

Newsletter



for the Cherokee
County Master
Gardeners

February/March 2002

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FROM THE EDITOR

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Dear Fellow Master Gardeners:

Whoever decided that spring-cleaning needed to be done in the spring must have been from Montana! The ground in Montana is still frozen in the spring. Here in Georgia, spring is my busiest gardening time. I barely have time to do the least amount of cleaning necessary to keep the health authorities at bay; let alone clean closets, organize drawers, or flip mattresses. Since moving to Georgia, I do "spring cleaning" on cold January and rainy February days. Unfortunately, we've had pretty mild Januarys and dry Februarys so I

use a lot of twenty-watt light bulbs. My favorite way to dust is to open all the windows on a breezy day and expect all the dust to blow out. In May, this doesn't work when the pines are shedding their yellow pollen. I know you are all busy as well, which makes the time we volunteer as Master Gardeners even more valuable to the county. Let me thank you now because this spring we will all be too busy...

Marcia Winchester, Editor

WHAT'S HAPPENING

FEBRUARY/MARCH

Feb 7 Sr. Center Workday - 10am

Feb 19 Monthly Meeting - 10am, Historic Courthouse

Feb 19 Advanced MG Training - Fruit @ Haralson County

Feb 20-24 Southeastern Flower Show @ ATL Exposition Center - more info: www.flowershow.org

Feb 23 Advanced MG Training - Xeriscaping

Mar 7 Sr. Center Workday - 9:30am

Mar 8 Advanced MG Training - Herbaceous Plant ID, Part 1 @ Houston County

Mar 16 Spring Plant Sale - Autumn Hill Nursery

Mar 19 Monthly Meeting - 10am, Historic Courthouse

2002 Georgia Gold Medal Winners!

Lady In Red Salvia
Blue Mist Bluebeard
Worcester Gold Bluebeard
Purple Beauty Berry
Forest Pansy
Oklahoma Redbud
Texas White Redbud

Salvia coccinea 'Lady in Red'
Caryopteris clandonensis 'Blue Mist'
Caryopteris clandonensis 'Worcester Gold'
Callicarpa dichotoma
Cercis canadensis 'Forest Pansy'
Cercis canadensis 'Oklahoma'
Cercis canadensis 'Texas White'

THE GARDENER'S LIBRARY

By: Marcia Winchester, Cherokee County Master Gardener



In my quest to learn more about native plants, I have read and purchased several books. There really isn't one book that covers everything on natives so be prepared to own several. I have also found that as my knowledge has grown, the books I use as a reference change. One of my first native plant books is *Nature's Melody* by Betty L. Benson. It has a bright yellow cover thus becoming my "yellow" book. It is very helpful for new enthusiasts because all the photos are grouped together by flower color. This helps to find an unidentified plant when in bloom. As in many books, most of the pictures are nice close-ups of the flower. This is not helpful if the plant is not in bloom. There is usually very little of the actual plant shown. But beginning native plant identification is with the flower. Once a plant is easily recognized by the flower then the next step is the leaves. In the book under each picture is a common name and the page where the written information is located. The written info is

short and informative. It includes perennial or annual, height, and bloom time. It then describes the flower and leaves. It includes where the plant likes to grow in nature and suggests where to plant it in a garden. It gives the best propagation method, which many books leave out. It even adds a note on each plant. This book includes some non-natives that are commonly found in the woods and are often mistaken for natives. It also includes basic ferns, which some books don't include. In the back it includes a glossary, hand drawings of flower inflorescence, leaf arrangements, leaf shapes, margins and attachments. It also has locations in Georgia of places to visit to observe native wildflowers.

This book can be purchased through the state Master Gardening organization for \$20.

GMGA WINTER CONFERENCE

By: Mariana Jackson, Cherokee County Master Gardener

"A perennial is a flower, had it survived, would bloom year after year." This was the crux of two of the four speakers we heard at this year's GMGA Winter Conference. Thirteen Cherokee master gardeners gathered with over four hundred master gardeners from all over the state at the Gwinnett Justice and Administration center to be entertained by some very entertaining and humorous speakers.

Peter Loewer from Asheville, North Carolina has written several books on gardening. His most recent book, *The Winter Garden*, was the subject of his presentation at the conference. He had a beautiful slide show of over 75 different plants, from mosses to mouse-tail plants (*Arisarum proboscideum*) and cactus (*Opuntia phaeacantha*) to crocuses. His plants of choice are beautiful in the garden from Thanksgiving to early April...and you thought that you couldn't find anything to do in the garden in winter!

