

The Potting Shed is a free monthly newsletter from the University of Georgia Extension in Bryan County. We provide science-based information to help Coastal Georgia gardeners. Have a question or need help, contact your local County Extension Office.
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PURE-BRED DAYLILIES

Daylilies are a very elite kind of flower...it has its own line of registered blue blood names and origins. There are more than 48,000 daylilies registered, and they are bred in at least 25 states by hundreds of individual hybridizers. But, if you are one of the many folks that don't care about pure bred, here are a few things to keep in mind so that you can just simply enjoy the plain, yet magnificent, beauty of the daylilies.

Probably the most important ingredient for all daylilies is water. While daylilies can withstand drought because of their fleshy roots, I find it amazing the difference when they get all the water they need.

So give plenty of water, at least one inch a week. Do not over water however, as daylilies do not like to have their roots immersed in water for extended periods of time. Give the soil a chance to drain well before you water again.

Here in the south, it is best to begin to cut back on the watering once the temperatures reach the 90's. Beginning in August only water once a week. While daylilies like lots of water, keeping the soil wet when the temperatures are high will encourage fungal and bacterial rots which can sometimes kill a daylily.

Bryan County Master Gardeners will meet on Tuesday, April 10, 2007 at 6:30 p.m. at the Bamboo Farm & Coastal Gardens Annex. Bill Lutz will be talking about roses. Everyone is invited!!

Fertilizer is important for healthy daylilies. Proper feeding will result in more and larger blooms and the plants will be more vigorous. Since these are such prolific flower producers, feed with a complete and balanced fertilizer, 10-10-10, every four to six weeks.

Daylilies require at least six hours of direct sunlight each day for best performance. They prefer raised beds rich in organic matter. Other than a few insect problems, almost every problem call I get on daylilies originates from the plants being placed in soggy soils.

Be sure to add a good layer of mulch to hold moisture, keep the soil cool and prevent weeds. My favorite mulch is pine straw. Daylilies are best planted in the early spring or fall, although container-grown plants can be planted throughout the growing season with outstanding success. Keep seed pods picked off to keep its energy focused on flower production.

See how easy it is to have a bed full of beautiful daylilies. In the end you can have the elite, pure bred, registered plants for the same amount of work required to have the middle class plants.



What To Do In April?



In April you should be concerned with the control of mites and scale. Spider mites flourish during hot, dry weather—the kind of weather that is very typical of late Spring in South Georgia. Ethion and oil is an effective control for both, especially if the weather is not too hot. Cygon is a good systemic control for scale and offers some control over spider mites. Kelthane, now back on the market, is an excellent miticide and can be used in hot weather. Another method of control of spider mites is very vigorous spraying of the bush with water, especially the undersides of the leaves. You can mechanically remove the mites from the plants by this method. Insecticidal soaps can also be used but some members have reported serious plant damage when using this method. Make your first application of fertilizer now if you haven't already. Once the first flush has hardened off you may make a second application.



April

Bulbs

Transplant that gift pot of Easter lilies after the blooms die. Cut the stems back 3 to 4 inches and plant in a sunny spot protected from the wind. The soil should be very well drained but rich in organic matter or humus. The Oriental, Asiatic and Olympic hybrid lilies are all hardy throughout Southeast Georgia. You generally buy and plant lily bulbs in the fall but don't pass up on a good bulb deal due to timing. They bloom in July and August, so be patient. It really depends upon cultivar but most flower stalks are 4 to 6 feet tall and hold 20 fragrant, bell shaped flowers. Lilies prefer for their tops to be in full sunlight and their bases shaded by other plants.

Feed bearded iris and other bulbs with a super phosphate fertilizer and spray for borers. If blooming is poor, then overcrowding may be the problem. Wait and divide in the fall. Do NOT cut off the yellowing foliage on daffodil, tulip or hyacinth bulbs. They are dependent on the leaves to supply nourishment for next year's growth.

Fruiting Shrubs and Trees

Most of the fruit trees have finished blooming and small fruit is beginning to develop. A lot of damage to fruit occurs now while it is very small. Spray with an approved insecticide weekly for wormless, unblemished fruit. Many of the problem insects live in the tall grass or weeds near the fruit trees and vines. Mowing regularly will help lower insect populations.

