

Newsletter

April/May 2003

Volume X, Issue 3



for the Cherokee
County Master
Gardeners

What's Happening

- Apr 8 Adv. MG train'g, Hall Co. Landscape Mgmt. 770-535-8293 to register
- Apr 12 Plant Clinic: Woodstock Lowes, 10-1; and Mann's Nursery 10-1.
- Apr 19 Roses Lecture. Hickory Flat Library 10-11:30.
- Apr 19 Rabies Clinic 8:30-3, contact Ext to help.
- Apr 15 Monthly Meet. RT Jones Library, 7pm Orchid Lecture
- Apr 24 Sr. Center Workday, 9:30. Bring tools, water and lunch.
- Apr 26 Plant Clinic, Mann's Nursery, contact Ext to help.
- Apr 26/27 Cagle Dairy All Farm Day and MG plant sale from 9-5. Contact Lynn Knotts @ 770-516-9417
- Apr 26 GNPS native plant sale. Peachtree Pres. Church 9-12
- May 1 Sr. Ctr. Workday. 9:30. Bring tools, water and lunch.
- May 3 Shade Plants- Hickory Flat Library 10-11:30
- May 10 Pass-along Plant Discussion. Sr. Center 10am
- May 15 Sr. Ctr. Workday. 9:30, bring tools, water and lunch
- May 17 Butterfly and Sun-Loving Plants. Hickory Flat Library 10-11:30
- May 20 MG Monthly Meeting @Bridgemill Community Bldg, 10am

THE RAINS RETURN...AND NOW WE HAVE A GREAT, STATEWIDE WATER MANAGEMENT PLAN

TODD HURT, ANR AGENT CHEROKEE COUNTY
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In January of this year, the water restrictions were lifted and all but one of the indicators show that the drought is officially over. Should we still be concerned about water conservation? Absolutely. The population of Cherokee County is growing at 3 times the state average yet water is a finite resource. Guess what? Even if we consider what our local needs are areas of Florida and Alabama are dependant on water that passes through our area. These "discussions" have been called the Tri-State water wars. The state governors and administrators have been trying to reach an agreement for nearly a decade. I have been told we are finally close to an agreement with FL and AL. I wanted to hit some of the highlights of the regulations that are being proposed for the state of Georgia but I caution you to check for county and local restrictions which are allowed to be more restrictive than the state regulations. At the time of this writing Cherokee county restrictions concur with the state but local communities restrictions may apply.

The Georgia General Assembly House Committee on Natural Resources and Environment has passed House Bill 237 (HB237) and this bill is expected to pass the Senate. Water being pumped from private wells and surface water will need to be

permitted if 100,000 gallons of water a day is being withdrawn. New water use permits will require users that a flow meter be installed and usage reported to the state. Applicants will also be required to submit an approved water conservation plan prior to issuing a permit. Lastly, HB 237 required that a statewide drought management plan be developed.

The Drought Management Plan is where the rubber meets the road. **Under this plan homes and businesses on municipal water sources are being asked to restrict outdoor watering to the odd and even schedule at all times (drought or not). Odd house addresses are allowed to water on Tuesday, Thurs., and Sundays. Even number addresses are allowed to water Mondays, Weds., and Saturdays. Time of day is not restricted until a drought is declared.** The drought management plan includes pre-drought strategies as well as four levels of restrictions as determined by drought indicators. Briefly, the two greatest things I see in the drought management plan are: 1) low volume "drip" irrigation and 2) home vegetable gardens will be exempt from future water restrictions. We plan on installing a drip system at the Senior Center to demonstrate the efficiency of this type of system. Contact me for more info.

FROM THE EDITOR

Today an extraordinary, yet simple, event happened. I had written my Editor's note for the newsletter weeks ago but I was so moved, I rewrote it so I could share with you my experience. It was another drizzly morning for our Senior Center workday and there were only a few of us who showed up to work in the garden. We were busy plugging away when our gentleman gardener from the Senior Center came out to walk. He is so soft spoken and loves being outdoors. He walked around the sidewalk a couple of times stopping to check out the emerging plants. He stopped by me, bent down and exclaimed, "Look at the diamonds!" I stopped and looked down at a sedum. It was covered with droplets of rain that were shining like jewels. I looked up at our senior and saw his joy and it made all the hard work we put into the Senior Center garden worthwhile. As he walked away to enjoy something I thought, "Wait 'til you see my sunflower stakes". **Marcia Winchester**

In This Issue

Ag Agent and Editor	1
Earth Day	2
Cool Tool	2
Exciting Exotic Gardening	3
A Sweet Welcome	4
Pythium Blight	5
Q & A	5
April Tips	6
May Tips	7
Lawn Care	8
Committee Highlights	8
Uninvited Guests, cont'd	9
Recipes	10

EARTH DAY

by: Myriam Zagarola, Cherokee County Master Gardener

Earth Day, April 22, 2003, was first celebrated on April 22, 1970. Its founder, Gaylord Nelson (a U.S. Senator from Wisconsin), called for a rally with the purpose of forcing the environmental issue onto the national agenda. Twenty million Americans demonstrated for a healthy, sustainable environment, and protested against the deterioration of the environment.

Earth Day 1970 enlisted support from Republicans and Democrats, rich and poor, city and rural citizens, business and labor leaders. The first Earth Day led to the creation of the United States Environmental Protection Agency and passage of the Clean Air, Clean Water, and Endangered Species Acts.

