



Shades of Green

Agriculture and Natural Resources

E-Newsletter

October 2025



UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA
EXTENSION
Athens-Clarke County

A Note from Athens-Clarke County Agriculture & Natural Resources

Hello readers!

The autumn season is quickly approaching and the weather is slowly starting to cool down. Garden beds are being transferred over from tomatoes, squash and cucumbers to leafy greens, collards, carrots and kohlrabi. The green and burgundy okra is still holding on strong and there is lots to see and enjoy in the garden! We hope you enjoy this month's issue of 'Shades of Green'.

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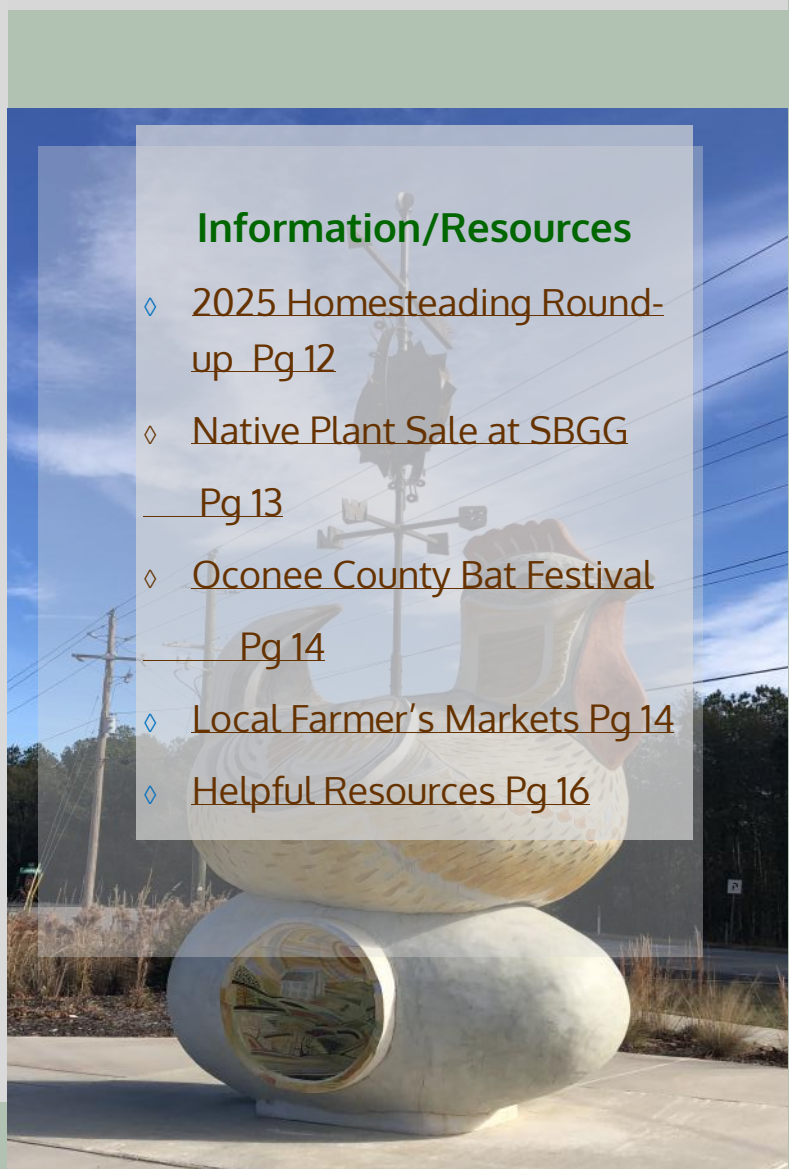
[Pumpkins are for Carving, Decorating and Eating](#) Pg 10



Large grasshopper enjoying the cotton plant in ACC Demonstration Garden!

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Scenes from the Demonstration & Education Garden



Resources for Home Preserving Okra

Kasey Christian, M.Ed.

National Center for Home Food Preservation

March 2015

Okra

Did you know that okra is also in the same family as cotton, cacao, and hibiscus (*Malvaceae* or *Mallow*)? One difference, however, is that it is high in soluble fiber, even though that comes from the mucilage that some people think of as too slimy. Perhaps you have noticed the hibiscus-like flowers that grow from the tall, upright okra plant. Usually just 5 to 6 days after flowering, the young seed pods are harvested for eating, plucked when they are 2½ to 3½ inches long. (Quick tip: If you're an okra grower, try harvesting these tender pods two to three times a week to increase the yield.)

