

Gardening with the Masters

For the Cherokee County Master Gardeners

Volume XXV Issue 2 February/March 2018

WHAT'S HAPPENING

FEBRUARY

Feb 1 - Demo Garden Workday

Feb 3 - Class on planting daffodils,
@Cherokee Cty Animal Shelter

Feb 6 - Seed Starting @ Rose Creek
Library, 11am - 12:30pm

Feb 10 - Garden Planning and Seed
Starting @ Hickory Flat
Library. 10am

Feb 15 - Demo Garden Workday

Feb 20 - Monthly meeting

Feb 23 - GMGA field trip to SE Flower
Show, must be GMGA member
to attend, \$30.

Feb 27 - Garden Planning & Seed
Starting @ R.T. Jones Library
11am - 1pm.

MARCH

Mar 1 - Demo Garden Workday

Mar 6 - Seed Separating party, 10am
@ the Bluffs

Mar 15 - Demo Garden Workday

Mar 17 - Round Robin lecture series,
10am @ Senior Center

Mar 20 - Monthly Meeting

Mar 24 - Pruning @ Hickory Flat
Library, 10am

EDITOR'S CORNER

By Marcia Winchester,
Cherokee County Master Gardener



I love living in a wooded subdivision with lots of wildlife, and I really enjoy *most* of the wildlife. The turkey population has grown to three broods of babies all in one group. I love seeing them march through the woods scratching in the fallen leaves for food. This summer I watched while they rested in tall grass behind my woods. We have lots of birds in the woods and at the feeders. The other day as I looked out the window, I spied a pileated woodpecker (*Dryocopus pileatus*) land on a tree. I don't think I'll ever get used to their beauty and size. A huge owl likes to sit in a tree by my window and call out in the early morning. He's gotten my pesky rabbit population under control. I see different hawks once a week. They are so majestic as they glide through the trees and soar in the sky.

Needless to say we have a robust deer population. In the June/July 2011 issue of this newsletter, I wrote about a very effective spray that deters deer from munching on plants. I faithfully use my Deer Stopper spray every 30 days. This year we had two fawns born in my neighbor's woods. The neighbor put a pile of brush in their woods, which the deer loved as it provided protection for them. While it has been fun watching the fawns grow, it has been a battle protecting my plants. They munched on plants that are not normally on their menu. I thought I'd experienced every problem with deer over the years. I was wrong! Two young bucks have moved into the area, and this fall they started marking their mating territory by rubbing their antlers against several of my favorite smooth-bark trees. They damaged several sourwoods (*Oxydendrum arboreum*), a Carolina silverbell (*Halesia carolina*), and a beautiful umbrella magnolia (*Magnolia tripetala*) that a friend gave me years ago as a two-foot-tall plant. Frantic to protect my trees, I pulled out my tomato cages and stakes and stuck them on either side of my susceptible trees. So far they have worked to protect the trees. My neighbors are probably puzzled. If you see a buck walking around with a tomato cage on its antlers, I want the cage back!

Marcia

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COOL TOOLS FOR GARDENING IN COMFORT

By Patricia Bowen, Cherokee County Master Gardener

As a young gardener, my go-to aid for playing in the dirt was a thick foam kneeling pad. It kept my knees clean and dry and safe from sharp pebbles and sticks. For years I hung it on the fence, and it weathered well and was always handy for weeding, planting, and other tasks that required getting down low and personal with the ground.



Image from gardener.com

Later, when my knees began to creak a bit, someone gave me the gift of a combination garden seat and kneeler from gardeners.com. I hadn't realized how uncomfortable I'd been with my old kneeler until I knelt on the new one that first time. It was love at first use. Many types are available. Mine is called the Deep-Seat Garden Kneeler because you can get down deep and kneel on it close to the ground, then use the handles on each side to lift yourself back up to standing, or you can flip the whole thing over and use it as a seat for pruning or harvesting. The kneeling pad/seat is firm and well padded on both sides, and the handles fold in for storage. It has a recommended weight limit of 250 pounds.

There are several brands of similar kneeler/seats on the market with prices ranging from 20 to 50 dollars. Some have attachable pouches for garden tools, either included in the price or for additional cost, and most fold for storage.

