

Gardening With The Masters

Growing, Gardening and Gaining Knowledge

April/May 2024

Trillium erectum flower Rolf Engstrand CC BY-SA 3.0

Garden TRIVIA Time

Carnivorous plants, which capture insects, are fascinating species, and they are relatively easy for the gardener to grow if you give them the right conditions. Do you know why they need these insects in their diet?

To find out, look in the April/May 2018 issue of the Cherokee County Master Gardener newsletter, *Gardening with the Masters*. Archived issues can be found on the CCMG website, <https://cherokeemastergardeners.com>.

IN THIS ISSUE

Editor's Corner/Trivia	Page 1
Georgia Pollinator Plants of the Year	Page 2
Worm Composting: Save Those Scraps!	Page 3
The Brilliance of Bromeliads	Page 4
The Allure of Wisteria	Page 5
Continued Articles and Plant Sale Information	Page 6
Master Gardener Statistics and Did You Know?	Page 7
April Gardening Tips	Page 8
May Gardening Tips/Rainfall	Page 9
Recipes/Links	Page 10

Editor's Corner

By Marcia Winchester,
Cherokee County Master Gardener



sedum, artwork Jennifer Ruscilli

I don't think there is a "no care" plant; however, the group of plants called sedum comes close. *Sedum* is the name of the genus and is frequently also used as a common name. You may also hear the common name stonecrop. Sedums are in the Crassulaceae family.

Most sedums need good drainage, a lot of sun, and adequate water. They tend to have shallow roots, thus they do well in containers, even shallow ones. I fertilize lightly in the spring.

While sedums do flower, I pick mine for the unique colors and textures of the foliage.

Sedums have a wide range of leaf shapes, from flat round leaves to some having narrow leaves like a bottlebrush. Some even have a rosette at the tip. Colors range from yellow to blue-green to deep maroon—not to forget chartreuse or even variegated. I've also found the amount of sun can intensify the color.

Not all sedums grow with the same vigor, so if you are combining several in a container keep this in mind. An aggressive sedum will choke out a slower growing, less aggressive cultivar. I put each in their own container and then place the containers beside each other.



sedum, artwork Jennifer Ruscilli

Sedums are extremely easy to propagate. You can easily divide a clump to plant into several containers. Or you can cut off pieces hanging down over the edges of a container, place them in a new pot, cover the stems partially with some soil, and wait for it to root. I've even taken pieces that have broken off and rooted them.

Sedums are available at many nurseries, or drop by the Cherokee County Master Gardener Plant Sale on Saturday, May 4, and let a Master Gardener help you with your selection. The plant sale will be held from 9:00 to noon at the Cherokee Senior Center at 1001 Univeter Drive in Canton.

Marcia

Pollinator Plants of the Year for 2024

By Mary Tucker, Cherokee County Master Gardener

Each year, the State Botanical Garden at the University of Georgia honors four “pollinator plants of the year.” This program, which began in 2020, aims to help both pollinators and gardeners by encouraging the use of these desirable plants in private and commercial gardens. Nominations are solicited from Georgia gardeners, and then a selection committee determines which plants will earn the honors each year. Factors that are taken into consideration are the plant’s horticultural value, ease of propagation, and ecological significance.

Stated goals of the program are to “create a network of horticultural professionals through which plant materials and propagation techniques can be shared; to increase statewide availability and diversity of pollinator-supporting plants for consumers; and to educate consumers about the increasingly important impact that landscaping and home gardens can have on pollinator populations.”

Plants are chosen in the following categories: spring bloomer, summer bloomer, fall bloomer, and Georgia native. Seasonal selections may or may not be native, though happily this year’s selections are all native plants.

Below are the plants that won the honor for 2024.



