



Shades of Green

Athens-Clarke County Agriculture and Natural Resources E-Newsletter

November 2023

Included in this issue...

Articles		Events/Resources	
<u>A Note from Athens-Clarke County Agriculture and Natural Resources</u>	Pg. 2	<u>Local November Events</u>	Pg. 10
<u>Control Light and Christmas Will Bloom</u>	Pg. 3	<u>Local Farmers Markets 2023</u>	Pg. 11
<u>Plant Now To Pick Fruit Later</u>	Pg. 5	<u>West Broad Farmer's Market: 2023 Special Events Calendar</u>	Pg. 12
<u>Out My Backdoor: Plants for Fall Migrants</u>	Pg. 7	<u>Information and Resources</u>	Pg. 14

A Note from Athens-Clarke County

Agriculture & Natural Resources

Hello readers! Autumn is here at the Athens-Clarke County Extension Office. We are excited to share some fun events happening at the office and around Athens this month! Be sure to check out local Farmers Markets and other events happening throughout the month hosted by UGA Extension, State Botanical Garden of Georgia, Georgia Museum of Natural History, and Sandy Creek Nature Center, among many others.

We hope you enjoy this month's issue of "Shades of Green".

Take care,



Control Light and Christmas

Cactus Will Bloom

By Paul Pugliese, CAES News



December 21 officially marks the winter solstice, when areas in the Northern Hemisphere have the shortest day and the longest night of the year.

A few popular plants given as holiday gifts include Christmas cacti, poinsettias, kalanchoes and chrysanthemums — plants whose flowering is perfectly timed to the shorter days experienced this time of year.

In many plants, the initiation of flower buds depends upon the amount of daylight the plants receive. The plant response to day length is called “photoperiodism.” Some plants will flower as day length gets shorter, while others flower as day length gets longer. Some plants are neutral, where day length does not influence flowering directly.

Christmas cacti are popular houseplants native to Brazil and are available in a wide variety of colors including red, rose, purple, lavender, peach, orange, cream and white. These species grow as epiphytes among tree branches in shady rain forests, and their cascading stems make them a great choice for hanging baskets. Flowering can last seven to eight weeks if the plants are kept at 68 degrees Fahrenheit.

Clients commonly call the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension office this time of year disappointed that their Christmas cacti or other short-day houseplants failed to bloom. They are often surprised to learn that if these plants are kept indoors year-round, their normal cycle of daylight exposure can be interrupted by artificial light inside the house. So, the challenge becomes trying to mimic normal daylight exposure with shorter days.

One option is to place these plants in a room with only natural light exposure near a window, ensuring that artificial lights stay off at night. Another option is to keep these plants outdoors as long as possible in the fall and then bring them indoors just before the threat of freezing temperatures. This usually means keeping most tropical houseplants outside until around the end of October in the Atlanta area. By this time, short-day plants are programmed to start forming flowers during the upcoming holidays.



Control Light and Christmas

Cactus Will Bloom, cont..

By Paul Pugliese, CAES News



I remember my grandfather keeping a Christmas cactus in a hanging basket on his porch all summer long and then bringing it inside just before the first freeze every year. It was an impressive plant with hundreds of flowers that would bloom between Thanksgiving and Christmas. I recall that he kept this plant going for almost a decade and it brought him many years of Christmas joy.

One of the great things about a Christmas cactus is that it doesn't shed leaves like poinsettias or other houseplants. Note that there are no true leaves on Christmas cacti, so photosynthesis occurs within the green stem segments known as phylloclades. Pinch back the stems in early June to promote branching terminals for more flowers, and use stem pieces with three to five segments to root new plants.

The secret of good flower bud production on Christmas cacti during the fall involves temperature regulation and photoperiod (length of day and night) control. Fourteen hours or more of continuous darkness each night is required before flower bud set will occur. Follow these tips to enjoy your Christmas cactus for many years to come.

Long nights should start around the middle of September and continue for at least six continuous weeks for complete bud set. Note that as little as two hours of interrupted lighting will inhibit flower bud set. Buds normally will be visible in about four weeks. The photoperiod has no effect on flowering once the buds are set.

Christmas cacti tolerate dry, slightly under-watered conditions during the spring and summer. Do not let the soil become waterlogged, especially during the long nights of winter. Following bud set in the fall, the soil must be kept evenly moist to prevent flower buds from falling off. Never let water stand in the saucer beneath the pot.

