



# Shades of Green

Athens-Clarke County Agriculture and Natural Resources E-Newsletter

February 2021

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

Hello readers and happy February! We hope you all are doing well and are looking forward to this second month of 2021. We are looking forward to kicking off even more of our programming this month. Our [2021 Virtual Green Thumb Lecture Series](#) officially begins on February 10. Make sure to check out the [flyer](#) later in this issue. We are also hosting an online beginners beekeeping class this month. Take a look at the [“Stay in the Loop!”](#) page of this newsletter to check out this class as well as other offerings.

We are excited to announce a new addition to this newsletter, and hopefully future newsletters. It is our [“Master Gardener Project Highlight”](#). Our ANR Agent, Laura Ney, will be highlighting on different volunteer projects our Athens-Area Master Gardeners have been working hard on. Make sure to take a look!

It may still be cold outside, but spring is soon approaching! Let us know if you would like any advice or have any questions if you are planning a spring garden or landscape. We are happy to assist and connect you to helpful resources.

We hope you enjoy this month’s issue of “Shades of Green”.

Take care,  
Athens-Clarke County Agriculture and Natural Resources





# Master Gardener Project Highlight

**By Laura Ney**

Athens-Clarke County Extension

Agriculture and Natural Resources Agent



## “Planting a Row for the Hungry”

For over twenty years, the Athens Area Master Gardeners have been tending gardens and growing fresh food for those in need, in Athens and surrounding communities. The original Athens Area Plant a Row or “PAR” garden was at a farm in East Athens. The program then moved to a small area behind Chase Elementary School for a few years. In the first six years that the gardens existed, 3,600 pounds of fresh produce was grown and donated to area food banks.

At their current locations of Thomas Orchards and Clarke Middle School, the Plant a Row gardens are going strong. In the last 15 years, the Clarke Middle PAR has donated 20,395 pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables to the Athens Area Emergency Food Bank and other area food banks. This last year alone, the Thomas Orchard PAR yielded 2,273 pounds of produce. This produce was donated to the Support our Seniors program and Food for Kids program in Oconee County.

Among the crops grown in PAR gardens are tomatoes, peppers, yellow squash, zucchini, green

beans, cucumbers, okra, herbs, sugar snap peas, southern peas, Irish potatoes, sweet potatoes, eggplant, lettuce, collards, turnips and green onions. These gardens are not only a source of needed fresh food for our communities but are also teaching gardens for the volunteers who participate in them. Over the years, hundreds of Master Gardener Extension Volunteers have gained valuable knowledge and experience in vegetable production practices such as variety selection, planting, caring for plants, pest management, and harvesting.

We are so proud of our incredible Master Gardener Extension Volunteers, who, despite the extra effort and precautions required while working during a pandemic, gave 1,109 hours of their time to provide food to our community. I want to give a special thank you to our Clarke Middle PAR project chairs, Merry Anderson and Pamela Bracken and our Oconee PAR project chair, Dr. Gary Wade and Bob Quinn. We are also very thankful to Clarke Middle school and to Jerry and Paula Thomas, owners of Thomas Orchards, for the resources and support they have provided, to make these gardens possible.



# Seed Catalogs Are Arriving!

By Becky Griffin



It is a great time of year for gardeners. The seed catalogs are arriving and our gardeners are as beautiful as our imagination, and the photos from the catalogs. These catalogs are mesmerizing. The photos are works of art and the vegetable descriptions are literature. Many of them contain information on vegetable history, how to plant, and how to use the produce. Flowers are described by height, scent, color and attractiveness to pollinators. And, oh so many new varieties to try!

## Garden Catalog Tips

Robert Westerfield, UGA vegetable specialist, gives us some tips on navigating our way through these catalogs and all of the vegetable choices.

Tip #1 If you are gardening for high yields or dependable results, use recommended varieties for your area. **UGA's Vegetable Planting Chart** has a list of varieties that have proven to do well in Georgia. These are the least risky choices.

