

# Gardening With The Masters

Growing, Gardening and Gaining Knowledge  
June/July 2025

## Remembering James Cleon Lawson December 14, 1925 – March 28, 2025

With a heavy yet grateful heart, we share the passing of James Cleon Lawson, founder of Lawson's Nursery in Ball Ground, Georgia. For nearly four decades, Mr. Lawson cultivated not only trees but also a deep and lasting connection with people in our community and across the country.

I first met Mr. Lawson in the spring of 2015, shortly after beginning my work as an Extension agent in Cherokee County. Having just purchased a property with 30 aging heirloom fruit trees, I was eager to learn more about these unfamiliar varieties that bore little resemblance to what I found in stores. Mr. Lawson welcomed my curiosity—and shared more than I ever could have hoped to learn.

His knowledge was truly encyclopedic. Whether discussing Native American history, bluegrass music, hunting, his Christian faith, or the history of North Georgia, Mr. Lawson spoke with insight, clarity, and an extraordinary memory for detail. Of course, his greatest passion was fruit—especially apples. Our visits often stretched into long conversations, usually joined by neighbors or friends who happened to see his four-wheeler parked outside the old nursery building. That four-wheeler was a local signpost: if it was out front, the door was open for a visit. Even phone calls were part of the rhythm—many from customers in other states who had purchased trees from him decades earlier.

Mr. Lawson's love for fruit trees began in childhood. His grandparents ran a country store on Yellow Creek Road, where traveling tree peddlers occasionally passed through. One day, his grandmother gave him some money to buy trees of his own. He planted them on the top side of a terrace on the family cotton field. These first trees all ended up being the "Rambo" variety despite the labels indicating otherwise. His early experiments with grafting—claiming he first tried by attaching a tomato to jimsonweed—hinted at the lifelong passion that was to come.

The nursery began as a side project while Mr. Lawson supported his family through other work: in the marble quarries to the north, raising broiler chickens, and even trying his hand at greenhouse tomatoes. But as interest in his grafted trees grew, the nursery blossomed into a full-time business. Eventually growing to a point where he would set out around 20,000 trees a year. Each one grafted by hand in the old nursery building.

With the help of his wife Bernice and sister Blanche, Lawson's Nursery became a name known well beyond Ball Ground. His trees have been planted in every U.S. state—and as far away as Pakistan. His influence, like his trees, took root far and wide.

Mr. Lawson leaves behind a legacy of generosity, knowledge, and community. He will be deeply missed—but the trees he planted, in soil and in spirit, will continue to grow for generations.

Josh Fuder

Mr. James Cleon Lawson (Left) standing with Josh Fuder, Cherokee County Extension Agent

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# Assassin Bugs

By Judy Lester, Cherokee County Master Gardener

Step out into your yard and breathe in the scents and sights of spring. Life is peaceful, right? No! It's a wild world out there! Assassin bugs, ambush bugs, predatory stink bugs, and pirate bugs may be lurking in your yard, but have no fear. These are the good bugs! Appearance and names don't necessarily tell the goodness or badness of an insect.

Consider assassin bugs. These insects are true bugs (order: Hemiptera), members of the family Reduviidae. There are many, many species of assassin bugs, so I will discuss them as a large family and share their general characteristics.



Assassin bug, adult (*Zelus* spp.),  
Russ Ottens, University of Georgia,  
[Bugwood.org](http://Bugwood.org)



Assassin bug, nymph (*Sinea* spp.),  
David Cappaert, [Bugwood.org](http://Bugwood.org)

With a name like assassin bug, you may want to know what it looks like, just to be on the safe side. The adult bug will have a short, stout, curved beak that is usually tucked into a groove between the front legs. The antennae are long, and the head is elongated. The legs are long and gangly. The wings cover the abdomen. Many, but not all assassin bugs have long, oval-shaped bodies. These bugs' size ranges from about 1/3 of an inch to over 1 inch long. The assassin bug nymph has a similar body to the adult bug, only it lacks wings. Nymphs often have spines on their front legs or thorax.

Assassin bugs are unlikely to attack people unless the bugs are handled roughly. In this case a person might receive a painful bite, but it is not life-threatening. One exception to this general guide is described later in this article.

