

Gardening With The Masters

Growing, Gardening and Gaining Knowledge

February/March 2020

WHAT'S HAPPENING

February

Feb 1 - WORKSHOP - "Starting Plants from Seeds", Ball Ground Community Center, 10am, \$10 FEE

Feb 6 and 20 - Demo Garden Workday

Feb 8 - SEMINAR - "Edible Landscapes", Hickory Flat Library, 10:30am

Feb 18 - CCMG Monthly Meeting

Feb 22 - WORKSHOP - "Hands on Pruning", Ball Ground Community Center, 10am, \$10 FEE

Feb 29 - SEMINAR - "Odd and New Characters in Vegetable Gardens", Hickory Flat Library, 10:30am

March

Mar 5 and 19 - Demo Garden Workday

Mar 7 - SEMINAR - "Raised Beds and Where Do They Go Wrong", RT Jones Library, 10:30am

Mar 17 - CCMG Monthly Meeting

CHEROKEE COUNTY EXTENSION PROGRAMS

Feb 21 - Fruit Tree Field Day, 9:30am - 3:30pm

Mar 6 - Cherokee County Ag Expo, 4:00pm - 7:00pm

Mar 13 - Extension Fruit Plant Sale - Pre Order, One Day Pick Up - Mar 20 (order form online)

Mar 26 - 2020 Grafting Workshops, 2 Sessions

For Seminar, Workshop, or County Extension programs please visit: <https://extension.uga.edu/county-offices/cherokee.html> for online registration, or call 770-721-7803

Editor's Corner

By Marcia Winchester,
Cherokee County Master Gardener

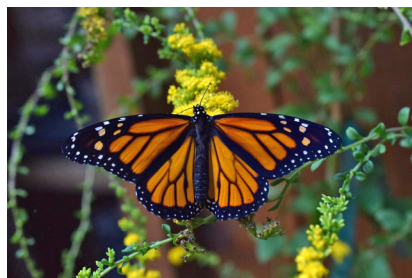
Early this winter I got to cross something off my bucket list. My family had a reunion in California near sites where the monarch butterfly overwinters. Observing thousands of monarchs was a dream come true.

Monarchs in the eastern part of Canada and the United States migrate to Mexico to spend the winter. The monarchs in the west migrate to part of California. Our first stop was the Pacific Grove Butterfly Sanctuary in Pacific Grove near Monterey. While the sanctuary is small, it provided educational signs with lots of helpful information on monarchs. For example the males have a small black dot on each wing that can be seen when the wings are open.

The monarchs spend the night in huge clusters on evergreen eucalyptus trees. They don't start moving in the mornings until the temperature reaches 55 degrees. When they rest in the trees their wings are folded back, thus creating a great disguise from predators. One sign warned that occasionally a monarch will fall out of the cluster, and it is too cold for them to move. We made sure to watch where we walked. On sunny days as it warmed up, we'd see monarchs skipping through the air looking for nectar.



Photo Monarchs courtesy Marcia Winchester.
See page 9 for additional photos.



Male Monarch photo courtesy Ellen Honeycutt.

Our second stop proved to be the best. Natural Bridges State Park near Santa Cruz had both a teaching classroom and an observation deck. While we stood on the deck we enjoyed a cluster of monarchs at least 5 feet long hanging from a tree. Words cannot describe our awe. Besides the huge cluster, there was another smaller one, plus hundreds dancing through the air.

The only disappointment for me was that both sanctuaries had English ivy planted and cultivated as a nectar source for the butterflies. Knowing how invasive

English ivy is in Georgia, I fear California will one day regret planting it.

Marcia

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A Tribute to One of Our Own

Cool Tools

By Joan McFather, Cherokee County Master Gardener



There's really nothing special about these particular tools—my wheelbarrow and my rake—except their size. And left to my own devices I never would have bought either of them, being as I have often been told, “set in my ways.” I prefer to think of myself as knowing what I want, and, having gotten it, seeing no need to make changes.

However, on the day in question, the man who frequently makes this personal observation when I fail to agree with him had accompanied me to a Home Depot where he stood transfixed—in love with a giant orange wheelbarrow. It wasn't so much tall as DEEP. Apparently big enough to haul two garbage cans, and very orange. It had two front wheels, “to give it strong stability,” my companion said with equally strong conviction. “You need it.”