Earth Day is a day to pause and re-think our way of living. A day to think, not about our short term future, but the future of our children and grandchildren. Will they have the blessing to enjoy nature as we have had in the past? Will they have the opportunity to live in a society that cares about our natural resources, green space, and environment in general? Will they have a clean river to go swimming or canoeing, or a forest to hike or visit to enjoy nature, or clean air to breathe when they are outdoors? What can we do to help promote better ways of living, with less pollution, more preservation of our flora and fauna, and better energy and water conservation? Here are just a few things you can do without much effort from your part, but with a great impact in our environment:

- If every American will set their air conditioners 6°F higher, we would save the energy equivalent of 190,000 barrels of oil every day. Help by setting your air conditioner no lower than 78°F. Buy a programmable thermostat. When set to use less air conditioning or heat when you are not home, a thermostat can reduce 10 % of your energy bill.
- Water heaters are the second largest energy user in American homes. You can save energy by setting the heater's temperature at 120°F. You can save 7 to 8 % of energy used by wrapping the electric heater with an insulated blanket. To improve the electric heater's efficiency, drain about 2 quarts of water from the valve faucet every 2 months. If going on vacation, change your heater's setting to the vacation setting.
- Clean or replace your air conditioner's filters at least once per month to increase efficiency.
- Set your refrigerator between 38 to 40°, and the freezer between 0 and 5. Energy consumption increases up to 25% when the temperature is 10° colder than necessary. Refrigerators usually don't have a

thermometer to show the exact temperature. If you want to set your refrigerator temperature accurately you will have to buy a refrigerator thermometer. One way to tell without using a thermometer is: freezer – ice cream is firm but not hard; refrigerator – if water has ice crystals it is too cold.

- Instead of using lights during the day, open the blinds. Also, in the winter let the sun come in so the house will warm naturally without the use of the heater.
 - Install fluorescent lamps, seal around the windows and doors, add insulation, and use products with the Energy Efficient star. This will help the environment as well as saving money.
 - Wash your car in the shade and use buckets of water instead of a garden hose.
 - Consider taking short showers, and less use of the tub. Run your dishwasher, washing machine and dryer only when there are full loads.
 - When landscaping, use only native plants because they don't need as much water. Plant deciduous trees and position them to shade your house in the summer. In the winter, while they are dormant, they won't block the sun into your house.
 - Screw plumbing caps on unnecessary sprinkler heads.
 - Drive less, combine trips, and carpool. Turn off your engine while waiting on lines such as Drive-thru, etc.
 - Plan the use of gasoline powered lawnmowers, blowers, edgers, chainsaws, and other equipment for cooler evening hours to reduce the impact of smog-producing emissions.
 - Buy electric or rechargeable lawn equipment. Or better yet, use manual tools such as rakes, hedge clipper, etc. This is great for the environment, your health, and your physical fitness.
 - Keep engines tuned up. Keep mower blades sharp and under-sides clean. Winterize equipment each fall.
 - Refuel lawnmowers and other gas tanks after 6 pm, and don't overfill. This will reduce escaping smog-forming fumes.
 - Mow less. Use turf grass or seed mixtures that grow slowly. Decrease lawn area by planting trees, shrubs, wildflowers, and ground cover plants.
- Please visit www.earthday.net for more information.

COOL TOOL

by: Sharon Atcheson, Cherokee County Master Gardener

Several years ago my aunt gave me a "cook tool" that she had purchased at the Atlanta Botanical Gardens. I had never seen or even heard of a "Kombi". Since then, I have expounded its virtues to anyone who will listen. It's a funny looking shovel with a jagged edge. Its cuts through everything! It can be slid along the top of the ground to scrape or go deep for cutting roots. Its sharp "teeth" make digging a lot easier.

When I'm digging, I use the "Kombi" to break up the soil, raking the rake the teeth over the dirt to remove any rocks or debris. I love the fact that I can cut into the ground to get the weed roots, sliding the "Kombi" along to get the whole weed patch. I have even removed large patches of grass, (called the "yard") to add more gardening areas. You can transfer the grass like sod to another area of the yard that needs patching. Its teeth make edging along the drive or walkway a lot easier too. Though it's not recommended, I have dug up some mighty large rocks with my handy-dandy tool. The teeth can be sharpened so you'll always have a good cutting edge.

The "Kombi" comes in a trowel, a "D" handle, the "Pro" and the original. I have the original, but would like to get the "Pro". Its wider so will hold more dirt. The prices and grades vary, but all are reasonable for what you get. You won't be disappointed! For more information, you can call 1-706-754-2875. Or better yet, come see me and I'll let you dig in my yard.

EXCITING EXOTIC GARDENING

by: Frank E. Weltz, Cherokee County Master Gardener

In horticulture “exotic” means flora introduced from abroad. In Georgia, that includes plants native to other U.S. States but not native in Georgia. The geographic distribution of some flora is so vast that the species can be native to several states and more than one country. A local example is the Eastern American Hemlock (*Tsuga Canadensis*) with a range from Nova Scotia to Georgia.

Exotic flora dominates urban and suburban gardens. When I shop at nurseries, it appears that about 90% of the merchandise is exotic. The nurseries, of course, are responding to market demand and “following the money”.

Why this overwhelming desire for exotics? My answer is that exotics provide the shapes, color, and ambience not available with native plants. In the U.S., botanists have been at their work for about 400 years; while in Europe and Asia, their work has spanned 2,000 and 5,000 years respectively. As cultivar selection and hybridization continue with native Georgia (and other U.S.) flora, I am sure more and more (native) plants will be coaxed into greater showmanship in the future.

All flora species are assigned Latin names. Sometimes these names provide a clue of geographic origin. Cultivars developed in Japan often include the word *Japonica* (Latin for Japanese). Sometimes the botanist developing a cultivar will use his/her own Latinized name (or select another name) when seeking a patent, leaving no clue to geographic origin.

The Leyland Cypress provides an interesting example. In 1888, the botanist, Mr. Naylor hybridized this tree via crossing the Monterey Cypress with the Pacific Cypress (both native California trees) at his greenhouse in Wales, Great Britain. He planted his cultivars at the farm of his brother-in-law, Mr. C.J. Leyland. Naylor assigned the Latin name *Cupressocyparis Leylandii* to the hybrid. What do we have here? A cultivar originating in Wales, with California parents – an exotic!

