

Gardening With The Masters

Growing, Gardening and Gaining Knowledge

April/May 2020

WHAT'S HAPPENING

April

Apr 2 and 16, Demo Garden Workday

Apr 21 - CCMG Monthly Meeting

May

May 7 and 21, Demo Garden Workday

May 19 - CCMG Monthly Meeting

Due to recent worldwide health concerns, the Cherokee County Master Gardeners elected to suspend some Seminars, a Workshop and a Garden Talk. This action is a proactive measure to ensure the wellbeing of our members and community. Should we reschedule any of our events, you will be notified here in our newsletter, on our website, or on Facebook. Please feel free to visit any of our web links posted here. They will keep you up to date with all our activities, events and changes, and help you to stay informed.



Photo courtesy John Ruscilli

<https://extension.uga.edu/county-offices/chokeee.html>

<https://cherokeemastergardenersinc.wildapricot.org/>

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

or call 770-721-7803

Editor's Corner
By Marcia Winchester,
Cherokee County Master Gardener

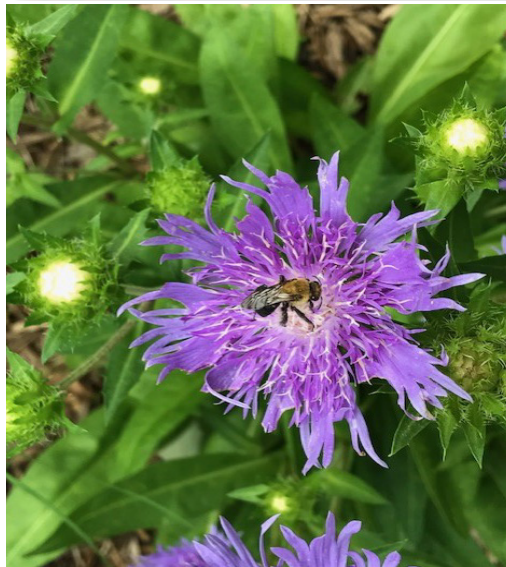


Photo courtesy Marcia Winchester

A few months ago, the Cherokee County Master Gardeners had the special honor of hearing Becky Griffin speak to us about native bees. Most people think of honey bees when they think of pollinators, but they are not even native to America; they were in fact introduced from Europe.

Becky informed us that there are actually over 400 species of native bees in Georgia. Some native bees live solitary in the ground. They briefly emerge to pollinate native plants while they are blooming and then go back into the soil until the next year.

Last year I was fortunate to witness this myself while hiking in Canton. We came across thousands of small holes in the ground, and I realized it was where native bees had emerged. Keep in mind that tilling your garden disrupts the lifecycle of these bees if they have chosen to nest there.

We also learned about the methods different bees use to gather pollen. Honey bees and bumble bees store pollen in a purse-like structure called a pollen press. Leafcutter and mason bees gather pollen in hairs under their abdomen, which actually makes them better pollinators.

Becky also gave us some tips on how to identify flies versus bees. Bees have four wings, whereas flies have two. The eyes of flies are centered more on the tops of their heads. Bees have hairs and antennas. Lastly, bees fly with intention, whereas flies meander around.

Mason bees and mining bees are important for spring pollination of fruit orchards. Putting up nesting boxes will give them homes and help your fruit trees bear. If you want to make your own nesting boxes you can find instructions in the UGA publication "Creating Pollinator Nesting Boxes to Help Native Bees."

See page 7 for more pollinator photos.

Marcia

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Photo courtesy Ron Fister

Green, Green Grass of Home

By Ronald Fister, Cherokee County Master Gardener

For the past decade and a half, our military personnel have been serving in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Kuwait and other countries without the enjoyment of the beautiful turf they once enjoyed in their neighborhoods and communities. If they did not fully appreciate the value of the turf before they left America's soil, they certainly knew the value of green when they returned. This garden beauty is taken for granted until you are called to serve in an area without the visions of green under your feet.

