University of Georgia Cooperative Extension

# Hort Depot

edited by James Morgan & Teresa Myler

APRIL 2013

## *LAWNS*

New sod can be laid now once the soil temperature has reached 55°F consistently for 4 or more days.

Make your last application of Atrazine by April 15th to control any broadleaf weeds summer weeds.

Fertilize Bermudagrass, Zoysiagrass, and St. Augustine grass with 6 pounds of 16-4-8 per 1,000 square feet. Apply 5 pounds of 12-4-8 or 4 pounds of 15-0-15 per 1,000 square feet of Centipede grass.

There is still time to aerate your lawn to alleviate compaction, increase air and water movement into the soil and to stimulate decomposition of thatch and organic matter.

Apply a post-emergence crab grass control now, when the seeds are young. Be sure to select a product labeled for the specific type of grass to be treated. Split application of summer pre-emergence herbicide should be reapplied at the end of May.

Check your lawn for signs of damage by insects and fungi.

## *ORNAMENTALS*

When selecting shrubs to plant, shake the plant for any insects. Look under the leaves for signs of aphids and spider mites. Take the plant out of the pot and check the roots. Healthier roots appear light brown to whitish in color.

Be on the lookout for lace bugs on azaleas and other ornamentals and apply insecticidal soap or horticulture oil spray to the underside of the leaf for adequate control.

Roses should be sprayed with fungicide/insecticide every 7 - 10 days for control of insects, black spots and spider mites. A light monthly application of 10-10-10 of fertilizer will also benefit them.

Prune climbing roses soon after their first bloom. Remove weak or diseased canes and prune other canes about one-third, training them to a trellis or fence.

Fertilize your shrubs once with one-half pound of 16-4-8, 12-4-8, or 10-10-10 per 100 square feet. Broadcast the fertilizer uniformly over the area just before a rain or water it in. Do not fertilize azaleas and camellias until they have finished blooming.

If wisteria does not bloom, it needs careful pruning to correct the condition. Prune long, straggling canes and all dead wood. Root pruning sometimes helps.

## *FRUITS AND VEGETABLES*

Continue orchard management with registered sprays on fruit trees and good sanitation.

Improve the fruiting of blueberries by removing unproductive wood that is diseased, dead and broken. Remove old canes (five to six years old) that have begun to lose their vigor. Select six to eight of the most vigorous, upright-growing canes for fruiting wood and remove all others.

Plant strawberries if you haven't already done so. Place pine straw around established plants as mulch after weeding and fertilizing the beds.

Erect trellises now for beans and cucumbers if you are going to train them on trellises later

Sweet corn, squash, tomatoes and other warm season vegetables can be planted after all danger of frost. The last frost usually occurs about April 10th-15th.

## FLOWERS

As soil temperatures get warmer, add summer annuals to the landscape. Be sure to amend the soil with rich organic matter as good drainage is essentials for the survival of tender annuals. When shopping for these annuals, look for plants with a lot of unopened blooms and a healthy root system.

Fertilize bulbs upon emergence of foliage with a 10-10-10 fertilizer using a rate of 3 pounds per 100 square feet. Repeat the application after the bulbs have bloomed.

When iris leaves appear thin and limp, check for borers. These grub-like insects can ruin an entire planting if not detected and eradicated early.

## SOIL TEMPERATURES NOT READY FOR SUMMER VEGETABLES YET

Georgia's recent warm daytime temperatures have home gardeners itching to dig in the soil and plant summer crops. But University of Georgia experts warn gardeners not to be tempted. Soil temperatures are still far too low for seeds to germinate and transplants to survive.

"In Georgia, we may have a warm front come in one day and a cold front a few days later," said Bob Westerfield, a consumer horticulturist with UGA Cooperative Extension. "It may hit 75 degrees outside, but the air temperature isn't important when it comes to gardening - the soil temperature is."

Westerfield has been tracking the soil temperature in his research plots on the UGA campus in Griffin, Ga. Last week, he recorded a soil temperature of 48 degrees.

"That soil's not ready for tomatoes. Summer crops need from 60 to 65 degrees," he said.

Green beans can handle temperatures of about 55 degrees, but it is still not quite warm enough for them. If gardeners ignore his advice and seed their gardens, he says the seeds won't germinate.

Gardeners who cannot resist the temptation can still plant cold season crops like asparagus, beets, broccoli, carrots, cauliflower, collards, kale, lettuce, mustard, onions, peas, potatoes, radish, spinach and turnips.


To track the soil temperatures in your area of the state, Westerfield recommends two different strategies. Buy a soil thermometer or use a meat thermometer to test the soil in your garden plot or rely on UGA's Georgia Automated Environmental Monitoring Network at www.georgiaweather.net .

Soil temperatures "creep up slowly" and Georgia soils should be ready to sow in seed by early-to-mid April, Westerfield said.

"And don't be swayed by the vegetable transplants lining the garden center shelves," he said. "Just because plants are in the stores doesn't mean it's time to plant them."

