Forsyth County Cooperative Extension News  
August 8, 2016

Hello, Neighbors! I am so thankful for the recent rains. According to Steven Nelson of the National Weather Service, however, “Due to a stationary low pressure area setting up to our west, there is a threat for heavy rain and minor flooding over north and central Georgia each day this week.” No severe storms are anticipated.

Earlier this summer, I focused a spotlight on some insects that cause plant damage. Calls and visits to the Extension office during the past month, however, point out that sometimes, we can be our plants’ worst enemy.

**PLANT PESTS: HUMAN ACTIVITIES**

July began with three consecutive calls about dying oak trees. In each of the cases, evidence pointed to construction-related injuries to the trees’ root systems that had occurred about a year earlier. The injuries included severed roots, smothered roots from several inches of applied concrete or piled soil, and/ or severe compaction of soil from the weight of heavy equipment. These conditions limited the flow of water and nutrients into the tree, either by removing the root matter that absorbs them, or by reducing the amount of water and oxygen in the soil. Because several of the trees were only affected on one side, they continued on through the fall and entered winter dormancy without showing much indication of injury.

Typically, established trees die slowly, showing signs of decline over a period of two or three years. During that time, we would expect to see branches dying on the side of the tree where the roots were damaged. Drought stress from the spring, however, probably accelerated the demise of the trees.
PLANT PESTS: WEEDS
Weeds are actually the most economically damaging pest. Herbicides, used to control weeds, can also injure desirable plants. Wind, water, and soil translocation can move herbicides from the point of application to surprising distances. If applied at temperatures exceeding 85 degrees Fahrenheit, herbicides can volatilize, becoming an airborne gas. Plants hit by herbicide-laced wind may be killed, or may suffer sub-lethal injuries that show up as leaf scorch or deformities in new growth.

Some plants are more susceptible to herbicide injury than others. Tomatoes are garden tattle-tales. Tomatoes and peppers in three container plantings in my yard showed signs of herbicide damage shortly after I transplanted them. I was curious to see if the plants could outgrow the injury. I pruned out the misshapen growth and waited to see how the plant would fill back in. The second grow-out was even more malformed, with parallel leaf veins and clubbed leaves characteristic of 2,4-D damage, an herbicide common in many lawn and pasture weed products.

Next, I wanted to test whether the herbicide contact came through the air, or if it was, perhaps, present in the compost I used to make the potting mix. So, I pulled out the injured tomato plants and replanted one pot with a tomato cutting that I rooted from a healthy plant. The plant has recovered from its transplant shock, but the new growth is still too small to reveal any answers.

We have two seasons of annual weeds to combat: summer and winter. Prevention is the best control for weeds. Keep weeds from flowering – and producing more weeds seeds – by pulling them out early or keeping them mowed low in the lawn. Apply pre-emergent herbicides to lawns in late August through mid-September to keep winter annual weed seeds, lurking in the soil from last winter, from germinating and growing into weeds this winter. Pre-emergent herbicides only work on seeds, but when applied at the right time, they continue suppressing seed germination for several weeks.
INTERESTED IN A GROWING BUSINESS?
Local food systems depend on small- and medium-sized farms. Unfortunately, these community assets are declining, and the start-up process for new and beginning farmers can be daunting. That’s why UGA Extension partnered with USDA NIFA to create the Journeyman Farmer Certificate Program. Farmers with fewer than 10 years of experience and those who are thinking about beginning a farm are ideal candidates for the 3-step training.

In step one, participants learn the basics of business planning, marketing, risk management, budgeting and accounting, and gain insight from successful small farms. Step two provides training in either small fruit and vegetable production, or small ruminant production. The final step involves hands-on training through an internship.

Journeyman Farmer Certificate trainings are being offered in Carroll, Screven, Dougherty, and DeKalb counties. Fees vary by location and class. For more information, visit http://sustainagga.org/Journeyman%20Farmer%20BRFD/JourneymanFarmer.html.

FRESH AND LOCAL FOODS FOR AUGUST – TOMATOES!
Adding Acid to Preserve Tomatoes
Tomatoes are one of the most popular foods for home canning. While we typically consider tomatoes to be acidic foods, studies have found that they have a “borderline” pH of around 4.6.

So how do you safely can tomatoes? Add bottled lemon juice, vinegar or citric acid to tomatoes in amounts recommended by the USDA to make them more acidic, and then proceed using the boiling water canning method. The National Center for Home Food Preservation has more information and many recipes for safely canning tomatoes and other fresh foods.

