

Gardening with the Masters

For the Cherokee County Master Gardeners

Volume XVI, Issue 3 April/May 2009

WHAT'S HAPPENING

APRIL

4/2 Demo Garden work-day 10-3

4/3 Burgess Arboretum workday

4/4 MG day at Redbud Nursery

4/11 10am - Lecture Container Gardening

4/16 Demo Garden work-day 10-3

4/18 •Lecture Water-Wise Gardening 10:00 am
•Funk Heritage Center Open House 10-12
•4-H Rabies Clinic

4/20 Intern Apps due to Extension

4/21 MG meeting 6:30 Extension

4/22-24 Burgess Arboretum Plant Sale

4/25 Lecture - "Native Plants in your Landscape" 10am

MAY

5/1 Set up Plant Sale 12:30-??

5/2 Plant Sale 10-2

5/7 & 5/21 Demo Garden work-day 9:00 - 3:00

5/9 •Lecture "Container Gardening" 10am
•Cobb Master Gardener Garden Tour 10 to 5

5/16 Lecture "Gardening with Kids" 10:00 am

5/19 Monthly meeting 10am Rock Barn

5/23 Lecture "Succulents, Cacti & Ornamental Grasses" 10 am

EDITOR'S CORNER

by Marcia Winchester



Have you ever read a plant label and wondered, "Will this plant survive in my garden?" When I moved from Illinois to Georgia, I bought lots of plants and had mixed results. I started analyzing why my plants died. One thing I keyed in on was plant labels. While a plant's Latin and common name are very important, I've discovered that other info can vary from different labels for the same plant plus the information is generic. The same label can appear anywhere in the US. There are many different zone 7 conditions. This is how I interpret labels and I now have better luck with my plants surviving.

Light Requirements:

Full sun /part shade - GA sun is much more intense than other parts of the county; to me this means no afternoon sun.

Mature height-width - GA has a long growing season; expect the maximum on the label.

Help Fulfill our Commitment!

The time has come to help at the Rock Barn in return for being given a Friday night to have our Christmas party in the historical building...

The days and times are:

April 11, 10 to 2:00

April 25, 10 to 2:00

April 26, 1 to 3:00

Please contact Suzie Thomas at TThomasgroup@aol.com to let her know your choice of times.

Water requirements:

90% of plants prefer moist, well-drained soil; The key is, in the winter when GA gets lots of rain, will the plant rot? I try to plant on a slope instead of where water might puddle. It's a good idea to research where the plant originates and what conditions it can tolerate. I think more "drought tolerant" plants die in a wet winter than any other problem.

Zone hardiness:

If zone 7 is the warmest a plant will survive I won't buy it. Usually these plants survive in a zone 7 like NC. where the nights cool off. I've lost many plants that cannot take the warm humid GA nights.

IN THIS ISSUE

Editor's Corner	1
Favorite Perennial	2
Clean Water Challenge	2
Transferees; Big Veggies	3
Pitcher Plants	4,5
Cool Tool	6
Mowing Heights	6
Spring Lawn Care	7
Rainfall	7
April Tips	8
May Tips	9
Recipes	10

MY FAVORITE PERENNIAL - GAURA LINDHEIMERI

by Lynn Sisson, Cherokee County Master Gardener

I wanted to share with you one of my favorite perennials which performs well in most gardens.

Native to Louisiana, Texas and adjacent Mexico, gaura loves to be in dry hot conditions (sound familiar?) It will grow in acidic, sandy, loam or clay soils but does not do well in wet areas or areas with poor drainage. It performs best in full sun but will tolerate partial shade and is hardy from Zones 5-10. Though it is easily propagated by seed, you can also divide the clumps in spring to start new plants. It grows in a bush type manner, 2-4ft tall by 2-3 ft. wide. The stems are slender, wiry and covered with little hairs; the leaves are spoon shaped, with toothed margins. The flowers are produced above the foliage on erect spikes, 8-24" long, that continue to elongate throughout the extended blooming period of late spring until first frost. The individual flowers are about an inch across and have four reflexed petals. They are white or pink when they open at dawn, fading to rose pink by the end of the day. Only a few flowers are open at any one time, and each drops off after blooming, leaving a clean, neat stalk.



