

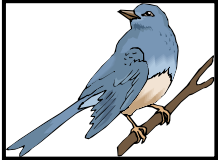
# The Garden Bench



The Garden Bench is a free bi-monthly newsletter from UGA Extension in Houston County. We provide research based information to help Middle Georgia gardeners. If you have a question or need help, contact your local County Extension Office at (800) ASK-UGA1 or see our web site at [www.ugaextension.org](http://www.ugaextension.org) or [www.gaurbanag.org](http://www.gaurbanag.org). To get the Garden Bench via email, subscribe by emailing [tberry1@alltel.net](mailto:tberry1@alltel.net)

March – April, 2008

Willie Chance, Houston County Extension Agent



**Our average last frost date is about mid-March.** That doesn't mean that the danger of frost is over. In our area the last frost could easily be two weeks or

more earlier or later. Use warm days to get ready in your gardens. Take a look at our tips on lawns, flowers and vegetables for suggestions on what and when to plant. Resist the urge to fertilize your lawn until after it has fully greened up.

## FRUIT AND NUT TREES

- \*Fall is best, but you can **plant strawberries now.**
- \***Continue to spray Home Orchard Spray on peaches, apples and plums.** Use sprays containing Captan, Malathion and Methoxychlor. **Follow all label directions. Do not spray fruit trees with products containing insecticides during bloom.**
- \***Fertilize fruit trees.** Contact your local Extension Office or see our website for amount and type of fertilizer to apply.
- \* **Prune fig trees** in late March.
- \***Thin fruit to produce larger and higher quality fruit** and to keep your tree from being damaged by fruit overload. Remove apples, peaches and pears until you have only **one fruit every 6 inches along the stem.** Thin as early as possible for best results.
- \***Proper pruning and fruit thinning** helps to prevent broken or bent branches. This is especially important with pears.
- \* **Fruits can be pruned soon after they bud out,** but it is best to do so before they begin to grow. Contact the Extension Office for a flier on pruning fruits or see our website.

## TREES AND SHRUBS

- \***Apply the first application of fertilizer to trees and shrubs in April.** Do a soil test or apply one-half pound of 12-4-8, 16-4-8, 10-10-10 or 18-0-18 per 100 square feet. **Broadcast the fertilizer over planting areas uniformly** (prior to a rain, if possible or water in). **Fertilizing once is enough for most shrubs.** Fertilize them again in May and July if you want the plants to get larger.
- \*Fertilize azaleas and other spring-blooming plants now. Fertilizer will not affect flowering.
- \***Asian ambrosia beetles bore into trees** creating toothpick-looking columns of sawdust on the tree. **Protect trees by spraying Permethrin** on the trunks before these pests get in. Weakened and new trees are most susceptible. Trees may be more susceptible as they leaf out. If you already have problems with this pest or expect problems, spray trees every 2 to 3 weeks until leaves are full size.
- \***Aphids, azalea lace bugs, many types of scale insects, white flies and pine bark beetles become active in March and April**
- \***Prune spring flowering plants** (azalea, camellia, forsythia, spirea, etc.) anytime **after bloom through mid-July.**
- \* **Prune oversized shrubs** in February and March. Try to do so before they bud out. Prune 12 to 24 inches high. Most healthy plants should survive but do not heavily prune boxwood and needled evergreens this way.
- \*Soak bare root roses in a bucket of water overnight before planting. Do not soak them longer than this since the roots can suffocate. Start **black spot sprays on roses when new leaves appear.**

\*Replenish the **mulch around your shrubs**.  
\***Plant container-grown shrubs** and trees soon.  
\*When buying plants, always make sure they have a healthy root system. Look for lots of white, healthy roots that are not potbound. The plants should look healthy. Short, stocky, and full shrubs may be better than very tall ones. **Do not stake trees** unless absolutely necessary.

## LAWNS

\*If needed, **core aerate** March through June and **dethatch** in May and June.  
\***Mole crickets** are hard to control now. It is best to wait until June if you can. If you must treat, use insecticide baits. Carefully follow instructions on the label.  
\***Fertilize your lawn after it fully greens up** – usually in late April or May.  
\*If **runoff is a problem** in your landscape: lawns established with **sod are up to 15 times more effective in controlling runoff** than seed-established lawns, even after three years.  
\*Wait until **late April or May to seed lawns**.  
\*Control lawn weeds now through late May, before they get large and the temperature gets too high to apply herbicides safely. **Do not use pre-emergence herbicides on lawns the first year**.  
\***Water lawns and shrubs** with 3/4 to 1 inch of water when they get dry. Dry lawns will look grey, have rolled or wilted leaves and footprints will show in them after they are walked on. **Water from midnight to 10:00 a.m.** Water only when lawn is dry - no more often than once or twice a week. Water deeply but infrequently. **Do not water established plants every day or every other day.**

## FLOWERS

\***Prepare your beds** for annual flowers. Do a **soil test and add lime and fertilizer as needed**.  
\***Fertilize established perennials** after all danger of frost is past.  
\***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. 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.

\*Plants for **sunny areas include** cockscomb, zinnias, amaranth, purslane, and marigolds.  
\*For **shady areas** consider begonias, impatiens, caladiums, pentas, and hostas.  
\*Plant your **favorite heat tolerant flowers** when temperatures climb – probably late April or May. These include lantana, cannas, Mexican petunia, annual periwinkle, summer phlox, salvia and others.  
\*Check between the leaves of daylilies for aphids.

## VEGETABLES

\***Plan your vegetable garden**. Leafy vegetables need at least 6 hours of sunlight daily to develop properly. Fruiting vegetables such as tomatoes, squash, eggplant and peppers prefer 8 to 10 hours of full sun. **Garden rows should run east-west** to maximize sunlight. **Plant tall-growing crops, such as okra, pole beans and corn on the north side of other vegetables** to avoid shading. Plant two or more short rows of corn next to each other (as opposed to one long row) for better pollination.  
\*Make **second plantings** (about 2 – 4 weeks later) of quickly maturing crops like corn, snap beans and radishes. Thin plants when they are two to three inches tall to give them plenty of room to grow.  
\***Harden off transplants before planting** them in the garden. Place them outside for a few hours each day in a sheltered spot for a week before transplanting them into the garden.  
\*Prepare rows for **“warm-season” vegetables to be planted during the last week of March or first two weeks of April, as weather permits**.  
\***By March 31 plant** corn, cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, collards, carrots and greens.  
\***In April, plant** your choice of the following “warm season” or “frost tender” crops: beans (snap, pole, or lima) cantaloupe, sweet corn, cucumbers, eggplant, okra, field peas, peppers, squash, tomatoes, watermelons. Begin planting sweet potatoes in **mid-April**.  
\*Houston County is in USDA **Hardiness Zone 8**.

## DIJANO?

\*Master Gardeners volunteers work through their local County Extension Office to help homeowners with information from UGA. Since January 1, 1995; **Houston County Master Gardeners have volunteered more than 41,000 hours and traveled more than 241,000 miles. The value of this service is estimated at more than \$725,000.**