

Forsyth Field Notes

October 2021

Forsyth County Cooperative Extension News

In this Issue

Stormwater & Water Quality
Landscape Diversification
Saving for the Holidays
Invasive Insect BOLO
Extension Events & Opportunities
[Forsyth County Extension Website](#)
[Facebook](#)

Stormwater and Water Quality

By Shannon Kennedy
ANR Educator
UGA Extension Forsyth County



Stormwater runoff from urban hardscapes carries numerous pollutants into drinking water.

So far this year, we have seen 14 notable storms come out of the Atlantic, and most areas of Forsyth County have received more than 50 inches of rain. As we see more storms, there is an increase in water runoff from our roads, lawns, and driveways. This results in the movement of fertilizers, pesticides, oil, gas, and other chemicals

from private and public property into adjacent streams. As that water moves downstream it eventually joins a reservoir where it will be used for drinking water. This forces us to confront a sometimes hidden truth: People downstream are at the mercy of how we protect our water quality, just as we are at the mercy of the people upstream.

So how do we start taking care of our water? Recently approved county ordinance amendments encourage incorporating low-impact stormwater features into open space designs. The daily practices of county residents, however, have a far greater influence on protecting water quality.

The first step in reducing pollution in stormwater is thoughtfully managing landscape care chemicals. Excess fertilizer washes out of the soil and into streams. Reducing fertilizer applications to maintenance levels allows plants to take up the fertilizer without waste. A UGA soil test provides fertilizer recommendations specific to the plant and the actual condition of your soil. The soil test also measures your soil pH and makes recommendations for amendments to achieve the optimum pH for nutrient uptake of the particular plant you're growing. If the pH is wrong, the nutrients in the soil do not get used and it leaches out of the soil into groundwater from which it eventually enters streams or lakes. You also want to be aware of when you are fertilizing: there is no point fertilizing if plants are dormant and fertilizing during drought can cause damage to plant roots. By avoiding



these situations, you can save fertilizer for later when it will benefit your landscape.

Another way you can protect water quality is by being strategic about the way you apply pesticides. Use the least impactful way of controlling weeds, disease, and insects first, then work your way up to stronger chemicals. This strategy is often referred to as “Integrated Pest Management”. IPM serves to protect people and the environment as much as possible while keeping pest damage at an acceptable level. Avoid applying chemicals while it is windy, or if there is a storm in the forecast. Other instructions for how to use the chemical safely will be listed on the product label and remember that following the label’s directions is prescribed by law.

When you are preparing pesticides for use, or when you are filling equipment with gas, make sure to do so on a paved surface. This will make clean-up much simpler in the event of a spill, and it protects your lawn from harmful chemicals. Collect any spilled granules instead of sweeping them into the lawn and use kitty litter or absorption pads to clean up spilled liquids. Dispose of empty containers as the label requires; not all containers can be safely discarded alongside household waste.

While chemical management is incredibly important for water quality, there are also a few practical things you can do to help reduce the amount of stormwater runoff. One of the best strategies is to minimize the number of paved surfaces on your property. Gravel, pebbles, and mulch can serve as a pathway or parking area, and the materials allow water to soak into the ground. Another idea is to divert the water from your downspouts into flowerbeds instead of onto pavement where it will wash chemicals into a storm drain. If you frequently have water

washing over your lawn during storm events, you may want to consider installing a rain garden. Rain gardens serve to intercept and collect water so it can sink into the ground over time. In your gardens, make sure you are mulching to hold soil down and add organic matter to the soil to improve your soil’s water retention.

There are many ways that you can protect water quality in your landscape. If you have any questions about these methods, or if you are interested in testing your irrigation water quality, call or email Forsyth County Extension. We would love to help.

The Value of Landscape Plant Diversity

By Heather N. Kolich
Agriculture and Natural Resources Agent
UGA Extension Forsyth County



Incorporating a variety of plants adds value and sustainability to the landscape.

Landscapes have several things in common with financial portfolios. Both are investments in the future; both require time to yield results; and both benefit from diversity. Financial experts recommend investing in a variety of different asset classes to help protect the overall portfolio when one type of asset suffers a setback. In the landscape, investing in a broad spectrum of plant species lowers the risk of loss if

disease or pests damage a particular species. Biodiversity in landscape plants extends investment benefits to other species, too.

