



# Shades of Green

## Agriculture and Natural Resources

### E-Newsletter

May 2025







# A Note from Athens-Clarke County Agriculture & Natural Resources

Hello readers!

Thank you for tuning in to the May 2025 edition of Shades of Green! We are flying full steam ahead into summer with great workshops and outreach events planned. We are especially excited for the 2nd annual Athens-Area Honey Bee Festival, happening on May 24th, 10 am-2 pm at our office (275 Cleveland RD Bogart GA 30622). Come out to enjoy crafts, games, live music, baked goods, honey processing demo and tasting along with live hive visits! We can't wait to see you there!

Athens-Clarke County Agriculture and Natural Resources

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# Did you know you can grow: Mayhaw

UGA Extension experts provide information on growing uncommon Southern delights in your own backyard.

By Makenna Reavis

Georgia, traditionally known as the Peach State, is famous for its peaches, pecans and peanuts. But thanks to its mild climate, the state also supports a variety of uncommon and exotic fruits.

In a new series inspired by [University of Georgia Cooperative Extension](#) resource “[Minor Fruits and Nuts in Georgia](#),” edited by consumer horticulturist [Bob Westerfield](#), we’ll highlight lesser-known fruits that thrive in Georgia and can be grown in home gardens.

This month, we’re kicking things off with a familiar tree, especially in the southern regions, that produces a fruit many may not know — the mayhaw.



In early spring, the mayhaw blooms with white blossoms. Other fruit trees like crabapple, plum and pear trees produce similar blooms.



## What is a mayhaw?

Mayhaw typically refers to the small, tart fruit of the hawthorn tree (*Crataegus* spp.), a member of the rose family (Rosaceae). Hawthorns are a large and diverse genus and are [Georgia’s second-most numerous tree genus](#), with many named species and varieties, with several native to the state. These flowering deciduous trees produce white blooms in early spring, and the fruit is harvested in May — hence the name “mayhaw.”

These small trees or shrubs are easily recognized by their sharp thorns, fragrant blooms, and small, apple-like fruit. They are known by many names, including Eastern mayhaw, May hawthorn, apple hawthorn, red haw, thorn-apple, hog-apple, quickthorn, May-tree, white-thorn, chastity tree and hawberry.

Mayhaws are among the few ornamental flowering trees well-suited for lakeshores and wetland landscaping, thriving naturally in the wetlands of the southern United States.

However, this versatile tree also adapts to upland areas, where it is valued as a home landscape or ornamental for its showy blooms and pollinator appeal. Its fruit, resembling a cranberry or small crabapple, ranges in color from yellow to deep red. With a flavor that varies from mildly sweet to tart, mayhaws are rarely eaten raw but are highly prized for making sauces, wines and the beloved Southern favorite — mayhaw jelly.

Colquitt, Georgia, proudly holds the title of the Mayhaw Capital of the World. The town celebrates this beloved fruit with the annual [Mayhaw Festival](#), held on the third weekend in April. The event brings locals and visitors together for a day of food, entertainment, crafts and a lively parade.



# Planting mayhaw

The best varieties of mayhaw to grow in Georgia are 'Saline' and 'Big Red'. Both have firm fruit and good retention, meaning they will not fall from the tree too early or shatter. They also bloom late, reducing the risk of freeze damage. Varieties that bloom and ripen early should only be planted in south Georgia.

Mayhaws can be grown from seeds or by **grafting**, a technique that joins parts of two plants to produce a stronger, more uniform tree. For optimal growth, plant seeds or seedlings 15 to 20 feet apart, with rows spaced 20 feet apart to ensure ample space for growth.

## Planting from seeds

Mayhaw seeds require stratification, which means they must be chilled for a period before they begin growing. Seeds can be planted directly in the soil in the fall to stratify over the winter or can be refrigerated for 12 weeks and planted in early spring.

Plant seeds in moist, sandy soil. Covering them with a screen after planting can prevent birds from eating the seedlings as they grow.

