

Newsletter



for the Cherokee
County Master
Gardeners

February/March 2004

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Quick and Easy Cold Frame

So you have the winter blues and you want to start some of your annuals and veggies early. Here is a quick and easy design for a cold frame like the one we recently installed at the Senior Center.

Materials needed:

- 3 – 2x8 by 10 feet treated (cut one of these into two 5 foot sections)
- box of 3 inch deck screws (approximately 16 screws needed)
- 4 - metal corner brackets for reinforcement (optional)
- a 6x12 foot piece of weed fabric to line the bottom
- 20'x10' piece of clear plastic for cover
- 6 – 2' pieces of rebar
- 3 – 8' pieces of ¾" pvc pipe (for hoops)
- bricks or stones to hold loose end of plastic
- high low thermometer (optional)
- staple gun and staples for plastic
- cordless drill with screwdriver attachment
- hammer
- saw (or have the board cut at the store)

Cut one of the 10 foot 2x8's into equal halves. Arrange these two pieces as the ends of the cold frame and attach the remaining 10 foot 2x8's for the sides. Screw corners together using the metal corners for reinforcement. You should have a perfect rectangle. Layout the weed fabric on the area you want the hot frame and flip the wooden frame over on top to hold it in place. Drive the six pieces of rebar into the ground on the inside of the wooden frame in each corner and two against the inside of the 10 foot boards at the center (approximately 5 feet from each end). Leave 8" of the rebar exposed (should be flush with the top of the 2x8). Slip one end of the pvc pipe over the rebar and flex the pipe into an arch until you can insert the other end over the rebar on the opposite side. Repeat this process for the 2 remaining pipes. Drape the plastic over the cold frame and attach one side with staples. Use bricks or stones to hold the other side down so that you can remove the cover as needed. The cold frame will gather heat from sunlight during the day to keep the plants warm at night. If additional heat is needed a 100 watt light bulb is usually sufficient. The trick is keeping the temperature in the desirable range. Good luck and have fun.

Todd Hurt, ANR Agent Cherokee County
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Every Monday, from
8:30-12:00, the Extension is having a **Plant Clinic**.

It is guaranteed you will learn something if you help. Call the Extension to sign up!

A SERIES ON PLANT PROPOGATION

by: Patricia Bowen, Cherokee County Master Gardener

Step 1: Planning

Now, in the quiet of winter, in the warmth of your home, is the time for planning changes and additions to your 2004 garden. The most economical and satisfying way to add to your garden is to propagate plants that you or your friends and neighbors already have, and share them or spread them around your own landscape.

You'll be carrying on an 8,000 year old tradition, when the advent of farming evolved in ancient civilizations. Grains were produced from seeds when early farmers noted how plants naturally dispersed seeds that later produced seedlings. Among many historical recorded methods, Greeks soaked seeds in milk or honey to speed germination, and early Romans recorded current propagation methods in great detail. (Keep your own records as you continue to make history!) Cuttings and graftings were common in Greece by 2,000 BC. Romans dipped cuttings in ox manure to stimulate rooting. In the Middle East, woody stems stuck in the soil propagated grapes, olives and figs.

Modern commercial propagation is much more highly sophisticated, and is often focused on improving resistance to pests and disease, while making home gardening easier, more successful and more satisfying.

There are three primary ways for the home gardener to propagate plants:

- By dividing plants, roots, corms or bulbs, called vegetative propagation. Dividing is usually done in early spring or fall. In spring, plants are emerging and are easy to work with. All but spring flowering bulbs

are ready to dig up and separate, and those can be managed after flowering.

- By taking cuttings, also vegetative propagation. Cuttings are best taken from new growth, so late spring and early summer offers the best opportunities to harvest strong shoots and nurture them into individual plantlets.
- By gathering seeds. Seeds typically become available in summer and fall, as grasses, flowers and fruits dry and put out free seeds for reproduction.

We'll discuss each method in depth, one at a time, in future newsletters. For now, let's discuss planning for propagation. Start by deciding which plants you'll propagate, and when. Walk through your yard and garden and decide what you'd like to propagate for expansion, for gifts, for yard sales, for personal learning and just plain enjoyment. Invite your neighbors over for coffee and share ideas, and resources.

