

Gardening with the Masters

Growing, Gardening and Gaining Knowledge
December 2019/January 2020

WHAT'S HAPPENING

DECEMBER

Dec 5 - Demo Garden Workday, Senior Center, 10am

Dec 6 - CCMG Holiday Party

Dec 19 - Demo Garden Workday, Senior Center, 10am

JANUARY

Jan 2 - Demo Garden Workday, Senior Center, 10am

Jan 16 - Demo Garden Workday, Senior Center, 10am

Jan 21 - CCMG Monthly Meeting



Happy Holidays from all
the Master Gardeners

Editor's Corner

By Marcia Winchester,
Cherokee County Master Gardener



Winter is one of my favorite seasons to garden in Georgia. When I lived in the Midwest, I'd garden when it was 30 degrees as that was warm winter weather in that region of the country. So 40 to 50 degrees is special.



Winter work day at our Senior Center Demo Garden, Canton, Georgia

When I moved down to Georgia one of my first questions was, "Does the ground freeze?" Unfortunately I asked a person from Florida. She didn't understand what I meant and responded, "Yes, we get frost." In the northern parts of the country, the ground can indeed freeze 5 feet deep during the winter. That means no digging, so I'd use those occasions to do a lot of pruning.

By contrast, during a Georgia winter I can dig, pot, and plant all season. Some plants do go dormant, but a lot don't, and those are the ones I work with. Plants are a lot less stressed in 50 degrees than they are in the 90 degrees of summer. Another plus is that I don't have to water in winter because we get plenty of rain. I enjoy watching the birds at the feeder while I pot up plants. When I get cold, I go inside and write plant labels. When it's too wet to work in the garden, I walk around and add to my to-do list of garden chores. Yes, there's plenty to do in the garden in winter here in the South. However, my favorite part of gardening in winter is NO mosquitoes!

Marcia

In This Issue

Editor's Corner.....Pg 1	Winter Bird Feeding with KidsPg 7
Dec/Jan Calendar.....Pg 1	Continued ArticlesPg 7
Classic City AwardsPg 2 & 3	December Tips Pg 8
Wild Onion or Wild Garlic? Pg 4	January Tips Pg 9
Holiday Plants and Pets Pg 5	RainfallPg 9
A Maple as a Houseplant? Pg 6	RecipesPg 10

Classic City Awards: A Wish List for Your 2020 Garden

By Mary Tucker, Cherokee County Master Gardener



Gaura 'Graceful White'

The new year is fast approaching, and now is the perfect time to start thinking about flowers to feature in your 2020 garden. The Trial Gardens at the University of Georgia is here to help! Each year, the staff there grows and tests the newest varieties from plant breeders around the world. In the process, they evaluate the plants for these characteristics: number of flowers, leaf color, uniformity of habit and flower, resistance to insects and diseases, and overall appearance. Those deemed to be the best performers are honored with the Classic City Award.

In 2019, more than 400 varieties were evaluated at the Trial Gardens. Highlighted here are the winners. Keep these in mind as you plan your garden for 2020. Visit the Trial Gardens' website, <http://ugatrial.hort.uga.edu>, for more pictures and a look at past Classic City winners.



Agastache Poquito™ 'Butter Yellow' by Terra Nova:

This hyssop is one of several in the Poquito™ series that the Trial Gardens tested. This yellow one stood out for its strong flower spikes and bold visual appeal. It likes full sun, and this beauty blooms well for several months. Its height reaches about twelve to sixteen inches when in bloom.



Caladium 'Clowning Around' by

Classic Caladiums: This distinctive caladium is sure to make you smile with its wavy green leaf margins, bright pink veining, and green spots against a pink background. Performing well in containers or garden beds in shade or morning sun, it will typically grow about 14 to 16 inches tall.



Calibrachoa Lia™ 'Bubblegum' by Dan-

ziger: This bold combination of bright pink flowers with yellow centers will certainly get attention in the garden. A current breeding trend with calibrachoa, also called million bells, is larger flowers, and this is one of those examples. 'Bubblegum' was featured in hanging baskets at the Trial Gardens.