Gardeners have selected a few cultivars like 'Corries Gold' which has leaves with golden yellow markings. "Swirling Butterflies" is smaller than the species, growing to only 2 ft. tall and has red sepals and flowers more profusely. 'Siskiyou Pink' is also lower growing with light pink flowers and 'Pretty in Pink' is even pinker. A recent selection from an Australian plantsman is 'Crimson Butterflies', easily outperforming 'Siskayou Pink' in compact stature, quantity of flowers, and length of bloom (June to frost.) There are over 20 species.

Gaura looks good in the back of a perennial border or bed. It is ideal for the wildflower or naturalizing garden, as it does tend to self sow. If cut back in midsummer when flowering declines, gaura will regrow even bushier and bloom again in the fall.

I cannot say enough about this perennial; go buy your pick today!

Family: Onagraceae (evening primrose Family)

Common Names:

- Whirling butterflies
- White gaura
- Butterfly gaura

TAKE THE CLEAN WATER CHALLENGE

By Mary Tucker, Cherokee County Master Gardener



As a means of educating the public about water quality and conservation, the Cherokee County Extension Office has initiated two programs: the Clean Water Challenge and the 40-Gallon Challenge. These programs educate about water usage and inspire citizens to protect and conserve our water supply. When you join either challenge, you make a pledge to take some simple steps, such as using a rain barrel to collect water, reducing your lawn area, or not over fertilizing your garden.

Everything you need to participate can be found on the Cherokee County Extension Office website, www.ugaextension.com/Cherokee. Look for the Clean Water Challenge link (under Local News & Events), fill out the pledge card, and mail it to the Extension Office. When you complete the pledge card and join the challenge, you'll be automatically entered into a drawing to win a free rain barrel and other great water-saving door prizes in 2009. (Note, however, that only Cherokee County residents are eligible to win door prizes.)

GET TO KNOW THE NEW TRANSFEREES...

by Monte Bores, Cherokee County Master Gardener

Rachel Prakash recently transferred to us from Cobb County.

Although born in Texas, Rachel has lived in Georgia since she was three years old.

In May of 2008 she and her husband Donn moved to Cherokee County. They have a one-and-a-half year old daughter, Clara, who loves flowers and sticks, and they are expecting the arrival of a son in July.

Rachel's initial interest in gardening blossomed as a child, while putting behind her mother in the garden. But it was only after studying plants in college that she realized how truly fascinating plants are.

Rachel completed MG training in 2005. As far as her gardening skills, she has dabbled in a lot of things but claims to have no particular gardening expertise. She does, however, hold a strong interest in organic, edible landscaping and herbs.



She said she is excited to be part of the Cherokee County Master Gardeners, adding that even though she has studied plants and worked at Cobb County Extension office, she still considers herself to be a very 'new' gardener and loves learning and hunting for the best gardening techniques that will work for her.

One important thing she has learned since becoming a Master Gardener is not to be quick to tell that to many people unless she's in the mood for a lot of gardening questions! (To that we can all say, "Amen!")

Rachel joins the ranks with those of us whose husbands don't necessarily share our same love of gardening, but she is determined to slowly drag hers into the green world.

Good luck, Rachel!

THE DISADVANTAGES OF BIG BEAUTIFUL VEGGIES

By Mary Tucker, Cherokee County Master Gardener

As reported in Dr. Andrew Weil's *Weekly Wellness Bulletin* on March 5, 2009, new research indicates that the nutrient value of fruits and vegetables in the United States and Great Britain has declined markedly over the last 50 years.

A report published in the February 2009 *Journal of HortScience* looked at historical food composition data. Noting that accurate comparisons are difficult because assay methods have varied through the years, researcher Donald R. Davis of the Biochemical Institute of the University of Texas nonetheless found "apparent median declines of 5 % to 40% or more of some minerals in groups of vegetables and perhaps fruit; one study also evaluated vitamins and protein with similar results."

According to the study, the chief culprit may be high-yielding cultivars of fruits and vegetables. It appears that larger, more productive versions of plants may exert a "genetic dilution effect" on nutrient concentrations.

This may not surprise you when you think of the huge fruits and vegetables that are available in modern supermarkets. Despite their impressive size, they are often relatively tasteless and watery compared with produce of previous times.

Dr. Weil recommends heirloom varieties of organic produce whenever possible, and growing your own is a wonderful option. However, he notes that commercial vegetables and fruits, despite their reduced nutrition, are still much healthier choices than processed snack and junk foods.