Blackberries and dewberries are the last fruit to start blooming. The way you tell them apart is by looking at their growth habit. Dewberries trail while blackberries grow upright. Look at the petal color of your blackberries. They should be white. If you see pink petals then double bloom disease has infected your berry patch. The disease affects berry quality. Nothing can be done to salvage this year's crop but spray with a fungicide in the fall to protect next year's production.

Ground Covers and Lawns

Lawns have greened up and are ready for fertilizer. The big questions are "What type of fertilizer to use and how often should it be applied?" Four turf grasses are grown in South Georgia: Bermuda, centipede, zoysia and St. Augustine. The fertilizer ratio (N-P-K) and the number of times it is applied is different for each of the turf grasses. If you're growing Bermuda grass, use a 3-1-2 fertilizer ratio, 3 to 4 times a year. Zoysia grass prefers a 4-1-3 fertilizer ratio, 4 times annually. St. Augustine grass performs best with a 2-1-2 fertilizer ratio applied twice annually. And finally, Centipede grass likes a 2-0-2 fertilizer ratio only once a year. Water the yard before and after applying fertilizer. This helps wash the fertilizer down into the root zone. Do not fertilize if your turf grass had a disease problem last year. More than likely the disease is still present and fertilizer only compounds the problem. Spray at least four times with a fungicide before you promote new growth with a fertilizer application.

Repair thinning spots in your lawn with sod as it becomes available in your area. Lawns receiving at least a half-day of direct sunlight will grow any of our turf grasses. No turf grass will grow in complete shade. Bermuda requires full sunlight. Centipede and zoysia do well in partial or full sunlight. St. Augustine is the only southern turf grass that will tolerate large amounts of shade.

Shrubs and Trees

The most popular home lawn shrub is undoubtedly the rhododendron or azalea. In Georgia, the common name "azalea" is used for native, deciduous plants and evergreen types. But if you start looking in the books "rhododendron" is used for species that are evergreen. Whatever name you call them, azalea and rhododendrons are excellent all year shrubs. They stay green during the summer and winter. Some have leaves that get a hint of red or orange in the fall. Most offer a riot of color in the spring and they love South Georgia's acid soil. Selecting plants while they are blooming is the only way to make sure you are getting the color you want. There are many evergreen hybrid azaleas that can be grown in South Georgia. The four major groups of cultivated azaleas are Indicas, Kurumes, Glenn Dale and Satsukis hybrids. Indica hybrids are early to mid-season bloomers and get big (6-12 feet tall). Some of the more common are 'Formosa' (rose lavender), 'Pride of Mobile' (watermelon pink), 'George L. Taber' (pale pink) and 'Mrs. G. G. Gerbing' (white). The Kurume hybrids have bolder flower color and max out at 4 feet tall. For "STOP" sign red, plant 'Christmas Cheer', 'Hexe' or 'Hershey Red'. If you lean more toward pink then go with 'Coral Bells', 'Salmon Beauty', 'Tradition' or 'Pink Pearl'. Tuck in a few late blooming Satsuki hybrids to extend the spring flowering in your yard through May. The Japanese Satsuki hybrids have very interesting flower colors and patterns, including spots, stripes or petals that are half one color and half another. When full-grown Satsuki azaleas only reach 2 to 3 feet tall. Trying to combine bloom colors can be disastrous. By planting different hybrids with different bloom times you avoid a clash of colors. Pastel colors are easier to combine than several bold primary colors. HINT: Find a paint chip card that matches the exterior of your home. Take it with you when selecting an azalea bloom to complement your house.

Two deciduous azaleas are native to woodland areas of the state. *Azalea canescens*, pink bush honeysuckle, is found throughout the state. It will grow in the hills or flatlands from north to south Georgia. The yellow bush honeysuckle, *Azalea austrinum*, grows naturally only in the southeastern corner of the state. If you are thinking about growing a native azalea in South Georgia, go with the pink bush honeysuckle. It will bloom heavily under deciduous trees or on the sunny edge of a pond. The fragrant, 3-inch blooms range from pink to white and appear before the leaves emerge.