Next, set aside some space and begin saving or acquiring:

- Pots and flats
- Potting soil, sand, pea gravel and peat moss
- Plastic beverage bottles for covering delicate plants (in terrarium fashion)
- Plant labels
- Snippers and a garden knife
- Rooting compound

Stay tuned in future newsletters for tips on how to propagate from division, cuttings and seeds. Also, you may want to pick up a fine reference book, "Plant Propagation" by Alan Allgood; it makes great fireside reading as you're making your propagation plans.

Suet Recipe

(Submitted By Helen Ogren, Cherokee County Master Gardener)

1 cup crunchy Peanut Butter
2 cups Quick Cook Oats
2 cups cornmeal

1 cup lard (not shortening)
1 cup white flour
1/3 cup sugar

Melt the lard and peanut butter in the microwave or over low heat. Stir in the remaining ingredients and pour into square freezer containers about 1 1/2" thick. If these are too thick for your suet basket, pour the next batch a little thinner. Store in freezer or refrigerator. Makes about 6-8 cakes. The recipe can easily be doubled or tripled for your heavy feeders. This will not melt and run in the summer unless placed in the direct sunlight. This is a great source of protein and fat for young birds as well as their parents. If you would like it a little thicker and stiffer, just add a little more corn meal to the next batch that you make. Square suet baskets are available at all "bird supply" stores. You can make your own simply by folding steel hardware cloth into the desired shape and hanging them from a limb or wiring them directly to a tree trunk. This suet can also be frozen in paper cup and later used as a suet ball in an old onion or grapefruit sack.

Q & A

by: Karen Garland, Cherokee County Master Gardener

Question: When is the best time to add manure to my garden? When I add manure to my vegetable garden what am I adding? And how much should I add?

Answer:

For good reason we know manure was being used by the Algokian tribe in North Carolina before 1585. Manure can do things for your garden that are nearly impossible to duplicate with alternative materials. When added once a year it can help improve the soil structure and increase the water and food absorption available for your plants. But, before you roll up your shirtsleeves and pick up a shovel you need to consider two things:

- Get a soil test before adding fertilizers or any amendments to your garden.
- Use well-aged or composted manure. Fresh manure is a little ripe, too laden with weed seeds and possibly injurious to tender plants by burning.

Common manures to add to the garden are: cow, horse, rabbit and chicken. Horse manure, being high in nitrogen, *must* be composted for a season before adding it to the garden; otherwise you might "burn" the roots of young plants. DO NOT add dog or cat manure to the garden, as household pets can transfer many disease organisms to humans through their manure.

In most areas of the country, it is best to add the manure in the fall or early winter (at least one month before planting), so it can start to decompose in the soil during the winter months when the garden is "at rest". Put down a layer of 1 to 2 inches of manure, then work it into the top 6 to 9 inches of soil. Irrigate to allow the manure to begin decomposition and to wash excess harmful salts out of the root zone. Manure can cause severe injury or even kill seedlings if applied too heavily or too closely to planting time. Raw or poorly decomposed manure is also

associated with root maggots, as well as many weed seeds. Be sure the manure is adequately aged or composted before you use it.

When using manure on a yearly basis, decrease the amount you apply each year up to the fourth year. The reason for this is that some of the manure applied the first year will still be in the soil the next year. For example, apply about 100 pounds of cow manure per 100 square feet the first year. The second year apply about 70 pounds, the third year 60 pounds and about 50 pounds every year thereafter.

Chicken manure is the most concentrated type. It may contain 2 to 4 percent nitrogen, 1 to 3 percent phosphorus and 1 to 2 percent potassium, as well as smaller amounts of other nutrients. Cow manure is about a 2-1-1 fertilizer. Other manures available at retail outlets, such as sheep, turkey or horse, have similarly low nutrient percentages. It is therefore not recommended to use manure as your only nutrient source. Rapidly growing annual vegetables require a high level of available nutrients. In addition to any manure you put down, you should also use a fertilizer whose nutrient profile closely matches what was recommended on your soil test.

Manure also adds small amounts of various other minor nutrients. But its most important advantage is as a soil amendment, adding organic material to your soil. Additional organic material (compost, manure, peat) benefits your soil in many ways, improving the texture of both sand and clay soils, increasing microbial activity, and improving water-holding capability. For this purpose, no one manure stands out as preferable to the others.

