

Gardening With The Masters

Growing, Gardening and Gaining Knowledge

February/March 2021

Due to continuing COVID health conditions, all face-to-face programs are still being restricted. Most programs are being scheduled as virtual events and the Cherokee County Master Gardeners, along with the UGA Extension office, are proud to offer these upcoming virtual seminars. The list of virtual seminars offered through June is posted on page 6 in this newsletter. Join us on the last Friday of each month.

Register using the link posted here.
https://ugeorgia.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9NOr2GKycbwqHj

WHAT'S HAPPENING

February

FEB 19 - ARBOR DAY

Feb 26 - VIRTUAL SEMINAR
**PRUNING
 ORNAMENTAL SHRUBS**
 REGISTRATION LINK POSTED ABOVE

March

Mar 26 - VIRTUAL SEMINAR
**SECRETS TO SUCCESSFUL
 SUMMER VEGGIES**
 REGISTRATION LINK POSTED ABOVE

CHEROKEE COUNTY EXTENSION PROGRAMS

Mar - Cherokee County Ag Expo

Please visit our Facebook page

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

the WildApricot website

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

or the UGA County Extension

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

or call

770-721-7803

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



What do birds eat when your feeder runs out of food? The last issue of this newsletter had an article on trees and shrubs that provide berries for birds to eat. Not all birds eat berries; some eat seeds and some prefer insects. If you wait to cut back perennials, leaving them in your garden over the winter, you will be providing food for our seed eaters like American goldfinches (*Carduelis tristis*). A pile of leaves will provide insects and worms for brown thrashers (*Toxostoma rufum*) and American robins (*Turdus migratorius*). Carolina wrens (*Thryothorus ludovicianus*) love looking under my deck for small spiders.



Photo courtesy Marcia Winchester



Photo courtesy Marcia Winchester

One spring I had a pair of pileated woodpeckers (*Dryocopus pileatus*) attacking some old rotting logs looking for food. I now make sure to have a few piles of old logs waiting for them. Mother Nature provides food through rotting branches on trees and through seeds held on plants over the winter, such as on sourwood trees (*Oxydendrum arboreum*). This summer I found what was left of a small tree that had been rotting in the middle of my woods. It had broken off at 6 feet tall and had so many holes from where the birds had been looking for insects. To me this is the ultimate bird feeder.

Marcia

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Lizards in Winter

By Karen Garland, Cherokee County Master Gardener

Early November, I was planting flowering bulbs with some second-grade students, at which point we observed a very bright blue object in the hole that was just dug. Our first thought was that it was a hairclip that someone had dropped or a blue ribbon. However, upon closer inspection, we realized that we had unearthed a lizard, known as a five-lined skink (*Eumeces fasciatus*). This discovery led to many questions from the group, including, "What is a skink?", "Why was it buried deep beneath the soil?", and "How does it survive the winter?"



Photo hatchling blue-lined skink courtesy UGA

There are four main species of skinks found throughout our area, including the five-lined skink (*Eumeces [Plestiodon] fasciatus*), Southeastern five-lined skink (*Eumeces [Plestiodon] inexpectatus*), broadhead skink (*Eumeces [Plestiodon] laticeps*), and ground skink (*Scincella lateralis*), which is less likely to be seen because it remains hidden in the leaf litter. A five-lined skink has short legs and a streamlined body that is generally gray, brown, or black, with five white or yellowish stripes, two on each side and one down the center of the back. Young skinks have a bright blue tail, but they gradually lose their stripes and the blue coloring on their tails as they mature.



Photo juvenile blue-lined skink courtesy UGA

Skinks are beneficial to have in the garden, as they prey on a wide variety of insects, spiders, and other invertebrates. Female five-lined skinks lay clutches of 15 to 20 eggs in moist soil or rotten logs during the summer and protect them until they hatch 30 to 50 days later, depending on the temperature. Her parental care ends a day or two after hatching when hatchlings leave the nest.

Most notable in five-lined skinks is their tail and its antipredation behavior. Predators tend to attack these bright tails more than other body parts. When attacked, the skink's tail often detaches from its body. The skink can then run to shelter to escape its death as the disconnected tail continues to twitch. If the predator does not eat the severed tail, the skink may return and search for it by homing in on released chemical cues. If the tail is found, the lizard will eat it because of the amount of energy stored in it.

