



Three County Master Gardeners' Association Newsletter

Summer 2010

Our Executive Board

President: Rosemarie Sells, 770-267-7404, rosemariesells@yahoo.com

Vice President: Donald Sikes, 706-367-4562

Treasurer: Ed Novak, edvisor@aol.com, 770-267-3853

Secretary: Shirley Turner, sturner@harrisonpoultry.com, 770-367-5863

County Coordinators:

Barrow County: Charlotte Phillips, charlienwinder@netscape.com, 770-307-0638,

Jackson County: Donna Hut, 706-654-2689, dlhut1@windstream.net

Walton County: Jean Selph, 770-266-6985, willowoaks@hotmail.com

Newsletter Coordinator: Margaret McCollum, margaretandy@bellsouth.net, 678-753-1030

President's Corner

Hello Everyone-

The warm days of spring are upon us, and the hot days of summer lie ahead, but I hope your spirit has been renewed by the changing of the seasons. As master gardeners we hold one truth to be self evident : that we enjoy watching things grow and produce. Even a little zinnia popping up unexpectedly from last year's crop gets me excited.

We have an upcoming quarterly meeting for the Tri-Co. master gardeners on the horizon-Thurs. evening, June 10th, 6pm at Barrow Ext. Office. As usual it will afford us a great time of fun, fellowship, and learning. Mike Sikes who is on the State Board of the Ga. Master Gardeners Assoc. and employed with McCorkle Nurseries will speak on New Plants. Aren't we always looking for some?

Let me commend our county coordinators, Donna Hut, Charlotte Phillips, and Jean Selph for doing a super job of arranging speakers, making contacts, hosting luncheons and quarterly meetings, not to mention keeping some great volunteer projects alive in their counties. We appreciate you.

Hope to see you on the 10th.

Rosemarie



Newsletter Changes

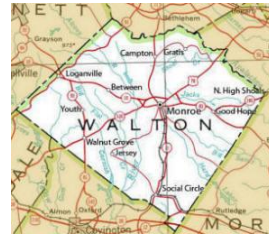
Due to budget concerns the Board decided to shorten the newsletter. The last newsletter cost \$40 for postage and copying. We will focus on members' and Britt West's articles plus local events.

If you would like to read the latest news about insects, soil, plants, and lawns, the best resource is UGA's Cooperative Extension Service's website www.georgiafaces.caes.uga.edu. Gardening Guru Walter Reeves' website www.walterreeves.com, radio show on 750 WSB, and gardening show "Your Southern Garden" on GPTV station also covers a wide variety of gardening topics. The Atlanta Botanical Garden's website is www.atlantabotanicalgarden.org. The Georgia Botanical Garden's website is www.uga.edu/botgarden. Georgia Perimeter College Botanical Garden's website is www.gpc.edu/~decbt/. Another great resource is the e-mail newsletter from UGA, "MG Snippets," which Krissy Slagle at can help you subscribe. Her e-mail address is kslagle@uga.edu.

UGA Test Trials Gardens Open House



Allan Armitage, PhD. of the Horticulture Department at UGA invites you to attend the Open House at the University Trial Gardens on July 10, 2010, 8:30AM – noon. See map at website ugatrial.hort.uga.edu.



The Word from Walton County

By Jean Selph, Master Gardener and
Walton County Master Gardener Coordinator

I am happy to report that since our last newsletter a lot more activity has been taking place in Walton County.

The nursing home at the Walton County Medical Center is still an ongoing project that we have worked on this spring, but there are also several new projects that have developed. Sometime back in the fall William Carlan had a call for some help with a gardening project at the local high school working with some of the students in a program that involved growing food and learning to prepare and cook the food grown in the classes. This project was worked on by several members of the Master Gardeners from Walton as well as Jackson County.

There is a pastor in Monroe, at River's of Mercy, who is working with his community of church members to grow a community garden and invest these skills and healthy eating habits into an area that needs a lot of direction. I along with Rosemarie Sells and her husband Richard helped plant 13 blueberry bushes at their garden.

