

Forsyth County Extension News March 24, 2014

Hello neighbors! Spring is here, the sun is out, and thoughts are turning to lawn care. Here's a quick primer and some links to turf-specific information.

**SAVE MONEY: SOIL TEST!** – Clients often call and ask how much lime or what type of fertilizer they should put on their lawn. The answer is, “It depends.” What does it depend on? The condition of the soil under your lawn, including soil pH and available nutrients, and the type of turfgrass you want to grow.

The pH of your soil determines what soil nutrients are available for your turfgrass to absorb. Tall fescue, bermudagrass, and St. Augustine grass perform best in the slightly acidic 5.5-6.5 pH range. Zoysia grass prefers a more neutral 6.0-7.0 pH. Centipede lawns like a sharp 5.0-6.0 pH.

Our Georgia piedmont soils are naturally acidic. Lime applications raise the pH, or make the soil less acidic. Lime initiates a slow change, so adjusting the pH of your soil may take 3-6 months.

The major nutrients in commercial fertilizers are nitrogen, phosphorous, and potassium. These are indicated on the fertilizer bag as N-P-K. When you purchase a bag of 10-10-10 fertilizer, those numbers indicate that 10% of the product in that bag is nitrogen (N), 10% is phosphorous (P), and 10% is potassium (K). The rest of the stuff is filler that helps you distribute the nutrients evenly over the area of your lawn.

Nitrogen is a nutrient that needs frequent replenishment in the soil. Potassium is more stable, but often needs to be supplemented. Phosphorous can build up in soils and may not need to be applied with the same frequency as the other major nutrients.

So how do you know what to apply to your lawn to get or keep it healthy? Bring in a soil sample for analysis. The UGA soil lab tests your soil and provides detailed fertilizer and amendment (like lime) recommendations and application instructions that are specific to your soil conditions and the type of grass (or other identified plants) that you want to grow. Soil analysis costs \$10 through the Forsyth County Extension office. Click [here](#) for instructions on collecting your soil sample.

**PRE-EMERGENT WEED CONTROL** – If you haven't already applied a pre-emergent weed control herbicide to your lawn, try to do so this week. February and March are the best times to do that for all lawn types. Pre-emergent herbicides work on the seeds of weeds to prevent them from germinating. One way to control annual weeds without chemicals is to keep them mowed down so they don't have the chance to flower and set seeds. If you can already see the weeds, you need to use post-emergent weed herbicides. Check the label to make sure the product you select is safe for use on the type of lawn you have. Follow all label instructions for application of pesticides, including the use of [personal protective equipment](#) and clothing. Pesticides can enter your body through your eyes, ears, nose, mouth and skin. Label instructions aren't suggestions; they are legal requirements to ensure user and environmental safety. Here's another safety tip: Buy only as much pesticide as you will immediately use. That way, you won't have to worry about safe storage or disposal of excess chemicals.

**TIMELY TASKS** – March is a good time to lay bermuda and zoysia sod. It's also a good time to fertilize tall fescue lawns, and this turf type can be aerated in March and April, if needed. Aside from controlling post-emergent weeds, there are no recommended lawn tasks for April.

**LAWN CALENDARS** – UGA has created useful lawn calendars for several types of turfgrass. Click the links to learn what to do when for your lawn.

[Bermuda Lawn Calendar](#)

[Centipede Lawn Calendar](#)

[St. Augustine Lawn Calendar](#)

[Tall Fescue Lawn Calendar](#)

[Zoysia Lawn Calendar](#)

**MASTER GARDENER SPRING PLANT SALE** – Don't miss the Forsyth County Master Gardener Spring Plant Sale! Over thirty vendors offering annuals, perennials, native plants, and garden enhancements will participate. Master Gardeners will be on hand to answer your gardening questions.

**When:** Friday, April 11, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. AND Saturday, April 12, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**Where:** The Big Red Barn at Cumming Fairgrounds, 235 Castleberry Road, Cumming, GA 30040

**Cost:** Free

### **FREEZING 101**

Not interested in canning, but looking for a way to preserve your garden's bountiful harvest? Be sure to register for the upcoming Freezing 101 lecture where you'll learn how to freeze foods to ensure their quality and safety. Forsyth County Family and Consumer Sciences Agent, Michele Melton, will discuss important steps for freezing both individual foods (like fruits and veggies) and prepared foods (like casseroles). She will also review some products available for use and provide handouts with step-by-step instructions for participants to take home.

**When:** Thursday, April 10<sup>th</sup>

- Morning Option: 10-11:30 a.m.
- Evening Option: 6:30-8 p.m.

**Where:** Forsyth County Board of Education, Room 380, 1120 Dahlonega Hwy, Cumming, GA 30040

**Cost:** FREE!

Pre-register to ensure handouts: 770-887-2418 or [msmelton@uga.edu](mailto:msmelton@uga.edu)

**BACKYARD FLOCK Q & A:** Join Dr. Casey Ritz from UGA's Poultry Science Department and Forsyth County Extension Associate Heather Kolich for a question and answer session about backyard flock management and health issues. The event is hosted by Rucker Horse & Pet.

**When:** Saturday, April 12, 11 a.m.

**Where:** Rucker Horse & Pet, 3540 Keith Bridge Road, Cumming, GA

**SEED SWAP** – Join us at any Forsyth County Public Library branch to learn from experienced Master Gardener Extension Volunteers how to propagate plants from seed, harvest seeds for saving, and properly store seeds for planting next year. Following the class, the libraries are hosting a seed swap with vegetable and flower seeds while supplies last.

**When:** April 26, 2 p.m.- 4 p.m.

**Where:** All Forsyth County Public Library branches. Click [here](#) for locations.

#### **4-H SUMMER CAMP**

Limited spaces are still available for **4-H Cloverleaf Camp**, July 7-11, 2014 at Rock Eagle 4-H Center! This summer camp is for 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> graders and offers challenging activities like canoeing, swimming and hiking; exciting classes and workshops; special nighttime adventures; and much more! To view a short video about Cloverleaf Camp, [please click here](#). You can access the camp registration form [here](#). Please call the Extension Office at 770-887-2418 if you have any questions about camp!

**Are you Covered?** As a result of the Affordable Care Act, individuals without health insurance as of April 1, 2014 may be subject to a fee. The open-enrollment period for the Health Insurance Marketplace ends on March 31, 2014. If you need more information, want to explore your health coverage choices, or need assistance with enrollment through The Marketplace, The UGA Health Navigators can help. Visit [UGANavigators.org](http://UGANavigators.org) or call 1-877-762-8442 for help today!

Happy (and safe) gardening! As always, please let us know if you have questions.

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