

Master Gardener Extension Volunteers of Union and Towns Counties

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Our Officers

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Nancy Peters-Benjamin

Vice-President

Doug Koke

Recording Secretary

Jared Ogden

Corresponding Secretary

Tommy Westbrook

Treasurer

Charles Claypool

Meetings: Master Gardener Extension Volunteers of Union and Towns Counties meet on the second Thursday of every month in the Fellowship Hall at Sharp Memorial Methodist Church in Young Harris, 4:00 p.m. socializing, 4:30 p.m. meeting. We do not meet if inclement weather closes Union County or Towns County schools.

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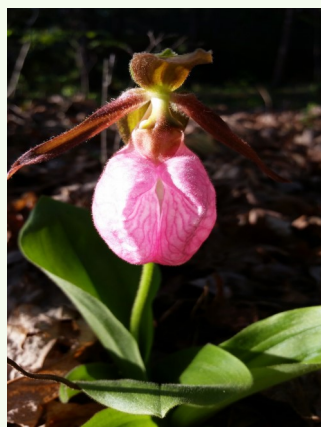
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Pink Ladyslippers

Discovered in the woods
near the property of Roy
and Nancy Peters-Benjamin

Editor's Words

This global pandemic created by coronavirus has brought about the most difficult times that many of us have ever seen. For me, all this stay-at-home time has allowed more time to spend in my gardens and maybe it has done the same for you.

A big thank-you to the outgoing officers and congratulations to our new slate of officers. I am sure their contributions to our Master Gardener Extension Volunteer group will be many.

Our featured Master Gardener Extension Volunteer for this quarter is Robin Volker. I truly enjoyed getting to know more about Robin, please see pages 3-5. Tommy Westbrook shared many pictures of his garden on pages 13-15, read about the Lazy Days of Summer on page 16, and Marty's thank you gift on page 17.

Please stay well and if all of us make decisions with the safety and health of everyone around us in mind, I don't see how we can go wrong.

Happy gardening,

Jo Anne

Summer begins on June 20, 2020 at 5:44 p.m.



Meet Robin Volker

Our featured Master Gardener Extension Volunteer for this quarter is Robin Volker. Robin and Rick, her husband of 22 years, met in church in Gwinnett County. Rick was born and raised in Detroit, but his dad taught him to hunt and fish in the lower peninsula of Michigan. Rick and Robin both love the outdoors and enjoy living in the North Georgia Mountains. They moved to Union County in December of 2014.

Robin completed her Master Gardener Extension Volunteer training through the Ohio State Extension Service in 2013 and was certified in 2014. She transferred her credentials to the UGA system in 2015.

Robin grew up in Blairsville, Georgia. Her family's home place was where the VA Clinic is now located. They had 40 acres that ran on both sides of Highway 515/US76. Robin remembers her mom grew most of what they ate in her early years. She had an extensive garden and preserved fruits and vegetables by freezing and canning. They had a milk cow, chickens for eggs and raised hogs for meat. Robin's mom died 20 years ago and Robin became a Master Gardener because she missed her mom so much and learning about gardening helps her feel closer to her mother. She tries to remember the things her mom tried to teach her when she was young but back then she didn't have time for planting, hoeing and preserving. She loves to both grow and eat okra and recalls one summer when her mom sent her out to hoe the okra. Upon inspection, her mom got quite upset because Robin had unknowingly cut down every single one of the tiny, two-leafed okra plants thinking they were weeds. Now each season when she can coax those little okra seedlings out of the ground, she gives them much love and tenderness, a long overdue apology for being an airhead kid (Robin's word not mine) so long ago.



Robin attended all 12 years of school in Blairsville, then graduated Young Harris College in 1980 and Jacksonville State University (Alabama) in 1982 with a BS in Business Administration.

Raising chickens is her biggest hobby. Three years ago, she decided to raise some chickens from day-old baby chicks. What a process that was! But those babies grew into her small flock that brings her much joy and a few fresh eggs. Four of the original chicks turned out to be roosters. She re-homed three of them and kept a beautiful Bantam rooster that she named Clyde. Clyde and her hens follow Robin everywhere, come when they are called and make her laugh as they exhibit their unique personalities.

Robin works fulltime as an ordained minister and life coach. She has worked in some capacity in churches since 1997. Currently she is the Senior Minister at Unity of Gainesville, in Gainesville, Georgia. She loves to inspire others to seek a personal relationship

with God and enjoys officiating ceremonies of marriage, life transition, infant christening and anything else that deserves a holy pause in the busyness of our lives.

Because Robin works fulltime, her gardening does not get enough of her time. She and Rick both enjoy their homestead of eight acres in the Jones Creek area, they have many projects that are in some phase of incompleteness including erosion control (they live on a hill) to wetland management to landscape design to vegetable gardening to plants and shrubs. She hopes to spend more time with their beloved piece of earth in the years to come.

Robin is an active Master Gardener Extension Volunteer. She volunteers with Peg Schneider and the Retired Educators and the Education Committee at the Georgia Mountain Research and Education Center. She enjoys working with the children in various education opportunities such as Johnny Appleseed Day for kindergarteners, First Grade Bird Program, Water Programs for second graders, and Environmental Day for fourth graders. She also volunteers as a judge for local and district competition with the 4H Program. 4H was an important part of her adolescent years and she is thrilled that our Board of Education shows so much support for this very important program in our schools.

