



Shades of Green

Agriculture and Natural Resources

E-Newsletter

August 2025



A Note from Athens-Clarke County Agriculture & Natural Resources

Hello readers!

This month's issue is packed full of information and events going on at our office! We especially want to highlight the Great Southeast Pollinator Census– you can join the count at our office on August 23rd! As always, feel free to reach out with questions to 706-613-3640.

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Athens-Clarke County Extension Demonstration Garden- Where Teaching and Knowledge Grow!

Located behind our office on Cleveland RD, this garden is open to the public at all times and features both ornamental and veggie/fruit selections. Though it produces quite a bit of produce, the garden is used primarily for tours, workshops and showcases of special varieites and production practices. The produce that is grown goes to our Family and Consumer Science program and is shared among the Master Gardeners volunteers who work the garden. All are welcome to visit and enjoy features such as the Pollinator Palace, rose arbors, water fountains, bee hives, and relaxing views. We only ask that you please do not pick flowers or produce so that others can enjoy them too, and please close the gate behind you!



The University of Georgia is an Equal Opportunity, Affirmative Action, Veteran, Disability institution. If you need reasonable accomodation or language access services, contact the Athens-Clarke County Extension Office at 706-316-3640.



Outreach & Teaching

The ACC Demonstration Garden supports the mission of UGA Extension to educate and inspire healthier living within the community. The garden provides the means for everything from workshops on various veggie production practices and horticulture methods to demonstrations on beekeeping and classes on cooking with fresh produce. Tours are also given on an as-requested basis.



Wildlife and Pollinators:

One of the goals of the ACC Demonstration Garden is to support pollinators and other wildlife. Features surrounding the garden include bee hives, bat houses, and purple martin houses. Supporting programming includes ACC HoneyBee Team, which promotes the annual Athens Area Honey Bee Festival, and programs on bats, an insect-supported species, with GA Department of Natural Resources. Wildlife activity is also monitored as part of an ongoing research project with UGA Warnell School of Forestry & Natural Resources.

For more information, please call
706-613-3640

This 11 acres, including land and all structures, were developed using SPLOST 2011 tax money.





'Top Georgia Crops' Section of ACC Demonstration and Teaching Garden:

275 Cleveland RD, Bogart GA 30622

Please visit anytime and close the gate behind you!

Native Landscape- a habitat for pollinators!

The Native Landscape at the ACC Extension Office is a habitat that demonstrates the use of Georgia native annuals and perennials. It is a great pollinator habitat that is also drought friendly, providing an aesthetically pleasing landscape with year-round interest. The landscape is located at the front and side of the ACC Extension Office.

An Ongoing Partnership

Much work has been put into developing the native landscape, with input from Master Gardeners, Master Naturalists, and others. Partnerships include Georgia Native Plant Society, State Botanical Garden of Georgia's Connect to Protect Program and the Georgia Pollinator Partnership (GAPP).



The Native Landscape was featured as part of Athens-Area Honey Bee festival in 2025, with Athens Native Plant Society as a vendor and others showcasing native bees, pollinator crafts, and garden scavenger hunts. The Landscape is taking part in the Great Southeast Pollinator Census in August 2025.



The long-term goal of the Native Plant Landscape is outreach and education on the beauty and benefits of native plants in our region. Why are native plants so important?

1. Native plants are critical to preserving the biodiversity and well-being of native pollinators. Eighty percent of our food plants are dependent on pollination. Native plants provide food and shelter for pollinators. Only native plants can be hosts for the larval stage of an insect. Without host plants the life cycle of insects is broken—without caterpillars there are no butterflies. Native oak trees support the largest number of pollinators in our ecosystem. According to Doug Tallamy, oak trees support over 500 native pollinators while Crepe Myrtle trees support zero native pollinators.
2. Native plants also support native birds and mammals. Most birds feed their babies caterpillar and other larval forms of insects. Without these native insects, bird populations have suffered and will continue to decline.
3. Native plants are well-adapted to our climate and are easy to maintain. They do well in our landscape without the need for excessive fertilizer, pesticides and other added chemicals. Native plants evolved in this area. In general, they only need the naturally occurring soils found here.

Source: Doug Tallamy

A Resource for all...

Beyond its floral and nectar resources, features of the landscape include water and mineral supply for butterflies, a brush pile for native bees, and suet feeders supplying fruit for a high-energy food source. The layout of the landscape includes a no-mow meadow, garden vignette, drought tolerant xeriscape, prairie, and even a fruit garden. More traditional landscaping is combined with “wild” gardening to showcase a variety of outcomes that can be replicated by any homeowner or landscaper.