Originating from Africa, okra now grows widely throughout the hot, southern portion of the United States, peaking in July and August. It is considered a warm, seasonal vegetable but is available year-round in the U.S. as an import.

Once you've had enough fresh southern-style fried okra, and already added it to your favorite gumbo recipe, preserve those precious pods by freezing, drying, pickling, or canning them. Handle okra pods carefully, as they will turn brown or black if bruised. Discard any bruised pods when selecting for preserving. If you have sensitive skin, then you may also want to wear cotton gloves while handling okra to protect your hands from the small spines on the plants and pods, which can cause an allergic reaction in some individuals.

Canning Okra

Okra is a low-acid food for canning purposes, so it must be canned with a pressure canner to ensure the safety of the final product. Using a proper pressure canning process and the recommended process times, okra can be canned by itself or with tomatoes. For step-by-step instructions for pressure canning in general, read the publication [Preserving Food: Using Pressure Canners](#) by the University of Georgia.

Directions for [Canning Okra](#) call for tender young pods to be washed and ends trimmed, then left whole or cut into 1-inch pieces. Okra should only be canned as a hot pack, with pre-heating the pods. Even though the instructions indicate the cooking liquid can be used for covering the pieces in the jars, you might prefer to have fresh boiling water to use in filling over the pieces in the jars. This helps reduce the mucilage and keep the liquid in the jars clearer after canning.

For [Canning Tomatoes with Okra](#), only a pressure process is available. Be sure to follow the instructions for the ratio of okra to tomatoes to be used.



Resources for Home Preserving Okra

Kasey Christian, M.Ed.
National Center for Home Food Preservation



Pickling Okra

Well known throughout the southern states, Pickled Okra makes a great, tangy snack. As with pickled products in general, [Pickled Dilled Okra](#) contains enough vinegar in proportion to solid food that the previously low-acid food becomes acidified. Unlike okra by itself, which is a low-acid food, properly acidified foods like pickled okra can be safely processed in a boiling water canner.

Freezing Okra

[Freezing Okra](#) is simple, but the best quality frozen okra will result from smoother rather than more ridged varieties because the smooth types do not split as easily. Follow the blanching instructions for the size of your pods to optimize quality in storage. Also quickly cool and drain pods, then pack, seal and freeze quickly as instructed. There is also an option for preparing okra to be frozen before freezing.

Drying Okra

[Drying Okra](#) is also a simple process, so long as you have a food dehydrator or an oven that registers 140°F. No blanching is required, and the provided directions described how to prepare the okra.

Think Safety


Preserving okra might be a creative process, but it's most important to think "safety". Follow tested recommendations for preserving okra. Creating your own canning procedures and recipes could result in a hazardous product, since the pH of raw okra is above 4.6.

When pickling, use commercially prepared vinegar with 5% acetic acid to be sure to achieve adequate acidification. Do not alter vinegar, food, or water proportions in a recipe or use vinegar with unknown acidity. Use only recipes with tested proportions of ingredients. There must be a minimum, uniform level of acid throughout the mixed product to prevent the growth of botulinum bacteria.

And finally, remember to use your preserved foods while they are still of good quality, and enjoy!

Additional References:

Izekor, S., & Katayama, R.W. (2002). Okra Production Update for Small Acreage Growers. Retrieved from <http://www.uaex.edu/publications/pdf/fsa-6101.pdf>
Westerfield, R. (2014). Home Garden Okra. Retrieved from http://extension.uga.edu/publications/files/pdf/C%20941_5.PDF



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FIELD REPORT

- Stories
- Expert Resources
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Home / [Expert Resources](#) / Fall Gardening: A Collection of Information and Resources

Topics: [Ants, Termites, and Other Pests](#), [Fruit](#), [Gardening](#), [Landscaping](#), [Lawn Maintenance](#), [Mulch](#), [Soil](#), [Vegetables](#)

Fall Gardening: A Collection of Information and Resources

AP 105
 Save PDF

UGA Extension contacts:
Sharon Dowdy, Kristin L. Slagle, Bob Westerfield, Clint Waltz, April Reese Sorrow, Stephanie Schupska, Paul Pugliese, and Amanda Swennes