“What for?” I scoffed—my usual reaction. But in the long run it was easier to give in and buy rather than to listen to the litany of things I couldn't do without it. And wheeling “Big Orange,” as he had instantly named it, towards the checkout, we encountered its soul mate, the wide-angle rake. This is your usual fan-shaped affair—just in green plastic and twice as wide across as a normal metal one.

“And just look at the ergonomically correct curve of the teeth!” I swear he said that. While I was contemplating “teeth”... “tines”? ... “ribs”? ... “prongs”??, to say nothing of what ergonomics had to do with anything, we were out the door and headed for the truck.

So now I have these two huge tools—and I love them! They are really helpful. Whereas once I was continually running back and forth with my puny one-wheeled wheelbarrow, now I can prune great mountains of shrubbery or gather heaps of downed branches or pull acres of weeds before I have to go empty it. And the woodpile! I can pile in enough cut logs to replenish the woodpile in one trip. I'll grant you that I look somewhat peculiar shoving it up the hill and even funnier chasing it down hill, BUT I CAN DO IT IN ONE TRIP!

The rake, too, I love. Living in the woods means lots of leaves, and I spend hours raking the drive and car turnaround. I have perfected the art of dragging the rake around to collect swaths of leaves; I have mastered turning the rake over and using it like a giant shovel, hoisting a bushel of leaves at a time over the edge. I AM WOMAN, SEE ME RAKE!

I don't listen to “I told you so.”



Note from the editor:

This article was written by Joan McFather after she finished her Master Gardener training in the fall of 2001. Sadly, we lost Joan in late 2019, and she is sorely missed by the Master Gardeners and many of the other citizens of Cherokee County.



Hooray for the Crocus!

By Mary Schuster, Cherokee County Master Gardener

When it seems like winter will never end, lo and behold, a bunch of crocus flowers can be seen emerging from the ground. This is usually a sure-shot sign that spring is on the horizon and the world is taking a turn for sunnier days and warmer (and welcome) time spent outdoors. At this point you can look Old Man Winter in the face and say "Game Over"!

Crocus is a genus of plants in the Iris family comprising 90 species of perennials growing from corms (though they are often called bulbs). It falls under the classification of both a bulb and a flowering plant. It has its origins in the Aegean Islands, Central Asia, the Middle East, North Africa, Southern Europe and Western China. It thrives well in woods, scrubs and meadows, AND your yard.

The USDA has designated Hardiness Zones 3 through 8 as the best regions for crocuses to grow in the United States. So, Cherokee County, Georgia, being in Zone 7a makes cultivation of this little plant easy.

The crocus is a clump forming plant with blooms that can appear in a wide spectrum of colors such as blue, orange, pink, purple, white and yellow. In springtime the leaf color is green with a shape that is grass-like with a glossy sheen. Most species will bloom from winter into spring. Crocuses like part to full sun and well-drained soil that is loamy with a neutral to slightly acidic pH. Clumps will enlarge over time, and it may naturalize by self-seeding, but it is not invasive.

As a perennial, the crocus may reward you with years of blooms in your garden, and it can tolerate drought conditions, though it appreciates regular watering during periods of growth and flowering. The crocus prefers good drainage and may rot if soil is too wet, especially during dormant periods.

Crocuses will do well in containers or in the ground. They are most commonly planted from bulbs, but seeds are also available for some species. The bulbs should be planted in the fall, preferably after November 1, so they can develop root systems that will ensure flowering to commence on schedule.



Not many diseases affect them, but possible pests and problems may include aphids, Botrytis blight, slugs and snails, and several viruses. Digging rodents, such as chipmunks, are usually the biggest problem since they will eat the bulbs.

Given their early bloom time and colorful flowers, it is safe to say that everyone would agree that the crocus is a showy and tough little bloomer that truly leads the rest of the soon-to-be bloomers into spring!

Photo courtesy "2000 Free Crocus Flower and Crocus Images - Pixabay".

SPRING PLANT SALE

May 2 - 10:00am - 1:00pm

Items for sale include herbs, vegetables, shade and sun perennials, ferns, sedums, and yard art.

Bring your kids for fun activities.

Master Gardeners will be available to answer any gardening questions and provide guided tours.