For more information on vegetable gardening in Georgia, see the UGA Extension publication, "Vegetable Gardening in Georgia" on the Web site www.caes.uga.edu/publications .

# *Now is a good time to control fire ants!*

*Original story by Sarah Lewis, student writer with the UGA College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences*


To eliminate fire ant mounds, UGA experts say you must apply baits every six months.

*Image credit: Chris Evans, River to River CWMA, Bugwood.org*

"April and September are good times to apply baits, once at the start of the season and toward the end to help control before they come back in the spring," said Will Hudson, a professor with the UGA College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences.

Fire ants are most active in warm weather. Fire ant season can last 10 to 11 months out of the year in the most southern areas of Georgia. Controlling ant colonies before they produce a mound is important. However, Hudson says that once a treatment program is in effect, timing is not all that important.

**Do I use baits or sprays?**

The general rule of thumb is if the area is one acre or less, don't use baits. Re-infestation is more likely from colonies outside of the yard when baits are used.

One important thing to remember is the difference between 'no mounds' and 'no ants.' "There is a difference between eliminating ants and controlling them," he said. "Baits do not eliminate ants because there is no residual control. A new colony can still come in and be unaffected by the bait laid down prior to their arrival."

To eliminate mounds completely, apply baits every six months, Hudson said. "There will be invasion in the meantime, and you will still have fire ants, just not enough to create a new mound," he said.

Hudson recommends treating lawns smaller than an acre with a registered insecticide in a liquid solution. This should rid the lawn of fire ants for one to three months. If you choose a granular product, measure carefully to be sure you apply the correct amount of material and get good, even coverage, he said.

The least effective treatment option for most people is individual mound treatments, according to Hudson. Treating mounds in general is going to be an exercise of frustration, and killing an entire colony by treating just the mound is a challenge, he said.

**Minimal impact**

Baits are considered to have minimal environmental effects for those who chose not to use hazardous chemicals. Once the bait is out, there is hardly any time for anything to come in contact with it before the ants get to it.

Nonchemical options include using steam or boiling water. "We recommend using boiling water to treat a mound near an area such as a well where you do not want any chemicals," Hudson said. "Using hot water is very effective, but the problem is you are not always able to boil the water right next to the area you want treated." Carrying the boiling water can inflict serious burns, so extreme caution should be used when treating with this method.

There are products on the market that are approved by the Environmental Protection Agency and labeled as organic. Hudson says organic designation is a "slippery" definition. There is an official USDA certification and many states have their own set of regulations when labeling a product as organic. This labeling can mean the product is either a natural product or derived from a natural product. "While there are a few products that qualify as organic, with most baits the actual amount of pesticide applied is minimal," he said.

**Realistic expectations**

Hudson says to be careful when choosing a product because the labels can be confusing, even deceptive, and it is difficult to make the right choice. For assistance in selecting a product, contact your local UGA Cooperative Extension agent.

"The most important thing to remember is that you need to be realistic in your expectations," Hudson said. "If you are treating mounds, you need to be prepared. You are going to chase the mounds around the yard."

**For more information on selecting a control measure:**

UGA Pest Management Handbook

Fire Ant Control Materials

## REDDISH-BROWN BOXWOOD LEAVES LIKELY CAUSED BY WINTER

If the leaves of the boxwoods in your landscape are turning reddish-brown, your plant is likely suffering from winter injury.

As with any tree or shrub in the landscape, boxwoods have their own set of diseases, insects and various other stress disorders. This time of year Extension offices receive a lot of calls about boxwoods turning a reddish-brown color.

Most clients say their boxwoods were a normal green color the previous summer. However, at some point during the fall and winter, they began to turn bronze.

Interestingly, this type of coloration in boxwoods is very common in shrubs that are stressed. The most common cause is a stress disorder known as winter injury. Boxwoods are very cold hardy and will not die as a result of this injury.

Although they may appear sick or diseased, this discoloration is usually temporary and will disappear as new spring growth emerges. This injury is most obvious when a severe cold freeze follows a period of mild temperatures. Georgia has had several warm to cold temperature extremes this past winter. Drought conditions during the fall and winter also can contribute to foliage injury and discoloration, too.

Sudden temperature changes during the winter can cause bronzing or discoloration of leaves as well as frost cracking of exposed stems and branches. Since water loss from these damaged stems is slow during the winter months, the damage may not be noticeable until spring.

Damage is usually more pronounced on plants located in sunny, exposed areas with west or southwest exposures to winter winds and winter sun. You can minimize the damage by avoiding these locations when planting boxwoods.

Reduce winter injury by mulching and maintaining uniform soil moisture the entire year. Mulching plants with wood chips or pine straw can help minimize drought stress. Never fertilize in late summer or fall with a fertilizer that contains large amounts of nitrogen, particularly in a quick release form. Spring and early summer are the best times to fertilize, but

only if the plant needs it. A soil test will help determine the exact amount and types of nutrients the shrubs may lack.