Garden experts around the country universally think adding some manure to your beds is one of, if not the most important thing you can do for your garden. If you don't believe them, do a test plot with manure and one without. You'll see the difference!

From The Editor

Dear Master Gardeners,

During the summer of 1998 Mary Tucker and I approached our extension agent Marco Fonseca and asked about starting a Cherokee county Master Gardener newsletter. Marco agreed we could produce one and Mary and I printed our first issue for August/September 1998. When I look thru the old issues I can see how we have grown and continued to improve. We originally published mostly info from the UGA Webb-site. We now use only monthly tips from UGA with all of our articles written by our Master Gardeners. When Adrian Smith took over the layout she took our format to a professional level and we were able to double our information in each issue. In my quest for an informative, helpful newsletter I missed an important point. We don't really have a name! I know you all have lots of suggestions for a name. Please email mwinc@bellsouth.net or phone 770-592-4022 them to me by March 1 your ideas. The newsletter staff will pick the best one and use it on our April/May issue. Thanks Marcia

Marcia Winchester

JAPANESE MAPLES: TO PRUNE OR NOT TO PRUNE?

by: Jennifer Resuta, Cherokee County Master Gardener

Question: I have two Japanese Maples and I would like to know how to prune them or if I should prune them at all?

Answer: First of all, always start with a sharp clean pruner. A clean cut is much easier for a tree to heal over than a jagged splintered end and you want to prevent the spread of disease from one plant to another. Alcohol is an easy and inexpensive method of sterilization of your tools.

Pruning Japanese Maples is truly a matter of personal preference coupled with the personality of the tree. I have seen Bloodgood Maples with all the branches removed from the lower two-thirds with only a pom-pom of leaves remaining. Personally, I don't like this look, but beauty is in the eye of the beholder, or in the hands of the person with the bypass pruners.

Let's look at the weeping Maples first. I prefer to have the branches cascade down to hide the trunk of the tree. Taking this preference into account, I will trim any branches from the top layer of the tree that are weighing the tree down heavily. These trees are expensive so err on the side of caution; less is more. Don't do any radical branch removal or you may end up with a Charlie Brown Christmas tree look alike. Take off branches that cross each other. Lighten a heavy branch by removing some of the attached smaller branches from underneath where they do not show (remove them first). Do a little at a time and step back to see if you have caused the shape of the tree to change. If you have a hump forming due to unusual branch production you can shave that off by trimming. Sometimes older Japanese Maples have layer upon layer of branches, which could cause the trunk to crack and break during an ice storm. You can lighten the weight by reducing some of the outer branches. Removing the ends of the branches can reduce the weight a lot. Pick a spot to start trimming and move all the way around the tree, removing branches randomly, but evenly. From time-to-time take a step back and look at the tree from a distance. Ask yourself, "Am I moving in the right direction? Is there an improvement? Am I removing too many branches, or too few?" When in doubt leave it. Remember these

trees grow slowly.

Branches that drag on the ground need to be trimmed. Try to keep the branches approximately 3 to 6 inches off the ground, enough to be able to get around the tree with a weed eater or underneath with a lawn mower without damaging the tree.

For those of you who want to expose the tree trunk, decide what percentage of the trunk you want exposed. Look at the tree from a distance and remove the branches from the bottom one-third first. Make sure that you leave any branches that are an integral part of the shape of the tree. For example, if there are only a couple of weeping branches - leave them intact. Remove any branches that seem to be growing at odd angles. Keep the tree balanced, removing branches that cross each other or grow toward the tree trunk.

With any species of tree, remove any dead branches as well, you and the tree will be happier as a result. Dead branches take energy from the healthy part of the tree and weaken it as a result.

The upright growers are much easier to prune than the weeping Maples. Typically, the bottom one third of the tree should not have any branches on it. Again taking personal preference into account, prune the suckering branches and shoots from the lower part of the trunk. As the tree grows taller you can remove more of the lower branches if you wish. I like to see 3 - 4 feet of clean trunk on mature deciduous trees. It gives you a clear view of your yard and the trees look tidy as well.

Remove any branches that cross over other branches, or any that grow towards the trunk. Japanese Maples are typically slow growers and usually have a nice shape naturally. If you have wild branches jutting out from the crown trim them off to keep a nice arcing look. My Bloodgood Maple needed very little pruning, except for suckering branches around the base of the trunk. If you really like to prune trees, perhaps fruit trees could be added somewhere in your landscape as these Japanese Maples will not keep your pruner terribly busy.