Microorganisms Beneath Our Feet

By Ronald Fister, Cherokee County Master Gardener

As we cultivate our gardens and tend plants within our landscapes, we see beauty, the results of our hard work and wonderful wildlife that co-exist with us. We often admire the beauty without thinking about the smallest microorganisms that connect our environment and make it all happen.

Without the microorganisms in our soil, you could not enjoy the earthy smell of the soil that is holding together the roots of our plants. Yes, that earthy smell in a single cup of soil, the wonderful aroma of nature, is the result of millions or even billions of microbes in that small portion of soil. If you are not convinced, take a cup of soil and bake it at 350 degrees Fahrenheit for 45 minutes. Let it cool. What do you smell? Perhaps you'll pick up the scent of some of the minerals in the soil, but not the earthy smell of microbes.

Our earth is living science, and the microbes within the soil are biological science that is improving our successes in landscape, gardens and lawns. One good thing is that microbes do not know any boundaries. They are there for the good and the not-so-good gardeners. They are a blessing given to all of us. Learn about them and appreciate their value.

What exactly do we call soil microbes? Microbes are bacteria, viruses, fungi, actinomycetes, nematodes and protozoa. We often include earthworms with them, but they are not microbes; nevertheless, they play a key role in the soil with their friends the microbes. Each of these microbes has a different role or job to improve soil and plant health. Bacteria convert the various forms of nitrogen to plant-usable forms, NO_3^- and NH_4^+ . Simply put, they convert amino acid from leaf matter to usable NH_4^+ (NH_2 to NH_4^+). Protozoa and nematodes consume the nitrogen rich bacteria that assist in the nutrient recycling process. Fungi are efficient in converting soil carbon into new cells for continued development.

Soil carbon is food source for bacteria and fungi creating the soil flora for healthy soil and healthy plants. During this process, the bacteria break down phosphorous from compounds to make phosphorous ions available to plants. Phosphorous is utilized in flower and fruit development and is key to respiration in plants.

Microbes can affect the flavors in food plants. In strawberries, *Methylobacterium extorquens* enhances the production by the plant of chemicals called furanones that are responsible for the characteristic flavor of strawberries. One of the furanones (DMHF) stimulates plant defenses, increasing plant production of various antimicrobial compounds to deter harmful microbes.

There are more of these examples going on beneath our feet than we can imagine. A large, complex and invisible ecosystem surrounds each plant and includes bacteria, fungi, viruses and soil invertebrates with multiple interwoven networks of predation, pathogenesis, cooperation and interdependency. These interactions beneath our feet connect plants to plants, plants to microbes, nematodes to nematodes and every other conceivable combination.

Microbes in the soil help feed the world. Without them there would be no plants or animals since all life on earth is dependent on these microbes to provide essential plant services. Over the next 20 years, scientist will depend on the microbes' community in the soil to unlock yields, control diseases and improve soil health for better quality while overcoming environmental issues. If microbes can signal to the plants the presence of invasive fungi, they can also raise yields while reducing pesticide use.

Though microbes are often forgotten or overlooked, this unique community deserves to earn the stamp of approval as we garden and work in our communities. The next time you smell your soil, give credit to these invisible creatures under our feet. We are just beginning to realize how important microbes are in impacting our plants and how they will be used to improve the flavors, color, health and yields of our food crops.



Photo beneficial nematode, Univ. Maryland

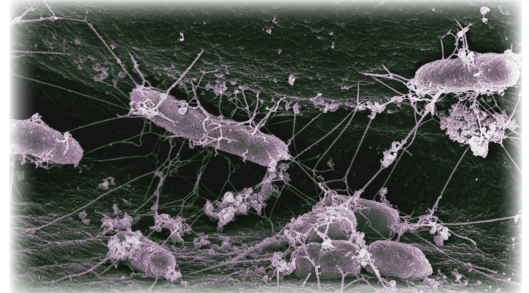


Photo microbes Michigan State.edu

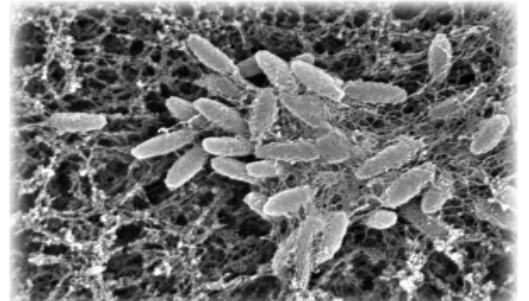


Photo microbes Michigan State.edu

For more information, see UGA circular 990, "Soil Innoculants" :
<https://extension.uga.edu/publications/detail.html?number=C990>



QUIZ TIME!