If the assassin bug does not assassinate people, what does it assassinate and how does it do the deed? The assassin bug grasps its prey with its front legs. Next it swings its beak up from under its body and inserts it into its prey. The assassin bug injects digestive enzymes into its prey through its beak. The digestive enzymes paralyze the prey. Then, true to its name, the assassin bug sucks up the digested insides of its prey, thus killing it. As I said, it's a wild world out there!

Assassin bugs feed on caterpillars, beetles, hornworms, and leafhoppers. Fields, meadows, bushes, and gardens are home to assassin bugs and their prey. Assassin bugs are natural enemies of pests found on important Georgia crops such as blueberries and pecans as well as pests found in our fruit and vegetable gardens. That is why a bug with a scary name and lifestyle is considered a good bug.

But, you may ask, are all assassin bugs good all the time? Generally speaking, assassin bugs are a beneficial influence on harmful insect pests. Every hornworm eaten in my garden is one less hornworm dining on my tomatoes! However, there are specific exceptions to the beneficial descriptions of assassin bugs. Perhaps you have seen one of the larger types of assassin bugs, the wheel bug. It is grey, and it gets its name from the large semicircle of spines resembling a cog wheel found on its thorax. The wheel bug can inflict a painful bite, but the bite is not life-threatening to people. It is a helpful predator, but I do not advise handling it.



Wheel bug, adult (*Arilus cristatus*),  
Joseph Berger, [Bugwood.org](http://Bugwood.org)

Assassin bugs are sometimes confused with their "kissing cousin," the kissing bug. Kissing bugs are in the insect family Reduviidae, but they are members of the genus *Tritoma*. In the southwestern United States and Central America kissing bugs may spread Chagas' disease, a form of sleeping sickness. However, kissing bugs are not a public health concern in Georgia.

Assassin bugs are good bugs! They, along with minute pirate bugs, damsel bugs, and predatory stink bugs, prey on pest insects, helping to control the pests without pesticides. Most pesticides are not selective; they kill good bugs as well as bad bugs. Give these helpful predatory insects a chance to keep their prey, our garden pests, in check.

## References:

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# Summer Lawn Care Basics

By Ashley Frasca, Cherokee County Master Gardener

This is the time of year when I and others start getting those homeowner questions about lawns! Dead spots, insect damage, fungus, and other oddities are being observed and stressed over right now. But don't make a mad dash to the nursery or big box store just yet.

Thank Mother Nature for the rise of turfgrass diseases this time of year. Generally, favorable conditions under which fungal diseases thrive are warm temperatures and foliar wetness, be it from repeated rains, dew, over irrigation, or high humidity. To properly treat the issue, a correct diagnosis needs to be made. Bring a sample to a county extension agent, who will be happy to take a closer look with a microscope. Also, UGA Extension has a publication for the identification and control of turfgrass diseases. And if these don't match the symptoms, it could perhaps be insect damage or poor fertility and/or maintenance.

For anyone investing in healthy turf at home, a soil test should be taken and submitted to UGA's Soil, Plant & Water Laboratory. This cheap and easy test reveals everything about the soil's nutrient value. Then planning, planting, and fertilizing become much easier to do! Soil test kits can be obtained from your local County Extension Office.



Dollar spot [ncsu.edu](https://www.ncsu.edu)

## Here are some basic habits to keep in mind this summer when tending to turf:

- All turfgrasses like sun! Give up trying to grow a lawn in a shaded area. However, UGA Turfgrass Specialist Clint Waltz points out that there are some grass species that handle limited light ('shaded' if you like) environments better than others. Visit UGA's [Georgia Turf](https://www.georgiaturf.com) for more information.
- Established lawns generally prefer one inch of water per week.
- Water deeply and in the early morning to avoid evaporation and to allow the grass blades to dry out.
- Pay attention to irrigation system settings. Don't let the system run when large amounts of rainfall are in the forecast. And ensure enough water is being delivered to be beneficial.
- Mowing frequency and height are important. Proper frequency is timed such that no more than one-third of the grass blade height is cut in one mowing. Tall fescue is generally kept at 2 to 3 inches tall, and bermuda and zoysia are best growing 1 to 2 inches high.
- Keep up with these chores:
  - ◊ Aeration, when the grass is in active growth
  - ◊ Fertilizing when necessary
  - ◊ Applying preemergent herbicide at least twice per year (by mid-March to prevent summer weeds and early September to prevent winter weeds)

## When it comes to summer sod installation, Jutt Howard with [NG Turf](https://www.ngturf.com) has these helpful tips:

- Do your best to install sod the day it's delivered. Remove the first six pieces of sod off the top and water them deeply. They're the most likely to be desiccated from transport.
- Find a local, fresh supplier of sod. It's best if the sod is harvested late in the afternoon for next-day delivery.
- Don't wait until you're finished installing the sod to water it. Irrigate as the sod is going down on the ground.
- Cool the ground with water before you put the sod down. Lightly hit dusty areas of dirt with the hose. Jutt says this ensures that the roots of the sod make contact with the ground when it's much cooler.

