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THE GARDEN BENCH

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

Inside this issue:

Plant Spotlight
Special Points of Interest
Your Spring Vegetable Garden
Home Garden & Landscape Tips for Middle Georgia

Special Points of Interest:

→ Visit and subscribe to the UGA Extension Houston County AG YOU TUBE channel

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCGFzRFjrL9CnoIqCeAZTCwA>

Current videos include Properly Pruning Roses (<https://youtu.be/dFdjusQQD9w>) & Gardening Basics: Seed Saving (<https://youtu.be/eJLcxMODUt4>)

→ Looking for fun and educational activities for youth? Consider joining the

4-H Horticulture Club

Grades 4-12

First Meeting Friday, Mar 12 @4:30 pm

For more information, contact the Houston County Extension Office 478.987.2028

Plant Spotlight

As I walk through my neighborhood I marvel at all of the plants blooming here in Middle Georgia at the end of winter. In my own yard I see fuschia lorapetalum, yellow forsythia, pink cherry blossoms, camellias ranging from pale pink to maroon, purple oxalis with their tiny pink blossoms, multi-colored pansies, and perky Johnny jump-ups. As winter gives way to spring, many of these plants will lose their flowers and become the backdrop to a new crop of colorful blooms. It is my goal to eventually have a four-season garden with bits of color all year long.

A colorful four-season garden doesn't usually just happen. There are several questions that you should ask yourself as you are planning a four-season garden:

- 1) What plants do I like and when do they bloom? Do I want a variety of colors, or do I want similar colors throughout my garden? A combination of warm and cool color flowers can create a sense of balance in the garden. Not all plants that you choose need to have bold flowers. Contrasting foliage and textures are as important as flower color. Consider the shape and size of leaves as well as the plant shape when choosing plants. Choose plants of various heights for greater interest in the garden, placing tall plants and vines towards the back and short plants and groundcovers near the front or along the edge of paths. Shrubs and larger focal plants would usually be spread throughout the bed or toward the back of the bed.
- 2) Do I want perennials, annuals, or bulbs? A combination of all of these types, plus trees, shrubs, and a few container plants works well in most gardens. Shrubs and trees, along with hardscapes such as large rocks, an arch, or even a garden bench help provide year-round interest.
- 3) Are the plants I want suitable to my region? Are they suitable to the soil, water, and available light in my specific location? How does the available light change throughout the year? Are there animals such as wild deer or even the family dog that I need to consider when choosing my plants? The key to a successful year-round garden is to know which species do best in your location.

The publications listed below are just a few of the many Georgia-specific publications that might help you in planning a four-season garden.

Landscape Plants for Georgia <https://extension.uga.edu/publications/detail.html?number=B625>

Flowering Bulbs for Georgia Gardens https://secure.caes.uga.edu/extension/publications/files/pdf/B%20918_4.PDF

Flowering Perennials for Georgia Gardens https://secure.caes.uga.edu/extension/publications/files/pdf/B%20944_6.PDF

Flowering Annuals for Georgia Gardens https://secure.caes.uga.edu/extension/publications/files/pdf/B%20954_5.PDF

Native Plants for Georgia Part 1: Trees, Shrubs, and Woody Vines https://secure.caes.uga.edu/extension/publications/files/pdf/B%20987_11.PDF

Success with Pansies in the Winter Landscape https://secure.caes.uga.edu/extension/publications/files/pdf/B%201359_2.PDF

Your Spring Vegetable Garden

Take advantage of warm days to get your garden ready, but don't plant too early—the average last frost date for our area is about mid-March, but the last frost could easily be two or more weeks earlier or later. Use these planting dates as a guide.

Houston County is in USDA Hardiness Zone 8a. Choose plants that are hardy for this zone.

Harden off transplants before planting

Planting Dates	Type of Vegetable
Mar 1–Apr 1	Cauliflower
Through mid-Mar	Asparagus, Broccoli, Cabbage, Carrot, Collards, Kale, Onions, Spinach
Mar 15–May 1	Bush Beans
Mar 15–May 10	Pole Beans
Mar 15–Jun 1	Lima beans, Corn
Mar 20–May 1	Watermelon
Mar 20–June 20	Cantaloupe
Mar 25–May 1	Tomatoes
Through Apr 1	Beets, Mustard, Radish, Turnip
Apr 1–May 1	Butter peas
Apr 1–May 15	Cucumbers, Eggplant, Summer squash
Apr 1–Jun 1	Okra, Peppers
Apr 1–Jul 1	Winter squash
Apr 1–Aug 10	Southern peas
Apr 15–Jun 15	Sweet potatoes

For additional information on planting, including spacing and planting depths, visit: <http://extension.uga.edu/publications/files/html/c963/c963vegechart.pdf>

Home Garden and Landscape Tips for Middle Georgia

Shrubs & Trees: Late March is the time for the first application of fertilizer to trees and shrubs. Do a soil test or apply one-half pound of 12-4-8, 16-4-8, 10-10-10, or 18-0-18 per 100 square feet.

Broadcast the fertilizer over the planting area uniformly (prior to a rain if possible, or water after fertilizing). Fertilizing once is enough for most shrubs and trees, but additional applications can be made in May and July if you want the plants to get larger. Spring-blooming plants such as azaleas may be fertilized without affecting flowering.

Aphids, azalea lace bugs, many types of scale insects, white flies, and pine bark beetles become active in March and April. Look for them and treat as needed. Start black spot sprays on roses when new leaves appear. Prune oversized shrubs to 12-24 inches high before they bud out in February or March. Do not heavily prune boxwood and needled evergreens this way.

Prune spring flowering plants (azalea, spirea, camellia, forsythia, etc.) anytime after bloom through mid-July.

Lawn Tips: Research does not support the use of a weed and feed product. Wait until soil temperature at a depth of 4" is consistently 65 °F to fertilize your warm-season southern lawn. (Visit www.georgiaweather.net to determine soil temperature.) Avoid all chemical applications during the stressful spring green-up period of warm-season grasses. Wait until the lawn greens up to core aerate or dethatch and wait until late April or May to seed lawns.

Control lawn weeds now through late May, before they get large and the temperature gets too high to apply herbicides safely. Water dry lawns between midnight and 10 AM with 3/4 to 1 inch of water.

Flowers: Prepare your beds for annual flowers. Do a soil test and till in lime and fertilizer as needed.