There are also cases where the common name can be misleading as to origin. One example (quite popular in Georgia) is the Cherokee Rose (*Rosa laevigata*), which common name leads one to believe it is a Georgia native, named after the Indian Tribe, as is Cherokee County. This rose comes to us from Japan, and is also native of Formosa. It is an aggressive plant, and has spread throughout the southeast USA and, in essence, has “naturalized itself”. Citizens, thus assuming it to be native, honored the plant with the name “Cherokee”.

The Crape Myrtle (*Lagerstroemia Indica*), a native of Australia and tropical Asia, has been subjected to name Americanization. In the U.S.A., cultivars refined as to size and color were named after American Indians and/or Tribes, such as Miami, Natchez, Tonto, Tuscaroora, etc. Such naming could cause people to assume an American origin. The chart which follows this article shows just a few exotics that are popular in Georgia.

Roses are by far the most popular exotics cultivated in both Georgia and the U.S.A. They occur as native in many Northern Hemisphere countries. Culture by humans is ancient and roses can be observed painted on pottery several thousand years old in Asia and southern Europe (Greece & Italy). Persians and North African Muslims (Moors) are credited with bringing the rose to western Europe in the early 700’s as they conquered Spain and attempted to conquer France.

From Spain and France, the rose spread to all of Western Europe and the British Isles. Rose culture became most popular in France and England, but it took another 1,100 years until a French horticulturist (Guillot) was able to perform a cross between a Perpetual Rose and a Tea Rose in 1867, and introduce the Hybrid Tea Rose to

society.

Flora journeys from one land to another that earns them the classification of “exotic” have often been linked to historical events of mankind. Some of these events can be described as economic, high adventure, and even treason and mutiny. One such event where the would-be exotic plant was the centerpiece is briefly described as follows: In 1787, the British Admiralty ordered the warship H.M.S. *Bounty* to the South Pacific island of Tahiti with the express mission to acquire Breadfruit Tree seedlings and transfer and cultivate them in British held West Indies islands (mainly Jamaica). The true story of this mutinous voyage is chronicled in the book The Bounty Trilogy. Written by Charles Nordoff and James Hall, this book was a bestseller when published in 1932.

For the movies, MGM shortened the title to “Mutiny on the *Bounty*” and produced it three times starring Clark Gable, Marlon Brando, and Mel Gibson in respective releases. For the second production, MGM secured the original maritime plans of the H.M.S. *Bounty* and constructed a replica warship. The movie was filmed on location in Tahiti and Bora Bora. The same replica ship was again used in the most recent production. I have had the pleasure of visiting Tahiti, Bora Bora and Jamaica; where subsequent journey have established the Breadfruit Tree as an exotic (in Jamaica).

+ The Deodar Cedar is so popular in California it is often referred to as the

<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Memo Notes</u>	<u>Geographic Origin</u>
Apricot Trees	Many Cultivars	China & Russia
Apple Trees	" "	Caspian Sea Area
Pear Trees	" "	Caucasia
Peach Trees	" "	China
Cherry Trees	" "	Caucasia & Persia
Japanese Cedar	(Cryptomeria)	Japan
Cedar of Lebanon		Lebanon & Syria
Deodar Cedar	(see + below)	Himalayas
Norway Spruce		Scandinavia
Japanese Maples	300 varieties	Japan
Camellias	Many Cultivars	China & Japan
Rhododendron	(see ++ below)	Himalayas
Hydrangea	(Bigleaf var.)	Japan
Tulips	(via Holland)	Turkey & N. Africa
Daylilies	30,000 var.	Japan, S. Europe
Chrysanthemums	Many Cultivars	China, Japan, N. Africa & S. Europe

California Cedar.

++ About 20 varieties of Rhododendron are native in America, including some in Georgia. More than 200 varieties exist in the Himalayan region.

ATTENTION!

• **There will be Plant Clinics at the Extension Office each Monday from 9-noon. Also, there will be Plant-A-Row workdays at Cagle’s every 4th Saturday.**

A SWEET WELCOME: FLOWERS FOR THE FIRST HUMMINGBIRDS OF THE YEAR

By: Mary Tucker, Cherokee County Master Gardener

The hummingbird is a true American beauty, found only in the Western Hemisphere. Its charm lies in its iridescent plumage, acrobatic flight, and diminutive size. But this tiny bird comes from a huge clan. The hummingbird family, Trochilidae, includes over 300 species, most of them living in South and Central America.

Just a few species breed in North America, and only one, the ruby-throated hummingbird (*Archilochus colubris*), is known to breed east of the Mississippi River. This is the hummer we in the Southeast are so enamored with. After they visit us for the summer breeding season, they make the long trip back to their winter homes in warmer climes of Mexico and Central America. Although we're familiar with bird migration, it's hard to imagine that a bird weighing less than a penny can fly nonstop over the Gulf of Mexico for more than 500 miles!

It's obvious these miniature wonders have made dramatic adaptations, and almost everything about them is unusual. In many ways they resemble insects more than birds. They are no larger than some moths, and they hover in flight in the manner of a bee or dragonfly. Their wing beat is so fast that the wings become virtually invisible in flight and produce the "hum" that is their namesake. The muscles that power this flight make them the most powerful bird for their size.

This rapid life in miniature equates to a fast pulse rate, high body temperature, and speedy metabolism. In proportion to size, a hummingbird burns energy faster than any other warm-blooded animal. To maintain this energy level, it must feed almost constantly. The best source of quick energy for this fast-paced lifestyle is the sucrose-packed nectar of many flowers, and this is what we associate the hummingbird with. However, the hummer does not live by nectar alone; it also relies on protein-rich insects and spiders to round out its diet. Often these creatures are on the very flowers that the hummer is gathering nectar from – an easy catch. Other times, the bird will perch on a twig and patiently wait. Then as a bug approaches, out the hummer flies, snatching the insect in midair. The hummingbird also takes advantage of the work of others, drinking the sap that exudes from sap-sucker holes in trees and eating the insects attracted to that same sap. A hummer may also steal insects caught in a spider's web, plucking them out with its long, thin, tweezer-like bill.

