



# Gardening with the Masters

Growing, Gardening and Gaining Knowledge  
February 2019/March 2019

<b>WHAT'S HAPPENING</b>
<b>FEBRUARY</b>
Feb 6 - Plant A Row Workday
Feb 7- Demo Garden Workday
Feb 8 - Lecture, Seed Starting, Rose Creek Library
Feb 15- Canton Arbor Day, Tree Give Away
<b>Feb 15-18 GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT</b>
Feb 19 - CCMG Monthly Mtg
Feb 20 - Plant A Row Workday
Feb 21- Demo Garden Workday
Feb 22- Fruit Tree Field Day
Feb 23- Bee School <a href="http://cherokeebecclub.com/index.php/2019/01/18/bee-school-2019/">http://cherokeebecclub.com/index.php/2019/01/18/bee-school-2019/</a>
Feb 23- Lecture, Planning a Cutting Garden, Hickory Flat Library
<b>MARCH</b>
Mar 1- Green Industry Update
Mar 2 - Georgia Native Plant Symposium, Macon
Mar 7- Demo Garden Workday
Mar 19 - CCMG Monthly Mtg
Mar 21- Demo Garden Workday
Mar 23- Lecture, Organic Vegetable Gardening, Hickory Flat Library
Grafting Class Sign-Ups cut off April 4th.



## Editor's Corner

By Marcia Winchester,  
Cherokee County Master Gardener

February and March is a good time to reflect on your garden after you've given up on your New Year's resolutions. You might even set some gardening goals for 2019. One goal I'd like to set for my garden could be spending more time sitting and enjoying it. So often all I see is everything I have on my gardening to-do list. This year I want to acknowledge and take pleasure in my gardening accomplishments.

I'd also like to finish relabeling my daylilies. For some reason since my husband has taken over mowing the grass a large number of my daylily metal markers have disappeared. Unfortunately, they have to be blooming in order to ID them from my pictures.

Two years ago I decided to down-size all of my planted containers on my deck. While I have eliminated some containers, I seem to be replacing them with new planters. I'm also trying to down-size all of the plants in my gardens. This means more plants for the Master Gardener plant sales. The first one will be May 4. Please don't worry; there will still be lots of plants in my garden for the deer to munch.



Photo courtesy Marcia Winchester

This could be the year I place a huge rock to hold water for the dragonflies to land on and drink. It has been in the garage in my wagon for at least two years. The poor wagon's tires are flat. Then there are all of the pretty or unusual rocks I've collected that are sitting in a pile waiting for a permanent location.

*Marcia*

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# Lawn Alternatives for Shady Areas

By Joan McFather, *Cherokee County Master Gardener*



Photo provided by [www.lawnsforyou.com](http://www.lawnsforyou.com). Notice the bare area as a good example of shade on the lawn.

It doesn't matter how much you want your lawn to grow under your trees—it just won't, or not at all happily anyway. There is no such thing as shade-loving lawn grass. Yes, yes, some grass seed is labeled "tolerant," but all that means is you'll spend an inordinate amount of time coaxing, babying, possibly swearing, and in the long run losing the battle to have the lawn you can be proud of. So what to do? Get rid of it—strategically.

Before you do anything, check out the sunlight. Grass needs about six hours of sun a day, and your maturing trees may have been causing more and more shade while you weren't looking. That pretty little Japanese maple specimen can be just as guilty as the woodland on the edge of your property.

Of course, you could trim back the trees that have grown out over your lawn, but personally I like my trees more than grass. Mature trees also add value to your property. Just remove what few tufts are still under them and put in mulch. Extend the bed out to the tree's drip line. The big box stores sell all different sorts: pine bark nuggets, shredded wood of various sorts, pine straw...up to and including artificial rubber bits that I wouldn't advise at all.

If your trees are pines, then you've already got your mulch. Another of my favorite mulches is also free for the raking: leaves. Just run your mower over them a few times; big leaves can actually hold moisture away from the soil. Chopped up leaves are very natural-looking, and you don't have to bag them up for the garbage disposal folks. The leaves decompose, making the soil richer. Each fall just add the next crop.