## Resources:

For more information about Turfgrass Diseases in Georgia: Identification and Control, click [HERE](#).



By Master Gardener, Mary Tucker

Did you know that the University of Georgia is a leader in the development, breeding, and testing of turfgrasses? A warm-season turfgrass breeding program was started at UGA in the 1950s, focusing on the development of cultivars of bermuda, centipede, zoysia, and seashore paspalum.

UGA's turfgrass work takes place at several of UGA's campuses. In Griffin you will find the Turfgrass Research Building with laboratories, offices, classrooms, greenhouses, and an extensive staff. Staff members include entomologists, plant pathologists, and agronomists. The grounds also feature turfgrass research plots where cultivars are evaluated and studied. The Tifton campus is heavily involved in a warm-season turf breeding program. Many of the cultivars are named in Tifton's honor, such as Tifway 419 (a bermuda sod), Tifton 9 (a pasture grass for horses), and TifEagle (specifically designed for golf course greens). The main UGA campus in Athens also has facilities tailored to turfgrass teaching and research.



UGA Turfgrass Research Facility,  
More info, click [GeorgiaTurf](https://www.georgiaturf.com)

Grasses that were developed at UGA can be found carpeting the ground around the globe in venues such as sports fields, golf courses, commercial settings, and residential lawns. In fact, it's possible that the turfgrass in your own yard is a UGA variety.

# Do You Have a Rabbit Problem In Your Garden?

By Diane Walton, Cherokee County Master Gardener

Rabbits are crepuscular, which means they are usually active at dawn or dusk. They sleep during the day, so you may never see them destroying your garden. Rabbits are active year-round, so they can be garden pests in any season. Rabbits can have between one to seven litters a year, with an average of five babies (called kits) to a litter. The mother can get pregnant immediately after giving birth. Babies are ready to leave the nest after two to three weeks.

If you never see these animals, where do they live? Usually they live in brush piles, tall grassy areas, or under low-growing shrubs. They may also burrow in the ground making tunnels.



## **Some signs that rabbits have been forging on your new plants are:**

- Plants look like they have been trimmed with pruners (you may have blamed your landscaper). If the leaf or stem has a clean edge, it was probably a rabbit having dinner. Rabbits have upper and lower incisors and also a big appetite. Rabbits can wipe out plantings overnight with their incessant munching.
- The young tender plants that just started to grow are gone. Just as we like fresh veggies and fruit, the rabbit also likes fresh new growth on plants. The new little plants do not have a chance, and they just disappear as the rabbits eat them down to the ground.
- Hoses or drip hoses have been chewed. Squirrels and other rodents can get blamed for this, but it is more likely a rabbit looking for water.
- You spot pea-sized brown/black animal droppings. These are easy to see as rabbit droppings can be anywhere in the yard.
- There are tufts of hair or a spot where a small animal has been digging. Sometimes rabbit hair will get caught on a shrub or thorny bush.
- In the winter the rabbits may gnaw on the bark of young trees and shrubs. There will be small teeth marks on the lower portion of the trunk.

## **What kind of plants do rabbits like to eat?**

What does a rabbit eat? They will eat just about anything in the garden that doesn't have a scent that deters them. In the spring and summer, they eat more flowers and vegetables, and in the fall and winter they eat woody plants like twigs and bark.

Rabbits are very unpredictable in what they will eat. Plants they may not eat one year will disappear the next. Baby bunnies will eat anything because they don't yet know what they like or don't like. If they are hungry and there is no other food source available, any plant is in danger.



## **Plants that are unpalatable to rabbits:**

Using some plants in your garden that deter rabbits is the most consistent way to rid your garden of rabbits. Plants that have a strong scent and can mask the aroma of flowers have been known to repel rabbits. Some plants that may work for you are lavender, rosemary, thyme, sage, oregano, catmint, alliums, marigolds, and mint. Many strong-scented plants are herbs, so planting herbs among your flowers will release a constant scent. Pruning the herbs will help to ensure the scent is strong since new growth has a stronger scent. Plants that have fuzzy leaves or aromatic leaves also can be used, such as Russian sage or lamb's ear.



