

The Garden Dirt



January 2011

FROM THE GROUND UP



JOINING JANUS

January is named for the Roman god, Janus. He is depicted with two faces - one facing forward, one facing backward. This is symbolic of past and future, of particular relevance to gardeners as we are constantly appraising our plants, beds and containers.

Looking backward, what can we do to improve our gardens? Reflection is one of our primary January garden chores, so let's look with a clear eye at problems we may have run into over the last gardening year.

1. How many hours of sunlight does the planting area(s) receive? Do you have some plants that got too much or too little light?
2. How much wind affects your garden plot? While many grasses love it, some other plants are worn down by too much wind.
3. Did the new plants you put in this year perform well?
4. Do you have plants in the same area with different watering needs?
5. Did you use the right kind of mulch for your plants? Herbs and xeric plants that like to be dry need a mulch of gravel or small stones.
6. Would your plants have fared better in raised beds? Any type of raised bed will warm up earlier in the spring, have better drainage and give you easier access.

Winter is the time to make corrections for any of these problems. There will be some warmer days during winter when working outdoors won't be impossible.

So, sift through the plant catalogs, get your soil pH tested, reflect on changes to the old garden and look forward to the glorious new garden you will welcome this Spring.

Judy

What a wonderful Christmas party! This was one of the biggest crowds ever. Many thanks to Teresa Morrison, Becki Peterson, Heather Gray-Jordan and all the hospitality volunteers for getting it all coordinated; Lindsey's Culinary Market made it in on the wire with wonderful food; and the good will and camaraderie generated by our group was virtually contagious. Thanks also to all who stayed on and helped clean up. I hope everyone had a wonderful time! There are pictures later in this newsletter.

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BACKYARD BERRIES AND BIRDS

When I was in the fifth grade, I had a teacher named Mrs. Snow. She could identify every bird on the playground and she could also identify their songs. One lazy day at the end of the school year, she sat straight up at her desk and said: "That's the summer tanager! Get up and get in line. We're going outside." It was 2:00 P.M. and my classmates and I were trying desperately to fight off a nice nap after lunch, so getting up and getting in line quickly was out of the question. Mrs. Snow glared at us and said, "This is a summer visitor and you have just missed welcoming him to your neighborhood." Thus began my deep love of (and on-going feeling of guilt for) birds.

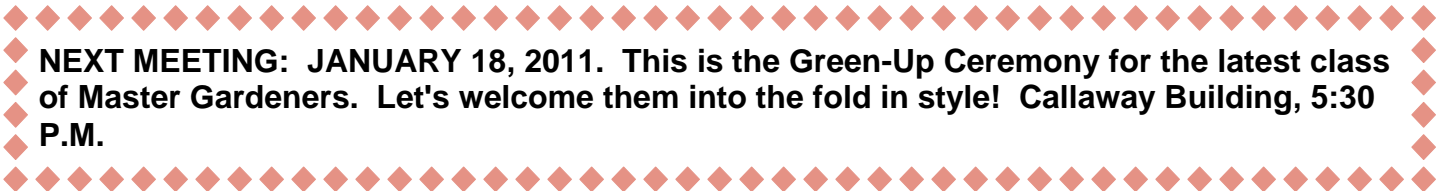
Birds eat what is available. They eat flower buds, flowers, and seeds in the spring and summer and they also depend on berries in the fall and winter. Berry plants produce berries at staggered time intervals throughout the year in each ecosystem. In North America, berries are available in just about every month of the year. You can plant berry-producing plants for fall feeding and provide plants like holly and ivy that produce winter berries for the leanest months when not much else is around for the birds to eat.

Here's a sketchy guide to some backyard plants with berries that birds love to eat:

Judy

<u>BERRY SEASON</u>	<u>BERRYING PLANT</u>	<u>FEEDING BIRDS</u>
Early summer	Strawberries	Catbirds, crows, mockingbirds, robins, brown thrashers, sparrows, towhees
Summer	Mulberries	Bluebirds, cardinals, catbirds, doves, titmice, flickers, cedar waxwings, blue jays, woodpeckers, sparrows
Late Summer	Blueberries	Robins, finches, bluejays, cedar waxwings, towhees, chickadees, brown thrashers
Late Summer/Fall	Barberries	Catbirds, bluebirds, mockingbirds
Fall	Elaeagnus	Robins, catbirds, mockingbirds
Fall	Dogwoods	Robins, catbirds, cardinals, bluebirds, titmice, woodpeckers, crows
Fall	Blackberries Raspberries	Finches, cedar waxwings, catbirds, crows, titmice, towhees, sparrows, bluebird, chickadees, bluejays, cardinals, robins, brown thrashers, mockingbirds
Fall/Winter	Pyracantha	Cedar waxwing, finch, bluebirds
Fall/Winter	Virginia creeper	Bluebirds, robins, flickers, chickadees, mockingbirds, nuthatches, titmice, sapsuckers, woodpeckers
Winter	Hollies	Bluebirds, catbirds, doves, flickers, blue jays, mockingbirds, robins, sparrows, sapsuckers, brown thrasher, towhees, woodpeckers, cedar waxwings
Winter	Cotoneaster	Chickadees, woodpecker, sapsuckers, finches, cedar waxwings, flickers
Winter	Euonymous (Burning Bush)	Bluebirds, cardinals, robins, titmice
Winter	Juniper, cedar	Cedar waxwings, bluejays, warblers, bluebirds, catbirds, finches, mockingbirds, flickers, brown thrashers, robins
Winter	Ivy	Cedar waxwings, bluebirds, blackbirds, robins, starlings

Information for this abbreviated list came from National Geographic [Field Guide to the Birds of North America](#), National Audubon Society [The Sibley Guide to Birds](#), Fred Alsop, III [All About Georgia Birds](#), and other articles.