Linda Blue, also from Asheville, North Carolina, shared with us tips on maintaining a perennial garden. She stressed the fact that a low maintenance garden is not a "no maintenance garden". Maintaining a perennial garden requires watering, fertilizing, weeding, plant grooming and pest control. Her talk gave us great basics to incorporate into our library seminars and perhaps next year's master gardener classes!

After lunch, afraid that we might fall asleep after our stomachs were full, they brought in Huly Smith who specializes in camellias. This 72-year-old had everyone gasping at the flowers from some of his *camellia reticulata* hybrids. The blooms were six to eight inches across!

If we weren't awake after Mr. Smith's talk, they introduced George Sanko from the Botanical Garden at Perimeter College. There was nothing "dry" about George's talk and if you were there you'll understand the double meaning. This man is passionate about what he does with native plants. With the threat of even tighter watering

restrictions this year in metro Atlanta, he is testing these native plants to their limits. Some of these plants are surviving in 100% sand and no irrigation. He is trying to kill them! The crazy thing is they are surviving. Sign me up, I want these plants! They have beautiful flowers, long bloom times and are drought tolerant. These plants may be the next Georgia Gold Medal Winners. Do you want to know some of the names of these plants of steel?

Well I'll tell the names of these academy award natives this time but next year you need to come to the GMGA Winter Conference to hear and see it all yourself!

Sun

Red Yucca
Wine Cups
Seashore Mallow
Arkansas Bluestar
Pink Muhly

Shade

Celandine Poppy
Bleeding Heart
Monkshood

Vines

Texas Clematis
Leather Flower

Ferns

Log Fern
Florida Wood Fern
Dixie Wood Fern

Ground Cover

Alleghany Spurge
Canadian Wild Ginger
Callaway Wild Ginger

RECOMMENDED PLANTING DATES - SPRING AND FALL

Courtesy of University of Georgia and The Cooperative Extension Service

Crop	Days to Maturity	Spring Date	Fall Date	Plant Distance
Asparagus		Jan 15 - Mar 15	Nov 1 - Dec 1	1.5 - 2 ft.
Bean, Bush	2nd Year	April 15_____	—Aug 1	2 - 4 in.
Bean, Pole	50-60	April 15_____	—Aug 1	6 - 12 in.
Bean, Lima	65-75	April 15_____	—Aug 1	3 - 4 in.
Beet	65-75	Mar 15 - Apr 1	Aug 1- Sept 1	2 - 4 in.
Broccoli	55-65	Mar 15 - Apr 15	Aug 1 - Sept 1	14 - 18 in.
Cabbage	60-80	Mar 15 - Apr 15	Aug 1 - Sept 1	12 in.
Cantaloupe	65-80	Apr 15 - Jun 15	_____	3.5 - 4 ft.
Carrot	80-90	Mar 15 - Apr 15	Aug 1 - Sept 1	2 - 3 in.
Collard	70-80	Mar 15 - Apr 15	Aug 1 - Sept 1	8 -16 in.
Corn	55-70	Apr 15_____	—July 1	12 - 18 in.
Cucumber	65-90	Apr 15_____	—Aug 15	3 - 4 ft.
Eggplant	50-65	May 1_____	—July 15	2.5 - 3 ft.
Kale	75-90	Apr 1 - May 1	Aug 1 - Sept 1	10 in.
Lettuce	50-70	Mar 15 - Apr 15	Aug 15 - Sept 15	10 -12 in.
Mustard	60-85	Mar 15 - Apr 15	Aug 15 - Sept 1	1-2 in.
Okra	40-50	May 1_____	—July 15	6 in.
Onion, Green	55-65	Mar 15 - Apr 15	Aug 15 - Sept 1	3 - 4 in.
Onion, Dry	42-55	Feb 15 - May 15	Oct 1- Nov 1	3 - 4 in.
Peas, Garden	100-120	Feb 15 - Apr 15	_____	2 - 3 in.
Peas, Southern	60-70	May 1_____	—July 1	4 - 6 in.
Pepper	60-70	May 1_____	—July 1	1.5 - 2 ft.
Potato, Irish	65-80	Mar 1 - Apr 1	_____	10 - 14 in.
Potato, Sweet	70-90	May 1 - Jun 1	_____	12 in.
Radish	90-120	Mar 1 - Apr 1	Sept 1 - Oct 1	2 in.
Spinach	25-30	Mar 1 - Apr 1	Sept 1 - Oct 1	2 in.
Squash, Summer	40-45	Apr 15_____	—Aug 15	2 - 3 ft.
Squash, Winter	45-55	Apr 25 - Jun 1	_____	3 ft.
Tomato	85-100	Apr 25_____	—July 15	3 - 4 ft.
Turnip	70-90	Mar 15 - Apr 15	Aug 1 - Sept 1	2 - 3 in.
Watermelon	40-60 80-90	Apr 25 - May 15	_____	8 - 10 ft.