A few diseases can also cause similar leaf symptoms in boxwoods. The easiest way to distinguish between a disease and winter injury is by observing the entire plant. Winter injury affects all the leaves on boxwood shrubs uniformly. Diseases tend to be more random and start out by affecting one or two branches initially and then spreading to other branches and nearby shrubs over time. Often, diseased leaves will form distinct brown spots with tiny black bumps. These are the fruiting structures of a fungal disease. The leaves may completely dry out and fall off the plant when diseased. In contrast, leaves that are discolored from winter injury will remain firmly attached to the branches.

For help diagnosing disease, insect and other problems on boxwoods, trees, or other shrubs, bring a plant sample to your local University of Georgia Cooperative Extension office. Many samples can be diagnosed in the office for free. If your county agent is unable to diagnose your problem, he or she can forward your sample to the insect and disease diagnostic labs at UGA. A nominal fee is charged to cover the cost of shipping samples.

Samples should include both healthy and abnormal leaves on a branch section at least 6 to 8 inches long. Place the sample in a sealed, zip-lock bag. Fresh samples collected and submitted early in the week are ideal.

For more information, contact your local UGA Extension office at 1-800-ASK-UGA1.

## Invasive Plant Species Word Search

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T R Q O K O O A L F R E W C D G S H S E W N I T
I R X B Z U N N Q C O C H K R E H O C E O C U O
S B O E W I D R V V F I X M A V R N O R K E E M
H E N P D D U Z I F N B I V T I U E G T B Z G T
E G E N I K E H U A V W C R S L B Y O K C Z W C
G C A X B C N E B H T J E D U O B S N L Y K A U
O N F P E C A E R R O P Q A M N Y U G I C R H J
U Y U F H L R L L T E D C R C M L C R S G L G C
J T E V I R P E S E N I H C I U E K A W R X Y L
I Y X Q Y X C G R O T A O Q L T S L S M N Y G I
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E Y K S T F L X L W I L Y P L T E H P K K A Q T
B A S N L N K P Y X A U I M P Z Z V K R P Q D D
C L I M B I N G F E R N J S X L A S Q R X H G T
D W S M A Y G N I B M I L C H P E Y H W P J Z G
F S S E P N O N N A T I V E W I S T E R I A S E
T A L L O W T R E E K W F K W M V S E E Y I N V
A I N W O L U A P D M Y W H R Z I Y N J W Y Y N
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AUTUMN OLIVE
BAMBOOS
CHINABERRY TREE
CHINESE PRIVET
CLIMBING FERN
CLIMBING YAMS
COGONGRASS
ENGLISH IVY
GARLIC MUSTARD
GIANT REED
HONEYSUCKLES
KUDZU
NANDINA
NONNATIVE WISTERIAS
PAULOWNIA
SHRUBBY LESPEDEZA
SILKTREE
TALLOWTREE
TROPICAL SODA APPLE
WINTER CREEPER

THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION
College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences
College of Family and Consumer Sciences

DOOR PRIZES!

BRING A FRIEND!

# 2013 Gardening Series

**by James Morgan, Dougherty County Ag Agent**
**6:00 to 7:30 pm in the Candy Room**
**at 125 Pine Avenue, Downtown Albany**
***Please pre-register by calling 229-436-7216***

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|---|---|
| Thursday, April 11 | Vegetable Gardening 101: The Basics |
| Thursday, April 18 | Totally Tomatoes! |
| Thursday, April 25 | Insect, Disease & Weed Control in Vegetables |
| Thursday, May 2 | Is Your Landscape Green Enough? |

$5.00 per class or $17.00 for the series

* The Dougherty County Extension Gardening Series takes place in the Candy Room at 125 Pine Ave.

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
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| APRIL | 1 April Fool's Day | 2 National Peanut Butter & Jelly Day | 3 | 4 | 5 National Walk to Work Day | 6 Army Day<br>International Pillow Fight Day |
| 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 National Farm Animals Day<br>New Moon | 11 | 12 | 13 Scrabble Day |
| 14 | 15 *Bat house plans* | 16 | 17 Appreciate Bats Day | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| 21 | 22 Earth Day | 23 Talk Like Shakespeare Day<br>World Book Night | 24 Arbor Day<br>James Audubon's Birthday | 25 Take Your Kids to Work Day<br>Full Moon | 26 | 27 Save the FROGS Day! |
| 28 | 29 April Flower Sweet Pea | 30 April Stone Diamond | | | | |

The Southeast is home to about 16 species of bats; all are insect eaters & help keep pest populations in check. Building bat boxes is a good way to keep bats out of your house but to keep them in the area.

Bat Appreciation Week 14-20

National Environmental Awareness Week 14-20

National Library Week 14-20

National Pecan Month

International Frog Month

National Garden Month

Florida Tomatoes Month  Brussels Sprouts & Cabbage Month  Cranberries & Gooseberries Month
National Pest Management Month  Tomatillo & Asian Pear Month