Spring Bloomer

Robin’s fleabane (*Erigeron pulchellus* ‘Lynnhaven Carpet’)

This winner is a selection of a native perennial that is found throughout eastern and central North America. It is a member of the Asteraceae family as evidenced by the small daisy-like flowers, which are borne on 6- to 12-inch stalks that emerge in spring from an evergreen basal rosette of obovate, hairy foliage. Each bloom is about 1 inch in diameter with a yellow center and rays that are white to light purple. The plants spread via rhizomes and seeds and can form an evergreen ground cover, especially if growing conditions are optimal. Robin’s fleabane will be happy in full

to part sun. It is drought tolerant and low maintenance and does not want an overly rich soil. It will attract spring bees and butterflies, and songbirds will eat the ripe seed heads.



Summer Bloomer

Spotted horsemint (*Monarda punctata*)

This native member of the mint family (Lamiaceae) is widely distributed east of the Rocky Mountains. The inflorescence is rather complex, with multiple whorls of creamy yellow, tubular, two-lipped flowers that are spotted with purple. Light pink to violet bracts are borne beneath the flower heads. When in bloom, the plant will rise to 3 feet tall, and it will gently spread to form a clump. It performs as a perennial or biennial. Though the plant may be short-lived, it will readily reseed if conditions are favorable. Spotted horsemint is drought tolerant and prefers ample sun and a well-drained soil. The foliage has an herbal fragrance and is resistant to browsing

by deer and rabbits. This plant is valuable for various pollinators, including bees, butterflies, wasps, moths, and hummingbirds. In addition, it is a host plant for several species of moth.



Fall Bloomer

White wood aster (*Eurybia divaricata*)

This perennial member of the aster family (Asteraceae) is widely distributed throughout eastern North America, where it is often found in dry, open woodlands. It typically grows to about 3 feet tall with a similar spread. It bears distinctive heart-shaped, coarsely toothed leaves. An abundance of small white flowers is borne in late summer through fall. After pollination, the center of the bloom turns from yellow to burgundy, enriching the display in the garden. It will perform in part sun to shade and in various soil types.

Worm Composting: Save Those Scraps!

By Judy Lester, Cherokee County Master Gardener

Are you regularly throwing away kitchen scraps? Perhaps you, like me, have a twinge of guilt knowing those scraps will likely end up in the landfill. You may have tried various types of composting only to give up when the results were disappointing. There is an alternative, a simple method of composting called vermicomposting or worm composting. Worm composting uses worms to transform those food scraps into a wonderful soil amendment for your garden.

Worm composting requires a worm bin, worms, bedding, and food scraps. Worm bins are easy to make using either plastic storage bins with lids or wood. Both types must have drainage holes. Plastic bins work best indoors because their temperature can be hard to regulate outdoors. Wooden bins should be 1 foot deep by 2 feet wide by 3 feet long. Drainage holes should be drilled in the bottom. Wooden bins breathe and have less moisture problems, but they are heavier than plastic bins. Avoid pressure treated wood.

Worms thrive when temperatures are between 59 and 77° F. Possible bin locations are garages or basements, but some types of bins can be kept inside the house in a closet or a utility room. Outside bins are ideally placed in a shady, cool spot where the bin is protected from fire ants and excessive rain. Inside bins should have a tray underneath them to protect the flooring. Bin lids should fit snugly so insects cannot get in it. The inside of the bin should be dark.



Worm bin contents courtesy CANVA



Worms courtesy CANVA

Worms such as red wigglers (*Eisenia fetida*) feed on leaves, barn litter, and garden waste. They are ideal candidates for worm composting because the worm bin used for composting resembles their native habitat. These worms reproduce quickly in a favorable environment. Red wigglers are easy to purchase online and in bait shops.

Bedding is needed for the worm bin. Use an 8-inch layer of moist shredded newspaper, office paper, peat moss, or other source of carbon in the bottom of the bin. The bedding should feel like a damp sponge. Now you can add your worms. Wait a few days for the worms to adjust to their surroundings before feeding them.