🌿 BIRD NEST COUNT 🌿



A



B



C



D

E



F



The Cherokee County Master Gardeners' Demo Garden, located at the Senior Services Center in Canton, is always busy each month with workers maintaining each garden. It's no exception that during peak bird season, the birds are busy, flitting around, looking for nesting sites.

Now that winter is here the leaves have dropped from the trees, branches are bare, and many bird nests are now exposed. Some are easy to find, but some are in places we didn't even expect.

So, we decided to have a contest. How many bird nests can YOU find if you visit the Senior Center? We know how many we can locate, but you might notice more if you look around. Our contest runs from January 31, 2020 until February 28, 2020. Come by the Senior Center in Canton, located at 1001 Univeter Road, Canton, Georgia. Count the number of bird nests you notice and post your findings on the Master Gardener **FACEBOOK SITE**: <https://m.facebook.com/cherokeemastergardeners/>. Photos are always welcome.

We will be watching the postings and monitoring just how many nests are discovered, throughout the contest. Winners will be announced on the Facebook Site, the beginning of March! Good Luck!

Armadillos in Your Landscape

By Ronald Fister, Cherokee County Master Gardener

Armadillos seem to be venturing into the Atlanta suburbs more than in the past, and we are encouraging them as you will see below. The increased population seems to have nothing to do with climate change or weather patterns. This natural progression is the result of successful birth and the development of their families and populations. The species found in the United States is the nine-banded armadillo (*Dasypus novemcinctus*), and it belongs to a specific family of insect-eating mammals. They are classified with anteaters and sloths. Nine-banded armadillos are native to the United States. Up until the 1960s they only lived in Texas and Louisiana. By the 1990s, they moved into Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi and South Carolina.



<https://newswire.caes.uga.edu/story.html?storyid=6134&story=Armadillo-Control>

Unfortunately, the beautiful landscapes we have in central Georgia create a wonderful and ideal environment for these creatures that use their shovel-like feet to create a mess of yards and gardens as they hunt for food. During hot and dry seasons, many of us water our gardens, landscape and lawns to keep the plants growing and green. That is exactly what the armadillo is looking for, and now we have the problem of this pesky creature. These moist areas are ideal for insects, the very diet of armadillos. They will eat insects or grubs, earthworms, ants, snails, amphibians and reptiles throughout the soil profile. They will thank you for the cool environment and the increased population of insects and worms both on the soil surface and below the soil.

Just why are we seeing more of them each year? The nine-banded armadillo is unique in that the females have quadruplets, four identical babies, each time they give birth. Armadillos are mature at six months of age, so in six short months, the babies are adults and ready to become parents too. Since they have four babies, it's easy to see how the population of these creatures is growing rapidly within our area.

The armadillo's teeth are small and peg-like giving us less to fear about biting. In addition, the armadillo is a low risk animal in transmitting rabies. The adults are about the size of a house cat. They can jump up to 4 feet, which is unusual, but will frighten most of us if we come upon them quickly. In rare situations, should you find a dead armadillo, bury it or dispose of it in a proper manner.

The holes created by armadillos are generally shallow, typically about 3 inches deep and 3 to 7 inches wide. There could be many spots throughout your lawn or landscape, making it difficult for the damage to recover for weeks.

Armadillos are slow to move but leave paths of destruction behind them in our lawns and neighborhoods. For this reason most people despise them and want to eradicate them as quickly as possible.

They are not protected in Georgia, so it is legal to eradicate or kill them any time of the year. However, gun regulations will limit or forbid you from killing armadillos by that method in most areas. Another method of elimination would be through trapping and removing them from your surroundings. The traps should be placed near their burrows. Consult wildlife management for the most ideal trap to use, if you desire to do so. There are no registered control products, repellants or pesticides to control or eradicate armadillos.

Removal is provided by many pest control companies for a fee, of course. If you should spot an armadillo(s), call a wildlife control and removal company as quickly as possible. This will allow them time to manage or minimize the destruction the animal can cause. If you elect not to remove the pest, you will increase the destruction to other neighbors or throughout your neighborhood.

