

The New Leaf

Coweta County Master Gardener Extension Volunteers Newsletter
University of Georgia Extension – Coweta County

FEBRUARY 2023

*PATTY ELLIS, MGEV
PRESIDENT*

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A couple of days ago I walked out onto my back patio at about 8:30 PM. It was a foggy and warm evening, and the light from the corner of the house revealed a spider web that had been spun on the frame of a pop-up greenhouse. Each part of the web was draped in drops of moisture from the fog and sparkled as the light hit it. I marveled at the beauty and intricacy of the web and how each component fit together in its form to carry out a necessary function.

The January BYA presentation by Rose Guerra on Winter Wildlife in Georgia also touched on the theme of how amazing nature can be in all of its variations. She discussed how generations of evolutionary adaptations have resulted in some species seeking warmer spots in winter, while others have developed the ability to withstand the cold by hibernating or going into a state of suspended animation with parts of their bodies freezing. If you've never seen Rose speak, I highly recommend you attend her next presentation of the BYA when it's scheduled. She's an engaging and informative presenter.



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It is also amazing to watch this group of volunteers work together to create and bring projects big and small to life. Work is beginning in earnest on the spring plant sale now that the heater in the greenhouse has been replaced. Sign-ups are filled to mix potting medium and plant seeds and cuttings that will grow into the plants that will be sold. The sale will generate the money we use to fund scholarships, allowing horticulture students to advance their education, as well as allowing us to bring educational programs to our local audiences. Cathy LeBar gave a great post meeting continuing education program in January about pets and toxic plants. Now our pets will be safer because we know which plants to avoid in our homes and landscapes. Our Boys and Girls club committee is cleaning the planting areas in preparation for another program teaching kids about all aspects of gardening. The ripple effect of each of these activities is enormous in its scope and reach. That seed you plant today will have lasting effects for years to come.

So please keep an eye on your email inbox for workday sign ups and committee meeting notifications. Your contributions of time and energy are more important than you think!

MAY 2023 GARDEN TOUR

• • • • • Save the Date!! • • • • •



Coweta Master Gardener Extension Volunteer

Spring Garden Tour

Saturday, May 20, 2023

9:00am — 3:00pm

Questions? Call 770-254-2620



An Equal Opportunity, Affirmative Action, Veteran, Disability Institution

Next meeting of the Garden Tour Committee will be on Wednesday, February 8th at 2:00 p.m. in the Don Morris meeting room.

BYA

Submitted by Lynda Matthews

The January BYA was as timely as it gets. Who knew our weather would drop to the single digits and remain below freezing for three days? What could be a better time for Rose Guerra to speak on winter wildlife in the garden, a most appropriate topic. We love Rose and her spirit and passion. We hope to have her again this year, just not during this cold weather.

Speaking of weather, has the low temperature caused havoc in your yard and garden? Before you do any pruning, wait until after the February 14th BYA. Our own MGEV super stars, Allen Summerlin, Dan Gentry and C.R. Phillips will be talking about when, where, and why to prune.

It's a new year and a new format. Come join us.

FEBRUARY IN THE GARDEN

- Good time to prune.
- Prune vines and brambles like grapes, raspberries and blackberries.
- Georgia Arbor Day will be celebrated February 13-19, 2023; plant a native tree in your backyard, an oak perhaps.
- Cut back ornamental grasses before new growth starts.
- Clean out bird boxes and get ready for returning birds.
- Some cool season crops may be planted when soil is above 40 degrees.