Calibrachoa Superbells® 'Honeyberry' by Proven

Winners: This calibrachoa stood out in the trials for its uniformity and steady display of blooms throughout the growing season, even in the heat wave Georgia experienced this past summer. The pink flowers have a nicely contrasting honey-yellow throat.



Celosia Kelos® Atomic 'CESP

1889' by Beekenkamp: Hot pink flower spikes that stand about 3 feet tall make this a stunner in garden beds or containers, and the plant proved to be low maintenance for the Trial Gardens staff. It's also a favorite of pollinators, such as honeybees and bumblebees.



Cuphea 'Honeybells' by Ball

FloraPlant: The Trial Gardens used this plant in both in-ground beds and in hanging baskets, and in each case, it performed admirably over the long growing season. The small tubular flowers are hot pink with yellow tips and are produced in abundance on plants that grow about twelve to eighteen inches tall.



Echibeckia™ Summerina® Sizzling Sunset™ by Pacific Plug & Liner: As its name implies, this plant combines features of rudbeckia and echinacea. The Trial Gardens tested the whole Summerina® series, and this cultivar stood out with its large, golden yellow and red flowers with the traditional black eye in the center.



Gaillardia Heat It Up™ ‘Yellow’ by Proven Winners: This bright yellow gaillardia was a winner for its long bloom season and the fact that it didn’t require deadheading as most gaillardias do. So you’ll appreciate its ease of maintenance, as well as the bright spot it will provide in the sunny areas in your garden.



Gaura ‘Graceful White’ by Dummen Orange: Gauras are indeed graceful with their tall, delicate stems, and this one is no exception. The large white flowers are tinged with pink as they age, and this provides a lovely complement to other colors in the garden. ‘Graceful White’ bloomed early in the season and again in late summer after a hard pruning.



Hollywood™ Hibiscus Rico Suave™ by J. Berry Genetics: This hibiscus sports bright yellow blooms that are accented with red centers, and the flowers contrast stunningly with the deep green foliage. Another impressive feature is a lengthy bloom time of May through September. It is recommended for both containers and in-ground plantings and can grow about three or four feet tall.



Petunia ColorRush™ ‘White’ by Ball FloraPlant: This petunia proved remarkable for its large, pure white blooms and mounding habit, making it a standout among the petunias that were trialed. It proved to be especially vigorous with its flowers and size, filling out to an impressive width in containers.



Portulaca Hot Shots™ ‘Grapefruit’ by Green Fuse Botanicals: Versatility is a wonderful characteristic in a plant, and ‘Grapefruit’ can boast drought tolerance, healthy foliage, bountiful flowering, and vibrant pink and yellow blooms that attract pollinators. In addition, it is suitable for borders, rock gardens, hanging baskets, and mixed containers.



Salvia Skyscraper™ ‘Orange’ by Selecta: Salvias are favorites of pollinators, as is this member of the Skyscraper™ series that features vibrant pink flowers with orange calyxes. It displays bountiful blooms and grows about one to two feet in height, making it a welcome addition to the sunny border or mixed containers.



The Trial Gardens are on the University of Georgia campus in Athens at 1030 West Green Street. To keep up with what’s going on and to learn about events, plant sales and garden open houses, follow them on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube.

PHOTO CREDIT: All photos courtesy of Dr. John M. Ruter (director) and Brandon Coker (garden manager) of the University of Georgia Trial Gardens.



Wild Onion or Wild Garlic?

By Carolyn Puckett , Cherokee County Master Gardener

A few years ago some new neighbors excitedly told me about the “wild chives” they found growing in an area behind their yard. Disappointingly, what they mistook for wild chives was actually wild garlic (*Allium vineale*).

