

Gardening With The Masters

Growing, Gardening and Gaining Knowledge

April/May 2025

Trillium erectum flower Rolf Engstrand CC BY-SA 3.0

Cherokee County Master Gardeners, 2025 Spring Plant Sale

Saturday, May 3, 2025

9:00 - 12:00noon

Cherokee County Senior Center
1001 Univeter Road
Canton, Georgia 30115



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Editor's Corner

By Marcia Winchester,
Cherokee County Master Gardener

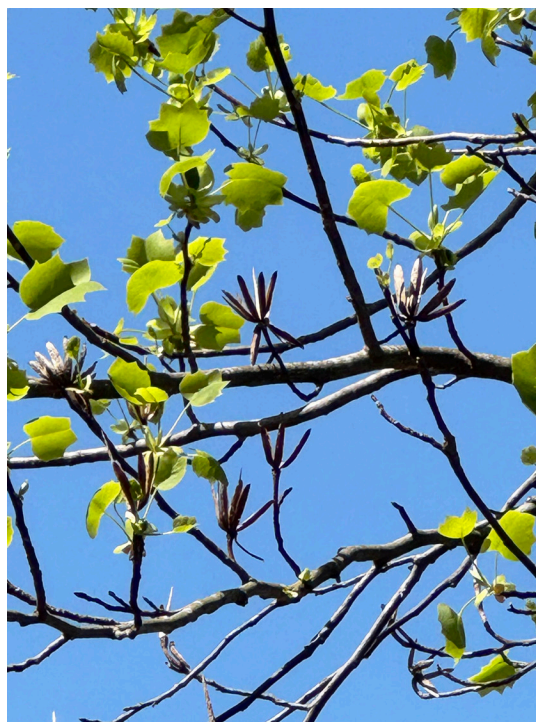


Photo native tulip poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*)
leaves budding with seed husks courtesy Jennifer
Ruscilli

Spring is my favorite season. I love to watch the trees come out of their winter dormancy. You can watch the buds swell daily until suddenly the trees are covered in their new leafy foliage.

This foliage is important in many different ways. Leaves provide shade for both humans and critters. They also provide protection from predators for caterpillars, squirrels, and birds. Tree leaves are a food source for caterpillars so that the caterpillars can become either a food source for birds or become butterflies or moths to pollinate many plants, including those that are sources of our food. Leaves even help slow down raindrops, and this helps with erosion. However, the most important function of not just tree leaves but all plants is photosynthesis. This is the process where plants transform light from the sun into chemical energy that feeds the plant.



Red buckeye (*Aesculus pavia*)
courtesy Marcia Winchester

That is just one part of spring that I love. I love the anticipation of which tomatoes I'll plant this year. Have you ever eaten a purple green bean? I can't wait to buy my first Vidalia onion. Which new annuals will be available to plant in my containers to enjoy? Which butterfly will be the first to fly by while I'm strolling in the garden? Bees are already out hopping from flower to flower busy pollinating. Mother Nature never fails to amaze me.

Marcia

Mulch is More!

By Mary Schuster, Cherokee County Master Gardener

With the growing season now underway, draw your attention to helping tender new plant growth thrive and meet its potential. Although this may not be an exciting subject, mulching can be one way to ensure that your goal in the garden and landscape is productive.

Mulch is a protective covering of either organic or inorganic matter, mainly used to reduce evaporation, maintain an even soil temperature, prevent erosion, control weeds, and enrich the soil. Mulch also helps prevent soil from splashing onto plants, and this in turn keeps the plants and fruits clean and inhibits soil-borne diseases.

This discussion will be limited to the use of organic mulches that are recommended for our region of the Southeast. Organic mulches are preferred in our neck of the woods here in Cherokee County, Georgia. Some examples include pine straw, pine bark, hardwood bark, and cypress mulch, as well as compost and composted leaves. These products are useful because many are readily available and have the ability to absorb moisture and release it back slowly to the atmosphere while helping to moderate soil temperatures.

There are advantages and disadvantages of various mulches, so let's go over them.



Photo mulch in a wheelbarrow courtesy Master Gardener, Mary Schuster

PINE STRAW



is excellent for water conservation, but a drawback is that it can be flammable when conditions get very dry. This medium may look great at first but fade to a dull color with age. It tends to decompose fairly quickly and may need to be freshened up often with the addition of yet additional pine straw. Or you may just want to occasionally fluff it up with a rake to maintain its appearance. One thing I've become concerned about in my pine island is the use of ground lighting around pine straw. If light bulbs lie directly on the pine straw, it may be a good idea to use cool LED lights to avoid a fire when the straw gets dry.

PINE BARK

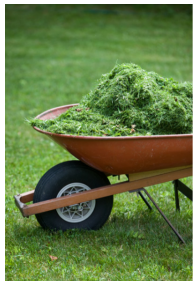


SHREDDED WOOD CHIPS



are good choices, and they can last longer than pine straw. Many can even be obtained for free. There are no disadvantages to their use.

GRASS CLIPPINGS



have no advantages and tend to mat down and get moldy. They can be put to better use in your compost bin.

FALL LEAVES



are a good mulch and are best when shredded, which can be accomplished by running the lawnmower over them before placing them in your garden as mulch.

In the spring, apply mulch after the soil has warmed and before weeds appear. With trees, leave a few inches of space between the mulch and the tree trunk. With small plants, leave a space between the mulch and the plant stem. With vegetables, apply a layer about one to three inches deep around plants such as peppers, tomatoes, squash, and eggplant. And finally, with perennials, apply a layer of mulch that's about two inches deep.