## Planting by grafting

Grafting mayhaw seedlings produces more predictable results than planting seeds but is a more involved process. When grafting mayhaws, the best practice is to use the mayhaw plant for both the scion (the cutting that will grow into a tree) and the rootstock (the root system used to support the cutting).



A screen can be placed over growing mayhaw seedlings to prevent birds from eating the seedlings while they are small.



Grafting is a process that can create a more stable mayhaw plant than starting from seeds.

## Caring for a mayhaw tree

### Fertilizer

In the first year of growth, mayhaws require 1/4 pound of 10-10-10 NPK (nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium) fertilizer in March, May and July. After the first year, they require 1 pound per inch of trunk diameter, up to a maximum of 5 pounds. Be careful to apply evenly and at least 8 inches away from the trunk.

### Pest control

Mayhaw trees are susceptible to quince rust, a fruit disease that causes lesions on leaves, early leaf drop and deformed fruit. Planting the trees away from cedar trees, another carrier of the disease, can help prevent its spread. Using a fungicide like myclobutanil can also help control quince rust.



# Using mayhaw



Mayhaw trees thrive with a balanced 10-10-10 fertilizer. To prevent root burn, evenly distribute the fertilizer at least 8 inches away from the base of the plant.

## Harvesting

It can take several years for a mayhaw tree to produce fruit. Once it does, there are a few methods of harvesting. Typically, mayhaws fall to the ground when ripe. Tarps or nets can be laid out beneath the trees to catch the fruit for easier collection. For varieties with stronger retention, place tarps or catch frames underneath the tree and shake the limbs to release the fruit.

Mayhaws do not have a long shelf life, so it is best to freeze or can the fruit within a few days of harvesting.



The shake-and-catch system of harvesting can be used to harvest mayhaw, similar to harvesting almonds (pictured), olives, cherries and more.

Mayhaws are typically used for juice, sauces and jellies. A fan favorite is mayhaw-pepper jelly, a sweet and spicy spread used on meats or with cream cheese and crackers. Wisham Jellies won the Jams and Jellies category of the 2016 Flavor of Georgia contest with their Wild Mayhaw Pepper Jelly.

If you're interested in growing mayhaws, visit local nurseries to find varieties that thrive in your area. Your county UGA Extension agent is also a great resource for expert advice and tips on selecting and growing plants suited to your home landscape.

**Not ready to plant a mayhaw just yet? Pick up fresh mayhaw fruit at a local farmers market and try your hand at making homemade mayhaw-pepper jelly with the recipe below!**

**For recipe, visit**

<https://cultivate.caes.uga.edu/did-you-know-you-can-grow-mayhaw/index.html>



Fire! Pepper Jelly from Wisham Jellies was a finalist at the 2024 Flavor of Georgia contest. Wisham Jellies won the



# Your ultimate guide to healthy garden soil

By Emily Cabrera | Estimated read time: 7 minutes

## Meet the expert: Bob Westerfield, UGA Extension consumer horticulturist



Testing your soil is always the first step to successful gardening.

A thriving garden starts from the ground up — literally. Healthy soil is the foundation of a productive and beautiful garden, providing essential nutrients, proper drainage and the right balance of air and moisture for plant roots to flourish. Whether you're preparing a brand-new garden bed or revitalizing existing soil, understanding its composition and how to improve it will set your plants up for success.

[University of Georgia Cooperative Extension](#) consumer horticulturist [Bob Westerfield](#) provides guidance on ensuring your garden soil is ready to provide fruitful vegetables this summer. Follow these essential steps to get your garden soil in top shape.

### Start with a soil test

Before planting, it's crucial to [test your soil](#) to determine its nutrient levels and pH. Soil tests reveal what nutrients are already present and what needs to be added for optimal plant growth. Lawns and ornamental areas should be tested every two to three years, while vegetable gardens benefit from testing every one to two years. Results typically arrive within four to six days after the lab receives the sample.

Most vegetables thrive in slightly acidic soil with a pH between 6.0 and 6.5. If your soil is too acidic, apply dolomitic lime to neutralize it while adding beneficial magnesium and calcium. However, avoid adding lime to already neutral or alkaline soil (pH 6.5 or higher), as it can make essential nutrients less accessible, leading to stunted growth, yellowing leaves and poor fruit production. Since lime reacts slowly, mix it into the soil two to three months before planting.