Add your food scraps to the top of the bedding, or create a pocket in the bedding and put the food there. Start with small amounts of food to determine how long it takes the food to disappear. One pound of worms can eat about a half pound of food scraps per day. A second bin will be needed for a large family's scraps. Fruit and vegetable scraps, eggshells, plain cereal, pasta, and coffee grounds are recommended worm foods. Avoid meat, oils, dairy, large amounts of citrus or onions, and pet feces. Worm composting will not kill seeds, so remove as many seeds as you can before adding scraps to the bin. When you notice the amount of scraps is quickly disappearing, you may gradually increase the amount of scraps you feed the worms.

Maintaining your worm bin is easy, but there are some common problems beginners may experience. If your bin has a sour odor, check to see if it is too wet. The bedding should be damp, neither too wet nor too dry. If it's too wet, scatter dry bedding over the existing bedding. Don't overfeed your worms, and be careful to feed high-moisture foods like melons in moderation. If the bin seems too dry, feel the bedding on the bottom of the bin. If it is moist, your bin is fine. If all the bedding is dry, however, use a spray bottle of water to mist the bedding. A 2-inch layer of bedding should be added as the old bedding is consumed.

It usually takes three to six months to produce enough worm compost to harvest. Two easy ways to harvest compost are the dump-and-sort method and the move-and-scoop method. To use the dump-and-sort method, spread a tarp in the sun. Make small piles of the contents of the bin on the tarp. Wait about fifteen minutes. The worms will move to the center of the piles, and you can scoop off the tops of the piles to get the compost. The move-and-scoop method involves moving the top third of the bin where the worms and the food scraps are to another container. Scoop out the compost from the bottom of the original container and save it for your garden. Add fresh bedding to the original container and move the worms and food scraps back.

It's best to let the compost dry, then sift it through a fine screen. It can be added to garden soil, mixed with potting soil, or steeped in water overnight to create a liquid fertilizer known as worm tea.

Composting can be simple. Try worm composting! Happy gardening!

[Click on the key words for additional resource links](#)
[Composting factsheet](#), [Lessons Learned in Composting](#)

The Brilliance of Bromeliads

By Ashley Frasca, Cherokee County Master Gardener

Winter doldrums have us thinking ahead to the warmth and color of summer. Bromeliads are a family of fun, tropical plants that can provide summer vibes all year long! Whether as houseplants, or outside (when temperatures are well above freezing), they demand bright light, but not direct sun.

They grow best in a light, well-draining soil mix. These soil-less mixes will likely contain peat moss, bark, and/or perlite. For the more adventurous bromeliad grower, they can even be grown on wooden planks.



Bromeliad bloom courtesy CANVA



Hans Rueffert courtesy Ashley Frasca

Hans Rueffert, a bromeliad enthusiast, is familiar to gardeners in Cherokee County. He presented at a Master Gardener meeting last summer, and his table at the annual Ball Ground Garden Club plant sale and festival always draws a crowd! At a young age, Hans recalls marveling at art his father made with bromeliads growing on driftwood. He says whether mounted to driftwood or to old barnwood planks, “bromeliads grown this way often exhibit their best shape, color, form, and resilience.” When displayed as houseplants, they may not get the humid conditions they need, so Hans reminds us, “A thorough, fine misting with a household spray bottle every few days will help simulate their preferred conditions.”

Strategy and care need to be taken though when attempting to grow a bromeliad on any wooden surface. Hans offers, “If using driftwood, soak the wood in fresh water for a week or more to make sure any absorbed salts or minerals leach out. This is particularly important if you’re using ocean driftwood, as the salt in the wood can pull moisture out of the plant. If using boards or planks, be sure to avoid pressure-treated or painted wood.”

Bromeliads are a prized plant all over the world, beloved for their long-lasting flower displays and brilliantly colored foliage. The spiral arrangement of leaves, sometimes called a “rosette,” creates a vase in the center of the plant that holds and absorbs water. Trichomes are tiny scales on their leaves which serve as a very efficient absorption system that can keep the leaves from transpiring (loss of water vapor) and shield the plants from solar radiation. These adaptations have enabled the epiphytic varieties not to have to depend on a traditional root system for nutrients and moisture.



