



The Garden Bench

The Garden Bench is a free bi-monthly newsletter from the University of Georgia Extension in Houston County. We provide research based information to assist Middle Georgia gardeners. For more information see these websites: UGA Extension Service - www.ugaextension.org or the Georgia Center for Urban Agriculture – www.gaurbanag.org and Georgia Weather – www.georgiaweather.net

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Willie Chance, Houston County Extension Agent



Winter can be an exciting time in Southern gardens! Our moderate winter temperatures (for at least a few days) allow us to get out and get a head start on garden projects. Begin new planting beds, build paths, and plant shrubs and trees. Hold off planting tender annuals until after the last frost.

Winter is a great time to garden indoors. Add greenery and color to your home with some relatively carefree houseplants. Check with your local nursery for new colorful houseplants suited for gardening indoors.

The UGA climatologist expects variable weather this winter. He expects periods of warmer weather as well as some freezing weather. There should also be a greater chance of winter thunderstorms and tornadoes this year. For more information see www.agclimate.org

FRUIT AND NUT TREES

- ***Mulch fruits** - especially strawberries.
- ***Plant fruit and nut trees** and grapevines. Do a soil test prior to planting. Add lime if necessary. Fertilize when buds begin to appear. Plant only recommended varieties for your area or you may encounter problems you cannot solve. Contact your local Extension Office or see our website for a list of recommended varieties and soil testing information.
- *When planting, **expect to spray apples, peaches, and nectarines to prevent pests**. Depending on weather, plums may also need spraying. Sprays will begin at bud stage and extend sometimes until harvest. Follow label directions. Use Home Orchard

or Home Fruit Tree spray containing Captan and Malathion.

- ***If you want fruits that are more pest resistant**, plant blueberries, Oriental persimmons, pears, figs, muscadines and blackberries.
- *Whitewash or wrap young (slick barked) fruit tree trunks to **prevent winter stem splitting**. Use white latex paint thinned with water.
- ***Prune fruits** before they bud out. Prune peaches and grapes last – usually in February. Early pruning can make peach trees and grape vines more susceptible to cold weather. Contact your local Extension office for a “how-to-prune” brochure.
- ***Prevent fruit pests** by spraying dormant oil for insects or lime sulfur for diseases. Spray before trees leaf out. Cover the tree well for best control.

TREES AND SHRUBS

- ***If a prolonged freeze is forecast**, water evergreen plants thoroughly the day before cold is expected.
- ***Prune spring flowering shrubs** such as azaleas, quince, forsythia and spirea anytime after bloom through mid-July. **Prune summer-blooming shrubs** (those that bloom after May 1) January through August. **Prune non-blooming shrubs** such as Cleyera, Anise, hollies and others from January through August.
- ***Remove spent camellia blooms** from the ground to reduce the possibility of petal blight.
- ***Plant trees and shrubs** as soon as possible so roots get well established before dry weather.
- *Examine shrubs for **scale insects**, especially Euonymus, Camellia, Ligustrum and Pittosporum. Control with dormant oil now. Scale insects may be more difficult to kill later in the year.

The Garden Bench, a gardening publication of the University of Georgia Extension Service in Houston County, is published in both English and Spanish. If you would like to receive it by email, contact us at tberry1@alltel.net. It is also available in bulk for clubs and organizations or as single copies at Houston County garden centers. Call the Extension Office for details on receiving bulk copies – (478) 987-2028.

LAWNS

***Soil test** and add lime if needed. Do not lime lawns unless asked to by a soil sample. **You can raise the pH too high and damage lawns** – especially centipede lawns.

*If the lawn has a thatch layer thicker than one-half inch (one inch for St. Augustine lawns), dethatch the lawn in January or February. **Do not dethatch lawns once they begin to green up.**

***Control wild onion and wild garlic** with two sprays of Image four weeks apart.

***Apply a pre-emergence weed killer in late February** and again 45 days later to prevent summer weeds. Do not use it if you plan to seed your lawn within 45 to 60 days. You can use Atrazine for all lawns except Bermuda grass. Halts (pendamethalin), Balan (benefin), Surflan (oryzalin) and XL can be used on all warm season lawn grasses. Contact the Extension Office or see the label to see which weeds each one controls.

***Weeds in lawns are leftover winter weeds. Controlling these weeds is difficult once they get large.** You can spray broadleaf weeds with Weed-B-Gon 33-Plus, or equivalent. **Expect poor control when using herbicides on large weeds.** You may want to just mow the weeds.

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FLOWERS

***Prepare your beds for annual flowers.** Do a soil test and add lime and fertilizer as needed. Plant hardy annuals and biennials now such as Baby's Breath, Sweet Peas, Foxglove, Ornamental Cabbage, Kale, Sweet William, and Calendulas. Wait until April 1 to plant tender annuals.

***Fertilize bulbs** when the plant gets two to three inches tall. Apply one pound of 10-10-10 per 100 square feet, or another equivalent fertilizer. Keep the soil moist but not overly wet. After the bloom dies, do not cut off the foliage until it turns brown. These leaves replenish the bulb's food supply for next year's bloom.

*Continue **deadheading and fertilizing** pansies. Fertilize pansies monthly with granular fertilizer or bi-weekly with liquid fertilizer.

VEGETABLES

***Plan your vegetable garden now.** Pick an area near the house, if possible. You will need 8 to 10 hours of sunlight and a good water supply.

*Select vegetables that your family likes and vegetables that grow well here. Size of the garden

may limit the types of vegetables you choose.

***Prepare garden for planting.** For winter and early spring plantings, use raised beds for better drainage and earlier soil warm-up. Put plenty of mulch between the rows to control weeds.

***Plant** English peas, onion sets or plants. **Start seeds of hardy vegetables** like cabbage, collards, broccoli, onion, lettuce and cauliflower **indoors.**

***Give seedlings plenty of light.** Place them in a south-facing window, a cold frame or hothouse, or within 12 to 18 inches of a fluorescent light

UPCOMING EVENTS

* Master Gardeners staff the **Garden Clinic from 1 to 5 pm every Monday, Wednesday and Friday** to answer home gardener's questions. Call (478) 987-2028 or stop by the Extension Office on the third floor of the renovated Old Perry Courthouse, 801 Main Street in downtown Perry.

* Willie Chance writes a **weekly article** that appears in the Thursday edition of the Macon Telegraph – Houston/Peach section.

* Back by popular demand, **The Garden Academy returns January 24.** If you are interested in attending this nine week series of bi-weekly gardening classes please call the Houston County Extension office at (478) 987-2028. Classes will be held at the Houston Extension Office in Perry.

* **Family Forestry Day – Sat. March 4, 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.** Make homemade paper, observe tree surgeons at work, and explore the 'Trees are Forever' mobile classroom. This is your chance to meet 'Smokey the Bear' and take home a tree seedling for your yard. Museum of Arts & Sciences, 4182 Forsyth Rd. Macon, GA 31210

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The University of Georgia

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