Rose Survey Results

Last summer was another great year for black-spot on roses. I asked our readers what roses they had that were either very-resistant or didn't get black-spot. Several readers sang the praises of Knock-out, a beautiful red rose. The Nearly Wild rose had some good comments. A climbing rose named New Dawn is supposed to be very hardy and the swamp rose or *Rosa palustris scandens* was also recommended. My favorite roses are First Kiss a Floribunda that repeats blooming in part shade with pretty pink clusters and *Rosa chinensis* "Mutabilis. Mutabilis does get some black-spot but it always shakes it off and keeps on blooming. It is a unique single rose that in each stage of bud opening it is a different color ranging from deep pink to orange and yellow. The new growth on the stems are a deep burgundy-red. Keep an eye out on your roses this year and send me your favorite black-spot resistant. Keep in mind roses that do well in the south can be different from the rest of the county. Buy from a knowledgeable source to get the best for our area.

RECYCLING OLD TIRES

By: Myriam Zagarola, Cherokee County Master Gardener

The United States rate of recycling materials from old tires has tripled since 1990, reducing piles of old tires accumulated all over the states. State programs charging a small recycling fee for new tires have created markets for old tires.

According to The Rubber Manufacturers Association, since 1994 the number of scrap tires accumulated has dropped from approximately 800 million to 300 million. Old tires present a fire and environmental hazard because they have higher energy content than coal. They also present a health hazard because they serve as breeding ground for mosquitoes when they collect water

The State of Minnesota pioneered the tire-reuse program in 1985. They imposed a \$1 fee on each new tire and used the money to find uses for the approximately 4 million tires scrapped in the state every year. The program eliminated the state old tire piles and found so many paying markets for old tires that the state eliminated the \$1 fee.

Since 1992, states and companies have been finding uses for shredded tires including rubberized asphalt for road building and small rubber particles in place of gravel for road beds and as filler. Rubber particles are mixed with dirt to prevent soccer field from compacting, and with sand to provide a softer foundation for synthetic turf used in athletic fields. Utilities burn old tires to make electricity, and cement manufacturers bake them with

other ingredients to produce cement.

Rubber mulch, made of recycled tires and other products, can be used to mulch garden areas such as flowerbeds, tree bases, landscaping, and paths. It has several advantages over wood. A few of them are:

- Color will remain vivid for years.
- Airflow is better than wood allowing soil to maintain moisture and plants grow better.
- Inhibit weed growth.
- No termites
- Low maintenance

You can find this product at Morgan's Ace Hardware in Woodstock or McFarland's in Canton.

E-Cycling News!

Dell Recycle and Donate Program is offering a 10% coupon on your next Dell.com purchase when you recycle or donate your old PC equipment (includes CPUs, monitors, notebooks, and printers from any manufacturer). If you donate a computer with a processor above Pentium 1 to the National Cristina Foundation, you will receive a document listing the items donated for tax purposes in addition to the 10% coupon. Dell is also offering pick up for a small fee. For more information visit dell.com/recycling.

What's Happening!

February

2/5	Senior Center Workday
2/17	Monthly Meeting at Rock Barn, Canton 10am
2/19	Senior Center Workday
2/18-21	Southeastern Flower Show
2/20	Arbor Day Project—Mountain Rd School
2/21	Lecture on Roses @ Hickory Flat Library 10-11:30am
2/28	Lecture on Principles of Pruning @ Hickory Flat Library 10—11:30am

March

3/4	Senior Center Workday
3/11, 16, 18, 23	Landscape Class (limited to 25). Call ext. to register 770-479-0418
3/16	Monthly Meeting
3/18	Senior Center Workday
3/20	CCMG Plant Sale—Autumn Hill Nursery Email Marcia to help mwinc@bellsouth.net
3/20	Georgia Master Gardener Day
3/20	Lecture on Lawn Care @ Hickory Flat Library 10—11:30am
3/31	Advanced MG Training—Woody Plants

FEBRUARY TIPS

ORNAMENTALS

- 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.
- 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.
- Prune clumps of ornamental grass before new growth appears. For large clumps, tie with rope and cut with a hedge trimmer.
- Spray or dig wild onions and garlic out of lawns.

