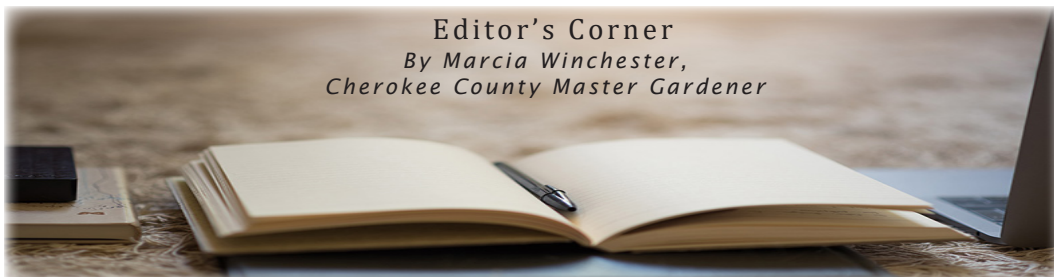


Gardening With The Masters

Growing, Gardening and Gaining Knowledge
December 2024/January 2025

Ilex vomitoria



Editor's Corner
By Marcia Winchester,
Cherokee County Master Gardener



Happy Holidays
from all the
Cherokee County
Master Gardeners

Enjoy your holidays and
we hope to see you soon!

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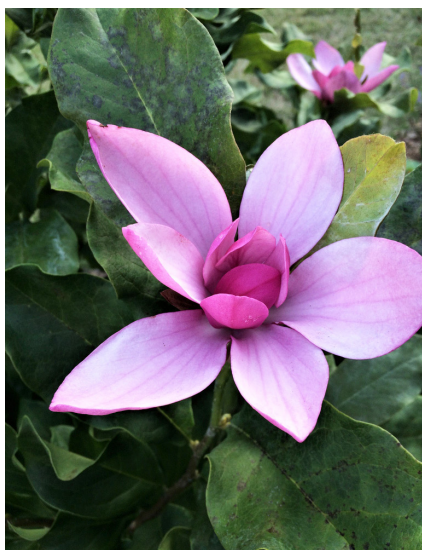


Photo *Magnolia liliiflora* 'Ann' flower, early summer, Durham County, NC Carol Tierney [CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

It's not recommended to plant a tree too close to your house. You don't want branches scraping the side of the house or to have roots growing into your foundation. However, one of my favorite trees is a *Magnolia liliiflora* 'Ann'. I don't remember why, but I planted it only 6 feet from the side of my house. 'Ann' only gets 8 to 10 feet tall and wide, so it's not a big tree.

It is planted in mostly shade, and I've pruned it to grow away from the house. The roots are far enough away from the foundation that they haven't been a problem.

I love this tree for so many reasons. When it blooms, I can enjoy the deep purple-red flowers from my family room and bedroom. It's close enough that I can touch it from my deck.

Another thing I appreciate about this tree is that small birds love to hop around in the branches singing and eating small insects. What a show! Sometimes I can watch three or four different birds perform their aerial antics at the same time.



Photo fuzzy protective covers Marcia Winchester

Last but not least, as with most magnolias, 'Ann' forms fuzzy protective covers for her spring flowers. Observing these fuzzy covers on the branches after the deciduous leaves have fallen adds yet more interest to this tree. In the spring as the flower buds grow, the fuzzy covers expand until they fall off, exposing the flowers. It's quite the sight.

Season to season there is so much to enjoy from one small tree, and I'm grateful it's close enough to the house for me to take full advantage of the abundance of pleasure it gives me.

Marcia

Give Asparagus a Chance

By Judy Lester, Cherokee County Master Gardener

Asparagus. Did you just think, “Yuck?” If asparagus could talk it might yell, “Give me another chance!”

I confess I endured asparagus (*Asparagus officinalis*) as a child. When the adult me moved to a home with an asparagus bed, the asparagus spoke for itself. Picking my own asparagus was a revelation. It was a beautiful, deep green color, and the stalk snapped when I picked it. I found I could eat it raw, right then and there—and (gasp) it was delicious! Asparagus won me over.



[Photo Home Garden Asparagus | UGA Cooperative Extension](#)

Why should you consider growing asparagus? For starters, asparagus is a perennial plant. Established asparagus plants can produce crops for 12 to 15 years! Asparagus is attractive. Its fall foliage is feathery, and it adds texture to the garden. Asparagus is a snap to harvest! (pun intended). It is rich in Vitamin B, calcium, magnesium, zinc, and dietary fiber. You can easily freeze or refrigerate asparagus until you are ready to eat it. Asparagus can be sauteed, steamed, grilled, or eaten raw.