\*All photos courtesy of CANVA





# Small Yard? Think Layers: Groundcovers, Vines, and Bulbs

By Carolyn Puckett, Cherokee County Master Gardener

In the previous two newsletter articles on plants for small yards, we recommended trees, shrubs, and perennials that do well in Cherokee County. This article lists groundcovers, vines, and bulbs you can use to take advantage of the ground layer and vertical layers in your small yard. If you see a plant described as a “nativar” this means that it is a cultivar of a native plant.

Several of the perennials listed in the April/May 2025 edition are spreaders that can be used as taller groundcovers, especially if you are wanting to convert part of your lawn into a meadow-like feature. However, you may have areas where you want lower-height groundcovers with foliage that hugs the ground. Many groundcovers will grow in the dappled light beneath the taller plants. It is best to use multiple species in an area rather than having a monoculture of all one species. Monocultures are more susceptible to insects and diseases. Listed below are some choices. The sizes are stated as height times width, with the height measurement including the temporary flowers, which often stand several inches taller than the more-persistent foliage.

Vines are another form of plant that can be ideal for a small yard, using the vertical layer by growing up a trellis, along a fence, through shrubs, or up trees—or even creeping across the ground as a groundcover.

I use bulbs to provide color in late winter and early spring, when not much else is blooming. Most of those listed are spring ephemerals, and other perennial plants fill the space the remainder of the growing season. In summer, I use *Caladium* ‘Spring Fling’ to fill in spaces, especially in that difficult area that gets morning shade and afternoon sun.

In addition, we provide some advice on plants that you should avoid, as they are overly aggressive or spread into wild areas, out-competing our native plants.

## LOWER-HEIGHT GROUNDCOVERS

### Sun-loving groundcovers

*Antennaria plantaginifolia* (pussy toes). Native. Evergreen. 6” x 24”

*Calylophus serrulatus* ‘Prairie Lode’ (western sundrops). Clumper with spreading foliage. Nativar. 8” x 15”

*Conoclinium coelestinum* (syn. *Eupatorium coelestinum*) ‘Wayside’ (dwarf blue mist plant). Nativar. Aggressive spreader but great late-season blooms for pollinators. 15” x 20”

*Coreopsis auriculata* ‘Nana’ (dwarf mouse-eared tickseed). Nativar. Evergreen. 8” x 8”

*Dianthus gratianopolitanus* ‘Firewitch and ‘Paint the Town Magenta’ (cheddar pink). Long-blooming cultivars. Evergreen. 1’ x 1’

*Geranium* cultivars ‘Azure Rush’ or ‘Rozanne’. Long blooming without deadheading. (Note, these are true perennial geraniums rather than the annual *Pelargoniums* sold as geraniums). 15” x 30”

*Geranium macrorrhizum* (big-root geranium). Several cultivars. Perennial. Evergreen. 1.5’ x 2’

*Origanum majorana* (sweet marjoram). Edible herb. 1’ x 2’

*Origanum vulgare* (Greek oregano). Edible herb. 1’ x 2’

*Oxalis regnellii triangularis* (purple oxalis). 6” x 18”

*Phlox subulata* (moss phlox). Blooms very early. Native. Evergreen. 4” x 36”

*Sedum* spp. (stonecrop). Many cultivars. Evergreen. 3” x 12”

*Stachys byzantina* ‘Big Ears’ aka ‘Helene Von Stein’ (lamb’s ear). Evergreen. 6” x 24”

*Verbena canadensis* (syn. *Glandularia canadensis*) ‘Homestead Purple’. (Rose vervain). Nativar. 1’ x 3’

*Veronica spicata* ‘Moody Blues Deep Blue’ (spike speedwell). Long blooming if deadheaded. Evergreen. 1’ x 2’



Mouse-eared coreopsis (*Coreopsis auriculata*), Hope Duckworth [ncsu.edu](https://ncsu.edu)

### Shade-loving groundcovers

*Antennaria plantaginifolia* (pussy toes). Native. Evergreen. 6” x 24”

*Asarum canadense* (Canadian wild ginger). Native. 6” x 18”

*Campanula poscharskyana* ‘Camgood’. Evergreen. Long bloom period. 6” x 18”

*Carex* ‘Ice Dance’. Evergreen. Spreads moderately. 1’ x 2’

*Chrysogonum virginianum* (green and gold). Native. 4” x 18”

*Chrysogonum virginianum* var. *astrale* (green and gold). Native. 4” x 3’. Longer stolons cover ground fast.

