

Gardening with the Masters

For the Cherokee County Master Gardeners

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WHAT'S HAPPENING

DECEMBER

Dec 3- Demo Garden Workday 10-2
Dec 5 - Crafting a Holiday Wreath, 10am, Senior Center
Dec 13 - Holiday Party, Woodmont Country Club, 6:30
Dec 17 - Demo Garden Workday
Dec 23 - Jan 1. County Extension Office closed for holidays
Dec 25 - 2015 Hours due at extension
Dec 25 - 2016 Recommitment Due at extension

JANUARY

Jan 7 - Demo Garden workday
Jan 19 - MG Monthly Meeting
Jan 21 - Demo Garden workday

**MASTER GARDENERS:
REMEMBER TO
TURN IN YOUR
HOURS FOR 2015
BEFORE THE
DECEMBER 25TH
DEADLINE**

EDITOR'S CORNER

*By Marcia Winchester,
Cherokee County Master Gardener*



This summer the Georgia Native Plant Society was approached about assisting with a USDA research project. Research and education are very important to me so I jumped in and said I'd love to help. I knew that before the project was done I'd end up learning and that always inspires me. The research project involves using the moth *Lygomusotima stria* as a control for the invasive Old World Climbing Fern (*Lygodium microphyllum*). The purpose is to observe the moth with the native grape fern (*Botrychium biternatum*) which is closely related to the *L. microphyllum* and see if the moth will also attack the grape fern.

The Georgia Native Plant Society's part of the project was to provide about 24 native grape fern. The Georgia Native Plant Society had a rescue site that had a lot of the grape fern. Our contact from the Tallahassee FL Research facility mailed me a cooler, duct tape, sphagnum moss and 24 big ziplock bags. The day of the rescue I told my group of rescue volunteers about the project and several volunteers asked if they could help. We hiked to where the ferns were. Then came the hard part. The ferns were mixed with tall grasses and lots of other plants, and were very hard to spot. What really helped was the bright yellow edging of the 'fertile frond' which is like a flower on a fern. So I started scanning looking for the light yellow. As I found the ferns my helpers would dig and bag them keeping count of our number. I was able to teach my helpers the difference between the grape fern and *Angelica venenosa* and a few other 'look alike' plants. I always enjoy teaching rescuers how to ID plants. When we dug enough fern several of us carried them to my car. The next day I spent 2 hours carefully packaging each fern with the bare roots covered in moist sphagnum moss in a plastic bag. I filled the cooler and wrapped it several times with the duct tape and shipped it to Tallahassee. Two days later we received word that the plants had arrived in pristine condition. I'm looking forward to the outcome of the research.

Marcia

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FALLING LEAVES - MULCH OR COMPOST

By Joan McFather, Cherokee County Master Gardener



The leaves are falling! You've noticed, right? Now you've got to rake them up and bag them and.... Wait! Why not use them as mulch? Or is it compost? Let's do some defining for starters.

Even though many people use the terms interchangeably, they really aren't the same thing, though either can be turned into the other. Think about it. Compost is biologically active material that results from decomposition of organic matter under controlled circumstances. Mulch is any material, organic or not, that is spread over garden soil to cover it. Ergo, if you spread compost over your soil, you've made it be mulch. If you pile up something organic and assist it to decompose, you've made it into compost. But there's really more to it than that.

First of all, compost is much better used when it is added to the soil. Consider it a soil conditioner that can retain and make existing nutrients more available to plants. You want to dig it in. Mulch just sits on top. Still, it does good things there: it suppresses weeds, it can keep soil temperature more even, conserve water, prevent soil erosion, and eventually, if organic, it will decompose and improve your soil's structure. (It goes without saying that

inorganic mulches such as stones and plastic will do all the above except improve the soil. Let's ignore them.)

So how do we achieve mulch? Of course you can go to the garden center where they will happily sell you all the wood chips or "bark nuggets" you want, but why would you when you have a ready supply of raw ingredients to hand: in a word—leaves. Now leaves will mat down and prevent rain water from getting to the ground if left whole, so your first item of business is to run your lawnmower over them a few times. If doing this on the lawn, some folks just leave them there to amend the soil as the bits sink down into the grass. But the chopped leaves can also be spread in the garden.