There's another category I'll call "garden seats." These are seats on wheels and carts you can sit on that go under various brand names: Garden Buddy, Garden Hopper, Garden Scooter, Lawn Cart, Garden Cart, and more. They range in price from around 20 to over 100 dollars and vary considerably in design and amenities. The less expensive are made of molded plastic; the pricier ones are sturdier, hold more weight, and are made of metal. The comparison ends there. Some have storage under the seat or in an attached wire basket; some have a steering bar or a pull chain. Some seats are molded; on some you just sit on the top of a rolling cart.



<https://www.serenityhealth.com/sunnydaze-rolling-garden-cart-with-extendable-steering-handle-swivel-seat-planter-basket/>



Garden Hopper, image from step2.com/p/garden-hopper

Consider your own needs, and then select the one for you based on the following criteria: Prices vary, but you'll get what you pay for. Seats and wheels on cheaper aids will break down sooner under heavy use and heavy weight.

Gauge your own flexibility when getting up and down, either from a kneeler where you'll need arm strength to raise yourself, or on a wheeled device that will put you further from the ground and require bending, and then raising yourself unaided from a sitting or squatting stance to standing.

Some storage capability is a handy time-saver for carrying tools, seeds, and gloves as you move around your garden.

Check for product guarantees and warranties. If you decide the product isn't right for you can you return it? What about wear and tear? For several years I left my \$50 Deep-Seat Garden Kneeler outdoors more often than I should have, and the seat began to deteriorate. I called the company to see if they offered a replace-

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BIRDS IN WINTER

By Mary Schuster, Cherokee County Master Gardener



Photo by John Flannery. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/drphotomoto/12157909625>

This writer was fortunate enough to become a Cherokee County Master Gardener (CCMG) as a participant in the class of 2014. The UGA Extension Office, along with designers of our training schedule, provided a vast array of interesting topics for us to consider. One that stood out for me in particular was a presentation given by the Atlanta Audubon Society (AAS). The speaker generally discussed the important role birds and other wildlife provide to our natural environment.

Of particular interest to me was the certification program the AAS provides called the "Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary." To become certified, one may attend a workshop and learn how to effectively turn a typical backyard into a wonderful and safe sanctuary for our visiting flying friends. After applying the principles learned in the workshop, the learner goes back and prepares the yard for a visit by the certification committee.

Great emphasis is placed on growing native plants for birds. Hence, another hobby evolves that combines both cultivation of native plants and the joy of bird watching into a fascinating little bundle providing hours of enjoyment while simultaneously dabbling in two pleasant pastimes.

As CCMGs we are lucky to get to participate in frequent plant sales. While we busily set up and take down the huge inventory of plants, it becomes necessary to learn to correctly identify the plants we are offering for sale. Before you know it, we become quite familiar with the many varieties available at the sale to place in our yards specifically for birds. Here are just a few great examples of native plants and the birds such plants attract:

American beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*)
Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*)
Elderberry (*Sambucus* spp.)
Native azalea (*Rhododendron* spp.)
Winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*)
Blackberry (*Rubus* spp.)
Winged sumac (*Rhus copillinum*)
Devil's walkingstick (*Aralia spinosa*)

Carolina Wren, Brown Thrasher, American Robin
Carolina Chickadee, American Goldfinch, Tufted Titmouse
Northern Mockingbird, Woodthrush, Brown Thrasher
Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Cedar Waxwing, Gray Catbird, American Robin
Carolina Wren, Chipping Sparrow, Brown Thrasher
Indigo Bunting, Brown Thrasher, American Robin
Wood Thrush, Brown Thrasher, American Robin

In addition to the proper plantings that provide food, remember to incorporate shelter/nesting areas and water for the birds. Good shelter protects them from weather conditions and natural predators. A dense canopy also provides an ideal environment for nesting. Your yard should have a mix of deciduous and evergreen plants. Several references suggest that at least 25 percent of the trees and shrubs should be evergreen. As far as water sources go, the vessels should be filled no more than two to three inches deep (while changing the water frequently) and elevated in the middle of an open area to minimize predation by cats and other animals.

Providing proper nutrition likely includes a supplemental source in addition to your native plants. Suet cakes are an inexpensive way to provide some essential nutrition for winter residents. To prevent squirrels feasting on the suet cake, try using suet flavored with hot pepper. Suet attracts a great variety of birds, and the birds tend to remain at the feeding cage long enough to get a really good look at them. As far as seeds are concerned, buy specific seeds for specific feeders. You may try placing cracked corn and millet in one feeder and just sunflower seeds in another. Please note that safe bird feeding includes completely scrubbing out feeders with a 10 percent non-chlorinated bleach solution at least a few times a year, especially between seasons.