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

- Remember that vegetable seeds have a short life and 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 (peaches, pears, apples and plums) can be sprayed now with dormant oils to reduce insect problems.

MISCELLANEOUS

- If ground feeding birds or squirrels from clay saucers, it 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.
- Hang or clean out bluebird houses now before the birds start looking for a home. Don't clean them on a windy day. Clean and disinfect clay pots now by soaking them in a solution of 1 part liquid bleach and 10 parts water. Scrub with a stiff brush. Be sure to rinse thoroughly to remove all bleach residue. This will have your containers ready to plant with spring annuals.

Spring Plant Sale is March 20th!

I will need lots of volunteers to make this event a success. During the Feb. workdays at the sr. center we will be potting up plants for the sale. If you have plants to donate drop them off at the sr. center the day before a workday or bring them on the workday. I will show you how to divide plants and give tidbits of info on them. On Thursday March 18 during the workday we will pull the plants we want to offer to sell. I will need volunteers to pick them up either on Thursday or Friday morning and deliver them to Autumn Hill nursery before or around 2. Friday at 2 I will need volunteers to help set up the plants, make labels, and set prices. We will also arrange our seeds and put out info with pictures of most of the items. Plants can be purchased after the sale is set. I will also need lots of volunteers the day of the sale from 8-5. Lastly I will need help to take plants back to the sr. center on Sunday or Monday.

Contact me at mwinc@bellsouth.net or call 770-592-4022 Marcia

MARCH TIPS

ORNAMENTALS

- 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.
- To divide dahlias, place dormant tubers in moist peat moss or sand until new shoots appear then divide with a sharp knife.
- Give roses a starter application of complete fertilizer.
- Cut back butterfly bushes to 1/3 desired height.
- Fertilize spring bulbs after they bloom.
- Prune Crape myrtles only removing the old flower heads. Do not cut back to the same spot each year as it creates a weak joint and the branches can split and fall in the summer with the additional weight of heavy flower heads. Remove sprouts at the base of the tree also.

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

- Don't rush to remove mulch from strawberries. Leave it 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.

MISCELLANEOUS

- 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 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.
- If you want flowers on your cactus, plant it in a small pot. Most cacti bloom sooner if root-bound.
- 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.

MY FAVORITE PLANT

By: Sharon Atcheson, Cherokee County Master Gardener

Campanula punctata 'Cherry Bells'

Campanulas (kam-pan`you-la) are a well-known genus of flowering annuals, perennials and biennials, some even being evergreen. Most prefer moist, well drained soil in sunny to semi-shady sites. There are over 250 species, with flowers usually blue, pink or white. The flowers are usually bell shaped and are therefore known as "bellflower".

The particular plant that found its way into my garden this year is an introduction from Japan called "Cherry Bells". It has wonderful dangling dark pink bells. It will grow to a height of 26-28" and spread of 18". As with other campanulas, the flowers will remain brightest with a little shade. Removing the faded "bells" will help keep it blooming.

Bellflowers can be bothered by slugs. You also need to protect them from drying winds. Mulch heavily to keep the soil moist and roots cool. Campanulas are great for rock gardens, borders and hanging baskets. They are a nice versatile plant.

WINTER LAWN CARE

by: Bill Slatton, Cherokee County Master Gardener

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

- February and March are still too early to start a new warm season grass lawn. May, June and July are the best months to start a warm season lawn by sod or seed. It is possible to install Bermuda sod in March or April but you may experience some late winter injury.
- Continue watering dormant lawns in during dry periods. This is the critical spring green-up period and the roots, stolons, and rhizomes are still actively growing. Wet soils to a depth of 6-8 inches. This is typically 1 inch of irrigation (approximately 1-2 hours). Measure your sprinkler output with a sprinkler gauge or tuna cans and a ruler for the total run time. If you have a problem with runoff split the time in half and water that area with two cycles in the same day. The frequency of irrigation during Feb. and March is typically once every 7-10 days in the absence of a 1 inch rain fall.
- Do not fertilize until lawns are 50% green. You don't want to encourage any new growth until the danger of frost has passed. This will probably be in April, when the Dogwoods are in bloom. Any pre-emergence weed control applied in early March should not contain fertilizer.
- Do not aerate or vertically mow (dethatch) at this time. This is best done during May-July.
- Scalping is sometimes performed on Bermuda or Zoysia to reduce thatch buildup by lowering the cutting height but must be done in March before the lawn begins to green up. This is a risky process that can permanently damage the lawn. Please read "Thatch control in turf" <http://www.ces.uga.edu/pubcd/L394.htm> for more information.
- A pre-emergence weed control can be used when soil temperatures are a consistent 50 degrees. This might be February or early March. Make sure it does not contain fertilizer. It will last 2-3 months. Water after applying. Use post-emergence sprays in March with caution, your grass may be coming out of dormancy and may be harmed.
- You can add lime at any time of the year. A soil test will determine the amount needed.