For more information about the armadillo, see UGA's Circular 866-2, which is found in the publications section of UGA's website <https://extension.uga.edu>.



The Great Backyard Bird Count: February 14-17, 2020

By Mary Tucker, Cherokee County Master Gardener



You have probably heard that bird populations have plummeted in the last few decades. It is estimated that North America has 3 billion fewer birds than it had in 1970, a shocking statistic that translates into a loss of more than 25 percent of the bird population. These losses are due to several factors, such as pesticide use and the loss or degradation of habitat. The study that determined this was a collaborative effort between several conservation organizations that analyzed data collected over the decades. Much of that data came from ordinary bird watchers like you and me acting as "citizen scientists" by reporting their bird observations.

From **February 14 to 17**, you will have the opportunity to take part in a world-wide bird count that will help scientists further evaluate the abundance and distribution of birds and to help track changes and trends that occur over the years. This annual event is called the Great Backyard Bird Count, and it was launched in 1998 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society. The four-day count now involves more than 200,000 people of all ages around the world.

It's easy and fun to take part in this, and I've personally been participating for over 10 years. Bird counts can be done anywhere, though I usually do mine at home by watching birds at my feeders. Other participants prefer to go to a park or nature trail or a favorite birding site, such as a lake shore.

All you have to do is watch birds for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the count. Keep a separate record for the different days or places that you participate. Count the highest number of each bird species seen at one time (to ensure the birds are not counted more than once), and keep track of the amount of time spent counting. Then log on to the website (<http://gbbc.birdcount.org/>) to enter your data.

Results are updated in real time in the form of animated maps and colorful graphs, so you can see what's happening with birds around the world during the count. Of course, it's especially fun to see what species other birdwatchers in Georgia are observing.

Visit the GBBC website for more information about the event and how to participate. You will find full instructions in addition to bird lists tailored to your Zip Code to help you record your bird sightings.

There are other similar events that occur throughout the year, including the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Project FeederWatch and NestWatch and the Audubon Christmas Bird Count. Any time of year, you can report bird sightings via eBird, an online database of bird observations that is a joint project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society. The Cornell Lab also has many resources for educators of school-age children from kindergarten through high school. All of these activities and resources give average folks like you and me an opportunity to be citizen scientists and do our part for bird research and conservation.

Websites:

Great Backyard Bird Count: <https://gbbc.birdcount.org>

Cornell Lab of Ornithology: <https://www.birds.cornell.edu>

National Audubon Society: <https://www.audubon.org>

eBird: <https://ebird.org>

<https://gbbc.birdcount.org/news/social-media-images/>





FEBRUARY GARDENING TIPS

ORNAMENTALS

- Prune hybrid tea roses and Knockout Roses™ now, removing old canes and lowering plant to a height of 12-15 inches. To care for rose bushes now, apply a fertilizer heavy in potassium

(K). Apply a drop of white glue to the end of fresh cut canes to prevent borers. Apply a dormant spray of lime-sulfur and dormant oil before active growth appears. Clean up rose beds, discard old foliage, pieces of canes, and remove old mulch with weeds. Re-apply a fresh layer of mulch to rose beds. For more rose pruning info: https://secure.caes.uga.edu/extension/publications/files/pdf/C%201001_2.PDF

- Winter is a good time to prune deciduous trees and shrubs that don't bloom in the spring. It allows you to view the trunk and branches when making your cuts. http://extension.uga.edu/publications/files/pdf/B%20961_4.PDF
- Change plant light bulbs over seedlings, as older bulbs do not give off as much light.
- Continue to fertilize pansies and other winter annuals with fertilizer high in nitrate nitrogen. http://extension.uga.edu/publications/files/pdf/B%201359_2.PDF
- Prune clumps of ornamental grass before new growth appears. Tie large clumps with rope; cut with a hedge trimmer.