The main reason azaleas die is due to poor planting. Azaleas like well-drained, acid soil (pH 4.5 to; 6.0), with a good dose of organic matter. When planting a bed of azaleas, put 5 to 6 inches of organic matter on the surface and then till it in to about 12 inches. The best organic matter to use would be leaf mold, aged pine bark chips or compost. In areas of heavy clay a raised bed works best. Dig the planting holes shallow and twice as wide as the container. The top 2 inches of the root ball should be above the soil line when the plant is placed in the hole. Being planted too deep is the number one cause of death to azaleas. Fill in around the plant with a mixture of native soil and organic matter. Use pine bark mulch to cover the top of the root ball and then water. Azaleas will not tolerate waterlogged soil or wet feet. Since they are shallow rooted and may dry out faster in the summer, make sure they get an inch of water weekly.

Evergreen azaleas are often used as foundation plants. Make sure to space any new plantings based on their ultimate mature size. Close plantings increases insect and disease problems. Pruning may be necessary to maintain a nice tight plant. Selectively prune straggly limbs after the plant has finished flowering. Do not shear unless you want to create a hedge. Shearing destroys the natural form of the plant. In July, azaleas are starting to set next year's flower buds, so leave the plant alone.

Inspect azalea plants for leaf gall disease. The leaves and sometimes the flowers become thick, fleshy and turn a pale green or whitish color. Hand pick and bag up the infected parts before the powdery white spores are released. There is only one outbreak each year so don't put this chore off.

Vegetables and Herbs

Planting sweet corn during the second week of April will give you roasting ears by July. Early plantings also have less worm problems than later plantings. Corn must be sprayed weekly from silking to harvest in order to control the corn earworm. Sweet corn should be planted on the north side of the garden, (so it won't shade out the other vegetables), in numerous short rows to get cross-pollination. 'Silver Queen', 'Merit' and 'Sweet G-90' are all very good old timey favorites. New, sugar enhanced cultivars have now hit the market. For doubling your sugar pleasure try 'Bodacious', 'Incredible', 'Calico Bell' or 'Kandy Korn'. When harvesting sweet corn try to get it to the refrigerator as soon as possible. It will start to lose sugar the minute the ear is removed from the stalk. This is why the sweetest ears will always come from corn you grow and harvest yourself.

By mid-April, the soil temperature is warm enough to plant and the danger of frost is supposed to be over. It's time to set out vegetable transplants or sow seed. Squash is extremely easy to grow from seed and there are many varieties to choose from: Crookneck yellow, straight neck yellow, patty pan and zucchini. Remember when buying seed packets, that on average they contain about 17 seeds and each mature plant can make one squash daily. That's a batch of squash being cooked each week. One squash or tomato plant needs 15 square feet of room. Crowding plants increases disease pressure and makes insect control very difficult. Keep a close eye on young vegetable plants since they are easily killed by sap sucking insects. Examine the underside of leaves for aphids and spider mites.

Native Plant of the Month



Virginia Sweetspire

I am always looking for plants as I drive along the road or walk in the woods and if I see one that grabs my attention then I always have the shovel ready. This is what my great grandfather did many years ago. Many plants that he stole from the woods are still used in what we would now term "old-fashioned landscapes". There are good reasons why my granddad used these plants, which include seasonal beauty, hardiness, durability and resistance to disease and insect pests. One of the old time favorites, Virginia Sweetspire, a.k.a. Virginia Willow, is an especially outstanding choice for Southern landscapes. Virginia Sweetspire (*Itea virginica*) has many notable characteristics. It was most likely first brought into the landscape because of its gorgeous white, slightly fragrant flowers. Native durability and toughness are great characteristics, but the real reasons for choosing this plant is for the flowers that show up in late April to May and for the superb fall color. When placed in full sun the foliage gets denser and the flowers are more abundant. Flowers are formed on the previous season's wood so we should always wait until after flowering to prune. In the fall, the leaves change to burgundy-purple which presents an attractive contrast to broadleaf evergreens in the landscape. One of the many notable characteristics of Virginia Sweetspire is its tolerance of wet soils. The type of soils that doom many landscape shrubs is no challenge for this plant. It actually prefers moist to wet situations. Amazingly though, it has very good drought tolerance! Virginia Sweetspire should start flowering in April so be on the watch. If you see it you will want it in your landscape. Plant them en masse for best effect. If given adequate sunlight and moisture they will supply many years of enjoyment.