Potted bromeliads are referred to as “terrestrial,” while “epiphytic” types can be found growing in trees or on shrubs. Called “air plants,” they get both nutrients and moisture from the air. Thankfully, they are not robbing their host of either in this scenario.

Since they are often slow growing, most bromeliads don’t require a lot of fertilizer, though fertilizer can help promote the blooming process. Bromeliads with overlapping leaves, such as a pineapple, prefer to be watered overhead so that water rests at the base of the cup-shaped leaves. Soil can be kept moist, but not wet.

Many types will slowly die after flowering. But if the plant is healthy, pups appear around its base. These are just offshoots from the original plant and can be propagated as new plants. Digging these out is best done in spring and summer. Include as much root of the pup as possible when transplanting to a new pot, and enjoy!

Epiphytic bromeliad courtesy Hans Rueffert

The Allure of Wisteria

By Megan Hilf, Cherokee County Master Gardener

When you say the word “wisteria,” most folks think of the quintessential picture of a white pergola with beautiful light purple flower clusters hanging down and filling the air with a sweet fragrance. Others may think of the springtime drives along back roads with these same flowers climbing to the sky among the trees, making a beautiful purple tapestry. Wisteria is certainly a stunning and lovely vine, but it can also be called invasive, damaging, and a killer of sorts.

Wisteria is a deciduous, perennial, fast growing woody vine belonging to the family Fabaceae, or pea family. Botanist Thomas Nuttall named the genus *Wisteria* after a famous American physician and anatomist, Dr. Caspar Wistar. Why it is not *Wistaria* remains a mystery.

Wisteria species are native mostly to China, Japan, Korea, and the eastern United States, but they have been introduced to many other areas. The vine can live up to 100 years. There are three major species: American (*Wisteria frutescens*), Chinese (*W. sinensis*), and Japanese (*W. floribunda*). There are also numerous cultivars.

The flowers are borne in racemes of varying length depending on the species. The flowers can be lilac, purple, blue, pink, or a rare white in color. The leaves are pinnate and alternate with 8- to 9-inch leaves. Leaflets average from 9 to 19 in number, again depending on species.

Pods form after the flowers and contain one to four seeds. Both the pods and the seeds are very toxic to humans and animals. Wisteria can spread from seed, underground roots and shoots, and the movement of seeds via water ways. The vines can grow up to 10 feet in a season. They are nitrogen fixing plants, which means they can improve soil quality. Due to their vigor, most wisterias will not grow well in pots. With intense maintenance, a wisteria vine can be groomed to be a tree.



Wisteris frutescens courtesy ncsu.edu



Wisteria sinensis counterclockwise vines courtesy Chris Evans, University of Illinois, Bugwood.org

Chinese wisteria was first introduced to the Americas in 1816, and Japanese wisteria was introduced in 1830. Both were introduced for horticultural purposes. They soon escaped into the surrounding areas and are now considered invasive in 19 states from Massachusetts to Florida and west to Illinois. They can reach heights of 70 to 80 feet, creating a gnarly mass of vines.

The Chinese and Japanese wisterias can be differentiated from each other in several ways. The seed pods of the Chinese are fuzzy whereas the Japanese pods are smooth. The vines of the Chinese turn counterclockwise versus the clockwise turn of the Japanese. The bark of the Chinese is brown-gray in color with fine hairs, and the Japanese bark is smooth and brown.

Sadly, as beautiful and stunning as they are, the Chinese and Japanese wisterias are known for destroying native trees and shrubs. The vines girdle the trees, killing them. The large mass of vines creates canopies of dense shade, killing many native plants and decimating native ecosystems.



Wisteria floribunda clockwise vines courtesy Scott Zona ncsu.edu

But do not despair. If you love the look of these plants and have a strong support for one to grow on, you can always plant the American native, *Wisteria frutescens*. In its natural habitats, it is found in wetlands of the southeastern United States (USDA Hardiness Zones 5 to 9). It is non-invasive, but it does require routine pruning and watering. Pruning should occur after blooming, as flowers only grow on new growth. The vines twist counterclockwise like the Chinese species, but they are not as thick and have smooth bark. Its pinecone-shaped summer blooms are smaller than those of the non-native species and are a bit less aromatic, but they often repeat blooming into the fall.