- [Planting Tall Fescue Lawns](#)
- [Soil Bag Flower Beds: An Alternative to Soil Amending](#)
- [Plant Pansies Like the Pros](#)
- [Fall is Collard, Turnip and Cabbage Planting Time](#)
- [Plant Now to Pick Fruit Later](#)
- [Leaves: Nature's Homemade Mulch](#)
- [Doing a Few Chores Now Will Prepare Your Garden for Later](#)
- [Clean and Oil Garden Tools for Winter Storage](#)
- [Fire Ant Treatment Time](#)
- [Expert Advice and Free Resources Help Your Garden Grow Year-Round](#)

Planting Tall Fescue Lawns

In this resource

- Summary
- Planting Tall Fescue Lawns**
- Soil Bag Flower Beds: An Alternative to Soil Amending
- Plant Pansies Like the Pros
- Fall is Collard, Turnip, and Cabbage Planting Time
- Plant Now to Pick Fruit Later
- Leaves: Nature's Homemade Mulch
- Doing a Few Chores Now Will Prepare Your Garden for

Be sure to check out Field Report, the new place for Expert Resources, Stories and Events from UGA Extension: College of Agriculture & Environmental Sciences and College of Family & Consumer Sciences. You can now access all your UGA Extension knowledge in one place!

Expert Resources: [Expert Resources](#) | [CAES Field Report](#)

Stories: [Stories](#) | [CAES Field Report](#)

Fall Gardening: A Collection of Information and Resources [Fall Gardening: A Collection of Information and Resources](#) | [CAES Field Report](#)

Leaves: Nature's homemade mulch

By Paul Pugliese

Aug. 19, 2010 | 2 min read



Yellow leaves on a tree in the fall of the year

If you don't like raking, bagging and dragging leaves to the curb, recycle your leaves into mulch. Leaves are nature's way of creating a natural blanket for protecting tree and plant roots from extreme cold temperatures.

If you remove leaves, you must replace them with some other mulch. Large, whole leaves tend to get blown around and don't stay within their landscape bed boundaries. The key to successfully using leaves for mulch is to shred them with a lawn mower, bagging attachment or leaf shredder so that they won't blow away.

Use alone or with pine straw or bark

A three to five inch layer of shredded leaves can be used around trees, shrubs, annuals or perennials. If you don't like the look of shredded leaves, use them as a base under a top layer of bark or pine straw mulch. This will also reduce the amount of mulch that you need to buy.

Once you learn to appreciate the benefits of leaves, you might find yourself scouring the neighborhood at night to collect bags of leaves that others have discarded. And, leaves incorporated into the fall vegetable garden will become rich, dark humus by next spring.

Fall is the best time for planting trees, shrubs, vines, groundcovers, herbaceous perennials and cool-season annuals. Plants established in the fall require less water and are less likely to suffer from drought-related stress next summer.

New plants need mulch

Be sure to mulch new plants immediately after planting to reduce weeds and provide extra insulation. Even though these plants may go dormant on top, the roots underground will continue to grow all winter long.

Mulch will help roots of newly planted trees and shrubs acclimate to the cold faster while they are becoming established this winter. When spring arrives, these plants will have well-developed root systems and be better prepared for possible drought.

Soil Bag Flower Beds: An Alternative to Soil

Amending

Growing annual flowers in native soils can be a challenge in Georgia. Clay soils, though fertile, are often poorly drained, leading to root diseases. Sandy soils are generally less fertile, but may drain too quickly, making it hard to keep flowers watered and fed. Planting directly into a good bag of potting soil could be a better option.

University of Georgia Cooperative Extension experts say the key to improving soil is adding organic amendments. But sometimes, even adding organic matter yearly to flowerbeds doesn't guarantee bountiful blooms.



In my personal garden, pine tree roots were a problem. It was difficult to work the compost in, and then the tree roots would grow up into the improved soil and take up the water and nutrients that were meant for the annual plants.

This spring, tired of working so hard to keep my summer annuals growing in clay soils and going broke from buying containers, I decided to try planting right in the bags of potting soil. First I did some research. I read UGA Extension publications online and found some information on growing vegetables in bags, but not much on flowers.

I decided to conduct my own research. First, I bought three 2-cubic-foot bags of potting soil from the home improvement store and laid them out where I wanted my flowers. I chose a potting mix that was moisture-retentive for summer planting, but for fall or winter plantings I would suggest using another mix. Waterlogged soils can kill annual plants.

Laying the bag flat, I cut drainage slits into one side of the bag. Next, I turned the bag over into place. Once I settled the bag and smoothed the soil, I used a razor knife to cut out a rectangle, leaving about 2 to 3 in. of plastic all the way around to help keep the soil from washing out of the bag when I water the plants.