Note:

- ◆ Days to maturity will vary with the variety and time of planting. Summer-planted crops will mature a few days sooner than Spring-planted crops.
- ◆ If the crop is planted as seed, the seed planting depth will be given on the envelope. In general, a seed should be planted at a depth 2-3 times the diameter of the seed. After the seed has germinated, the plants should be thinned to the distance given in the table.
- ◆ Best results will occur when planting between these dates. Those willing to gamble on the weather may plant one week before or after these dates.

COOL TOOL!

By: Mary Tucker, Cherokee County Master Gardener

When I volunteered to write the Cool Tool column for this issue of the newsletter, I told Marcia I would be describing a tool I bought for my husband, Rick. She said, "It must have something to do with cutting!". She knows Rick. I grow stuff. He cuts it.

Rick is extremely hard to buy for, so as his birthday was approaching this year, I was desperately browsing through catalogs to get some ideas. One catalog I picked up was a small, somewhat nondescript one called *Walt Nicke's Garden Talk*. It was only 30 pages long, with no glossy color photos to spice it up, and based on the name "Garden Talk", you wouldn't know what you might find inside.

I got a pleasant surprise when I opened up this little catalog. In it were quite a few gardening tools I had never encountered before and a nice selection of tools for either cutting or sharpening. Rick has plenty of cutting tools, but nothing to keep them all sharp, so I was delighted when I saw the PRUNA*mate Precision Pruner Sharpener manufactured by Multi-Sharp Tools.

It's a small tool, no more than a few inches long. It's made of lightweight, industrial grade plastic with a sharpening surface of abrasive silicon carbide. The tool can be adjusted

to numerous angles so you can sharpen just about any tool with a blade, from knives and pruners to garden shears and loppers. It will sharpen straight or curved blades, and Rick has used it to sharpen our Felco pruners, garden knife, my little flower shears, and his big loppers.

The PRUNA*mate came with simple but clear, illustrated instructions, and Rick has found it easy to use. It's quick, too, only taking two to three minutes to sharpen a tool. But I should let him speak for himself: "It's great, better than I thought it would be. A very cool tool."

If you are interested in one for yourself (or your prune-happy significant other), you can call Walt Nicke at 978-887-3388.

By now I am sure you are wondering how much this great gadget costs. It was only \$9.95, leaving me with money in the birthday budget to also buy Multi-Sharp's Rotary Mower Sharpener. Maybe in a future Cool Tool column I will tell you about it.

BIRD'S EYE VIEW - ATTRACTING NESTING BIRDS

By: Helen B. Ogren, Cherokee County Master Gardener



The first people to attract nesting birds in our area were American Indians, who hung gourds on poles to entice Purple Martins to nest nearby. Martins are vigorous nest defenders, even against larger predator birds such as hawks, owls, and crows. It is thought that Native Americans took advantage of this, to help keep these predators away from their small game, and from their meat and pelts during drying and curing processes.

Today we prize Martins and other birds for eating copious amounts of insects, weed seeds, and rodents. Some can eat up to their weight in insects per day. Even seedeaters collect large scale amounts of insects while feeding their young. Those who wish to garden using a few or no chemicals can really appreciate this.

Your local bird or garden supply stores have a range of appropriate nesting boxes available, along with suggestions for their placement. Or you may make your own from plans available at the library if you are handy with tools. Don't install perches under entrance holes. The nesters don't need them, and they provide easy access to eggs and nestlings by

predators. You can break or saw off any perches that may be on store-bought boxes. NEVER use treated wood to make nest boxes. Avoid using paint, which could harm birds. Let the wood breath.