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

- Remember that vegetable seeds have a short life and usually will not be good after a year or two. This includes sweet corn, onion, okra, beans, parsnip, and peppers.
- Consider the family vacation when planning your garden. Choose planting dates and varieties so your garden won't be ready for a full harvest while you are away. http://extension.uga.edu/publications/files/pdf/C%20943_4.PDF
- Peaches grow best when maintained with an open center (no central leader). Keep 3 or 4 strong, scaffold branches evenly distributed around the trunk. Limbs that branch out at a 60° angle are preferred. Spreaders can be used to widen narrow crotch angles. https://secure.caes.uga.edu/extension/publications/files/pdf/C%201063_2.PDF
- Prune fruit trees and grapes in late February or early March after the worst of the winter cold is passed but before spring growth begins when temps maintain at 45°. For disease and insect control, cut out dead wood and dispose of the prunings. After each cut, disinfect pruners with rubbing alcohol, or nine parts water to one part bleach. Take care because both mixtures can cause damage to grass or other plants.
- Before working an area in the garden for early spring planting, check the soil. It should be dry enough to crumble in your hands, so that you don't compact the soil while working it.
- Don't start your vegetable plants indoors too early. Six weeks ahead of the expected planting date is early enough for the fast growing species such as cabbage. Eight weeks allows enough time for the slow growing types such as tomatoes and peppers. http://extension.uga.edu/publications/files/pdf/B%201432_2.PDF

- Handle seed packets with care. Rubbing the outside to determine how many seeds are inside can break the protective seed coats, thereby reducing germination.

MISCELLANEOUS


- To make old hay and manure weed-free, spread on the soil in late winter, water well, and cover with black plastic. Weed seeds will sprout after a few days of warm weather, and then will be killed by frost and lack of daylight.
- Hang or clean out bluebird houses now before the birds start looking for a home. Don't clean them on a windy day.
- Clean and disinfect clay pots by soaking them in a solution of one part liquid bleach and nine parts water. Rinse thoroughly to remove all bleach residue. This will have your containers ready to plant with spring annuals.

Garden Talks Schedule - Northside Hospital Cherokee Galleria Room

450 Northside Cherokee Blvd, Canton, Georgia 30115

Creating a Bird Sanctuary In Your Garden	February 15
What Do I Want My Landscape to Be? Triage, Learning From Experience	March 21
Your Garden, A Splash of Color	April 11
Birding In Your Landscape	May 23
Adaptive Gardening and Plant Safety	June 20
Patio Container Gardening	July 25
Creating a Bird Sanctuary In Your Garden	August 15
What Do I Want My Landscape to Be? Triage, Learning From Experience	September 26
Your Garden, A Splash of Color	October 31
Birding in Your Landscape	November 28
Winter Planning, Looking Forward	December 26

RAINFALL COMPARISONS

	Cherokee County			State Wide		
	Nov 19	Dec 19	YTD	Nov 19	Dec 19	YTD
Actual	3.2	4.4	56.3	2.9	6.9	45.9
Normal	4.6	4.5	55.7	3.9	4.0	47.8
Deviation	-1.4	-0.1	0.6	-1.0	2.9	-1.9



MARCH GARDENING TIPS

ORNAMENTALS

● Be aware that a brown plastic material that looks and feels like natural burlap, but does not break down in the soil, may be used to wrap root balls of B & B plants. Synthetic materials enclosing the roots of trees and shrubs must be completely removed to ensure success of the transplants. Planting techniques for trees can be found at: http://extension.uga.edu/publications/files/pdf/B%20932_3.PDF

- Propagate deciduous shrubs, such as forsythia and winter jasmine, now by ground layering.
- Give your roses a starter application of complete fertilizer.
- Cut back butterfly bushes to 1/3 desired height.
- Fertilize spring bulbs after they bloom. Do not remove leaves until they turn yellow.

● Prune crape myrtles only removing the old flower heads. Do not cut back to the same spot each year as it creates a weak joint and the branches can split and fall in the summer with the additional weight of heavy flower heads. Remove sprouts at the base of the tree.

● If you have left a few inches of plant stems on your perennials to ID the plant's location cut them back before the new growth emerges. It is also a good time to cut back the tattered foliage on evergreen ferns and perennials.

- Cut foliage off tattered liriop.
- Start fertilizing pansies and winter annuals with houseplant fertilizer.