Risks of monoculture: History lessons

Uniformity is a goal of many HOAs. When the same few plants dominate every yard, however, we create community risk.

My husband remembers streets lined with ash trees from his childhood. In 2002, an invasive insect, emerald ash borer (EAB), was discovered in his home state. Since then, EAB has spread to 35 states and killed tens of millions of ash trees in forests, suburbs, and cities, including thousands of street trees from Michigan to Georgia.



Plant diseases can spread easily among popular, overused landscape plants.

Red tip photinias were all the rage for living walls in the 1980s. Then a leaf spot disease defoliated and killed the closely planted shrubs yard by yard. The loss of those plants opened the gates for a new screening plant: Leyland cypress. Now these ubiquitous trees are suffering problems of their own: a short lifespan of 12-20 years and a suite of fungal diseases that are unrealistic to control large trees. Branches turn brown and trees die, leaving homeowners distressed about losing the planting and their privacy, as well as the cost of removing several dead trees.

Benefits of biodiversity: Multiplication of nature



Biodiversity in landscapes increases sensory engagement and nurtures wildlife

Investing in a variety of landscape plants adds layers of richness that provoke our senses. Fragrant blossoms can stimulate memories. Swaying grasses add movement and sound. Contrasting textures tempt fingers to reach out and touch leaves, trunks, and flowers. Including space for culinary herbs and perennial fruits satisfies the sense of taste, too.

A rich diversity of plants also sustains pollinators, birds, and wildlife. Flowers provide pollen and nectar for hummingbirds and our numerous native bees. Plants that produce fruit, berries, nuts, or seeds attract many species of migratory songbirds. Trees and large shrubs support nests and offer small animals hiding places from predators. Butterflies and moths need particular plants for egg laying because the larvae of some species feed only on the leaves of specific plants. Host plants are adapted to caterpillar feeding and recover once the caterpillar moves into the pupa stage.

Expanding the palette: Additions and subtractions

Adding different types of plants increases landscape biodiversity, but reduction and replacement are part of the formula, too. Native plants are a good starting choice for

creating a thriving ecosystem. Consider these give and takes:

- Add weeping and waving native grasses, such as fall-blooming pink muhly grass, and reduce turfgrass to serve a specific purpose, like paths and play areas.
- Clear invasive plants like privet and Japanese honeysuckle out of wooded areas and plant native, shade-tolerant ferns and shrubs.
- Replace marginal shrubs like Indian hawthorn with native rabbiteye blueberries. They flower in the spring and produce edible berries.
- Phase out the Leyland cypress screen with a mix of evergreen and flowering natives, like American holly, Southern magnolia, and arrowwood viburnum.

The bottom line



A well-designed, diverse landscape can increase the resale value of homes by 5-15% over a yard dominated by turfgrass.

Investing in a biodiverse landscape is good for the environment and for your bottom line. Reducing turfgrass area reduces the costs of inputs, such as water, fertilizer, and herbicides. Properly placed trees and shrubs can reduce energy costs. And several studies indicate that a well-designed, mature landscape adds 5-15 percent to the resale price of a home.

Saving for the Holidays

By Angelica B. Davis
Family and Consumer Sciences Agent
UGA Extension Bartow County



Saving a little each month can help avoid credit card interest fees for holiday spending.

Shorter days and cooler temperatures remind us that holidays are just around the corner. Americans spend an overwhelming amount of money on gifts every year. It is great to shop and find that perfect gift for someone important in your life, but holiday spending habits can be counterproductive. Magnify Money reports that Americans accumulated more than \$1,000 in holiday debt at the end of last year. Spending more than normal during the holidays and putting most of the extra on credit cards can mean months or even years of debt payments.

Credit cards are convenient, especially when you pay the balance in full every month. They help to build credit and can have a variety of benefits through reward programs. However, if you do not pay off the balance every month, finance charges increase the cost of the holidays. Credit card interest rates are high. So how can consumers stay out of this yearly rut?

To avoid paying off credit card bills for months after the holiday season, start saving now. It is best to start saving something every month. The more you can save, the

better, but saving even a small amount makes a difference.