*Erigeron pulchellus* (Robin’s plantain). Native. 1” basal leaves are evergreen. 10” x 24”

*Fragaria virginiana* (wild strawberry). Native. Edible. May go dormant in heat. 4” x 24”

*Lysimachia nummularia* ‘Aurea’ (golden creeping Jenny). Can be aggressive. 4” x 24”

*Mitchella repens* (partridge berry). Native. Evergreen. 1” x 24”

*Phlox stolonifera* (creeping phlox). Native. 6” x 18”

*Saxifraga stolonifera* (strawberry begonia). Evergreen. 6” x 18”

*Sedum ternatum* (woodland stonecrop). Native. Evergreen. 3” x 8”



Green and gold (*Chrysogonum virginianum*), Cathy Dewitt [ncsu.edu](https://ncsu.edu)



Creeping phlox (*Phlox stolonifera*), Michael Wolf, [ncsu.edu](https://ncsu.edu)

Continued on page 7

## Do You Have a Rabbit Problem In Your Garden?... continued from page 4

### Natural Predators–

#### Mother Nature's answer to Rabbits.

Owls, hawks, coyotes, bobcats, and dogs are natural predators for rabbits. Putting fake animals in your yard does not work since stationary objects will not scare the rabbits. Dogs and cats will scare rabbits away, but they need to roam freely, which may not be appropriate in communities where animals must be on a leash or behind a secure fence. Also, rabbits learn quickly how far a dog on a chain can reach.

### Physical Barrier

A fence or netting can be effective in keeping rabbits out of the garden. The fencing must be buried at least 4 to 6 inches below the surface to prevent them from digging under it. The fencing may not be aesthetically appealing in the garden, but it will protect your plants.

### Remove Hiding Places or Habitats

Remove any brush piles or tall grasses in your yard. If rabbits do not have a place to hide during the day, they will leave the area. Rabbits also burrow and live under low growing shrubs such as trailing junipers.

### Trapping

Set up a live trap and bait it with fresh vegetables or fruit to entice them. Once trapped, release the rabbit safely away from your garden.

### Repellants

There are several commercial rabbit repellents available in garden supply stores. Scent repellents such as urine or blood meal can be effective. Read the directions carefully and make sure the repellent does not cause harm to plants in your garden. Also, to work properly many of these repellents must be applied often. and this can be very costly.

Homemade repellents can also be effective. Mix warm water with dish soap, garlic cloves, and hot sauce. Spray this on your plants before sundown. Mixing 1 cup vinegar, 1 cup water, and 2 tablespoons of hot sauce and spraying this around the perimeter of your yard will keep rabbits from entering your yard. Any of these repellents must be frequently applied since the scent wears off quickly and will also be washed away with rain.

Taste repellents work by making plants taste unpleasant to rabbits. Using cayenne pepper, soap, or human hair will work if applied directly on the plant or around the garden perimeter.

### Scare Tactics (some good/some bad)

A good old-fashioned scarecrow can be a visual deterrent to help keep rabbits away. These are easy to make with some old clothes and a hat. Shiny objects such as old CDs or aluminum foil can be hung near the garden. Make sure these objects move with the air to assist in scaring away the rabbits. Of course, the rabbit may be smart enough to eventually realize that these deterrents are not a danger.

Loud noises can scare rabbits. Wind chimes are the best as the noise is not as disturbing to humans but will be to the rabbits. Once again, the rabbits may adapt to the sound, and it will no longer work to send them away.

Motion-activated devices, such as sprinklers or lights, can also work well in the garden. These devices turn on when a rabbit enters the area, scaring it away. Motion-detection lights in the garden only work after it is dark, so rabbits eating at dusk or dawn may not be affected.

Any one of these tactics or a combination of several may work for you. Any solution to your rabbit problem will likely take a lot of time and be an ongoing effort unless you are able to extract the rabbits from your area permanently. My resolution to the problem is planting several herbs throughout the garden. This has helped, but the rabbits still seem to find their way around them at times. Good luck with your "Battle with the Rabbits."