Continued on page 6

Pollinator Plants of the Year for 2024.....continued from page 2

It is relatively resistant to browsing by deer. The blooms attract pollinators such as bees and butterflies, and it serves as a larval host for the pearl crescent butterfly. As an added bonus, the mature seeds are eaten by birds and small mammals.



Georgia Native

American witchhazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*)

This member of the witchhazel family (Hamamelidaceae) grows as a deciduous shrub or small tree and typically reaches 15 to 35 feet in height. It is found throughout eastern North America where it often inhabits woodlands, forest edges, and stream banks. It prefers sun to part shade and a rich, moist, well-drained soil. The leaves are obovate to ovate with wavy margins, and they turn lovely shades of yellow in the fall. After the leaves drop (and sometimes a bit before) the tree sports

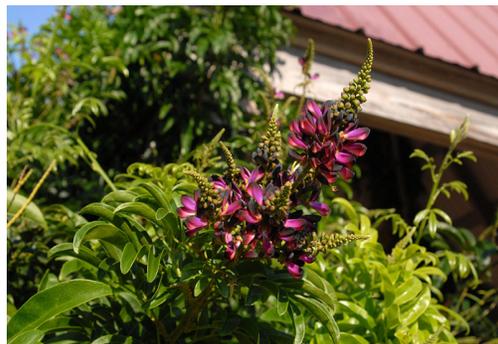
fragrant, bright yellow blooms that consist of strap-like petals. The timing of the bloom in late fall to winter is a boon for insects since little else is flowering. The flowers are especially attractive to noctuid moths, small flies, and other beneficial insects. The fruit and seeds are eaten by a variety of birds and small mammals.

Photo credit: Photos courtesy State Botanical Garden at University of Georgia.

For more information visit: <https://botgarden.uga.edu/2024-pollinator-plants/>

The Allure of Wisteria.....continued from page 5

American wisteria is more cold tolerant than the non-native species. It also has smaller, smooth pods and only reaches heights of 15 to 25 feet. The vines are not as woody and strong as the non-native species and are easily trained to trellis or fences. American wisteria is the larval host to the silver spotted skipper and the longtail skipper butterflies. The blossoms attract many other butterflies and bees. It is deer resistant, likes acidic soil, and can grow in full sun or part shade.



Evergreen wisteria *Millettia reticulata* also known as *Callerya reticulata* courtesy Jim Robbins ncsu.edu

Another option is the Asian plant known as “evergreen summer wisteria.” You may see it referred to by the botanical names of *Millettia taiwanensis*, *M. reticulata*, or *Callerya reticulata*. Despite its common name, it is not a wisteria nor is it evergreen in Zone 7, but it does belong to the Fabaceae family. Summer wisteria is non-invasive and grows in Zone 7 (root hardy) through Zone 10. Cold hardiness is 0 to 10 °F, so it is recommended to plant in a southeastern location to avoid extreme cold and wind. It prefers full to part sun and will do well in containers. It is a wonderful vine for arbors, pergolas, or chain link fences. The fragrant, purple-red flowers are borne in late summer to early fall. It can reach heights of 12 to 15 feet with a spread up to 12 feet. The leaves are glossy green and leathery in texture and imparipinnate (single leaflet at the terminal end). This plant is great for many pollinators. In 2016 the summer wisteria won the “Best of the Best” award at the UGA trial gardens.

So, the next time you are mesmerized by the beauty of wisteria, consider planting the native American wisteria or the plant known as summer wisteria, and you will not be disappointed.