Before you tell me that those nuggets will be prettier, I will tell you about an Iowa State University study finding that wood mulch actually increases plants' need for food. Wood is high in carbon, which will seek out nitrogen to help it break down and in so doing will steal your plants' food. That said, sure, use wood chips where there are no plants. A word of caution even so: do not use wood chips any closer to your home than 6 inches. Subterranean termites are a fact of life all over America, and any kind of mulching too close to your home invites them right up to your framing. The same thing is true in the garden: heap mulch around your trees and plants, and you'll invite disease, pests, and rot. Leave a few inches wide open.

But back to the leaves. If you're not going to mulch directly, make compost. Done correctly, compost is pretty: a rich black that gardeners know as "black gold." Spread as mulch in the garden, it sets off the greens and flower colors of whatever you have planted. Composting is something you can do year round—to take advantage of grass clippings during the summer, for example, and household leftovers at any time. (A couple of small caveats: if you have a Bermuda lawn, avoid using the clippings; with heat they may sprout and take over the world! Also be careful not to use grass recently sprayed with pesticide.) Some people are put off by the notion that the composting process is difficult or time consuming or that it requires fancy storage. You can make it all that, or you can keep it simple.

In fact, since we're on the subject of leaves, you can compost a pile all by themselves—almost. Find a location in the shade where drainage is adequate—the shade will help keep the leaves from drying out. Plan on a pile about 4 feet in diameter and 3 feet in height. On top of every foot of leaves, add a layer of dirt. Do not try to pack the leaves down. In about four to six months you will have material that is dark

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WILDLIFE CONTROL

By Patricia Bowen, Cherokee County Master Gardener



Just like us, wildlife needs three basics: a food source, a water source, and shelter. If you have one or two of those on your property, critters will take advantage of them and stop by now and then. If you have all three, as I do, they'll move right in. I live in the woods on a creek, and I have seen deer, opossums, turkeys, turtles, foxes, squirrels, voles, chipmunks, bats, coyotes, many varieties of pretty and predatory birds, evidence of bears, and more. I've found long snake skins in both my attic and my basement. I've stopped planting fall pansies because local raccoons love their succulent roots; I plant, they dig, I replant, they dig again. A few critters even moved into my attic uninvited and cost me dearly to repair their unintentional damage.

You might not appreciate it as you drive around in heavier and heavier traffic, but Cherokee County is still mostly rural and full of wildlife. Human growth is reducing the natural habitat of our wild neighbors who were here before us, and while some folks want to attract birds and bees to their gardens, others lament that deer and bunnies are harvesting their crops, flowers and shrubs. Through trial and lots of error, I've learned over the years that some of my own practices attract, and some deter wildlife, AND that I can't be too selective in what I attract.

Whichever camp you belong in, you need to know the wants and needs of various forms of wildlife, and then decide if you want to use this information to attract or deter them. To attract them, provide what they want and need. To deter them, take it away.

Every species has its own food needs. Fruits and berries are rich nutritional sources in summer and fall, and they'll attract birds, mammals, squirrels, foxes, deer, bears, raccoons and opossums. Nuts are actually fruits with a hard exterior and are rich in fats and proteins, and some of the trees that will bring hungry critters around include oak, pecan, beech, walnut, hazelnut and butternut. Grains and seeds are a major food source, and dried wild grains and even seeds of conifers like pine cones can be found year round. Deer and bears store layers of fat to get them through the winter by feeding on acorns. Squirrels and some bird species like blue jays store up nuts and seeds in winter larders. Birdseed and suet will draw rodents, turkeys, bears and browsing mammals. Weed seeds are probably the most abundantly available food source; for instance a single pigweed plant can contain nearly 100,000 seeds! Others that generate profuse seeds include ragweed, crabgrass and Joe Pye weed.