Not having this energy can have serious consequences. For example, if a skink loses its tail shortly before winter, it might not have enough energy to survive until spring. Also, it may not be able to reproduce during the year that it takes to rejuvenate a new tail. Furthermore, when the tail does grow back, it will not be as long as the original nor as brightly colored. Additionally, since the new version will not easily detach itself from the skink's body, the animal is more vulnerable to predators.

Lastly, how do skinks, and more generally lizards, survive during the winter? The challenge of winter survival for most animals is considerable. We observe birds and butterflies migrating south and mammals stockpiling food. They are significantly adapted to navigating falling temperatures and harsh weather. But what do animals do that cannot move long distances to warmer climes? This is especially true for reptiles, which are ectothermic and lack a thick fur coat or downy feathers to insulate their bodies. As an ectotherm, their body temperature is based on the environment.



Photo adult male skink courtesy UGA

Lizards are at significant risk when the temperature falls below freezing. Contrary to popular belief, lizards do not hibernate during the cold winter months. Instead, they are adapted to conserve energy through a process called brumation, a slowing of their metabolism and physical activity to conserve energy. Unlike hibernating animals who need to eat to have enough fat storage to last them through the winter, brumating animals stop eating before entering inactivity as their metabolic rate drops so low that they are unable to fully digest their meal until outside temperatures increase.

Lizards seek shelter by burrowing down in the soil, leaf litter, decaying logs, or other material to escape the frigid temperatures. On warmer days, they may venture out to bask in the sunshine. Furthermore, unlike mammals, lizards must periodically awaken to drink water during their dormancy to avoid dehydration.

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Knock Out® Roses: Rose Rosette Disease

By Ronald Fister, Cherokee County Master Gardener

Several years ago, Knock Out® roses (*Rosa* hybrids) became popular for our landscapes because the average gardener did not want to battle the diseases, insects or water issues that can be seen with traditional roses. As Knock Out roses gained in popularity, disease issues finally plagued these roses as well, primarily Rose Rosette Disease (RRD). RRD has attacked Knock Out roses and non-native, invasive multiflora roses (*Rosa multiflora*) within our landscapes, especially when these roses occur in large groupings.



Photo courtesy <https://www.knockoutroses.com/inspiration>

By understanding the disease and how it is spread, Knock Out roses can continue to serve a role as an accent plant on the corner of the yard, at the foundation of the home or as an accent plant in annual flower beds. I have even enjoyed mixing them with loropetalums in a 2:1 ratio with Knock Out roses as two-thirds of the planting. This will allow the natural environment to work against mite infestations that causes RRD. The colors of the roses and loropetalums are amazing when blended. Before we get caught up with planting them in landscapes, it is important that we understand the disease and how to manage it if we want to incorporate these roses into our gardens.



Photo by Mary Ann Hansen, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Bugwood.org

Rose Rosette Disease is caused by a plant virus, known as Rose Rosette Virus (RRV). The virus does not spread within the fluids of the plant, but it is spread by eriophyid mites (*Phyllocoptes fructiphilus*) feeding on the plant. These mites are microscopic and generally hide within the buds, open flowers or at the base of the shoots and leaf axils. As the result, the disease is first noticed at the top of the plant or on newly emerged growth. As mites move from an infected plant to a healthy one, they transfer the virus to the new plant. Once the plant is infected, it generally takes two to four weeks before the plant shows symptoms of RRD.

Once the symptoms develop, the disease moves rapidly throughout the upper part of the initial infection site, and the plant begins to display deformed branching, excessive needles or prickles, leaf distortion and elongated new shoot



Photo stem with overabundance of pliable thorns Millie Davenport, ©2013 HGIC, Clemson Extension

growth. The mites will crawl over the top portion of the plant and are also carried to new locations through wind currents or breezes. Therefore, be careful not to carry the mites on your gloves, tools and clothing as you are walking through the landscape. The mites survive the winter by living within the spent flowers and leaf axils. Though the mites are inactive in the winter months, the symptoms will appear immediately as the plant begins to grow in the spring.