Americans benefit from high-quality turf at sports fields, parks, business grounds, school campuses, civic and governmental areas, and at our homes. A recent survey conducted by Engine's CARAVAN Omnibus on behalf of the National Association of Landscape Professionals found that 81 percent of all Americans have a lawn, and 79 percent say that a lawn is an important feature when renting or buying a house. In fact, when asked to prioritize home features, respondents ranked a nice-sized lawn second, falling behind a renovated kitchen, but above other popular features such as updated bathrooms, storage space and hardwood floors.

Surprisingly, the younger generation of Americans placed even higher value on lawns than their parents or grandparents. A beautiful, nice-sized lawn was the number one priority among millennials, even beating out an updated kitchen. Among millennials, 82 percent reported that having a lawn was important, while only 77 percent of baby boomers reported it to be important.

In addition to being simply relaxing, healthy lawns offer other benefits: reducing the reflections of sunlight, absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, providing a home for tiny microbes beneath its roots, creating a wonderful space for our pets, giving us a cushion for our feet, reducing injuries to young athletes, reducing runoff after a hard rain, and most of all providing oxygen for us to breathe. Wow, so many benefits, even in small spaces! It is no wonder we appreciate turf in our personal garden spaces.

These benefits of turf are true regardless of the size of the lawn. However, none of this happens without a mower to deliver quality turf and a bit of exercise for those guiding the mowing machine. A great lawn starts with returning all clippings back to the soil, which is called "grass cycling." This allows the grass clippings to remain on the lawn while naturally recycling the nitrogen, phosphate and other nutrients back into the soil. This benefits the soil microorganisms and the future growth of the grass. This is the best management practice for the environment versus dumping clippings directly into the landfill. It is never recommended to cycle the grass clippings to the compost if the lawn has been treated with herbicides.

In addition to giving lawns the best appearance, proper mowing management must also reduce any potential damage to the grass. Start with sharp mower blades early in the season, and sharpen them often. Larger lawns will require blade sharpening more frequently. If you are not capable of sharpening the blades or reels, there are professional services available. Just inquire at your local lawnmower store for a service technician.

Once you have the blades sharpened, do not remove more than 30 percent of the grass during any mowing. Following this practice reduces stresses and avoids grass yellowing or browning. After all, green is our aim in turf management. Higher cutting also lessens the amount of sunlight reaching the soil surface and thereby reduces weed growth and the germination of mid-season grassy weeds.

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Grubs in the Garden: Friend or Foe?

By Karen Garland, Cherokee County Master Gardener

As winter's frosty grip has weakened, the thoughts of many gardeners have turned to the day their plows, tillers, shovels and hoes can come out of hibernation to begin the task of breaking up the soil. While it appears to be mere dirt to some, the soil is actually an intricately balanced complex mixture of minerals, organic remains, water and air that is teeming with both beneficial and harmful organisms.

Some of the more conspicuous inhabitants to make an appearance in the soil are white grubs. However, the term "white grub" encompasses the larval stage of several scarab beetles. The grubs look a bit like plump, grayish-white caterpillars, with a distinctive head capsule, that when resting have a characteristic C-shape. They are usually found just beneath the top layer of soil in a garden. With dozens of species, ranging in size from ½ inch to 2 inches long, they look nearly identical, whether they are the larvae of Japanese beetles (*Popillia japonica*), European chafer beetles (*Amphimallon majale*), May or June beetles (*Phyllophaga* spp.), rhinoceros beetles (Dynastinae subfamily), masked chafer beetles (*Cyclocephala hirta*) or flower scarabs (Cetoniinae subfamily).



Photo courtesy Karen Garland

Like the life cycle of all other beetles, scarabs have four developmental stages: egg, larva, pupa and adult. In late summer, depending on the species, females lay from 50 to 200 eggs in the soil, and from these ova hatch tiny white grubs that waste no time in beginning their mission of feeding. The grubs spend from one to four years, depending on the species and the climate, foraging on either decaying plant materials, roots or decomposed dead animals. A two-year life cycle is common for the white grubs in Georgia, while a three-year cycle is more typical in northern climates. During the larval stage, the grub will burrow deeper into the soil to overcome freezing temperatures, overwintering for one or two years; then the insect enters a pupal phase, from which it emerges as an adult.