FEBRUARY PRUNING HINTS FROM CR

- Annuals: Remove faded blooms from plants as they occur (Just like in January).
- Bulbs: Remove faded blooms as they occur. Leave the foliage until it turns yellow and collapses.
- Edibles: Blueberries tend to grow tall sprouts in the center of the bush. Now is a good time to remove them. Don't prune branches that are within picking distance. The horizontal branches within 6' of the ground will bear the most fruit.
- Houseplants: Most plants will naturally lean toward their light source. Unless they are turned once per month, indoor plants acquire an unbalanced look. Small potted plants can be turned by hand. Larger plants in pots can be placed on wheeled plant holders designed for easy turning. Ungainly plants can be pruned back by half to correct asymmetric growth.
- Lawns: Your lawn should be dormant this month, and no mowing will be necessary.
- Perennials and Ornamental Grasses: While there are no pruning activities this month, it's an excellent time for transplanting, watering during mild spells in the weather, and fertilizing with a liquid 20-20 fertilizer.
- Roses: Prune rose bushes severely between now and March 15th; the new growth that is produced will bear most of this year's rose blooms. Wait until June to prune climbing roses. Remove dead, weak, or damaged canes. Make a flat cut $\frac{1}{2}$ inch below the dead or damaged portion. Cut away limbs that rub against each other or cross through the center of the plant. To shorten a living branch, make a 45-degree-angle-cut $\frac{1}{4}$ inch above a bud that points outward from the plant. If your rose has been pruned every year, prune back the size of the plant by $\frac{1}{3}$. If the rosebush is completely overgrown, $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{2}{3}$ of the plant might need to be removed.
- Shrubs: Continue to prune deciduous shrubs to remove dead wood, rejuvenate them, or keep them from getting too big for the space in which they are growing (as when they block the view from windows or spread out into a pathway). One way to avoid the need to prune constantly is to select the right plant for the right place. If shrubs have overgrown their original location or become straggly and spindly in appearance, prune them back severely while they are dormant. Prune back azaleas, spiraea, privet, and Abelia X grandiflora to a height of 12 inches. You may choose to stretch out the pruning over a period of years. Remove $\frac{1}{3}$ of the oldest wood in the first year; in the second year, take $\frac{1}{2}$ of the remaining oldest stems and cut back long shoots that grew from the previous season; in the third year, prune out whatever old wood (the oldest wood has the thickest stems) is remaining, and prune new shoots just enough for a pleasing effect. Prune camellias once they finish flowering. Remove faded blooms and snip back the tips of branches for an overall pleasing effect. Prune evergreen shrubs like boxwood, holly, anise, leucothoe, and others before new growth begins. Remove dead wood and tip branches to a desired height.

- **Trees:** This is a good month to prune deciduous trees. Because there are no leaves, you can see the form of the tree and determine where you need to prune. When pruning to remove a large limb do so in stages so the branch doesn't tear and split back on the tree, peeling off a section of bark. Do not make a flush cut. Prune back to where the swollen part of the branch comes out of the tree. This is called the branch collar. Sharp, good quality tools are best, and regular maintenance will ensure they last a long time. Hand-pruners are ideal for heading and thinning stems up to 1/2 inch in diameter. Loppers are ideal for selective pruning of larger branches. Saws are useful for branches over 1 inch in diameter. Tips for pruning your newly planted trees: 1.) Remove dead or diseased branches, 2.) Remove broken branches below the point of injury back to a healthy branch, 3.) Prune to remove branches that are crossing or rubbing. Wounds can develop where branches rub, creating an environment conducive to pest and disease problems, and 4.) Remove branches that form narrow V-shaped crotches with the main trunk. These crotches are weak and may break in the future. To minimize the problem, select improved varieties of trees with strong branching habits
- **Vines and Ground Covers:** This is a good month to get out the lawn mower and cut back your tattered or winter-damaged monkey grass. By cutting it back now, there will be a reduced chance of cutting off new growth. Set the mower at the highest setting and mow down the foliage. The grass should be about 3 inches high when you finish. If you have only a small patch of monkey grass, you can cut it back with a pair of sharp shears. Once spring arrives, fresh dark-green leaves will quickly cover up the ragged edges.

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LOOK FOR A NEW FEATURE

Have you considered how you will complete the new 10-hour requirement in 2023 for continuing education?

Each month Dale Senko will be reviewing Continuing Education Programs that are available to Master Gardeners, in person and online. *If you want to share a review of what you have learned from an online lecture you have attended, send a short write-up to this newsletter, and we will include it in this column.*

Stephanie and Patty have suggested all sorts of ways to acquire your hours this year. Review their emails.

In a nutshell, here are four suggestions for you to easily acquire the hours:

- Attend BYA. Monthly BYA attendance will give you all the hours you need.
- Attend education sessions following Coweta MGEV Volunteer Meetings.
- Tune into Thoughtful Thursdays. Each session is 30-45 minutes, scheduled live February through November and accessed from MGLOG. Previous years presentations are also available.
- Attend garden seminars in local counties, in-person and online. Sign-up for CLIPS to receive info on upcoming education events, or travel overseas with Denise Best on her Cornwall tour.

A number of counties in Georgia conduct online sessions on YouTube. If you subscribe to CLIPS you will receive emails with lists of upcoming educational events/YouTube lectures. To subscribe, send an email to CLIPSGMGA@gmail.com. Georgia Native Plant Society has an online conference Feb 18-19. Find information at <https://gnps.org/education/2023-georgia-native-plant-society-symposium/>. Master Gardeners in Fulton County have scheduled virtual sessions every Sunday in March.

Be sure to take keep track of the event title and length because you will need it when you report the hours in MGLOG.