Utilizing some of the following steps will control the disease within our surroundings.

1. Immediately remove the plant(s) that are infected with the disease.
2. Spray roses in the winter and early spring with a dormant oil to control the eggs, two stages of nymphs and the adults.
3. Plant in settings with plants that are not affected by the mites. Large beds of the roses will be more subject to the disease.
4. Deadhead the rose throughout the season, and dispose of spent blooms or branches in a plastic bag to remove them from the landscape.
5. Educate your neighborhood about the disease, and do not allow excessive planting of Knock Out roses in common areas.
6. Miticides can be used in the spring and summer months with products containing abamectin as the active ingredient, or with Floramite or Forbid®.
7. To avoid movement of the mite, plant to give adequate spacing to avoid contact with other roses or movement through light breezes.

continued on page 6

An Early Spring Charmer

By Carolyn Puckett, Cherokee County Master Gardener

I confess to being a plant geek, itching to grow every plant I read about. But my favorite plants, the ones that bring joy to my heart, are the delicate ephemeral native plants that shyly poke their small flowers up through the woods' leaf litter in early spring. And of these sweet plants, the perennial Virginia (or eastern) spring beauty (*Claytonia virginica*) is one of the earliest and prettiest.

Other common names for the spring beauty are fairy spuds, good morning spring, grass-flower, mayflower, or wild potato. The Virginia spring beauty grows in rich moist forests and bottomlands throughout Georgia, except in the Blue Ridge, where the Carolina spring beauty (*C. caroliniana*) grows instead.

The Virginia spring beauty grows 3 to 12 inches tall. There is usually only a single pair of stem leaves, with the stalk merging into the blade without a clear demarcation. Its leaves are only about 1/4 inch wide and 3 to 8 inches long, looking somewhat grass-like. Sometimes there are also basal leaves. In contrast, the Carolina spring beauty bears wider leaves that are not grass-like and have a distinct stalk (or petiole). In fact, you may see *Claytonia virginica* referred to as narrow-leaved spring beauty and *C. caroliniana* as wide-leaved spring beauty.

The showy flowers of *Claytonia virginica* are 1/2 to 1 inch in diameter, with five oval petals of white or pale pink striped with deeper pink veins. The pink stripes are reminiscent of peppermint candy striping and serve as nectar lines for pollinators. Each plant bears four to 13 flowers in a loose raceme. The flower buds form in the fall under fallen leaves. Blooming as early as February to March, Virginia spring beauties sometimes grow in such a large mass that they look like patches of unmelted snow. The flowers close at night and on cloudy or stormy days, when pollinating insects are not flying.

Spring beauty's nectar production is quite generous. One source states that as many as 71 different species of insect pollinators have been recorded as visitors. The spring beauty bee (*Andrena erigeniae*) feeds its larvae only on spring beauty's pink pollen. For more information about this small mining bee, see <http://bugoftheweek.com/blog/2015/5/4/spring-beauties-mining-bees-iandrena-erigeniae/>.

Spring beauties grow from corms that resemble small potatoes and have a sweet, chestnut-like taste. Deer, elk and sheep like to eat the flowers, and squirrels, chipmunks and mice eat the corms. Native American and early settlers used the corms in soups, stews and salads. Of course, you should not dig native plants from the wild.

Once it has set seed in late spring, spring beauty goes dormant, disappearing until late winter or early spring the next year, when it once more peeks out from the woodland leaf litter.

Homeowners can grow spring beauty as a naturalizing plant in moist dappled shade. In fall, plant corms 3 inches deep and space them 3 inches apart. Because it is dormant during plant sale seasons, you will probably have to buy it from a nursery that specializes in native plants. Spring beauty is hardy in USDA Hardiness Zones 3 through 8, growing from Georgia to Nova Scotia. It has no serious insect or disease problems.

