next morning. Should a significant infestation develop, insecticide recommendations and rates can be found in the current North Carolina Agricultural Chemicals Manual.
JULY TO DO!

Landscaping & Lawn Care
By Onda Marable, Master Gardener, Vance County

- Start repotting overgrown houseplants.
- Prune maple, dogwood, elm, birch, white pine and narrow leaf evergreens
- DO NOT PRUNE spring flowering shrubs
- Divide and transplant iris
- Prune off dieback on your rhododendron
- This is a good time to take soil samples from the lawn for testing by your Extension Center. The results will tell you what needs to be added this fall.
- Deadhead annuals and perennials. Replace worn out annuals.
- Pinch back annuals, especially petunias and salvias, to encourage bushier plants
- Fertilize annuals
- Irrigate regularly to avoid drought stress to your plants
- Fall blooming chrysanthemums should be cut back before July 15
- Continue feeding warm season lawns
- Remove faded flowers on crapemyrtles and perennials to encourage a second bloom
- Spray herbicides to kill woody weeds like kudzu, poison ivy/oak, honeysuckle
- Watch for pest/fungal infestations and take appropriate measures. (bagworms, aphids, lacebugs) Easier to treat if caught early.
- This is Japanese beetle month. Knock off into soapy water in the mornings while they are wet with dew. Only resort to chemicals if you are really infested.

PLANT OF THE MONTH

By Marty Finkel, Master Gardener, Granville County

Weeping Mimosa Tree
(*Albizia julibrissin*, ‘Ishii Weeping’)

I know, I know – everyone recognizes a mimosa tree, and I try to select a plant of the month that most people probably do not know. But with all the mimosas in bloom for such a long time (May through August), I could not resist featuring the weeping form of this tree. It was discovered at Ishii Nursery in Japan. It will reach 8-10’ in height, and it can be seen at the J.C. Raulston Arboretum in Raleigh.

Michael Dirr, in *Manual of Woody Landscape Plants*, does not have a high opinion of the mimosa because of its high susceptibility to Fusarium wilt, its widespread self-sowing of seeds, and its problems with leaf spot and rust. He says numerous plants in the South have been killed to the ground by the Fusarium wilt disease, and that shoots from the roots develop into masses of suckers. He does not include the weeping form in his list of cultivars. Knowing all the reasons why one should not plant this tree, some of us are willing to take the chance, especially with the weeping form. Mimosa trees bloom best in full sun, they transplant readily, and they withstand drought once well established.

PICTURES:
Squash Bug: Ric Bessin, Extension Entomologist, University of Kentucky College of Agriculture
*Albizia julibrissin*: J.C. Raulston Arboretum & Marty Finkel
Birds, squirrels, rabbit and sign: National Wildlife Federation
INTERESTING TIDBITS
By Marty Finkel, Master Gardener, Granville County

With all the recent interest in rain gardens, check out the book by Helen Kraus and Anne Spafford, *Rain Gardening in the South*, with detailed instructions about construction, plant selections, and maintenance. Both authors are professors in the Dept. of Horticulture at NCSU. If your local library does not have a copy, we can all suggest they acquire one. If you are following one of the many “how-to” rain garden plans, the recommended plants may be for another area of the country. Go to Google and enter “NCSU rain gardens,” and find recently updated area-specific plant lists (coast, piedmont, mountains). Some local nurseries specialize in native plants. These nurseries will have a knowledgeable staff and a large selection of plants that do well in rain gardens.

If you like big, bold, and beautiful, you might want to join Mark Weathington at the JCRA for the walk on July 14 “Annuals, Tropicals, and Tender Perennials” www.ncsu.edu/jcraulstonarboretum/calendar

A collection of 40 different types of redbud trees at the JCRA has been named a North American Plant Collection Consortium, a recognition that the collection is among the best in the nation. This collection is the first at the JCRA to receive the NAPCC collection designation. From Chris Glenn at the JCRA, NCSU, June 12, ’09

Here’s a suggestion for helping to retain moisture in the soil (not that we needed it in June): Buy a package of disposable diapers and cut a square 6” x 6” for each hole. Dig a hole 12” deep. Dip the diaper square in water but do not wring it out. Put this on the bottom of the hole along with 2 tablespoons of Miracle Grow or other liquid fertilizer. Cover with dirt, then set OUT THE PLANT. Water the plant. The plant will not need watering as often since the diaper retains moisture. The diaper will disintegrate during the growing season. From a *Carolina Country Magazine* gardening tips column.

Rose Tips for July
By Heidi Moore, Master Gardener, Warren County

July is a month of continued maintenance for the rose gardener. Keep on the lookout for Japanese beetle and other insects. The best approach is to treat infestations only when a problem exists so insects will not develop immunity to insecticides and you are not killing your beneficial insects.

It is also important to continue with your weekly fungicidal spray routine to ward off the two most common problems, black spot and powdery mildew. Be sure to water sufficiently and add liquid fertilizer during these very hot, dry days to keep your plants hydrated and nourished. Strong healthy plants are the best defense against insects and diseases.

Put safety first when applying chemicals for fungus and insect control. Wearing a long sleeves shirt, a good pair of chemical-resistant gloves and a pair of goggles with side shields will protect you from spray drift. Labels provide instructions for safe and effective use and should be followed exactly. Before applying any pest or disease control it is essential to carefully read and thoroughly understand the label.

Old blooms, past their peak, should be pruned away as soon as possible. This will keep your plants looking neat and the ground free from fallen petals. It will, also, encourage new growth to produce more blooms. You can deadhead back as far as necessary to keep your plants more compact, but be sure to always cut above a five-leaflet leaf. This will encourage new grow and another bloom to grow from the axial.