Having a diverse, interesting, beautiful and educational native plant landscape for the public to enjoy will lead to greater familiarity with and interest in using native plants in private yards and public green spaces.



Ongoing progress at ACC Native Landscape



Blossoming at Marigold Market: UGA REEU Fellowship Marigold Market Service Learning and Outreach Project Article: 1st Place 2025

Every year, students in the UGA Department of Crops, Genetics and Genomics receive the opportunity to participate in the Research and Extension Experience for Undergraduates (REEU) program. Students are paired together for a day of volunteering with a local farmer or farming family at the Marigold Farmer's Market in Winterville. Students help the farmer with selling goods and learn first-hand what it takes to produce a product for the public. The teams then write a short article describing their experience at the market as part of a competition for a cash prize awarded by the department. The winning article is published on the UGA Plant Center website and in Athens-Clarke County Extension's Shades of Green. We are happy to feature this year's winning article, "Blossoming at Marigold Market", written by students Ashley Oshin and Bethany Horton.



Students Ashley Oshin and Bethany Horton at Marigold Market in Winterville, GA



Blossoming at Marigold Market: UGA REEU Fellowship Marigold Market Service Learning and Outreach Project Article: 1st Place 2025

The moment we stepped foot onto the Marigold Farmers Market in Winterville, GA, we felt an overwhelming sense of connection. As participants in UGA's Research and Extension Experience for Undergraduates (REEU) program for Crop Genetics and Genomics, we were introduced to the Marigold Market with two tasks: to volunteer with locals and to gain insight into the "field to table" approach to agriculture. While volunteering, we spoke with Lydia, a co-op member of the Market, helping her sell organic products. Through her, we gained an appreciation for the Market's accomplishments in local agriculture.

When we asked Lydia about her agricultural journey, she laughed and gestured to her dirty shoes. "It's not just on my clothes and under my nails," she exclaimed, "I've got dirt in my blood!" Lydia Engelsen, organic farmer and owner of Sungate Farm, shared stories of her childhood in Trinidad. She conveyed how it felt to live in a time and place where she knew exactly what she was eating. Now as an experienced farmer in Georgia, she's learned considerably from her upbringing and involvement with the Market. And as she spoke, her passion for organic, sustainable agriculture and sharing her knowledge with the next generation was palpable.

So much happens between growing produce and preparing it for consumption, it's impossible to keep track of what you're ingesting. "There's a disconnect between the people and what they're eating," Lydia explained. The Market is intentional about bringing products straight from the field to patrons' tables, fostering a sense of community and integrity among everyone. While we were helping Lydia run a section of the market, a family that had purchased many items left without paying for one. Once they realized, they quickly came back to pay. As Lydia chatted with them, we realized that patrons of the market are honest about what they buy, because the market is honest about what they sell. It was truly inspiring to witness. Through our experience, we grew a deep passion for local agricultural improvement. And like Lydia, we learned how initiatives like the Marigold Market can help many other communities blossom.



ACC Demonstration & Teaching Garden trials All-American Selection (AAS) Program Winners 2025

The Demo Garden is now involved with the All-American Selection (R) program, where we are having public displays of AAS Winners. This year we were sent a large collection of both veggie and ornamental seeds to grow and show. This fall we will be able to select a collection of plants to showcase! This is a huge exciting program for us, and we are just getting started. As you visit the Demo Garden, we hope you will take a moment to view the AAS plants!



Help your tomato plants **stand tall**

Staking and pruning homegrown tomato plants

By Jordan Powers | Estimated read time: 4.5 minutes

Now that we've announced the winners of the [tomato sandwich slicer showdown](#) and your plants are taking off, it's time to address our first tomato gardening issue: supporting unwieldy tomato plants through staking and pruning.

"At times, it can be a little challenging to keep tomatoes healthy, but no other vegetable comes close to bearing as much produce in such a limited space," said [Bob Westerfield](#), [University of Georgia Cooperative Extension](#) consumer horticulturalist in the [College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences](#). "Staking and pruning are two common practices that can help tomatoes stay healthier and produce larger fruit."



First up: Determinate vs. indeterminate tomato varieties

While determinate tomato cultivars grow like a compact bush and produce a larger harvest all at once — perfect for those looking to can tomatoes or make sauces — tomato sandwich seekers are often better off selecting an indeterminate plant for a steady stream of tomatoes all season long.