As alarming as these springtime grubs appear, they do little harm to plants this time of year. However, the damage comes between July and October after this spring's adult beetles have laid their eggs, and when the next generation of grubs is feeding underground. These late-summer larval pests feed on the roots of many garden plants and lawns.

These scarab grubs can be very destructive, and because their mischief occurs beneath the ground, their presence may not be suspected until after the damage is done. A wide range of plants may be attacked by the plump predators; corn, small grains, potatoes, turnips, carrots, strawberries and onions are especially photovulnerable. Small plants may become permanently stunted or may wilt and die, and if the grubs are numerous, even older plants will suffer. The adult beetles feed on the flowers and foliage of trees and shrubs, and although they are not usually as destructive as the larvae, the mature beetles can cause considerable defoliation.



Photo courtesy UGA

If you are planning a garden, cultivate and turn over soil regularly to expose grubs to birds and other insect-eating animals. This practice will remove the grubs' food supply as well as crush many of the larvae. Additionally, keep your garden soil healthy and moist, as beetles prefer dry soils. Pull up and control weeds, and hand collect grubs as you rake and plow a garden, throwing the grubs into a bucket of water with liquid dish soap to kill them.

However, while some types of scarabs are pests to lawns, gardens and crops, many others help to decompose materials in the compost heap, can be used as fishing bait, and are an important part of the food chain for animals, including skunks, opossums, raccoons, moles and birds such as robins, crows, and grackles. Additionally, many other animals, including birds, bats, and frogs, eat the adults. Therefore, you be the judge as you work to manage ecological balance and a garden that is productive: a friend or foe?

The Delicious Native Fruit You May Never Have Tasted

By Carolyn Puckett, Cherokee County Master Gardener

As a young child visiting my grandmother, I learned the pawpaw song. Do you know it?

“Where oh where is dear little Nellie? . . .
Way down yonder in the pawpaw patch. . . .
Pickin’ up pawpaws, put ‘em in a pocket. . . .
Way down yonder in the pawpaw
patch.”

Photo courtesy Rebekah D. Wallace,
University of Georgia, Bugwood.org

Here is one YouTube version of the song if you wish to hear it: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NsZ6RS67oAY>. (As with many folk songs, the lyrics can vary somewhat).



5549623

Pawpaw tree, John Ruter University of Georgia

If you have ever seen a pawpaw fruit (*Asimina triloba*), you will wonder how big those pockets were, for the fruit can be as big as a mango! In fact, it is our largest native fruit. But you are unlikely to find this delicious fruit, which I think tastes like banana custard, in your local grocery—it simply does not keep long enough.

This small, deciduous native tree, growing 15 to 30 feet tall, has obovate, tropical-looking leaves. It can be grown as a multi-stemmed shrub or pruned into a single-trunk tree form. While in nature pawpaws are understory trees and will need some sun protection when very young, they produce more fruit in full sunlight.

Blooming in the spring, the 1- to 2-inch purple flowers faintly smell like carrion to attract pollinating flies and beetles. The flowers start off female and then turn male. In the fall, the leaves turn an attractive clear yellow. As a bonus, pawpaws attract the beautiful zebra swallowtail butterfly (*Eurytides marcellus*), whose sole larval host plant is the pawpaw.



Photo by Debbie Roos,
North Carolina State Extension

Trees started from seed will produce fruit in five to eight years; trees from grafted cuttings will produce fruit in three to four years. When ripe, the 7- to 14-ounce fruit turns a light green to yellowish color. The fruit matures over several weeks in late summer and early autumn, feeling soft when ripe. Pawpaw fruit is an excellent source of vitamins, minerals, and amino acids; it helped the Lewis and Clark expedition survive a tricky time on the Oregon Trail.

The tree tends to sucker, and it can form large colonies (thus the song’s pawpaw “patch”). If you decide to grow this fruit, you will need at least two trees with different genetics—a tree’s suckers are identical clones so cannot be used as the second tree. There are several commercial cultivars available.