Wood chipped shady alternative provided by [www.lawnsforyou.com](http://www.lawnsforyou.com).



Photo provided by Viki and Sam Strauss, [www.centraltexasgardener.org](http://www.centraltexasgardener.org).

If you have several trees near one another, consider creating a bed around all of them, making an island. You can leave it as is, or plant shrubs, perennials, annuals, whatever you like—as long as they are shade-loving and you keep an eye on their watering needs. You might plan a decorative path. Then there's the matter of bed lines. Do you like areas to look tidy? (Ask yourself if you preferred coloring inside the lines when you were a child. If you did, you probably would like definite edges in your landscape.)

Borders around your property can be changed to accommodate tree shade. Just reconfigure the border in smooth curves where possible. I have an ancient dogwood which I love; the lawn border has been interrupted for years by a patch of moss under that tree, but I don't want to alter the curve, so...well, I like moss, too.

Photo provided by [www.betterhomegardens.net](http://www.betterhomegardens.net).



# Toothwort: A Winter Delight for Your Garden

By Carolyn Puckett,  
Cherokee County Master Gardener

We generally expect non-evergreen perennial plants to show their leaves from spring to fall, with the plants dying back to the ground for winter. However, some plants reverse this pattern, showing their leaves in the winter and going dormant in summer.

One such plant is our attractive native perennial broadleaf toothwort (*Cardamine diphylla*, previously *Dentaria diphylla*). Toothwort's common name refers to the tooth-like projections on the underground stems or rhizomes. Other common names for broadleaf toothwort are two-leaved toothwort, twin-leaved toothwort, crinkleroot, or pepper root (referring to the peppery flavor of the rhizome).



Photo *Cardamine diphylla*,  
provided by Marcia Winchester.

A lover of moist shady spots, the roughly 10-inch tall broadleaf toothwort has nearly opposite, simple leaves, so deeply dissected as to appear to be compound leaves. Each leaf is palmately cut into three- to five-toothed lobes. In addition to their interesting shape, the leaves are streaked with showy white veining. In north Georgia, some leaves start emerging from September to November. Then in March, the rest of the leaves emerge filling in the clump. In April, the broadleaf toothwort sports lovely clusters of 1-inch white or pink four-petaled flowers at the top of a stem arising above the leaves. Toothwort rarely produces seed and depends on the spread of rhizomes for reproduction; it spreads gradually to make a nice-sized mass but is never invasive.



Photo *Cardamine concatenata*,  
provided by Janet Novak, U.S.  
Department of Agriculture.

A related species, cutleaf toothwort (*C. concatenata*, synonym *C. laciniata*), is a spring ephemeral, emerging in February to May, before deciduous trees leaf out, and going dormant before early summer. The plant sports whorls of three narrow, coarsely-toothed leaves that are so deeply divided that they appear to be five segmented. The nectar of the flowers attracts both long-tongued and short-tongued bees, including honey bees, bumblebees, and mason bees.

If you want to see toothwort in person, you'll find it growing in the pollinator garden at the Cherokee County Master Gardener Demo Garden. Both broadleaf and cutleaf toothwort can be purchased from some nurseries that specialize in native plants, and it may be available at some CCMG plant sales.

Other toothworts found in north Georgia are *C. angustata*, synonym *C. heterophylla*, known as slender toothwort, and *C. dissecta*, synonym *C. multifida*, known as fineleaf toothwort. These species are not generally available in commerce.

By planting toothwort you will also be helping a rare butterfly, the West Virginia white butterfly (*Pieris virginiensis*), whose range extends south into northern Georgia. Toothwort serves as a host plant for this butterfly's caterpillars, which are chartreuse with lighter yellow stripes on the sides and back. Where toothwort is not available, these butterflies may lay their eggs on the non-native invasive garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*). Chemicals in garlic mustard appear to be fatally toxic to the caterpillars, causing a threat to the survival of this rare butterfly.