The hummingbird's long bill and tongue are perfectly adapted to extracting nectar from many flowers, and it has coevolved with these plants, creating a mutually beneficial relationship. As the bird gets its meal from a nectar-laden blossom, its head inevitably gets dusted with pollen and in turn deposits it on the next bloom it visits, ensuring the plant's reproduction.

In general, the plants that have evolved with the hummingbird have characteristics in common. They are often trumpet-shaped or tubular, with nectaries at the base of the corolla. This deep flower structure discourages many other pollinators, but is perfectly suited to the long bill of the hummer. Many plants that attract the hummingbird have large, solitary flowers, often with the blooms hanging down. Others have flowers that are grouped into spires that rise above the foliage, giving the bird easy access without hitting its wings. The flower is often red, a color the hummingbird can see, but which bees cannot distinguish from other dark colors. Since the hummer has no sense of smell, the blossoms are usually not fragrant.

Though the hummingbird is naturally drawn to red flowers, it is also a curious creature and an adept learner. A hummer will investigate just about any flower (and even bright spots on your clothing). It will quickly learn to identify which blossoms yield the largest bounty of nectar. Banding studies have shown that an individual will even re-

member the specific locations of plants and feeders from year to year, drinking from those same food sources every year as it migrates to its breeding territory.

The ruby-throated hummingbirds begin leaving their wintering grounds as early as January, their migration coinciding with the blooming of nectar-producing plants. By early March they begin to reach the lower part of the Southeast. Studies have shown that individual birds tend to continue the voyage until reaching the area where they were hatched. By mid-April, they have migrated into all regions of the Southeast.

To welcome these early migrants, it's best to use native plant species, ones that co-evolved with the birds and fill their nectar needs. Many hybridized, cultivated varieties of plants have been bred for blossom size, double or triple petal configuration, or fragrance, and in the process, the features that the hummers look for have vanished.

Several native perennial vines provide a nectar-laden greeting for the returning hummers. Carolina jessamine (*Gelsemium sempervirens*) is one of the earliest bloomers, budding as early as February. Though not the typical red of a hummingbird flower, this yellow, trumpet-shaped blossom can't help but attract the little bird's attention, brilliantly standing out against the glossy, narrow, evergreen leaves. It may also bloom in fall, providing fuel for the hummers as they migrate south. A close cousin, swamp jessamine (*G. rankinii*), is a more reliable rebloomer in autumn.

Another attractive native vine is coral honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*), which begins to bloom in March or April. It sports thin, tubular flowers that dangle in clusters. The species usually displays a scarlet bloom, whereas named selections may have orange or yellow flowers. The foliage is a light blue-green and may be semi-evergreen in warmer climates.

Native shrubs and trees also serve the hummingbird well. There are many species and named cultivars of the native azalea (*Rhododendron* spp.), and all of them offer a bounty of nectar from their trumpet-shaped blossoms. The flower color of these shrubs varies among the species from white to light or dark pink and from yellow to deep orange. The large number of cultivars available has expanded the range even more. The bloom times also vary a great deal. Some of the earliest to flower are piedmont azalea (*R. canescens*), pinxterbloom (*R. periclymenoides*), and coast azalea (*R. atlanticum*), which begin blooming as early as March or April. The flowers appear before or as the leaves emerge, making the blossoms easy to spot in the understory or edge of the forest, surely a welcome site for a hungry hummer.

Another early-blooming native that the hummingbirds adore is the red buckeye (*Aesculus pavia*). In April and early May, just as the developing leaves are unfurling, this small tree or large shrub puts on its show with scarlet, tubular blooms borne in large, loose, upright spikes. The red buckeye grows in the open understory of deciduous forests and will bloom while still quite small.

A taller treat of the forest is the tulip poplar tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*), which can reach impressive heights of 100 feet. But the flowers are what impress the birds. They are large and tulip-shaped, with greenish yellow petals. An orange spot at the base advertises the meal inside.

Closer to the ground, in the dappled sun of woodlands, the migrating hummingbird can find a selection of perennials from which to choose. One of its favorites is the native columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*).

(Continued on page 5)

A SWEET WELCOME (CONTINUED)

(Continued from page 4)

densis), which blooms in late March to early May. The distinctive flowers, which dangle from slender stalks, evolved to be pollinated by the hummingbird. The blossom is a bell-shaped combination of five red sepals and five yellow petals. Projecting backward are the spur-like nectaries. Long, yellow stamens hang down from the center of the bloom, sure to brush against the bird's head as it feeds. The striking flower of the Indian pink (*Spigelia marilandica*) greets the hummer from late April into June. It is another red, trumpet-shaped blossom, but it is held upright rather than dangling. The inside of the petals is a bright yellow, forming a star at the mouth of the bloom. Fire pink (*Silene virginica*), also blooming late April to June, is sure to catch the eye of the hummingbird with its red, star-shaped flower. The five petals are a clear and brilliant scarlet, and the blossoms are borne in loose clusters at the ends of slender stalks.

The sunny flower garden has offerings of its own. One of the best and earliest is Texas sage (*Salvia greggii*), which starts blooming in late March or early April and continues throughout the summer. This

Southwest native is a dependable, drought-tolerant performer in the Southeast, taking on the form of a small 2- to 3-foot tall shrub. The flower shape is the typical salvia construction of a tubular corolla with a large lower lip. It is available in colors of yellow, peach and magenta, but I'm betting the hummingbird's favorite is the same as mine, the scarlet red form.

Any of these native plants will brighten your landscape with their brilliant blooms – and with the accompanying charms of that American beauty, the hummingbird.

[Note: This article was previously published in *Carolina Gardener* magazine.]