You can clean out old nests in late fall or early winter. Birds may move in some materials while using them for winter shelter. Clear this out in early spring, or let the birds do it. Some birds start nesting very early. Just a little warm-up can give them amorous ideas.

Check all boxes. Some may have a resident tree frog (OK by me) or a wasp nest (not so OK). If seriously full of mites (you'll know this immediately when your hand and lower arm are covered), dust with Sevin dust. It biodegrades in a week and is harmless to birds of the barnyard. It can be hosed or brushed out and then re-hung. Be sure anything used for hanging is strong and secure. Leave some natural thickets, hedgerows, and vine tangles where possible. Non-cavity nesters will build here, and, best of all, Mother Nature cleans up after them.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

THE SENIOR CENTER

By: Marcia Winchester, Cherokee County Master Gardener



The Senior Center garden is the Master Gardener's first and continuing project. It started by taking a weedy barren area behind the Senior Center and creating a garden the seniors could enjoy. Through donations from the community, grants from the state Master Gardener's organization and, most importantly, hard work from the

Master Gardeners, we have made a beautiful retreat for the seniors to sit or walk through.

We have divided the area into several gardens with individual chair or co-chair persons. A chairperson of a garden is responsible to design, plant and keep up their garden. Plants are obtained by division, donations, or purchased within the allocated budget. Master Gardeners can work on one specific garden or help where it is needed each month. As with any garden it is constantly changing. The current gardens we have are the front, the sides, the Memorial, Heirloom, Fragrant, butterfly, herb, and vegetable.

Gerry Slaughter and Ann Rand chair the front garden. They have several helpers but could use more. This garden goes across the entire front of the building and is a bit shadier than the back gardens. The soil is very poor clay. Gerry is experimenting with drought tolerant shrubs to find the best combination. Duties include pruning, changing annuals, watering, weeding and, once a year, putting down mulch. Elena Padgett has designed a window box under the front window. She had to water it every week and we would like to experiment with exchanging some of the plants for drought tolerant ones. If you are interested in designing this let us know.

The side gardens are also a drought tolerant challenge. They run on both sides of the building being only 12-18 inches wide. Last year we took out our latest batch of failures on the north side and put in about six different sedum ground covers. They still need an occasional watering and mulching. The lamb's ear on the south has mites and needs attention. Last year Terry Leese took over the Memorial garden. It is up the hill in full sun. The Memorial garden is dedicated to Meals-on-Wheels volunteers. It is heart shaped with a crepe myrtle and ice plant for color. The Heirloom garden was installed one year ago. It is a fun garden with plants we associate with past memories. Scott Love designed the garden totally from donations and needs a co-chair to help fine-tune the plants. Arlene Ward received a \$500 grant from the state Master Gardener's organization to install our fragrant garden 1 1/2 years ago. This garden circles the arbor and swing so the seniors can enjoy fragrances as they sit and

swing. Arlene could also use a co-chair along with some helpers. We are finding some plants aren't as fragrant as written up and need to be changed; yet balanced so as not to have too many scents at the same time. Judie Bicknell and I co-chair the butterfly garden and our challenge is having too many plants for our space. Our herb garden is small and Becky Griffin's challenge is to eradicate pink primrose. Last year we had six varieties of basil in our herb garden. Our vegetable garden is our biggest and most important garden. We have raised the beds and put down mulch for easier picking for the seniors. We have 5 small blueberries, a tiered strawberry bed and several other beds for vegetable for the seniors. We have a tradition of a tomato taste test at our August workday. We desperately need two co-chair for the committee. We have several volunteers to plant, pick the harvest, and keep it weeded.

New projects for the winter are putting down aged manure, mulching everything, planting azaleas and native ground cover on the hill by the animal shelter to control erosion and to eradicate the Bermuda in the back fence garden. Once the fence is replaced by the county we can reestablish the hollyhocks and add more plants. We also want to put in some shrubs to hide the holding area. Jean Garner needs help on the water committee. Watering is done in compliance to any county restrictions and is a great way to put in volunteer hours and the senior center on weekends and nights. If one of the gardens appeals to you, call the chairperson for more information or help in that garden on your next workday. Also a list of tasks can be assigned over the phone or email to be accomplished on your schedule. During workdays we have insect ID, plant propagating, pruning tips, and more. Judie and I will work on coming up with some alternate workdays and times.

There is lots of room to add a new garden if anyone is interested. We are open to new ideas. Any new additions will need a plan of maintenance. The front sign is a good example of an area someone could create a garden with presenting a design and the commitment to maintain it. Other projects we could expand at the Senior Center are to have a recipe board for the seniors. They would need to be quick, easy recipes for 1-2 people. Another project could be to design weatherproof information stands with info on the plants and their uses. This might be helpful in the vegetable and herb area with information on when and how to harvest. We could also have information on why different plants are in the butterfly garden. Judie and I hope to see you soon.-

FEBRUARY TIPS

ORNAMENTALS AND TURF

- Place Stakes in intended planting spots and view from several angles to help you imagine how new plants will look. When you are ready to plant, place plants still in pots where you intend to plant and step back to view the whole area one last time before committing the plant to the ground.
- Apply pre-emergence weed control in late February to home lawns.
- Do not use pre-emergence weed control if you are planning to re-plant or re-seed your lawn. Also, do not apply it if you planted a new lawn, re-seeded or re-sodded your lawn this past fall.
- This is a great time to plant bare root roses. Select a quality plant with at least 3-5 strong canes.
- Prune hybrid tea roses now, removing old canes and lowering plant to a height of 12-15". To care for rose bushes at this time, apply a fertilizer heavy in potassium (K). Prune rose canes back to about 6-10". Apply a drop of white glue to the end of fresh cut canes. This will prevent borers. Apply a dormant spray of lime-sulfur and dormant oil before active growth appears. Clean up rose beds, discard old foliage, pieces of canes, and remove old mulch with weeds. Re-apply a fresh layer of pine straw to rose beds.
- Start slow developing flowers inside such as alyssum, coleus, dusty miller, geranium, impatiens, marigold, petunia, phlox, portulaca, salvia, vinca and verbena. Be sure to change plant light bulbs over seedlings, as older bulbs cannot give off as much light.
- Remember that vegetable seeds have a short life and

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

usually will not be good after a year or two. This includes sweet corn, onion, okra, bean and parsnip.

- Consider the family vacation when planning your garden. Choose planting dates and varieties so your garden won't be ready for a full harvest when you are out of town.
- Plan to grow at least one new vegetable this year; it may turn out better than what you have been growing. The dwarf varieties on the market use less space while producing more foot per square foot.
- Peaches grow best when maintained with an open center (no central leader). Keep three or four strong, scaffold branches evenly distributed around the trunk. Limbs that branch out at a 60° angle are preferred, but spreaders can be used to widen narrow crotch angles.
- Prune fruit trees and grapes in late February or early March after the worst of the winter cold is passed but before spring growth begins when temps maintain at 45°. For disease and insect control, cut out dead wood and dispose of the prunings. Disinfect pruners after each cut.
- Grapevine prunings can be made into attractive wreaths.

Decorate them with cutout hearts, dried flowers, or bird nests, or shape them into a heart over a wire frame for use as Valentine gifts.

- Fruit trees, such as peaches, pears, apples and plums, can be sprayed now with dormant oils to reduce insect problems.
- If ground feeding birds or squirrels from clay saucers, it

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is best to use a cracked one. That way rain water can drain. The sides of the saucer keep seeds from blowing away on windy days.

- When purchasing cut roses, choose colors that are clear and sharp. Look for flowers with petals that are just starting to unfurl and buds that are springy to the touch. A rosebud that is too tight is known as a 'bullhead' and will never open. The cause of bullheads is unknown.
- Handle seed packets with care. Rubbing the outside to determine how many seeds are inside can break the protective seed coats, thereby reducing germination.
- To make old hay and manure weed-free, spread on the soil in late winter, water well, and cover with black plastic. Weed seeds will sprout after a few days or warm weather, then will be killed by frost and lack of daylight.

MY FAVORITE PLANT

*By: Liz Hood,
Cherokee County Master Gardener Intern*

It wasn't so much that I found fothergilla as that it found me at the garden center. Looking for a small shrub to fill in a bare spot in a perennial bed, I saw the frothy fronds of white, somewhat resembling bottlebrushes, waving in the spring breeze and just had to take one home (that has never happened to any other Master Gardener, has it?). *Fothergilla gardenii* "Mt. Airy" is hardy in the entire state of Georgia and isn't too picky about soil type. The bed that I have planted it in has what I would call average amendments for our rocky clay and receives late afternoon sun, although it will take full sun. The habit is rounded with a maximum size of about 4-5 feet and a spread of about 2 feet. Although the spring show of color is why many buy fothergilla, the fall color is equally spectacular with a blaze of orange and red leaves in varying hues. It is deciduous, so you'll have to live with the bare stems until spring. After the first winter, I added red twig dogwood and a contorted filbert to the bed and have a "bare bones" winter garden.

MARCH TIPS

ORNAMENTALS AND TURF

- Be aware that a brown plastic material that looks and feels like natural burlap, but does not break down in the soil, is now being used to wrap root balls of B & B plants. Synthetic materials enclosing the roots of trees and shrubs must be completely removed to ensure success of the transplants.
- Propagate deciduous shrubs, such as forsythia and winter jasmine, now by ground layering.
- If you want flowers on your cactus, plant it in a small pot. Most cacti bloom sooner if root-bound.
- To divide dahlias, place dormant tubers in moist peat moss or sand until new shoots appear then divide with a sharp knife.
- Re-pot houseplants that have grown too large for their containers. Cut back leggy plants to encourage compact growth. Root the cuttings in moist media to increase your supply of plants.
- Houseplants can be watered more frequently with the onset of spring and new growth. Start fertilizing houseplants now for good growth.
- Give roses a starter application of complete fertilizer.
- Don't rush to remove mulch from strawberries. Leave it

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

over your plants to protect them from late cold spells. When plants start to grow, the mulch must be removed to allow leaves to develop in the light. If leaves develop under the mulch, they will become etiolated (blanched) and yellow from lack of chlorophyll, and may burn and die when exposed to the sun.

- Spring applications of pesticides should be made on peaches, apples and pears. Correct timing for spraying depends on the stage of development of flowers.
 - Lettuce is very sensitive to low pH. Lime should be applied to the soil if the pH is below 6.0.
 - If your garden is on a hillside, plant across the slope (not up and down) to help hold moisture in the soil and reduce erosion.
 - Start transplants of tomatoes, peppers and eggplants indoors.
 - Seed root crops, such as carrots beets, radishes and parsnips, in your garden.
 - Do not add lime to the area for potatoes. The lower pH helps control scab.
 - One way to avoid the danger of unusually cold nights is to set water-filled plastic jugs around each seedling. Warmed by the sun, these will radiate heat all night, preventing cold damage.
-
- Place bird houses outdoors early this month. Birds will

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begin looking for nesting sites soon and the houses should attract several mating pairs. Ideally, houses erected on smooth metal poles where predators cannot climb are most often selected, but placement on top of fence posts or in trees will usually suffice.

- Put out hummingbird feeders in mid-March.



QUESTION AND ANSWER

Send your questions to Angie Yabrow
at yardbird_mabs@msn.com
or call her at 770-592-9399

Q: Why are ticks more prevalent in the spring and fall than at other times of the year?

A: I checked many sources for this including people I know that might have some knowledge of ticks and their behavior and the best consensus I have is that it relates to the tick's lifecycle and the times of the year when egg laying and molting occur. The two types of ticks (soft and hard) have differences in their lifecycles. The soft tick's lifecycles stages are usually not distinguishable. Soft ticks may feed several times during each stage and females will lay multiple small batches of eggs between feedings. The lifecycle lasts many years and many soft ticks can survive for extended periods of time without a "blood meal". Hard ticks, on the other hand, have 3 distinct life stages and a "blood meal" is taken during each stage. Hard ticks are distinguished by the specific type of lifecycle they have. One-host ticks will attach to a host and remain there through all stages of their lifecycle and only drop as adults to lay eggs and die. The 2-host and 3-host will attach and remain for the larval and nymphal life stages, then drop off and attach to a different host as an adult for the final "blood meal". Most ticks will drop in late summer to early fall to lay eggs and die. The eggs will hatch in the spring and fall and attach to the host where they will stay for the time, based on their lifecycle type. This process seems to account for the increased number of ticks during the spring and fall while the ticks remain attached during summer and winter.

Q: I received a beautiful camellia for a Christmas gift and don't know what to do with it. I have considered over-wintering it in my garage, but would appreciate any help you can give me.