CONTINUING EDUCATION REVIEW

Submitted by Dale Senko



“Introduction to Growing and Using Medicinal Herbs”
UGA online presentation on YouTube
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hwVZN15YelQ>

This is a 54-minute presentation by a UGA staff member and a county extension coordinator. There are three segments which cover herb growing, use and questions and answers. Each is about 20 minutes long. The “Growing” segment is a general overview of how to grow herbs and harvest. It is a good review with a few new pieces of information for even the experienced master gardener. In the “Using” segment, the presenter speaks to the benefits of certain herbs and includes cooking tips. She gives an on-camera cooking demonstration for preparing hibiscus tacos. The last segment answers all sorts of questions and covers information which may be new to you. The speaker mentions growing medicinal herbs in forests which piqued my interest. Someone asked about whether her frozen rosemary will come back. Another take-away for me was about not drawing a distinct line between culinary and medicinal herbs. Culinary herbs contain vitamin content, so in that sense, they are medicinal.

GNPS PLANT OF THE YEAR

2023 Plant of the Year: Spotted beebalm

Valerie Boss

Spotted beebalm (*Monarda punctata*) is a beautiful and hardy herb, and the GNPS welcomes it as the 2023 Plant of the Year. A member of the mint (Lamiaceae) family, its natural habitats are woodland margins, sand hills, and coastal plains east of the Rocky Mountains.



Insects adore spotted beebalm. Its blossoms are a source of pollen and nectar for numerous wasps, including *Sphex pensylvanicus*, *Monobia quadridens*, and *Ammophila procera*; honey bees; specialized native bees, such as *Dufourea monardae*, *Perdita gerhardi*, and *Protandrena abdominalis*; and at least 7 species of butterfly and moth. In addition, native *Monardas* in general are larval hosts for many moths, including *Anterastria teratophora*, *Lintneria eremitus*, and at least 3 species of genus *Pyrausta*.

Spotted beebalm grows to 2-3' in height. Its stems are erect, 4-sided, simple or sometimes branched, and have soft hairs. Leaves are opposite, hairy, lanceolate, and toothed, growing to about 3" long. Like other members of the mint family, the leaves are pungent and rich in aromatic essential oil, which is medicinal if used with caution. Native Americans historically employed spotted beebalm as a remedy for a variety of ills (detailed information can be found by searching the American Native Ethnobotany Database). Most modern users take it as a very weak tea for respiratory or digestive ailments. The leaves can also be sprinkled on food as a flavoring, but sparingly, owing to their potential toxicity.

Spotted beebalm is an excellent choice for a rock or herb garden. Drought tolerant, it likes plenty of light and well-drained soil, and can handle stony or sandy conditions. Individual plants survive only a few seasons, but they re-seed easily. Grouped in clusters, spotted beebalm catches the eye, as do the myriad insects that thrive on its flowers.

ARTIST OF THE MONTH – Kimberly Magyar

I got started on this by watching other artists on YouTube. I use a drill press with a diamond bit to drill the holes. It's not hard, but you do have to have patience and not be scared of broken flying glass or dirty glass dust. I wear safety glasses, long sleeves, and hand protection when I drill. This is a hobby that somewhat supports my long-time buying habit for vintage glass and crystal. My husband, Scott, welds the stems for me, and we have an account at Sabel Steel. I would like Scott to teach me how to weld, but it would probably be more realistic for me to take a class at the local tech school.



HELP DESK

Submitted by Deberah Williams and Renee Connell

UPDATE

Since the new year began, the Help Desk has been a little busier in January than I expected. It is obvious that many of the clients are planning for the upcoming planting season, and there are some very interesting calls to note.

- One client was looking for a place to buy Trillium.
- Another client's panda plant, *Kalanchoe*, had a downy mildew problem.
- Someone with an empty lot learned she could plant clover on it to avoid grass cutting.
- There were "how do I prune" questions, one about crepe myrtles, and another about a Coral Bark Maple.
- "Where can I get my pecans cracked?" The nearest place is in Troup County.
- One client was concerned about needle ants. They are similar to fire ants but not as aggressive.
- Clients called about frozen tea olives and a struggling palm tree.

Here is a link to a very good UGA publication, *Winter Protection of Ornament Plants*.
https://secure.caes.uga.edu/extension/publications/files/pdf/C%20872_7.PDF

Also, there are spots available for MGEV volunteers at the Help Desk, so please consider joining us. I promise you will learn SO much, meet very nice local gardeners who are hungry for information, and help our local Coweta residents have gardening success. They will appreciate you for it.

KUDZU

Kudzu is a fast-growing vine originally from China/Japan which generally has 2-3 leaflets and is hairy on the edges. It produces light purple or pink flowers with a fragrant, sweet grape smell in late summer.¹ It is a perennial and the scientific name is *Pueraria montana* (Lour.) Merr. It is an aggressive vine and can grow 60 feet per year.² It kills or degrades other plants by shading them under a blanket of leaves, by girdling stems and tree trunks, and by breaking branches or uprooting trees by its weight.¹ It often chokes out competing native vegetation that provides food and habitat for native animals.