PYTHIUM BLIGHT

by: Bill Slatton, Cherokee County Master Gardener

Pythium blight, also called grease spot, is a fungus disease that causes injury that appears in early morning as a circular spot surrounded by blackened grass blades, which are intertwined with mycelial threads of the fungus. The dark grass blades are water-soaked but soon wither, becoming reddish brown, especially if the weather is sunny and windy. The spots, usually not more than 2 inches in diameter, generally occur in groups. They tend to form streaks from being spread by the mower or because of water in poorly drained low places. It can be very destructive in periods of high temperature and high humidity, especially on poorly drained areas. It is usually more injurious to newly established turf, but will attack turf of any age if conditions are favorable. A sudden drop in temperature and dry air will check its spread. Ryegrasses are the most severely affected, but it can infect all grasses. It can kill large areas in hours because it spreads rapidly. It needs to be treated with a fungicide containing chloroneb or ethazole as soon as it is noticed.

Management Tips For Pythium Blight (from the [Georgia Pest Management Handbook](#)):

1. Don't mow wet turf when temperature is over 70°F to minimize disease spread.
2. Reduce thatch.
3. Apply less than 2 pounds of nitrogen per 1000 ft²/month during hot weather.
4. Increase air circulation to speed the drying process of the turf.
5. Minimize the amount of shade.
6. Irrigate turf early in the day.
7. Improve the drainage of the turf. Irrigate turf deeply and as infrequently as possible.

Q & A

By: Angie Yabrow, Cherokee County Master Gardener

Q: I know it is winter, but I want to make sure I get it right this year. I love Lantana and plant it every year. I want to know if I should deadhead them? I have tried both. The ones I didn't formed seed heads. Is this how they propagate, or will that take all the nutrients from the plants for the summer? Please help!

A: In mild climates (Zone 9 and higher), Lantana can survive and even bloom out side year-round. To keep it going, you need to keep deadheading the blooms and fertilizing. But, in most of North America, Lantana growers have to start over each spring. You can do this in several ways.

1. Purchase new plants from a nursery each year.
2. Let some of them go to seed, collect the seed, and store in a cool, dry spot; and plant in early spring. You will need to do this in trays indoors to get an early jump and transfer the plants outdoors after danger of frost has passed (about when tomatoes are set out).

3. Deadhead all of your Lantana to keep it blooming in full glory, then take cuttings in fall before first frost and root them in trays filled with a potting medium. Keep them in a well-lighted indoor spot through the winter, and they should be well-rooted and of substantial size to set out in the garden after the danger of frost has passed in spring.

Q: I received a tiller as a gift and need advice in how I should use it. I am learning about gardening and want to make as few mistakes as possible.

A: Compulsive tilling pulverizes soil, eliminates air spaces, and generally ruins the tilth of the soil. (Good soil tilth is characterized by large soil particles with lots of air space between them.) Till once in spring and once in fall, making only enough passes to turn under material. Regularly turning under organic matter counteracts some of the negative effects of repeated tilling. And remember, never till soil when it's wet. There's no better way to destroy the tilth of loam or turn your clay into cement.

APRIL TIPS

ORNAMENTALS

- Many herbs are excellent for natural-appearing rock gardens or formal plantings with brick pathways. These herbs do well in soil with good drainage and full-sun locations: creeping thyme, sage, santolina, garlic, rosemary and oregano.
- Observe your spring bulbs while in bloom this spring to be sure they have not been shaded by new growth of tree or shrub plantings. If so, you may need to move your bulbs to a sunny location or prune back the plantings. Also, mark over-crowded clumps. Dig up and divide them after the tops have died back. Make notes on where you want to add color for next spring.
- Fertilize bulbs upon emergence of foliage with a 10-10-10 fertilizer, using a rate of 3 pounds per 100 square feet. Repeat the application after the bulbs have bloomed.
- Lift, divide and replant chrysanthemums as soon as new shoots appear. Each rooted shoot or clump will develop into a fine plant for late summer bloom. Pinch out the top when the plants are about 4 inches high to thicken the plant.
- If you want an Easter Lily outside, don't plant it near other lilies. Easter Lilies may carry a virus that can infect other lilies.
- Plant clematis in locations that receive at least 6 hours of sun a day. Use an organic mulch or ground cover to shade roots and keep them cool. Plant in rich, well-drained loam.
- Layering has been found to be successful on more species of trees and shrubs than any other style of vegetative propagation. Layering consists of wounding a branch of the plant, then covering the wounded area with a rooting medium, such as soil or sphagnum moss. The branch will usually form roots around the wound while it is still attached to the parent plant. Layering is most successful if done in the spring or late fall as rooting is most vigorous in cool weather.
- Prune spring-blooming shrubs, such as forsythia, weigela and early spirea after they have completed flowering.
- Do not fertilize azaleas and camellias until they have finished blooming. They also should be pruned after blooming.
- 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 common trees visited by hummingbirds are buckeye, horse chestnut, apple, crabapple, hawthorn, redbud and tulip poplar. Shrubs include azaleas, beauty bush, coralberry, honeysuckle, New Jersey tea, and salvia greggii, and butterfly bush.
- Once new growth begins on trees and shrubs, cut back to green wood any twigs affected by winterkill.

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

- When planting orange, yellow or chocolate peppers, be sure to plant extra. They produce fewer fruits due to staying on the plant longer to mature.
- To hinder early blight on tomatoes, mulch under to keep the soil borne diseases from being splashed on the plant during rains.
- Fresh raspberries are tender and perishable, so they are rarely sold in stores. To have fresh berries, raise them in your own backyard. Fifteen or twenty plants, spaced 3' apart, in rows 6' apart, will produce a good supply of fruit for home use.
- If fruit trees are lacking pollinators nearby, put bouquets of blossoms from good pollinators and place them in pails under

blossoming trees. Make plans to plant pollinating varieties this fall or plant perennials or shrubs that bloom at the right time.