Cherokee County Master Gardeners, 2024 Spring Plant Sale



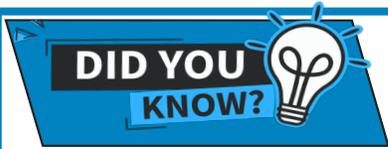
Saturday, May 4, 2024, 9:00am until 12:00Noon

Cherokee County Senior Center, 1001 Univeter Road, Canton, Ga 30115

Sun & shade perennials, pollinator plants, daylilies, hostas, vegetables, herbs

Each plant sale always features nice varieties of plants, shrubs, trees, specialty plants, garden accessories, garden art, plus expert advice. Master Gardeners are on hand for plant growing advice and to answer questions.

For more information about the Master Gardeners, their events and activities, follow us on Facebook and visit our website. Links on page 10.



By Mary Tucker, Master Gardener

The ambrosia beetle can be a serious pest of trees and shrubs, and plants are most commonly affected in late winter to spring when the adult beetles emerge from overwintering and bore into susceptible trees. They do not eat the wood, but they gnaw into it to create tunnels in which to lay eggs that will hatch into larvae.



Ambrosia beetle (*Xylosandrus crassiusculus*)
J.R. Baker & S.B. Bambara, North Carolina State University, Bugwood.org

During this process, the heartwood of the trees is damaged, and this may cause the death of the tree. Be on the lookout for the diagnostic signs of infestation: a toothpick-like protrusion of sawdust at the entrance to the bored hole; a buildup of sawdust at the base of the tree; sap leaking out of the tree; stained bark; delayed leaf emergence in spring; wilting leaves.

For more information on ambrosia beetles, see the article by Ashley Frasca in the June/July 2023 issue of the Cherokee County Master Gardener newsletter. Archived newsletters can be viewed at the CCMG website, <https://cherokeemastergardeners.com/>.

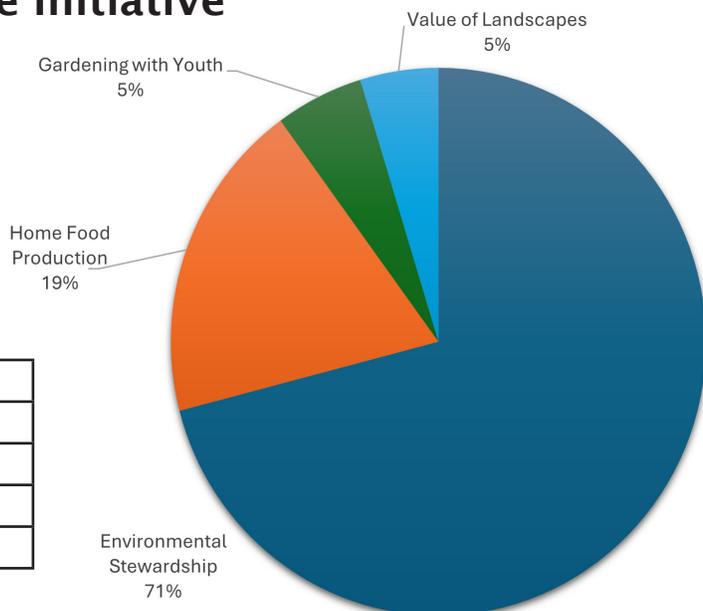
Also, visit these Extension web pages for more on these pests:

- University of Georgia: <https://extension.uga.edu/publications/detail.html?number=C1160>
- North Carolina State University: <https://henderson.ces.ncsu.edu/2020/04/tiny-bugs-big-problems-ambrosia-beetles/>
- Clemson University: <https://hgic.clemson.edu/factsheet/ambrosia-beetles/>

2023 Annual summary of Master Gardener Activities Cherokee County

10	# of New Master Gardener Extension Volunteers (completed training this year)
55	# of Active Master Gardeners Returning
65	Combined Volunteers
4999	Total # of Volunteer Hours this year X (\$29.95/hour*) = \$149, 720
6484	Total # of in person contacts
1,021,482	Total # of telephone/email Contacts
16,183	Total # of miles traveled X (\$0.14**) = \$2,265.62
24	Total # of advanced training hours
270	Total # of continuing education hours

Hours Volunteered by State Initiative



Georgia MGEV projects fall into five initiative, or priority areas.