Vegetative parts of wild plants, such as leaves, stems and roots (and your garden flowers, vegetables and herbs), feed rodents like squirrels and chipmunks and voles, browsing mammals like rabbits and raccoons, birds like turkeys and hawks, deer and more. Roots, bulbs and tubers feed diggers like moles, gophers, turkeys, geese and muskrats. Water features, natural or decorative, draw ducks, geese, beavers, deer and large birds to aquatic plants and grasses (and to your expensive pond fish like koi and goldfish).

Nectar feeders, such as hummingbirds, moths and bees, will gravitate to honeysuckle, butterfly bush, bee balm, petunias, cardinal flower and bottled nectar hanging off your deck. Insects are a vital food source for song birds, quail, pheasants, and bats.

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WITCH HAZEL

By Marc Teffeau, Cherokee County Master Gardener



In Cherokee County we see flowering trees in the early spring through mid-summer. There is an interesting exception to that rule with the native witch hazel, or *Hamamelis virginiana*, which usually flowers November through early December here in north Georgia.

Witch hazel (*Hamamelis* species) is a genus of small trees and shrubs native to Asia and North America that contains five species and close to 100 cultivars. It is an understory plant usually found in upland mixed hardwood forests. In the forest the small tree often exhibits multiple trunks and an irregular, somewhat flattened spreading crown. They bloom in late fall or late winter, depending

on the species, with unique yellow, gold, orange or red flowers.

These trees are known as witch hazels because, with a little bit of creative thinking, the stringy, curvy petals of its flower are thought by some to resemble a witch's broom. In addition to the wispy, twisted, ribbon-like appearance, witch hazel flowers are remarkably durable. It is not uncommon for plants in full bloom to tolerate temperatures in the low 20s for several days.

Depending on the species or cultivar, the spicily fragrant flowers come in shades of red, yellow, and orange. Bloom time ranges from fall to late winter. For this reason, you may hear some species of witch hazel called by the common name "winterbloom." All are fragrant to some extent, though some selections are so intense that their spicy scent can saturate the calm winter air.

The term "witch" probably comes from the Old English word "wych," meaning "to bend." Another name of the species is "water-witch," because dowzers and early settlers would use a Y-shaped branch of witch hazel, known as a divining rod, to find groundwater. A dowser would grasp the forked ends of the branch, holding it out parallel to the ground in front of them. When water was below their feet, the divining rod would bend or "witch" downward, pointing to the location of the underground source.

A less common name is "snapping hazel," resulting from the unique, rather loud popping sound that its seed pods make as they dry out and literally explode. This novel seed dispersal method can send the witch hazel's tiny, ripened black seeds flying through the air a distance of up to 25 feet, insuring that there will be less competition with the parent tree after the seed germinates.

The botanical name *Hamamelis* means "together with fruit." Witch hazels are the only North American tree to incorporate next year's leaf buds, last year's ripe seed pods and this year's flowers all on the same branch at the same time.

Ever hear of witch hazel tonic? This medicinal concoction is made from oil extracted from the bark, branches and leaves of the native witch hazel, *H. virginiana*. Native Americans are credited with making this discovery. They in turn taught early settlers of its medicinal properties. The tonic is still used as a treatment for sunburn, skin irritations, dryness and insect bites.

But it's not just the unique bloom times or intriguing names that make this plant so attractive. It also has drop-dead spectacular fall color, ranging from a vivid deep yellow to a rich orange-red. Most *Hamamelis* species are hardy in USDA Hardiness Zones 5 to 8 and prefer well-drained, moist, loamy, acidic soils. Witch hazels are not very drought tolerant, and it is suggested that you use a non-compacting mulch to keep the roots cool and moist, as these trees are subject to drought stress. Used in a variety of ways in the landscape, witch hazels can be effective as specimen trees or in a massed planting in both partial shade and morning sun.

There are four major types of witch hazel available to gardeners. The common *Continued on page 6*

POINSETTIAS

By Joan McFather, Cherokee County Master Gardener Intern



I remember the first time I saw poinsettias growing in their native Mexico—good grief! They're TREES! Yes, yes, I know—you're headed back to the big box store to pick up at least one of those beautiful potted plants, and someone is bound to give you one. Well, you can thank our nineteenth century ambassador to Mexico, Joel Poinsett, for the opportunity. An avid botanist, Poinsett sent samples of the winter-blooming tree, called "Flor de Noche Buena" or Christmas Eve Flower, back to the United States, and by the mid-1830s the plant was widely known here as the "Poinsettia." But it was still a weedy sort of shrub until in the early 1900s the Ecke family perfected grafting two varieties together, resulting in a bushier more compact plant. Third generation Paul Ecke, Jr. popularized Poinsettias by sending free plants to television shows where they were seen in Christmas specials. Then in 1991 the Eckes' secret methods were discovered, and competition has flourished ever since.