KIDS CORNER

KIDS CAN BECOME “CITIZEN SCIENTISTS” BY COUNTING BIRDS

By Jennifer Ruscilli, Cherokee County Master Gardener Intern

It's February, the weather is unpredictable, and you are looking for something different for the family to do. You are bored with the day-to-day grind of kids busy with school, computers, and video games, so why not let your kids become “citizen scientists” by participating in the largest global bird-counting event called the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), held this year from February 16 to 19. This global event is a great way to be part of an important project that family members of any age can get involved with. Anyone can participate whether you are a novice, expert, or just a feeder watcher.

You are asked to count birds at least fifteen minutes (or as long as you wish) on one or more days of the four-day event. Count the birds in as many places and as many times as you want, and you can even count in your own backyard! You are among people from all over the world counting in real time.

So how do you get started, and what tools do you need? Primarily you will need a field guide to assist in bird identification and a checklist for recording the birds you see. And if you want to attract birds to your yard, a bird feeder is indispensable. Birds follow food sources, so fill up your bird feeder and hang it in a good spot that you can easily see. Once the birds know you have a food source (and it won't take long), they will quickly visit your feeder. Grab your trusty field guide and start identifying the birds you see. You can get a field guide at any bird supply store, but the Wild Birds Unlimited (WBU) store sponsors the Great Backyard Bird Count for the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society. WBU carries an excellent field guide, *Birds of Georgia*, which provides useful information, and you can find all the tools you need for this event at your local store.

The staff at any WBU store can tell you more about the bird count. You can also visit the GBBC website for more information about the event and how to participate: <http://gbbc.birdcount.org>. Here you will find instructions and bird lists tailored to your Zip Code to help you record your bird sightings.

Bird counts can be done anywhere: at home, at the park, or on your favorite walking trail. Take your *Birds of Georgia* field guide and tracking sheets while on a fun outing for the family. Maybe visit a nature trail and see how many birds you can count along the way. Just don't forget to use separate sheets for the different places and different times that you count birds. Count as often and on as many of the four days as you like. Counting is fun and easy as 1-2-3: count birds anywhere; make your best estimate of the number of each species; enter your counts on your checklists. Fifteen minutes minimum is adequate and doable, and your best estimate is valuable.

Once you have completed your checklists, follow the GBBC website instructions for entering your results. This is a real-time event, so your child and family have made a valuable contribution, and you can see your counts immediately. The numbers you collect will be used as an instant snapshot of the birds you spotted for the year 2018 and will make an important contribution to scientists from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society. They will use your information to get a bigger picture about what is

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Here is an activity. Can you identify the birds in the photos? The birds in these pictures as well as the following ones all visited my feeder while this article was being written: Red-headed Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Eastern Bluebird, Blue Jay, House Wren, Dark-eyed Junco, Northern Cardinal, Mourning Dove, White-breasted Nuthatch, Tufted Titmouse.

(answers on Page 7)

Both pictures by Jennifer Ruscilli



EVERGREENS IN WINTER

By Karen Garland, Cherokee County Master Gardner

This winter has been a weather rollercoaster, with temperatures plummeting with the polar vortex, followed by a thaw with the mercury rising into the 60s, then back to bitter cold again. Extreme cold temperatures can make plants that are holding moisture brittle, and added weight from snow and ice strains twigs, branches, and trunks, often causing them to break or crack. This fluctuation of temperatures is very hard on plants, especially evergreens.

Evergreens are hardy trees or shrubs that retain their leaves during the winter when the majority of vegetation is bare and the landscape is otherwise desolate. Non-botanists oftentimes confuse all evergreens as having needles, such as a pine (*Pinus* spp.), arborvitae (*Thuja* spp.), juniper (*Juniperus* spp.), and hemlock (*Tsuga* spp.). However, not all evergreens are classified as having needles; broadleaf evergreens include such plants as rhododendron (*Rhododendron* spp.), evergreen azaleas (*Rhododendron* spp.), evergreen hollies (*Ilex* spp.), mountain laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*), boxwood (*Buxus* spp.), and southern magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*). All of these evergreens are often a valuable source of food and shelter for birds and small animals during the cold months. Yet, the cold can leave evergreens looking bare and bedraggled.