Mulching will help ensure beautiful and healthy plants and a lovely landscape!

**Unless noted all mulch photos courtesy Canva*

Small Yard? Think Layers: Perennials for a Small Yard

By Carolyn Puckett, Cherokee County Master Gardener

In our last newsletter we discussed using vertical layers to accommodate more ornamental plants in a small yard. We discussed plants for the tree canopy, small trees, and large and small shrub layers. In this article, we will discuss perennials for plant lovers constrained by a small yard. In the next newsletter, we'll discuss groundcovers and vines.

Many homeowners prefer the type of garden confined to tightly pruned shrubs set some distance apart. This type of garden depends on lots of mulch to fill in the empty spaces around the shrubs. However, if you are a plant lover, you will want to use that space to grow more plants!

A fuller garden is more beneficial for our native critters as it provides more shelter, more blooms for the pollinators, and more food for the birds.

Having more plants enhances your ability to expand the availability of nectar and pollen from late winter to late fall. Here is a website with information on which plants bloom when for some top pollinator plants: <https://ento.psu.edu/files/bloom-chart-top-plants-fig-1.pdf>

Growing more plants also gives you the opportunity to grow flowers of different shapes to appeal to a broader range of pollinators. For example, many insects prefer composite flowers, with flat heads or cones composed of many small flowers, while hummingbirds prefer funnel-shaped flowers. In addition, a thickly-planted bed leaves less room for weeds and cuts down on the amount of mulch needed.

The perennials you can use in your small garden are numerous. Even though your lot is small, you need not limit yourself to small or short plants. I use large, deep beds that allow me to plant tall plants closer to the house or property line, medium size plants in the middle, and low-growing plants to edge the bed.

In fact, while I kept much of the turf in the front yard to accommodate HOA rules, the rest of my property is mostly all large garden beds with a stepping-stone path winding through them. The path is wide enough to accommodate my garden cart.

Below, I list plants that have done well for me here in Cherokee County. (Yes, every plant on the list currently grows in my less than one-quarter acre lot!) If a particular cultivar has done well or is dwarf, I have listed the cultivar name.

Because some sites are challenging because of hot afternoon sun or competition from tree canopy and roots, I have categorized the plants by cultural conditions.

Research has shown that to support our native critters, we should aim for at least 70 percent native plants, so my plant list leans heavily toward natives (a "nativar" is a cultivar of a native plant).

Even though your space is limited, it is still advisable to plant in groups of three or more of the same perennial for esthetic reasons as well as for pollinators.

PERENNIALS

Full sun (at least 6 hours of direct sunshine)

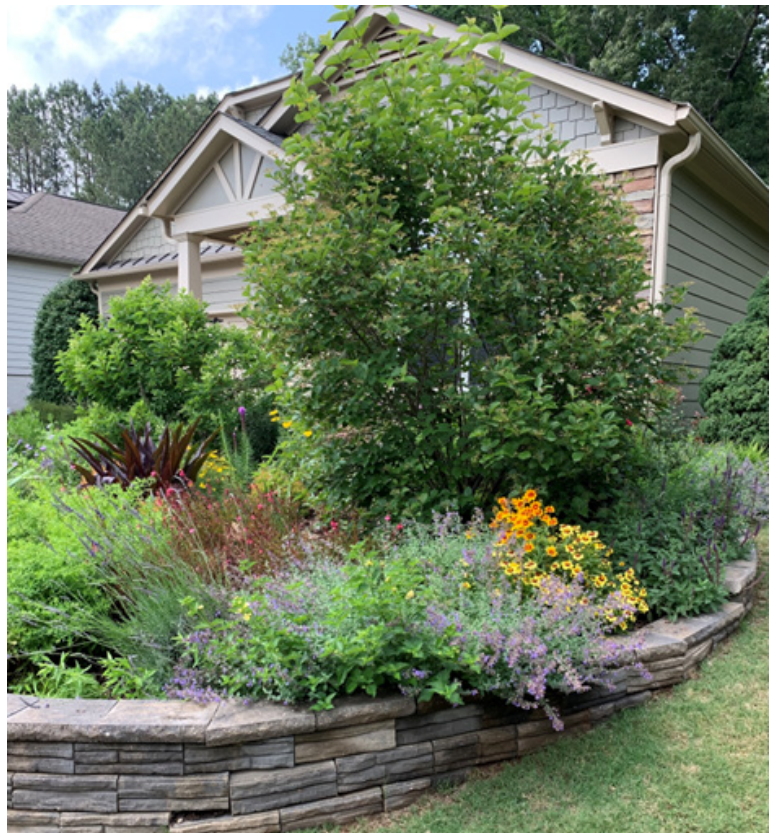
Achillea 'Coronation Gold' (yarrow). 3' x 2'

Agastache 'Blue Boa' (anise hyssop). Blooms all summer. Nativar. 32" x 18"

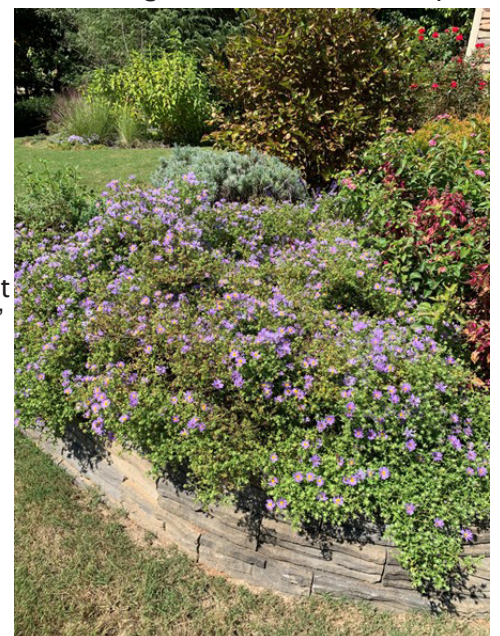
Allium 'Millenium' (ornamental onion). Foliage persists. Long bloom time. 20" x 15"

Allium tuberosum (garlic chives). Aggressively self-sows. 6" x 12"

Amsonia hubrichtii (Arkansas bluestar). Native. Golden fall color. 3' x 3'



If you are a plant lover you will want to fill in the spaces around shrubs with colorful perennials. Photo courtesy Carolyn Puckett



Fragrant aster (*Symphotrichum oblongifolium* 'October Skies') provides color in October. Photo courtesy Carolyn Puckett.

Continued on Page 4

Perennials ...continued from page 3

Amsonia tabernaemontana var. *salicifolia* (willowleaf bluestar).

Native. 3' x 3'

Aquilegia canadensis (native columbine). Short lived but self-sows.

3' x 1.5'

Asclepias angustifolia 'Sonita' (Arizona milkweed). Nativar. 2' x 2'

Asclepias tuberosa (butterfly weed). Native. 2' x 1.5'

Baptisia species (false indigo). Many good cultivars. Native. 4' x 4'

Calylophus serrulatus 'Prairie Lode' (western sundrops). Clumper.

Nativar. 8" x 15"

Chrysopsis mariana (Maryland golden aster). Native. Self-sows gently.

2.5' x 1'



Clinopodium georgianum (Georgia savory).

Native. 2' x 2'

Coreopsis palustris 'Summer Sunshine'

(swamp tickseed).

Gentle spreader. 4' x 3'

Coreopsis verticillata 'Zagreb' (treadleaf

tickseed). Nativar. 15" x 18"

Eutrochium purpureum 'Euphoria Ruby'

(Joe Pye weed). Very dwarf nativar. 32" x 18"

Helianthus salicifolius 'Autumn Gold' (2'

x 2') or 'First Light' (4' x 4') (willowleaf

sunflower). Dwarf nativars.

Heliopsis 'Tuscan Gold' (ox-eye daisy).

Nativar. 32" x 24"

Lantana camara 'Mozelle' (lantana). Sterile

cultivar. 3' x 4'

Liatris spicata 'Kobold' (blazing star). Nativar. 2.5' x 1'

Monarda didyma 'Purple Rooster' and 'Raspberry Wine' (bee balm).

Mildew-resistant nativars. 36" x 30"

Monarda fistulosa (wild bergamont). Spreader. Native. 3' x 3'

Muhlenbergia capillaris (pink muhly grass). Native. 3' x 3'

Nepeta x faassenii 'Walker's Low' (catmint). 2.5' x 3'

Oenothera 'Cold Creek' (sundrops). Clumper. Nativar. 9" x 15"

Penstemon digitalis (beardtongue). Several nativars. 3' x 2'

Phlox paniculata (garden phlox); 'Jeanna' is great for butterflies.

Native. 3' x 2'

Pycnanthemum muticum (clustered mountain mint). Spreader. Native.

3' x 3'

P. tenuifolium (narrowleaf mountain mint). Native. 3' x 3'

Rudbeckia 'American Gold Rush' (black-eyed Susan). Nativar. 2' x 2'

R. hirta (black-eyed Susan). Native. 3' x 2'

Scabiosa columbaria 'Butterfly Blue' (pincushion flower).

Long blooming if deadheaded. 16" x 12"

Schizachyrium scoparium (little bluestem). Several blue-green nativars.

3' x 2'

Solidago rugosa 'Fireworks' (rough goldenrod). Spreader.

Nativar. 3.5' x 3'

Stokesia laevis (Stokes' aster). Several nativars. Evergreen. 15" x 15"

Vernonia 'Southern Cross' (ironweed). Dwarf nativar. 3' x 3'

Yucca filamentosa 'Bright Edge' (Adam's needle).

Evergreen nativar. 3' x 4'

Morning shade and afternoon full sun

If you have trees and large shrubs, you will have at least some shade, although the shade may be morning-only or afternoon-only shade. Morning shade and afternoon sun can be a tough environment for plants. Generally, I have found that plants that are labeled "sun or part shade" do the best in these places.

Acorus gramineus (dwarf sweet flag). 6" x 12"

Aquilegia canadensis (native columbine). Short lived but self-sows. 3' x 1.5'

Allium 'Millenium' (ornamental onion). Foliage persists. Long bloom time. 20" x 15"

Chelone glabra (white turtlehead). Native. 3' x 2.5'

Clinopodium georgianum (Georgia savory). Native. 2' x 2'

Coreopsis verticillata 'Zagreb' (treadleaf tickseed). 15" x 18"

Dianthus gratianopolitanus 'Firewitch' and 'Paint the Town Magenta' (cheddar pink). Long-blooming cultivars. 1' x 1'

Geranium macrorrhizum (big-root geranium). Several cultivars. 1.5' x 2'

Hibiscus moscheutos (swamp rose mallow). Native. 6' x 5'

Hibiscus coccineus (scarlet rose mallow). Native. 8' x 3'

Liriope muscari (clumping lilyturf). *Liriope spicata* is too aggressive. 1.5' x 1.5'

Monarda fistulosa (wild bergamont). Spreader. Native. 3' x 3'

Nepeta x faassenii 'Walker's Low' (catmint). 2.5' x 3'

Penstemon digitalis (beardtongue). Many nativars.

Phlox carolina (Carolina phlox). Native. 1' x 3'

Phlox pilosa (downy phlox). Native. 1' x 1.5'

Rudbeckia hirta (black-eyed Susan). Native. 3' x 2'

R. 'American Gold Rush' (black-eyed Susan). Nativar. 2' x 2'

Solidago rugosa 'Fireworks' (rough goldenrod). Nativar.

Stokesia laevis (Stokes' aster). Several nativars. Evergreen. 15" x 15"



Columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*), bloom and leaf detail © Debbie Roos, ncsu.edu



Stokes' aster (*Stokesia laevis*), © Cathy DeWitt,

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Partial or filtered shade, including morning sun and afternoon shade

Aquilegia canadensis (native columbine). Short lived but self-sows. 3' x 1.5'

Aralia cordata 'Sun King' (Japanese spikenard). Gold foliage. 6' x 6'

Astilbe chinensis (false spirea). Most drought-resistant species. Many cultivars. 6-18" x 18"

Athyrium niponicum (Japanese painted fern). Several cultivars available. 20" x 20"

Begonia grandis (hardy begonia). Self-sows by bulblets. 2' x 2'

Carex oshimensis 'Everillo' (Japanese sedge cultivar). Bright gold, evergreen. 2' x 2'

Carex spp. (sedge). Several native species available. 8-24" x 6-18"

Chasmanthium latifolium (river oats or northern sea oats). Self-sows prolifically. Native. 3' x 2'

Chelone lyonii 'Hotlips' (pink turtlehead). Native. 3' x 2'

Dryopteris australis (dixie wood fern). Large, robust clumping fern. Native. 5' x 3'

Dryopteris ludoviciana (southern shield fern). Native. 3' x 2'

Erigeron pulchellus (white wood aster). Spreader. Native. 1.5' x 1.5'

Geranium macrorrhizum (big-root geranium). Several cultivars. 1.5' x 2'

Geranium maculatum (spotted cranesbill). Native. 2' x 1.5'

Heuchera americana (coral bell). Native. 1.5' x 1.5'

Heuchera cultivars

'Autumn Bride', 'Candy Apple', 'Grand Amethyst', and 'Watermelon' have done better than most cultivars for me.

Heuchera villosa (alumroot). Native. 2' x 2'

Helleborus foetidus (bear's foot hellebore). 2' x 1.5'

Helleborus x orientalis (Lenten rose). 1.5' x 1.5'

Lobelia cardinalis (cardinal flower). Short-lived but self-sows. Native. 5' x 2'

Maianthemum racemosum (false Solomon's seal). Native. 3' x 2'

Phlox carolina (Carolina phlox). Native. 1' x 3'

Phlox stolonifera (creeping phlox). Spreader. Several natives. 1' x 1'

Polystichum acrostichoides (Christmas fern). Native evergreen. 2' x 2'

Solidago caesia (bluestem goldenrod). Native. 3' x 3'

Spigelia marilandica (Indian pinks). Native. A red and gold "wow" flower. 2' x 1.5'

Tiarella cordifolia (foamflower). Many natives. 1' x 1.5'

Zizia aurea (golden alexanders). Native. Self-sows gently. 30" x 18"



(*Heuchera villosa*) left, and (*Heuchera americana*) right, courtesy Marcia Winchester



Foamflower (*Tiarella cordifolia*), 'Cabarrusco'
© Hope Duckworth [CC BY 4.0 ncsu.edu](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

Dry shade

Helleborus foetidus (bear's foot hellebore). 2' x 1.5'

Helleborus x orientalis (Lenten rose). 1.5' x 1.5'

Epimedium versicolor 'Sulphureum' (barrenwort). 1' x 1.5'

Erigeron pulchellus (white wood aster). Spreader. Native. 1.5' x 1.5'



Lenten rose (*Helleborus x orientalis*) flowers and leaves (spring), © Rachel Arnold [CC BY 4.0 ncsu.edu](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

A number of the above recommended plants will be available at the Cherokee County Master Gardener spring plant sale, which will be held Saturday, May 3, from 9 to noon at the Senior Center at 1001 Univeter Road, Canton.

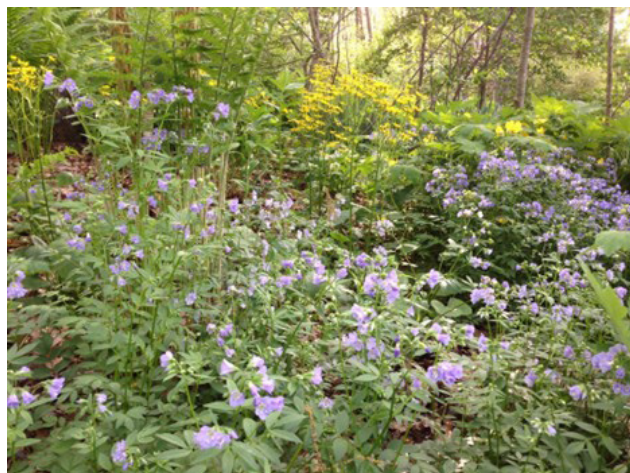
To supplement my lists or to learn more about each plant, I recommend:

Clemson University <https://hgic.clemson.edu>

North Carolina State University (NCSU)
<https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu>

University of Georgia native plant lists.

For the complete guide to native plants for Georgia, click [HERE](#).



There is plenty of room under your tree canopy for spring-blooming perennials. Photo courtesy Carolyn Puckett.

Native Irises to Love

By Carolyn Puckett, Cherokee County Master Gardener

When people tell me they love irises, I automatically assume they are talking about German bearded irises (*Iris x germanica*), for their huge blooms are truly impressive. Yet there are other irises that will grow well for you here in Georgia, such as the tough Siberian iris (*I. sibirica*) and the shade-tolerant Japanese roof iris (*I. tectorum*). But did you know that there are also several iris species that are native to the United States?

All iris species have floral parts in sets of three. The three inner petals are generally upright and are known as standards. The outer three pendant petals are known as falls. Some species have a showy beard of hairs in the middle of the falls and are known as bearded irises. Iris leaves tend to be long, strap-like, and sword-shaped.

My favorite of the native irises is the dwarf crested iris (*I. cristata*). Spying this miniature bearded iris in the woods was probably what first led me to love native plants. The leaves are 4 to 6 inches long, arising from a thick fleshy root called a rhizome. The flowers, which bloom here in late April to early May, are produced on 2-to-3-inch stalks. The upright standards are shorter and narrower than the arching falls, and the crest is a lovely deep yellow. Plants will grow in full sun with plentiful moisture, but they prefer partial to heavy shade. While it likes a moist, well-drained soil, it will grow in dry shade. Soil that is too rich will result in lots of foliage and few blooms. The shallow rhizomes creep along the surface to create drifts in the woodland garden. The most common flower color is blue, but there are also white cultivars.



Photo dwarf crested iris (*Iris cristata*)
courtesy Stephanie Brundage,
Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

Another dwarf iris native to the eastern United States is vernal iris (*I. verna*). Like the dwarf crested iris, it has a creeping rootstock, but its rhizomes are deeply buried. The semi-evergreen leaves are about 6 inches tall. The fragrant 1.5-inch flowers are light-to-dark blue or violet with a large orange blotch on the falls. This iris likes shady moist to dry areas.

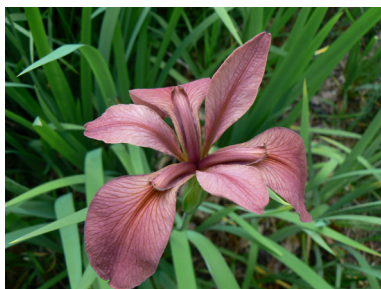


Photo *Iris versicolor* courtesy John Hixson,
Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

Larger blue flag iris (*I. versicolor*) is native from eastern Canada to Virginia. “Versicolor” refers to its ability to produce many-colored blooms, while “flag” comes from an old-English word for reeds, referring to its preference for wetlands. It grows 24 to 30 inches tall with narrow, strap-like, blue-green leaves 1 inch wide. The multiple 4-inch flowers per stalk are shades of reddish or bluish purple and bloom here in June. It prefers sun but will tolerate partial shade.

Southern blue flag iris (*I. virginica*) can grow to 4 or 5 feet tall, but is usually closer to 2 to 2.5 feet, and it is evergreen in milder climates. This is a good iris for both foliage and flower. The light-blue-to-violet flowers, blooming in late spring to early summer, have falls marked with white and are sometimes crested with a yellow frill. It grows best in moist to very wet soil in full sun to light shade and should not be permitted to dry out during the growing season. An especially vigorous cultivar is ‘Contraband Girl.’

Another iris native to the south is the summer-blooming Louisiana iris. This is actually a group of five distinct species of iris (*I. brevicaulis*, *I. fulva*, *I. giganticaerulea*, *I. hexagona* and *I. nelsonii*), although hybrid cultivars are more common in the nursery trade. The Louisiana irises are non-bearded and non-crested irises, and they range from 9 to 30 inches tall. The blooms are usually wide-petaled and open. Louisiana irises like lots of sun and water. They will grow in bogs, but this is not a requirement.



Copper iris, red iris (*Iris fulva*),
courtesy Mary Tucker

Zigzag iris (*I. brevicaulis*) has 1-to-3-inch flowers that are usually a lilac to deep blue, but they can also be purple or white. The blooms emerge at the top of a naked stem which zig-zags up for 5 to 12 inches. The crests on the reflexed falls are yellow and white. Zigzag iris will grow in full sun to partial shade and takes wet to average soil.

Dixie iris (*I. hexagona*) grows in wet, sunny areas. It grows 3 to 4 feet tall and spreads 1 to 1.5 feet. The leaves die back in the spring after bloom and reemerge in fall to overwinter. The blue-to-lavender flowers grow on stems that are 1 to 3 feet tall. One of its cultivars is ‘Black Gamecock.’

One of the few red-colored irises is the copper iris (*I. fulva*) which has flowers 4 inches across.

Give Leaffooted Bugs the Boot

By Judy Lester, Cherokee County Master Gardener

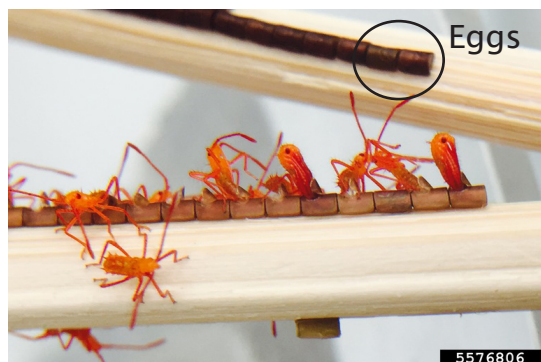
Today I am writing to warn you to be ever vigilant in your garden. Take it from one who got a little careless last summer: garden pests can get pesky in a hurry! I noticed a couple of medium brown bugs with leaf-like sections on their hind legs on my tomatoes in mid-June, but I was preoccupied with what I thought were more pressing gardening tasks. I neglected to identify them. Believe me, I paid for that bit of lazy gardening! Those bugs were not garden friends. They were leaffooted bugs, garden pests that ruined more than half my tomatoes.