THE PLEASURE OF PITCHER PLANTS: PART ONE

by Mary Tucker, Cherokee County Master Gardener

I've had many gardening disappointments over the years. Plants sometimes die a quiet death and simply seem to disappear from my garden, and their demise often makes me feel somewhat like a failure as a gardener. These failures make me truly appreciate the plants I've had success with.



Our native pitcher plants (*Sarracenia* spp.) are a favorite plant group of mine. Not only are they easy to grow (if you understand their lifestyle and needs), but they are beautiful as well, and their carnivorous lifestyle makes them especially fascinating. I started gardening with pitcher plants over ten years ago after I heard a presentation at the Cullowhee Native Plant Conference given by pitcher plant grower and hybridizer Larry Mellichamp. I purchased my first pitcher plant from Larry, and it is still thriving! I've also added to my collection since then, and I am currently growing over a half dozen species or cultivars.

PITCHER PLANT LIFESTYLE

If you're interested in growing these beauties, you first need to know a bit about their lifestyle so you can understand their needs. Most carnivorous plants are indigenous to sunny bogs, wet meadows, and savannas with acidic, nutrient-poor soil that is low in the minerals essential for a plant's growth. To supplement the meager nutrition they derive from the soil, carnivorous plants have adapted their structure to catch and digest insects.

Pitcher plants have evolved modified, tubular leaves that secrete nectar. This lures an insect inside; then stiff, downward-pointing hairs and a waxy substance inside the tube prevent the insect's escape. At this point, enzymes in the leaf digest the insect, making its nutrients available for use by the plant. As a backup system, the leaves also contain some chlorophyll and thereby produce some food through photosynthesis.

Most pitcher plant species occur only in the Southeast, though *Sarracenia purpurea* (purple pitcher plant) has a wider range and can be found throughout the eastern United States, the Great Lakes region, and into Canada. Seven species are endemic to Georgia and all are State protected. Despite their protected status and the fact that pitcher plants are easy to grow from seed, wild collection is still a problem. So be sure to only purchase pitcher plants from a reputable nursery.

Pitcher plants bloom in April or May, and a solitary, nodding blossom is borne on a long stalk. The blooms are yellow or maroon, and though the petals drop after a few weeks, the flower structure remains until the seeds mature

in the fall. But these plants are more renowned for their attractive and insect-eating foliage than for their bloom, and they are at their peak of beauty during their most vigorous growth period, which is in August and September. The leaves come in all manner of color, pattern, and form, and hybridizers are taking advantage of these characteristics to breed some fanciful and exquisite cultivars. In a future article I'll be discussing some of the many pitcher plant species and cultivars that are available.

CULTIVATION OF PITCHER PLANTS

Despite the unusual lifestyle of pitcher plants, they are not as difficult to grow as you might expect, provided they have the proper soil, sunlight, and moisture. Given proper conditions, they are long-lived plants, and evidence suggests that they can have a lifespan of one hundred years or more. In cultivation, strive to give them conditions similar to those they experience growing in the wild. This includes ample sun, a nutrient-poor soil with a low pH, and plenty of moisture (but not standing water or anaerobic conditions).

If you have the time, energy, and space, you can install a large in-ground bog to replicate their natural growing conditions. If you'd like to see some examples of such bogs, visit the Atlanta Botanical Garden. On the other hand, pitcher plants are very amenable to life in a container; this is the easiest way for the average gardener to enjoy them.

There is no strict recipe for the planting medium, but most pitcher plant growers recommend Canadian peat moss, which has a low pH and very few nutrients, as a primary ingredient in the growing medium. Peat should compose approximately 50 percent of the mix, with the balance being coarse sand (such as sand blaster sand or builders sand) and/or perlite or vermiculite. I have always used equal measures of peat and sand, and I have been pleased with the results. The sand should be clean, with no additives or other minerals. For ease of handling, pre-moisten the peat moss before preparing the mix and filling the growing container.

CONTAINER SELECTION

A variety of containers are suitable, provided you consider the plant's needs and adapt the container as necessary. In the wild, pitcher plants grow in areas with a high water table, and moisture is available to be wicked up to the plant. This is the same effect you want to achieve with your container. This can be done with a fairly shallow pot with bottom drainage holes that is set in a saucer filled with water from which moisture can wick up. To provide ample water, the saucer should be deeper than the typical plant saucer.