Cold damage on *Illicium floridanum*.
Photo by Marcia Winchester

Winter sun, wind, and cold temperatures can bleach and desiccate evergreen foliage, damage bark, and injure or kill branches, buds, and roots (Swanson and Rideout, 2018). Snow and ice can break branches or bring down entire trees. Salt used for deicing streets, sidewalks, and parking lots is also harmful to landscape plantings. Additionally, as food sources become sparse, rodents, rabbits, and deer may be forced to feed on the bark, twigs, buds, or foliage. Oftentimes, if not addressed, the foraging of these animals poses a threat to the health and survival of the plant. Nevertheless, unless the damage is substantial, cold injury in evergreens is not usually fatal, especially if precautions are taken.

Therefore, there are several ways to minimize winter injury to evergreens. (Note: Not all evergreens need winter protection, especially those that are established and have not suffered from disease or drought.)

Choose plants appropriate for your hardiness-growing zone.

Avoid desiccation known as winter burn, which is caused when moisture evaporates through the foliage faster than the roots can replenish it. This is most common with dry soil, freezing temperatures, and cold, blowing winds. However, the damage may not be observed until the spring, when sections of the plant become yellow or rust colored. Therefore, make sure trees and shrubs are well watered throughout the summer and fall.

Avoid frost cracks on the trunks, which are formed when temperatures fluctuate between cold nights and warm days causing the tree to expand and contract. To prevent frost cracks place mulch over the root zone to help limit wide soil temperature fluctuations and to preserve soil moisture.

Prevent sun scald, which is characterized by elongated, sunken, dried, or cracked areas of dead bark, usually on the south or southwest side of a tree. On cold days, the sun can heat up bark to the point where the cells in the cambium layer of the bark are stimulated. When the sun is blocked by a cloud, hill, or building, bark temperature drops rapidly, killing the active tissue. Sun scald can be prevented by wrapping the trunk with a commercial tree wrap, plastic tree guards, or any other light-colored material. The wrap will reflect the sun and keep the bark at a more constant temperature.



Heavy snow bent branch of *Illicium floridanum*. Photo by Marcia Winchester

If an ev-

Continued on page 7

ergreen

FACT OR FABLE: WINTER LAWN TIPS

By Stephanie Howard, Cherokee County Master Gardener

It is not too early to begin preparations for a beautiful healthy lawn. Keep in mind that grasses fall into two categories in Cherokee County. Cool-season grasses include tall and fine fescues, Kentucky bluegrass, and ryegrasses. Warm-season turfs include bermudagrass, centipedegrass, zoysiagrass, and St. Augustine grasses. Also, remember that there are few (if any) absolutes when it comes to gardening and lawn care!

Here are some common lawn questions:

Removing grass clippings from my lawn will reduce thatch buildup.

Grass clippings are not the same as thatch. Thatch is a buildup of roots, stems, and shoots. A thatch layer in excess of half an inch may lead to disease or damage caused by insects, water retention, or nitrogen buildup. If left on the lawn, minimal grass clippings add nitrogen to the soil and do not necessarily contribute to thatch. However, it is important to remove excess clippings, especially if a thatch layer has developed. The most effective means of thatch control is proper mowing, irrigation, and fertilization. You may consider top-dressing your lawn regularly (every one to two years) to discourage thatch accumulation.

Recommended Mowing Heights

Grass Type	Mowing Height (inches)
Bermudagrass	1 – 1.5 to 2.0
Centipedegrass	1 - 2
St. Augustine Grass	2 - 3
Zoysiagrass	1 -2
Tall Fescue Grass	2 - 3
Kentucky Bluegrass	2 - 3

I need to water my lawn two to three times per week to keep it green and healthy.

In your newly installed lawn, lightly water daily for the first two to three weeks. For an established lawn, water in a pre-emergent application during February and March. Once the growth season begins, look for signs of moisture stress before setting your irrigation schedule. Stress signals include footprint indentations that remain for more than a couple of minutes or grayish color grass blades. In general, the turf will need about one inch of water per week. However, if your lawn is susceptible to runoff, you may want to water in two applications. The most effective time to irrigate is just before dawn.