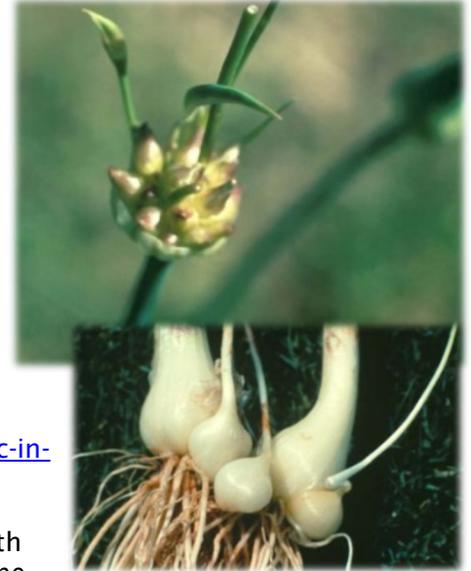
If you have a lawn, you also may have been plagued with unwanted wild garlic. Or your lawn could harbor wild onion (*A. canadense*). These perennial grass-like weeds emerge from underground bulbs in the fall and persist through winter, dying back in early summer. If you have warm-season grass, such as Bermuda or Zoysia, the weeds will be most

All photos *Allium vineale* courtesy <https://turf.caes.uga.edu/pest-management/weeds/grass-like-weeds/wild-garlic.html>

noticeable in cool weather when the grass is dormant.

How does one tell these two common, stinky green weeds apart? The easiest way is by their leaves. Wild garlic has slender, glossy, rounded, hollow leaves, while wild onion has thin, solid, flat leaves. While both species flower, they usually get mown down before flowering.

To combat these weeds, maintain healthy, dense turf that can compete with and prevent weed establishment. Mowing will weaken the plants, but it will not kill them, as the underground bulbs will persist for years. There are no pre-emergent herbicides that are effective. Post-emergent herbicides usually require multiple applications over several seasons. The kind of herbicide to use varies based on the type of grass you have. Check out this website for herbicide information: <https://ugaurbanag.com/how-do-we-control-wild-garlic-in-lawns/>.



Personally, I just dig up the clusters of wild garlic or onions, bulbs and all, with my favorite weeding tool, a garden knife or “hori-hori.” This is most easily done when the ground is very moist. Or, you can just ignore the problem since the above-ground leaves die back in early summer.

Not all species of “wild onions” are undesirable. Many consider our native woodland ramps or wild leeks (*A. tricoccum*) a spring delicacy. The ramps have a bright white, onion-like bulb emerging into two or three broad, lance-shaped leaves about 8 inches high. These basal leaves will wither away before the smooth, 6 to 10 inch tall, flowering stalk, topped with a single 1- to 2-inch umbel of 20 to 40 flowers, matures. Gather the ramp foliage and bulb before the plant flowers to use in soups or salads. Even though ramps often develop in large colonies in the wild, if foraging please harvest sustainably by clipping only a few leaves and leaving the bulbs undisturbed.

Another native allium to cultivate as an ornamental is the woodland nodding onion (*A. cernuum*). A basal cluster of soft, slender, flat leaves about 12 inches long emerges from an underground bulb before the stiff, 1 to 2 foot tall, flowering stalk appears. The flowering stalks bend at the top, where they sport loose clusters of up to 30 nodding, bell-shaped, pink (occasionally white) flowers.

Both ramps and nodding onions are available as plants or seed from many online nurseries.

University of Georgia Extension:

“A ‘Stinky Story’ - Controlling Wild Garlic in Home Lawns” <https://extension.uga.edu/content/dam/extension-county-offices/burke-county/anr/Wild%20Garlic%20Control.pdf>

Clemson University Extension:

<https://hgic.clemson.edu/factsheet/wild-garlic-wild-onion-2/>

Wild garlic and wild onion

https://www.google.com/url?client=internal-uds-cse&cx=017235838535360921777:c_acq9hx buc&q=https://hgic.clemson.edu/factsheet/wild-garlic-wild-onion-2/&sa=U&ved=2ahUKewjhp_yVz6jIAhWFneAKHe81AsAQFjAGegQIBhAC&usq=AOvVaw31GDWqFrU1pG9nf9B_Ay0a

Holiday Plants and Pets

By Megan Hilf, Cherokee County Master Gardener



As the holidays approach, many of us are busy making our homes festive and alive with holiday charm. Being a veterinarian and a Master Gardener, I am often asked about the toxicity of some of the plants seen around this time of year. First and foremost, always call your veterinarian or an animal emergency clinic if your pet consumes any plant you are not sure about. The ASPCA also has a wonderful website listing toxic and non-toxic plants (<https://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control>), and there is also Pet Poison Hot Line.