Tip #2 When trying a new vegetable variety order only a small quantity to start. Experimenting is

one of the great pleasures of the garden. Succeed or fail, it is fun to try. Just don't over-invest in seeds until you know how they will perform in your garden.

Tip #3 Remember the vegetables you grew up with may not necessarily be the best ones to plant now. There are many improved hybrid varieties that can hold up to our disease and heat issues. A good example is Silver Queen corn. While popular, it is definitely not the best variety to grow in Georgia. There are many new corn hybrids on the market that are much sweeter and maintain their sweetness longer when stored.

Hopefully, these tips will be a helpful guide as you enjoy making your 2021 garden seed selections. One bonus tip especially for school gardeners – the photos in the catalogs can be laminated and used as plant markers or in gardening lessons.

Happy Reading.

*(Becky Griffin is the Community and School Garden Coordinator for University of Georgia Extension)*

# How Do I Get Grass to Grow Under Trees?

By Willie Chance

**G**rass and trees do not get along. Have you ever noticed that in the woods, no grass grows under trees? Trees and turf are not good neighbors.

Trees and turf both need the same resources - sunlight, water and fertilizer. When these two compete - the lawn usually loses. Often we blame the death of the grass on lack of light. This may be true but I believe that more of the problem is due to lack of water. Trees are very efficient at drawing water out of the ground.

I would prefer that we not try to grow grass under trees. It is such a struggle and requires so much work and water. Why not just replace the grass with mulch? This would look nice and may improve the health of the tree. You can often use mulched areas just like you would grassed areas.

Mulch is free or inexpensive and easy to maintain. If you want more color, you can plant a ground cover but this will dramatically increase

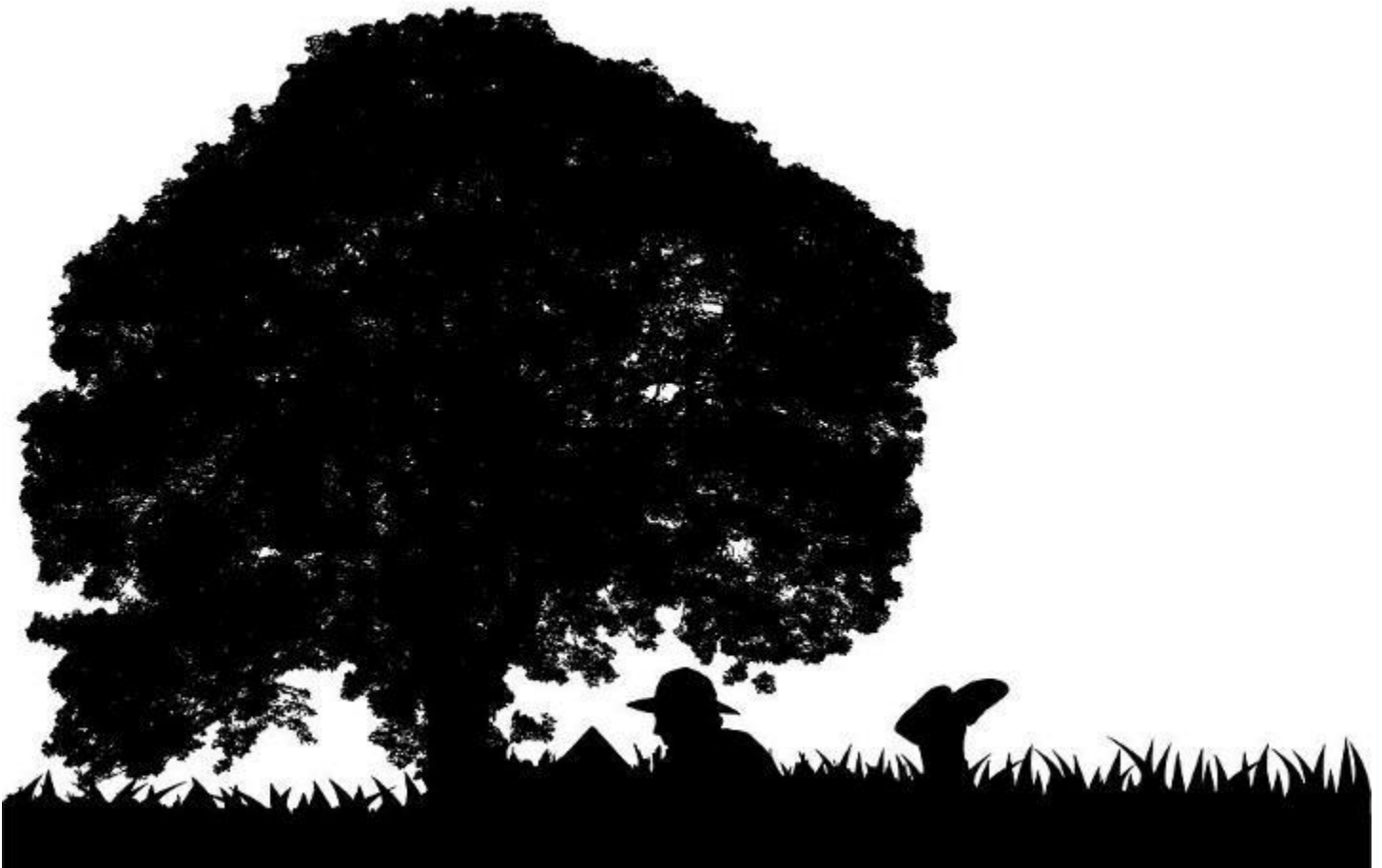
maintenance.