I can save time and money by applying a pre-emergent and fertilizer at the same time.

A pre-emergent is more effective when applied once soil temperatures are consistently 50°F, but still during turf dormancy. When turf begins to green up, you may fertilize according to instructions from your soil report. By May, if you still have hard-to-control weeds, you may consider a post-emergent or a weed-and-feed product. You may apply lime at any time. For information specific to your turf, visit http://caes2.caes.uga.edu/commodities/turfgrass/georgiaturf/CultPrac/1310_Calendar.htm

The best time to install new turf is in the spring.

Well, it depends on your turf! The best time to install warm-season turf is late spring or early summer, once the soil temperature is consistently above 65°F. In Cherokee County, April and May are usually safe months for planting. The *best* time to install a cool-season turf is in the fall before the first frost. It may also be planted in the spring after soil temperatures reach above 55°F. A good rule of thumb is to plant when the Bradford pears begin to bloom.

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Garden Kneeler - continued from page 2

ment seat, and they kindly sent me a whole new product, no questions asked.

Different stores carry different brands and models and offer different pricing, so it's easier to first do your comparison shopping online. For best guarantees and warranties, shop directly with the dealer; with either source, if one is offered, be sure to fill out and return your registration card and keep a record of the purchase with your gardening supplies or files.

Counting Birds - continued from page 4

happening with our own Georgia bird populations. Don't forget to take pictures of your child's favorite bird with your phone, or consider a pair of child's binoculars for some up-close looks at all the birds.

Answers to Bird Counting Activity from page 4:

Left Picture: Red-bellied Woodpecker

Right Picture: Carolina Chickadee (on the left), House Finch (on the right of feeder)

Contact the UGA Cherokee County Extension Office, or visit the website at <http://extension.uga.edu/county-offices/cherokee.html>. Master Gardeners are available with information to help educate you about your backyard habitat and problems you may be having.

Winter Damage - Continued from page 5

has suffered winter injury, wait until mid-spring before pruning damaged foliage and branches back to living tissue. Fertilize injured plants in early spring, and water them well throughout the season. Provide appropriate protection the following winter. Even though plants respond differently to winter stress and each winter provides a different set of stressful conditions, plants possess a remarkable ability to withstand an extremely severe winter. Happily, though, the days are getting longer, which can only mean one thing ... spring is around the corner!

References

Lamont, Bill. "Harsh winter weather can potentially injure trees, shrubs." *Harsh winter weather can potentially injure trees, shrubs*, Centre Daily Times, 12 Jan. 2018, www.centredaily.com/living/home-garden/article194468219.html.

Swanson, Bert, and Rideout, Richard. "Protecting trees and shrubs against winter damage." *Protecting trees and shrubs against winter damage : UMN Extension*, University of Minnesota Extension, 2018, www.extension.umn.edu/garden/yard-garden/trees-shrubs/protecting-from-winter-damage/.

Winter grass tips - continued from page 6

I cannot successfully grow turf in shady areas.

Again, it depends! The most important part of installing turf is to choose the species most appropriate for your conditions. Shade-tolerant grasses for cool-season turfs include fine fescue grasses, and Kentucky bluegrass in partial shade. You may consider zoysiagrasses (El Toro, JaMur, Zeon, and Zorro) or St. Augustine grasses (Palmetto, Mercedes, and Raleigh) or warm-season lawns. Be aware that there are degrees of tolerance. Check the Georgia Turf website below for more information.

Media Newswire. "Thatch is the Enemy of Home Lawns". Frank M. Watson. 05/14/15. <http://www.caes.uga.edu/newswire/story.html>

UGA Cooperative Extension. "Ten Steps to a Healthier Home Lawn". Circular 1009. Clint Waltz & Alfredo Martinez. Sep 2011.