As it was summer, I added begonias and a small amount of slow-release fertilizer. Lastly, I mulched over and around the bags with pine straw.

A few weeks out, the only drawback was keeping the mulch covering the plastic bag. The pine straw kept slipping and exposing the plastic. In an effort to prevent this, I cut two strips from a burlap coffee sack and tucked them over the front of the bags. This helped keep the pine straw in place.

Overall, the bag-planting experiment worked well. I plan to try this method this fall using violas, kale and other cool season annuals. If you have problems with your soil, give this technique a try for your fall annuals.

Plant Pansies Like the Pros

With their colorful faces and cold-weather tolerance, pansies are an easy landscape addition if they are installed correctly. A University of Georgia plant expert who specializes in helping Georgia's landscapers says planting like the pros is the best way to have beautiful flowers and avoid heartaches and backaches.

"If you're going to spend your money on flowers, you might as well do it right," said Gary Wade, a UGA Cooperative Extension horticulturist.

During his 26 years helping make Georgia more beautiful through plants, he's come up with a few pansy-planting pointers.

Top Tips



Don't plant more than you can maintain.

"Annual flowers are high maintenance and require a lot of care to keep them looking their best," Wade said.

Plant at the right time of year.

Georgia has three pansy zones. In cooler north Georgia, install them between Sept. 15 and Oct. 1. In middle Georgia, plant between Oct. 1 and Oct. 15. In warm south Georgia, wait until Oct. 15 to Nov. 1 to plant.

"If you plant too early, the warm weather can make pansies stretch and become leggy," Wade said.

Landscapers usually purchase flowers grown in 4-in. containers. These plants cost more than those grown in smaller six-packs. But because they have larger root systems, they will establish more quickly, produce more flowers earlier and be ready to weather the winter.

Lots of Color, Variety of Faces

Pansies come in a wide variety of colors. Wade suggests planting white, gold and yellow pansies with purple. Bright yellow and orange blooms go well with darker maroon and blue. The combinations are almost limitless. "There are some plants out now that are pretty much UGA red," Wade said.

Pansy blooms can be solid colors, or they can have shades of pastel colors. Traditional pansies have dark centers surrounded by a lighter color (known as faced pansies). For smaller flowers, plant violas.

Planting Perfection

After choosing the perfect colors in larger pots and buying at the right time of year, planting is the next step toward pansy perfection, Wade said.

1. Choose a spot that gets full sun and drains well to prevent disease problems.
2. Prepare the bed. Commercial landscapers plant pansies on beds raised 6 to 12 in. above the surrounding soil. This assures good drainage and improves visibility. When re-planting old beds, remove old mulch to avoid plant diseases. Top new beds with 4 in. of organic matter (such as compost), and work it into the bed about a foot deep.
3. Broadcast fertilizer, such as 10-10-10, at a rate of 2 cups per 100 sq ft over the bed. Rake it into the top 4 in. of soil.
4. Plan your bed. Lay out the plants in their pots on the bed, spacing them 8 to 10 in. apart. Rearrange the pots until you get the bed looking just right.
5. Plant the pansy bed from the inside out so you won't crush any plants. Carefully remove each plant from its container, dig a hole and plant it.
6. Mulch plants with 2 to 3 in. of pine straw, pine bark mini-nuggets or shredded hardwood mulch. Carefully place the mulch around the plants, and brush excess mulch off the leaves, Wade said.
7. Water the plants with a hand-held hose or watering can. Once the bed is thoroughly wet, apply liquid fertilizer, such as 20-20-20 or 15-30-15, which is absorbed by both foliage and roots.
8. Keep the bed moist, but not too wet. Water between 6 a.m. and 9 a.m. "Don't water in late evening because the water won't evaporate and will encourage diseases," Wade said. Apply liquid fertilizer once a month throughout the winter.
9. Groom pansy beds once a week by removing spent blossoms and seedpods. Seedpods zap the plant's energy. Old blossoms may harbor diseases.

Pumpkins are for carving, eating and decorating

By Sharon Dowdy

Oct. 18, 2019 | 4 min read



'Orange Bulldog' is an improved pumpkin variety developed by UGA scientists from germplasm collected in the jungles of South America. It has greater levels of resistance to viruses than conventional pumpkins. 'Orange Bulldog' made its debut in 2004 and has consistently produced yields of 13,000 to 20,000 pounds per acre in north and south Georgia.