To get started, analyze your weekly spending. See what you can do to cut unnecessary expenses. Small changes can free up extra money for your savings fund. Reducing your spending by a dollar a day gives you an extra \$30 a month. Skip the \$5 cup of coffee every morning or pack a lunch instead of eating out to save even more.

Most financial institutions allow you to electronically transfer money from your checking into your savings account. Automatic transfer is convenient, and you can set it up so that you never have to think about saving. Set the date of the transfer on your payday, and the money goes into savings before you're tempted to spend it.

After several months, your holiday fund will start to add up. When the holidays roll around again, use your savings instead of your credit card for gifts. Avoiding the yearly cycle of credit card debt and hefty interest payments will free up more money for you to save. Make this the year you streamline your savings and beat the holiday debt cycle.

Invasive Insect BOLO: Asian Longhorned Beetle

A very large, exotic boring beetle, the Asian Longhorned Beetle (ALB), has been confirmed to be in South Carolina. This is an invasive insect that we don't want to become established in Georgia. Unlike native boring beetles, ALB attack living trees as well as dead or dying ones. They are especially drawn to maple trees.

ALBs are shiny black beetles with white spots on their large (0.75-1.5 inch long)

bodies and very long, segmented antennae with black and white bands. On females, the antennae are as long as the beetle's body; on males, the antennae are much longer than the body.



5480755

To identify ALB, look for large holes in the trunks of trees. This may be the first or only sign of an infestation.

What can we do to stop the spread of ALB?

- Don't move firewood; purchase it locally and use it in the same area.
- Report dead or dying maples to your local Extension office.
- Learn what the ALB looks like.
- Bring suspected ALB specimens to your local Extension office.



Upcoming Extension Programs

Fall Plant Sale, going on now!

Fall is a great time to plant perennial trees and shrubs. Through the Fall Plant Sale, Forsyth County Extension is offering a variety of perennial fruits and native ornamentals selected for the Georgia upper piedmont area. See order form at <https://extension.uga.edu/county-offices/forsyth.html>

Order Deadline: October 12, 2021

Join us for our 2021
Fall Plant Sale
Order deadline
Oct 12, 2021
Plant Pickup
Oct 23 9am-2pm

All proceeds go towards funding Extension Educational programs.

Especially for October Programs

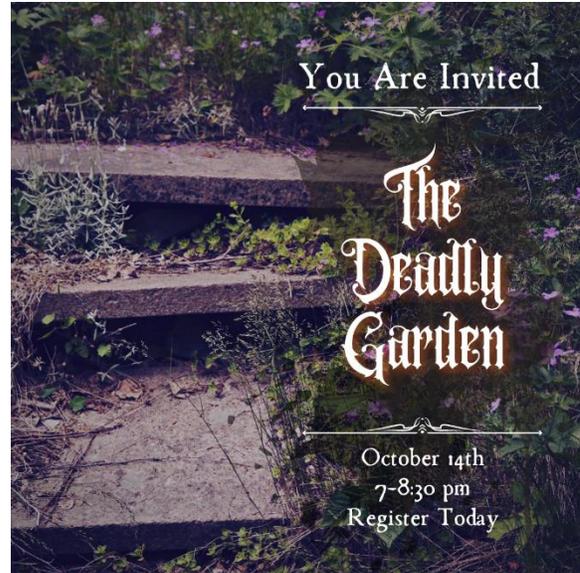
The Deadly Garden, October 14
Special guest speaker Madam Kudzu will discuss poisonous plants, cryptic creatures, and other ghoulish garden pitfalls.

When: October 14, 7-8:30 p.m.

Where: Forsyth County Extension Office, 5110 Piney Grove Road, Cumming

Cost: Free, but please bring a shelf-stable food item for our food drive for at-risk neighbors in Forsyth County.

Attire: Family friendly costumes encouraged, but optional.



Register for The Deadly Garden Class:

https://ugeorgia.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_54oE87I6whcCUfA

Bat Booth at the Haunted Forest Halloween Festival, October 30

Bring the kids to the Haunted Forest Halloween Festival at The Collection for some spooky fun and visit the Bat Booth, hosted by Forsyth County Extension Master Naturalist Volunteers, to learn about bats and win prizes!

When: October 30, 4-6 p.m.

Where: The Collection at Forsyth shopping plaza, 410 Peachtree Parkway, Cumming

Cost: Free