A: Now is a perfect time to plant a camellia. When the ground is workable, dig a hole twice the size of the root ball and condition it as needed with compost or other organic matter and good soil before planting. Then, you should be able to enjoy some beautiful winter color in your garden this year (depending on the variety you have, of course).

THOMAS' TURF TIPS

By: Thomas Dorn, Cherokee County Master Gardener

- **DO** take soil samples and have them analyzed by your County Extension Office. This is the best \$6.00 you will ever spend on your yard. Have your soil analyzed BEFORE you lay new sod, seed, or start a lime/fertilization program on an established lawn. Follow the recommendations on the returned analysis; any County Agent or Master Gardener can help with interpretation.
- **DON'T** remove grass clippings from well-maintained Bermuda and Fescue lawns. A common myth is that this will lead to thatch buildup. On the contrary, this naturally returns nutrients to your soil and, if removed, your fertilizer requirements can increase by as much as 30%.
- **DO** follow ALL directions on your fertilizer, herbicide, pesticide and fungicide packages. When in doubt, call your County Extension Office for assistance.
- **DON'T** apply general pre-emergent and post-emergent herbicides to your lawn within two to three months of seeding.
- **DON'T** wring your hands with worry over drought and your Bermuda lawn; it has been shown to survive for 48 days without any water. Fescue, Zoysia, and Centipede, on the other hand, are less drought tolerant.
- **DO** be realistic about how much time and expense you wish to invest in your lawn, and what your desired end-look is to be: these have a great deal of bearing on your choice of turf.
- **DO** apply Roundup or other systemic weed killers directly to winter weeds in your Bermuda lawn while the Bermuda is *completely* dormant; the weeds will be killed without affecting the Bermuda.
- **DON'T** attempt to grow any turf in deep shade: it will NOT succeed. Of the four major turf types that are common in this area, Zoysia and some of the finer Fescues are the most shade tolerant; Bermuda is the least tolerant.
- **DO** follow a year-round plan of turf management (regardless of the type of turf you have planted) which includes fertilization, pre- and post-emergent herbicides.
- **DO** water your lawn less frequently but longer (approximately 1" per week if possible): short, frequent waterings encourage only shallow root growth which is less able to withstand drought.
- **DON'T** worry too much about some isolated insect or fungal damage on your lawn as it will likely rebound; see next tip.
- **DO** remember: Healthy turf is MUCH more able to withstand drought, ward off weed infestation and survive fungal attacks.

RECYCLING TIPS

By: Miriam Zagarola, Cherokee County Master Gardener

Recycling Holiday Items:

- ❖ Try not to damage the wrapping paper when you open your gifts so it can be used again.
- ❖ Save bows, ribbons, boxes and bags. You will never have to pay another penny for these items.
- ❖ Save plastic bags to use as trash bags, packaging material, protective cover for unused items, liner for the kitty pan, etc.
- ❖ Exchange or return any gifts you don't need.
- ❖ Give, give, give!!! Give any gift you don't want to keep, and any other items you don't need, to charity. You can take a tax deduction. Besides, it feels so good to give to those less fortunate. There is a Goodwill facility located at Hobgood Park in the corner of Towne Lake Parkway and Bells Ferry Road in Towne Lake. They will be happy to take any items you no longer need. There is also a Goodwill Store in East Marietta Street in Canton. Please call before you go. If you don't have time to drive, just pick up the phone and donate those items to your favorite charity.
- ❖ Save your poinsettias, Christmas cactus, and

cyclamen. Just treat them like any other houseplant. They will reward you with unusual beauty when the next holiday season arrives.

- ❖ Too many drinks and too many containers left! Remember to recycle glass, plastic, and tin containers.
- ❖ If you eat out and bring back food with you, remember to recycle the Styrofoam containers as well as the plastic containers. Mother Earth will thank you for it! Publix has a recycling bin for Styrofoam items.
- ❖ Take your Christmas tree to a recycling station.

Other recycling ideas for your Christmas tree:

1. Add to your composting pile.
2. Place it standing in your backyard to give food and shelter to birds and other wildlife.
3. Use it in a pond or lake as a habitat and source of nutrients for fish.