Since asparagus is a perennial, carefully choose its spot in the garden. Trust me: it does not respond well to being moved. Choose a spot that receives full sun and has good drainage. Plant it where its fall foliage will not shade other plants.

Prepare the bed ahead of time. Amend the soil with organic matter: compost, manure, leaves, or bagged topsoil. Raised beds, 8 to 10 inches tall, will also work. The soil pH should be between 5.8 and 6.5. If in doubt, have the soil tested as soon as possible, and amend it accordingly.

It is quicker and easier to grow asparagus by purchasing asparagus crowns (one-year-old roots) from reputable nurseries. Recommended varieties for our area are Jersey Giant, Jersey Knight, Mary Washington, and Purple Passion.

Dig a trench 6 inches deep and 15 inches wide for the length of your row. Plant the crowns 9 to 12 inches apart with the buds pointing up. Spread the roots in a uniform pattern around each crown. Cover the crown with 2 inches of soil, and water the plants well. As the plants grow, gradually add more soil to the trench. Asparagus needs about an inch of water each week, and more if it is planted in a raised bed.

Next comes the test of your gardening skill: waiting for the crowns to mature. Asparagus crowns need two years to mature, so do not harvest asparagus until the second year after planting. Then you can harvest pencil-sized spears for three weeks. Do not harvest all the pencil-sized spears because the plant root system is still growing.

Over the next two to three years, you can gradually increase your harvest time. Following year four, you can harvest six to eight weeks during the growing season. Harvest asparagus in the morning by cutting or snapping spears that are 5 to 8 inches long.

Enjoy the lovely asparagus foliage throughout the season. After frost turns the foliage yellow, cut it back to 2-inch stubs. Remove the old foliage and compost it, or dispose of it if diseases were an issue. Mulch the bed, and keep the bed free of weeds. Weeding procrastinators like me may break tender asparagus spears by mistake.

Enjoy your reward! Whether boiled, grilled, steamed, roasted, or eaten raw, asparagus is a wonderful treat. With care, your asparagus bed can feed you for many years to come.

References

Georgia Master Gardener Handbook, Eighth Edition. Edited by Dorn and Sawyer. ©2021. Home Garden Asparagus. Pg. 426-429

[Home Garden Asparagus | UGA Cooperative Extension](#)

[Campbell Vaughn: Asparagus is more than good eating. ...](#)

[Vegetable Planting Chart | UGA Extension](#)

Are You Accidentally Harming Our Native Critters?

By Carolyn Puckett, Cherokee County Master Gardener

Have you ever done your best to do what is best for our world only to discover that something you are doing actually is a bad idea? It has certainly happened to me.

Sharing our planet with other flora and fauna has become a hazard for our native plants and critters. We see a few holes in our plants' leaves, and we automatically want to spray a pesticide. We want to protect our blueberries from the birds, and we cover the plant with large-hole netting.

Search on the internet, and you'll find that these practices are recommended. However, the law of unintended consequences can kick in. We end up harming animals that we had no idea we were harming. Let's talk about things we do that inadvertently have negative impacts and what we can do instead.

Exclusion netting used on fruiting bushes can be a problem. Most netting is flexible with large holes. Birds can get their feet or wings caught in the netting. Even if you find and release the birds, the stress can still kill the bird. Snakes also can get caught in this netting. The solution is to use stiff netting with small holes. If you can stick your finger through the hole, it is too large. Alternately, you can use a very light-weight floating row cover or a large mesh bag to protect your ripening fruit.

Bug zappers are also problematic. Yes, they kill bugs, but they kill the wrong kinds of bugs by the thousands. They are ineffective for mosquitos or other biting insects, but they kill many beneficial insects. And there is a ripple effect. Night-flying moths pollinate such foods as peas and soybeans. These nocturnal pollinators are attracted to the light and killed. Nocturnal insectivores such as bats and nighthawks are also negatively affected when we kill the insects upon which they feed.

We also inadvertently kill the wrong kinds of insects when we use systemic pesticides. A systemic pesticide that kills the chewing or sucking insect making holes or discoloration in leaves will also kill the butterflies, bees, and flower flies that feed on the pollen or nectar.