...Continued on Page 5

THE PLEASURE OF PITCHER PLANTS: PART ONE... *CONTINUED*

by Mary Tucker, Cherokee County Master Gardener

The moat that this system creates will also act as a barrier to pests such as slugs and snails. To prevent mosquitoes, I use the biological control *Bacillus thuringiensis* (found in products such as Mosquito Dunks) in the water.

An alternative is to use a container without bottom drainage, but with drainage holes drilled about halfway up to relieve excess moisture. This will allow the bottom half of the container to act as a reservoir from which the plant can draw its water.

Since pitcher plants require so much water, I prefer to use plastic pots to inhibit evaporation. I have found the bowl-shaped plastic pots to be very satisfactory and shallow enough to allow water to wick up to keep the plants uniformly moist.

With proper planting methods, you can also incorporate pitcher plants into an ornamental pond. One method is to plant them in a container and raise it partially out of the water so that the root zone is above the water level. Several models of "floating planters" are now on the market, and these can be used to plant bog-dwelling species.

CARE AND MAINTENANCE

Whether you grow pitcher plants in containers or in an in-ground bog, keep in mind that the environment you are providing is not an exact duplication of the natural bog that pitcher plants would inhabit in the wild. For this reason, you need to monitor moisture levels, especially during hot, dry spells.

Most pitcher plants need full sun to thrive, though the purple pitcher plant is a bit more shade tolerant. Most are also very cold-hardy, and they actually require a period of winter dormancy. Even in a pot they can usually be left outside unprotected unless the temperature drops into the mid to upper teens. If in doubt, check the requirements of the species you are growing. If planted in the ground, most can withstand even colder temperatures. The purple pitcher plant, with its more northerly native range, is the most cold-tolerant of the species.

The leaves of most species will turn brown in winter, though some, such as the purple pitcher plant, are evergreen to semi-evergreen. Trim away dead leaves, both for a neater appearance and to keep the decaying leaves from adding too many nutrients to the planting medium. Likewise, resist any temptation to apply fertilizer to your pitcher plant bogs.



Though they are extremely sensitive to minerals and salts, most city water is not damaging to them. If you are in doubt, check your local conditions or use rain or distilled water. It is also a good idea to occasionally flush out the pots with extra water to prevent salt buildup.

Pitcher plants spread via rhizomes and can be divided when they have developed multiple crowns. Some of the more vigorous species may need to be divided every few years to keep them from getting overly crowded. Some authorities say that the best time to divide pitcher plants is during winter dormancy or in early spring. Others recommend division in the fall when the plants are not actively growing but the roots are still vigorous.

I find that the constantly moist soil of my pitcher plant bogs encourages germination of many seedlings – from desirable plants such as cardinal flower to unwanted weeds or tree seedlings. If left unchecked, these plants can overtake the bog and shade out or crowd out the pitcher plants.

Though pitcher plants eat insects, some insects may also eat your pitcher plants. Though I've never had any major insect pest problems with my pitcher plants, I have heard the experts say that scale, aphids, grasshoppers, slugs, snails, or thrips can be a problem. Thrips are the most aggravating since they can actually deform the plant. To control pests, use insecticidal oils or soaps, isopropyl alcohol, or Orthene.

If you'd like to learn more about pitcher plants (and other carnivorous plants), below are a few books and other resources about these interesting members of the plant world.

BOOKS AND RESOURCES:

Carnivorous Plants by Adrian Slack, 2000

Carnivorous Plants of the United States and Canada by Donald Schnell, 2002

The Curious World of Carnivorous Plants: A Comprehensive Guide to Their Biology and Cultivation by Wilhelm Barthlott, Stefan Porembski, Rudiger Seine, and Inge Theisen, 2007

Growing Carnivorous Plants by Barry Rice, 2006

The Savage Garden by Peter D'Amato, 1998

International Carnivorous Plant Society (ICPS) - <http://carnivorousplants>

COOL TOOL

By Mary Tucker, Cherokee County Master Gardener

I'll admit that trees and shrubs are not my strong point when it comes to gardening, so I often need help, especially with tree identification. One of my favorite tools for this task is the Dendrology website at Virginia Tech (www.cnr.vt.edu/dendro/dendrology/main.htm). There's much helpful information at the site, but one of the niftiest things is the ID section where you can get assistance in identifying a tree from a leaf or twig. The site offers two methods of identification: a traditional dichotomous key or a multichotomous key.