Photo *Pieris virginiensis*,  
provided by Frank Model,  
Massachusetts Butterfly Club.



Photo *Anthocharis midea*,  
provided by Megan McCarty  
at [https://  
www.goodfreephotos.com](https://www.goodfreephotos.com).

Toothwort is also a host plant for caterpillar of the falcate orange-tip butterfly (*Anthocharis midea*). This caterpillar is green with bold white side stripes and a yellow-orange stripe along the top of the back.

Continued on page 6



Photo provided by <http://vegetables.caes.uga.edu>.

# Peter Piper Picked A Peck of Pickled Peppers!

By Mary Schuster, *Cherokee County Master Gardener*

Here we are in very early spring, and for avid vegetable gardeners this is the time to start planning this year's crop. A veggie that is easy to cultivate that is also very healthy to eat is the pepper. Peppers belong to the plant family Solanaceae along with eggplant, tomatoes, and potatoes. There are three major categories of peppers: bell peppers, hot peppers, and sweet peppers. We all know peppers to be famous for adding heat to the palate; however, their pungency is actually found largely in the seed portion of the plant and is measured according to the Scoville Heat Index.

For the purpose of this article, however, the bell pepper (the mildest type) will be discussed. Examples of bell peppers include 'Big Bertha', 'Camelot', 'Colossal', and 'Karma'.

Peppers in general are available in a rainbow of colors (green, yellow, red); they are high in vitamins C and A; they are relatively drought tolerant; and they are one of the easiest plants to grow. In recent history the National Garden Bureau designated 2015 the "Year of the Sweet Pepper." OK, enough well-deserved fanfare. Let's get down to the nitty gritty.

Some folks like to start peppers from seeds and others find it easier to purchase transplants from garden centers. Seeds take about 10 days to germinate and can be started indoors about six to eight weeks prior to transplanting them in the garden. In Georgia the recommended planting dates are April 1 to June 1 in the spring and/or July 25 to August 10 for the fall harvest. Once planted, they will need well-drained soil and should receive eight to 10 hours of daily sunlight. Adding some compost or other organic soil may be necessary to keep the pH from 6.0 to 6.5. If the soil is not tested for pH, fertilizers such as 10-10-10 or 13-13-13 can be applied. Figure broadcasting about 2 pounds per 100 square feet of garden.



Photo provided by M. Florkowska, [extension.uga.edu](http://extension.uga.edu).

Peppers are typically ready for harvest from 70 to 85 days after installing the transplant. It is best to harvest them when they are green and the walls of the plant are firm. If a sweeter tasting plant is preferred, then simply leave them on the bush until they reach a rich red color. Peppers should then be stored in the veggie drawer of the fridge safely for two to three weeks. They may also be frozen by cutting them into strips and placing them in freezer bags. And they can also be dried by pulling the whole plant just before the first frost and hanging it upside down.

Please note the importance of protecting hands with gloves when handling peppers to prevent irritation to the skin, eyes, or nose. This author learned this tip the hard way when preparing and canning pepper salsa a few years ago. I know some like it hot, just not that hot!

Very few potential problems face the gardener dealing with peppers, but there are some issues to be on the lookout for, such as blossom-end rot caused by a calcium deficiency along with poor watering technique and insect infestation like the European corn borer. And, as always, there is a free-range deer population in this county that often takes to nibbling garden plants in progress. Leafy pepper plants are no exception.

Peppers, like tomatoes, look great in the garden. They are big and blocky and easily identifiable. On your table they add a splash of color and zip to salads and other food items. They are nutritious and delicious.

<https://parkseed.com/pepper/c/pepper/filter/100000001626eq100000001670/>  
<http://extension.uga.edu/publications/detail.html?number=C1005&title=Home%20Garden%20Peppers>  
<http://agr.georgia.gov/georgia-grown-peppers.aspx>  
[From Vegetable Gardening in Georgia \(Circular 963\) by Robert Westerfield, Extension Horticulturist, and David Linvill, Chatham County Extension Agent.](#)

# Gardening With the Masters 2019 Seminars



**JANUARY 26th:** Seed Starting (Hickory Flat Library) How to jump start the gardening season by starting your own seeds.