Leaffooted bugs (*Leptoglossus* spp.) have a flattened tibia of the hind legs that resembles a leaf. There are several species in the southeastern United States. *Leptoglossus phyllopus* is a common species in our area. These bugs are medium sized, about 20 mm long. Their bodies are medium brown, and some species have a white stripe across the body about midway between the head and the tip of the abdomen. There may be white markings on the leaf-like part of the hind legs. If you are quite observant you may also notice their bronze to dark brown barrel-shaped eggs, laid in rows on leaves or stems. The nymphs are orange, red, or reddish-brown, resembling the adult bug but without wings.



Adult *Leptoglossus phyllopus*: RussOttens, University of Georgia, Bugwood.org

Why are these interesting bugs despised? Leaffooted bugs have piercing-sucking mouthparts, and they prefer to feed on fruiting structures, such as my tomatoes. They also feed on other types of fruit, corn, sunflowers, and okra. After the bugs suck juices from the plant, the feeding area darkens and becomes hard. If the leaffooted bugs feed on seeds, the seeds may shrivel, be deformed, and shrink in size, or there may be a dark spot and a slight depression at the feeding site.



Nymphs and hatching nymphs (*Leptoglossus phyllopus*): Jennifer Carr, University of Florida, Bugwood.org

The type of damage is related to the plant's stage of development. Early damage can cause more severe deformities or fruit or leaf drop. Damage on a plant that is near maturity may leave small dark spots at the feeding site. If you overlook these symptoms and pop a damaged cherry tomato into your mouth, you will immediately regret your rashness. The taste of the fruit is revolting!

What is a gardener to do?

The first line of defense against leaffooted bugs is to be observant. Inspect the stems, leaves, and fruit of your plants for adult leaffooted bugs, nymphs, and eggs. Commercial growers may opt to control leaffooted bugs with pesticides. Organic growers may choose to manage the leaffooted bug population by treating the organic mulch in their gardens. Spraying the mulch with soapy water on a warm winter day can drive the adult bugs out of the mulch.



Nymphs (*Leptoglossus phyllopus*): Jerry A. Payne, USDA Agricultural Research Service, Bugwood.org

I decreased the leaffooted bug population in my small backyard garden by gently shaking affected branches or fruit over a bowl of soapy water on a daily basis. A thorough garden cleanup at the end of the growing season will also help by removing affected plants that may have eggs on the vegetation.

Another method of decreasing the number of leaffooted bugs is trap cropping. Trap cropping may not eradicate all the harmful garden pests, but it can be an effective tool in an insect management plan to reduce the insect pest problem. A trap crop is a sacrificial plant that draws the damaging insects away from the desirable crop, like a decoy. This method of insect control works well for small-market gardeners who have space to plant a block of desirable (trap) plants 8 to 12 feet away from the market crop. Planting the decoy plants about two weeks earlier than the desired crop will attract the insect pests before the pests feed on the market crop. The trap crop may

be the same species of plant as the crop you hope to market, but in some cases a completely different plant species may be used. Leaffooted bugs and stink bugs are attracted to cherry tomatoes, but they are also drawn to okra, sunflowers, and sorghum. To learn more about trap cropping, read the UGA Cooperative Extension Circular 1118, "Trap Cropping for Small-Market." This can be found at <https://extension.uga.edu/> under the Publications section.

Native Irises to Love ...continued from page 6



Blue flag iris (*Iris virginica*), John Ruter, University of Georgia, Bugwood.org

There is a European yellow flag iris (*I. pseudacorus*) that is similar in size and habit to our native blue flag iris, but the highly-invasive yellow flag iris causes problems in southern streams and wetlands. So, if you want an iris for your pond edge or rain garden, please try one of the native blue flag or Louisiana irises instead.

The Cherokee County Master Gardeners will have several of the above irises for sale at our upcoming CCMG Plant Sales. The spring sale will be held on Saturday, May 3, from 9 to noon; the fall sale will be on Saturday, September 6, from 9 to noon. Sales are held at the Senior Center, 1001 Univeter Road, Canton. Stop by to find a wide assortment of plants that do well here at truly bargain prices. Also, take a stroll through our co-located demonstration gardens to see these same plants in growth.

Give Leaffooted Bugs the Boot ...continued from page 7

Plan now for a successful garden this summer. Remove any remaining garden debris, and break up the garden soil with a tiller or a garden fork. Follow planting instructions on seed packets so that your plants have adequate spacing, sunlight, and water. After you plant, don't be distracted. Be alert. Check your plants regularly for damaging insects and diseases. Leaffooted bugs are only one of many insects that can ruin your produce. If you notice leaffooted bugs, give them the boot before they get established! Happy gardening!