Herb collection courtesy CANVA





## Small Yard? Think Layers: Groundcovers, Vines, and Bulbs... continued from page 5

### VINES

#### On a regular trellis

*Clematis* spp. (Cultivars 'Nelly Moser' and 'Guernsey Cream' bloom well in shade).

*Rosa* (rose) climbing cultivars.

#### On a very sturdy trellis or fence

*Clematis virginiana* (virgin's bower). Native. Sun to part shade. 15' to 20' long.

*Gelsemium sempervirens* (Carolina jessamine). Native. Blooms very early. Evergreen. Sun to part shade. 10' to 20' long and 20' to 30' wide.

*Lonicera sempervirens* (coral honeysuckle). Native. Loved by hummingbirds. Sun to part shade. 10' to 20' long.

*Wisteria frutescens* (American wisteria). Native. Sun. 15' to 40' long.



Coral honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*), Jim Robbins [ncsu.edu](https://ncsu.edu)

#### Up a tree

*Hydrangea anomala* subspecies *petiolaris* (climbing hydrangea). Part to full shade. Can grow 50' tall.

*Parthenocissus quinquefolia* (Virginia creeper). Native. Good for wildlife. Sun to shade. Can also serve as a groundcover but will climb any upright plants it encounters. 30' to 50' long.



Climbing hydrangea (*Hydrangea anomala*), Sonya [ncsu.edu](https://ncsu.edu)

### BULBS

*Anemone blanda* (windflower). Spring ephemeral. Self-sows nicely.

*Caladium* 'Spring Fling' (angel wings). Takes sun or shade. Plant early May. Dig bulbs in early fall and store over the winter. Good foliage-color plant for shade.

*Fritillaria meleagris* (guinea hen). A checkered flower! Spring ephemeral. Self-sows lightly.

*Iris*, various species and cultivars, some for sun and some for shade. Siberian iris are tough.

*Mertensia virginica* (Virginia bluebells). Spring ephemeral. Native. Self-sows nicely.

*Narcissus*, many cultivars (daffodil).



Virginia bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*), Rachel Arnold [ncsu.edu](https://ncsu.edu)

## AVOID THESE AGGRESSIVE, NON-NATIVE INVASIVE PLANTS

We like our landscapes to look complete, even though it normally takes plants until their third year in the ground to start filling out well. It is easy to be tempted by aggressive plants that seem to fill in spaces quickly. However, these plants continue to grow and spread even after the space allotted them has been filled. It is best to avoid the following spreaders:

*Ajuga reptans* (bugle weed).

*Ampelopsis glandulosa* var. *brevipedunculata* (porcelain berry).

*Euonymus fortunei* (winter creeper).

*Ficus pumila* (creeping fig).

*Hedera helix* (English ivy).

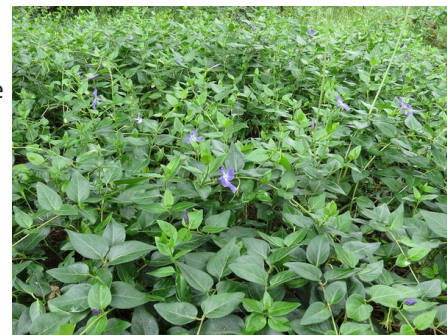
*Lonicera japonica* (Japanese honeysuckle).

*Lonicera maackii* (amur honeysuckle).

*Vinca major* and *V. minor* (periwinkle).

*Wisteria floribunda* (Japanese wisteria).

*Wisteria sinensis* (Chinese wisteria).



Periwinkle (*Vinca major*) Donald Hobern [ncsu.edu](https://ncsu.edu)

Of course, all the plants we have recommended for small yards will be equally happy in larger landscapes. The plants we have listed in this and the previous two "Small Yard? Think Layers" articles are all ones that currently thrive in my Cherokee County yard. I hope you give some of them a try in your own yard.

Many of the above plants will be available for sale at the Cherokee County Master Gardener fall sale on Saturday, September 6, from 9 to 12, at the Senior Center at 1001 Univeter Road, Canton. There are also demonstration gardens at the Senior Center where you can see the plants growing.

For more information about the plants listed above, see:

- Clemson University <https://hgic.clemson.edu/>
- North Carolina State University (NCSU) <https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu>
- University of Georgia native plant lists. There are publications that support all of these Small Yard articles. Click [HERE](#) for part I that refers to woody vines, trees and shrubs.