Learn how to take a soil sample from UGA Extension expert Jason Lessl in "[Soil Testing for Home Lawns, Gardens and Wildlife Food Plots.](#)"

Before digging in, do you have these essential garden tools?



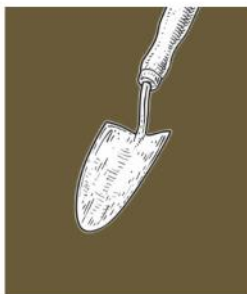
**Round-point shovel**  
For digging and turning soil



**Spading fork**  
For loosening compacted soil and mixing in soil amendments



**Soil rake**  
For leveling garden beds and breaking up clumps



**Hand trowel**  
For planting and small-scale soil work

# Checking soil texture and drainage



## Check soil texture

First, wet a handful of soil and squeeze it in your fist.

**Clay-heavy** soil forms a tight, slippery ball.

**Sandy** soil crumbles easily and feels gritty.

**Loamy** soil holds together loosely but crumbles under slight pressure — this is the ideal balance.



## Check soil drainage

First, dig a hole about 12 inches deep and fill it with water.

If the water drains within a few hours, your soil has good drainage.

If water remains after 24 hours, your soil may be compacted or too clay-heavy, requiring organic matter or raised beds to improve drainage. Adding sand to clay soil will not improve drainage.

## What does healthy soil look like?

Regardless of soil type, the key factors for a thriving garden are high fertility, good drainage, ease of tilling and deep topsoil. Avoid areas infested with persistent weeds like Johnsongrass and nutgrass, rocky sites or locations with a hardpan layer.

Healthy soil should contain plenty of organic matter and support beneficial organisms like earthworms and microbes, which aerate the soil and break down organic material into plant-available nutrients. Since most roots grow in the top 8 inches of soil, maintaining healthy topsoil with organic amendments and avoiding compaction is essential.

## Prepare your soil early

If you didn't plow or spade your garden soil in the fall, do so in early spring as soon as the ground is dry enough to work. To check, mold a handful of soil into a ball — if it crumbles when pressed with your thumb, it's ready.

To start preparing your garden bed where your vegetables will eventually be planted:

1. **Turn the soil** to a depth of 7 to 8 inches, incorporating compost or garden soil if needed.

**Pro tip:** If incorporating large amounts of undecomposed organic matter, sprinkle nitrogen (e.g., ammonium nitrate) over it before turning it under. This speeds up decomposition and provides nitrogen for soil organisms and plants.

2. **Rake the soil** soon after turning it to prevent excessive drying and maintain good texture. For small-seeded crops, a finely pulverized surface ensures easier planting, better germination and a more even stand.

3. **Ensure good drainage** by avoiding compacted or waterlogged soil.

## Boost your soil with organic matter

While you can't change your soil type, you can improve its structure, moisture retention and nutrient availability by incorporating organic matter. Because organic material decomposes quickly in Georgia's warm climate, regular additions are essential.

- **Compost** kitchen scraps, straw and leaves to replenish nutrients.

Incorporate organic material like [livestock manure](#) or shredded leaves during fall soil prep.

- **Sow cover crops** like crimson clover, rye or vetch if you're not planting vegetables immediately. Before the next planting season, turn cover crops under and add nitrogen for best results.

UGA Extension expert Bodie Pennisi provides in-depth guidance on composting at home in "[Composting and Mulching](#)."



# Your ultimate guide to healthy garden soil

By Emily Cabrera | Estimated read time: 7 minutes

## Choose the right fertilizer

Fertilizers supply essential nutrients for plant growth. They are labeled by their nutrient content, such as 10-10-10 (10% nitrogen, 10% phosphorus and 10% potassium). For most vegetable gardens, these three common fertilizer grades work well:

- **10-10-10:** Balanced for a wide range of crops.
  - **6-12-12:** Ideal for root vegetables and phosphorus-loving plants.
  - **5-10-15:** Suitable for many garden vegetables.
- Vegetables fall into three categories based on fertilizer needs: heavy, medium and light feeders. Grouping crops by nutrient requirements simplifies fertilization. Always base fertilizer application on soil test results.

