

December 2011



## *Winterizing Trees: Dormant Season Preparations* By Kim D. Coder

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Have you winterized your trees yet? Fall is a time of serious change and reorganization within a tree. Many trees will not survive to grow another spring. You can help your trees survive and thrive.

Trees sense the changing seasons by the temperature, by a dormancy timer in the leaves, and by the amount of light they receive. The old leaves, buds, and inner bark all have a pigment that reads the seasons of the year. As the days shorten in fall, this pigment called phytochrome, tells the tree to close down for winter.

Getting ready for winter in an organized way is called senescence. Within a tree, a message is sent from the tissues with phytochrome which signals senescence. Senescence in trees is an ordered shutting-down of summer growth and the conservation of valuable resources. Senescence brings both the fall colors and leads to renewed spring growth.

Many of the materials a tree has collected or manufactured during the growing season are withdrawn from the soon-to-be dead leaves. Tree waste materials are left behind. The last bit of tree food is stockpiled in the living cells of the outer annual growth rings. Twigs, branches and

roots become the collection sites and warehouses of materials needed for the next season to come.

Within the tree, biological doors and windows are being closed and locked. From the moment last Spring's green leaves expanded and began to make food, winter dormancy has been designed into the tree system. The process of spring and summer growth reset and start a dormancy timer that now hurries tree preparations.

The tree-filled landscapes this time of year can be mistakenly thought to be asleep. Fall and winter trees are not sleeping, but are simply still -- truly counting the days until Spring.



Most of the growing points in the tree are protected inside overcoats called buds.

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## Winterizing Trees (continued from Page 1)

Each growing point waits for the correct message to signal a new season of growth. Only then will it be apparent whether the tree has put aside and saved enough resources to respond to the new season of growth.

Winter is a difficult time for trees. Trees must stand in the face of drying and cold winds. Food reserves must be carefully conserved for the coming needs of Spring. Water continues to be lost from the tree.

Any creature needing a meal chews and nibbles on the resting buds and twigs. Trees stand alone against all circumstances that the winter season can generate.

What can you do to help your valuable trees.? Little things can make your trees more effective and efficient at surviving a long winter.



### The “Top 10 List” of things you can do to winterize your tree include:

1. Remove or correct structural faults and deadwood that are clearly visible. Try to make small pruning cuts that minimize the exposure of the central heartwood core on branches.
2. Properly prune branches that will

touch the ground when loaded with rain and snow. Foliage and branches that are in contact with soil can invite undesirable pests and problems.

3. Remove damaged and declining twigs, branches, and bark. Do not leave pests food and shelter for the winter.

4. Remove any new sprouts that have grown at the tree base, or along stems and branches. These sprouts will interfere with tree changes needed for winter and next spring.

5. Complete limited greenwood pruning of poorly placed branches. Pruning should conserve as many living branches as possible with only a few selective cuts.

6. Spread a thin layer of composted organic mulch to blanket the soil. Cover an area at least as large as the branch spread. Mulch is nature’s way of recycling valuable materials, but be careful of pests hitching a ride.

7. Properly wrap new trees that have not developed a corky bark and could be easily damaged. Mechanical injury from the environment, including chewing and rubbing by animals, must be prevented.



8. Aerate soils if they are compacted and poorly drained. It is critical not

to damage tree roots in the soil. Saturated and dense soils can suffocate roots.

9. Fertilize with all the essential elements, if they are in short supply within the soil. Be sure to go lightly with nitrogen, if used at all, especially under large, mature trees and around newly planted trees.



10. Watering may be needed where soils and trees are cool but not frozen, and there has been little precipitation. Winter droughts need treatment with water the same as summer droughts, except it is much easier to over-water in winter.

Trees are investments that require a small amount of care. For the sake of your tree’s quality of life and your own, take a few minutes to winterize your tree. Wonderful springs come from well-tended winters.