For more information about the spring beauty:

<https://mgmv.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Claytonia-virginica-2020.pdf>

<https://vnps.org/princewilliamwildflowersociety/botanizing-with-marion/spring-beauty-claytonia-virginica/>

* Please note the Cherokee County Master Gardeners plan to have some spring beauty bulbs available for purchase in the September plant sale



Photo *Claytonia virginica* courtesy Ellen Honeycutt



Photo *Claytonia caroliniana* courtesy Ellen Honeycutt



Walk this Way: Enhancing the Garden with Paths

Part One – Layout and Functionality

By Mary Tucker, Cherokee County Master Gardener

Garden paths serve many functions and can be strictly utilitarian to decidedly decorative. The construction of many walkways and paths is easily accomplished by the average gardener, and the simple addition of a path can greatly enhance both your garden's accessibility and its appeal.

Paths beckon us into the garden, inviting us to explore the landscape. We may be visually led to a strong focal point, such as a fountain or sculpture at the end of a straight vista, or we may be more subtly enticed by a curving pathway whose destination is out of view and therefore somewhat mysterious and intriguing.

A garden path can also serve as a temporal design element by establishing a pace for the garden visit. A faster speed is encouraged by straight or wide paths, especially if composed of smooth, even material that provides a sure footing. On the other hand, meandering, narrow paths slow our footsteps, as do widely spaced steppingstones or uneven surfaces, such as cobblestone or rough fieldstone.

The placement of a path can encourage us to appreciate a particular aspect of the garden, such as an ornamental pond adjacent to the path or an ancient oak that towers overhead. Perhaps just as important, a path's route can lead your garden visitors away from an undesirable view, for instance a compost pile or messy work area.

Paths also serve as protectors of the garden, keeping wandering feet off the plants. Minor paths, for use by the gardener alone, can provide access into garden beds for maintenance while preventing the compaction of soil. These paths may consist of just a few strategically placed steppingstones or a narrow strip of wood chips.

The need for paths evolves right along with the garden. For instance, when a gazebo is built, a route leading to it is

often necessary. As flower beds are added, paths may be needed to link them together. Perhaps there are areas in your yard that are underutilized, for instance a woodland area where you could plant shade-loving perennials if only a path made for easier access.

Once the need for a path is established, it's time to think about layout, design, and style, all of which are interrelated. Carefully consider what will complement your property best, keeping in mind the character of the landscape and existing garden.

A heavily wooded, natural site will look most appropriate with paths of an informal nature, ones that meander through the site in gentle curves. On the other hand, symmetrical or geometrically shaped garden beds lend a formal air to landscape design, and such a garden is well suited to paths with crisp, clean lines.

Extensive paths or formal walkways are often best planned and drawn out on a scaled plot of the property. However, for smaller projects, you may find it just as effective to simply lay out the path right in your garden. As you plan the path, keep in mind how it will be seen from within the house or from other parts of the yard.

For straight paths, use stakes and string and take careful measurements; for curved paths, use a garden hose as a flexible guide and mark the path with landscape marking paint or powdered lime.

Once you have the layout determined, walk the route several times to evaluate it. Does the path allow for a smooth and natural progression through the landscape? Are there areas that should be widened to allow placement of a bench to appreciate an exceptional view? Do changes in grade need attention?



Sculptural focal point



Stepping stones



Path to unseen destination



Loose stone around ornamental pond



Informal pine straw path

Lizards in Winter.....continued from page 2

If you find a lizard that appears sluggish and cold, ask yourself these questions before interfering: Was I responsible for the lizard's exposure? Was the lizard unearthed from a buried hiding spot? Was its hiding place dismantled or destroyed? Is the animal in impending danger from humans or other animals? If your answer is "no" to those questions, merely leave the animal alone. These are wild animals and rarely require our help.

Lastly, if you want to share your backyard with skinks, consider that a rock and brush pile placed in an appropriate location can provide a habitat for safety, food, and shelter. Do not remove decaying logs or fallen leaves, as they offer suitable nest and winter brumation sites. So, the next time you are enjoying your heated abode during a frosty winter day, consider the enormous hurdles your reptile neighbors face while they are brumating until spring's warmer temperatures arrive.