Photo *Euphorbia pulcherrima* courtesy <https://georgiaforages.caes.uga.edu/news/story.html?storyid=5670&story=Poinsettia-History>

The most commonly inquired about is the poinsettia (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*). Most folks think they are highly toxic but in fact they are actually considered to be only mildly toxic. The ingestion of them may cause slight stomach upset or skin irritation upon contact with the milky sap that contains diterpenoid euphorbol esters. These esters can be slightly irritating to the skin and stomach lining. In most cases, the clinical signs are self-limiting and rarely require a trip to the doctor, but to be safe, the best advice is to keep these plants up off the floor and away from curious furry friends.

Holly (*Ilex* spp.) and mistletoe are more concerning. Holly contains saponins, a glycoside that will cause a soap-like froth. They receive their name from the soapwort plant (*Saponaria* spp.). The root from the soapwort plant was used to originally make “natural” soap. They can cause a bit of vomiting, diarrhea, and lethargy if ingested. Other plants containing saponins that might be found at the holidays include Christmas rose (*Helleborus niger*), asparagus fern (*Asparagus densiflorus*) and daisies (*Bellis perennis*).

Mistletoe, both the American variety (*Phoradendron serotinum*) and the European variety (*Viscum album*), are toxic, with the American being slightly less. These plants contain polysaccharides and alkaloids that can cause drooling, vomiting, and diarrhea, and in large quantities they can cause the heart rate or blood pressure to drop, inability to walk, and collapse. They can even lead to seizures and death but only if very large quantities are consumed.

Amaryllis (*Hippeastrum* spp. or *Amaryllis* spp.) and paperwhites (*Narcissus* spp.) contain a toxin called phenanthridine alkaloids according to the ASPCA. Signs of ingestion can include drooling, vomiting, and a drop in blood pressure. Luckily the plants are very bitter tasting. However, some dogs are very determined—so again, keep them out of reach.

Lilies are one of the deadliest plants to cats and are often found in many holiday floral arrangements. Those lilies belonging to the *Lilium* and *Heimerocallis* genera contain a water-soluble toxin that targets the kidneys. The toxin is found in all parts of the plant; petals, pollen, or even the water from the vase can result in severe acute kidney failure. These plants should be kept far away from our four-legged friends. Seek immediate care for your pet if you suspect ingestion of a lily.

Fortunately, there is a common holiday plant that you can safely use in your home; Christmas cactus (*Schlumbergera bridgesii*) is nontoxic to both cats and dogs.

In addition to plants, there are many other hazards to pets this time of year. Other things to beware of include chocolate, bread doughs, raisins, macadamia nuts, xylitol (an artificial sweetener), alcohol, and other holiday cheer, which can all be toxic. You should seek medical advice/attention immediately if your pet consumes any of these. Also keep in mind that packages with ribbons and strings are very inviting to play with and if swallowed can lead to abdominal obstruction, requiring surgery and an extra holiday bill you had not included in your budget. Electrical wires are found in abundance as we light our homes, but make sure your new puppy or kitten is well protected from trying to play with or chew on them.



Photo *Schlumbergera bridgesii* courtesy <https://extension.uga.edu/story.html?storyid=7823>

So have fun, enjoy the beauty of the season, and be smart and safe.

A Maple as a Houseplant?

By Marc Teffeau, Cherokee County Master Gardener

There is a very interesting subtropical shrub known as “flowering maple” that can be grown as a houseplant. I was first introduced to this plant last spring by a fellow Master Gardener when she asked me to identify it. Common names also include Chinese bellflower, Chinese lantern, abutilon, and Indian mallow. The plant is a member of the *Abutilon* genus, not the *Acer* genus that contains maple trees. However, it is called flowering maple because the plant’s leaves are similar in appearance to maple leaves. It is commonly found throughout South and Central America and in other subtropical areas, where it grows as a perennial.