*Dr. Kim D. Coder is a Professor of Tree Biology & Health Care, Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources*

## *Gardening with Deer* by John Aitkens

For 10 years I've lived on DEERhollow Road in DEERfield subdivision which sorta qualifies me to share with you my landscaping trials and tribulations in trying to live with our deer friends!



Now, I must tell you that my wife has complicated my efforts a bit. In the unfenced area of our yard she feeds our deer pans of corn, sunflower seeds, and apples every day, and even provides them a water bowl to wash it all down! The herd shows up every evening and she almost has to push them out of the way to fill their bowls. (I know, she shouldn't feed the wildlife, but what can I say!)

In the August issue of this newsletter I gave you my recipe for very inexpensive homemade deer repellent spray, and shared with you my successful use of Milorganite (R) to further discourage them from munching. The combo of these two deterrents works great in the short term on plants, especially annuals and perennials, which most gardeners want to grow in unprotected areas of the yard. However, for year round control, deer resistant annuals, perennials, and ornamentals are your first line of defense. There are some good publications at the Extension Office website (see below), so I won't bore you with an extensive list of plants here, but rather a few tried and true varieties that have worked well for me in my yard.

*Here is the publication website where you can search for the following publications:*

<http://www.caes.uga.edu/publications/>

C889-1 Using Milorganite to Repel White Tail Deer from Perennials

C985 Deer Tolerant Ornamentals

C957 Poisonous Plants

**Annuals** - Marigolds and annual Lantana are a sure bet. Other annuals such as Impatiens, Petunias and Pansies are just another name for "deer salad"! Nevertheless, if you spray them with repellent and/or sprinkle them with Milorganite, you can enjoy them, too, keeping in mind these deterrents are susceptible to rain and time.



**Herbs** - I plant Rosemary all around my yard and prune it into a shrub. Since all my other herbs are inside my fenced vegetable garden, I can't speak first hand as to their resistance, but I understand most are due to their essential oil content.

Speaking of fencing, as you know, a deer can easily jump a 6 foot fence, but someone once told me that if you plant shrubs on either side of a fence, it confuses deer because they need a clear place to leap from, and/or land. Seems to work in my yard, but occasionally I've

watched mom find a spot to jump over my 4 foot rail fence, while Bambi crawled underneath! The fawns are cute and don't eat much, so I tolerate them.

**Perennials** - In my yard I like daffodils, iris, salvia, umbrella sedge, swamp sunflowers, holly ferns, lenten roses, cast iron plants, butterfly bushes, perennial verbena, perennial lantana, black-eye susan, among the many perennials that are deer resistant (see publication).



**Ground cover and grasses** - I use archangel, Mexican primrose and winter creeper everywhere, and have used lots of the pampas-type grasses. I also use liriope as a border which the deer enjoy "pruning" for me.

**Ornamental shrubs** - I have planted lots of varieties of hollies, junipers, nandinas, osmanthus, sweetspire, barberry, cactus, yucca, and mahonia.

I am barely a Master Gardener intern, so clearly no expert, but the above tried and true strategy has worked very well for me. Maybe it will give you some ideas.

Good Gardening!

## Ten Plants for Your Pollinator Garden *by Kim Sutherland*

Attracting pollinators to your garden starts with choosing plants that are good nectar sources and/or host plants. Including trees, shrubs, perennial and annual herbs, and native plants that flower throughout the growing season will guarantee a healthy pollinator garden.

If I had to choose just 10 plants to start a pollinator garden, I would start with milkweeds. Any plant in the milkweed family is a host, as well as nectar source, for monarch butterflies. Having both nectar and host plants growing throughout their migration route is important for their survival. There are many native milkweeds such as butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*), swamp milkweed (*A. incarnata*), common milkweed (*A. syriaca*) and whorled milkweed (*A. verticillata*). Do not plant the Mexican milkweed, also called Mexican blood flower (*A. curassavica*). It may be invasive in warmer parts of the state, but it also confuses the seasonal migration of the monarchs.