# JUNE GARDENING TIPS

## FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

- Strawberries picked early in the day keep best. Do not wash or stem berries until ready to use. Store berries in covered containers in the refrigerator.
- Set young melons and cantaloupes atop tin cans or flat rocks – they'll ripen faster, be sweeter and have less insect damage than those left on the ground.
- Yellow crook-neck squash tastes best when 4-7 inches long. Pick when pale yellow (rather than golden) and before skin hardens. **For info, click [HERE](#).**
- Remove cucumbers by turning fruits parallel to the vine and giving a quick snap. This prevents vine damage and results in a clean break. **For info, click [HERE](#).**
- Stop cutting asparagus in mid to late June when spears become thin. After the last cutting is made, fertilize by broadcasting a 10-10-10 formula at the rate of 2 lbs per 100 sq. ft. Allow the tops to grow during the summer to store food in the roots for the crop next spring.
- Corn needs water at two crucial times: when the tassels at the top are beginning to show and when the silk is beginning to show on the ear. If weather is dry at these times, you will need to water the corn. **For info on growing corn, click [HERE](#).**
- If weed plants are mature, weed your garden early in the morning when moisture is present to prevent the seed heads from shattering and dropping weed seeds in the garden. Hold as much of the seed heads in your hand and do not shake off extra soil as it may scatter weed seeds.



Photo taken at the Sr. Center Demo garden, courtesy John Ruscilli, during the 2019 pollinator census count.

## JUNE MISCELLANEOUS

- To protect bees that pollinate many of our crop plants, spray pesticides in the evening after bees have returned to their homes.
- The best time to harvest most herbs is just before flowering when the leaves contain the maximum essential oils. Cut herbs early on a sunny day. Herbs are best if watered the day before to wash off the foliage. **For info, click [HERE](#).**



UGA2169035

Like a mountain path, the narrow squiggles are characteristic trails left by a group of insects known as leaf miners. Special-Lisa Ames, UGA

## ORNAMENTALS

- Use pliers to pull up tree seedlings after a rain when soil is moist. Grip the stem at the soil line; twist and pull straight up. Watering deeply the day before pulling weeds will make the job easier.
- Climbing roses don't really climb – they have long canes that require support. You will need to loosely tie the canes to trellises with broad strips of material or foam covered wire. Do not use wire as it can damage the cane. **For rose culture info, click [HERE](#).**
- Miniature roses can be propagated from stem cuttings. Take cuttings with 4 leaves and insert them into pots filled with moist potting soil. Rooting hormone is optional. Place whole pot in a perforated plastic bag and place in a shady spot. Water as needed. By autumn, cuttings should be rooted.
- Control black spot and powdery mildew on rose foliage.
- Fertilize your roses at monthly intervals with either granular or liquid fertilizer. Inspect plants frequently for pests such as spider mites, aphids and Japanese beetles.
- Leaf miner larvae tunnel inside leaves, leaving whitish trails as they move about. Holly, boxwood, columbine, and locust are particularly susceptible to damage.
- Disinfection of pruners between cuts is recommended when removing diseased tissue from plants. UGA recommends a one to ten solution of bleach and water, but it can be cumbersome to carry a bucket of this mix about in the garden. The solution is corrosive and must be rinsed from tools after use. Rubbing alcohol in a spray bottle also works. When spraying tools, spray over a trash can so you don't kill or injure grass or plants.
- Now is the time to prune evergreen azaleas and rhododendrons before they set next year's flower buds. **For pruning info, click [HERE](#).**
- Divide and transplant German iris now so they will have a long growing season and a better chance of blooming next year. Cut off and discard the older part of the rhizome that does not have white fleshy roots. Cut the leaves back to six inches so they don't blow over. **For more info about true bulbs and other bulb-like structures, click [HERE](#).**





# JULY GARDENING TIPS

## ORNAMENTALS

- If your hosta and azalea stems have a white powder covering them, it is probably the waxy coating of planthopper insects. They don't do much damage, but can spread diseases. Spray with garden insecticide if unsightly.
- Lamb's ear tends to have their lower leaves die after a heavy rain. This forms ugly mats that will rot stems and roots. Pull away the yellow leaves to keep up airflow.
- Fertilize crape myrtles, butterfly bushes, and hydrangeas with 1 Tablespoon of 10-10-10 per foot of height. **For crape myrtle culture, click [HERE](#).**



Adult flatid planthopper and nymphs on an eastern ninebark shrub.  
Photo courtesy Debbie Roos, NC State University,  
[Growing small farms info](#)

## FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

- Pick squash regularly to keep up production. If the vines wilt, check the base of the stem for "sawdust". This means the plant has squash borers in the stem. Remove infected plants (thus removing the borers) and plant new seeds. It is good to change your planting location to hopefully prevent the new plants from being attacked.



