

The Augusta Chronicle

Tor weather in Augusta, and it might not let up

Campbell Vaughn Columnist

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Christmas and New Year's in Augusta were mild. But guess what? Except for writing this article, I am on vacation this week.

My vacations usually mean I spend lots of time doing stuff that I should have done months ago and getting about one-third of it done at best. Anyone who has a home or any type of property is probably still finding ways to clean up from Hurricane Helene.

It is hard to believe how much debris has been picked up in the past two months and still hard to fathom how much more is on the ground in the woods. I have been following Augusta Mayor Garnett Johnson's daily storm report and he stated that Richmond County hit over 2 million cubic yards of debris picked up last week. To put that in perspective, if you piled up that amount of wood chips on in a field of 125 acres it would be 10 feet tall. Basically, the size of Daniel Field at a basketball rim height.

Weird weather is the normal in Augusta.

This year was marked with a wet spring, dry summer and then all at once we got a quarter of a normal year's rain in 24 hours. It didn't rain for about 30 days after Helene and we have received intermittent precipitation leaving us with mostly moist soil. We actually went up in rainfall, but 11 inches on Sept. 26 and 27 skews those numbers.

We were warmer on average this year by almost one-half degree over last year and probably had our highest average temperature in recorded history. Unfortunately, our average temperatures are still higher than where it was consistently from 1990 to 2010.

Campbell Vaughn: Not only can you eat it, but asparagus looks good in your yards

One or two degrees doesn't make much difference in our personal well-being, but it makes a huge difference in nature. Warming trends lead to more severe storms like the one we saw in late September, so it is something where we all need to stay prepared.

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and runs through the bloom in the spring.

In Augusta, our chill hours are not quite as high as they were last year, but we are not doing too poorly. We are currently hovering around 450 chill hours, but have a long way to go before spring. Forecast in the next week or so should put those chill hour numbers up in a hurry.

When the chill season is over, peaches need to have 650 to 850 chill hours while rabbiteye blueberries need around 550. In other words, we need to have some cooler weather to make sure we have plenty of peaches for homemade ice cream next summer.

We are looking forward to an exciting year at UGA Extension. Our Master Gardener Extension volunteers are ready to put up Bluebird houses we made in a local woodshop to increase bluebird habitat. We will be trying to create some bluebird trails to monitor the use of these houses with some public training sessions that we will line up soon. More information to follow.