Georgia farmers devote about 900 acres to growing pumpkins — technically a squash and a cousin to the cucumber. Most Georgia-grown pumpkins come from the northernmost part of the state where the climate is cooler and there is less disease pressure.

Home gardeners who want to grow their own pumpkins for the fall season needed to have their seeds in the soil between May and early July, as it takes most varieties 75 to more than 90 days to mature. How you plan to use your pumpkin — in a pie, in a cornucopia, carved with a scary face — determines which variety you should grow. The smallest are typically used for table displays, medium-sized pumpkins are best for pies, and larger ones make the best carving pumpkins. Many smaller pumpkins have extremely hard shells and can be exceptionally difficult to try to carve.

According to University of Georgia Cooperative Extension horticulturists, growing pumpkins can be difficult, as diseases like powdery mildew and a range of viruses, as well as insects like vine borers, love them too. Selecting a disease-resistant variety like the UGA-bred 'Orange Bulldog' will give gardeners a leg up. Organic growers in particular love the variety because it can be grown without applying pesticides.



The ‘Orange Bulldog’ is a standard jack-o’-lantern-sized pumpkin, but features colors ranging from salmon to burnt orange. It took UGA College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences scientist George Boyhan years of selecting the most round, orange squashes to generate seeds that would routinely produce a large, orange squash that could be used like a traditional pumpkin.

He bred ‘Orange Bulldog’ from germplasm collected from the jungles of South America and released it in 2004. It’s so popular now that seeds are always in high demand and often unavailable.

Some Georgia 4-H members grow pumpkins to show off their gardening skills and to compete against their peers in the annual 4-H pumpkin-growing contest. The winning pumpkins typically weigh between 400 and 600 pounds.

According to UGA Extension horticulturist Tim Coolong, producers in Michigan and Wisconsin have grown pumpkins that weigh more than 1,000 pounds.

“In order to get really big pumpkins, you need cooler nights,” Coolong said. “The cooler night weather allows those pumpkins to get bigger. We can certainly grow pumpkins that weigh several hundred pounds in south Georgia, but to really get a lot of size out of them, it would help if you lived in Blairsville [Georgia] or a similar area.”

After carving the Halloween pumpkin, the seeds can be dried and roasted by tossing them with oil and/or salt and placing them in a preheated oven at 250 degrees Fahrenheit for 10 to 15 minutes.

Smaller pumpkins, called “pie pumpkins,” can be cooked down and served up in pies at Thanksgiving and Christmas. (Tried and true Southerners prefer sweet potato pie, although some palates can’t discern between the two.)

Pumpkins can also be canned, dried or pickled. UGA Extension specialists say freezing is the easiest and safest way to preserve pumpkins.

“There are no safe, tested home-canning procedures for mashed pumpkins or pumpkin butters either,” said UGA Extension Food Safety Specialist Elizabeth Andress. “If you guess wrong, the result could be botulism (a rare, but serious illness caused by foodborne bacteria).”

Due to natural acidity levels, home canners should use certain precautions when canning pumpkin to make sure it’s safe to eat. Smaller pumpkins with hard rinds and stringless, mature pulp are the best to use for pressure canning cubed pumpkin.

U.S. Department of Agriculture processing directions can be found at nchfp.uga.edu.



2025 Homesteading Roundup

Grow Your Skills, Feed Your Future: A Homesteading Experience for All Levels

Friday

10 October 2025
09:00 AM

**Lincoln County
Ag Center**

12080 Rowland York Drive
Lincolnton, GA 30817

\$25

Register at:
<https://uga.questionpro.com/home>
by October 3rd, 2025
Space is limited!

8:30 AM

DOORS OPEN FOR REGISTRATION

9:00 AM

**OPENING REMARKS &
PRESENTATION: UNDERSTANDING SOIL
HEALTH**

Dr. Laura Ney,
ANR Agent Clarke
County

GROUP ROTATIONS:

10:00 AM

STATION 1: PRUNING WORKSHOP

Sierra Burke,
ANR Agent Hart
County

**STATION 2: BACKYARD LIVESTOCK
HEALTH AND WELLNESS**

Robyn Stewart,
ANR Agent Lincoln
County

11:30 AM

LUNCH BREAK- LUNCH PROVIDED

12:40 PM

**PRESENTATION:
COTTAGE FOOD LICENSING AND FOOD
SAFETY**

Joseph Harrison,
Program Coordinator
Extension Food Science
and Technology

GROUP ROTATIONS:

1:30 PM

STATION 1: SEED SAVING

**STATION 2: FOOD PRESERVATION
& FREEZER JAM ACTIVITY**

Emily Williams,
FACS Agent Oglethorpe &
Madison Counties

3:00 PM

CLOSING REMARKS



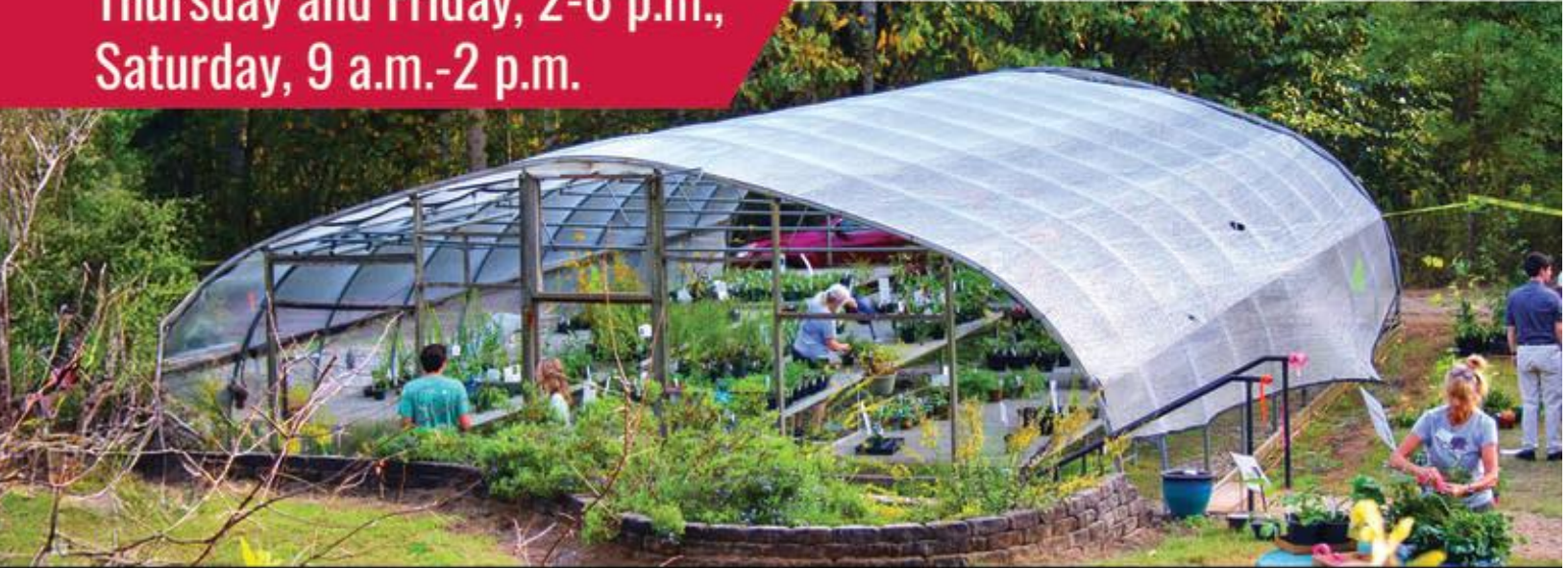
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14th Annual Native Plant Sale

Oct. 2-4
Thursday and Friday, 2-6 p.m.,
Saturday, 9 a.m.-2 p.m.



State Botanical Garden of Georgia
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

Oconee County

Bat Festival

October 13th, 2025

4-8pm

Heritage Park

**2543 Macon Hwy
Watkinsville, GA 30677**

Event Schedule:

4:15	(Talk) Bats of Georgia
5:15	Costume Contest
6:00	(Talk) Helping Native Bats
6:45	Bat House Building Demonstration
7:00	Bat Trivia
7:30	Bat Walk

Other Festival Activities:

-  Trick or Treating
-  Crafts & Games
-  Bat Garden Plant Sale
-  Food, Freebies, & Door Prizes

ADMISSION IS FREE!

Questions? Contact Oconee County ANR Agent, Carsen Dean
706-542-7078 crd72388@uga.edu

Athens Seed Lawn & Garden



UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA
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Oconee County



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DONOR ORGAN TRANSPLANT SERVICE



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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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[Pest Management
Handbook](#)

[Pesticide Applicator
Info](#)

[Georgia Certified Plant
Professional](#)

[Bugwood— Pest Images](#)

[UGA Center for Urban
Agriculture](#)

[Extension Publications](#)

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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.

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