[Photo squash vine borer](#)

- Before you spray an insecticide on your vegetables, check the label. Each insecticide has a waiting period after application before you can harvest.
- Although tomatoes are self-pollinating, they need movement to transfer pollen. If it is hot and calm for several days, gently shake plants to assure pollen transfer and fruit set. Hot temperatures can interfere with blossom set. **For staking tomatoes, click [HERE](#).**
- Most fertilizer recommendations are for 100 square feet, so keep your garden's square footage a simple fraction of that. For example, a 4 X 12 foot garden is very close to 50 square feet and would require one half the fertilizer required by a garden of 100 square feet.
- Okra pods get tough if allowed to grow too large. Pick regularly. **For home grown okra, click [HERE](#).**
- Mulch strawberries heavily to protect them from heat and drought.
- The time of day vegetables are harvested can make a difference in the taste and texture. For sweetness, pick peas and corn late in the day; that's when they contain the most sugar, especially if the day was cool and sunny.
- Cucumbers are crisper and tastier if you harvest them early in the morning.
- Start a fall crop of Brussels sprouts, broccoli, cauliflower and kale indoors. Outdoors, sow pumpkin, beans, squash, cucumbers, and crowder peas. Plant carrots mid-month. **For a vegetable garden calendar, click [HERE](#).**

- Sunflowers are ready to harvest when the back of the head turns brown.
- Keep an eye out for the tomato hornworm. They can do enormous damage overnight. When you see damage, check under leaves and stems to find them. Hand pick to dispose of them. **For hornworm info, click [HERE](#).**




Tomato hornworm courtesy UGA

- Don't plant all your beans at once. If you stagger the plantings every two weeks you will have fresh beans longer. Soak bean seeds overnight before planting for faster germination. **For info on home garden green beans, click [HERE](#).**

## JULY MISCELLANEOUS

- If you keep your houseplants indoors all summer, keep them out of the draft of the air conditioner. Plants react to an air conditioner's cool air in various ways. Some drop their leaves, others don't bloom well and some fail to bloom at all.

## RAINFALL COMPARISONS

	Cherokee County			State Wide		
	Mar 2025	Apr 2025	YTD 2025	Mar 2025	Apr 2025	YTD 2025
Actual	4.0	5.2	18.9	3.9	4.6	15.5
Normal	5.6	4.5	21.1	4.6	3.8	17.2
Deviation	-1.6	0.7	-2.2	-0.7	0.8	-1.7

# June/July Recipes

## Oven Fried Chicken

*Submitted by Maurya Jones*

### INGREDIENTS:

- 1 4-pound chicken, cut into pieces
- 1/2 cup ranch dressing
- 1 package (2.5 oz.) extra crispy seasoned coating mix



### INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Discard chicken skin.
2. Place the chicken pieces into a large resealable plastic bag.
3. Add ranch dressing to chicken.
4. Seal bag and turn chicken to evenly coat with the dressing.
5. Allow chicken to marinate in refrigerator overnight or at least 1 hour.
6. Preheat oven to 400 degrees.
7. Place seasoned coating mix in shallow dish.
8. Dip marinated chicken in the coating mixture, turning to evenly coat all sides of each piece.
9. Place coated chicken in a single layer on a baking sheet; sprinkle with any extra coating mixture.
10. Bake until chicken's internal temperature reaches 165 degrees (40 to 45 minutes).

## Tomato-Basil Salad

*Submitted by Maurya Jones*

### INGREDIENTS:

- 1 fresh tomato, cut into chunks
- 2 tbsp. chopped onion (purple or yellow)
- 4 to 5 basil leaves, chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- Olive oil

### INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Combine first 4 ingredients in bowl
2. Drizzle olive oil over it and refrigerate for several hours



Recipe photos courtesy Maurya Jones



**UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA**  
**EXTENSION**  
*Cherokee County*

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

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