Fertilize plants monthly from the time new growth starts — in late winter or early spring — and throughout the summer using a one-half strength liquid fertilizer, such as 20-20-20 with trace elements. Christmas cacti have a higher requirement for magnesium than many plants. Fertilize monthly during the growing season with Epsom salts (magnesium sulfate) mixed at 1 teaspoon per gallon of water, but do not apply the same week as regular fertilizer. Stop fertilization during the late summer for greater flower bud production in the fall.



Plant Now To Pick Fruit Later

April Sorrow, College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences

Plucking fresh fruit from your own orchard can be a delicious way to add beauty and flavor to your home landscape. The best time to plant fruit trees in Georgia is in the fall, according to a University of Georgia expert.

“Growing fresh fruit can be rewarding and fun but can also provide its share of frustration,” said Bob Westerfield, a UGA Extension horticulturist.

To start on the right path, choose an appropriate site.

“Fruit trees will grow and produce in a broad range of soil types, but the best yields and longest-lived trees occur on loamy, well-drained soil,” he said.

Avoid sites where water collects after a heavy rain and areas with poorly drained clay. Trees planted in full sun will yield the most fruit. A minimum of 6 hr of sunlight is needed for fruit trees to produce, but 8 to 10 hr is better.

Next, choose a young tree, about 1 year old.

“Experience has shown that younger trees bear almost as soon, are easier to keep alive and develop into more healthy vigorous trees than do oversized stock,” Westerfield said. “The older trees cost more to grow

and are sold at higher prices, but are usually worth less.”

When digging the hole, bigger is better, Westerfield said.

“If planting container fruit trees, the hole should be at least twice the size of the root ball,” he said. “Holes for planting bare root trees should be wide enough to accommodate the longest roots so they can spread out.”

Do not add potting soil, fertilizer, or any other soil amendments to the planting hole. Backfill the hole with the soil you dug up.

Planting

To plant, hold the tree in place so the graft union is just above ground level. Begin filling the hole with soil. Be sure to tamp backfill soil thoroughly to eliminate air pockets. Add a few gallons of water to settle the soil before completely filling the hole.

Trees should be pruned immediately after planting. Cut the main shoot back to 30 in. above the ground at planting.

“This procedure allows branches to form at desired levels, improves the strength of the tree and provides a balance between the top and the roots,” Westerfield said. “Initial pruning is important. It will set the tone for the future growth of the tree.”



Plant Now To Pick Fruit Later

April Sorrow, College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences

Prune trees in late winter when the weather is mild or in early spring before growth starts.

“Training the limbs of young trees is as important as making proper pruning cuts,” he said. “Those scaffold limbs selected to be the main framework should be spread out and held in a horizontal position to widen the angle with the main trunk and encourage early fruit bud formation and resulting early fruit production.”

Wait until spring to fertilize with 5-10-10 fertilizer.

Varieties

Many fruit cultivars can be planted in Georgia, but select varieties best adapted to your soil and climatic conditions.

Apple varieties suitable for the southern part of Georgia are Anna and Dorsett Golden, he said. Varieties that do well in the upper two-thirds of the state include Ginger Gold, Gala, Mollie's Delicious, Ozark Gold, Golden Delicious, Mutzu, Yates, and Granny Smith.

There are many varieties of figs available, but only a few are well adapted to Georgia. For the mountain regions, select a protected site and try Celeste or Hardy Chicago. In the Piedmont, Celeste, Hardy Chicago and

Conadria are fairly well adapted. South of the fall line, any of the varieties listed can be grown, but Celeste and Conadria are two of the best. If you would like to extend the season with a late-ripening variety, plant Alma.

Recommended pear varieties for south Georgia include Hood, Floradahome, Baldwin, Spalding, and Warren. Orient, Carrick Waite, Kieffer, Magness, Moonglow, Starking Delicious, and Dawn do well in middle to north Georgia.

Japanese plum varieties recommended for Georgia include Methley, Morris, AU Rubrum, AU Producer, AU-Amber, Spring Satin, Byrongold, and Rubysweet.

Dwarf trees are perfect for home gardens, Westerfield said. They can produce fruit earlier than standard trees, occupy less space, and can be more easily pruned and sprayed.

“Whichever variety you choose, be sure it grows in your area of the state and be sure to provide a pollination variety if it needs one,” he said.

Apple, pear, and plum trees should be planted in pairs for pollination. Peaches and nectarines are self-fruitful. Your local UGA Extension office can provide information on the best varieties for your area and pollinator recommendations.



Out My Backdoor: Plants for Fall Migrants

Terry Johnson, Georgia DNR

Attracting songbirds on their fall migration to your backyard is always a challenge. Some folks have limited success feeding them fruit. However, if you want to host a wide variety of these migrants, you need to offer them a bountiful supply of native fruits and berries.

