



# The Garden Bench

The Garden Bench is a free bi-monthly newsletter from the University of Georgia Extension in Houston County. For more information see: Houston County Extension - [www.ugaextension.org/houston](http://www.ugaextension.org/houston); the Georgia Center for Urban Agriculture – [www.gaurbanag.org](http://www.gaurbanag.org); and Georgia Weather – [www.georgiaweather.net](http://www.georgiaweather.net)

November - December 2006

Willie Chance, Houston County Extension Agent

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## Winter Gardening

Welcome to the holiday season, winter gardening, and our last 2006 issue of The Garden Bench! We hope you found this year's issues have enhanced your gardening enjoyment. Our holiday wish for you is that you find peace and joy in your garden and home.

The **Central Georgia Master Gardener Training program** is planned for January 29 through April 11, 2007. Classes meet Monday and Wednesdays from 1:30 to 4:00 pm in Byron, GA This volunteer training program is a great opportunity for people to learn about gardening and to share that knowledge with others through volunteering.

**Volunteering is the key to this program.** Master Gardeners must attend classes, pass exams and volunteer time back to their community. In the past few years Master Gardeners have donated thousands of hours to their fellow gardeners through the County Extension office. They serve to answer the phones, conduct programs, work at the trial garden, and many other activities. If you want more information on this program, contact your local Extension Office or call (478) 987-2028. Cost for the program is \$135 and the application deadline is December 1, 2006

If you are looking for a great gift for your gardening friends, the full color **2006 Gardener's Calendar is a bargain at just \$8 a copy.** The calendar is a peek through the garden gate at several Master Gardeners personal gardens. It also features gardening tips for every month of the year. The calendar is published especially for gardeners by the Houston County Master Gardeners. Calendars are available at the Extension Office.



## Dreaming of a New or Enhanced Garden

Our Southern weather allows us to play in the garden year round. Take full advantage of these sunny, cool days to beautify your community through your garden. A little time invested now can yield great results later. Simple structures like seating, arbors or arches, and short stacked walls can enhance the enjoyment of your garden. Many garden designs benefit from added lighting. Lights can be used to enhance a planting, mark a path or insure safety. The new solar powered lights are economical to buy and use. They are easy to install and don't require an electrician to wire the yard.

Give your garden beds a thorough cleanup and refresh the mulch to give everything a clean appearance. Get those new garden beds prepared by tilling and adding soil amendments as required. Don't forget to get a soil test! Organic soil amendments such as compost and ground pine bark are useful to improve sandy or clay soils. Do not add them to individual planting holes. Rather, dig large beds and add them uniformly to the entire bed.

As your garden goes dormant for the winter, take a good look around. Add evergreen shrubs as needed to create more color and texture to an otherwise bland landscape. Continue planting trees and shrubs. Camellias provide colorful blooms

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*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](mailto: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.

as cold weather arrives. Encore azaleas will give you good plant structure and color at least twice a year. Native Azaleas are wonderful deciduous shrubs that come in a variety of bloom colors. Crape myrtles, red-twig dogwood, birch and other plants have beautiful bark that looks good even in the winter. Consider adding maples, Chinese pistache, ginkgo, or other fall color trees to your landscape for striking autumn color.

This is a great time to plant shrubs, trees and perennials! Shrubs take at least six months to become established while trees take a year or more. If there has been no significant rainfall for one week, water your plants. This is especially important for new plantings. On new plants, direct the water to the root ball. Watering the soil around the plant may not be enough to keep new plant roots moist and alive.

Finally for that enhanced garden, do a bit of planning and planting for color. Plant flowering bulbs for spring color.

## Lawns

Now that your lawn is going dormant, give it one final edging for a clean, neat appearance. Keep leaves and pine straw raked off the lawn to prevent damage to the lawn by matted, rain soaked leaves. Reduce early spring weeds by applying a herbicide in late December. See this site to select the right herbicide for your lawn – [www.ent.uga.edu/pmh/turf/turf.htm](http://www.ent.uga.edu/pmh/turf/turf.htm) Winterizer fertilizers are generally unnecessary for lawns fertilized earlier in the year. Most lawns should not be fertilized after September 15. Don't fertilize newly planted sod.

## Flowers



Have fun and add a pop of color to your winter garden with mixed plantings of snapdragons, pansies, violas and herbs such as parsley. Don't remove any foliage from perennials until it is killed by the cold weather. After a killing frost, remove the foliage. As you clean out the flower beds, mark the spots where late starting perennials will come up next spring to avoid damaging them. Renew mulch in flower beds for a fresh look. Mulch should be two to four inches deep. Do not pile it up around the base of the plant. Don't prune back lantana until next spring. When cut the stems will hold rain water and either freeze or cause the plant crown to rot.

## Vegetables / Herbs

Remove plants that have stopped producing or any dead plant material from the garden. Harvest any remaining summer vegetables before a killing frost. They could hide pests that can attack next year's garden. Remove, clean and store any tomato cages or fencing. Make a note on what vegetables did the best and which ones did not. As you plan next year's vegetable garden see this site for a vegetable gardening calendar or contact your local Extension office - <http://pubs.caes.uga.edu/caespubs/pubcd/B577.htm>

## Container Gardening / Holiday Plants

Bring tender plants indoors to avoid damage from frost. Water container plantings when the soil dries out to a depth of about ½ inch or so. Add water until it runs out the drainage holes. You can use one application of a slow release fertilizer to feed annuals and cool season perennials in containers all winter long. Select a slow release fertilizer that will release nutrients in the cooler weather. Water soluble fertilizers will also work but need to be added regularly. Read the label for directions. Container planting is a great way to add holiday cheer at your front door. Small trees or shrubs and even Rosemary plants can be used in containers. Simply add ornaments, bows and lights to complete your design. Be sure to use low wattage outdoor lights.

Extend the life of your Christmas trees, poinsettias, and Amaryllis plants by placing them in a cool, draft free location in your home. Be sure to water as needed.



**The University of Georgia**

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