

# The Garden Bench January / February 2009

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

## Gardening Tips for Middle Georgia

A few gardening basics will help keep your garden and landscape healthy. Clean out dead materials from flower and vegetable gardens. Plan your vegetable garden and have soil tests done. Fertilize and lime as recommended. This will provide the right nutrients for each plant type.

Now is the best time to check trees for structural problems. Remove dead limbs or limbs rubbing against each other. Look for broken limbs, limbs forming a 'V,' cavities in trunks and limbs, or mushrooms

growing on the tree. These can be signs of a weak tree that may fall. See this web site - [www.tinyurl.com/haztree](http://www.tinyurl.com/haztree).

Winter weeds in the lawn are hard to control once they bloom. Scout for weeds and remove, treat or mow them before they go to seed. Don't fertilize the lawn until it is fully greened up in the spring. Soil test the lawn and fertilize as recommended for your turf type.

Plant bare root roses now through March. Prune non-

climbing roses in mid-February. Trim Knock-Out roses only if they grow over a path or just need a bit of tidying. Fertilize roses after the last frost, usually in late March.

### Upcoming events:

#### **Green Up 2009**

Landscape Update & Trade Show  
February 24, 2009  
Georgia National Fairgrounds,  
Perry, GA  
[www.tinyurl.com/extnews](http://www.tinyurl.com/extnews)

#### **Spring Home & Garden Show**

sponsored by the  
Master Gardeners of Central  
Georgia. April 4th & 5th  
Georgia National Fairgrounds,  
Perry, GA.

## Gardening Tips for Tough Economic Times

Diane Stephens

Would you like to cut costs and reduce routine maintenance while improving your home landscape and gardens?

Take a walk around the garden, and consider applying some of these tips:

Reduce the size of that high maintenance lawn by enlarging existing garden beds.

Generally, turf grass will not grow well under a tree. Mulch around trees out to the edge of the canopy.

Keep the mulch about three to four inches deep around the tree but not touching the tree trunk. If possible, group trees together in a large mulched bed. This will improve the health of your trees and protect them from weed eater or lawn mower damage.

Plant trees and shrubs in place of annual flowers. Group by plant requirements in mulched beds for maximum impact and reduced maintenance.

Use perennial plants and bulbs for seasonal color. Look for naturalizing

varieties that multiply over time and last for years. Daffodils do well in our area. Tulips have a tendency to decline due to our heat and humidity.

Daylilies and many other perennials supply color to the landscape. As they grow, many will need to be divided. Use these new plants to expand your garden. Coleus cuttings can easily be rooted in a growing medium or water.

For additional money saving ideas see *Water Smart Landscape* on page two.

Call your local  
Extension Agent at  
(800) ASK-UGA1

HAVE YOU SEEN THIS ???



Stick Insects or Phasmids (*Phasmatoidea, Phasmatidae*) encompass about 2,700 known insect species. With their long bodies that give them a twig-like appearance, Phasmids are almost invisible among the tree leaves. Don't worry, they are strictly vegetarians and make good pets!

Newsletter compiled by:  
Diane Stephens, Master Gardener  
Willie Chance, Extension Agent  
Contact Information:  
Office: 801 Main St.  
Perry, GA 31069  
Telephone: 478.987.2028  
<http://www.ugaextension.com/houston>  
E-mail: [mg@uga.edu](mailto:mg@uga.edu)

Water conservation is critically important to all of us in Georgia. Conserving water helps ensure availability at a reasonable cost.

Incorporate these seven basic principles to have an attractive water smart landscape. All seven principles must be considered during planning and design or redesign of your landscape.

These seven basic principles should be followed sequentially:

1. Planning & Design
2. Soil Improvement & Analysis
3. Efficient Irrigation
4. Plant Zoning
5. Mulch
6. Turf
7. Appropriate Maintenance

For more information -  
[www.pubs.caes.uga.edu/caespubs/pubcd/B1073.htm](http://www.pubs.caes.uga.edu/caespubs/pubcd/B1073.htm)

### Web Page Links

Houston County Cooperative Extension Homepage  
<http://www.ugaextension.com/houston>

Middle Georgia Master Gardeners Home Page <http://www.mgcg.org/>

Cooperative Extension Home Page  
<http://www.caes.uga.edu/extension/>

Gardening & Landscape Information UGA Urban Ag Web site:  
[www.gaurbanag.org](http://www.gaurbanag.org)



**The University of Georgia**

The University of Georgia and Fort Valley State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the counties of the state cooperating. The Cooperative Extension offers educational programs, assistance and materials to all people without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex or disability. An equal opportunity/affirmative action organization committed to a diverse work force.

### Planning & Design

Planning provides direction and ensures coordination of water conserving techniques. The first step is to create a “base plan”: a to-scale diagram of the present landscape including major elements such as property line, fencing, house, walls, driveway, sidewalk, patio or deck. Indicate spigots, outside electrical outlets & lines, cable, gas, and electric & gas meters.

Indicate on the base plan where and what has been planted. Include trees, shrubs, flower beds, lawn and other garden elements. Now you’re ready to develop a planting plan.

### Soil Improvements & Analysis

Determine soil texture in the planting areas of your plan. Soil can be clay, sandy, loamy or a mix of sand and clay in our area. Clay soil does not drain well. Sandy soil does not hold water well. Both clay and sandy soils benefit from tilling in 1 to 2 inches of compost or well-rotted manure. Soil testing after amending the soil will help determine the available nutrients in the soil and the pH (alkaline, acidic or neutral). Soil testing can be done for a small fee through your local Extension Office - (800) ASK-UGA1.

### Efficient Irrigation

If you intend to use an irrigation system, zone high water use turf areas separately from other plantings. Use low pressure, low angle sprinklers for turf. Use drip, spray or bubbler emitters for trees, shrubs flowers and groundcovers.

If hand watering, do not use any sprinkler that throws water high into the air. There is a great deal

of water loss due to evaporation.

### Plant Zoning

The planting plan should group trees and plants of like requirements for sun, shade, water and soil conditions. Create large mulched beds to group trees and shrubs.

### Mulch

Essential! Mulch reduces evaporation, erosion, soil crusting, weeds, and disease. Use organic mulch like pine straw or ground bark.

### Turf

Match your grass plantings to their intended use. Curved, more compact areas are more efficient, both for mowing and watering. The most heat and drought tolerant turf grass for our area is Bermuda. The second best choices for heat & drought tolerance are Zoysia and St. Augustine followed by Centipede.

### Appropriate Maintenance

Preserve the beauty of your landscape with regular maintenance. Weeding may be a chore at first. It will diminish as your chosen plants flourish and crowd out weeds. Don’t be tempted to over-fertilize. It could damage your plants and it contributes to pollution of our watershed, lakes and streams.

Irrigate efficiently. Watch your turf and other plants—let them tell you when they need water. Turf will begin to turn gray, leaves will curl, and footprints will be left on grass when you walk on it. Water deeply but infrequently. Use sharp blades on mowers to avoid leaf damage to turf. Mow at the proper height for your turf. Watch for pests to quickly correct problems.