Flowering maples were considered an old-fashioned plant that fell out of favor with gardeners. They were popular during the Victorian era, hence another name, “parlor maple.” These flowering plants were first among the “softer” plants grown in chilly Victorian parlors. I came across the plant again in October 2018 when my wife, Linda, and I were on a tour of the Biltmore Estate Gardens in Asheville, North Carolina, as part of the Garden Writers Association regional tour. A couple of different cultivars of the flowering maple were in the Biltmore greenhouse, including an heirloom variety that Biltmore had bred named ‘Biltmore Ballgown’.



‘Biltmore Ballgown’
courtesy Marc Teffeau



The genus *Abutilon* is a large group of over 200 species of flowering plants in the mallow family (Malvaceae). The mallow family includes well-known plants like cotton, hibiscus, hollyhock, okra, rose of Sharon, and the marsh mallows that we find in the wetlands. The flowering maple has blooms similar in shape to hibiscus flowers.

As a result of extensive breeding efforts with a few species of this plant, a variety of beautiful cultivars have been produced with lovely bell-shaped flowers in colors of orange, salmon, red, white, yellow, and bi-colored hues. The generally solitary, pendant flowers are borne on long stems from leaf axils or near the branch tips on the current season’s growth. The flowering maple’s lantern-like buds open to cup- or bell-shaped flowers that may be up to 3 inches in diameter.

Some of the cultivars also have variegated foliage, and it is interesting to note that this variegation is a result of a virus that does not harm the plant. The AMV (Abutilon Mosaic Virus) is transmitted by seed, grafting, and in nature by the Brazilian whitefly.

Abutilon is an easy plant to grow indoors, and for this use, I would recommend the smaller cultivars. Light requirements range from full sun to very light shade. Flowering maples need a well-drained, peat-based potting soil. They do not require fertilization over the winter. Watering requirements indoors are to keep the soil slightly moist, but do not overwater. Usually, only a monthly watering is needed during the winter. They tend to get rangy, so to prevent this from happening, pinch the tops of the branches in the spring to encourage a more compact habit.

Besides being grown as a houseplant, these shrub-like plants can also be used as an annual in the landscape and as container plants during the warm growing season in our area, where they will bloom from June through October. If you want to grow the plant as an annual, it does well in full sun to partial shade. It can also be employed in hanging baskets. Most species require moderate watering, although some need a little more moisture.

You can enjoy flowering maple both inside and out by growing it as a container patio plant during warm months and then bringing it in to overwinter as a houseplant. Temperature-wise these plants prefer a cooler room during the winter.

Flowering maples are not known to have any significant insect or disease problems outdoors in the landscape.

(Continued on page 7)



Photo variegated flowering maple foliage
courtesy Marc Teffeau.

(Continued from page 6)

However, inside as a house plant, it can become susceptible to the usual list of houseplant pests such as aphids, mealybugs, scales, whiteflies, and spider mites. If one of these pests shows up on the plant, treat it as you would usually treat a houseplant pest.

If you would like to propagate your abutilon, it will root easily from stem-tip cuttings. A rooting hormone will increase your chances of success. Take cuttings in the spring and place in seed-starting soil in a warm, bright room. One recommendation is to take new cuttings of the plant every three years to start new plants and then get rid of the older plants. Other sources of information on the plant note, however, that with proper pruning, there's no reason you can't keep an abutilon houseplant thriving for many years.

When young, flowering maples tend to grow fast. As a result, they may need to be repotted a couple times a year. The general recommendation is to repot at the beginning of the growing season and again mid-season. Older flowering maples tend to do better being somewhat pot-bound as this tends to encourage them to grow more vigorously and have a better bloom set.

There are several abutilon cultivars available to choose from. They include 'Canary Bird', 'Fireball', 'Boule de Neige', 'Kirsten's Pink', the 'Bella' series, and 'Kentish Belle'. If you are interested in speckled and variegated foliage plant, look for cultivars *A. straitum thompsonii* or 'Souvenir de Bonn'.

Winter Bird Feeding with Kids

By Jennifer Ruscilli, Cherokee County Master Gardener

Winters are tough on birds and here in Georgia our winter month temperatures can go from balmy to extremely cold. So what about our birds and what can we offer them to eat during these frigid temperature drops? A much needed energy source for birds during cold temperatures is fat, so have you thought about making your own suet?