Salvias are great nectar sources for bees and hummingbirds. Bees in particular like blue-flowered salvias,



e.g. blue anise sage (*Salvia guaranitica*) or azure sage (*S. azurea*). Hummingbirds are attracted to red salvias like scarlet sage (*Salvia coccinea*) or Texas sage (*S. greggii*), but they will also find

the blue ones.

Culinary herbs, such as mint, oregano, and thyme are hardy, drought tolerant perennials, although not natives. Their tiny flowers will provide nectar for small bees, wasps, and butterflies- like the hairstreaks. I also plant fennel or dill. They are great for pickle-making and salads, but are also hosts, along with parsley, for the black swallowtail caterpillar. If you let the plants flower, they will also provide nectar for small insects.



Goldenrod (*Solidago* spp.) should never be considered a weed. It is an excellent fall nectar source for many different types of insects. Butterfly bush (*Buddleia davidii*) is aptly named and provides safe resting spots and nectar for butterflies and hummingbirds. Glossy abelia (*Abelia X grandiflora*) is a magnet for butterflies and bees, blooming all summer and fall. Although, the flowers are tube shaped, the twigs provide landing spots for butterflies as they sip nectar.

I recommend passionflower vine (*Passiflora incarnata*), as a host plant for the gulf fritillary. It will bring in beautiful orange and black butterflies with silvery underwings to your garden. You are guaranteed to find red caterpillars with black spikes on your

passionflower vine in the fall. It also produces one of the most stunning flowers in the plant kingdom and is native to the southeast.



I try to avoid annual flowers, preferring my annuals to be vegetables, but two annual flowers that I have started growing for butterflies are zinnias and snapdragons. Zinnias, native to Mexico, are great butterfly attractors. The wide open flower is just right for a butterfly to land on. Snapdragons (*Antirrhinum majus*) are easy to grow from seed and are the host for the buckeye butterfly. The Buckeye has drab underwings, but when it flashes the top of its wings a beautiful pattern with eyespots is revealed. Snapdragons are also good nectar plants for hummingbirds. A native which can replace this plant is the related *Chelone* or turtlehead.

The Monarchs Across Georgia website ([www.monarchsacrossga.org](http://www.monarchsacrossga.org)) has more information about butterflies and pollinator gardens. You can also have your garden certified through their state-wide pollinator garden certification program.

*Kim Sutherland is a Georgia Master Gardener and is the current chair of Monarchs Across Georgia.*

**Contact Kim at:**

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## *Which Blueberries to plant?* by Amanda Tedrow

**I would like to plant blueberry plants this fall. What type should I plant and how many do I need for a good crop? Bill J. –Athens**



Typically, in northern Georgia the blueberry bush of choice is a rabbiteye. In our area rabbiteye blueberries perform better than highbush varieties. Blueberries prefer well drained acidic soil just like azaleas, rhododendrons and many other favorite shrubs

for our area. When planting use at least two (preferably three) varieties of blueberries for proper cross pollination and fruit set. These plants cannot pollinate themselves and must have a compatible pollinator. Blueberry varieties have early, mid, and late season flowering and fruit set. Make sure when purchasing plants to purchase at least two varieties from the same flowering time period. For example, purchase two different early varieties and two different mid-season varieties will produce a good crop but, if only one early season and one late season variety are purchased little crucial cross pollination will occur and few fruit will be produced. The earliest fruiting varieties are Climax and Woodard. Mid-season varieties include Tiftblue, Baldwin, Brightblue and Bluebell. Late season varieties

are Briteblue and Delite. Since late season varieties bloom later than early and mid season there is usually little chance of frost killing flowers which could be a problem in north Georgia.