Rodent poisons are wreaking havoc on birds, mammals, and insects. Compounds known as second-generation rodenticides block the body's ability to clot blood, and the resulting internal bleeding can cause death within days. When predators or scavengers eat the poisoned rodents, they too ingest the poison and sicken.

I often hear people talk about catching a chipmunk or some other animal and releasing it in another area. This is not a good idea. For one thing, other members of the same species are likely to move back in, making the whole exercise useless. The animal released in another area is likely to die as they will be in an unfamiliar area where they do not know sources of food or shelter. Other members of the same species may already exist in the area, and the newly released animal will cause conflict, stress, or even death to those animals. The animal may also try to travel back to its home, potentially becoming a victim of automobiles.

If you feed the birds, do you wash your feeder regularly? Failing to wash your bird feeders and bird baths every couple of weeks can result in the spread of disease since so many birds congregate there.



Clean bird feeders outside with warm, soapy water and soak them in a bleach solution of 9 parts water to 1 part bleach for 10 minutes. (Photo by MSU Extension Service/Adam T. Rohnke)



Red-bellied Woodpecker stuck in a glue trap being transported to the Raven Ridge Wildlife Center in Pennsylvania. [Photo courtesy of: Raven Ridge Wildlife Center in Pennsylvania.](#)

I recently got an email that alerted me to the consequences of using yellow sticky tape on tree trunks. Applying large patches of sticky tape can protect your tree from some insects, such as spongy moth (formerly gypsy moth), and can alert you to the presence of invasive insects, such as the spotted lanternfly. However, birds are attracted by the insects stuck on the sticky tape and get stuck fast. Even when attempts are made to release them, the birds frequently die from the stress. Instead, use a circle trap, a flattened funnel that can be wrapped around a tree (you can find instructions for making a circle trap online). Also beware of using glue traps to capture rodents and insects; unfortunately these traps often catch birds, snakes, lizards, and bats instead.

Being good stewards of our natural world benefits us all. Learn more about the consequences of your actions as they affect other species.

Georgia Master Gardeners: 45 Years of Community Service and Education

By Mary Tucker, Cherokee County Master Gardener

The Georgia Master Gardener program celebrated a milestone in 2024: the 45th anniversary of its founding. In 1979, Master Gardeners in Georgia began serving their neighbors and communities by providing unbiased and science-based horticultural information and by volunteering through various educational gardening projects. Throughout the many counties in our state with Master Gardener programs, you'll find these volunteers answering homeowners' questions, teaching seminars, conducting workshops, educating school children, and constructing community gardens. In all these endeavors, the focus is always on education that is based on applied research. And the outcome is always a more knowledgeable gardening community.



Photo pollinator census count courtesy Shannon Bellew, Cherokee Tribune

The official title of a Master Gardener in Georgia is “University of Georgia Master Gardener Extension Volunteer,” a lengthy name that serves to impart a bit of history about the program. “Extension” refers to the fact that the program is part of the Cooperative Extension Service (CES), a nationwide function of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) in partnership with universities such as UGA.

The CES has a long history that has ties to Georgia, for it was created in 1914 through the Smith-Lever Act, which was co-authored by Senator Hoke Smith of Georgia and Senator Frank Lever of South Carolina. The purpose of this legislation was to assist farmers and rural Americans by providing outreach programs that share useful, practical, and research-based information on agriculture, vocation, and home economics. CES programs are administered by county Extension Agents, employees of a state's land-grant university.

As the United States became more urbanized, the emphasis of CES programs expanded beyond agricultural concerns to include homeowner gardening and landscaping issues. In the early 1970s, Dr. David Gibby, the Extension Agent in Tacoma, Washington, was getting overwhelmed answering gardening questions from homeowners. He had seen how effective volunteerism was in other aspects of life, so he was inspired to recruit volunteers to assist with this dilemma.

These volunteers in the state of Washington were trained in subject matters of interest to the urban and suburban homeowner, such as the culture of ornamental plants, maintenance of lawns, and the growing of fruits and vegetables for home consumption. These volunteers were called “Master Gardeners.”

This program was so successful that it inspired other states to implement the Master Gardener program. Today, nearly all 50 states, as well as the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, have a Master Gardener program. Similar programs are also offered in Canada, the United Kingdom, and other countries.