<http://www.walterreeves.com/lawn-care/lawn-growing-in-shade-2/>

[http://caes2.caes.uga.edu/commodities/turfgrass/georgiaturf/LandscapeAlert/In%20the%20Shade%20\(4-12\).html](http://caes2.caes.uga.edu/commodities/turfgrass/georgiaturf/LandscapeAlert/In%20the%20Shade%20(4-12).html)

FEBRUARY TIPS

ORNAMENTALS

- Prune hybrid tea roses and knockout roses now, removing old canes and lowering plant to a height of 12-15". To care for rose bushes now, apply a fertilizer heavy in potassium (K). Apply a drop of white glue to the end of fresh cut canes to prevent borers. Apply a dormant spray of lime-sulfur and dormant oil before active growth appears. Clean up rose beds, discard old foliage, pieces of canes, and remove old mulch with weeds. Re-apply a fresh layer of mulch to rose beds. For more rose pruning info: <http://extension.uga.edu/content/dam/extension-county-offices/cobb-county/anr/Rose%20Maintenance%20Guide%20rev.pdf>
- Winter is a good time to prune deciduous trees and shrubs that don't bloom in the spring. It allows you to view the trunk and branches when making your cuts. http://extension.uga.edu/publications/files/pdf/B%20961_4.PDF
- Change plant light bulbs over seedlings, as older bulbs do not give off as much light.
- Continue to fertilize pansies and other winter annuals with fertilizer high in nitrate nitrogen. http://extension.uga.edu/publications/files/pdf/B%201359_2.PDF
- Prune clumps of ornamental grass before new growth appears. Tie large clumps with rope; cut with a hedge trimmer.

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

- Remember that vegetable seeds have a short life and usually will not be good after a year or two. This includes sweet corn, onion, okra, beans, parsnip, and peppers.
- Consider the family vacation when planning your garden. Choose planting dates and varieties so your garden won't be ready for a full harvest while you are away. http://extension.uga.edu/publications/files/pdf/C%20943_4.PDF
- Peaches grow best when maintained with an open center (no central leader). Keep 3 or 4 strong, scaffold branches evenly distributed around the trunk. Limbs that branch out at a 60° angle are preferred. Spreaders can be used to widen narrow crotch angles. https://secure.caes.uga.edu/extension/publications/files/pdf/C%201063_2.PDF
- Prune fruit trees and grapes in late February or early March after the worst of the winter cold is passed but before spring growth begins when temps maintain at 45°. For disease and insect

- control, cut out dead wood and dispose of the prunings. Disinfect pruners with one part bleach -9 parts H2O or rubbing alcohol after each cut. Drift from both will damage grass or other plants.
- Before working an area in the garden for early spring planting, check the soil. It should be dry enough to crumble in your hands, so that you don't compact the soil while working it.
 - Don't start your vegetable plants indoors too early. Six weeks ahead of the expected planting date is early enough for the fast growing species such as cabbage. Eight weeks allows enough time for the slow growing types such as tomatoes and peppers. http://extension.uga.edu/publications/files/pdf/B%201432_2.PDF
 - Handle seed packets with care. Rubbing the outside to determine how many seeds are inside can break the protective seed coats, thereby reducing germination.

MISCELLANEOUS

- To make old hay and manure weed-free, spread on the soil in late winter, water well, and cover with black plastic. Weed seeds will sprout after a few days or warm weather, and then will be killed by frost and lack of daylight.
- Hang or clean out bluebird houses now before the birds start looking for a home. Don't clean them on a windy day.
- Clean and disinfect clay pots by soaking them in a solution of 1 part liquid bleach and 10 parts water. Rinse thoroughly to remove all bleach residue. This will have your containers ready to plant with spring annuals.



RAINFALL COMPARISONS						
	Cherokee County			State Wide		
	Nov 16	Dec 16	YTD	Nov 16	Dec 16	YTD
Actual	1.4	3.6	58.4	1.2	3.3	52.9
Normal	4.2	4.7	54.8	3.8	4.0	48.0
Excess	-2.8	-1.1	3.6	-2.6	-0.7	4.9

MARCH TIPS

ORNAMENTALS

- Be aware that a brown plastic material that looks and feels like natural burlap, but does not break down in the soil, may be used to wrap root balls of B & B plants. Synthetic materials enclosing the roots of trees and shrubs must be completely removed to ensure success of the transplants. Planting techniques for trees can be found at: http://extension.uga.edu/publications/files/pdf/B%20932_3.PDF
- Propagate deciduous shrubs, such as forsythia and winter jasmine, now by ground layering.
- Give your roses a starter application of complete fertilizer.
- Cut back butterfly bushes to 1/3 desired height.
- Fertilize spring bulbs after they bloom. Do not remove leaves until they turn yellow.
- Prune Crape myrtles only removing the old flower heads. Do not cut back to the same spot each year as it creates a weak joint and the branches can split and fall in the summer with the additional weight of heavy flower heads. Remove sprouts at the base of the tree.
- If you have left a few inches of plant stems on your perennials to ID the plant's location cut them back before the new growth emerges. It is also a good time to cut back the tattered foliage on evergreen ferns and perennials.
- Cut foliage off tattered Liriope.
- Start fertilizing pansies and winter annuals with houseplant fertilizer.
- Divide daylily and hosta clumps when the leaves just start to emerge from the ground so you don't damage the new growth. More Hosta info: http://extension.uga.edu/publications/files/pdf/B%20944_4.PDF