- Thin young fruits of apples, pears and peaches within 25 days of the peak bloom, leaving 4-7 inches between fruit to insure larger, healthier fruit.
- 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.
- Erect trellises now for beans and cucumbers, if you are going to train them on trellises later in the season.
- When the spring is very wet and the soil is too muddy to work, try planting your seed potatoes on top of the ground. Lay the cut seed flat on top of the wet earth with the eye up, spaced in rows 24" apart and 12" apart in the row. Cover them with 6" of oak leaves and water the leaves heavily enough to pack them so they won't blow off. This method saves digging and planting furrow, hilling, and digging up the potatoes. Just pull back the leaves and there they are, nice and clean and not sunburned.
- 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.
- Plant a bush-type, winter squash if your garden is small and you do not have adequate space for the long-vine varieties.
- 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 such as tomatoes, squash, eggplant 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 about 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 5-7 leaves, they are ready to transplant into the garden. For a sturdier plant, be certain to place the plant in the soil up to the bottom leaves. This increases the root growth of the plant.
- 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. Tie the plants to the stakes with a soft material such as stockings or old bed sheets that will not cut into the stems.

MISCELLANEOUS

- Don't be too anxious to move your houseplants outdoors. A slight chill can knock the leaves off tender plants.
- Replace the bulbs on plant lights yearly. They gradually lose their strength causing plants to stretch up and stop blooming.
- Moles are tunneling insect eaters and 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.

MAY TIPS

ORNAMENTALS

- Keep and eye out for aphids and other insects on roses. Spray if necessary. Begin spraying for blackspot at least twice a month. Remove & replace mulch under roses and you will cut down greatly on black spot.
- Red and silver maples, willows, poplars and elms can clog septic lines with their roots. Do not plant these near water or 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.
- Caladiums need generous amount of water and fertilizer to encourage continuous production of new leaves during the summer. Apply a light sidedressing of 5-10-5 fertilizer every two weeks and water thoroughly.
- If you are looking for plants that flower each year, require little care, and are rarely bothered by pests or disease, try some of these perennials: coneflower, bleeding heart, liatris, daylily, geum, hosta, Virginia bluebell, veronica and foamflower.
- To maximize a small space, try annual vines. They can disguise ugly walls and enliven fences. When trellised, they create shade and privacy while hiding undesirable views.

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

- Protect developing strawberries from birds with spun-bonded row cover or plastic netting.
- Technically, berries are fruit that are soft throughout, such as blueberries. Thus 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. So a raspberry is not a berry but is a cluster of small drupes or drupelets.
- Thin peaches 4-6 inches apart for large, high-quality fruit.
- If spraying fruit trees near a vegetable garden, cover vegetables with a large sheet of plastic to protect them from the spray.
- 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 inches high.

- 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.

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. A coat of varnish can make the marks last longer.
- Experiments in England suggest that sugar water might be more effective bait for slugs than beer. Slugs preferred an agar gel containing 2-5% sucrose (table sugar).
- USDA entomologists are testing the biological control potential of an insect that preys on the azalea’s worst enemy, the lace bug. Lace bugs suck nutrients from azaleas and other plants producing unsightly white spots on leaves. An adult of the insect predator, Stethoconus japonicus, can consume 2-6 lace bugs per day.
- Birds have 5 basic needs: food, water, shelter, nesting sites, and predator protection. Supply these and you will have many more birds around your home to entertain you and control insect pests.
- Try trapping earwigs and sowbugs with rolled up newspapers moistened with water. The insects will hide in the papers by day. Gather up the traps and dispose of them frequently.
- 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.
- A garden use for plastic milk jugs: seep irrigation. Punch holes in the sides of a jug about 2 inches apart. Bury the jug leaving the neck protruding from the soil. Fill the jug with water (solutions or liquid fertilizer may be used to water and feed at the same time) and screw the cap on firmly. The water will seep out, providing a slow, deep irrigation for nearby plants.
- Trellis and stake downwind from the prevailing winds so plants will lean against the supports when the wind is blowing.

Rainfall Comparisons

	Cherokee County				State Wide			
	January	February	March	April	January	February	March	April
Actual	2.6	5.5			2.6	3.5		
Normal	5.7	5.2	6.52	5.31	5.3	4.6	6.12	4.78
Deficit	-3.1	0.3			-2.7	-1.1		

LAWN CARE—APRIL AND MAY

by: Bill Slatton, Cherokee County Master Gardener

Warm Season Grasses (Bermuda, Centipede, Zoysia, St. Augustine)

- Warm season grasses can be planted after the danger of frost has passed, usually in mid to late April, however they will do better if planted in May. It is best to have soil temperatures of 75-80°. Cultivate and fertilize before planting.
- Mow when the grass reaches the recommended height. If you mow lower than the recommended height during the spring green-up you could shock the grass. After green-up, mow consistently at the correct height.
- If there has been no significant rainfall, water at 1-inch per week. It is best to water during the day in April to allow the grass to dry out. Fungal diseases love cool weather and damp grass. May can be a dry month, so make sure your lawn gets its 1-inch per week.
- When the lawn is 50% green you can begin fertilizing. Use fertilizer with a slow release form of nitrogen. An application of 1.5 pounds of actual nitrogen per 1000 square feet should last 2-3 months. Centipede lawns should have a fertilizer specifically designed for Centipede lawns and be applied at a rate of ¾ pounds per 1000 square feet. A slow release fertilizer with as little phosphorus as possible can be substituted for a Centipede fertilizer. If the soil is too cold for the roots to absorb nutrients, Centipede and Zoysia may emerge yellow. The grass should green up in a couple of weeks.
- Aerating is best if you wait until the soil temperatures reach 80°. This will usually be around mid May. Aerating in April can allow the introduction of weed seeds and interfere with the pre-emergence weed control.
- Your pre-emergence weed control is still effective in April. You can start using post-emergence sprays in May once you have mowed at least twice.
- April is a great time for fungal diseases. They can have all kinds of fun with your lawn. They are really happy with warm days, cool nights and moist lawns. Diseases can appear as discolored or dead areas with clearly defined edges. Check the edges for discolored, wilted, or spotted blades. Use a fungicide approved for use on your grass.
- Sod webworms, cutworms, armyworms and chinch bugs

can all start to show up in April and May. Webworms and cut worms feed on grass blades at night. Watch for spider like webs on the lawn early in the morning or patches of cut grass blades. Armyworms feed in masses and can be very destructive. Treat with a soil insecticide for your type of grass.