The program will vary somewhat depending on the needs of the locale, but the hallmarks of the Master Gardener program are always education and volunteerism. Once a Master Gardener has been trained, he or she is required to volunteer by serving the gardening public a certain number of hours each year in order to maintain the Master Gardener status.

Statewide in Georgia there are now more than 2000 active Master Gardeners. In 2023, these dedicated people contributed close to 160,000 volunteer hours that benefited communities throughout the state. The monetary value of that service equates to over \$5 million.

Our local Master Gardener program in Cherokee County was formed in 1995, so for almost 30 years this group has been a proud part of national Master Gardener history. The Cherokee County Master Gardeners offer a wide range of activities to serve and educate the public. These activities include seminars and hands-on classes, plant clinics, plant sales, and an “Ask a Cherokee County Master Gardener” helpline on the CCMG website: <https://cherokeemastergardeners.com/>.

The CCMG newsletter has been in publication almost as long as the group has been in existence. “Gardening with the Masters” is full of timely articles written by local Master Gardeners. The public is invited to subscribe to the newsletter and to view archived issues on the CCMG website. To further expand educational outreach, Master Gardeners also write on a regular basis for local newspapers and community magazines.

Plants with Lovely Color to Beat the Winter Doldrums

By Ashley Frasca, Cherokee County Master Gardener

When the dog days of summer fizzle out, I long for fall color to last long past when it does. While enjoying the autumnal pigments of falling leaves, I also carry a dread for when the trees are nothing but branched silhouettes in the winter.

When there's a bland stillness around us in the landscape, pops of bright color this time of year excite a gardener's longing for the pastel blooms of spring. To tide us over, let us appreciate these plants for the color they provide in an otherwise bleak winterscape.

These cold months are the ideal time to install new trees and shrubs in the landscape. Consider the hundreds of Japanese maples available, and they are not just admired for their fall leaf color. Varieties like coral bark (*Acer palmatum* 'Sango-kaku') and yellow coral bark (*Acer palmatum* 'Bijou') make a statement with their brightly colored bark, which is hard to miss once the leaves have fallen. And these types are comfortable in smaller spaces.



Photo yellow coral bark *Acer palmatum* courtesy Ashley Frasca

When the blades of ornamental grasses are dull and many shrubs have shed their leaves, red-twig dogwood (*Cornus sericea*) shines bright! Those bare, red branches give way to spring blossoms and delicate berries in fall. These can tolerate full to partial sun.



Shrub and flower *Camellia sasanqua* 'Green 94-035' October Magic® Orchid™ courtesy Jennifer Ruscilli

A prolifically flowering camellia (*Camellia* spp.) can stop traffic in the dead of winter. Tucked within the shiny, deep green evergreen leaves are bright, rose-like flowers that seem to last forever. When including both sasanqua and japonica varieties of camellia, one can enjoy flowers for at least six months out of the year! For a more extensive look at camellias, see Mary Schuster's article, "Camellia: A Three-Season Beauty" in the December 2022/January 2023 issue of this newsletter, which you can find archived at the CCMG website: <https://cherokeemastergardeners.com/>.

An evergreen great for shade, and for pollinators looking for food in the winter, is mahonia. The long, yellow blooms are hard for anyone to miss! A variety that is all the rage right now is *Mahonia eurybracteata* 'Soft Caress', aptly named because it lacks holly-like sharp edges.

Gardeners with limited space can still enjoy hedges that stay compact, like Pancake™ Arborvitae (*Thuja occidentalis* 'Concesarini'). This evergreen shrub sports blue-green color in winter and does not require any pruning or shaping.



Thuja occidentalis 'Concesarini' jcr.ncsu.edu

Finally, a plant to introduce at a holiday gathering as an unforgettable hostess gift is a hellebore (*Helleborus* spp.). I recently gave a hellebore, or Lenten rose, to a friend, and it received rave reviews! This perennial plant will show outside every month of the year, as it keeps its thick, green foliage year-round. It grows well in areas where hostas and ferns thrive.

The faded, antique colored flowers of hellebores are beautiful against a winter landscape. Most bloom between January and March. An added bonus is that the blooms make great cut flowers for indoor arrangements.

Let these many colors of winter perk up your landscape and beat the winter doldrums as you await the arrival of spring.