2,280	70%	Environmental Stewardship
611	19%	Home Food Production
171	5%	Gardening with Youth
152	4%	Value of Landscapes
	0%	Health Benefits of Gardening

APRIL GARDENING TIPS

- 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. **For home fruit orchard pruning techniques, click [HERE](#).**
- 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. **For bunch grapevine care, click [HERE](#).**
- 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 beans and squash.
- 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. **For staking and pruning tomatoes, click [HERE](#).**



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. **For more bulb information, click [HERE](#).**
- 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. **For more pruning information, click [HERE](#).**
- Do not fertilize azaleas and camellias until they have finished blooming. They should be pruned after blooming. **For selecting and growing azaleas, click [HERE](#).**
- 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. **For more information on selecting trees and shrubs for pollinators, click [HERE](#).**

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. **For information on Georgia homegrown tomatoes, click [HERE](#).**



Florida weave tomato stake method described in web link

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. **For more information on growing roses, click [HERE](#).**
- 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. **For crape myrtle care, click [HERE](#).**
- Check the leaves on azaleas and camellias for leaf galls. They are white to green growths and can be pruned out and disposed of. **For information on camellia diseases, click [HERE](#).**

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

- Protect developing strawberries from birds with spun bonded row covers. Netting can trap and kill beneficial snakes and birds. **For growing home garden strawberries, click [HERE](#).**
- 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.
- 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. 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. **For growing home garden sweet corn, click [HERE](#).**
- 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.

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. **For more information about ants and aphids and control measures, click [HERE](#).**
- 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 2024	Feb 2024	YTD 2024	Jan 2024	Feb 2024	YTD 2024
Actual	8.5	4.1	12.6	7.2	5.7	12.9
Normal	6.0	5.0	11.0	4.5	4.4	8.9
Deviation	2.5	-0.9	1.6	2.7	1.3	4.0

Recipes

Steamed Asparagus with Hollandaise

Submitted by Maurya Jones

Steaming asparagus is the easiest way to go (no oil or butter), and it's fast and easy.

Yields 2 servings. Prep time 5 minutes. Total time 10 minutes.

INGREDIENTS:

1 lb. asparagus, ends trimmed
2 Tbsp. butter, melted
Kosher salt
Freshly ground black pepper
Lemon wedges, for serving

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. In a large skillet over medium heat, add asparagus. Add enough water to cover the bottom of the pan. Cover and let steam until asparagus is easily pierced with a knife, 3 to 5 minutes.
2. Toss asparagus with butter and season with salt and pepper.
3. Serve with lemon wedges and with hollandaise sauce if desired.

Sugar Snap Peas

Submitted by Maurya Jones

These sweet and crispy peas are entirely edible—pod and all and are a good source of vitamin C and iron. Choose plump green pods with a bright green color. They can be refrigerated for up to 3 days.

To cook:

Sugar snap peas have “strings” much like the ones on celery. To remove them, pinch one end of the pea to get rid of the string, pull it up the straight side toward the stem end, and then pinch it off. I steam or stir fry them for just 3 minutes so they retain their crispness and flavor.

When I steam sugar snap peas, I simply serve them as side dish with salt and pepper. You can also serve them with hollandaise sauce if desired.

Simple Hollandaise Sauce

Submitted by Maurya Jones

Prep 5 minutes. Total 10 minutes.

INGREDIENTS:

1/2 cup light mayonnaise
1/2 cup plain low-fat yogurt
1 tsp. yellow mustard
1 tsp. lemon juice

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Mix all ingredients in saucepan.
2. Cook on low heat for 5 minutes or until heated through, stirring constantly.
3. Serve over hot steamed fresh asparagus, sugar snap peas, or broccoli.
4. Sauce can be garnished with chopped fresh parsley or finely chopped red peppers.



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