

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; the Georgia Center for Urban Agriculture – gaurbanag.org; and Georgia Weather – georgiaweather.net

September - October 2007

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HOT TOPICS

We have talked about weather and water in most of our 2007 Garden Bench issues. So for this issue we will simply say we are still in a drought and must follow the Georgia Drought Level II watering restrictions.

We get calls at the Extension Office in spring about weeds that come up in the winter. Weeds have a seasonal lifecycle. Some germinate in the winter and grow into the spring. These are cool-season weeds. Examples include henbit and annual bluegrass. Warm-season weeds come up in spring and grow into the summer. Crabgrass and lespedeza are examples of warm season weeds.

The key to weed control is prevention and persistence. For best weed control, we highly recommend pre-emergent lawn treatment in early October and then 8 weeks later to prevent cool season weeds. Follow up with a post-emergent broadleaf weed treatment for weeds that escape the preventative herbicide. Herbicides applied in the fall will not control warm season weeds that come up in the spring.

Carefully select the correct herbicide for your lawn type and the type of weeds you have. Contact your local Extension Office for details – (800) ASK-UGA1. When using pesticides, follow the label directions!

Caution - we see damage to trees and shrubs caused by improper use of herbicides in flower beds. Follow the label directions and don't use herbicides near trees, shrubs or their roots unless that herbicide is labeled for use around that shrub or tree.

FALL PLANTING & CLEAN UP

As temperatures begin to cool and fall-winter rains begin, begin planting or transplanting trees and shrubs. Trees planted in the late fall have time to develop a root system during winter before they have to face our hot, dry summers.

Plant shrubs at least one half their mature diameter plus one foot away from the house. A plant that will be six feet wide at maturity should be planted four feet away from the foundation of the house.

When planting, till large beds to plant into. Merely digging holes for each plant will limit their growth. Improve very sandy or clayey soils by adding organic matter like ground pine bark or compost. Evenly incorporate these into the entire planting bed. Do not add organic matter if you are only digging individual planting holes.

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.

Mulch around shrubs and trees to a depth of two to four inches. Do not pile mulch up against trunks of trees and shrubs. Water deeply immediately after planting. Keep the soil moist but not overly wet. Newly planted trees will require special watering for a year while shrubs need this for six months. When watering new plants, direct water to the root ball. Some times the soil can be moist but the root ball can dry out, killing roots.

Lawns

Don't put that lawn mower away yet. The most important practice for a healthy lawn is to keep it mowed at the right height. Don't remove more than 1/3 the grass blade height at a mowing. As we move into fall, the growth of your lawn slows down. As long as your lawn grows, it should be mowed. Keep leaves raked off the lawn to prevent damage to the lawn by matted, rain-soaked leaves.

Flowers



Snapdragons

Plant pansies from October 15 to November 15 to provide color and interest to the winter garden. Try other fall flower selections. Snapdragons, dianthus, parsley, and ornamental cabbage make a wonderful addition to the garden. Chrysanthemums add color and texture to the fall garden. September and early October are good times to move, divide, and plant irises, liriopse and daylilies. Dig caladium tubers before the first frost. As you clean out the flower beds, mark the spots where late starting perennials will come up next spring to avoid damaging them as you dig. Renew mulch in flower beds for a fresh look. Mulch should be two to four inches deep.

Fruits / Nuts

Improve next year's crop by ensuring fruit or nut trees, berry shrubs, and strawberry plants are watered during fall and winter. Trees should be watered deeply but only once every seven to ten days depending on rain fall. This watering practice helps trees develop deep roots and better fruit. Remove dead plant material and leaves to prevent disease in the orchard.

Vegetables / Herbs

Plant cool season vegetables. Seed beets, carrots and turnips by Sept. 15. Seed mustard and lettuce by Oct. 1 and radish & spinach by Oct. 15. Transplant cabbage and collards now through early October. Wait until November to plant onion sets or plants. Plant elephant garlic in October. Other cool season vegetables to try include kohlrabi, Swiss chard, leeks, Brussels' sprouts, Chinese cabbage, parsley and cilantro.

Begin preparing next year's summer vegetable garden by cleaning up dead plant material, tilling the soil, and taking a soil test. Plant a "green manure" crop to till into the soil very early next spring to add organic matter. This is a good time to soil test to determine if your garden needs lime. Add dolomitic lime now since it takes several months for it to raise the soil pH and provide magnesium and calcium for the vegetables.

Upcoming Events

September 21 and 22 Middle Georgia Master Gardener Plant Sale at the Macon Farmers Market on Eisenhower Parkway. Come early for best selection!

October 4 – 14 Georgia National Fair – www.gnfa.com. Come visit us at the Georgia Grown Pavilion in Heritage Hall. See and buy Georgia-grown products, plants and vegetables. Master Gardeners will be available to answer gardening questions. You can also buy a copy of the 2008 Garden Calendar!



The University of Georgia

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