Knock Out® Roses: Rose Rosette Disease continued from page 3

In summary, this disease was reported in multiflora roses as early as the 1950s. This disease then moved to the cultivated Knock Out rose. Knock Outs were prized for their color, growth habits and disease free characteristics, or so we thought. If you are careful, there is no need to stop planting them. You can continue to enjoy their beautiful red, pink and yellow flowers that enhance other plants when coordinated with other colors for eye appeal. Do not hesitate to remove completely the infected plant, since it will not recover to a healthy plant. Hot weather is an ideal time to regularly inspect for the disease. Mites spread rapidly as temperatures exceed 85°F.

You can find more information about Rose Rosette Virus at many Extension websites, and UGA's publication 1176 has more information about the Rose Rosette Virus and its transmission via mites: https://secure.caes.uga.edu/extension/publications/files/pdf/C%201176_2.PDF

Walk this Way: Enhancing the Garden with Pathscontinued from page 5

A width of 4 feet will accommodate two people walking side by side. A 2-foot width may be sufficient for a single person, provided plants are not overhanging the path or encroaching on the space too much. If steppingstones are used, they should be spaced 18 inches to 2 feet apart from center to center, and they should be large enough to easily accommodate an adult's foot.

Casual or formal, curved or straight, utilitarian or decorative, a well-designed walkway is sure to be a path to garden enhancement. In the next issue, we'll look at material selection, another important consideration for your garden paths.



CHEROKEE COUNTY
MASTER GARDENERS

Virtual Seminars

Last Friday of each month 12:00-1:30

January 29th Seed Starting
February 26th Pruning Ornamental Shrubs
March 26th Secrets to Successful Summer Veggies
April 30th Cutting Gardens
May 28th Container Gardening
June 25th Pollinator Gardens

Join the Cherokee County
Master Gardeners in
a Virtual Seminar
on the last Friday of each
month.

From 12:00noon until
1:30pm

Registration is provided by
clicking on the
registration link listed here.

https://ugeorgia.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9NOr2GKycbwqHj



The Great Backyard Bird Count: February 12-15, 2021

By Mary Tucker, Cherokee County Master Gardener

You have probably heard that bird populations have plummeted in the last few decades. It is estimated that North America has 3 billion fewer birds than it had in 1970, a shocking statistic that translates into a loss of more than 25 percent of the bird population. These losses are due to several factors, such as pesticide use and the loss or degradation of habitat. The study that determined this was a collaborative effort between several conservation organizations that analyzed data collected over the decades. Much of that data came from ordinary bird watchers like you and me acting as "citizen scientists" by reporting their bird observations.

From **February 12 to 15**, you will have the opportunity to take part in a world-wide bird count that will help scientists further evaluate the abundance and distribution of birds and to help track changes and trends that occur over the years. This annual event is called the Great Backyard Bird Count, and it was launched in 1998 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society. The four-day count now involves more than 200,000 people of all ages around the world.

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.

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.

There are other similar events that occur throughout the year, including the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Project FeederWatch and NestWatch and the Audubon Christmas Bird Count. Any time of year, you can report bird sightings via eBird, an online database of bird observations that is a joint project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society. The Cornell Lab also has many resources for educators of school-age children from kindergarten through high school. All of these activities and resources give average folks like you and me an opportunity to be citizen scientists and do our part for bird research and conservation.

Websites:

Great Backyard Bird Count: <https://gbbc.birdcount.org>
Cornell Lab of Ornithology: <https://www.birds.cornell.edu>
National Audubon Society: <https://www.audubon.org>
eBird: <https://ebird.org>



Photo red-bellied woodpecker
courtesy Jennifer Ruscilli



Photo Carolina chickadee and house finch
courtesy Jennifer Ruscilli



Dark-eyed Junco. Photo: Deborah Bifulco/Great Backyard Bird Count

<https://www.birdcount.org/social-media/>

FEBRUARY GARDENING TIPS



ORNAMENTALS

- Prune hybrid tea roses and Knock Out 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
- 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. <https://extension.uga.edu/publications/detail.html?number=B961>
- 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. <https://extension.uga.edu/publications/detail.html?number=C943>
- 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. After each cut, disinfect pruners with rubbing alcohol, or nine parts water to one part bleach. Take care because both mixtures can cause damage to grass or other plants. <https://extension.uga.edu/publications/detail.html?number=C1027-10>
- 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_3.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 of 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 one part liquid bleach and nine parts water. Rinse thoroughly to remove all bleach residue. This will have your containers ready to plant with spring annuals.