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

- Apply pre-emergence weed killers in late Feb. or Early March to control crabgrass and some summer broadleaf weeds (do not apply if reseeding).
- It is possible to start or over-seed Fescue in Feb. or March. However planting this time of year often does not allow the grass to become fully rooted prior to summer drought stress and results may be temporary. Sod is a better option this time of year but that too should be completed by the end of April.
- It is very important to keep cool season grasses mowed at the proper height (2-3 inches) in the spring. This encourages the grass to spread and develop deep roots.
- There should be enough rain in February, but March could have some warm, dry spells. If there has been no rain, water at the rate of 0.5-1 inch a week. Newly seeded lawns should be watered frequently while they are germinating. Gradually reduce over a period of 4-6 weeks. As the temperatures warm up, water during early morning as watering restrictions allow it. Water will evaporate quicker than at night, reducing the risk of fungal diseases.
- Sometime around late February, early March, you can begin fertilizing cool season grasses. Try to get fertilizer that does not have slow release nitrogen(you want to encourage growth now not in the summer). It can also include a pre-emergence weed control. Apply at the rate of 1 pound of actual nitrogen per 1000 square feet. This is approximately 6 lbs. of 16-4-8 per 1000 sq.ft.
- You can aerate cool season lawns with a core aerator in March or April. Aerate before fertilizing, but not after applying pre-emergence weed control, or it will disrupt the chemical barrier.
- Insects and disease should not be a problem this month.
- Your cool season lawn may need lime. Have it tested. Most lawns will need about 50 pounds per 1000 square feet. Apply after aerating.

Rainfall Comparisons

	Cherokee County			Statewide		
	Nov	Dec	YTD	Nov	Dec	YTD
Actual	6.9	2.8	52.6	4.7	2.7	58.4
Normal	4.1	5.0	48.5	3.9	3.8	53.0
Deficit	2.8	-2.2	4.1	0.8	-1.1	5.4

BARGAINS ABOUND AT GMGA WINTER CONFERENCE

by: Mary Tucker, Cherokee County Master Gardener

I'm always looking for a bargain – sales, close-outs, two-for-one deals. That's one reason I love the Georgia Master Gardener Association conferences. I've been to numerous GMGA conferences over the years, and I am always amazed by the quality of learning I get for a very meager sum. I've attended similar symposia elsewhere and have sometimes paid six times the price. This past Winter Conference in Coweta County was no different. For the small registration fee, I got five excellent presentations by respected gardening authorities, a respectable lunch, and even a door prize (I think every attendee won a prize, for there were hundreds of them). Perhaps just as important, I had a chance to spend the day with some great folks – Master Gardeners who love gardening and love to share their knowledge and enthusiasm.

The conference began with a report on projects funded by GMGA grants, and we learned the details of two projects. Becky Blades told us of Cobb County's Junior Master Gardener program at Midway School, work that will surely instill a love of gardening and a respect for nature in these sixth graders. Mike Doyle of DeKalb County explained how the new formal herb garden at the Environmental Education Center was designed and built, becoming an attractive and educational part of the existing demonstration garden at that site. These projects are only a small sampling of the work funded by GMGA grants, and we need to keep these funds in mind for our Cherokee County projects. Information about the grants program, as well as an application form, can be found at the GMGA website, www.gamastergardener.org.

Allan Armitage, renowned UGA horticulture professor, researcher, and author, was the day's first speaker. He set a joyful, enthusiastic tone with one of his first comments: "Master or not, I just love this gardening thing!" His presentation on annuals introduced us to some sensational new plants that have been tested at the UGA Trial Gardens. He noted that folks tend to think of annuals as only petunias and marigolds, but "that world has changed." Allan proved that point with slides of an exciting array of plants with luscious foliage and magnificent blooms. Remarkable annuals such as these are becoming a major trend, and these lovely plants are fortunate to have Allan as a spokesman.

Mike Cunningham, owner of Country Gardens Farm and Nursery in Newnan, spoke on another hot trend, container gardening, opening our eyes to the many attrac-

tive plants that are available for winter interest. Among them were many ornamental cool weather vegetables, dwarf conifers, and an array of herbs. In addition to plant selection, Mike covered all the basics of container gardening, including siting, container choice, soil mixes, and design. I loved his design tip of combining plants that were "thrillers, fillers, and spillers."

Steve Brady, who has served as a Georgia Extension Agent and as superintendent of the Bamboo Farm and Coastal Gardens Research Center in Savannah, gave us a new perspective on our gardens and their insect inhabitants. Steve's presentation was quite entertaining (though at times somewhat disgusting!) as he showed us an intimate view of prey and predator. His slides helped us differentiate between beneficial insects and pests, and he offered tips on encouraging the good guys to reside in our gardens. Perhaps most importantly, Steve taught us not to make assumptions based on appearance – a worthy lesson in many ways.

Sheldon Hammond, Fayette County Extension Coordinator, advised us of "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly" in urban trees. His highly recommended trees were those that have multiple season interest; a low incidence of insect, disease, or cultural problems; and are readily available. These included some of my favorites, such as Grancy Graybeard and Chalkbark Maple. The trees Sheldon advised against (among them Bradford Pear and Silver Maple) were those with weak wood, insect or disease problems, or other "nasty habits."

Tara Dillard, well-known garden designer, writer, and lecturer, encouraged us to look at vines as an essential element in garden design. She illustrated their many uses, such as softening the hard edges of a wall, bringing a welcoming scale to the façade of a house, shading a patio or deck, creating a focal point on a trellis, or acting as an entryway when placed on an arbor. Tara's lovely slides illustrated her points well, whether they were shots from grand English estates or intown urban residences.

These five excellent speakers, plus the other perks, made the GMGA Winter Conference quite a bargain. If you're a bargain shopper like I am, your next opportunity will be at the GMGA Spring Conference, which will be held April 24 in Columbus. You can find the details in the GMGA newsletter, the SCOOP, or at the website, www.gamastergardener.org.

 * **Name The Newsletter Contest!** *
 * **All entries must be received by March 1st. Email mwinc@bellsouth.net or phone 770-592-4022.** *

Recipes

Send recipes to
Sharon Atcheson at
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German Sausage Chowder

1 lb. fully cooked bratwurst or knackwurst, cut into 1/2 pieces (kelbasa will do fine)
2 medium potatoes, peeled and chopped
1 medium onion, chopped
1 small head of cabbage, shredded
3 cups milk
3 tbs. all-purpose flour
1 cup shredded Swiss cheese

Combine sausage, potatoes, onion 1 1/2 t. salt and dash of pepper in large saucepan. Add 2 cups water. Bring to boiling; reduce heat. Cover; simmer for 20 minutes or until potatoes are nearly tender. Stir in cabbage; cook 10 minutes more or until vegetables are tender. Stir in 2 1/2 cups milk. Stir remaining milk into flour; stir into soup. Cook and stir until thickened and bubbly. Stir in cheese. Makes 6 servings.

Porcupine Meatballs

1 beaten egg
1 10 3/4 oz can condensed tomato soup
1/4 cup long grain rice
2 T. finely chopped onion
1 T. snipped parsley
1 lb. ground beef, or turkey
1 t. Worcestershire sauce

In a bowl, combine egg and 1/4 c. of the soup. Stir in uncooked rice, onion, parsley 1/2 t. salt and 1/8 t. pepper. Add beef or turkey, and mix well. Shape meat mixture into small balls; place in a 10 inch skillet. Mix remaining soup with Worcestershire and 1/2 c. water; pour over meatballs. Bring to boiling; reduce heat. Cover and simmer 35 to 40 minutes; stir often. Makes 4 to 5 servings.

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To stimulate the love for and increase the knowledge of gardening and to voluntarily and enthusiastically share this knowledge with others.