Why not create some very enjoyable and tasty treats to offer your favorite feathered friends? You can make balls, cubes, loaves, crumbles, and smears. Just melt equal parts of lard or suet, and peanut butter (natural is the best), over low heat. Once cooled enough to handle, add in all sorts of edible items your feathered visitors love to eat, even dried mealworms, until the mixture gets a bit stiff. Then get creative! Fill all the crevices of a pinecone with your mix, or press the mixture into cookie cutters and molds. Cat food cans, tuna cans, bread pans, are all good shapes to use for molds. Refrigerate your molds long enough for the shapes to set up. Tie a string around the pinecones, hang outside and watch the fun. Don't forget to poke a hole in your mold shapes for hanging!

Here's a favorite recipe from one of our Master Gardeners, Mary Tucker.

Birds' Favorite Treat

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup lard
- 1 cup chunky peanut butter
- 2-1/2 cups uncooked oatmeal (quick-cooking or regular)
- 2-1/2 cups cornmeal (plus a bit to line bottom of pan)
- If desired, you can also add raisins or other dried fruit for the fruit-eating birds

NOTE: during the nesting season, you can also include ground eggshells to add calcium, which assists the females with egg production.

DIRECTIONS

1. Melt lard and peanut butter together in saucepan. Remove from heat. Stir in oatmeal and cornmeal (and eggshells and/or dried fruit if desired). Mix well. Of course, you can adjust the ingredients to make it the consistency you desire.
2. Place a thin layer of cornmeal in the bottom of a square cake pan. (This will help keep the food from sticking to the bottom of the pan.) Instead of the cake pan, you can also use muffin tins lined with a paper liner, tuna cans, etc. You can also mold it into the plastic liners that suet blocks come in to make your own suet refills.
3. Refrigerate the mixture until hard. Cut into squares or crumble into pieces. The food can be placed in a suet feeder or simply placed on a bird feeder or on the ground.
4. It's a favorite of many birds, including bluebirds, titmice, chickadees, wrens, various warblers, robins, catbirds, thrashers, mockingbirds, woodpeckers, blue jays, and many more. Squirrels also love it, of course!



The website <https://www.birdwatchersdigest.com/bwdsite/freebies.php> has free, downloadable pamphlets, filled with lots of recipes for **Savory Suet Cakes, Dough** and **Smearables**. Don't forget to mix in your feathered friends' favorite thing to eat. They will appreciate the food and you will be entertained all through the winter. Have fun!

DECEMBER Gardening 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.
- 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. https://secure.caes.uga.edu/extension/publications/files/pdf/B%201359_2.PDF
- 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. https://secure.caes.uga.edu/extension/publications/files/pdf/B%20961_4.PDF
- 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. <https://extension.uga.edu/publications/detail.html?number=C1032-4&title=Drawing%20a%20Landscape%20Plan%20-%20Site%20Analysis>

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. https://secure.caes.uga.edu/extension/publications/files/pdf/C%201027-5_1.PDF
- To protect winter veggies from extreme cold, apply a thin layer of mulch or cover with a row cover. https://secure.caes.uga.edu/extension/publications/files/pdf/C%20984_3.PDF
- 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 of 6-12-12 per 1000 ft² applied broadcast. Till deeply and smooth soil surface. Set asparagus crowns any time in late December or early January when soil is not frozen.

MISCELLANEOUS

- Keep all indoor plants away from drafts and direct heat sources - inexpensive plastic draft hoods help redirect heat away from plants. https://secure.caes.uga.edu/extension/publications/files/pdf/B%201318_4.PDF
- 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 overheat 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. Use either rubbing alcohol or 1 part liquid bleach to 9 parts water.