Weeks ago, birds such as warblers, thrushes, tanagers and flycatchers began making preparations for their fall migration by switching their diet from one rich in insects to one dominated by berries and fruits. Before they leave on their epic journey, they will increase their body weight anywhere from 50-100 percent.

But these birds do not gobble up just any berry or fruit they find. Instead, they show a definite preference for berries that are highly pigmented (such as blue, blue-black and red) and produced by native plants. Some non-native plants produce berries that are similarly colored; however, these berries are often far less nutritional. This is important to the birds because they are on a tight time schedule. They need to spend as little time as possible bulking up. Eating berries that are higher in nutrients allows them to reach the desired body weight in the shortest time.

Researchers have recently learned that strongly pigmented berries are high in antioxidants. In fact, some biologists believe the birds' preference for these berries is linked more to the antioxidants they contain than to their sugar and fat content. Antioxidants help the birds deal with the stress of long migrations. In addition, the plants bearing such berries often advertise their presence with brightly colored foliage or stems.

Since the fall songbird migration takes place mostly at night, literally thousands of tanagers, flycatchers, warblers, thrushes, vireos and other songbirds pass over Georgia under the cloak of darkness. The only time we see them is when they make a periodic stop to rest, drink and eat. How long they stay depends on factors such as the weather, their physical condition and the availability of water and food. Sometimes their stops last a day or two. Sometimes the birds linger much longer.

This is where we can help them. If our yards provide these amazing long-distance travelers with the native berries they need to refuel and continue on their journey, they can more quickly resume their flight, while also providing us with the chance of seeing scores of birds most of us probably never imagined we would see in our yard.

Out My Backdoor: Plants for Fall Migrants

Terry Johnson, Georgia DNR

The first thing homeowners should keep in mind is that the fall songbird migration actually begins in summer. Much of it is over before autumn. For example, most of the beautiful small orchard orioles that have been singing in our yards this spring have already left for their winter homes, anywhere from central Mexico southward to Panama. Many of the thrushes and vireos also are already on the move.



However, late summer and early fall is when a greater variety of flycatchers and thrushes is passing through.



Consequently, we need to provide plants that are cloaked with an abundance of native fruits and berries from August into the fall. Here is a short list of six of these plants.

First is **Devil's walking stick** (also called Hercules' club). This plant grows upward of 15 feet tall. It is named for its unique stems covered with spiny thorns and produces a crop of black fruits borne on pink stalks. These fruits are eaten by a number of resident birds such as mockingbirds and migrants such as American robins and gray catbirds. A word of caution, though: This plant can spread and often needs to be controlled.



Next up: **possumhaw**. This native shrub grows 15-30 feet tall and produces an annual crop of red berries that are eaten by a number of migrants such as thrushes.

Flowering dogwood is one of the iconic small trees of the South. Its shiny red berries are loaded with fat. Some 75 species of birds, including many migrants eat the berries of flowering dogwoods.



Out My Backdoor: Plants for Fall Migrants

Terry Johnson, Georgia DNR

Pokeberry is a perennial that can attain a height of 20 feet or more. Its purplish, juicy black berries, displayed on magenta stems, are consumed by more than 20 year-round resident birds, including mockingbirds and cardinals, as well as southbound migrants.



Virginia creeper is a vine that produces an abundance of bluish-black berries that are gobbled up by about 35 species of birds, including migrating warblers, thrushes, tanagers, grosbeaks, catbirds, vireos and others. While this is a valuable songbird food plant, do not recommend planting Virginia creeper near a building: It has a propensity to climb any structure. However, it does

well growing on fences, trellises and arbors.

Sassafras is probably a plant that you never dreamed of as being a great source of food for migratory birds. However, the small tree's blue-black fruits are among the most nutritional foods available to migrants. Species that eat them include eastern kingbirds, vireos, great crested flycatchers and gray catbirds.



I hope you can find places for these plants in your yard. If you do, you will be bringing more wildlife to your home while enhancing the definition of "bird feeding."



VIRGINIA CREEPER ~ *Parthenocissus quinquefolia*

Terry W. Johnson is a former Nongame program manager with the Wildlife Resources Division and executive director of The Environmental Resources Network, or TERN, friends group of the division's Nongame Conservation Section.

Local November Events

Critter Tales

November 4, 11 2:30—3:30 p.m.

(Second Saturday of every month)

Listen to a story about nature and watch it be brought to life

Sandy Creek Nature Center
205 Old Commerce Rd.