The pawpaw tends not to be susceptible to many of the diseases that affect other common fruit trees. Also, deer usually do not bother the pawpaw tree, although raccoons and squirrels reportedly enjoy the fruit.

The pawpaw has been gaining in popularity, and even has its own Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/ksu.pawpaw/>) where you can request free pawpaw seed. Ohio and Pennsylvania each have an annual pawpaw festival. Lucky me, I have a Maryland friend with a pawpaw farm, and she has shared her fruit with me many times. She sells out her crop every year, proving just how delicious this native fruit is!

For more information, see:

<https://hgic.clemson.edu/factsheet/pawpaw/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PvuLibrmxtU>

<https://kysu.edu/academics/cafsss/pawpaw/pawpaw-description-and-nutritional-information/>

https://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/content/dam/pubs_ext_vt_edu/2906/2906-1319/2906-1319_pdf.pdf



Kids + Gardens = Summer Fun

By Barb Schirmer, Cherokee County Master Gardener

Recently I read the statistic that 90 percent of our best childhood memories took place outdoors. I'm not sure what type of science was involved in coming up with this conclusion, but as I think back on my own childhood, it certainly seems accurate. Activities such as camping, hiking, boating, swimming and just laying in the grass are some of my fondest memories. With all the rainy days we have had this spring, the thought of getting outside for playtime is foremost in all of our minds, and what better way to spur enthusiasm than to involve kids in the fun of creating their own vegetable gardens.

Kids always enjoy being outdoors. They love running in the garden, climbing trees, digging in the dirt and even watering the lawn and garden. Children are always curious about everything in nature too. Working with them in the garden is a wonderful way to encourage responsibility and creative play.

Why a vegetable garden? Vegetables germinate and grow quickly, and they can be immediately eaten after harvesting. With that said, your children will enjoy having their own vegetable garden, planting seeds, watching them sprout and grow, watering, cultivating, and finally harvesting and eating their own produce.

Anything that encourages kids to grow things seems like an obvious addition to a natural play space. Whether you live in the country or in the city - whether you have a big backyard or only room enough for a window box - you can grow a garden with your kids.

Here are a few special tips to help ensure that you have a successful gardening adventure:

- Find an area that is accessible and suitable for your child's garden. Ensure it gets a lot of sunlight, is near a water source and has good soil.
- Allow the child to choose the layout for the garden. It does not necessarily have to be the usual rectangular shape. A small plot or sandbox converted into a garden bed will provide your child with a sense of ownership and the responsibility that goes with it. It can also be a garden consisting of beautifully designed pots. A round vegetable garden with divisions for different plants can also be fun and exciting.
- If you only have a little corner to garden in, then choose dwarf and compact vegetables and herb varieties that will produce in a very small space and won't grow so tall that they overshadow their neighbors.
- Encourage your child to use creativity in designing the vegetable garden so it becomes uniquely their own. To add color and excitement, you can help the child plant some colorful flowers such as sunflowers and marigolds.
- Once the ground has warmed in early spring you can plant. Prepare the soil by breaking up the dirt with a hoe or garden rake. This is also a good time to add soil-enriching compost or other natural organic fertilizers, which can be worked into the soil with a garden rake.
- Choose the right kinds of vegetables to plant. To get your kid excited about the vegetable garden, plant vegetables that the child likes to eat and are easy to grow. Common choices include tomatoes, radishes, carrots, cucumbers, beans, peas and squash. Encourage planting at least one vegetable that is new to them so they have the experience of trying something different ... maybe eggplant or kohlrabi.
- Garden care throughout the growing season is important, so discuss the importance of checking on the garden daily. Watering, fertilizing and weeding are important jobs. Even though the garden probably will not need daily care, it is a good idea to check the plants often for weeds or signs of drying.
- Once the vegetables are ready to harvest, they can be eaten immediately fresh from the garden, used in favorite recipes, or perhaps preserved for later use through canning or freezing.



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Suggested Mowing Heights: (Grass plants need green, healthy leaf blades to convert sunlight to usable energy during photosynthesis while sustaining vigorous and healthy root systems.)

Grass Type	Height	Grass Type	Height
Bluegrass	2 - 3 Inches	Ryegrass	1 - 2 Inches
Bermudagrass Common	1 - 2 Inches	Tall Fescue	2 - 3 Inches
Bermudagrass Hybrid	1 - 1.5 Inches	St. Augustine	2 - 3 Inches
Centipede	1 - 2 Inches	Zoysia	1 - 2 Inches

1. To measure the height of the cut, set the mower on a hard, flat surface, and measure from the hard surface to the blade cutting edge.
2. During extremely hot weather, raise your mowing deck a half inch to relieve the plant stresses.
3. Clean the underside of the mower deck after each cutting to reduce the spread of diseases and weeds and to eliminate odor when the mower is stored in your garage or storage shed.
4. Continue to check the cutting edges prior to each use.
5. Follow all safety precautions when using any equipment.
6. Remove limbs and other objects from the lawn before each mowing.

In summary, a lawn or turf is to be enjoyed by you and others as they pass your real estate. Just remember, that the first thing the human eye will see in your landscape is your seasonal color (flowers), then the green turf, regardless of the square footage of the turf surface. Take a drive into a neighborhood and try it yourself. Turf is to be enjoyed, cherished and shared.

Enjoy your “green, green grass of home”.

Kids + Gardens = Summer Fun*continued from page 5*

Some words about gardening safely:

Children develop at different rates, and only parents or guardians will know when their kids are ready to be introduced to using specific tools or are able to help with certain jobs. Working alongside a grownup and having a go at something (under close supervision at first) is a great way for children to learn safe practices and to gain the skills needed for greater independence, although continuing adult guidance will be required. After ensuring that the garden is as risk-free as reasonable, children should have as much freedom within its boundaries as possible. Dig out plenty of old clothes so that they can run around and get as mucky as they like.

Talk to your children about any specific local hazards that may come into the garden from the outside. These might include aggressive ant species, wasp or hornet nests, snakes and other poisonous or biting creatures, as well as wild and cultivated plants that can sting or potentially cause allergic reactions. If these could be a problem, adults should be extra vigilant with their supervision.

Sometimes people get a little uptight about gardening. They believe there are “rules” and you have to do it “right”! But this is nonsense. Gardening should make you happy, and there is no greater joy than watching children explore and have fun in the garden. Throw caution to the wind and “dig in”! There are lots of great resources and guidelines for working with children in the garden. For more information, reach out to the UGA Master Gardener program.



All photos courtesy of the National Gardening Association

Birding is Good for the Soul: “Global Big Day”

By Mary Tucker, Cherokee County Master Gardener

As I write this, we are in the midst of a worldwide pandemic. There is fear and trepidation, and our normal activities have been disrupted. Also as I write this, I see a northern flicker at our bird feeder, and my heart soars! The muted dusty brown feathers on her back are punctuated with dramatic black markings, and her head is accented with a glorious spot of vivid red. When she flies off into the trees after feeding, I see flashes of yellow under her wings and a bright white rump - a stunning display. I temporarily forget the uncertainty and stress and just revel in appreciation of nature and its glory.

While we are isolated from others and our usual activities are halted, I encourage you to feed your soul by bird watching. And on May 9, you'll be able to enjoy the birds while also being a “citizen scientist” by taking part in the “Global Big Day,” an annual worldwide birding event in which participants report their bird sightings. Last May, more than 35,000 people in over 175 countries reported more than two-thirds of the world's species in this single day!

This 24-hour event, which began in 2015, is organized by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. The purpose is to get a snapshot of the bird population around the globe. This will help scientists better understand birds, get a feel for how ecosystems are functioning and become aware of trends that are occurring within bird populations. The event is also meant to encourage bird watching (and reporting) year round.

You can participate by going to a park, nature reserve or natural area - or you can take part in your own backyard. The event runs from midnight to midnight in your local time zone, and you can report your bird sightings for any amount of time during that span. Even as little as 10 minutes will make you part of the global team.

Your results are entered on the eBird website, the same method used for the annual February Great Backyard Bird Count, which many of you have participated in. Use your same username and password, and if you don't have an account yet, signing up is free and easy at <https://ebird.org>. You can also download a free eBird mobile app so you can submit lists on the go while you are out in nature. In addition, the Cornell Lab offers the Merlin Bird ID app to help you with identification.

So use this opportunity to do your soul - and science - some good by enjoying the birds. As an added bonus, even if you're isolated from others during this time, you'll know that you are part of a larger community of bird lovers all united in the common goal of furthering science and protecting the birds we love.



The Cornell Lab
GLOBAL BIG DAY
9 MAY 2020



Photos of birds courtesy Linda Robbins, Cherokee County Master Gardener



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All photos taken at the Sr. Center Demo garden, courtesy John Ruscilli, during the 2019 pollinator census count.



APRIL GARDENING TIPS



Photo bush beans, courtesy UGA

ORNAMENTALS

- If your bulbs have been shaded by new growth of a tree or shrub plantings, consider moving them to a sunny location or pruning back the plantings. Mark crowded unblooming clumps; and dig up and divide them after the tops have died back. Note where you want to add color for next spring. http://extension.uga.edu/publications/files/pdf/B%20918_3.PDF
- Upon emergence of foliage, fertilize bulbs with a 10-10-10 fertilizer. After the bulbs have bloomed, fertilize with a 10-10-10 at a rate of 3 lbs. per 100 feet.
- If you plant an Easter lily outside, don't plant it near other lilies as it may carry a virus that can infect them.
- Prune spring-blooming shrubs, such as forsythia, quince and early spirea, after they have completed flowering.
- Do not fertilize azaleas and camellias until they have finished blooming. They should be pruned after blooming. https://secure.caes.uga.edu/extension/publications/files/pdf/B%20670_5.PDF
- Many gardeners plant annual and perennial flowers to attract hummingbirds; woody plants can also be added to the yard to provide nectar for our smallest native birds. Some trees to add are buckeye, horse chestnut, apple, crabapple, hawthorn, redbud, and tulip poplar. Shrubs include red and bottlebrush buckeye, rhododendrons, Georgia basil, azaleas, and rosemary.
- Once new growth emerges on trees and shrubs, cut back to green wood any twigs affected by winterkill.

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

- When planting orange or yellow peppers, plant extra since they take longer to mature and produce fewer peppers.
- To hinder early blight on tomatoes, mulch to keep the soil-borne diseases from being splashed on the plant during rains. Remove mulch and dispose of at end of season. http://extension.uga.edu/publications/files/pdf/B%201271_5.PDF
- To have fresh raspberries, raise them in your own backyard. Fifteen or twenty plants, spaced 3' apart, in rows 6' apart, will produce a good supply of fruit. https://secure.caes.uga.edu/extension/publications/files/pdf/C%20766_3.PDF

- Thin young fruits of apples, pears and peaches within 25 days of the peak bloom, leaving 4-7" between fruit to insure larger, healthier fruit.
- Grapevines with excessive vegetative growth generally have less high-quality fruit. In early spring, prune out the canes with the fewest buds to allow light, moisture, and air circulation within the plant to improve the quality and quantity of the fruit. https://secure.caes.uga.edu/extension/publications/files/pdf/B%201505_2.PDF
- Erect trellises now for beans and cucumbers. Don't plant tomatoes, peppers, or other warm season plants until the soil temperature warms up. Usually in Cherokee County that will be April 15 or later. Plants that are planted earlier will just sit there and not grow, or they will be killed by a late frost.
- When weather is wet and cold, allow about twice the germination time listed on the seed packet. If there is no sign of growth after this time, dig around a little to check for sprouted seeds; if you find no signs of life the seed has probably rotted and you will need to replant.
- If your garden is small and you do not have adequate space for the long-vine varieties, plant a bush type of squash and green beans.
- Root crops must be thinned, no matter how ruthless this practice seems. Thin carrots, beets, parsnips and onions so you can get three fingers between individual plants.
- When planning your vegetable garden, consider that leafy vegetables need at least six hours of sunlight to develop properly. Fruiting vegetables like squash, tomatoes, eggplant, beans, and peppers need 10 hours of full sun.
- When transplanting seedlings in peat pots to your garden, be careful not to allow the rim of the peat pot to protrude above the soil level. If the rim is above the soil, it will act as a wick and draw moisture away from the transplant. To prevent this from happening, break away the uppermost rim of the pot before planting and make sure the pot is completely covered with soil.
- When tomato seedlings have 5 to 7 leaves, they are ready to transplant into the garden. To increase root growth and produce a sturdier plant place tomatoes in soil up to the bottom leaves.
- Drive stakes for future supports at the same time you plant tomatoes. If you try to install stakes later, you may damage the plant roots.