For more information on growing blueberries in Georgia and additional cultivar recommendations visit:

[http://www.caes.uga.edu/applications/publications/files/pdf/C%20946\\_2.PDF](http://www.caes.uga.edu/applications/publications/files/pdf/C%20946_2.PDF)



## *Browning Boxwoods* by Amanda Tedrow

**My boxwoods turn brown every winter and I don't know what causes it. Is there anything I can do to prevent this or is it too late for this year as well? Sydney G. Winterville**



Boxwoods often have a problem with bronzing in the winter. This color change is typically due to winter sun

and wind damage. If possible, plant boxwoods near a windbreak with limited sun exposure. Morning and early afternoon sun are preferred to mid to late afternoon sun, especially in the winter. Bronzing can also occur in plants that are stressed by low pH, low fertility or drought. It is likely that your shrubs will have a bronze tint this winter due to the drought of this past summer. If you

have not checked your soil pH lately I would recommend a soil test to make sure the conditions are best suited for your shrubs.

Boxwoods are very particular about their surroundings. When planting boxwoods make sure you keep them well watered during the summer months for at least the first year. These shrubs prefer cool soils which are moist but not wet since boxwoods are prone to root rots. Boxwood shrubs will benefit greatly from a good layer of mulch. This mulch will maintain a cooler soil temperature in addition to increasing water retention. Pruning should be done yearly in the late winter since the shrubs are slow-growing and even slower to recover from drastic pruning.



## Gardening Events in Our Area

Gardening is  
cheaper than  
therapy and you  
get tomatoes.

~Author

Unknown

**Shiitake Mushroom Workshop**, Saturday, December 3, 2011, 9-3pm. UGA Horticulture Greenhouses on South Milledge Avenue. \$65 for Georgia Organics and PLACE members and \$75 for non-members.

**Wreath Making Class**, Wednesday, December 14, 2011, 10-noon. Winter-ville Depot. \$15. Register through ACC Extension or Athens Community Council on Aging

**Native Plant Symposium**, Wednesday, January 18, 2012: 8:45 am - 3:30 pm State Botanical Garden, The Garden Club of Georgia Terrace Room. members \$55



Don't wear perfume  
in the garden -  
unless you want to  
be pollinated by  
bees. ~Anne Raver



## Amanda Says

I have to say that cool season vegetable crops are some of the prettiest plants I've ever seen. There are so many lettuce varieties, leaf shapes, colors and tastes out there. Then there are all the beautiful kale, radishes, beets, and Swiss chard. I have little need for ornamental flowers when there are so many great edibles out there. The great news is with the warm weather we have been experiencing has extended our planting window for many cool season vegetables.

As of this point we haven't even had a freeze at my house so our warm season vegetables are still going strong. Who knew you could have tomatoes on the vine in late November?

I have also been enjoying my greenhouse this fall. I love cacti and suc-

culent plants and I have the scars to prove it. I bought my first cactus in 2002 for ninety-nine cents and I have been hooked ever since. I'm up to around 400 plants now which takes up quite a bit of space. I think the only reason we have a greenhouse (homemade) is because my husband wanted our kitchen back. For the first couple years at our house on cold nights we had numerous plants keeping us company while we were cooking dinner. It was very earthy but not great for having houseguests.

The other gardening activity I've been involved in is making seed tape for some of my spring veggies. If you have never tried this craft before I would recommend it. There are some great tutorials online for seed tape and I've even seen that some gardeners make seed tape to give as holiday gifts.

Happy Gardening!

## *Outdoor Water Restrictions: Clarke, Barrow, Oconee & Jackson Counties*

Outdoor water use for Clarke, Barrow, Oconee, and Jackson Counties is now limited to one day per week with even number addresses allowed to water on Saturday and odd number addresses allowed to water on Sunday. The ban on watering between 10:00 AM and 4:00 PM remains in effect on Saturdays and Sundays.

THE FOLLOWING USES ARE EXEMPT FROM ALL HOURLY AND 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

For more information and additional exemptions please see the following link:

<http://athensclarkecounty.com/index.aspx?NID=1243>



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Visit us on the web at

<http://www.ugaextension.com/clarke/anr/index.html>

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### **MISSION STATEMENT**

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**Learning**  
*for*  
**Life**