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Extension Solutions for Homes and Gardens

by Paul J. Pugliese

“Community Gardens: A Growing Trend”

County Extension offices frequently get calls from homeowners that are frustrated by limitations to gardening such as not having a big enough backyard, not enough sunlight, or restrictive covenants with their home owners associations. If you fall into one of these categories, then you might be very pleased to know that there is a growing interest toward the creation of more community gardens in Cherokee County. There are currently two active community gardens in Canton and Woodstock that are mostly maxed out as far as space and popular demand. Both cities are in the process of seeking out more land and exploring the possibility of expanding these community garden opportunities to the public.

Coming this fall, a third community garden will be opening at the Cherokee County Senior Center on 1001 Univeter Rd., Canton. This new community garden should be ready to open and begin leasing plots in time for fall vegetable planting. The Garden Club Council of Cherokee County is currently in the process of building these gardens under the guidance of Cherokee County Senior Services. So, if you missed out on planting a garden this spring, then why not make up for lost time and start one this fall? Many people are surprised to learn that fall is a great time to start a vegetable garden. Many cool-season vegetables such as beets, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, collards, kale, lettuce, mustard, onions, radish, spinach, and turnips should ideally be planted in August or September in this part of Georgia. Most of these leafy vegetables and root crops will be ready to harvest in late fall or early winter!

Fall is also an excellent time to begin amending your soil with compost and/or planting a winter cover crop to prepare your garden for a successful spring garden planting. When amending your garden soil, remember all you need is 3-4” inches of compost spread out evenly over the area to be planted and then uniformly till it into the existing soil at least 8-10” inches deep. This should be done once a year, ideally in the fall. And remember, there can be “too much of a good thing” when it comes to amending your soil; so be sure to do a soil test every couple years to make sure your pH and soil nutrients are on target.

For those who are interested in leasing a garden plot or currently have an active garden plot, know that your best source of information about what to plant, when to plant, and how to plant is your local Cherokee County Cooperative Extension office. Our office has several resources that many new gardeners may not be familiar with. First, our office has many free publications about gardening available in print as well as online at www.ugaextension.com/cherokee. Also, we have a help desk staffed with trained and certified Georgia Master Gardener volunteers that can assist you with any questions you might have about gardening over the phone. Simply call 770-479-0418 with your gardening questions or submit a question online from our website. Lastly, our office also provides several diagnostic services such as soil testing and troubleshooting insect, disease, and weed problems. Plant and soil samples can be brought to our office in Canton Monday through Friday. Please call our office about proper sampling procedures and to schedule a drop off time.

For information about the NEW Cherokee County Senior Center garden, call (770) 345-2675.

For information about the Canton community garden, call (770) 720-1048.

For information on the Woodstock community garden, call (770) 517-6788.

Paul Pugliese is the Agriculture & Natural Resources Extension Agent for Cherokee County Cooperative Extension, a partnership of The University of Georgia, The U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Cherokee County. (770) 479-0418. For more information and free publications, visit our local website at www.ugaextension.com/chokeee

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