That competition has resulted in spectacular forms with bracts of an assortment of colors embellished by streaks, marbling, zigzags, speckles and creamy hems. Leaves may be flat or curled, and plant sizes now vary from huge specimens to tiny pocket-sized ones. And those *are* leaves you are looking at. Poinsettia flowers are actually found in the tiny yellow pockets called *cythia* at the center of each leaf bunch or bracts that turn their vibrant colors through photoperiodism. This simply means they need long periods of darkness to change color.

Poinsettias can be kept outside, but they will not withstand a frost and may die if temperatures dip below 50 degrees for an extended period. Ideally they want a temperature in the 65 to 70 degree range, a bit cooler than many of us keep our homes. To keep your plant at its best, give it as much light as you can, but avoid a hot south-facing window. You will not need to repot unless you intend to try to keep your Poinsettia (it is generally capitalized since it is named after a person); if so, use regular potting soil. The biggest mistake people make is overwatering. Remove the foil from around the container and water about once a week. Avoid wetting the foliage. Be generous, but do not let plants sit in water-filled saucers to avoid root rot. Though your plant appears to be in "full bloom," it is not actively growing, so no fertilizer is necessary.

There are some caveats to filling your home with these beauties. Like other members of the *Euphorbiaceae* family, they exude a milky sap, and some people with latex allergies may have a skin reaction after touching the leaves. However, despite rumors to the contrary, Poinsettias are not poisonous. An entertaining study at Ohio State University showed that a 50-pound child would have to eat 500 to 600 leaves at a sitting to have any side effects, and since the leaves are reportedly not particularly tasty, that scenario is highly unlikely. Nonetheless, if you have a determined child, be aware that the most common side effects are upset stomach and vomiting.

Now the number one question everyone asks: shall I try to keep my Poinsettia alive until next year? Well, the short answer is, why would you want to? It's a bunch of trouble, and next year you can buy even prettier ones. Having said that, I will admit I have had one on my kitchen counter now for a full year—just to see what it would do. It was fairly small, a gorgeous creamy yellow. As one is supposed to, I fertilized it using a complete houseplant fertilizer about every two weeks. The bracts turned a delightful lime green—I have no idea why. And so, over the year, the bracts have fallen by the wayside, and pretty dark green leaves have taken their place. I know it won't recreate the beauty it once had—I have not given it the required darkness. I just want to see what happens naturally.

For those of you who really want to do the job right, after the holidays decrease regular watering to allow the plant to dry out some but not completely. Relocate the plant to a cool, dark area until spring or around April, then bring it back to a sunny area and water well. Cut all the branches back

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Leaves - continued from page 2

and crumbly. To use, pull from the bottom of the pile. You can till the compost into your soil as an organic amendment and conditioner—but not as a fertilizer because it will be low in nutrients.

Now for you folks that like everything neat and tidy: compost in your leaf bags! Remember the ratio: 2/3 brown, 1/3 green. If you are clearing the lawn, you're already set: just blow the leaves and grass clippings (remember: no Bermuda) together into your bagging attachment. Fill your storage bags full and punch down. Add about a gallon of water to each, and tie closed. For the next couple of months flip them over and upside down a couple of times a month. Once the weather is freezing, you don't even need to do that. No grass? For the needed nitrogen third you can add coffee grounds, vegetable scraps, and so on to your leaves. Some suggest cutting some air vents in the bag. It's up to you how much labor you want to put into the process. One way or another, you will have solved the leaf problem, and in six months to a year you will have compost.