**FEBRUARY 23rd:** Planning a Cutting Garden (Hickory Flat Library) Learn what to grow in order to have a steady supply of blooms for multiple seasons.

**MARCH 23rd:** Organic Vegetable Gardening (Hickory Flat Library) Strive to grow gardens that are bountiful, healthy, and ecologically friendly.

**APRIL 6th: SPRING SYMPOSIUM @ Yanmar EVO Center,**  
9:00am-5:00pm Registration information listed under the Symposium information in the adjacent column. Make your check payable to CCMG and return with the registration form, or register online.

**MAY 4th:** Raised Beds & Container Gardens (Senior Center) (\*Plant Sale) Gardening made accessible by using raised beds, containers, and even in buckets.

**JUNE 22nd:** Heavenly Hydrangeas (\*Plant Sale) (Senior Center) The Southern Belle of the gardening world, these beauties are a traditional favorite. Class will help you choose, plant and care for hydrangeas.

**JULY 27th:** Seed Saving (Hickory Flat Library) Your opportunity to learn how to save seeds from your garden all-stars for future planting & sharing at Seed Libraries at Hickory Flat, Rose Creek and Ball Ground.

**AUGUST 17th:** Fall Vegetable Gardening (Rose Creek Library) Learn to extend your garden season to enjoy fresh vegetables into the holidays.

**SEPTEMBER 14th:** Companion Plants w/Bulbs (\*Plant Sale) (Senior Center) Learn to incorporate bulbs right along with those annuals and perennials.

**OCTOBER 19th:** Tree & Shrub Selection & Planting (Rose Creek Library) Selection is just as important as planting when it comes to trees and shrubs. Come learn how and what to do.

**DECEMBER 7th:** Holiday Wreath Making (Senior Center) Join us for our festive class, and make a holiday wreath from natural materials found in your yard. Participants will need to bring some supplies. Class limit of 25 participants.

## Other 2019 dates to remember:

**Canton Tree City Arbor Day** - February 15, 9:00am-4:00pm

**Cherokee County 4-H Rabies Clinic** - April 13

**Cherokee County Fair** - September 17-22,  
Exhibit entries: Sept 15, 2:00-5:00pm, Sept 16, 9:00am-noon; 2:00-5:00pm

# SPRING SYMPOSIUM

April 6, 2019

Whether a seasoned gardener or a novice, you'll want to be a part of our 2019 Spring Symposium. It's a day-long event with renowned speakers, specialists, educators, business owners and Certified Master Gardeners. The format for the day is ten round-robin educational sessions. You will also see vendors from various horticultural entities and have opportunities for free seeds, door prizes and a Silent Auction. Our keynote speaker will be Horticulturist and Author, Erica Glasener, who will discuss "**Growing a Greener World**". A few of Erica's accomplishments include hosting "A Gardener's Diary" on HGTV for 14 years, writing a biweekly column on plants and garden design for the AJC, and serving as past Marketing Manager for Gibbs Garden.

## Other Educational Sessions will be:

- Designing A Garden for Year-Round Pleasure
- Fluttering Through The Garden
- Go Wild for Wildflowers
- How To Prune Properly
- Quick Ways to Use Fresh Herbs
- Snakes of Georgia: Friend or Foe
- Bugs, Blights, Wilts: Threats to Georgia Forests
- Diseases and Plant ID's
- Camellias For the Landscape
- Orchids: An Overview (If That's Possible)

**WHERE:** Yanmar EVO Center 5889 Alabama Road, Acworth, GA

**COST:** \$40.00 per person (Includes boxed lunch)

## Two ways to register:

Mail check payable to CCMG, and submit with this form to.  
Attn: Diane Walton, 326 Lauren Lane, Woodstock, GA 30188  
or by credit card @  
<https://cherokeemastergardenersinc.wildapricot.org>

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

CONTACT PHONE # \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Pd By Ck# \_\_\_\_\_

Confirmation email will be sent.