Diamond Hill Farm Stand

Every Thursday, 4-6 pm

Vegetables and fresh flowers are available on hand and pre-ordered. Every Thursday, 4–6 p.m. at Authentic Brewing Company.

www.diamondhillfarmathens.com

UGA Extension offices around the state are working hard at developing quality online presentations on various topics.

Visit the UGA Extension [event calendar](#) to see events happening local to our county as well as virtual opportunities.

Winter Wonderlights First Friends Friday

State Botanical Garden of Georgia

Hear from James Gilstrap, Asst. Director of Operations, about exciting changes to the Winter Wonderlights Display.

November 3rd, 9:00 am—10:30 am

Naturalists Walk

November 4th 10:00—11:00 p.m.

Sandy Creek Nature Center
205 Old Commerce Rd.

State Botanical Garden of Georgia Winter Lights

November 22—December 30

2450 S. Milledge Avenue

For further information:

wonderlights.uga.edu

Autumn Splendor Lakeside Loop Hike

Nov. 18th 12:00—4:00 p.m.

Sandy Creek Park
400 Bob Holman Road

African American Heritage and Urban Agricultural Festival

November 18th 11:00—2:00 p.m.

West Broad Farmers' Market
300 South Rocksprings Street

Nature Ramblers

Thursdays, November 2nd, 9th & 16

9:00– 10:30 AM

Learn more about the State Botanical Garden's natural areas, flora, and fauna, and enjoy inspirational readings about nature

State Botanical Gardens
245 S. Milledge Ave.

Community Field Day Fund Raiser

Nov. 11th, 10:00—2:00 p.m.

Pittard Park

115 Parkview Rd. , Winterville

<https://allevents.in/winterville/10000636667829617>

Local Farmers Markets



The **Athens Farmers Market** takes place on **Saturdays** from 8am-12pm at Bishop Park and **Wednesdays** from 5pm- 8pm at Creature Comforts Brewery. Be sure to visit [their website](#) for updates and details.

Saturday Market: Year-Round

Wednesday Market: March—November

Find them on Facebook: [@AthensFarmers-Market](#)

Follow them on Instagram:
[@athensfarmersmarket](#)



The **West Broad Farmers Market** takes place on **Saturdays** from 11am– 2 pm at 300 S. Rocksprings Street and on **Tuesdays** from 5pm– 8pm at Authentic Brewing Company.

Both markets run from April 1—December 16

Visit [their website](#) for more information.

MARIGOLD



MARKET

The **Winterville Farmers Market** takes place on **Saturdays** from 10am-2pm at Pittard Park. Visit [their website](#) for more information.

The market runs from April 15th– December 16th.

Find out more on Facebook:

[@marigoldmarketwinterville](#)

Instagram: [@marigoldmarketwinterville](#)

WEST BROAD FARMERS MARKET

2023 SPECIAL EVENTS CALENDAR

- | | |
|---------|---|
| April 1 | Opening Day Celebration
Baked Cookie Contest |
| May 6 | May Day Celebration
Berry Pie Contest |
| June 17 | Juneteenth Celebration
Red Velvet Cake Contest |
| July 15 | Dawg Days of Summer
Peach Cobbler Contest |
| Aug 26 | Health & Wellness Day
Pepper Eating Contest |
| Sept 30 | Youth Day Celebration
Salsa Showdown |
| Oct 28 | Fall Festival
Jack-O-Lantern Contest |
| Nov 18 | African American Heritage Festival
Thanksgiving Pie Contest |
| Dec 16 | Holiday Market & Craft Fair
Gingerbread House Contest |



EVERY SATURDAY
ONLINE & IN PERSON

**APRIL 1 -
DECEMBER 16**
11 AM - 2 PM

300 S. ROCKSPRINGS ST.
ATHENS, GA 30606

SHOP LOCAL WITH
YOUR FAVORITE
FARMERS, GROWERS,
BAKERS, & MAKERS


NOW EVERY WEEKEND!



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](#)

[Bugwood— Pest Images](#)

[Landscape Alerts Online](#)

[Georgia Turf](#)

[Pest Management Handbook](#)

[Pesticide Applicator Info](#)

[Free Online Webinars](#)

[SE Ornamental Horticulture Production & IPM Blog](#)

[UGA Center for Urban Agriculture](#)

[Georgia Certified Plant Professional](#)

[Extension Publications](#)

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:



Contact us:

275 Cleveland Road
Bogart, GA 30622
Phone: (706) 613-3640
Email: lney@uga.edu
vlc74120@uga.edu

Like us on Facebook:

