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#### Special Points of Interest:

##### GEORGIA MASTER GARDENER CONFERENCE 2019

##### Plants & Planes: Our Heritage, Our Future

open to all Gardeners, Master Gardeners, Green Industry Professionals and Consumers

**October 19, 2019**

Museum of Aviation Century of Flight Building/Warner Robins, GA  
Begins at 8:30 a.m.

Conference speakers include:

Dr. Michae Dirr, globally recognized expert on woody plants

Dr. K. Coder, world renowned expert on urban trees

Mary Lynn Beckley, presenting *Georgia Landmark & Historic Trees*

The Nichols Brothers, speaking on Japanese Maple trees

Mark Maher, with *Southern Living* will share new plant introductions

Sheri Dorn, will present *Plants & People: Connections for the Future*

For more information, visit: <http://mgcg.org/gmga-october-conference/>

# The Garden Bench

**July/August 2019**

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

## Plant Spotlight

### Persimmon

Growing up as a “military brat,” I always enjoyed coming to Georgia to visit my grandparents, who lived in rural South Georgia. In addition to running wild through the cornfields and keeping watch for water moccasins while sitting by the pond with a fishing pole, my brother, cousins, and I would wander the dirt roads, picking (and eating) wild blackberries. Depending on the time of year we visited, we might get to pick pears, muscadines, figs, or persimmons from my grandmother’s gardens. Although pears and grapes (but not those warm, juicy muscadines) were available to us wherever we lived and my grandmother always made sure we had plenty of fig preserves, the only time we ever had persimmons was when we came to Georgia.



Both North American (native) persimmons (*Diospyros virginiana*) and Oriental persimmons (*Diospyros kaki*) can be successfully grown in Georgia. Oriental persimmons are not hardy below 10 degrees F, and as a general rule, should not be grown north of Macon. Both types are deciduous, producing a striking display of fall colors, and have an attractive winter branch silhouette. Unlike native persimmons, which usually require both a male and a female tree to produce fruit, most Oriental persimmon varieties are either self-pollinating or can produce fruit from unfertilized flowers. Native persimmons may grow to 30-40 feet and usually produce smaller fruit than the Oriental persimmons which grow to 20-30 feet.

Persimmons require pruning when young, but mature trees need pruning only to remove dead or broken branches. They are not heavy feeders and bearing trees should be fertilized very lightly. Excess nitrogen can cause fruit drop. Fruit drop may also occur if the trees are drought-stressed; mulch and provide consistent moisture to avoid crop loss.

The unripe persimmon fruit is very sour and astringent, but they continue to ripen after they are picked. In general, Oriental varieties are not as astringent as native varieties. Many varieties must be allowed to become fully soft before they lose enough astringency to be edible. Exceptions are Fuyu and Jiro, which can be eaten green when firm with little astringency.

[https://secure.caes.uga.edu/extension/publications/files/pdf/C%20784\\_6.PDF](https://secure.caes.uga.edu/extension/publications/files/pdf/C%20784_6.PDF)

<https://georgiawildlife.com/out-my-backdoor-persimmon-forgotten-wildlife-food-plant>

## Home Garden and Landscape Tips for Middle Georgia

### Lawn Tips:

Good cultural practices can prevent many lawn problems. The most important practice for a healthy lawn is to keep it mowed at the right height. Don't remove more than 1/3 the grass blade height at a mowing. Keep mower blades sharp to avoid damaging the lawn by tearing the grass blades.

Many lawn problems are due to improper watering: wait to water until the grass begins to turn bluish-gray. Most established lawns need only about one inch of water per week. **The most efficient and effective time to water is after sunset and before sunrise.**

Bermuda, St. Augustine, Zoysia, and Centipede lawns can be fertilized in July. Do not fertilize Centipede lawns after Sept 1 or other lawns after Sept 15, and don't fertilize if the grass will not be watered properly or is water stressed.

Post emergent herbicides can be applied to small actively growing weeds at air temperatures between 60-90 F. Applications to grass stressed by high temperatures or drought increases the possibility of injury and usually results in poor weed control.

For more information on Georgia lawns, visit <http://caes2.caes.uga.edu/commodities/turfgrass/georgiaturf/Turfgras/index.html>

### Flowers:

Don't forget to keep those container plants watered! Water when the top of the soil dries, and apply enough water to run out the bottom of the pot.

Fertilize and "dead-head" annuals and perennials. Pinch back mums to make them bushier and keep them blooming longer.

Start seeds of favorite biennials and other fall flowers in pots. Seedlings should be ready for transplanting in the fall.

Sunflowers are ready to harvest when the back of the head turns brown. Plant or transplant daylilies and irises beginning in late August.

### Fruits & Nuts:

Apply a heavy mulch layer around strawberries to protect them from heat and drought. Fertilize strawberries in August.

Water fruit trees once a week, when the soil dries out.

Fertilize established figs if they are watered. Apply mulch around fruit trees, but to avoid creating a path for insects and disease, do not place it right up against the trunk.

Prevent disease by promptly disposing of fallen fruit, leaves, and dead limbs.

Planting Dates	Type of Vegetable
Through July 10	Okra
Through July 15	Tomatoes (indeterminate, grape, cherry, determinate)
July 1-Aug 1	Beans (pole, lima), Butterpeas
July 5-Aug 10	Bush beans
July 10-July 30	Eggplant
July 15-Aug 15	Cauliflower, Cucumber
July 25-Aug 10	Peppers (bell, hot, hot-sweet)
Aug 1- Aug 25	Summer squash
Aug 1-Sept 1	Broccoli, Collards, Kale
Aug 1- Sept 20	Beets
Aug 1-Oct 1	Cabbage
Aug 10-Sept 15	Turnips
Aug 15-Sept 15	Mustard
Aug 20-Sept 15	Carrots

### Vegetables & Herbs:

Before spraying insecticides on your edible plants, check the label for how long you must wait after spraying before harvesting. Each insecticide has a waiting period after application before you can harvest.

With regular watering, vegetables and herbs can thrive in hot, dry environments. Keeping vegetables picked, well watered and fertilized will encourage continued production. If needed, fertilize every four weeks. Water twice a week with 3/4 inch water. Mulch to control weeds and water loss.

**Most vegetables are best harvested in early morning.** This is especially important for leafy greens like lettuce and chard, for fresh herbs such as parsley and basil, for crisp fruiting vegetables such as peas, and for anything in the cabbage family, such as broccoli and radishes.

Examine your plants regularly for insects and disease.

### Shrubs & Trees:

To encourage a second bloom on crape myrtles, fertilize, water, and remove faded flowers.

**Do not prune or fertilize spring-flowering shrubs like azalea, camellia, and viburnum after mid-July if you want flowers next year!**

Watch for damaging insects on shrubs like euonymus, azalea, camellia, pyracantha, holly, gardenia, and pittosporum. Azalea caterpillars, scale, spider mites, lacebugs and spittle bugs are common now. Spray roses for insects and diseases as needed. For additional information on the control of common pests of landscape plants, visit [https://secure.caes.uga.edu/extension/publications/files/pdf/B%201074\\_7.PDF](https://secure.caes.uga.edu/extension/publications/files/pdf/B%201074_7.PDF)

Apply a light application of fertilizer to newly planted ornamental trees and shrubs during July. See [https://secure.caes.uga.edu/extension/publications/files/pdf/B%201065\\_5.PDF](https://secure.caes.uga.edu/extension/publications/files/pdf/B%201065_5.PDF)