Beautiful Dreamer
There’s a stack of gardening catalogs on my desk and in my email inbox. Each is filled with beautiful photographs, inspiring ideas and loads of knowledge just waiting to be plucked. One company specializes in gardening tools. Another showcases greenhouses in all shapes and sizes. There are also seed catalogs for herbs, flowers, vegetables and one that’s almost entirely tomatoes.

Gleaning through gardening catalogs or websites is an excellent and economical way to learn about growth habits and environmental needs of many different plants. Knowing how tall a plant grows and whether it needs full sun or partial shade can help you decide if that particular specimen is suitable for the bare spot in your yard or if something else would be a better, more successful choice.

This is also a good time to get reacquainted with the University of Georgia’s Extension publications website (extension.uga.edu/publications), where you can find Georgia-specific answers to almost all of your gardening questions.

Prepared Pruner
Most woody plants need pruning at some point and, for many shrubs, that point is before they start to sprout their new, spring growth.

Pruning stimulates growth, flowering and fruit production; opens the plant to airflow and sunlight, inhibiting fungal diseases; and helps maintain the plant’s shape and size. Winter – while the leaves are on the ground and the branches are visible – is a great time to give your plants a good inspection and begin plotting your pruning strategy.

Take some plastic tape or ribbon with you so you can flag the limbs you plan to prune.

(Continued on page 5.)
Southern gardeners love crape myrtles, but unfortunately most don’t know how to properly care for them.

University of Georgia Cooperative Extension agents regularly answer questions regarding proper care and maintenance of the popular flowering tree. The keys to success with crape myrtles include adequate sunlight, proper soil pH, good drainage, proper pruning, adequate fertilization, proper mulching and insect control.

**They love the sun.**

Crape myrtles need full sun - eight hours or more of direct sun daily - in order to thrive and bloom. Crape myrtles will not be their best with less than eight hours of direct sun light. Gardeners should check the sun patterns in their yards before planting crape myrtles.

Crape myrtles thrive in slightly acidic soils with a pH of about 6 to 6.5. If the pH level is off, the plant will not use fertilizer properly and the gardener will be left with substandard crape myrtles. You should take a soil sample to your local Extension office for testing if you don’t know your soil’s pH.

**Prune in late winter; fertilize in early spring.**

Late winter is the time to prune crape myrtles, but gardeners don’t need to prune all of their crape myrtles every year. Some trees may not need to be pruned.

Gardeners should prune the trees so that they maintain a natural shape and to thin out branches and allow light into the canopy. You should not cut off the top of your crape myrtle trees. This pruning method is so drastic it is often referred to as “crape murder.”

To maximize spring growth and summer bloom, gardeners should fertilize their crape myrtles in early spring just prior to new growth.

Fertilizers like 8-8-8, 10-10-10, 12-4-8 or 16-4-8 will work fine and are ideal for crape myrtles but you shouldn’t go over board.  

(Continued on page 6.)
An herbicide designed to kill weeds in turfgrass can also kill neighboring trees and shrubs.

Herbicides in the phenoxy chemical class provide broadleaf weed control in lawns, pastures and hay forages. Some of the more common chemicals in this class include 2,4-D; MCPP; dicamba; clopyralid; and triclopyr.

**Safe for animals but not always for trees and shrubs**

These chemicals are considered very safe and leave very few toxicity concerns for animals. In fact, many of these herbicides are labeled for pasture use and allow for livestock to continue grazing without any restrictions.

However, pesticide labels should always be read and followed to determine if any special precautions should be taken for specific site uses.

Phenoxy herbicides provide selective weed control, which means they control many broadleaf weeds without causing damage to grass. Of course, each product is a little different and some are labeled for very specific turfgrass types, depending on their tolerance.

The label should be checked for application to a specific lawn type (tall fescue, bermudagrass, zoysiagrass, etc.). If the turfgrass isn’t on the label, don’t assume the herbicide can be applied to all lawns.

Unfortunately, phenoxy herbicides don’t discriminate between dandelion weeds or any other broadleaf plants, including many trees and shrubs. So, it’s very important to take extra precautions when applying these herbicides near landscaped areas with ornamental plants.

**Wind and rain can spread herbicides.**

Consider the potential for drift damage to nearby plants and avoid spraying herbicides on a windy day. There is also the potential for movement of these herbicides through runoff and leaching in the soil. This is why the product label usually warns against spraying within the root zone of trees and shrubs and never exceeding the maximum application rates listed on the label.

Many homeowners and landscapers often overlook these label precautions. The information that is contained on the label can seem somewhat vague to inexperienced applicators. The biggest misconception concerns where the root zone of a tree or shrub exists. The roots of mature trees and shrubs actually extend well beyond the drip line of the canopy. Research shows that absorption roots may extend as much as two to three times the canopy width.

Consider spot-spraying to target individual weeds rather than broadcasting applications across the entire lawn. And never exceed the labeled rate.

In landscapes that contain mature trees and shrubs, phenoxy herbicides may not be the best choice for weed control. These herbicides may be best reserved for wide-open spaces such as athletic fields, parks and pastures where tree roots are at a safe distance.

The high potential for herbicide damage to trees is another great reason to protect tree roots by providing a mulch zone that extends well beyond the drip line of the canopy. If you’re not trying to grow a manicured lawn underneath a tree, then there is no reason to apply phenoxy herbicides there for weed control.

**Use the right herbicide for the job.**

Another way to avoid potential damage is to rely less on phenoxy herbicides. Other classes of herbicides have less potential to affect the roots of nearby trees and shrubs. Take the time to identify your weeds and choose a more selective herbicide rather than combination products that usually contain multiple chemicals in the phenoxy class.

(Continued on page 7.)
Happy Valentine’s Day!

Let’s show our worms some L-O-V-E love! This is a month to celebrate all things love! We celebrate our significant others, family members as well as good friends. In fact, in some cultures Valentine’s Day is a celebration of friendship and love. As we share our love this year, let us be sure to include our little slithery friends – our Wonder Worms!

For this month’s article, we are going to be diving into a topic that is currently taking over the vermicomposting world. We will be exploring **vermiponics**. Many people reading this article will probably be familiar with the terms “hydroponics” and “aquaponics.” We’ll discuss hydroponics, aquaponics and also how to incorporate worms into a vermiponic system. Lastly, we’ll review some basics for getting started. So put on your seatbelts! We are in for a great ride!

**What is hydroponics?**

In the gardening world, hydroponics is a process whereby you grow plants in sand, gravel or liquid with added nutrients but without the additional of soil.

**Benefits of a hydroponic system**

There are many potential benefits for growing your plants in a hydroponic system. A few of these benefits are as follows:

- Less land will be used to grow plants.
- By not growing plants in soil, you will also use less water.

These can lead to a more efficient growing system.

For more information on hydroponics, refer to [this publication](#) by Virginia Cooperative Extension.

![Image](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

*This is an example of a simple nonaggregate hydroponics system.*

*Image credit: Alabama A&M & Auburn Universities Extension*

**What is aquaponics?**

The easiest way to understand aquaponics is to imagine it as growing fish using an integrated hydroponic system. It is a symbiotic process whereby aquatic creatures including farmed fish produce waste which supplies nutrients for plants grown in a hydroponic system. Doing their part, the plants clean and purify the water.

(Continued on page 6.)
I’m wondering if you have any advice on how to kill off privet, Bradford pear and bush honeysuckle stumps after all the branches have been cut to the ground. I try to dig these out whenever possible, but many are just too big, tangled with desirable shrubs, or wedged in tight spaces against driveways and retaining walls. Every winter I go on a rampage cutting this stuff back, and by midsummer, I’ve got a jungle on my hands again and they’ve choked out anything I try to get established.

— Melinda L., Athens

I’m worried about the herbicide coming in contact with the good plants in your garden, the herbicide can be applied with a sponge applicator. By combining multiple pruning sessions with the herbicide treatment you should be able to deplete the energy reserves and eventually kill the woody plants.

You already are utilizing a mechanical control by diggin the plants you can reach. There are other mechanical control devices that grasp the base of the plant and use torque to uproot the plant. These mechanical controls are great options if you would prefer to garden without chemicals.

(Amanda Tedrow is the County Extension Coordinator for Athens-Clarke County Extension.)
Benefits of an aquaponic system
There are many potential benefits for an aquaponic system. A few of these benefits are as follows:

- An aquaponic system saves space.
- Just as with hydroponics, you also use less water.
- Unlike with the traditional growth method in soil, you will not have any weeds or critters using aquaponics.

To read more about aquaponics, please visit the USDA aquaponics website.

Well then – what is vermiponics?
Vermiponics is simply a hydroponic/aquaponic gardening system using worms! If you are a bit lost trying to understand this concept, you would not be alone. Let us explore this in more detail!

What does a vermiponic system involve?
Vermiponics combines the best components of hydroponics and aquaponics to create a mini-ecosystem. Remember that in an aquaponic system, the fish help to cultivate the plants, and, in turn, the plants benefit the fish. A similar symbiotic relationship exists with vermiponics. In the vermiponic system, red wiggler castings are used to fertilize the plants. The worms benefit the plants, and likewise, the plants benefit the worms.

In your vermiponics system, you will have a basic flood and drain system including a fish tank, pump and a gravel grow bed. In vermiponics the food source for the worms is your food scraps and other such compostable items. Instead of placing food scraps in the water, you will put them on the gravel bed(s).

Benefits of a vermiponic system
Vermiponics is a new phenomenon in both the agriculture industry and at-home composting worlds. That said, much more research is needed to determine the exact benefits of a vermiponic system and the best methods for achieving these benefits.

A few potential benefits are as follows:

- A vermiponic system requires less water than an aquaponic system.
- It also requires less maintenance than an aquaponic system.
- Worms tend to tolerate more than fish.
- Other than feeding them, worms do not require much additional maintenance.
- Worms reproduce more rapidly.

Well readers, in line with our month of love, we share a wonderful system that you can consider incorporating into your already successful vermicomposting system. Either way, let us show our worms some much needed love during this month. After all, they are our hardworking Wonder Worms! And let’s take a moment to remember that you, your worm helpers and your bin are making a difference. Even on a small scale, your contributions are having an impact and will positively affect your community as a whole.

(Lisa Sebannie is a Georgia Master Composter Extension Volunteer.)

Over-fertilizing the trees will cause excess growth and reduce the number of blooms on each tree. You soil test results will include a recommendation for the proper fertilizer. You can apply the tree’s fertilizer directly over its mulch.

Mulch to fight weeds, trap moisture.
Gardeners should mulch their crape myrtles after planting to conserve moisture, reduce weeds and insulate roots against extreme temperatures. There should be a layer of about three to five inches surrounding the tree. Gardeners should plan to mulch an area larger than the planting hole.

Insect damage is a frequent problem on crape myrtles, and aphids cause much of that damage.

Left unchecked, aphids will release bodily fluids onto the foliage, and the resulting honeydew can lead to sooty mold, a black discoloration that can occur in the summer and fall.

Sooty mold usually causes little damage, but it can reduce the plant’s vigor. You can plant crape myrtle cultivars that are resistant to aphids or treat other cultivars with insecticides to reduce sooty mold. As always, follow label directions on all pesticides.

By following the practices outlined here, your crape myrtles should perform their best this growing season and in years to come.

(William Tyson is the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension coordinator for Effingham County.)
After the cold and dark winter months, spring is my favorite season for exploring and appreciating nature. The temperature is just right to examine changes in the garden, take a hike through the woods, go kayaking or birding—the activities seem endless!

This spring, I encourage you to not only explore but also to educate yourself about the ecosystems and natural environments around us. I hope you will consider participating in the 2015 Georgia Master Naturalist Program. A partnership between ACC Extension and the UGA Warnell School of Forestry & Natural Resources, the classes are led by UGA faculty and other experts. The program includes field trips to granite outcroppings, ponds, forests, urban landscapes and more. Please review the following information, and contact me with you have any questions.

I hope you join us!

- Amanda
Spring Vegetable Gardening

Learn the dos and don’ts of vegetable gardening from an experienced gardener! During this free workshop, Athens Area Master Gardener John Aitkens will discuss the key steps to growing a successful vegetable garden. Gardeners of all levels are welcome!

WHEN:
Wed., March 4 · 6-7:30 p.m.

WHERE:
Athens-Clarke County Library
2025 Baxter Street
Athens, GA 30606

TO REGISTER:
Register by March 3 by contacting ACC Extension at 706-613-3640 or atedrow@uga.edu.

For questions and to register:
Contact Amanda Tedrow, Extension Agent at 706-613-3640 or atedrow@uga.edu.
The Seniors Garden Club hosted by the Athens Community Council on Aging meets on the first and third Thursday of the month from 10-11 a.m. Meetings are FREE. Contact 706-549-4850 for more information.

On Thursdays, UGArden holds its weekly produce stand from 4:30-6 p.m. during the spring semester. The student-run stand is located at 2500 S. Milledge Avenue past the greenhouse entrance. Offerings include vegetables, shiitake mushrooms (in season), herbs, and mixed herb teas. For more information, visit www.ugarden.uga.edu.

On Wednesday, March 4 at 11 a.m., the UGA Center for Urban Agriculture and Department of Horticulture are holding the webinar “Summer Container Gardens.” Presented by Jenny Hardgrave of Simply Flowers, the webinar will also be archived for you to view at your convenience.

On Wednesday, March 4, Athens-Clarke County Extension will present the free gardening workshop “Spring Vegetable Gardening.” Held from 6-7:30 p.m. at the Athens-Clarke County Library, the workshop will review basic vegetable gardening dos and don’ts. Registration is required. To register, please call 706-613-3640 or email atedrow@uga.edu.

On Friday, March 6 and Saturday, March 7 Piccadilly Farm is holding the 23rd Annual Hellebore Days. The event is free will be held from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. on both dates at Piccadilly Farm in Bishop, GA. Attendees will be able to view thousands of spectacular hellebores (Lenten Roses) in a variety of colors. For more information, please call 706-765-4444.

On Friday, March 6 at 2 p.m., the 2015 All Bugs Good and Bad Series will present the webinar, “Fire Ant Management Using Baits.” This one-hour free webinar will discuss fire ant baits and other control methods.

The link for the webinar opens at 1:45 p.m. Please enter as a “Guest.” A recording of the webinar will be posted after March 6.

Are you a current or aspiring goat farmer? Oglethorpe County Extension is offering a Master Goat Farmer certification training. Classes will be held on Mondays from March 16-April 20 from 6:30-8:30 p.m. at the Oglethorpe County Extension office. To register please call 706-743-8341 or visit the Oglethorpe County Extension website. Register by Monday, March 9.

Buy healthier, locally raised plants at a low price! On Saturday, March 21, the Ladies Homestead Gathering of Athens-Clarke County is holding its 1st Annual Plant Sale at the ACC Extension office. The sale will be from 10 a.m.-noon and will include heirloom tomato, pepper and sweet basil plants as well as succulents (pre-order only). For more information, please contact Taylor at taylorkrcek@gmail.com.

Friday, March 27 is the registration deadline for the 2015 Master Naturalist certification program. The program is offered through Athens-Clarke County Extension and UGA Warnell School of Forestry & Natural Resources. Classes will be held at Sandy Creek Nature Center in Athens each Friday from 9 a.m.-4 p.m. in April and May. To register and for more information, please call 706-613-3640 or visit the ACC Extension website.

On Saturday, March 28, 3 Porch Farm is hosting its Annual Plant Sale/Farm Tour from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. The event will feature plenty of seeds for your spring garden including heirloom varieties, hybrid veggies and flowers! Attendees can tour the farm’s solar electricity production system, strawberry and flower fields, biofuels station, vehicles and more. The farm is located at 135 Francis Hill Road in Comer. For more information, please email 3porchfarm@gmail.com.

“Spring is the time of plans and projects.” — Leo Tolstoy, Anna Karenina
**Non-Drought Outdoor Water Use Schedule**
*Effective August 8, 2013*

**allowed daily**

Between 4:00 pm and 10:00 am

- Automated irrigation systems
- Hand watering (without a shut-off nozzle)
- Lawn sprinklers

**odd/even schedule**

No hourly restrictions

Even: Mon • Wed • Sat
Odd: Tues • Thurs • Sun

- Car washing at home
- Charity car washes
- Hosing driveways
- Outdoor cleaning
- Pressure washing by homeowner
- Topping-off pools

**allowed anytime**

By anyone

- Commercial pressure washing
- Drip irrigation or soaker hose
- Watering of food gardens
- Hand watering (with a shut-off nozzle)
- Hydroteching
- Installation and maintenance of an irrigation system
- Irrigation of newly installed turf (for the first 30 days)
- Irrigation of public recreational turf areas
- Irrigation of plants for sale
- Irrigation of sports fields
- Water from a private well
- Water from an alternate source
  - grey water, rain water, condensate

*Please note: The odd/even schedule still applies to non-landscape outdoor water use.*

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*This Non-Drought Outdoor Water Use Schedule is consistent with the Outdoor Water Use Rules set forth in the Georgia Water Stewardship Act that went into effect statewide on June 2, 2010.*

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Athens-Clarke County Water Conservation Office
706-613-3729 / savewater@athensclarkecounty.com
Outdoor Water Restrictions:
Barrow, Oconee & Jackson Counties

Outdoor water use for Barrow, Oconee, and Jackson Counties is now limited to three days per week with even number addresses allowed to water on Saturday, Monday, and Wednesday and odd number addresses allowed to water on Sunday, Tuesday, and Thursday. The ban on watering between 10:00 AM and 4:00 PM remains in effect for all scheduled watering days. No outdoor watering is allowed on Fridays other than exemptions below.

The following uses are exempt from all hourly/day of the week restrictions:

- Drip Irrigation
- Soaker Hoses
- Hand Watering
- Food Gardens
- New installations of plants and turf (with a permit)
- Grey Water, Rainwater and AC Condensation Reuse
- Golf Course - Tee and Green Irrigation
- Plants for sale, resale, or installation

Please be aware that water restrictions are subject to change.

For more information and additional exemptions please contact your county’s water conservation department.

Mission Statement

The UGA Athens-Clarke County Extension’s mission is to respond to the people’s needs and interest in Agriculture, the Environment, Families, and 4-H/Youth in Athens-Clarke County with unbiased, research-based education and information.

Athens-Clarke County Extension
2152 West Broad Street
Athens, GA 30606
Phone: (706) 613-3640
Fax: (706) 613-3643
E-mail: atedrow@uga.edu