Photo staked tomatoes courtesy Mike Lloyd, Master Gardener



MAY GARDENING TIPS



Aphid infestation on a rose. (Clemson University - USDA Cooperative Extension Slide Series, Bugwood.org)

ORNAMENTALS

- Keep an eye out for aphids and other insects on roses. Spray if necessary. Begin spraying for blackspot at least twice a month. Removing and replacing mulch under roses will cut down greatly on black spot. http://extension.uga.edu/publications/files/pdf/C%201001_2.PDF
- Red and silver maples, willows, poplars, and elms can clog septic lines with their roots. Don't plant near water/sewer lines.
- If you are building a home on a wooded lot, save young, vigorous trees. They will adapt to changes in their environment better than older trees. Trees that once grew in shade and are suddenly exposed to increased sunlight, wider temperature changes, and drying winds may not survive.
- Lightly sidedress perennials, including spring bulbs, with a 5-10-10 or 10-10-10 fertilizer, being careful to avoid the center or crown of the plant.
- Prune off sprouts from the base of crape myrtles.
- Check the leaves on azaleas and camellias for leaf galls. They are white to green growths and can be pruned out and disposed of. <http://blog.extension.uga.edu/bulloch/2015/04/what-is-this-strange-growth-on-azalea-leaves/>

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES


- Protect developing strawberries from birds with spun bonded row covers. Netting can trap and kill beneficial snakes and birds. http://extension.uga.edu/publications/files/pdf/C%20883_4.PDF
- Technically, berries are fruit that are soft throughout, such as blueberries. The raspberry is not a true berry, but a fruit that is made of many small sections each with a seed or pit. Fruits with fleshy material surrounding a hard seed are called drupes. Thus a raspberry is not a berry but is a cluster of small drupes or drupelets.
- Thin peaches 4-6" apart for large, high-quality fruit.
- If spraying fruit trees near a vegetable garden, cover vegetables with a sheet of plastic to protect them.
- Place a thick layer of newspaper under tomatoes to cut back on leaf diseases. Cover with mulch. This helps prevent fungus spores from splashing on leaves. Remove and dispose of at end of the season.
- To ensure pollination of sweet corn, plant several rows together in a block, rather than in one long row. Side-dress with 3 Tbsp of 10-10-10 per 10 feet of row when 12-18" high. <https://athenaeum.libs.uga.edu/bitstream/handle/10724/12286/C905.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
- When thinning beans, watch for "snake heads," seedlings that have lost one or both of their cotyledons and produce poor, weak sprouts. Also, watch for "bald heads," seedlings that have the growth point damaged so severely that they cannot develop. Both types will be weak and delayed in growth and should be removed.