If you still want to grow grass - plant a shade tolerant grass. St. Augustine is most shade tolerant followed by Zoysia and then centipede. You can also remove or limb-up trees to let more light in. When pruning trees, remember that your trees are more valuable than your turf. You can replace turf but not trees!

Watering properly will help grass grow in difficult areas. Water the soil deeply and then let it dry out before watering again. Apply three - quarter inch of water when the soil is dry and then again as needed. This will usually be about once a week during very, dry weather. Do not water more often than twice a week!

Hard compacted soils may also be a problem under trees. Of course, you cannot till under trees. Mulch would be a great option in areas like these.

*(Willie Chance is a previous Extension Agent in Houston County, Georgia)*





# Fire Pits are Hot Stuff

By Greg Sheppard



Last night my wife and I enjoyed relaxing outside in our Adirondack chairs and watching the moon rise over the mountains. The experience wouldn't have been near as pleasant if we didn't have the benefit of a warm fire to ward off the winter chill. Outdoor fire pits and garden fireplaces are more popular now than ever. Maybe you should consider adding one to your property. It is an easy way to make your landscape more enjoyable year-round.

There is something about a campfire that has drawn folks together since the days of the caveman. I bet you remember toasting marshmallows or cooking hotdogs when you were a kid in scouts. Well, with a fire pit of your own, you don't have to wait until you can go camping to repeat the experience. If you're not the camping type, then a simple fire pit is even better. You can have all the fun and fellowship a campfire brings and then you can retreat inside to a comfortable bed instead of sleeping on the ground.

Fire pits can be included into virtually any outdoor seating or entertaining area that is on ground level. The simplest design is to mark a circular area 3-4 feet in diameter where you would like to locate the fire. Line this area with sand. Then buildup a stone ring to encircle the fire pit. There are many options for this stone ring. You can make it as simple or elaborate as you like. Many gardeners are finding the decorative fire pit rings sold in garden catalogs are just what they are looking for. You can find these metal rings starting at about \$50. Many of them feature decorative cut outs of trees, bears, or other "woodsy" themes. Some folks prefer a simple fire pit that is sunken into a patio but these may not be unsuitable for families with very small children.

Maybe you prefer the look of an outside "room" instead of a casual fire pit. Outdoor fireplaces and

chimneys can be used to provide that feeling. The first time I saw a garden chimney was on a TV gardening show that featured an upscale California landscape. Since that time more and more folks have discovered the joys of including a fireplace structure. They are not just for the rich and famous. I have seen some wonderful outdoor fireplaces built into stacked stone retaining walls that surround patios.