## Lawn Alternatives.... Continued from page 2

Having established your shade beds, you can certainly add plants. Don't try to cover up existing roots with topsoil—just work around them. Unless you now have large areas, use low-growing plants that typically will have shallower root systems. And don't think in terms of flowers. Instead, use plants with interesting greenery: hostas (*Hosta* spp.), astilbe (*Astilbe* spp.), ferns such as Japanese painted fern (*Athyrium niponicum*), ginger (*Asarum canadense*), and leopard plant (*Ligularia dentata*).

Then fill in with ground covers such as bugleweed (*Ajuga reptans*) or my favorite, Japanese pachysandra (*Pachysandra terminalis*), either in plain green or a fetching variegation. Be careful in your choices: some ground covers are invasive. Lily of the valley (*Convallaria majalis*) is one such, though I've been waiting for years to have mine take over my woods. Bishop's weed (*Aegopodium podagraria*), also called goutweed, comes in a variegated form, but it can be a thug and very difficult to remove. Prettier to me—but taller—is variegated Solomon's seal (*Polygonatum variegatum*) from Japan; or try evergreen strawberry begonia *Saxifraga stolonifera*, originally from China, which is not a begonia at all but has similar leaves and can be naturalized. Above all, DO NOT PLANT ENGLISH IVY (*Hedera helix*). Think kudzu can take over the universe? Trust me on this one, and don't plant ivy. For more ideas, do an online search, or better still, consult your County Extension Office.

Shady areas are well-suited for native plants, too. In North Georgia, we have a naturally acidic soil, good for cinnamon fern (*Osmundastrum cinnamomeum*) and evergreen Christmas fern (*Polystichum acrostichoides*). And how about partridgeberry (*Mitchella repens*), another lovely evergreen? For ephemerals, try Jack-in-the-pulpit (*Arisaema triphyllum*), some of the many trilliums (*Trillium* spp.), and of course violets (*Viola* spp.). For a vine, consider Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*), just NOT English ivy—ever. Personally I really am a big fan of moss, plugs of which you can buy online to start your own in case you don't have any naturally occurring in your landscape. Moss actually likes poor soil along with shade—a win-win if you are as lazy a gardener as I am.

## Toothwort ....Continued from page 3

Although toothwort is a cousin to the annoying but edible annual hairy bittercress (*Cardamine hirsuta*) that invades our lawns and gardens, you will not regret adding toothwort to your shade garden. A carpet of toothwort will give your winter garden a boost out of the ordinary.

Sources:

Chafin, Linda G. *Field Guide to the Wildflowers of Georgia and Surrounding States*. University of Georgia Press. 2016.

Horn, Dennis and Cathcart, Tavia. *Wildflowers of Tennessee, the Ohio Valley and the Southern Appalachians*. Second edition. Lone Pine Publishing and the Tennessee Native Plant Society. 2013.

Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. [https://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id\\_plant=caco26](https://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=caco26)

## The Great Backyard Bird Count: February 15-18, 2019

By Mary Tucker, *Cherokee County Master Gardener*

As I wrote about in the last issue of this newsletter, this is an exciting winter for bird lovers! Several species that are not usually in Cherokee County are overwintering in our area this year. These species include the red-breasted nuthatch, purple finch, and pine siskin.

Scientists are interested in understanding these unusual movements of birds, and you can help gather data by participating in the annual Great Backyard Bird Count, which will take place this year on February 15 through 18.

This program was launched in 1998 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society. The four-day count now involves more than 160,000 people of all ages around the world. The data collected creates an annual snapshot of the abundance and distribution of birds, and it helps track changes and trends that occur over the years.

It's easy and fun to take part in this, and I've personally been participating for over 10 years. Bird counts can be done anywhere, though I usually do mine at home by watching birds at my feeders. Other participants prefer to go to a park or nature trail or a favorite birding site, such as a lake shore.