Photo bluebird houses in the demo garden courtesy Jennifer Ruscilli

	RAINFALL COMPARISONS					
	Cherokee County			State Wide		
	Nov 20	Dec 20	YTD 2020	Nov 20	Dec 20	YTD 2020
Actual	2.9	3.8	78.5	4.2	2.7	65.3
Normal	4.3	4.7	54.7	3.8	4.0	47.5
Deviation	-1.4	-0.9	23.8	0.4	-1.3	17.8



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
- 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. <https://extension.uga.edu/publications/detail.html?number=C944>
- 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.
- Using sharp pruners to create a clean cut, clip any tattered foliage off 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: <https://extension.uga.edu/publications/detail.html?number=C955>

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. https://secure.caes.uga.edu/extension/publications/files/pdf/C%201018_2.PDF
- 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.
- Plant seeds of 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_5.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. <https://extension.uga.edu/publications/detail.html?number=C976>
- The purple martin (*Progne subis*) isn't a year-round bird in Georgia, but arrives in southern Georgia in early February, reaches northern Georgia by mid-February, and then leaves during the fall. With increasing interest in our environment and nonchemical pest control, the martin is regaining popularity. <https://extension.uga.edu/publications/detail.html?number=C977>
- Put out hummingbird feeders in mid-March.
- 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_5.PDF



Photo courtesy <https://extension.uga.edu/story.html?storyid=7869>



Photo hummingbird feeders courtesy John Ruscilli



The Spirit of Giving

Every December, the Cherokee County Master Gardeners participate in their "Adopt A Senior" project. Their project goal is to collect a donation for giftbags which are filled with much needed items for Seniors in the Senior Center on Univeter Road in Canton. This past December the master gardeners were able to collect enough monies to give eleven gift bags, more than the previous year. This photo is the presentation of the gift bags to the Senior Center staff.



Recipes *courtesy Pat Bowen*

Winter is warm-up time in the kitchen, so here are a couple of my favorite one-bowl meals that will get you through the coldest days.

Chili and Beans

My mom wasn't the best cook, but she sure could make a mean pot of chili. I've been making her chili recipe for longer than I want to tell, and hope you enjoy it as much as I do.

Basic Ingredients:

3 cans kidney beans (or substitute a can of one other type, such as garbanzo, black, white)
1 8-oz can tomato sauce
1 large can crushed tomatoes
1 lb ground beef
1 chopped onion
1 chopped green pepper, or mix of green and red
2-3 tbsp chili powder and cumin (add gradually, to your taste)
Optional toppings below

Brown meat and drain excess fat. Add onion and pepper to the browned meat, and sauté, stirring until vegetables are slightly soft. Add other ingredients, bring to a low boil, and simmer one hour. Stir occasionally, and as you do, taste to adjust seasoning.

You can top each serving with cheese, sour cream, crackers, and/or chopped raw onion (green, white, sweet).

You can also experiment with this recipe, as I have, by adding garlic, pork sausage, Worcestershire sauce, BBQ sauce, jalapenos, any and all to your taste, as it simmers.

Pantry Ramen

A reliable comfort food, this recipe adds a unique slant to an old shelf staple.



Photo pantry ramen
courtesy Pat Bowen

Ingredients:

1 cup water
¾ cup coconut milk
1 3-oz package ramen noodles (your choice of flavor)
¼ cup frozen green beans, thawed (or other vegetables you have on hand)
1 tbsp peanut butter
½ tsp curry powder
sliced American cheese (or jack, swiss, provolone)

Bring the water to a boil. Add the coconut milk, noodles and flavor packet, green beans, and peanut butter, and resume boiling. Simmer for three minutes, stirring now and then.

Remove the pot from the heat. Stir in curry powder until dissolved. Transfer the ramen and broth to bowls, and place a slice of cheese atop each serving.

<http://extension.uga.edu/county-offices/chokeee.html>
<https://m.facebook.com/chokeeeastergardeners/>

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**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.

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