Using the dichotomous key, you narrow down the identification by a series of characteristics, such as whether the leaves are opposite or alternate, or whether they are simple or compound. As you narrow the search, options for your tree are shown, and you can view a fact sheet about each tree that describes it and shows numerous photos of the aspects of the plant, including leaf, bark, flower, fruit, and twig. Fact sheets are offered on approximately 800 species of trees!

The multichotomous key is more like an interview process, where you answer questions about the tree. These questions include such things as whether the tree was growing in the wild or not, what its size and habitat are, what the leaves are like, and what the fruits are like. If there are any characteristics you are unsure of, you can answer "I don't know." When you finish the process, you are presented with an identification (or multiple options) for your tree.

Another handy feature of the Virginia Tech Dendrology website is its Urban Street Tree Selector. Trees in urban sites are under unusual stresses from pavement, nearby buildings, foot traffic, reduced root area, soil compaction, etc. The Street Tree Selector uses the site conditions you describe to provide you with a list of trees that will grow well in that site. Though it is designed primarily for Virginia communities, it is also useful to the Mid-Atlantic region and much of the Southeast.

The website also has a "Features" section that offers miscellaneous information about trees. For example, here you can search for a species by state or zone, learn about the meanings of those perplexing scientific names, learn which trees have the best fall color, and view wood grain images.

I encourage you to take a look at this Virginia Tech website for yourself because I can't possibly describe all the features that it offers. Whether you're a tree expert or a novice (like me) you're sure to find lots to interest and educate you.

Virginia Tech Dendrology website
www.cnr.vt.edu/dendro/dendrology/main.htm

**MASTER GARDENER
 PLANT SALE!
 MAY 2, 2009**

Come on out and support your
 Master Gardener plant sale,
 Saturday, May 2 from 10-2. We
 will have drought tolerant, butterfly loving plants and daylilies.
 The MG will also be on hand to answer gardening questions.

Recommended Mowing Heights		
Type of Grass	Height	Mow When (Height):
Kentucky 31 Fescue	3"- 4"	4.5"- 6"
Turf-type Fescue	2.5"- 3"	3.75"- 4.5"
Creeping Red/Chewing Fescue	2"- 2.5"	3"- 3.75"
Kentucky Bluegrass	2.5"- 3"	3.75"- 4.75"
Common Bermuda	2"	3"
Hybrid Bermuda	1"-1.5"	1.5"- 2.25"
Centipede	1.5"- 2"	2.25"- 3"
Saint Augustine	2"- 3"	3"- 4.5"
Zoysia	1"- 2"	1.5"- 3"

SPRING LAWN CARE

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

http://www.commodities.caes.uga.edu/turfgrass/georgia/turf/Turfgras/1110_SeasonWarm.htm

- Plant warm season grasses when soil temperatures reach 75-80*. May is the best time.
- 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.
- Fungal diseases love April - they can have all kinds of fun with your lawn! They thrive on 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. If there has been no significant rainfall, water at 1-inch per week if allowed on current watering restrictions. It is best to water during the morning to allow the grass to dry out.
- 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, the roots won't 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°, usually 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.
- 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.

<http://lpm.uga.edu/turf/sodwebworms.html>


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

http://www.commodities.caes.uga.edu/turfgrass/georgiaturf/Turfgras/1120_SeasonCool.htm

- Mow at the recommended height. Never cut more than one-third at a time. Keep the blade sharp as dull blades will rip grass and cause the tips to turn brown.
- If there has been no significant rainfall, give 1 inch of water per week according to current watering restrictions. It is best to water in the morning 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.

<http://lpm.uga.edu/turf/sodwebworms.html>

RAINFALL COMPARISONS

	Cherokee County			State Wide		
	JAN 09	FEB 09	YTD	JAN 09	FEB 09	YTD
Actual	6.5	4.1	10.6	5.6	3.5	9.1
Normal	6.1	5.1	11.2	4.7	4.9	9.6
Deficit	0.4	-1.0	-0.6	-0.9	-1.4	-2.3

APRIL TIPS

ORNAMENTALS

- If your spring bulbs have been shaded by new growth of a tree or shrub plantings, consider moving them to a sunny location or pruning back the plantings. Mark over-crowded clumps; dig up and divide them after the tops have died back. Note where you want to add color for next spring. <http://pubs.caes.uga.edu/caespubs/pubcd/B918.htm#Site>
- Upon emergence of foliage, fertilize bulbs with a 10-10-10 fertilizer, at a rate of 3 pounds per 100 square feet. Repeat the application after the bulbs have bloomed.
- If you plant an Easter Lily outside, don't plant it near other lilies as it may carry a virus that can infect other lilies.
- 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 should be pruned after blooming. <http://pubs.caes.uga.edu/caespubs/pubcd/B813-w.htm>
- 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 red and bottle-brush buckeye, rhododendrons, Georgia basil, azaleas, New Jersey tea, Salvia greggii, and rosemary. <http://apps.caes.uga.edu/news/viewtext.cfm?id=870>
- Once new growth emerges 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 since they stay on the plant longer to mature and produce fewer fruits
- To hinder early blight on tomatoes, mulch under to keep the soil borne diseases from being splashed on the plant during rains. <http://county.ces.uga.edu/cobb/Horticulture/Factsheets/Tomato/earlyblightoftomatoes.htm>
- To have fresh raspberries, 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. <http://pubs.caes.uga.edu/caespubs/pubs/PDF/C766.pdf>
- If fruit trees are lacking pollinators nearby, pick 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 same time as your fruit trees.
- 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. <http://georgiafaces.caes.uga.edu/pdf/3043.pdf>
- 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.
- If your garden is small and you do not have adequate space for the long-vine varieties, plant a bush-type, winter squash.
- 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 like squash, tomatoes, eggplant and peppers need 10 hrs 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. To increase root growth and produce a sturdier plant place tomatoes in soil up to the bottom leaves.
- 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.

MAY TIPS

ORNAMENTALS

- Keep an eye out for aphids and other insects on roses. Spray if necessary. Begin spraying for blackspot at least twice a month. Removing and replacing mulch under roses 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.
- Check the leaves on Azaleas and Camellias for leaf galls. They are white to green growths and can be pruned out and disposed. <http://pubs.caes.uga.edu/caespubs/pubcd/B813-w.htm>
- Prune off sprouts from the base of crape myrtles.
- Protect developing strawberries from birds with spun-bonded row cover or plastic netting.

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

- Technically, berries are fruit that are soft throughout, such as blueberries. 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. Thus 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.
- Place a thick layer of newspaper under tomatoes to cut back on leaf diseases. Cover with pine straw. This helps prevent fungus spores from splashing on leaves.
- 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. <http://pubs.caes.uga.edu/caespubs/pubcd/C905/C905.htm>
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- 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.

APRIL / MAY 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.
- 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.
- 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.

Recipes

Send recipes to
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Sour Cream & Garlic Whipped Potatoes

- 6 small potatoes (cut into cubes with skins on)
- ¾ cup sour cream
- 6 cloves garlic (remove skin & “smash” with knife)

Put potatoes & garlic in a pot; cover with water. Bring to a boil. Turn down to medium heat and let cook for 15-20 minutes. Drain potatoes; add sour cream and whip with electric mixer.

Serve immediately.



Crab-Stuffed Flounder (serves 8)

- ¼ cup chopped onions
- 8 flounder filet
- ¼ cup margarine
- 1-6 ½ oz can crab meat (drained)
- 1 3oz can mushrooms (drain & reserve liquid)
- ½ cup cracker crumbs
- 1 Tbsp chopped parsley
- Pepper to taste

- 3 Tbsp. margarine
- 3 Tbsp. flour
- Milk
- 1/8 cup dry white wine
- 1 cup grated White Cheddar Cheese
- 1/8 tsp paprika

Cook onion in ¼ cup margarine until tender, not brown. Stir in mushrooms, crab, cracker crumbs, parsley, & pepper. Mix well; spread over filets. Roll filets & place seam side down in baking dish.

In a saucepan, melt 3 Tbsp. margarine. Blend in flour. Add enough milk to mushroom liquid to equal 1½ cups. Combine with wine & gradually pour into saucepan. Cook & stir until mixture thickens & bubbles. Pour over filets. Bake at 400 degrees for 25 minutes. Sprinkle with cheese & paprika. Return to oven & bake 10 minutes longer.

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