Later we received a request for the Master Gardeners to help at the William Harris homestead with a general cleanup project to get the grounds ready for the upcoming episode of Hidden Treasure's, to be aired on June 9, 2010 on channel 2, at 8:00 p.m. The homestead also hosted a Country Antiques show in April and asked for some volunteers to assist with the visitors. We still hope to plant a community garden at Harris homestead next year, but we got too late of a start this year to be able to organize it as it should be. The Harris homestead is such a beautiful property that we hope we can get good participation next year and grow a wonderful community garden and with the beautiful setting we will be in it probably won't even feel like work.

We are also hosting a booth at the Crepe Myrtle Festival, on June 10th at Hammond Park, in Monroe. We are going to have a plant sale as a fund raiser and also be available to give out information on the Master Gardener's program. The hours of the festival are 9 - 4 p.m. If anyone needs hours or if you have already completed your hours for this year, we would love to have you come and work for a couple of hours. I trust everyone received the email from Cindy (Barrow County Cooperative Extension Service) with the directions to Hammond Park, but if not either contact I or Rosemarie Sells and we can furnish any information you need.

Happy Gardening!

My Ideal Anniversary

By Debbie Maund,
Master Gardener

On my first anniversary it snowed. On my 25th anniversary it was mid 80's. We started buying "trees" as our anniversary gifts many years ago. Now we have to work to find a place to plant these trees as we get them. Nonetheless we are continuing the tradition.

We spent Saturday shopping for apple trees and while we were there we got a crape myrtle and several other plants. In the afternoon we dug holes, planted, watered, and moved trees and bushes. Too tired to go out to eat, we ate dinner at home and collapsed by 10pm.

Sunday (the real anniversary)

We were outside by 8:00 a.m. It was going to be hot, so we watered, then tilled one of the gardens to plant just a few things. It is soooo easy to plant. You forget how hard it is to take care of the garden once it becomes full summer, but a lapse in memory brought about a full day of gardening. I had a leftover seeds and they usually grow, so I began to till and plant (nothing to lose but time). Then my husband helped till the bigger garden, and I tilled some more, then planted some more. He put in the water pump and we watered. I know these seeds may not survive and there has to be some more cold nights, but with the sun shining, the ground dry (finally); I just had to try to get my garden going early. Who knows how the weather will go, but nothing beats the first real dry spring day with a husband who would rather plant the garden with me on our anniversary weekend.

Many of my friends think I am nuts. I say who cares about a fancy dinner when I can have fresh vegetables all summer. I am sure those of you reading this article would agree that nothing is better than a full day of working outside with the hope of many more to come. Thank goodness I found a spouse who loves the outside as I do and gives me the perfect anniversary weekend.

A Little Bit About Fire Ants

BY Shannon Horner,
Master Gardener

INTRODUCTION

Many of us find the eradication methods for ants to be somewhat confusing. There are different methods or techniques of eradication with a vast selection of products to choose from within each of these methods. Outlined in this article are the different methods of control. Once a homeowner is aware of the different methods available, an educated choice can be made as to the best method or approach for controlling fire ants on the property.

Fire ants are stinging ants of which there are over 280 species worldwide. Many of these species live within the United States, of which there are four that pose a more serious threat. These are the tropical fire ant (*Solenopsis geminata* Fabricius), the southern fire ant (*Solenopsis xyloni* McCook), the black imported fire ant (*Solenopsis richteri* Forel), and the red imported fire ant (*Solenopsis invicta* Buren). Obviously the two imported species are not native to our region whereas the other two are native species. It is often difficult to distinguish between the imported species and the native species.

The two imported species of fire ants were introduced into the United States from South America via Brazilian cargo ships at the port of Mobile, Alabama in the 1930's. The black imported ant arrived first and had spread to adjacent counties in Alabama and Florida. However, the introduction of the red imported fire ant, a much more aggressive species, has for the most part displaced the black imported fire ant and the two native species. Currently, the black imported fire ant is found only in extreme northeast Mississippi, northwest Alabama and a few southern counties in Tennessee.

