

THE GARDEN BENCH



UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA
EXTENSION

Houston County Extension
Office

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Special Points of Interest:

→ Master Gardener Extension Volunteer Training Program

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the next Master Gardener training classes will be postponed from their normal Feb 1 start date. The 2021 class is expected to start late summer/early fall and will likely be a hybrid program of self-paced online content and in-person experiences. More information will be available at a later date.

For more information about the program, contact the Houston County Extension Office at 478-987-2028 or cmote1@uga.edu

→ Toy and Food Drive

Houston County Extension Office is collecting donations of toys, gifts, Bibles, and non-perishable food items for Middle GA Food Bank and Kids Yule Love. Please share your blessings by bringing your donations to the office or by buying online and shipping directly to the Extension office.

Gardening and home landscape information from UGA Cooperative Extension in Houston County. Our newsletter provides research-based horticulture information to help Middle Georgia gardeners.

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Plant **Spotlight**

SOIL TESTING

Developing and maintaining productive soils begins with soil testing. Soil tests provide information on the soil's actual nutrient status and give recommendations on appropriate nutrient and lime amendments for optimal growth.

FAQs about Soil Testing

Q: When should soils be tested?

A: Soils can be tested any time of the year, but you should allow enough time for the analysis and for fertilizer and lime applications to become effective. Lime reacts slowly, and if possible, it should be mixed with the soil 2-3 months before planting. Now is a great time to get your soil tested!

Q: How often should soils be tested?

A: Once medium or high fertility levels are established, lawn and ornamental areas should be sampled every 2-3 years. Vegetable gardens should be sampled every 1-2 years.

Q: How much does it cost and where do I drop it off?

A: Each sample costs \$8 and can be dropped off at the extension office. Office hours are M-F 8AM-12PM and 1PM-5PM. Soil samples can be dropped off at the soil sample station outside the office door when the office is closed.

Q: How soon will I get my results?

A: In general, it takes 7-10 days from the time the lab receives the samples until you get the test reports. Times could be longer due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Q: Where can I learn more?

A: [https://secure.caes.uga.edu/extension/publications/
files/pdf/SB%2062_2.PDF](https://secure.caes.uga.edu/extension/publications/files/pdf/SB%2062_2.PDF)

Flowers: Continue planting pansies, snapdragons, calendulas, ornamental cabbage, and kale. For best results, plant pansies before Nov 15, and remember to water and fertilize them. Later plantings will grow more slowly.

Now is the time to plant spring-flowering bulbs such as tulips, daffodils, hyacinths, anemones, and crocus. Choose a sunny spot with well-drained soil and plant bulbs at a depth equal to 2 to 3 times the height of the bulb.

Leave foliage on perennials until after it is killed by the cold weather, then remove the foliage.

Don't prune lantana until next spring.

Vegetables & Herbs: Asparagus, elephant garlic, and green onions can be planted through the end of the year.

Harvest any remaining summer vegetables before a killing frost. Remove plants that have stopped producing and clean the garden area of weeds and dead plants to reduce pests that could attack next year's crops. Start planning next year's garden!



Winter Protection of Ornamental Plants

The Farmers Almanac predicts that winter temperatures in Georgia will be warmer than normal with the coldest periods in mid- and late December and throughout January, but even mild winters offer up some cold nights that can injure some landscape plants. There are several things you can do to improve the survival rate of your prized landscape plants this winter.

- Select plants that are suited to your climate and maintain proper plant nutrition.
- Utilize windbreaks such as fences, buildings, or evergreen plants, especially on the northwest side of a planting and consider planting your cold-sensitive plants on a southern wall.
- Avoid doing the following: pruning in late summer or early fall, fertilizing with high nitrogen fertilizers in the fall, and transplanting in late fall or early winter.
- To minimize heat loss, mulch or cover sensitive plants that remain outdoors. Sheets, blankets, or cardboard boxes can be used to cover plants, **but DO NOT USE plastic sheeting!** Remove the cover during the day.
- Push pots together to decrease heat loss from the sides of the containers and wrap the bases of the containers in burlap or blankets.

Planting Dates for Your Winter Vegetable Garden

Although the time has passed for planting most cool-season vegetables, it's not too late to plant asparagus, garlic, and onions!

Dry Onion Bulbs: plant through Nov 10

Asparagus: plant in November & December

Elephant Garlic: plant in November & December

Green Onions: plant through December 31