These tomatoes grow on long, vining stems and produce fruit until the first frost as long as gardeners keep harvesting them.

Want to know more? Check out Westerfield's "[Georgia Homegrown Tomatoes](#)." This UGA Extension resource covers how to grow great tomatoes and avoid problems that gardeners often encounter.

Staking tomato plants

For the best chance at productive plants with healthy fruit, Westerfield urges home gardeners to invest in providing plants a strong support structure all season long.

“Because many diseases and insects start at the ground level, using a structured system to keep them away from ground contact is prudent,” Westerfield said. “Any system of tomato staking should provide a strong structure that will hold up to the elements and last the entire growing season.”

The single-stake system

The single-stake method is mainly used for determinate varieties; indeterminate or more vigorous types often need stronger support.

- **Choose your stake:** Use wood, plastic or metal. T-posts are the most durable.
- **Place the stake:** Insert 1 or 2 inches from the plant's base, 6 to 12 inches deep depending on soil type.
- **Wait until the plant is 10 to 12 inches tall** to begin tying.
- **Use soft ties:** Garden twine, fabric strips or even pantyhose work well.
- **Tie the plant every 8 inches** up the main stem for support.



The double-stake system

Use the double-stake method for extra support compared to single-staking.

- **Place two stakes** on opposite sides of the tomato plant.
- **Begin tying the plant to both stakes** as it grows using soft ties.
- **Maintain spacing** between plants to allow for airflow and easy harvesting.



The cage system

Store-bought wire cones work for patio or determinate tomatoes in a cage system, but larger, vigorous plants may need sturdier cages.

- **For strong cages, build your own using:**
 - Galvanized livestock fencing with 4-to-6-inch woven squares
 - Concrete reinforcement wire with heavy-gauge mesh
 - Wood (square, triangle or trellis design)
- **Make cages at least 3 feet in diameter** to allow room for plant growth.
- **Ensure easy harvest access** with large openings in the material.
- **Secure the cage to the ground** using small stakes or landscape staples, especially for top-heavy plants.
- **Place the cage around your plant early**, before significant growth, to avoid damaging the stems or fruit.



The Florida weave system

The Florida weave method gives tomato plants the support they need using only stakes and durable string. Use secure stakes — metal T-posts are preferred again for this method.

- **Plant tomatoes in a straight row**, spacing them appropriately.

- **Insert stakes by inserting:**

- One at the end of the row
- One for every third or fourth plant

- **Tie a durable string to an end post**, 1 or 2 inches above the ground.

- **Weave string in and out** between plants, looping around each middle post for added support.

- **Tie off at the opposite end post** to secure the row.

- **Repeat the weaving process:**

- Add new levels of string every few inches vertically
- Alternate sides of the plant with each new level

- **Continue weaving as plants grow**, keeping them upright between the woven strings.

Pruning tomato plants

To prevent the possibility of disease transmission, Westerfield suggests gardeners begin the pruning process as soon as plants are in the ground by removing all lower stems that come into contact with the soil.

- **Use sharp, scissor-type hand clippers** for clean cuts.
- **Prune less for determinate varieties**; indeterminate types benefit more from regular pruning.
- **Remove sucker shoots** to boost fruit production and airflow.



Tomato suckers are smaller shoots that grow from where a leaf joins the main stem. Removing sucker shoots increases airflow and allows the plant's energy to go to fruit production.

- **Cut nonbearing branches selectively** to allow more sun and air into the plant canopy.
- **Remove damaged or diseased leaves/branches** early to manage plant health.
- **Clear all clippings from the ground** to prevent disease spread.
- **Disinfect clippers with an alcohol-based solution** between plants to reduce virus transmission.
- **Avoid over-pruning** — tomato fruit needs some shade to prevent sunscald.
- **Thin fruit as needed:**

- Remove damaged or insect-ridden tomatoes.
- To grow larger fruit, trim clusters and leave only one tomato per group.



“Virtually every tomato variety can benefit from some type of support system as well as occasional pruning. By using these concepts, it is possible to extend the growing season from planting time in the spring until the first frost.”