Witch Hazel - continued from page 4

witch hazel (*H. virginiana*, Zones 3–8), which is native to the eastern United States, presents its faintly scented yellow flowers just as the nearby hardwood trees are losing their autumn leaves. The native range of *H. virginiana* is from New Brunswick, Canada, down to Georgia and west to Minnesota, Missouri and the Ozarks. The plant's height can range from 6 to 25 feet with a similar spread.

More shrubby, and native to Missouri and Arkansas, the Ozark or vernal witch hazel (*H. vernalis*, Zones 4–8) might be blooming by Christmas in a mild winter. This plant's yellow to reddish flowers are usually the smallest but most profuse within the genus, with a fragrance that ranges from delicate to a bit husky. In 2004 a newly discovered species of *Hamamelis*, big-leaf witch hazel (*H. ovalis*), was found in a very small area in the headwaters of one creek in southern Mississippi.

There are two Asian species of this plant: the Chinese witch hazel (*H. mollis*, Zones 5–9) and the more delicate Japanese witch hazel (*H. japonica*, Zones 5–9). They both flower later than the native species. The flowers of Chinese witch hazel are always some shade of yellow, broad petaled, and usually sweetly scented. Its Japanese cousin can have yellow or reddish flowers with petals that are narrower, more spiderlike, and with a less intense perfume. Chinese witch hazel has fuzzy leaves that turn yellow in autumn, whereas the Japanese variety boasts smooth leaves that turn shades of burning red and orange. In the early 1920s, Boston's Arnold Arboretum happened upon a cross of the two Asian species, producing hybrids now classified as *Hamamelis* × *intermedia* (Zones 5–9).

There are cultivars of both the native and Asian witch hazels available to gardeners. Native eastern witch hazel cultivars include *H. virginiana* 'Harvest Moon' and 'Little Suzie'. Some of the more commonly recommended ones include *H. × intermedia* 'Arnold Promise'. This is an end-of-season, light-yellow-flowering hybrid introduced by the Arnold Arboretum almost 40 years ago. It has a vase shape, is richly scented and usually displays a mixture of yellow, red, and orange fall foliage. *H. × intermedia* 'Barmstedt Gold' produces modestly scented flowers in a dark yellow, making it stand out against an evergreen background. Its petals are more than an inch long and quite feathery, and fall leaf color is yellow.

If you are interested in red cultivars, there are far fewer red cultivars than there are orange or yellow. The deep red blooms of *H. × intermedia* 'Diane' vary in intensity from year to year. Like most red-flowering selections, its scent is very faint. The petals are broad and about 1 inch long. Fall color can be a vivid mixture of red and yellow. *H. × intermedia* 'Jelena' is a vigorously spreading selection. Its stunning copper-orange flowers are about 1 inch long. *H. × intermedia* 'Pallida' is a low, wide-spreading, early-flowering cultivar. The flowers are paler, larger, and more sweetly scented than those of 'Arnold Promise'. Fall color is yellow. Other hybrid cultivars that you might consider include 'Ruby Glow' and 'Primavera'.

Both the native and Asians are nice choices for the landscape. Happy Gardening!!

LAWN CARE - DECEMBER AND JANUARY

by: Rachel Prakash, Cherokee County Master Gardener

Cool Season Grasses (Tall Fescue, Kentucky Blue grass, Creeping Red/Chewing Fescue)

- Keep turf at a length of 2-3". Be careful not to mow more than 1/3 of the total length of the grass at one time.
- If it is a new lawn, make sure to water 1" per week if no additional rainfall is received.
- Now is a good time to test the soil pH and amend according to recommendations.
- Control weeds that are present by either pulling manually or treating with a post-emergent.

Warm Season Grasses (Bermudagrass, Centipedegrass, Zoysiagrass, St. Augustinegrass)

- Test the soil in your lawn and add amendments now so the soil pH is optimum come growing season.
- Spot treat with a post-emergent weed killer for dandelions, violets and other broadleaf weeds present in cool weather before they set seed. As an alternative to spraying, these weeds can be pulled with attention to making sure the root is complete-

Wildlife - continued from page 3

If you use chemical insecticides or pesticides to control insects or wildlife on your property, use restraint; and consider that those chemicals may be introduced into the food chain. When a bird eats a poisoned insect or a mouse ingests poison, the opossum or vulture that eats the poisoned animal gets a dose, too. It's friendlier to eliminate the temptation.