Resources

UGA Cooperative Extension PDF on Leaffooted Bugs:

<https://extension.uga.edu/content/dam/extension/programs-and-services/integrated-pest-management/documents/insect-pdfs/leaffoot.pdf>

UGA Cooperative Extension Circular 1118 on Trap Cropping:

<https://extension.uga.edu/publications/detail.html?number=C1118&title=trap-cropping-for-small-market-vegetable-growers>



By Master Gardener, Mary Tucker

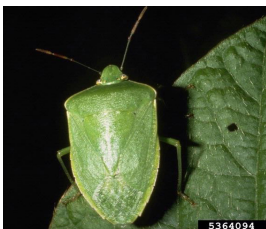
Did you know that the leaffooted bug, featured in this newsletter, is classified as a "true bug"? This insect is in the order Hemiptera and the suborder Heteroptera. The term "true bug" is used to distinguish this group of insects from other insects that may commonly be called bugs, such as beetles.

True bugs have forewings that are divided into two distinct regions, with the base being leathery and the tip being membranous. The hindwings are entirely membranous. The four wings fold over the back of the insect when not in flight, and the resting wings form a characteristic X-shaped design on the insect's back.

True bugs undergo simple or gradual metamorphosis (rather than complete) that occurs in five stages. Nymphs resemble adults but lack wings and may change color as they mature.

These insects have piercing-sucking mouthparts, and many, such as the leaffooted bug, suck plant juices and can be agricultural pests.

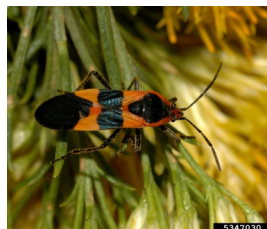
Other true bugs that you will recognize in your garden include stink bugs, squash bugs, boxelder bugs, milkweed bugs, and assassin bugs.



Green stink bug (*Chinavia hilaris*): Frank Peairs, Colorado State University, Bugwood.org



Squash bug (*Anasa tristis*): Helene Doughty, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Bugwood.org



Milkweed bug (*Oncopeltus fasciatus*): William M. Ciesla, Forest Health Management International, Bugwood.org



Assassin bug (*Zelus exsanguis*): Louis Tedders, USDA Agricultural Research Service, Bugwood.org



Boxelder bug (*Boisea trivittata*): Ward Upham, Kansas State University, Bugwood.org



Photo bush beans, courtesy UGA

ORNAMENTALS

- If your bulbs have been shaded by new growth of a tree or shrub plantings, consider moving them to a sunny location or pruning back the plantings. Mark crowded unblooming clumps; and dig up and divide them after the tops have died back. Note where you want to add color for next spring. **For more bulb information, click [HERE](#).**
- Upon emergence of foliage, fertilize bulbs with a 10-10-10 fertilizer. After the bulbs have bloomed, fertilize with a 10-10-10 at a rate of 3 lbs. per 100 feet.
- If you plant an Easter lily outside, don't plant it near other lilies as it may carry a virus that can infect them.
- Prune spring-blooming shrubs, such as forsythia, quince and early spirea, after they have completed flowering. **For more pruning information, click [HERE](#).**
- Do not fertilize azaleas and camellias until they have finished blooming. They should be pruned after blooming. **For selecting and growing azaleas, click [HERE](#).**
- Many gardeners plant annual and perennial flowers to attract hummingbirds; woody plants can also be added to the yard to provide nectar for our smallest native birds. Some trees to add are buckeye, horse chestnut, apple, crabapple, hawthorn, redbud, and tulip poplar. Shrubs include red and bottlebrush buckeye, rhododendrons, Georgia basil, azaleas, and rosemary. **For more information on selecting trees and shrubs for pollinators, click [HERE](#).**

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

- When planting orange or yellow peppers, plant extra since they take longer to mature and produce fewer peppers.
- To hinder early blight on tomatoes, mulch to keep the soil-borne diseases from being splashed on the plant during rains. Remove mulch and dispose of at end of season. **For information on Georgia homegrown tomatoes, click [HERE](#).**
- Thin young fruits of apples, pears and peaches within 25 days of the peak bloom, leaving 4-7" between fruit to insure larger, healthier fruit. **For home fruit orchard pruning techniques, click [HERE](#).**

APRIL GARDENING TIPS

- Grapevines with excessive vegetative growth generally have less high-quality fruit. In early spring, prune out the canes with the fewest buds to allow light, moisture, and air circulation within the plant to improve the quality and quantity of the fruit. **For bunch grapevine care, click [HERE](#).**
- Erect trellises now for beans and cucumbers. Don't plant tomatoes, peppers, or other warm season plants until the soil temperature warms up. Usually in Cherokee County that will be April 15 or later. Plants that are planted earlier will just sit there and not grow, or they will be killed by a late frost.
- When weather is wet and cold, allow about twice the germination time listed on the seed packet. If there is no sign of growth after this time, dig around a little to check for sprouted seeds; if you find no signs of life the seed has probably rotted and you will need to replant.
- If your garden is small and you do not have adequate space for the long-vine varieties, plant a bush type of beans and squash.
- Root crops must be thinned, no matter how ruthless this practice seems. Thin carrots, beets, parsnips and onions so you can get three fingers between individual plants.
- When planning your vegetable garden, consider that leafy vegetables need at least six hours of sunlight to develop properly. Fruiting vegetables like squash, tomatoes, eggplant, beans, and peppers need 10 hours of full sun.
- When transplanting seedlings in peat pots to your garden, be careful not to allow the rim of the peat pot to protrude above the soil level. If the rim is above the soil, it will act as a wick and draw moisture away from the transplant. To prevent this from happening, break away the uppermost rim of the pot before planting and make sure the pot is completely covered with soil.
- When tomato seedlings have 5 to 7 leaves, they are ready to transplant into the garden. To increase root growth and produce a sturdier plant place tomatoes in soil up to the bottom leaves.
- Drive stakes for future supports at the same time you plant tomatoes. If you try to install stakes later, you may damage the plant roots. **For staking and pruning tomatoes, click [HERE](#).**