NEXT MEETING: JANUARY 18, 2011. This is the Green-Up Ceremony for the latest class of Master Gardeners. Let's welcome them into the fold in style! Callaway Building, 5:30 P.M.

FLOWER OF THE MONTH: Carnation

The flower for January is the carnation, also commonly referred to by its scientific name, dianthus. The name dianthus was given to the carnation by the Greek botanist Theophrastus. "Dianthus" comes from two Greek words: "dios", referring to the god Zeus, and "anthos", meaning flower. Thus, carnations are the flowers of God.



Carnations are native to Eurasia, and historically they are known to have been used by the Greeks and Romans in garlands. There are 5 petals on the carnation, *Dianthus caryophyllus*, but border carnation cultivars can have double flowers with as many as 40 petals. They are bisexual flowers and bloom simply or in a branched or forked cluster. Carnation leaves are narrow, varying in color from green to grey-blue. They have strong, straight stems. You can grow carnations from cuttings made of the suckers that form around the base of the stem of the plant, from the side shoots of the flowering stem, or from the main shoots before they show flower buds. They need several hours of sun in the garden each day and the soil needs to be kept moist. Overwatering can cause the leaves to turn yellow.

Carnations are popular flowers because they last a long time even when cut, so they make great corsages and boutonnieres and last a long time in the vase. They come in a wide variety of colors and each color symbolizes a human trait. For instance, pink carnations represent a mother's love; dark red carnations symbolize deep love; purple carnations symbolize capriciousness; and yellow carnations symbolize disappointment or dejection.



A \$300 grant was given by AAMGA to the UGA Gardens on Milledge project. If you are interested in participating in the project please contact Brenda Beckham at 706.549.0981 or bbeckha2@bellsouth.net

George Watson asked that this information be added to the newsletter this month:

To protect yourself from mail-order nursery fraud, follow this procedure:

1. Pay only by credit card so you'll have some recourse in case your plant arrives dead.
2. If you are ordering from a company for the first time, place only a minimum order as a test.
3. Call their toll-free number and talk to them. If they're rude or uninformed, look elsewhere.
4. Check "The Garden Watchdog Guide to Gardening by Mail" at www.davesgarden.com/gwd for ratings of mail order vendors according to service and quality.

Compiled from "According to Steve", [Southern Living](#).

If you have any Master Gardener announcements, please send them to:

**AAMGAlistserv@gmail.com by 7:00 pm on Tuesday evenings.
Our newsletter deadline is 7:00 pm on the 27th of the month.**

Christmas 2010



Thanks to Shirley Baker for sharing these great pictures from the 2010 Christmas Party. A great time was enjoyed by all!



JANUARY GARDEN CHORES

- * Prepare beds for bare-root roses arriving in nurseries. Dig an area 4 feet wide and 12 inches deep for each plant. Add soil conditioner.
- * Water poinsettias only as needed (when the top inch of soil is dry to the touch). Keep in bright light but cool temperatures. Don't fertilize until March.
- * Small, leafless shrubs and trees can be transplanted now. Wait for a warm day when the ground is not frozen.
- * Check indoor plants for pests. Be sure to spray insecticidal soap on the undersides of leaves.
- * Amaryllis flower stems and their faded blooms can be removed. Treat it like a houseplant until warm enough to plant in the garden.
- * Watch for brown edges on indoor plants. Mist leaves twice a day and move them out of drafty areas.
- * Turn your compost heap. Keep a cat around to catch any escaping mice or voles.
- * Clean out birdhouses. Clean out and refill bird feeders weekly. Don't forget to supply your visiting birds with water.
- * Get your soil pH tested at the County Extension Office. Be sure to take samples from different areas of your property.
- * Interplant perennials and bulbs. Perennials' leaves will hide the yellowing leaves of the bulbs, and this allows the bulbs to store as much energy from their leaves as possible for their dormant period.
- * Keep looking through magazines and catalogs for new and interesting plants. Remember Janus: look backward at possible mistakes and forward for future rewards.

Each month, the Garden Chores are gleaned from [Horticulture](#) magazine and web-site; Wikipedia articles; [The Cultivated Gardener](#), by Cathy Wilkinson Barash and Jim Wilson; [Organic Gardening](#) magazine and web-site; [Georgia Gardener's Guide](#), by Erica Glasener and Walter Reeves; articles from [Fine Gardening](#) magazine and web-site; [Southern herb Growing](#), by Madalene Hill and Gwen Barclay with Jean Hardy; [The Complete Herb Book](#) by Jekka McVicar; and other publications. Elizabeth's Chores from last year are also utilized.

Volunteer Opportunity: Each year, the Oconee 4-H Club fifth graders ask us to help them judge their projects and prepare the winners for District Competition at Rock Eagle. This involves 2 afternoons in latter January and 1 afternoon in February. If you are interested in volunteering and working with an enthusiastic group of 5th graders, please let me know at: lee1569@charter.net. **Judy**

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