## Plan your planting for success

A successful garden requires more than just planting — it takes strategy, Westerfield noted:

- **Follow a planting schedule.** Start cool-season crops like lettuce, cabbage and peas early, and wait until after the last frost to plant warm-season vegetables like tomatoes, peppers and squash.
- **Mark your rows.** Use string and stakes to keep rows straight, ensuring optimal spacing and organization.

**Use proper planting techniques.** Large-seeded crops like beans and corn should be planted in furrows, while smaller seeds like carrots and lettuce require finely prepared soil.

## Protect your plants

Once your vegetables are in the ground, take steps to protect them for a successful season:

- **Mulch with straw** to retain moisture and prevent soil crusting. Always verify that wheat straw or other materials you put in your garden were not previously treated with long-acting herbicides.
- **Transplant healthy seedlings** for a strong start.
- **Use row covers** to shield young plants from extreme temperatures.
- **Deter pests** by installing chicken wire fencing or, for areas with a heavy deer presence, consider installing a taller, more permanent fence. See UGA Extension resource "[Garden Fencing](#)" to learn about recommended fencing options.

## Get ready for a bountiful harvest

By investing time in soil preparation, you're setting your summer vegetable garden up for success. Healthy soil leads to stronger plants, fewer pests and bigger harvests.

For more resources and advice, explore [UGA Extension publications](#) on soil health, composting and vegetable gardening.





# The Basics of Composting

Thursday, May 8th, 6:00 PM

The Athens-Clarke County Extension Office

275 Cleveland Rd, Bogart, GA 30622

In honor of International Compost Awareness Week, we will be hosting a free presentation from Suki Janssen, our Athens Clarke County Director of Solid Waste. Join us to learn why composting is important and how you can get started!

Registration not required but rsvp appreciated.

For questions or to rsvp, contact Laura Ney, [lney@uga.edu](mailto:lney@uga.edu)



College of Agricultural &  
Environmental Sciences  
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

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Action, Veteran, Disability Institution*





# Backyard Fruit for the Home Gardener

Saturday, May 10  
1:00–2:00 PM

Athens Library  
2025 Baxter St  
Athens, GA 30605

How do I grow fruit in Georgia? What varieties of apples, pears, figs and blueberries are best? What fruit is native to Georgia? And should I get my soil tested? Get answers to these questions and more as part of this backyard fruit gardening workshop.

Presented by Victoria Clendenning, Athens-Clarke Co.  
Agriculture and Natural Resources Educator







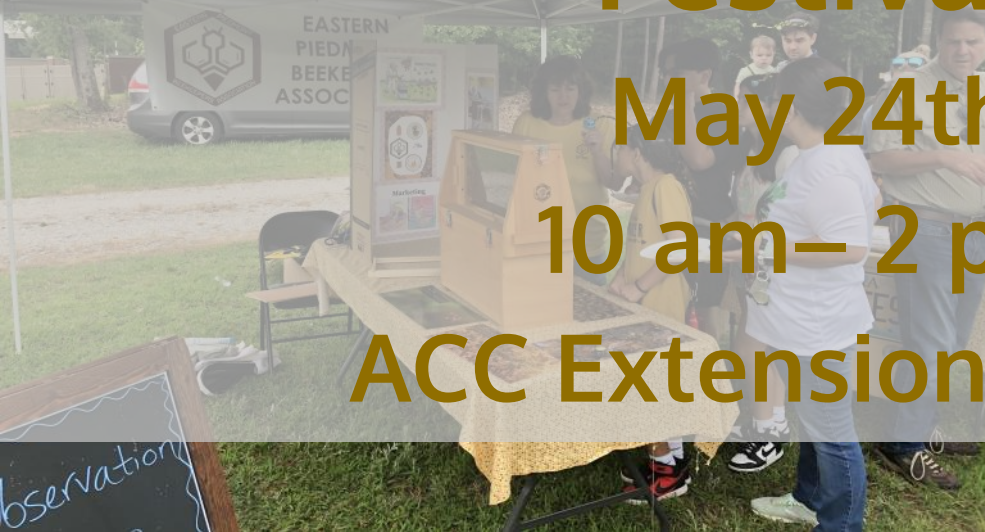
# Athens Area Honey Bee Festival

Festival

May 24th

10 am – 2 pm

ACC Extension Office







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An Equal Opportunity, Affirmative  
Action, Veteran, Disability Institution