Florida weave tomato stake method described in web link

MAY GARDENING TIPS

ORNAMENTALS

- Keep an eye out for aphids and other insects on roses. Spray if necessary. Begin spraying for blackspot at least twice a month. Removing and replacing mulch under roses will cut down greatly on black spot. **For more information on growing roses, click [HERE](#).**
 - Red and silver maples, willows, poplars, and elms can clog septic lines with their roots. Don't plant near water/sewer lines.
 - If you are building a home on a wooded lot, save young, vigorous trees. They will adapt to changes in their environment better than older trees. Trees that once grew in shade and are suddenly exposed to increased sunlight, wider temperature changes, and drying winds may not survive.
 - Lightly sidedress perennials, including spring bulbs, with a 5-10-10 or 10-10-10 fertilizer, being careful to avoid the center or crown of the plant.
 - Prune off sprouts from the base of crape myrtles. **For crape myrtle care, click [HERE](#).**
 - Check the leaves on azaleas and camellias for leaf galls. They are white to green growths and can be pruned out and disposed of.
- For information on camellia diseases, click [HERE](#).**

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

- Protect developing strawberries from birds with spun bonded row covers. Netting can trap and kill beneficial snakes and birds. **For growing home garden strawberries, click [HERE](#).**
- Technically, berries are fruit that are soft throughout, such as blueberries. The raspberry is not a true berry, but a fruit that is made of many small sections each with a seed or pit. Fruits with fleshy material surrounding a hard seed are called drupes. Thus a raspberry is not a berry but is a cluster of small drupes or drupelets.
- If spraying fruit trees near a vegetable garden, cover vegetables with a sheet of plastic to protect them.
- Place a thick layer of newspaper under tomatoes to cut back on leaf diseases. This helps prevent fungus spores from splashing on leaves. Remove and dispose of at end of the season.
- To ensure pollination of sweet corn, plant several rows together in a block, rather than in one long row. Side-dress with 3 Tbsp of 10-10-10 per 10 feet of row when 12-18" high. **For growing home garden sweet corn, click [HERE](#).**
- When thinning beans, watch for "snake heads," seedlings that have lost one or both of their cotyledons and produce poor, weak sprouts. Also, watch for "bald heads," seedlings that have the growth point damaged so severely that they cannot develop. Both types will be weak and delayed in growth and should be removed.



Aphid infestation on a rose © Anne W. Gideon Bugwood.org

April/May Miscellaneous

- Mark the handle of your spade/hoe in inches for a handy measuring device for row width and planting distances. Paint or tape the measurements on the handle, and apply varnish to make the marks last longer.
- When you see ants crawling on garden plants, look for aphids. Some ant species protect aphids, moving them from plant to plant and even taking them into the anthill for overnight safety. The ants do this to ensure a supply of honeydew, a sugary water substance secreted by aphids, on which ants feed. **For more information about ants and aphids and control measures, click [HERE](#).**
- A garden use for plastic milk jugs: seep irrigation. Punch holes in the sides of a jug about 2" apart. Bury the jug leaving the neck protruding from the soil. Fill jug with water (solutions of liquid fertilizer may be used to water and feed at the same time) and screw on the cap. The water will seep out, providing a slow, deep irrigation for plants.
- Trellis and stake downwind from the prevailing winds so plants lean against the supports when the wind blows.
- Don't be too anxious to move your houseplants outdoors. A slight chill can knock the leaves off tender plants.
- Replace bulbs on plant lights yearly. They gradually lose their strength causing plants to stretch and stop blooming.
- Moles are tunneling insect eaters and are particularly attracted to grubs. When bulbs are missing or shrubs have root damage, look for voles or field mice to be the culprits. These rodents often use mole tunnels as their runs.

RAINFALL COMPARISONS

	Cherokee County			State Wide		
	Jan 2024	Feb 2024	YTD 2024	Jan 2024	Feb 2024	YTD 2024
Actual	3.5	6.2	9.7	3.1	3.9	7.0
Normal	6.0	5.0	11.0	4.4	4.4	8.8
Deviation	-2.5	1.2	-1.3	-1.3	-0.5	-1.8

Recipes

Chicken Bowl for Four

Submitted by Maurya Jones

INGREDIENTS:

2 8-oz. chicken breasts cubed
Seasonings for chicken: salt, pepper, and smoked paprika
2 cups cooked rice (jasmine, white or brown)
1 can of refried beans
1 avocado, peeled and sliced
Toppings: chopped yellow onion, salsa, 1 cup shredded cheese, sour cream, Tostitos

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Brown cubed chicken in 2 tablespoons of olive oil and sprinkle with seasonings
2. Combine beans with cooked chicken and heat through
3. Divide cooked rice into 4 bowls
4. Add cooked chicken and beans on top of rice
5. Place avocado slices and toppings of choice on top



Fruit Salad

Submitted by Maurya Jones

INGREDIENTS:

2 cups of fresh assorted greens
1 apple, washed and sliced
1 pear, washed and sliced
1/2 cup Craisins
1/2 cup walnuts or pecans
1/2 cup blue cheese
Dressing ingredients: 2 Tbsp. olive oil, 2 tsp. balsamic vinaigrette

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Place assorted greens on platter.
2. Arrange fruits, Craisins, nuts, and blue cheese on top of assorted greens.
3. Drizzle dressing on top.



All recipe photos courtesy Maurya Jones



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<https://extension.uga.edu/county-offices/cherokee.html>

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