

# Healthy Georgia Connections

Issue No. 11

NEWS YOU CAN USE FROM **UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA** COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

## EXTENSION FEATURE

### Reassure children that heightened anxiety about returning to school is normal

Cal Powell, director of communications, College of Family and Consumer Sciences



First-day jitters are common, but students returning to school this year during the COVID-19 pandemic will face all sorts of unknowns that could lead to heightened anxiety.

“School is going to look very different this year, from increased handwashing to masks to social distancing,” said Diane Bales, UGA Extension child development specialist. “All of the typical concerns like not having a routine and not knowing your teachers will be magnified this year.”

With so many changes and unknowns, it’s important for parents to reassure their children that anxiety is normal, Bales said. “Encourage kids to talk about their concerns,”

said Bales, associate professor in the UGA College of Family and Consumer Sciences. “If they’re excited about going back, but anxious and nervous about having to wear a mask, let them know that all those feelings are valid and normal. Talking about their concerns can help them feel better.”

Preparing to whatever degree you can before the first day of school is going to reduce some anxiety and make the school day more successful.

Knowing what to expect can also help to reduce anxiety, Bales said. With that in mind, she urged parents to find out as much as they can about their child’s daily schedule and routine in advance.

“Preparing to whatever degree you can before the first day of school is going to reduce some anxiety and make the school day more successful,” Bales said. “Kids will engage more completely and not be overwhelmed with anxiety.”

To illustrate this point, Bales often asks her students to recall their own first day of school, and then asks them to recall their 38th day of school.

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**AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES****Water conservation in the landscape**

Greg Huber, public service professional, Georgia Center for Urban Agriculture

As summer temperatures climb, water is needed to maintain healthy gardens and landscapes, but it is important to practice good stewardship of valuable water resources. Water conservation begins with water-wise landscape planning.

Overall, watering demands can be reduced by selecting the right plant for the right place. Choose plants with low water demand and good drought tolerance that are well-adapted to the location's climate and growing conditions, and group plants with similar watering needs to maximize the efficiency and run time for watering zones.

For new landscapes, loosen compacted soils and incorporate composted organic amendments to improve water infiltration and drainage while balancing moisture-holding capacity. Mulching is an essential water conservation strategy — a 1-to 2-inch layer of mulch conserves moisture and insulates soils against solar heat gain. Mulching too deeply can prevent water from reaching plant roots. Stone and gravel mulches are not recommended because they tend to absorb heat and increase evaporation.

With an average annual rainfall between 50 and 60 inches, Georgia landscapes need only supplemental irrigation during the growing season. Water deeply and infrequently once or twice per week. In the absence of natural rainfall, water deep enough to penetrate the soil several inches, then allow a two- to three-day drying period until the next rainfall or irrigation cycle.

To improve watering efficiency, avoid watering midday to reduce evaporation. Water the roots, not the leaves, when possible. To avoid evaporation and drift, use the optimum water pressure according to the manufacturer's specifications for sprinklers and nozzles. While vaporized water may look refreshing, it tends to drift, evaporate and fall short of the intended coverage pattern. Sprinklers that deliver heavy droplets improve efficiency by reducing



evaporation and drift while reaching plant roots more quickly. For automated irrigation systems, installing a rain shut-off sensor, repairing leaks, using moisture-sensor technology to enhance scheduling, and installing anti-siphon valves to prevent drainage at the low head are a few ways to water wisely.

More plants die from too much water than not enough water. Recognize the symptoms of heat stress versus water stress. Heat stress is caused when plants lose water through transpiration faster than water can be absorbed into the root system. In other words, even with ample water available in the root zone, the plant can't absorb the water as quickly as it is being lost, resulting in temporary wilt. Hot, dry, windy weather conditions exacerbate heat stress. Plants may flag in the heat of the day and rebound by morning. If the plant is flagging and the soil is wet, do not water.

In contrast, water stress is caused by a lack of water available to the root system. If the plant is flagging and the

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**FAMILY & CONSUMER SCIENCES****Tomatoes can be preserved to enjoy year-round**

**Elizabeth Andress**, professor and Extension specialist, Department of Foods and Nutrition

**Alexis Barnes**, Family and Consumer Sciences agent, Fulton County

**Kayla Wall**, Family and Consumer Sciences agent, Quitman County

It's the height of tomato season in Georgia and the harvest is abundant. Tomatoes can be preserved by canning, drying, freezing or pickling. They can also be used in creating fruit spreads like jams, jellies and marmalades.

Raw tomatoes or raw tomato products can be kept refrigerated below 40 degrees Fahrenheit, but will spoil over time due to bacteria, yeasts and molds.

Only boiling water or pressure canning methods are recommended for canning foods. Older methods, such as oven canning and open kettle canning, [have been discredited and can be hazardous](#). The risk of botulism poisoning determines the choice of either boiling water or pressure canners for canning foods. In foods that are acidic (pH 4.6 or lower), the microorganism that causes botulism cannot grow. It is safe to use a boiling water bath canner when you know foods have a pH 4.6 or below. All other foods must be canned using tested pressure canning processes.

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For many years, tomatoes were considered highly acidic. However, new varieties, over-mature fruits and tomatoes from dead or frost-killed vines may have a pH greater than 4.6. The U.S. Department of Agriculture and university-based researchers have determined that to ensure a safe acid level for boiling water canning of whole, crushed or juiced tomatoes, add 2 tablespoons of bottled lemon juice or 1/2 teaspoon of citric acid per quart of tomatoes. For pints, use 1 tablespoon of bottled lemon juice or 1/4 teaspoon of citric acid. Acid can be added directly to the jars before filling the



jars with product. Add sugar to offset acid taste, if desired.

The safety concerns for pickling tomatoes are the same as those for canning tomatoes. A pH below 4.6 must be achieved before a food can be safely preserved using a boiling water canner. When pickling, commercially prepared vinegar is typically added to achieve the necessary acidity. Do not alter vinegar, food or water proportions in a recipe or use vinegar with unknown acidity. Use only recipes with tested proportions of ingredients. There must be a minimum, uniform level of acid throughout the mixed product to prevent the growth of botulinum bacteria.

UGA Extension has many tested canning procedures and recipes using tomatoes for home canning. They include tomato juice or sauces, crushed tomatoes, whole or halved tomatoes, ketchups and salsas. There are also numerous relishes and pickled green tomatoes. These can be found in "[So Easy to Preserve](#)" or online at the [National Center for Home Food Preservation](#).

To read more about tomato preservation, visit [t.uga.edu/69w](http://t.uga.edu/69w).

**4-H YOUTH****New youth leadership board elected in Georgia 4-H**

**Cris deRevere**, 4-H public relations coordinator, College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences

Georgia 4-H usually fills summer programming with residential camps and statewide events. Due to event restrictions this year, key elements of State 4-H Council normally held at Rock Eagle 4-H Center in June were conducted online to maintain statewide youth engagement.

More than 500 eighth- through 12th-grade youth gathered for the annual meeting last year. The focus of this event is to celebrate civic engagement and elect new state officers, one of the top positions a 4-H'er can hold.

This year, 4-H leaders for UGA Extension decided to combine all of the essential participation elements from State Council into an online series. The four-day series included the campaigns, voting and election of new state officers. The current state 4-H board of directors used the leadership skills they developed during their terms of service to act as the youth facilitators for the weeklong series.

"While things have not gone as we planned this year, we are still celebrating a great program year," said Arch Smith, state 4-H leader and director. "As I reflect on this group of state officers and their service over the past year, they have been resilient, led with pride, and exemplified what Georgia 4-H is all about."

Youth wishing to run for state office presented a campaign speech and participated in a live Q&A on July 21. More than

**2020-21 Georgia 4-H State Board of Directors**

**President:** Jhaycee Barnes, *Spalding County*

**Vice President:** Lily Thomas, *Putnam County*

**State Representative:** Cooper Hardy, *Pulaski County*

**State Representative:** CJ Harris, *Newton County*

**State Representative:** Amare Woods, *Tift County*

**Northeast District Representative:** Parker Varnadoe, *Madison County*

**Northwest District Representative:** Salih El-Gayyar, *Fayette County*

**Southeast District Representative:** Lilah Grace McClintock, *Bacon County*

**Southwest District Representative:** Etain Campbell, *Pulaski County*

650 youth voting delegates from around the state were able to vote virtually in two waves. The first wave selects the top five, at-large candidates that will serve as president, vice president and state representatives. The second wave of voting is a district-level ballot to select four district representatives. All state officers and their titles were announced on July 23.

"We teach 4-H youth to be resilient," said Jeffrey Burke, Georgia 4-H events and programs manager. "We're demonstrating that value by adapting our programming to a virtual format. In this way, we continue to serve and engage youth during the pandemic."

To view the full online series, visit [youtube.com/Georgia4H](https://youtube.com/Georgia4H).

**Water in the landscape, continued from page 2**

soil is dry, it's time to water. If your plants are beginning to wilt, check the soil moisture before you water — you may be applying too much water and contributing to root disease or displacing oxygen in the soil. It's better to err on the slightly dry side than on the soggy side.

Good water stewardship conserves valuable resources, ensures continued enjoyment, and benefits landscapes and gardens. A lot of water can be conserved by properly

maintaining irrigation systems, recognizing plant watering needs and exercising good watering practices. Research has shown that a landscape that has been carefully planned and installed and properly managed will be healthier, less prone to insects and diseases, and require less water.

For more information on water conservation in the landscape, see UGA Extension Circular 1010, "Tips for Saving Water in the Landscape," at [t.uga.edu/562](https://t.uga.edu/562).

**School anxiety**, *continued from page 1*

“Everybody laughs,” she said. “By the time you get to your 38th day of school, you know your routine and schedule and everything is normal. It has a lot to do with having that consistency and predictability. It also gives kids confidence when they know what to expect.”

Bales noted it’s a good idea to practice new guidelines at home before school starts. For example, measure off 6 feet of distance in your house to help your child visualize the social distancing rules and practice wearing a mask.

“I’d start with 10 to 15 minutes a day and build up to longer periods of time wearing the mask,” she said. “Getting the routine down before school starts is important.”

For younger kids, Bales suggested that parents who pack lunches should make sure that items are easy to open since it may not be feasible for teachers or administrators to help at lunchtime due to social distancing.

Parents should also remind their children not to share common items such as pencils and paper. “We normally teach kids to share, but right now that could be less safe in terms of spreading germs,” Bales said. “For now, it’s probably important to not share items and to keep up with our own things.”

Bales emphasized that parents should remind their children why safety measures to prevent the spread of the virus are important. “Prepare them without overwhelming them or giving them too much information,” she said. “Remind them that the goal is to keep everybody healthy.”

**AG PRODUCTS CONNECTION**

In collaboration with Georgia Grown and other industry partners, UGA Extension is using its network of county offices to connect agricultural producers with consumers looking for fresh, Georgia-grown products. Visit [Uga.edu/538](http://Uga.edu/538) for more.



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