Photo raised bed at Papa's Pantry courtesy Gerald Phillips, Master Gardener

JANUARY Gardening Tips

ORNAMENTALS

- Watch for camellia buds that have brown spots on the edges and then spread to the entire flower. 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. https://secure.caes.uga.edu/extension/publications/files/pdf/B%201065_5.PDF
- January is a good month to plant trees. Do not add fertilizer to planting hole - it could burn the roots. https://secure.caes.uga.edu/extension/publications/files/pdf/B%20932_3.PDF
- Fertilize annuals in colder months with a fertilizer high in nitrate nitrogen.
- Keep pansies and violas dead headed.
- If squirrels are digging bulbs, cover the bulbs with 1-inch wire mesh so foliage can grow through. Then place 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.
- Analyze last year's planting, fertilizing and spraying records. Make notations to reorder successful varieties.

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

- 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. https://secure.caes.uga.edu/extension/publications/files/pdf/B%20807_4.PDF
- Don't plant strawberries or figs until February or March. <https://extension.uga.edu/publications/detail.html?number=C883&title=Home%20Garden%20Strawberries>, and <https://extension.uga.edu/publications/detail.html?number=C945&title=Home%20Garden%20Figs>
- 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. https://secure.caes.uga.edu/extension/publications/files/pdf/C%20766_3.PDF

- 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". <https://site.extension.uga.edu/franklin/2018/01/when-to-prune-fruit-trees/>
- 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.

MISCELLANEOUS

- 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.
- 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. <https://extension.uga.edu/publications/detail.html?number=C951&title=Care%20of%20Holiday%20and%20Gift%20Plants>



RAINFALL COMPARISONS

	Cherokee County			State Wide		
	Sept 19	Oct 19	YTD	Sept 19	Oct 19	YTD
Actual	0.7	7.2	48.7	0.9	4.3	36.1
Normal	4.0	3.7	46.6	3.8	3.1	39.9
Deviation	-3.3	3.5	2.1	-2.9	1.2	-3.8

To help track Cherokee County rainfall, keep track by 1/10 each month and send results to Debbie Meadows at debbiemeadows@windstream.com

Tater Tots Hotdish

Here's a quick and easy variation on pot pie. It's tasty served with a crisp salad.

Ingredients:

3 tbsp butter
1 large onion, chopped
6 tbsp flour
3 cups milk
1 bouillon cube (chicken or vegetable)
1 pkg frozen mixed vegetables, thawed
1 lb boneless chick parts (breast, thigh or strips), cut into bite-size pieces
½ tsp thyme
Ground black pepper and salt to taste
18 oz Tater Tots, thawed

Directions:

Preheat oven to 400. Grease 8x11 or 3-quart casserole. Melt butter in large sauté pan. Stir in onion and cook until soft. Sprinkle in flour, then gradually add milk and bouillon cube until sauce thickens. Add chicken, vegetables and seasoning and blend well. Simmer 15 minutes, stirring often. Transfer to baking dish, and cover evenly and snugly with Tater Tots. Bake for 30 minutes or until golden brown.

Easy Breezy Finger Sandwiches

Do you get those coupon mailers from your grocer, along with recipes that entice you to buy certain products? This is a variation on one from Kroger, and my family loves it. It's a fun snack, and is easy to prep for a holiday party dish.

Ingredients:

1 package refrigerated crescent dough
½ lb. deli ham or roast beef
¼ pound of sliced soft cheese of your choice, one that melts well
Dipping sauce

Instructions:

Bring meat to room temperature. Lay out triangles of dough on a sheet pan. Divide meat and cheese at the widest side of triangles. Roll up and bake according to package directions.

Slightly cool and serve the sandwiches with your choice of dipping sauces. Good options include horseradish sauce, various hot or sweet mustards, beefy bouillon, or your own favorite. Dress up with sides of pickles and olives or other colorful and tasty condiments.



To receive printed copies of the 2019/2020 newsletters, please send a check for \$10 to:

Diane Walton
326 Lauren Lane
Woodstock, GA 30188

Great Gift Idea

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

UGA Cooperative Extension—Cherokee County
1130 Bluffs Pkwy, Suite G49
Canton, GA 30114

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



**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

The University of Georgia and Ft. Valley State College, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and counties of the state cooperating.
The Cooperative Extension Service offers educational programs, assistance and materials to all people without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex or disability.
An equal opportunity/affirmative action organization committed to a diverse work force.