A native of Asia, kudzu was introduced into the United States at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition in 1876 to help control erosion. The USDA listed it as a common weed of the South in 1970. It is estimated that kudzu now covers seven million acres in the southeast. The largest infestations are found in Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia.²

To kill Kudzu the root system must be killed. Mow or cut monthly over two or more growing seasons. Sever vines and treat roots to get foliar levels manageable for more direct treatments. Burning will not kill roots and may stimulate dormant seeds to germinate. Mechanical control can consist of grubbing and cutting. Another type of mechanical control uses livestock. Goats and sheep have a reputation for eating vegetation that most other grazing animals would not touch. This trait makes them popular for landowners who need to clear brush or invasive plants from overgrown parcels. They've proven to be a low-impact, low-cost way to control invasive plants like privet, kudzu, honeysuckle and English ivy.⁷

- 1 https://www.se-eppc.org/pubs/kudzu_yam_micro.pdf
- 2 <https://www.se-eppc.org/manual/kudzu.html>
- 3 <https://www.se-eppc.org/pubs/ml1194.pdf>
- 4 photo: <https://www.walterreeves.com/landscaping/kudzu-control-2/?highlight=Kudzu>
- 5 <https://www.se-eppc.org/wildlandweeds/pdf/Fall2008-Morrison-pp7-8.pdf>
- 6 <https://www.se-eppc.org/wildlandweeds/pdf/Fall2008-Fergusson-pp5-6.pdf>
- 7 <https://ugaurbanag.com/?s=Kudzu+plan>



NATURE TRAIL

Submitted by Ed Atkinson

Pictured below are Betty Boylston, Marge Cox, and Joe Kirsch getting exercise and breathing in the fresh air at the nature trail on a recent workday.



SPRING PLANT SALE

Submitted by Kimberly Magyar

The Spring Plant Sale is Saturday, April 15 - only 82 days away. The Greenhouse team has been very busy! Barbara Schwartz and team recently cleaned the GH, and it is sparkling and smells good. Barbara also has a handle on the watering system and has been checking on the cuttings and seeding that have been done. Ros Johnson was able to procure a free load of nice soil delivered from Vining Stone. Thank you, Ros! She also has made sure we have plenty of soil supplies in stock and ready for our use. Jerry Allen has been setting up work dates and is busy mixing and potting up the soil with his team. Thanks to Amy Sharpe, we now have a donated bag of Soil3's veggie mix. Please be sure to thank Amy for that, and be sure to look for her picture in their ad campaign. Amy Keller, Don Lambeck, and Dave Granroos have been instrumental in keeping the GH and PS teams on track and moving forward with purpose and accuracy.

We also have some free "pumpkin shaped" pots from our 2022 SPS. When we ran out of our regular pots to use, Amy Keller contacted Tommy Morgan and he graciously had some extra pots for us to use. They worked in a pinch, and we've decided that what is left is free for the taking. The pumpkin pots are on the table in front of the brown shed. Please help yourself. At some point, we'll be asking for MGEVs to bring any pots that previously had MG purchased plants back to the GH to be recycled. We'll let you know when we are ready to accept pots. As you are cleaning out your storage areas, please keep those pots to the side for reuse. If there are any other brand/size/color of pots, we cannot use them, but please recycle elsewhere.

To reach more types of gardeners in 2023, we will sell a small number of houseplants! Do you have houseplants you can propagate from or donate? We're thinking a table full of nice, lush houseplants might be a good seller. What do you think? Be on the lookout for workday emails, and thank you all for your support of our plant sales throughout the years.



2023 Master Gardener Coweta County Committee Chairs

Ask MG/Market Day
Backyard Association
Boys & Girls Club/Youth Ed.
Demonstration Garden
Education
Ext. Support/MGEV Help Desk
Fall Plant Sale
Finance
Fundraising
Garden Tour
Greenhouse
Hospitality
Communications
Nature Trail
Scholarship
Speakers Bureau
Spring Plant Sale
Sunshine
The New Leaf
Volunteer Awards
Volunteer Management/Support

Harley Stewart
 Melanie Landrum, Deberah Williams
 Rebecca Gibson
 Kathy Olmsted, Amy Keller
 Cathy LeBar, Paula Hyatt
 Susan Mills (library), Patty Ellis, Deberah Williams
 Kim Magyar, Kathy Olmsted
 Colleen Stephens
 Diane Cook, Cathy LeBar
 Diane Cook
 Jerry Allen, Ros Johnson, Barbara Schwartz
 Colleen Stephens, Amy Sharpe
 Shanna Campbell
 Ed Atkinson, Melanie Atkinson, Audrey Harrelson
 Jennie Adcock
 Dan Gentry
 Kim Magyar, Kathy Olmsted
 Sara Hanson
 Pat Farmer
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 Patty Ellis, CR Phillips

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