● Divide daylily and hosta clumps when the leaves just start to emerge from the ground so you don't damage the new growth. More hosta info: http://extension.uga.edu/publications/files/pdf/B%20944_4.PDF

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

● Don't rush to remove mulch from strawberries. Leave it over your plants to protect them from late cold spells. When plants start to grow, the mulch must be removed to allow leaves to develop in the light. If leaves develop under the mulch, they will become etiolated (blanched) and yellow from lack of chlorophyll, and may burn and die when exposed to the sun. http://extension.uga.edu/publications/files/pdf/C%20883_4.PDF

- Begin summer vegetable seedlings inside now.
- Spring applications of pesticides should be made on peaches, apples and pears. Correct timing for spraying depends on the stage of development of flowers. Check the label and follow the directions.

● Lettuce is very sensitive to low pH. Lime should be applied to the soil if the pH is below 6.0. https://secure.caes.uga.edu/extension/publications/files/pdf/C%201018_2.PDF

● If your garden is on a hillside, plant across the slope (not up and down) to help hold moisture in the soil and reduce erosion.

● Plant seeds of root crops, such as carrots, beets, radishes and parsnips, in your garden.

● Do not add lime to the area for potatoes. The lower pH helps control scab. http://extension.uga.edu/publications/files/pdf/C%201011_3.PDF

MISCELLANEOUS

● One way to avoid the danger of unusually cold nights is to set water-filled plastic jugs around each seedling. Warmed by the sun, these will radiate heat all night, preventing cold damage. Other ways to protect from the winter cold are at http://extension.uga.edu/publications/files/pdf/C%20872_4.PDF

● Place bird houses outdoors early this month. Birds will begin looking for nesting sites soon and the houses should attract several mating pairs. Ideally, houses erected on smooth metal poles where predators cannot climb are most often selected, but placement on top of fence posts or in trees will usually suffice.

● Put out hummingbird feeders in mid-March.

● Re-pot houseplants that have grown too large for their containers. Cut back leggy plants to encourage compact growth. Root the cuttings in moist media to increase your supply of plants.

● Houseplants can be watered more frequently with the onset of spring and new growth. Start fertilizing houseplants now for good growth. http://extension.uga.edu/publications/files/pdf/B%201318_4.PDF



Photo courtesy <https://extension.uga.edu/story.html?storyid=7869>



Photos Monarch Butterflies courtesy Marcia Winchester



Sausage and Pepper Bake

Easy, hearty, a wonderful snow-day supper served with salad and crispy bread.

Ingredients:

1 lb. sweet or hot Italian sausage, casings removed
1 green pepper, sliced
1 large onion, sliced
4 cups spaghetti sauce
1 cup water
1 lb. cooked pasta such as ziti, shells or other fork friendly
2 cups shredded mozzarella cheese
1/2 cup grated parmesan cheese

In deep pot, cook sausage, pepper and onion for 6-8 minutes, breaking up sausage. Stir in spaghetti sauce and water and bring to boil. Reduce heat and simmer ten minutes. In large bowl, combine pasta, most of mozzarella,

and parmesan. Stir in sauce mix. Turn into 13x9x2" baking pan. Sprinkle with remaining mozzarella. Bake at 350 for thirty minutes.



Veggie Puff

This versatile casserole can be served as a main dish for lunch or as a side with dinner. Dress it up with a creamy bleu cheese or spicy salad dressing, to your taste. Add spices, jalapenos, pimentos with the vegetables if you like.

Ingredients:

2 packages frozen chopped or small vegetables such as broccoli, corn, spinach
1 cup Bisquick baking mix
1 cup whole milk
2 eggs
1 cup shredded cheddar cheese

Instructions:

Spray a 2-quart casserole and preheat oven to 325 degrees. Cook vegetables as directed on package and drain. Beat baking mix, milk and eggs until smooth. Stir in vegetables and cheese. Pour into casserole dish and bake until inserted knife comes out clean, about one hour.

Makes around six servings.



<http://extension.uga.edu/county-offices/chokeee.html>
<https://m.facebook.com/chokeemastergardeners/>

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EXTENSION
Cherokee County

The University of Georgia and Ft. Valley State College, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and counties of the state cooperating.

The Cooperative Extension Service offers educational programs, assistance and materials to all people without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex or disability. An equal opportunity affirmative action organization committed to a diverse work force.



**Mission Statement of
the Georgia Master Gardener Association:**

To stimulate the love for and increase the knowledge of gardening and to voluntarily and enthusiastically share this knowledge with others.

<https://chokeemastergardenersinc.wildapricot.org/>