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

- Don't rush to remove mulch from strawberries. Leave it over your plants to protect them from late cold spells. When plants start to grow, the mulch must be removed to allow leaves to develop in the light. If leaves develop under the mulch, they will become etiolated (blanched) and yellow from lack of chlorophyll, and may burn and die when exposed to the sun. http://extension.uga.edu/publications/files/pdf/C%20883_4.PDF
- Begin summer vegetable seedlings inside now.
- Spring applications of pesticides should be made on peaches, apples and pears. Correct timing for spraying depends on the stage of development of flowers. Check the label and follow the directions.

- Lettuce is very sensitive to low pH. Lime should be applied to the soil if the pH is below 6.0.
- If your garden is on a hillside, plant across the slope (not up and down) to help hold moisture in the soil and reduce erosion.
- Seed root crops, such as carrots, beets, radishes and parsnips, in your garden.
- Do not add lime to the area for potatoes. The lower pH helps control scab. http://extension.uga.edu/publications/files/pdf/C%201011_3.PDF

MISCELLANEOUS

- One way to avoid the danger of unusually cold nights is to set water-filled plastic jugs around each seedling. Warmed by the sun, these will radiate heat all night, preventing cold damage. Other ways to protect from the winter cold are at http://extension.uga.edu/publications/files/pdf/C%20872_4.PDF
- Place bird houses outdoors early this month. Birds will begin looking for nesting sites soon and the houses should attract several mating pairs. Ideally, houses erected on smooth metal poles where predators cannot climb are most often selected, but placement on top of fence posts or in trees will usually suffice.



Bluebird House. Photo by Marcia Winchester

- Put out hummingbird feeders in mid-March.
- Re-pot houseplants that have grown too large for their containers. Cut back leggy plants to encourage compact growth. Root the cuttings in moist media to increase your supply of plants.
- Houseplants can be watered more frequently with the onset of spring and new growth. Start fertilizing houseplants now for good growth. http://extension.uga.edu/publications/files/pdf/B%201318_4.PDF

Recipes

Send recipes to
Pat Bowen at
woodsgal@hotmail.com

Marcia's Hearty Minestrone Soup

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| 1 medium onion | minced |
| chopped | 2 15-oz cans kidney |
| 1 c carrots chopped | beans drained and |
| 1c celery chopped | rinsed |
| 1c cauliflower | 2 c spaghetti sauce |
| chopped | 1 c small pasta |
| 1c squash chopped | 6 c chicken broth |
| 4 cloves garlic | |

In large soup pot sauté veggies (not beans). Salt and add garlic. Stir in broth, spaghetti sauce, beans, and pasta. Simmer 30 minutes. Can freeze extra.

Spinach and Chickpea Stew

Robust, Satisfying, High in Protein

(serves 4)

Options: Add other fresh or cooked vegetables you may have on hand such as sweet potatoes or cooked cauliflower. Add curry for an ethnic taste, or sliced jalapenos for heat.

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 2 tbsp vegetable oil | 1 14 oz can diced to- |
| 1 onion, chopped | matoes |
| 2 cloves garlic, minced | 9-10 oz fresh spinach, |
| ½ tsp cayenne pepper | stems removed |
| and ground turmeric | 1 14 oz can creamed |
| 1 tsp ground cumin | corn |
| 1 can chickpeas, | |
| drained and rinsed | |

Heat oil in large pot and sauté onion until soft, then add garlic. Add corn and spices and cook on low 4-5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the chickpeas and tomatoes and bring to low boil. Add spinach a handful at a time, and stir after each addition. Cover and simmer five more minutes and serve. Serves 6-8.

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CHEROKEE COUNTY



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To stimulate the love for and increase the knowledge of gardening and to voluntarily and enthusiastically share this knowledge with others

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