(Continued on page 8)

# LAWN CARE-FEBRUARY AND MARCH

By Stephanie Howard, Cherokee County Master Gardener

## Warm-Season Grasses

(Bermuda, Centipede, Zoysia, St. Augustine)

### For Established Lawns

- It is still a little too early to aerate or dethatch. Root systems are still delicate.
- Once the soil temperatures are consistently 50°F or above, apply a pre-emergent herbicide for your particular type of grass to control winter and spring weeds. Be sure to follow the product directions. In most instances, wait until late March to apply post-emergent herbicide sprays for broadleaf weeds on Zoysia and Bermuda lawns. Avoid post-emergent herbicides on Centipede or St. Augustine lawns at this time.
- Begin to fertilize when the lawn is at least 50 percent green—very late March or April.
- Do not aerate or dethatch.

### For Newly Installed Lawns

- Consider the amount of rainfall when setting irrigation for turf installed in the fall. It needs no more than 1 inch of water per week as the turf comes out of dormancy.
- Avoid using herbicides on new lawns. However, if weeds become a problem, you may apply a post-emergent herbicide at half strength. Do so only after the lawn is completely greened up.

## Cool-Season Grasses

(Tall Fescue, Kentucky Bluegrass, Creeping Red Fescue, Chewing Fescue)

### For Established Lawns

- Continue proper mowing height (about 2.5 inches). Raise another 0.5 inch in dry conditions.
- Consider the amount of rainfall when setting irrigation. Irrigate 0.5 to 1 inch of water per week.
- Aerate in late February or March prior to fertilizing or herbicide application.
- This is actually the best time to treat with a pre-emergent herbicide to prevent crabgrass and other spring weeds. You may also apply a post-emergent herbicide spray to target broadleaf weeds, such as dandelion and chickweed.
- Fertilize with a product approved for your cool-season turf in accordance with the manufacturer's directions and the Soil Test recommendations.

### For Newly Installed Lawns

- This is the best time to install Tall Fescue turf. Seeding is possible during this time, but not optimal.
- Keep the soil moist as it becomes established. Reduce irrigation after four to six weeks.

## SOIL TESTING

This is a great time to do a soil test. Carefully follow the recommendations from the UGA Soil Test Report for lime or fertilizer applications. Although possible to apply lime at any time, remember that it raises the pH of the soil. Requirements vary with the type of turf. Centipede grass is usually suited to the low pH of Georgia soils, so liming may not be necessary. Zoysia, Bermuda, and St. Augustine grasses tolerate higher pH levels. This is actually the best time to apply lime to cool-season lawns.



Click on the link below. We will be glad to help you with that next garden project.

The University of Georgia Cooperative Extension offers soil testing services through your local county office.

Visit the Cherokee County UGA Cooperative Extension at 1130 Bluffs Parkway, Suite G-49, Canton, GA 30114. Phone: (770) 721-7803; website: <http://extension.uga.edu/county-offices/chokeee.html/>.

## Disease & Insect Control for All Lawns

This has been an extremely wet season, so check for fungal disease. As your lawn comes out of dormancy, check for dead or dark patches with clearly defined edges. Apply an approved fungicide as needed.

Check for webworm, armyworm, and/or cutworm infestations. Webworms leave a veil-like webbing on the turf surface, which is easily seen in the morning before the dew burns off. Circular, sunken patches of cut leaf blades might indicate the presence of cutworms. Armyworms leave significant damage by chewing patches of blades to the ground. White grubs feed on grass roots. Control them with an approved insecticide before they move deeper in the soil. Patches of wilted, yellow grass might indicate the presence of chinch bugs. St. Augustine and Centipede are especially susceptible, but other grasses are also at risk. If needed, treat the soil with an approved product for the specific type of infestation. Control strategies differ, so be sure to follow instructions on the product label.

**Remember!** Apply de-icing salts carefully, especially to sidewalk and driveway areas adjacent to turf!

# FEBRUARY Gardening Tips

## ORNAMENTALS

- Prune hybrid tea roses and Knockout Roses™ now, removing old canes and lowering plant to a height of 12-15 inches. 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: [https://secure.caes.uga.edu/extension/publications/files/pdf/C%201001\\_2.PDF](https://secure.caes.uga.edu/extension/publications/files/pdf/C%201001_2.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](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](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](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](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 to nine parts water or rubbing alcohol after each cut. Take care because both mixtures can cause damage to 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](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.