Helleborus orientalis ncsu.edu



Photo Master Gardener, Nancy McCarthy holding one of the vegetables grown at the "Plant A Row for the Hungry" garden

One of the hallmark projects of the CCMGs is the Demonstration Garden at the Senior Center on Univeter Road in Canton. Here the public not only learns about plants that perform best in our climate but can actually observe them growing. Various sections of the garden highlight specific themes, such as heirloom plants, herbs, plants that benefit pollinators, or flowers for cutting.

The Master Gardeners are also involved with the maintenance and development of a demonstration garden at the Backyard Agricultural Education Station at Cherokee Veterans Park on Highway 20 in Canton. This garden was developed by the County Extension Office in 2022 and concentrates on the growing of fruits and vegetables.

The CCMGs maintain several "Plant-a-Row for the Hungry" gardens that donate fresh food to local food banks. Classes are also held at these gardens to educate the public about how to grow their own produce.

"To stimulate the love for and increase the knowledge of gardening and to voluntarily and enthusiastically share this knowledge with others."

These additional photos reflect many more ways the Master Gardeners have shared their passion along with educating the public over the years.

SEMINARS



Seed starting seminar, courtesy Jennifer Ruscilli

PLANT CLINICS



Photo Master Gardener, Veronica Steffensmeier educating the public with the Plant Clinic at the local farmers market

DEMONSTRATION CLASSES



Shrub pruning basics with roses courtesy Marcia Winchester

PLANT SALES



Plant sale courtesy Jennifer Ruscilli

Be on the Lookout! Invasive Spotted Lanternfly Detected in Georgia

In mid-November, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) confirmed the first detection of Spotted Lanternfly (*Lycorma delicatula*) in Fulton County, Georgia. The Spotted Lanternfly (or SLF) is a non-native and invasive planthopper that poses a serious threat to agriculture, which is Georgia's number one industry. This pest was first detected in Pennsylvania in 2014, and it has now spread to 17 states, primarily in the eastern part of the U.S.



Photo adult lanternfly with wings spread

Georgia's Agriculture Commissioner, Tyler Harper, is urging everyone to be on the lookout for this pest. "We urge anyone who sees the Spotted Lanternfly in their area to document it, report it, and kill it. Controlling the spread of the Spotted Lanternfly is our best strategy for safeguarding Georgia's agriculture industry, and we are asking for the public's help in this effort."



Photo of deposited egg masses on a barrel

Spotted Lanternflies have piercing-sucking mouthparts that pierce through bark to feed on vegetation. These pests have a broad range of hosts, including ornamental and woody plants. They are a special threat to a variety of agricultural crops, particularly grapes.

In late fall, females lay egg masses that contain dozens of eggs. These eggs are deposited on almost any surface, including trees, outdoor furniture, grills, etc. They may also be laid on non-stationary items such as rail cars, trailers, and shipping containers, which leads to expansive spread of the population.



Photo adult lanternfly

Learn to identify these egg masses and crush them to prevent hatching.

To combat this threat, the Georgia Department of Agriculture is encouraging Georgians to learn to identify the Spotted Lanternfly in all of its life stages and to take immediate action if they spot one of these pests:

- Take a clear picture of the pest.
- Kill it.
- Report your sighting using the online reporting tool at <https://www.gainvasives.org/slf/report/>.



Photo juveniles

For more information:

Georgia Dept. of Agriculture: <https://www.agr.georgia.gov/pr/invasive-spotted-lanternfly-detected-georgia>

Georgia Invasive Species Task Force: <https://www.gainvasives.org/slf/>

UGA Extension Viticulture Blog: <https://site.extension.uga.edu/viticulture/2024/11/spotted-lanternfly-frequently-asked-questions/>

*All photos courtesy Lawrence Barringer, Bugwood.org



By Mary Tucker, *Master Gardener*

Did you realize that asparagus is dioecious, meaning that male and female flowers are borne on separate plants? The female plants produce the seeds, and the energy that this takes may result in a lower yield from the plant.

In addition, female plants may have a shorter lifespan. Consequently, many gardeners prefer to plant all-male hybrids; others prefer heirloom or open-pollinated varieties that will be a mix of male and female plants.



Photo asparagus CANVA



Asparagus seeds CANVA

Another advantage to hybrid asparagus plants is that there are varieties that have been bred to be resistant to diseases, such as rust and fusarium. Some varieties are also more cold tolerant or heat tolerant than others, so it's advised to plant asparagus that is most suited to your particular climate.