Cool Season Grasses (Tall Fescue, Kentucky Bluegrass, Creeping Red/Chewing Fescue)

- Seed as soon as possible if you're going to. The best time is in September/October. Seedlings need to establish before the summer heat.
- Mow at the recommended height. Never cut more than one-third at a time.
- If there has been no significant rainfall, give 1 inch of water per week. In April, it is best to water during the day so the moisture will evaporate quickly, helping to prevent fungal diseases. Remember that May is one of the driest months of the year. Watering deeply and infrequently encourages grass roots to grow deeper into the soil.
- Established evergreen lawns should be fertilized early in April with fertilizer that has a slow release form of nitrogen at the rate of 1.5 pounds per 1000 square feet. This should last through the summer. Newly seeded lawns should be fertilized four weeks after sowing. Do not fertilize in May.
- If you have not already done so, you can still apply pre-emergence weed control in April. Do not apply to newly seeded or sodded lawns until they have been mowed at least twice. You can spray visible weeds with a post-emergence spray.
- Fungal diseases can appear in April and early May. They like daytime temperatures of 65-80°, nighttime temperatures of 50-60°, and moist lawns.
- Keep an eye out for webworms, cutworms and armyworms in April and May. Mature white grubs will move closer to the surface in May. Wait until late July/early August to apply insecticide to treat the newly hatched grubs. The insecticides are not very effective on mature grubs.
- Use sharp mower blades. Dull blades will rip the grass and cause the tips to turn brown.

Care and Share Committee

The purpose of the Care and Share Committee is to reach out to other master gardeners on a more personal level than has been done in the past. When you need us, we want to be there to help. If you, or a close family member have been ill or in the hospital, we would love to bring you a nice meal to say we care, or at least send you a card. If you have a death of an immediate family member, let me know. We want to help out by bringing a meal, but we also would like to send a gift to your favorite charity or send a gift certificate to you for a nice plant you can put in your yard in honor of your loved one. Those of us who have had deaths or serious illnesses in the past, know how nice it is to have someone outside of our family, show support and compassion. It's a "warm fuzzy" just when we need it.

Also, we are asking that you let us know the month and day of your birthday. We will send an e-mail greeting to you if you will share that information with us. I promise we won't sing to you. Another thing the committee is doing is overseeing the selection of someone or a business that we want to honor for their contribution to our group. They will receive a Certificate of Appreciation to hang on their wall. This year's honor went to Autumn Hill Nursery. If you would like to serve on this committee, please let me know. Hopefully, we will only have to send birthday greetings this year. Sharon Atcheson, CCMG

UNINVITED GUESTS - CONTINUED FROM LAST ISSUE

by: Karen Garland, Cherokee County Master Gardener

Bats - Bats like an environment that is hot and dark. If they are in your attic use flashing lights, a loud radio, and run a fan. Once entrances have been located, caulk all cracks and screen openings. The best time to seal a home is in early spring or late fall; do not close entrances between May and August to avoid sealing in nursing pups.

Beavers - Protect individual trees with three-foot high cylinders of hard ward cloth encircling the trunk.

Birds - To protect fruit and other crops, create barriers: bird netting, an overhead grid of wires or twisted Mylar strips.

Cats - Cats love catnip and they will frazzle themselves and the plant by eating it, batting it around, and rolling on it. You can capitalize on this catnip compulsion by planting kitty crops of catnip far from the garden and from bird feeders.

Chipmunks - To prevent root or bulb feeding, plant susceptible bulbs, tubers or other plants in hardware-cloth or chicken wire enclosures. Rodents do not usually bother daffodils and narcissus. Tulips are their favorite meal.

Coyotes - Don't feed family dogs outdoors; remove bird feeders, which concentrate coyotes' prey. Don't allow them to approach your house; scare them off with loud noises or spray with water hose.

Deer - Deer can be deterred by smells that they find offensive. Rotten eggs give a particular pungent aroma they don't like. However, we two-legged critters don't like it either, making a home brew of rotten eggs a nasty chore. Instead, there are sulphurous compounds available for sale that deter deer in the same way without the mess.

One recipe that is more user-friendly yet still deters the deer is made of a fish emulsion that is actually good for your ornamentals. (Don't use this one on your vegetable garden, as it will affect the taste!) Mix 3 Tbsp. kelp and 1-cup fish emulsion with 3 Tbsp. liquid hand soap. Put into a 3-gallon pump sprayer and fill with water. The smell of the fish should keep the deer at bay, but if they should be hungry enough to take a bite, they won't like the taste of the soap. A deer's sense of smell is so refined that a smelly blanket from the doghouse may keep deer from the garden. The occasional presence of a dog in and around the garden also helps keep pesky deer at bay.

The deer's highly refined sense of smell makes small, scented soap bars an easy repellent. Use an ice pick to make a hole in the middle the bar and use a loop of string for hanging. Affix a bar of soap at waist level to trees and bushes, spacing them 20 to 25 feet apart.

One last deer deterrent is a combination of aromatic plants around the area where deer enter your yard. With no tasty morsels to draw them into your garden, deer are likely to bypass this yard in search of plants they prefer. If they do venture into this area, the scent of the plants rubs off on the deer and a cloud of strong scents confuse their senses. Some good scented deer-detering plants are lemon thyme, spearmint, lamb's ears, and rosemary. A few prickly or unappetizing plants that discourage deer from the garden include blackberries, Rotunda Chinese Holly, Madagascar Periwinkle, butterfly weed and common fox-glove.