Garden fire features of all types seem to be increasingly common in our area. For those that find an outdoor fireplace and chimney too elaborate for their taste there are many other options. You can find different styles of pre-fabricated outdoor fireplaces, fire bowls, and pottery chiminea in the larger garden centers and catalogs.

Regardless of whether you purchase a metal outdoor fireplace or build a fire pit or an elaborate garden chimney safety is an important issue. Keep any fire feature well away from the structure of the house. Never place them on wooden decks. Radiant heat from metal fireplaces can start a fire on wooden decks as well as dry grass or leaves. Also, don't burn paper in outdoor fire features. The burning ash and embers can travel long distances and still be capable of starting a fire. I like to keep a water hose or at the very least a 5 gallon bucket of water nearby while relaxing by our fire pit. Never leave a fire unattended in an outside fire structure. Sudden wind gusts and an errant spark can cause disaster. Also be sure that any outdoor fire is completely extinguished before heading inside for the evening.

Don't let cool weather run you inside and spoil your enjoyment of the outdoors. Get started on a fire pit. They are the hottest trend in gardening these days!

*(Greg Sheppard is a previous County Extension Agent in Lumpkin County, Georgia)*

*Athens-Clarke County Extension*

# *Virtual Green Thumb Lectures*

## *2021 Free Monthly Gardening Class Series*



### **February: Raised Beds and Garden Fences**

Please join us online for an informative presentation on topics including:

- How to easily build a raised bed
- Options for filling your beds, what and when to plant your beds
- “Show & tell” of the basics of fences and fence materials for your garden or your property
- Strategies in addition to fencing that discourage deer

Gardeners of all experience levels are welcome.

#### **WHEN:**

Wednesday, February 10 · 6:00-7:30 pm

#### **WHERE:** ONLINE via Zoom.com

Specific link to join Zoom meeting will be sent to the email you register with

#### **TO REGISTER:**

Registration is required. Please register by February 9 by visiting

**[www.accgov.com/gardening](http://www.accgov.com/gardening)**

#### ***For questions:***

Contact Laura Ney, Extension Agent at  
706-613-3640 or lney@uga.edu

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# Stay in the loop! (local or online activities and events)



## Athens-Clarke County Extension Online Beekeeping For Beginners

On February 17 from 6:00pm-7:30pm, join us online for an informative presentation on beginner beekeeping.

To register, visit

<https://www.accgov.com/anrclasses>



## Athens-Clarke County Leisure Services Trails and Open Space Programs

Visit [their website](#) for a full list of fun outdoor trails and activities



The **State Botanical Garden of Georgia** is open for the public, but make sure to check out [their website](#) for updates and hours.

Contact the State Botanical Garden of Georgia by emailing [garden@uga.edu](mailto:garden@uga.edu) or calling 706-542-1244.

- [Discover education activities for home.](#)
- Take a [virtual tour](#) to see what's blooming.
- Check out their [event calendar](#) for more offerings.



**UGA Extension** offices around the state are working hard at developing quality online presentations.

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



# Join Athens-Clarke County 4-H!



Students in 5<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> grades in Athens-Clarke County can sign up for 4-H now. The mission of Georgia 4-H is to assist youth in acquiring knowledge, developing life skills, and forming attitudes that will enable them to become self-directing, productive and contributing members of society. 4-H meetings will look different this year and are online. There is no charge to be a member or participate in a competition.

To start your 4-H Adventure e-mail the ACC 4-H Agent, Elizabeth Conway, at [ebarber@uga.edu](mailto:ebarber@uga.edu) today!



Virtual 4-H Programs can be viewed on the ACC 4-H website:

<https://tinyurl.com/acc4hvirtual>

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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:

<a href="#"><u>Find My Local Extension Office</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Bugwood— Pest Images</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Landscape Alerts Online</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Pest Management Handbook</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Georgia Turf</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Free Online Webinars</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>SE Ornamental Horticulture Production &amp; IPM Blog</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Pesticide Applicator Info</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Georgia Certified Plant Professional</u></a>
	<a href="#"><u>UGA Center for Urban Agriculture</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Extension Publications</u></a>

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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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