Weather impacts wildlife's food and water sources. Heavy rain and a cover of snow make finding seeds difficult; sleet and ice make it almost impossible. Whatever food you put out in such weather events will draw widely, and it will provide footprints and other unique evidence of which forms of wildlife you've attracted.

Water sources may be natural, such as ponds and streams, rain puddles in tree limbs, puddles left after a storm, even dew on the grass. Or sources may be provided by bird baths, fountains, fish ponds, sprinklers and irrigators. Plants are also a source of water in the form of leaves, and roots and most fruits and berries have a high water content.

Shelter or "cover" is almost as important as food and water and is especially welcoming when it's close to food and water sources. It provides concealment from predators, a place to rest and nest and raise young, and protection from inclement weather. Many cover plants also provide seeds, nuts and berries. Some forms of cover include trees, shrubs, high grasses, rock and brush piles, hollow trees, bird nesting boxes, bridges, empty buildings, and fence rows.

Finally, a few recommendations for those of you who wish to deter unwanted wildlife from moving into your yard or home. Open doors to your garage or other outdoor structures are an invitation to come in. Loose lids on trash cans or seed containers are easily opened by raccoons and bears. Keep the ground clean below bird feeders, and restrict access to pet food. Fence your garden, and line the interior of the fence with chicken wire that sits both above and below ground so creatures can't burrow under it. Keep tree limbs and vines away from roofs and foundation walls to deter raccoons and other small animals that want to move in for the winter. If you find a nest in an unwanted area of your home or property, place ammonia soaked rags around the area, shine lights on it and place a portable radio turned up loud near it.

We've moved into wildlife territory, so we shouldn't be surprised when they move back into ours. It's a little more difficult to deter them than to welcome them, but both are possible if you take the right steps.



DECEMBER TIPS



ORNAMENTALS

- Yews, juniper, holly, boxwood, broad-leaf evergreens and many deciduous trees, roses, and shrubs can be propagated this month. Insert evergreen cuttings in vermiculite or sand in a cool greenhouse or tie bundles of the cuttings together and bury in a cold frame. Remove in early spring and plant in a nursery bed. http://www.caes.uga.edu/Publications/displayHTML.cfm?pk_id=7850
- December is a good month to replace overgrown shrubs - don't fertilize until early spring.
- Fertilize pansies and other winter annuals with a fertilizer containing nitrate nitrogen. The higher the ratio of nitrate nitrogen the better the fertilizer. http://www.caes.uga.edu/publications/pubDetail.cfm?pk_id=7840
- Finish winter clean-up by pruning deciduous perennials 3-4 inches from the ground. Leaving part of the stem helps mark the location and size of the plant. http://www.caes.uga.edu/Publications/displayHTML.cfm?pk_id=6094
- When it is too cold to work in the yard, work on putting your landscape on paper; mark existing plants, site conditions (wet, dry, sunny, shade) then make a list of what you want to add.

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

- Pick mummied fruit off trees and rake up leaves under fruit trees to remove insects and diseases.
- December is a good month to construct raised vegetable beds. Any length is fine but it's good to build them no wider than 30-40 inches for easy access and to minimize compacting soil. http://extension.uga.edu/publications/files/pdf/C%201027-4_1.PDF
- Apply a thin layer of pine straw, mulch or cover with a row cover to protect winter veggies from extreme cold. http://www.caes.uga.edu/Publications/displayHTML.cfm?pk_id=7861
- Top dress unused areas of veggie beds with 2-4 inches of composted manure or shredded leaves.
- Fruit trees can be pruned at any time during the winter provided the temperature is above 45°.
- Get asparagus beds ready to plant when weather and soil conditions permit. The planting site should be in areas that will not interfere with cultivation of other crops. Bed preparation should include heavy applications of compost or aged animal manure plus 25 lbs or 6-12-12 per 1000 ft² applied broadcast. Till deeply and smooth soil surface. Set asparagus crowns any