# Athens - Area Honey Bee Festival

May 24th, 2025

**Family Friendly**



- Kids activities and crafts
- Face painting
- Bee hive explorations
- Honey tasting
- Plants for sale
- Food
- Games
- and more!

**This is a free  
event.**

**Donations will  
be accepted.**



10:00 AM –  
2:00 PM

ACC Extension Office  
275 Cleveland Rd, Bogart  
GA 30622







## **Creating Landscapes for Beauty, Biodiversity, & Ecological Benefits**

**Monarchs Across Georgia (MAG) Pollinator Symposium**

**Saturday, May 17, 2025**

**The State Botanical Garden of Georgia**

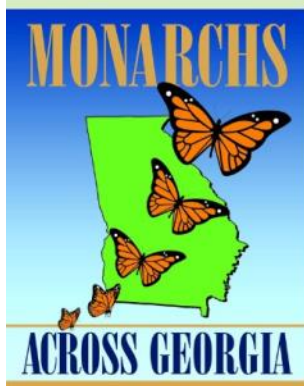
**9AM-3PM**



**Keynote by Heather Holm,  
pollinator conservationist and  
award-winning author  
[pollinatorsnativeplants.com](http://pollinatorsnativeplants.com)**

**\$85 - includes catered box lunch and full agenda**

**More Information and Register**





# HELP KEEP WILD BIRDS HEALTHY

## Take our bird feeding survey



## Why participate?

Your responses will help scientists at the University of Georgia understand how people who engage in backyard bird feeding can help keep wild birds healthy.

- 🕒 Survey takes just 10-15 minutes
- 🔒 Completely voluntary & responses are confidential
- 🐦 The survey questions are about wild birds and bird feeding

## Who is eligible?

We are interested in surveying people who are:

- 18 years or older
- Reside in the United States
- Feed wild birds
- Owns at least one bird feeder

**PLEASE  
SHARE THIS  
SURVEY  
WITH  
OTHERS!**

## How to participate

Scan the QR code, click on the direct link [HERE](http://bit.ly/43uopoL), or directly copy and paste the link into your web browser:  
<http://bit.ly/43uopoL>



Warnell School of Forestry  
& Natural Resources  
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

For questions, contact Nicole Kemon at  
[Nicole.Kemon@uga.edu](mailto:Nicole.Kemon@uga.edu)

*This study has been approved by the University of Georgia's Institutional Review Board (IRB) and follows all research confidentiality guidelines.*





## Plant Sale

All  
proceeds  
support our  
garden!



**Trial Gardens**

*College of Agricultural & Environmental Sciences*

**UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA**

# PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE

DATE  
**7 JUNE**  
2025

START  
**9:00AM**

END  
**12:00PM**



**220 W. Green St, Athens, GA 30602**

## Garden Tours

9AM-Dr. A

10AM-Dr. Ruter

11AM-Sandy



## People's Choice Awards

Vote for  
your  
favorite  
plants!





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Athens-Clarke County



Ask a  
Master  
Gardener  
at Marigold  
Market!

April - November 2025

MARIGOLD  
FARMERS  
MARKET!








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!



**gardenwithclarke**

UGA Extension Athens-Clarke County







## Helpful resources online:

[Find My Local  
Extension Office](#)

[Georgia Turf](#)

[Free Online Webinars](#)

[Pest Management  
Handbook](#)

[Pesticide Applicator  
Info](#)

[Georgia Certified Plant  
Professional](#)

[Bugwood— Pest Images](#)

[UGA Center for Urban  
Agriculture](#)

[Extension Publications](#)

[OnlineLandscape Alerts](#)

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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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