HELPFUL HINTS

By: Arleene Ward, Cherokee County Master Gardener

- Gerry Slaughter divides her Mother-in-Law Tongue about twice a year and discards at least one half because it multiplies. Old, overgrown specimens can be salvaged by soaking the plants that are dehydrated in water for a few hours.
- Believe it or not, pencil makes a more durable and long-lasting mark on a plastic or wood label than ink. Even permanent markers will fade, especially when in contact with moist soil and sunlight. Pencil lines will remain indefinitely and are rather impervious to the rigors of outdoor elements.
- Here's how you can get two tools in one - a shovel yardstick! Lay your shovel on a table. Then, lay a yardstick next to the shovel's handle, lining up the top edges. With a permanent marker, copy the increments on the shovel's handle. To go the extra mile, turn the shovel over - starting this time at the base of the handle, copy the increments again. - Rebecca Kolls.
- The EPA cites indoor air pollution as one of the top five public health threats. Upholstery, carpets, draperies, plastics, particleboard, and other synthetic materials release hundred of noxious compounds into our homes. Houseplants provide a natural antidote to air pollution. Researchers have identified the areca palm, lady palm, bamboo palm, philodendrons, polden pothos, gerbera daisies, peace lilies, chrysanthemums, and English ivy as among the most helpful houseplants. They act as air filters and rid the atmosphere of toxins. - Rebecca Kolls.
- To keep pests away and clean your houseplants - mix weak tea or water with a couple drops of ammonia and dish soap to make a plant spray. - Frugal Living Online
- Cut the bottom from a plastic milk jug and leave lid on. This makes a great scoop for potting soil. - Frugal Living Online

WINTER POND CARE Q & A

By: Arleene Ward, Cherokee County Master Gardener

Q: What kind of care do my fish need in the winter?

A: In our climate you can expect water temperatures to fall below 50°. As temperatures fall, the metabolism in your fish slows. Allow them to rest undisturbed during the winter months. Do not feed your fish. Their slowed metabolism enables them to survive on the stored food reserves in their bodies. In fact, they are unable to digest food at this time. Undigested food will remain in their stomachs and ferment. Your fish risk death if this happens. Even on occasional warm days, when you see the fish swimming around, wait until spring warm-up to resume feeding.

Q: What should I do if my pond freezes over? Will my fish and plants be okay?

A: Hardy plants overwintered in the deepest part of your pond should be okay. The key here is to be sure the crown of the plant stays below the ice. If your pond is not deep enough to protect the crown from freezing, or if your plants are

tropical, you may need to store them in buckets of water in your garage or basement. As for the fish, do not let your pond freeze completely over for more than 12 hours. A build-up of methane and hydrogen sulfide gases beneath the ice can prove fatal, so keep an opening in the ice to allow for oxygen exchange to take place. However, you must never bang on the ice to break it open. This sets up concussion waves which can injure or kill fish, so instead, pour hot water onto the ice to melt an opening about a foot in diameter. Some ponders leave a pump bubbling all winter to prevent a sheet of solid ice from forming. Others install small heaters, such as the kind cattle ranchers use in water troughs to keep water from freezing.

Donation Box Information

The extension is setting up a box that we can donate to for our county. Each month is a different type of item. This is a totally volunteer activity.

February - Toiletries

March - Canned food items

April - Pet food for the animal shelter

RECIPES

Submit your recipes to our Garden Recipe Editor, Dan Searcy, at dmsearcy@aol.com

Blackjack Bourbon Peach Sauce

(Great on grilled chops)

- 3/4 cup peach preserves
- 1/3 cup bourbon, preferably sour mash
- 1/3 cup raspberry or strawberry vinegar
- 1 Tbsp lemon juice
- 3/4 tsp ground nutmeg
- 1/2 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 3/4 - 1 tsp hot pepper sauce (optional)

In a small saucepan, combine all ingredients except hot sauce. Simmer, stirring often until lightly thickened, about 10 minutes. Brush on grilled chops. Refrigerate leftovers.

Sautéed Spinach

(serves 2)

- 8 cups spinach - stemmed and cleaned
- 1 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 small crushed garlic clove
- 1 small red onion
- 1 tsp balsamic vinegar
- salt and pepper



In a deep, wide pan sauté onion and garlic for 1 minute. Add spinach, stirring often. Cook 2-4 minutes until done. Add vinegar and salt. Serve.

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Cherokee County



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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.