NATIVE HABITAT

Fire ants nest in the ground near well watered sites. Common areas where colonies would be found include river banks, pond edges and well watered lawns. A nest is usually less than a square yard and will usually have several entrances. It is an underground series of tunnels and chambers that may go as far as six feet into the

ground. Much depends on the soil type and the age and size of the colony.

Fire ants will also locate mounds near heat sources such as steam pipes and concrete walls. This could allow them to survive in colder areas than would be expected. Fire ants most likely will not survive the freezing temperatures of the northern states. It is believed they will not survive in areas where minimum temperatures reach 10 degrees F for extended periods or in areas that receive less than 10 inches of rain per year. Their northern spread depends on temperature. Western spread depends largely on water supply. In Georgia, we have plenty of water and warm weather to allow these little pests to thrive.

DAMAGE

Fire ants are a danger to people, animals and plants and they create losses totaling almost \$6 billion a year in urban and agricultural areas. They will feed on almost any plant or animal material. However, they seem to prefer insects. The arrival of imported fire ants into an ecosystem wrecks havoc on the local ecological community. In some instances, the depredation by fire ants has completely eliminated some species from an ecosystem. Fire ant control methods usually include cultural, physical, mechanical and biological control techniques.

CONTROL METHODS

Cultural Controls

In addressing the controls being used against fire ants, it must be pointed out that if native ants are not harming an environment, they should probably be left alone. Often when a native element is eradicated from an ecosystem, something worse takes its place. Native fire ants actually help retard the spread of the imported species, and therefore, should be spared if possible. This concept may not always be realistic since for most of us, it is hard to tell which species we are treating.

Drought and Heat Tolerance

By Dora Fleming, Master Gardener
& Newspaper Columnist

Benjamin Franklin said, "Experience keeps a dear school, but fools will learn in no other". I really think he meant me as I rush pell-mell through the nursery in spring picking up all manner of beautiful plants, with not a thought to their drought and heat tolerance. The inevitable happens to many of them, of course - they wilt their way through summer begging for water morning and night. A nuisance.

There really are plants that we can purchase that will make it through the summer in fine shape.

There's a new variety of roses, The Knock-out series, that thumbs its nose at the heat and blooms happily away all summer. They feature single blooms in red, pink or white and even some double ones have appeared on the market. This variety also doesn't fall victim to black spot like its cousin, the hybrid teas. There is a row of red ones on the street in front of Greer's Market in Grove Hill and they are blooming now without benefit of extra water.



There are annuals, too, that you don't have to stand over with a hose all summer. Verbena and coreopsis in my garden never ask me for water as I walk by.



Vinca minor, *Vinca major*, *Portulaca*, (my favorite nursery in Athens, Georgia has a sign on their portulaca that says, "Do not water") coreopsis, sedum, marigolds and yarrow don't seem to notice the heat and lack of rain either.



Portulaca, Moss Rose

Queen Anne's Lace, *Daucus carota* L., looks great in a bed with all of these and shares its drought tolerance with the rest of them. Butterfly weed, *Asclepias tuberosa*, loves dry weather and dies if watered very much.

And there's always lantana, the Champion of Drought Tolerance. New cultivars seem to appear every year – trailing or upright with lots of color possibilities. There is even a trailing one with dainty lavender blooms.

I've learned to avoid planting Hydrangeas since for their first year they wilt by afternoon even if watered in the morning. Angel Trumpet, *Brugmansia*, is a wilter, too. Hibiscus doesn't really wilt much, but still seems to look unhappy enough to get my attention if not watered.

Next spring I am going to try and remember that spring makes promises that summer cannot keep and be more careful about what I plant.

There's always yucca and every other day.



cacti if it comes to that...or we could all move to Spokane. It rains there