<https://www.vegedge.umn.edu/pest-profiles/pests/seed-corn-maggot>

APRIL/MAY MISCELLANEOUS

- Mark the handle of your spade/hoe in inches for a handy measuring device for row width and planting distances. Paint or tape the measurements on the handle, and apply varnish to make the marks last longer.
- When you see ants crawling on garden plants, look for aphids. Some ant species protect aphids, moving them from plant to plant and even taking them into the anthill for overnight safety. The ants do this to ensure a supply of honeydew, a sugary water substance secreted by aphids, on which ants feed. https://secure.caes.uga.edu/extension/publications/files/pdf/B%201074_7.PDF
- A garden use for plastic milk jugs: seep irrigation. Punch holes in the sides of a jug about 2" apart. Bury the jug leaving the neck protruding from the soil. Fill jug with water (solutions of liquid fertilizer may be used to water and feed at the same time) and screw on the cap. The water will seep out, providing a slow, deep irrigation for plants.
- Trellis and stake downwind from the prevailing winds so plants lean against the supports when the wind blows.
- Don't be too anxious to move your houseplants outdoors. A slight chill can knock the leaves off tender plants.
- Replace bulbs on plant lights yearly. They gradually lose their strength causing plants to stretch and stop blooming.
- Moles are tunneling insect eaters and are particularly attracted to grubs. When bulbs are missing or shrubs have root damage, look for voles or field mice to be the culprits. These rodents often use mole tunnels as their runs.

RAINFALL COMPARISONS						
	Cherokee County			State Wide		
	Jan 20	Feb 20	YTD	Jan 20	Feb 20	YTD
Actual	7.3	15.2	22.5	6.8	10.4	17.2
Normal	5.9	5.0	10.9	4.1	4.5	8.6
Deviation	1.4	10.2	11.6	2.7	5.9	8.6

Chicken Chow Mein Casserole

Forget the take-out. Here's an easy Asian meal that is healthy, tasty, and satisfying for chow mein fans. It takes just 20 minutes to put together, plus one hour baking time.

Ingredients:

2 lbs. skinless chicken breasts
(5 to 6 breasts)

1 8-ounce can sliced water chestnuts, drained

2 cups cashews

2 cups chopped celery

2 4-ounce cans sliced mushrooms

1 medium onion, diced

1 green bell pepper, diced

2 cans condensed cream of mushroom soup

1 cup milk

10 ounces chow mein noodles

½ cup Parmesan cheese

Add as desired: soy sauce, spicy mustard, white or fried rice



1. Bring chicken breasts to a boil in water and simmer for 30 minutes. Remove from water (reserve broth), let cool slightly, and cut into bite-sized pieces. Save 2 cups of broth for the next steps.
2. Preheat oven to 350. Lightly grease a large casserole or 9" x 13" pan.
3. In a large bowl, combine water chestnuts, cashews, celery, mushrooms, onion, and bell pepper. Stir in the condensed soup and milk. Add the cooked chicken, the reserved broth, and all but ½ cup of the chow mein noodles.
4. Spoon all into the prepared pan. Sprinkle with the Parmesan cheese and the reserved noodles.
5. Bake for one hour, until bubbly and lightly browned on top.

Serves 6 to 8 as a main course, 12 to 16 on a party buffet. Leftovers keep well ... if you have any.

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Turkey with Pecan-Cherry Stuffing

It's not just for Thanksgiving anymore ... frozen turkey breasts are available year-round. I was a guest at a holiday dinner on a snowy day in Massachusetts and was served this marvelous dinner. Since then I've served this easy, tasty entree in all seasons.

Ingredients:

1 fresh or boneless turkey breast

(about 3 to 5 lbs.)

2 cups cooked rice

½ cup chopped pecans

½ cup dried cherries or cranberries

1 tsp poultry seasoning

¼ cup peach, apricot, or plum preserves

1 tsp Worcestershire sauce



1. Thaw breast if frozen. Remove and discard skin. Cut deep slices three-fourths of the way through turkey at 1" intervals.
2. Stir together rice, pecans, cherries and poultry seasoning. Stuff rice mix between slices. Skewer lengthwise if needed to hold together.
3. Place turkey in slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for five to six hours, or until turkey registers 170 on meat thermometer.
4. Stir together Worcestershire and preserves. Spoon over turkey, cover and let stand for five to ten minutes.

Serves 8 to 12, based on size of turkey breast. Leftovers keep well and can be frozen for a future meal.

This recipe was featured on the website: <https://recipes.howstuffworks.com/turkey-with-pecan-cherry-stuffing-recipe.htm>



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