### The Great Backyard Bird Count



(Continued from page 6)

All you have to do is watch birds for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the count. Keep a separate record for the different days or places that you participate. Count the highest number of each bird species seen at one time (to ensure the birds are not counted more than once), and keep track of the amount of time spent counting. Then log on to the website (<http://gbbc.birdcount.org/>) to enter your data.

Results are updated in real time in the form of animated maps and colorful graphs, so you can see what's happening with birds around the world during the count. Of course, it's especially fun to see what species other birdwatchers in Georgia are observing.

Visit the GBBC website for more information about the event and how to participate. You will find full instructions in addition to bird lists tailored to your Zip Code to help you record your bird sightings.



Photo: <https://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/red-breasted-nuthatch>



# MARCH Gardening 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](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](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](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](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](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.
- 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](http://extension.uga.edu/publications/files/pdf/B%201318_4.PDF)



Photo provided by Marcia Winchester



### RAINFALL COMPARISONS

	Cherokee County			State Wide		
	Nov 18	Dec 18	YTD	Nov 18	Dec 18	YTD
<b>Actual</b>	8.6	11.3	67.3	6.6	6.2	60.7
<b>Normal</b>	4.5	4.7	54.7	3.8	4.0	47.5
<b>Excess</b>	4.1	6.6	12.6	2.8	2.2	13.2

## Meatball Veggie Soup

It's soup season, y'all. Here are two easy, hearty favorites of mine for you to warm up with when winter winds blow. Both recipes serve 4-6.

It doesn't get any easier than this, or taste any better. Serve with Italian or French bread and a salad.

### Ingredients:

1 one pound bag frozen Italian meatballs  
½ chopped onion  
2 tbsp butter  
Salt and pepper to taste  
1 package frozen mixed vegetables  
½ cup small uncooked pasta (ditalini or mini farfalle are good choices)  
4 cups V8 vegetable juice  
1 quart beef broth

### Instructions:

Brown meatballs and chopped onion in butter in deep pot. Stir in all but pasta and bring to a boil. Add pasta and simmer at a low boil for 30 minutes, stirring often.

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Diane Walton  
326 Lauren Lane  
Woodstock, GA 30188

GREAT GIFT IDEA

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<https://m.facebook.com/cherokeemastergardeners/>

UGA Cooperative Extension—Cherokee County  
1130 Bluffs Pkwy, Suite G49  
Canton, GA 30114



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## Southwestern Corn Chowder

This one's a spicy variation on traditional corn chowder. Serve with tortilla chips or Fritos corn chips on the side.

### Ingredients:

6 slices bacon, cut into 1" pieces  
1 tbsp chopped garlic  
1 diced red bell pepper  
1 diced medium onion  
3 tbsp flour  
16 oz jar Picante sauce (hot or mild, to taste)  
2 cups chicken broth  
2 cans cream corn  
1 can corn niblets  
2 medium diced cooked potatoes  
8 oz salsa con queso (cheesy salsa)  
Garnish: shredded cheddar cheese and chopped green onions

### Instructions:

Brown bacon slowly in a soup pot until crisp. Remove bacon from pot and sauté garlic, pepper and onion in the bacon fat until soft. (If bacon is very lean, add a tbsp of oil to the bacon fat.) Add flour and stir into mixture on low heat for one minute. Add Picante sauce, broth, and corn. Simmer five minutes. Add potatoes, bacon and queso. Heat thoroughly, and serve with garnishes. (You can also substitute ½ lb chorizo for the bacon, but drain after browning and then add 2 tbsp oil to the pan to sauté the vegetables.)



**Mission Statement of the Georgia Master Gardener Association:**  
To stimulate the love for and increase the knowledge of gardening and to voluntarily and enthusiastically share this knowledge with others