

The Garden Bench March / April 2009

Gardening and home landscape information from UGA Cooperative Extension in Houston County. Our newsletter provides research based horticulture information to help middle Georgia gardeners.

Home Garden and Landscape Tips for Middle Georgia

Warm Spring days are filled with promise. Trees are beginning to leaf out, bulbs are springing up, and the birds are noisy with excitement. The garden is calling!

Trees & Shrubs

***Apply the first application of fertilizer to trees and shrubs late March.** Do a soil test or apply one-half pound of 12-4-8, 16-4-8, 10-10-10 or 18-0-18 per 100 square feet. **Broadcast the fertilizer over planting areas uniformly** (prior to a rain, if possible or water in). **Fertilizing once is enough for most shrubs and tree.** Fertilize them again in May and July if you want the plants to get larger.

***You can fertilize azaleas and other spring-blooming plants.** Fertilizer will not affect flowering. ***Ambrosia beetles bore into trees** creating tooth-pick-looking columns of sawdust on the tree. **Protect trees by spraying Permethrin** on the trunks before these pests get in. Young or stressed trees are most susceptible. Trees are more susceptible as they leaf out.

***Aphids, azalea lace bugs, many types of scale insects, white flies and pine bark beetles become active in March and April. Look for them and treat as needed.**

***Prune spring flowering plants** (azalea, camellia, for-

sythia, spirea, etc.) anytime **after bloom through mid-July.** You can continue heavy pruning through early March. **Prune non-bloomers or summer bloomers from January through mid-September.**

***Replenish the mulch around your shrubs.**
*** Start black spot sprays on roses when new leaves appear.**

Flowers

***Prepare your beds for annual flowers.** Do a **soil test and till in lime and fertilizer as needed.**

***Fertilize established perennials** after all danger of frost is past.

***Fertilize bulbs when the plant gets two to three inches tall.** Apply one pound of 10-10-10 per 100 square feet, or another equivalent fertilizer.

***Continue deadheading and fertilizing pansies.** Fertilize pansies monthly with granular fertilizer or bi-weekly with liquid fertilizer.

***Plant in sunny areas:** cockscomb, zinnias, amaranth, purslane, and marigolds.

***For shady areas** consider begonias, impatiens, caladiums, coleus, and hostas.

***Plant heat tolerant perennials when temperatures climb** in late April or May. These include lantana, cannas, Mexican petunia, annual periwinkle, summer phlox,

salvia and others.

Fruits

*** Thin fruit if set is too heavy.** This helps to keep the limbs from breaking and can produce better quality fruit. Remove apples, peaches and pears until you have one fruit every six inches along the stem. Remove plums until you have one fruit every five inches.

*** You can prune fruit trees** after they bloom, but earlier is better. Contact us or see publications online for directions.

Upcoming Events

Vegetable Gardening Class. UGA Extension and Master Gardeners are offering Vegetable Gardening 101 – an introduction to basic vegetable gardening. March 23 from 6:30 – 8:30 in the Centerville City Hall Community Room at 300 Church Street in Centerville, GA. The cost of \$10 includes a packet of gardening information. Pre-register by calling (478) 987-2028 or emailing mg@uga.edu by March 19.

Spring Home & Garden Show sponsored by the Master Gardeners of Central Georgia. April 4 & 5. Georgia National Fairgrounds,

Turf Tips & Tricks



- ◆ Tune up mower, sharpen blades to prevent grass blade tearing.
- ◆ Check mowing deck and blades to ensure they are level to prevent scalping the lawn.
- ◆ Check irrigation system and sprinkler heads to ensure proper operation.
- ◆ March through June is the best time to renovate lawns. Dethatch May through June.
- ◆ Avoid using herbicides on lawns during green up! Fertilize after the lawn greens up - usually in late April or May.

Newsletter compiled by:
Diane Stephens, Master Gardener
Willie Chance, Extension Agent
Contact Information:
Office: 801 Main St.
Perry, GA 31069
Telephone: 478.987.2028
<http://www.ugaextension.com/houston>
E-mail: mg@uga.edu

Call your local
Extension Agent at
(800) ASK-UGA1

A well-tended garden can supply you and your family with a variety of nutritious vegetables to be eaten fresh or preserved.

Garden site

If possible, select a site that has at least 6 - 8 hours of sun and is located near the house and a water supply. The soil should be loamy, fertile & well drained.

Make a Plan

Plan your garden so that the available space can be used wisely. For small areas, select those crops that you like best and that will produce an adequate supply on a few plants.

Plan to use the space continuously by planting another in-season crop soon after the last harvest is completed.

Web Page Links

Houston County Cooperative Extension Homepage

<http://www.ugaextension.com/houston>

Middle Georgia Master Gardeners Home Page <http://www.mgcg.org/>

Cooperative Extension Home Page <http://www.caes.uga.edu/extension/>

Gardening & Landscape Information UGA Urban Ag Web site: www.gaurbanag.org



The University of Georgia

The University of Georgia and Ft. Valley State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and counties of the state cooperating. The Cooperative Extension Service offers educational programs, assistance and materials to all people without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex or disability.

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY / AFFIRMATIVE ACTION ORGANIZATION

Plant tall-growing plants together on the north or west side of the garden so they will not shade lower-growing plants. Make a map and keep it current so that the vegetables can be rotated within the garden from year to year.

Lime and Fertilizer

Have a soil test run to determine lime and fertilizer needs. If the pH is low (acidic soil), apply the recommended amount of lime before preparing the soil so it can be mixed with the soil during soil preparation. A pH of 6.0 to 6.5 is recommended for all vegetables except Irish potatoes, which require a pH of 5.5 to 5.8. Vegetables are classified as light, medium and heavy feeders, based on their fertilizer needs.

Planting the Garden

Information on cultivars, planting dates and spacing is given in the planting chart. Several vegetables can be successively planted to lengthen the harvesting season.

Cultivation

Cultivate or hoe the garden as often as needed to control weeds and grasses. Do not cultivate or hoe too deeply or you will injure roots.

Mulch

A mulch of straw, leaves, ground landscape waste or pine straw will help conserve moisture and control weeds. Apply enough mulch to have two to four inches after settling. Do not pile mulch against the base of vegetables.

Watering

Water as needed to maintain a uniform moisture supply.

In the absence of rain, one inch of water once a week will probably be adequate for heavier soils. Sandy soils might require 2 applications of 1/2 to 3/4 inch of water twice a week. Water early in the morning so foliage will dry off quickly. This helps prevent diseases.

Control Insects, Diseases and Nematodes

Serious losses can occur from insects, diseases and nematodes. If nematodes are present, control measures must be taken before the crop is planted. ***Plant vegetable varieties that are resistant to nematodes and major diseases!***

Watch for insects and diseases and begin control measures as soon as problems are spotted. Contact your County Extension Agent for help in identifying pests & controls.

Harvesting

Harvest at the proper stage of maturity to get the highest quality vegetables. If crops such as beans, okra, squash and cucumbers are left on the vine to mature, the plants will stop producing. It is essential to pick vegetables regularly.

Any surplus production should be canned or frozen as soon as possible after harvesting. Information on canning and freezing is available at your county Extension office or at www.fcs.uga.edu/ext/pubs/food.php?category=Preserving

We edited these materials from the publication *Home Vegetable Gardening* found online at:

<http://pubs.caes.uga.edu/caespubs/pubs/PDF/L171.pdf>