MISCELLANEOUS

- time in late December or early January when soil is not frozen.
- Keep all indoor plants away from drafts and direct heat sources - inexpensive plastic draft hoods help redirect heat away from plants.
- Keep checking house plants for insect infestation. Isolate and treat infected plants immediately.
- Winterize your lawnmower, tiller and weed-eater. Drain out gas and replace the oil with fresh oil. Remove the oil filter and either clean or replace it. Check all nuts and bolts to be sure they haven't vibrated loose. Mower blades and tiller tines can be sharpened. Inspect wheels, belts and other moving parts.
- To keep your shears and loppers in good shape for next year, clean them with mineral spirits or Lysol bathroom tile cleaner. Adjust the tension screw and give them a good sharpening. Be sure to use a broad file while sharpening. Tools sharpened by a power grinder will over heat and lose their tempering, making the metal likely to chip or break.
- Clean garden hand tools with liquid detergent and bleach, drying thoroughly. Then oil to prevent rust.
- Blades of shovels and hoes can be sharpened with a file. Apply a light coat of household oil. Treat all wood handles with a coat of linseed oil.
- Drain garden hoses and sprinklers checking for leaks. Replace any old washers. Do not store hoses in direct sunlight or freezing temperatures as both will shorten the life of your hose.
- Clean all pressure sprayers and dusters before putting them away for the winter. Make sure they are functioning properly prior to storage.
- Clean and sanitize all stakes and trellises before putting them up for the winter.
- After Christmas, your tree can be moved outside and redecorated for the birds. Anchor the tree in a bucket full of damp sand. Hang strings of popcorn and cranberries and add strings of peanuts (in the shell). Apples, oranges, leftover breads and cakes, even peanut butter cookies, can be hung on the boughs, but don't use food containing chocolate, as it is poisonous to some animals. For best results, push the edible ornaments well into the tree; things that swing may scare birds.

**HAPPY
HOLIDAYS!**

JANUARY TIPS

ORNAMENTALS

- Watch camellias for buds that have brown spots, irregular - shaped blooms or blooms that have a nettled appearance. This is petal blight. Remove and destroy any buds showing symptoms. Don't confuse it with cold damage. It's a good practice to remove spent flowers from the ground.
- January is a good month to plant trees. Do not add fertilizer to planting hole - it could burn the roots.
- Fertilize annuals in colder months with a fertilizer high in nitrate nitrogen.
- Keep pansies and violas dead headed.
- If squirrels are digging bulbs, cover them with 1" wire mesh so foliage can grow through then mulch over wire.
- Pull up winter weeds now before they form seeds.
- If a few, consecutive warm days have caused your bulbs to nose out from under protective mulch, plan to thicken the mulch layer as soon as cold weather returns to prevent freezing by exposure.

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

- Analyze last year's planting, fertilizing and spraying records. Make notations to reorder successful varieties.
- Plant B & B, bare-root and container-grown fruit.
- Water newly planted fruit trees thoroughly, even if the ground is wet, so the soil around the roots will settle.
- Prune grapes in January or February. If this job is left too late in the season, bleeding from cut ends will occur. Train them onto a one or two wire fence http://www.caes.uga.edu/Publications/pubDetail.cfm?pk_id=7641&pg=np&ct=pruninggrapes&kt=&kid=&pid=
- Don't plant strawberries or figs until February or March http://www.caes.uga.edu/Publications/displayHTML.cfm?pk_id=6802
- Some mail order seed companies offer pelleted seed of lettuce, carrot, and a few other small-seeded crops. Pelleted seed has a special coating to make them larger. This is especially valuable for children and gardeners with arthritic hands, weak eyesight, or poor coordination. Wide spacing of seed helps eliminate thinning. When using pelleted seed, plant in moist soil and keep it moist because the coating has to dissolve before the seed can germinate.
- Organize your seeds for inside planting. Take each seed packet and count back from the last frost (April 14) taking into consideration the number of days for germination.
- Remove brown raspberry and blackberry canes that bore fruit last year; tie up green canes for this year's fruit. http://www.caes.uga.edu/Publications/displayHTML.cfm?pk_id=6371


