

March 12, 2008

Plant or Not to Plant? That is the Question.

We have waited for it for so long. Now it is right around the corner. We still do not know what to do. Gardeners are usually a possessed bunch. Winter is a time for restoring the body, perusing the catalogues and gearing up for the next growing season. Visualizing new planting beds primed for luscious varieties of something hot from the nursery, unique and oh so special. But wait, this is 2008, the year after one of the worse droughts in this state history, when the water tables are still so far below normal that everyone is still pausing and waiting another week or two before washing the car. What's a gardener to do?

Taking matters into our own hands, we've been researching, visiting local greenhouses and nurseries, searching the internet, and talking with other Master Gardeners and horticultural specialists with NCSU. Is anyone making any specific recommendations? Not exactly. The long range forecasters say continued dry weather thru June. The need to be in the garden, soil under our nails and sweat on our brows is too strong. Plant we will!

But we're going to plant wisely. We're going to choose plant varieties that will tolerate less water and higher temperatures for a prolonged period of time. Drought tolerant will be the by-word. Educating ourselves on Xeriscape landscaping will be a continuation of our project at the Rowan Public Library. Further adaptations of water wise gardening will be seen in all of the Rowan County Master Gardener display gardens.

Our commitment to provide research based education to the public will include workshops on drip irrigation, rain gardens, composting and rain barrel installation.

The more we become aware of the needs of our soils and plants, the better equipped we are as gardeners to create the productive, esthetically pleasing vegetable and ornamental gardens that we desire.

There are a few things to remember as we begin this spring gardening season.

- First and foremost, have a plan. Look closely at existing beds. What worked and what didn't last year.
- Second. Less is sometimes more. Gardeners always think they need more. (How many containers do you have sitting, little green orphans waiting for a space?)
- Third. There is always the fall.

Master Gardeners are available as speakers to any group who has an interest in learning more about water wise gardening and our plans for dealing with this continuing issue. Workshop dates and times will be posted on the Master Gardener web site [www.rowanmastergardener.com](http://www.rowanmastergardener.com) as they are scheduled. Contact the Cooperative Extension office at 704-216-8970 if you have any questions.

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