—Bob Westerfield, Georgia gardening guru

Local July Events

Join The Count! Great Southeast Pollinator Census at Athens-Clarke County Extension

Saturday, August 23rd 10 am—1 pm

We invite you to learn how to become a citizen scientist and participate in the Great Southeast Pollinator Census with us— All ages invited! We will spend time outdoors counting insects and uploading to GSPC database. Activities for kids will include butterfly crafts, native bee exploration, and native plant information for adults!

Athentic Weekly Farmer's Market

Thursdays 4-7 PM

108 Park Ave, Athens GA 30601

Join us on Thursdays from 4-7 for our local farmer's market filled with locally grown produce and delicious treats from Athens artisanal vendors! Standard vendors include: Diamond Hill Farms, Normaltown Bread Company, Katie Bee Honey, Flossie May Forage, Grand Designs Woodworking, and more to come!

Plant Conservation: Protecting Plant Diversity

Saturday, August 9th 9 AM—1 PM

State Botanical Garden of Georgia

Plant conservation is an applied science that draws upon many fields of knowledge from ecology to horticulture, to ethics and politics. This course surveys threats to biodiversity in Georgia and worldwide, examples of rare plant research, techniques for restoration and reintroduction, and ways individuals and organizations are making a difference in protecting the rare plants of Georgia.

35th Annual Insectival Sunday, September 14th, 2025 12-4 PM State Botanical Garden of Georgia

One of our largest and most well-known festivals, Insectival, will return to the garden this year! Participants will meet and interact with a variety of entomological experts and their buggy friends.

Activities include presenter booths, a puppet show and the popular butterfly release on the Flower Garden lawn. Join garden staff and partners as we celebrate our beloved six-legged neighbors. Insectival is sponsored by the State Botanical Garden of Georgia, UGA Lund Club, UGA Department of Entomology and Georgia Museum of Natural History.

Fall Wildflowers of the Georgia Piedmont

Saturday, September 13th, 2025 9 AM—1 PM

State Botanical Garden of Georgia

Our gardens, roadsides, and meadows are aglow with color in the fall. In this class, students will learn to recognize the most common fall-blooming wildflowers in the Georgia Piedmont and be introduced to the basic botanical terminology used in identifying and describing fall-flowering plants, with an emphasis on plants in the Aster (composite) family. We will then apply that knowledge to plants in the field, learning to recognize families, genera, and species based on characteristics readily observable in the field.

Athens Water Festival

Sandy Creek Park and Lake Chapman

Saturday, September 6, 2025 10 AM—2PM

Dive into the ultimate summer adventure at the 16th annual Athens Water Festival. Water is your quest during this day filled with power-up splash zones, watery obstacle courses, and more. Whether you're playing games, creating art, making bubbles, or watching the magic show, there's something for every player - young or old! Bring a bathing suit to run through the spray of water trucks and a water bottle to fuel up at the water monster.



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GREAT SOUTHEAST POLLINATOR CENSUS 2025 JOIN THE COUNT!

Visit Great
Southeast
Pollinator Count
Webpage:



Great Southeast Pollinator Census Website

Saturday, August 23rd
10 AM – 1 PM

275 Cleveland Road
Bogart, GA 30622

- We invite you to join us to learn how to be a citizen scientist and participate in the Great Southeast Pollinator Census in your own backyard, park, or wherever there are pollinators! All ages are invited!
- We will spend time outdoors counting insects in our native landscape and demonstration garden and uploading those to GSPC database. Information will be given on insect ID and instructions for completing the count.
- Activities for kids include butterfly crafts, native bee exploration, and native plant information for adults!
- Come out to learn how you can steward pollinators in your own habitat!
- We will conduct the count outdoors- all crafts, refreshments and information will be located indoors.

<https://gsepc.org/>

Call 706-613-3640 or
Email lney@uga.edu



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Athens Farmer's Market

<https://athensfarmersmarket.net/>



Marigold Farmer's Market

<https://marigoldcollectivewinterville.com/>



Concerned about the state of your garden?

Are weeds taking over your landscape?

No need to fear, Clarke is here!



Follow @gardenwithclarke on Instagram and learn how to battle pests, identify weeds, build your soil and so much more as you garden alongside Clarke, Athens-Clarke County's super gardener!



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UGA Extension Athens-Clarke County





Helpful resources online:

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Athens-Clarke County Extension Agriculture and Natural Resources

Mission Statement

The UGA Athens-Clarke County Extension's mission is to respond to the people's needs and interest in Agriculture, the Environment, Families, and 4-H/youth in Athens-Clarke County with unbiased, research-based education and information.

Visit us online:



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