- Spray dormant oil on fruit trees, per label instructions.
- Prune Apple and Pear trees. Remove dead limbs first, then the pencil-sized, vertical "water sprouts". http://www.caes.uga.edu/Publications/displayHTML.cfm?pk_id=6366

MISCELLANEOUS

- Sterilize tools, pots, and anything you use around your plants. Use one part household bleach to nine parts water. Soak for about 15 minutes, rinse well and let dry.
- Protect liquid insecticides from cold weather to preserve their effectiveness. If any product is stored below the manufacturer's suggested minimum storage temperature, it loses its potency. The most important factor in determining if the product is usable is the complete absence of crystals. If crystals remain after the product returns to room temperature, do not use it. Dispose of it according to the directions on the label.
- Chop unwanted Kudzu, English Ivy, and Bamboo to the ground. Follow with herbicide on the new leaves in April. <http://www.caes.uga.edu/extension/franklin/anr/documents/ControllingWeedyVines.pdf>
- Clean indoor plant leaves with a damp rag. Sandwich the leaf between folds of cloth and wipe gently. Change the cloth for each plant to avoid transferring insects or diseases.
- Make sure houseplants are misted and not touching windows. Cut back on fertilizer except for plants you are trying to force to bloom. http://www.caes.uga.edu/Publications/displayHTML.cfm?pk_id=7639

RAINFALL 2016-PLEASE HELP!

Debbie Meadows is looking for volunteers to track the rainfall in the different parts of Cherokee county. This simply means at the end of each month email to her your total rainfall to the 10th of an inch. Let her know if you can help and which part of the county you live in. debbiemeadows@windstream.net

	RAINFALL COMPARISONS					
	Cherokee County			State Wide		
	Sept 15	Oct 15	YTD	Sept 15	Oct 15	YTD
Actual	4.4	5.7	43.3	2.9	2.6	39.7
Normal	4.5	3.4	44.9	3.8	3.1	39.4
Deficit	-0.1	2.3	-1.6	-0.9	-0.5	0.3

Recipes



Sauteed Mushrooms

(serves 4)

- 3 green onions with tops (chopped)
- 1/4 cup margarine (melted)
- 1 pound fresh mushrooms (sliced)
- 1/4 cup dry white wine

Saute green onion in margarine until tender. Stir in remaining ingredients; cook, uncovered over low heat for 30 minutes (or until mushrooms are tender).

Poinsettias - continued from page 5

to about 6 inches. You can repot at this time and even take it out and sink the pot in a protected spot in your garden. When new growth reaches about 6 inches, start pinching out the tips to encourage branching, doing this once a month until mid-August. As nights become longer, bring in your plant. Now the laborious part: from September through November it will need 12 hours of total dark during the night, but plenty of light during the day to absorb enough energy for the bracts to turn color. If you can arrange cooler nights (55-60 degrees) and warmer days (65-70), all the better. With diligence it may just work.

Or you can go buy another one in a brand new color.

Holiday Rum Cake

(makes about 1 1/2 dozen)

- 1 box yellow cake mix
- 1/2 cup dark rum
- 1 (3 1/2 oz) box vanilla instant pudding (dry)
- 1 cup chopped pecans
- 4 eggs
- 1/2 cup cold water
- 1/2 cup canola oil

Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Grease & flour Bundt pan. Sprinkle chopped nuts over the bottom. Mix all cake ingredients together. Bake for 1 hour (until an inserted knife blade comes out clean). Invert & use knife blade to *deeply pierce* the top of the cake all over its surface.

Glaze

- 1 stick margarine
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1/4 cup water
- 1/2 cup dark rum
- 1 tsp Rum flavoring

Melt margarine in saucepan. Stir in water, sugar, & rum. Boil for 5 mins. stirring constantly. Mixture should thicken a bit. Remove from heat & stir in rum flavoring. Pour into the pierced openings in the cake & around the sides of the pan until all the glaze has been absorbed. Loosen cake from pan & invert onto serving plate.

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www.caes.uga.edu/extension/cherokee
<https://m.facebook.com/cherokeemastergardeners/>



CHEROKEE COUNTY

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GREAT HOLIDAY GIFT IDEA!!



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