The seeds that the female asparagus plants bear are held in small, round, pea-like fruits that appear on the plants in late summer to early fall. Each fruit holds three to four seeds. These fruits turn from green to bright red as they mature. If left on the plants, they may reseed into the garden. If this is allowed to happen, the bed may become overcrowded. Note that these fruits are inedible and can cause digestive problems if ingested.

DECEMBER GARDENING TIPS



Photo courtesy <https://ugaurbanag.com/growing-pansies/>

ORNAMENTALS

- 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. **To know more about pansies click [HERE](#).**
- 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. **For more pruning info, click [HERE](#).**
- 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. **For more info on landscape planning, click [HERE](#).**

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

- 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°, **For more info on home orchard pruning click [HERE](#).**
- 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.
- 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. **For more raised bed info, click [HERE](#).**
- Pick mummied fruit off trees and rake up leaves under fruit trees to remove insects and diseases.
- To protect winter veggies from extreme cold, apply a thin layer of mulch or cover with a row cover. **For mulching info click [HERE](#).**

DECEMBER MISCELLANEOUS

- Keep all indoor plants away from drafts and direct heat sources - inexpensive plastic draft hoods help redirect heat away from plants. **For more info on houseplants and winter care, click [HERE](#).**
- 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.
- To prevent freezing, cover spigots with winter covers.



Photo raised bed at Encompass Ministries 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. **For more info on camellia care click [HERE](#).**
- January is a good month to plant trees. Do not add fertilizer to planting hole - it could burn the roots. **For soil preparation and planting info click [HERE](#).**
- 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.



UCA1436148
Camellia flower blight rapidly turns flowers brown. Bugwood.org


- Prune apple and pear trees. Remove dead limbs first, then the pencil-sized, vertical "water sprouts". **For a pruning and training factsheet click [HERE](#).**
- 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.

JANUARY 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. **For care on holiday and gift plants click [HERE](#).**

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. **For dormant grape pruning click [HERE](#).**
- Don't plant strawberries or figs until February or March. **For home gardening with strawberries click [HERE](#). For home gardening with figs click [HERE](#).**
- 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. **For more info click [HERE](#).**
- Spray dormant oil on fruit trees, per label instructions.

	RAINFALL COMPARISONS					
	Cherokee County			State Wide		
	Sept 2024	Oct 2024	YTD 2024	Sept 2024	Oct 2024	YTD 2024
Actual	9.3	0.0	43.8	9.6	0.0	51.0
Normal	4.0	4.8	46.8	3.7	3.0	40.5
Deviation	5.3	-4.8	-3.0	5.9	-3.0	10.5

Recipes

Homemade Pizza

Submitted by Maurya Jones

Ingredients

1 dough ball or dough sheet (can be found in deli section of most grocery stores)
1 jar of pizza sauce (12-14 ounces; I prefer Botticelli pizza sauce)
1/2 lb. freshly ground Italian sausage
Package of sliced pepperoni
8 oz. ricotta cheese
6 fresh basil leaves

Instructions:

1. Roll out dough ball or dough sheet and place on pizza stone
2. Pour a little more than half jar of pizza sauce on top of dough
3. Brown sausage, drain, and spread on top of sauce
4. Place pepperoni slices on top next
5. Place basil leaves on top
6. Stir ricotta and place 6 dollops of it on top

What makes this homemade pizza so good is the mix of fresh ingredients and ricotta and basil leaves.



Shrimp Creole

Submitted by Maurya Jones

This delicious pumpkin cheese cake is perfect for the holidays. Makes 8 servings.

Ingredients

2 tbsp. butter
1/2 cup minced onion
1 bay leaf, crushed
1/4 cup diced celery
1 tsp. minced parsley
1/2 cup chopped green pepper
1/8 tsp. cayenne pepper
1 tsp. salt
1 6 oz. can tomato paste
2-1/2 cups water
1 lb. small or medium fresh shrimp

Instructions:

1. Boil shrimp until done; set aside. If desired, season the shrimp as it cooks, either with Bay Seasoning or with a mix of salt, black pepper, and cayenne pepper.
2. Melt butter over low heat. Add onion and cook until yellow.
3. Blend in remaining ingredients except shrimp. Cook slowly, stirring occasionally, about 30 minutes.
4. Stir in shrimp. Serve over hot cooked rice.

Serve with green salad.



Photos Maurya Jones



UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA
EXTENSION
Cherokee County

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

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



<https://cherokeemastergardeners.com>
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