Dogs - If your dog is digging in your garden, you may not be able to change its pesky habit but you can redirect it! Give the dog its own sandbox or fill a kiddie swimming pool with sand if you prefer. Put the sandbox far away from your garden and bury treats, like dog biscuits and chew toys, in the sand. Pretty soon your pooch will look forward to digging for buried treasure in the sandbox and forget about digging in your garden.

Mice - Hungry mice can girdle a young tree trunk by nibbling at the bark. A mixture of ½ ounce of Tabasco sauce with 1-pint water and ½ teaspoon dishwashing liquid can deter mice from this bad habit. Add 1 teaspoon of chili powder to the mixture to ensure that the mice get

"hot feet" before they reach the tree. Spray this mixture on the ground around young trees and at the trunk base.

Moles - Moles do not directly destroy plantings by chewing, but can ruin a lawn's looks and damage young plant roots with their tunneling in search of grubs. A concoction of 3 ounces castor oil and 4 tablespoons dishwashing liquid mixed in a blender with 1 cup of warm water yields about 12 ounces of concentrate. When ready to treat the mole tunnels, mix 2 tablespoons in a gallon of warm water. Spray the affected area or locate a tunnel, make a hole with a stick, and pour in about a cup of the diluted mixture. In a large yard this method is quicker and easier than spraying.

Raccoons - *In Chimney*: Lower a trouble light with flasher disc and 60 watt light bulb inserted in socket, three-fourths of the way down the chimney. Place a radio in box, speaker side up (so it's almost against damper) inside fireplace. Set dial to a talk station (not music). Raccoon may leave that night, or may take a week or longer if animal has young. **CAUTION: DO NOT LIGHT A FIRE TO TRY TO SMOKE ANIMAL OUT!** When vacated, cap chimney.

In Attic (crawlpace/under deck): Use clamp-on reflector lights (with flasher disc). Use radio on talk station. When you suspect that animal is gone, tack or staple a plastic garbage bag over entry hole (leave lights and radio going). If the plastic is not broken through after three nights, repair hole. Keep lights and radio going for several days in case animal decides to check area again. Monitor frequently.

In Garbage Cans: Garbage attracts both domestic and wild creatures. If possible, keep it in a garage. If no garage, use heavy garbage cans with tight fitting lids. Pour ammonia over garbage (each time you add to it) and fasten lid with heavy rubber bungee cords.

Squirrels - Squirrels love tulip and rhododendron buds. They also are prone to digging up the bulbs of spring flowering plants when nuts and acorns get scarce. One quick, easy way to deter squirrels is to sprinkle used cat litter around the base of flowers or around the area where bulbs are located. A few spoonfuls are enough to convince them that a hungry cat is lurking nearby. (Don't use this trick for food crops!)

In Chimney: Usually a squirrel in the chimney has fallen in by accident and has a difficult time climbing out. Try lowering a thick, heavy rope or knotted sheets, so the animal can climb out. When gone, cap chimney. *In Attic*: Use a clamp-on light with flasher disc above plastic or inflated great horned owl. Owls are their natural enemy and predator. Also, use mothballs around the perimeter of attic. Do not seal your home during nesting period. Flying squirrels bear two litters per year.

Skunks - Under Foundation: Use a clamp-on reflector light with flasher disc and a 25 or 40 watt bulb inserted in it. Place it over blow-up or plastic great horned owl (the only predator of skunks). Stake the owl with light near the den of skunk. Turn light on at dusk and off in the morning. Move owl and light every other day to prevent skunk from becoming used to it. Also, place ammonia soaked rag part way into hole, leaving enough room for animal to exit. Freshen ammonia rag each day. Also sprinkle flour in front of hole to show tracks exiting. When you suspect animal is gone, stuff large plastic bag into hole and observe for disturbance. If none, then fill hole. Continue with owl and light for one to two weeks afterwards. **Snakes** - Close snakes out from underneath steps and porches with hardware cloth. Eliminate woodpiles near the house. Remove shrubs and mulch around house if snakes are numerous. Preying on insects and rodents, remember that snakes are beneficial helpers in the environment. It is against the law in Georgia to kill non-venomous species.

Coq-au-Vin

- 2 boneless chicken breasts
- 1c. white wine
- ¼ c. fresh parsley chopped
- 1 clove garlic chopped
- 2 shallots sliced
- 1 green pepper cut into pieces
- 1 clove garlic cut into thirds
- 1 medium onion sliced
- 1c. orange juice
- 1c. white wine
- 1 c. chopped carrots
- 1c. chopped celery
- 1/4c. chopped fresh basil
- ¼ c. chopped chives
- ½ c. chopped mushrooms
- 1 c. chicken broth

Springtime Egg Skillet

- 2 c. shredded hash browns
- 6eggs beaten or 6 cups eggbeaters
- chopped ham or bacon
- 1/3 cup chopped green onion
- 1/3 c. shredded cheddar cheese
- chopped tomato

Cook potatoes in olive oil on oven-proof skillet 8-10 minutes until done; cover with ham, green onion, cheese, and tomato-then eggs. Cook 10 minutes, broil to cook top. Serves 2-4

Marinate chicken in 1st 3 ingredients 20 minutes. In olive oil sauté veggies in large sauté pan. Add chicken(discarding marinade) herbs, orange juice, and wine. Cover and cook 30 minutes. Thicken and serve with mashed potatoes and fresh parsley.

The University of Georgia and Ft. Valley State College, 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 committed to a diverse work force.

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Mission Statement of the Georgia Master Gardener Association:
To stimulate the love for and increase the knowledge of gardening and to voluntarily and enthusiastically share this knowledge with others.