Summer Fresh Salsa with Baked Tortilla Chips

2 large tomatoes, seeded, chopped 1 Tablespoon lime juice
1 jalapeno, chopped ½ teaspoon cumin
¼ cup chopped onion Salt
¼ c fresh chopped cilantro White corn tortillas

Preheat oven to 350. Mix salsa ingredients in a bowl and set aside. Stack several tortillas at a time and cut into 6 sections diagonally, creating triangle or “chip” pieces. Place on a non-stick cookie sheet and sprinkle with salt. Bake 6-7 minutes or
until lightly browned. Remove sheet from oven and place on a cooling rack. Sprinkle chips with additional salt while still hot. Enjoy with salsa.

FORSYTH COUNTY 4-H'er in the SPOTLIGHT
Forsyth County 4-H'er Chelsea Linke advanced to the state level in the Human Development Category at the highly competitive 4-H State Congress event held in Atlanta each July. Competing against six other 4-H'ers from around Georgia, Chelsea placed second with her Project Achievement oral presentation on teaching strategies. A 4.0 student at South Forsyth High School, Chelsea gained practical experience in her topic as a Mentor Me volunteer and by establishing and leading a community service-oriented 4-H project club. She is also the recipient of two local 4-H scholarships, which will apply to her tuition at the University of Georgia, where she will begin perusing a degree in education this fall.

OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN AND WIN
Farming in Miniature Fall Lecture Series: Have your yard and eat it, too.
In partnership with Forsyth County Public Libraries, I'll offer several free lectures in September. Topics include:

Foodscaping with Edible Perennial Plants – Incorporating fruit trees and other edible plants into landscapes is a national trend. Learn how to take sustainable living a step further by using attractive, productive, lower-maintenance native plants in your foodscape design.
   Wednesday, September 7, 2 p.m. at Cumming Library
   Friday, September 9, 10:30 a.m. at Sharon Forks Library
   Friday, September 16, 10:20 a.m. at Hampton Park Library

Healthy Backyard Flocks through the Winter – Cold weather and shorter days bring changes in the way we manage backyard chickens. Learn about physiological changes and steps to minimize the increased risk of disease during colder months, as well as measures to prolong productivity and protect the health of your flock.
   September 6, 7 p.m. at Hampton Park Library

Composting and Soil Biology – Whether you’re growing lawns, vegetables, trees, or forage, your plants are only as healthy as the soil supporting them. Get a peek into the secret life of soil and learn how to improve the structure and fertility of your soil.
   September 15, 7 p.m. at Sharon Forks Library

Seed Saving – Did your garden produce the perfect tomato this year? Did you plant the last of Grandma’s legendary runner beans? Learn how to harvest and preserve seeds from this year’s garden so you can grow those wonderful plants again next year.
   September 24, 2 p.m. at Post Road Library
2016 FORSYTH COUNTY EXTENSION/ SOUTHEASTERN HAY CONTEST
Whether you’re growing hay to feed your own livestock or to sell to others, knowing the quality of the hay is essential to knowing how much you’ll need to bring your animals through the winter. Only lab analysis can determine hay quality.

Here’s another reason to test your hay: prizes! I’m pleased to announce that the 2nd Annual Forsyth County Extension Hay Contest is accepting submissions. This year’s contest offers several additional categories. Your local contest entry is simultaneously entered into the 2016 Southeastern Hay Contest. Hay and/or silage samples, entry form(s), and $22 contest fee (per entry) must be submitted to the Forsyth County Extension office by 5 p.m. September 16, 2016.

2016 FORSYTH COUNTY EXTENSION CANNING AND BAKING CONTESTS
The popular Forsyth County Extension Canning and Baking contests return to the Cumming Country Fair and Festival this year, with a twist. Each entry, whether for the canning contest or the baking contest, must be prepared using at least one Georgia grown ingredient. Examples include vegetables grown in your own home garden, eggs or produce purchased at the Cumming Farmers Market, or ingredients purchased in the Georgia Grown section of the grocery store.

FOOD RECALLS TO NOTE
Recent food recalls affecting Georgia include ground turmeric, ice cream, cheeses, baking mixes, and frozen entrees.

Thank you for reading, and please visit our website for details on upcoming events and more useful information.

Heather