Robin's favorite indoor plant is the Thanksgiving cactus (*Schlumbergera truncata*). She has a plant grown from a cutting from her mother's cactus which is almost as old as Robin is. She shares that most of the cacti that you see around the Christmas holiday is Thanksgiving cactus, not Christmas cactus. Thanksgiving cactus has leaves that are broad and flat with slight serrations on the edges. The leaves of the true Christmas cactus are smoother and have rounded edges.

Currently, her favorite outdoor plant is her fragrant Fountain Japanese Snowbell (*Styrax japonica*). This is a compact, deciduous tree which produces lovely bell-shaped white blooms in May and June. The flowers hang down while the leaves turn up toward the sun. It produces sweet floral fragrance and is loved by many kinds of bees. In the fall, the leaves turn yellow to red. She and Rick chose four of these trees as specimen focal points along a long 150 foot hillside bed, and they turned out to be a lovely choice.



Robin loves to cook and Rick loves to eat! They eat mostly a Paleo diet, eliminating gluten, dairy, soy and corn. This helps them to stay healthy and active so they can keep up with their two Labrador retrievers, Abby and Junebug.

They own a camper and love to travel and explore state and national parks throughout the country. Grand Canyon NP, Yellowstone NP and Denali NP in Alaska are some of the many parks Robin and Rick have visited. One of Robin's goals is to visit all 50 states and so far, she has made it to 38! She enjoys seeing how people in other parts of the country live and has found that experiences gained from living in other states has helped her to be a better person and have a broader view of situations than what she would have had, had she not risked change.

Something that many of her friends do not know about her is when she was twelve years old, she and her friend Cindy were featured on Channel 5 TV dressed in early American settler garb, making corn-shuck dolls. This was her only moment of TV fame. Recently researching corn-shuck dolls on eBay, Robin decided she should have kept some of the dolls they made because they now sell for \$30 to \$50 each.

Robin is a very interesting and multi-talented person and I truly enjoyed getting to know her better and hope you will, too.

Jo Anne Allen
Master Gardener Extension Volunteer

June is National Pollinators Month



June is National Pollinators month. The planting of pollinator gardens with native, non-invasive pollen and nectar-producing plants is encouraged to attract bees, birds, butterflies and other natural pollinators. Please do your part!

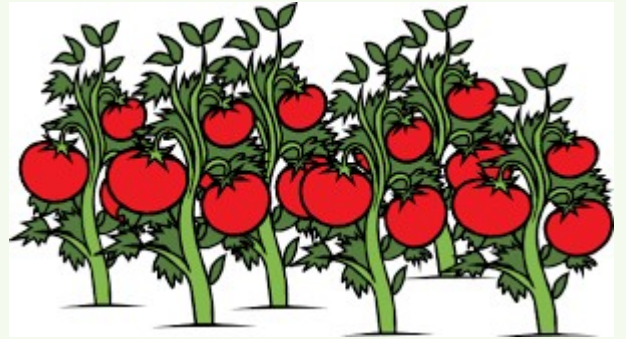


June Garden Chores

Harvest vegetables regularly to prolong production and enjoy your vegetables at the peak of their freshness. One ripe vegetable on your okra or squash plant halts blooming on the entire plant. Use a knife when harvesting so you will not damage your plant.

Watch for Japanese beetles in your garden. Hand-pick them or spray with an insect killer, always following label directions. Systemic products are also on the market.

If you like the taste of homegrown tomatoes but do not have garden space, patio type tomatoes can be grown on a sunny porch (6 hours minimum sun) in a pot 24-inch or larger.



Fertilize tomato plants regularly, inspect them for signs of leaf diseases and spray with a fungicide if necessary. Always follow label directions.

Container grown vegetables and flowers can dry out quickly on a patio in full sun. Daily watering may be necessary.

Plant corn in several short rows, side by side, instead of a long single row because wind currents pollinate it, not insects.

Plant herbs in sunny patio pots near your kitchen and you can start harvesting leaves in a few weeks. Your plants will grow best if you harvest regularly.

Use soaker hoses to irrigate annuals, perennials, shrubs and vegetables.

Be careful if you must work in your garden when the soil is too wet. When planting, the wet soil will clump together and possibly leave air pockets that will dry out your plant's roots. Water in new plantings well.

Cuttings of deciduous shrubs may be rooted in late June; root 6-inch clippings in damp sand, keeping it moist and roots may form by September.

Remove faded flowers from summer annuals to prevent a lull in blooming.

Water cucumbers regularly so they won't have a bitter taste.

Some quick growing annuals you can grow in your garden are cleome, cosmos, marigold and zinnia.

Don't kill the big green caterpillars that get on your parsley or fennel. They will soon become beautiful swallowtail butterflies.



Check garden crops daily for disease and insect problems.

An easy formula for creating a beautiful container garden is to use a single tall plant with a trailer that spills over the edge, along with some plants to fill in the gaps.

Harvest onions, garlic and Irish potatoes when two thirds of the plant tops have died down.

Mulch your vegetable garden with pine straw or wheat straw. You can use three sheets of newspaper to cover the ground around your plants, then cover the paper with straw.

Look for seedlings under your Lenten roses and transplant them to other shady spots in your garden.

Check dahlias for spider mites and spray with an insecticide if necessary, always following label directions. Clip the faded flowers to encourage blooms through the summer.



Stake tall growing flowers like dahlias, lilies and hollyhocks.

Pull weeds from vegetable gardens and flowerbeds weekly.

Cut back chrysanthemums so they won't be too leggy later in the summer and fall when they bloom.

Prune climbing roses after blooming finishes, cutting away weak, old or woody canes.

One of the best things you can do for your trees and shrubs is to eliminate nutrient and water competition by removing the grass and weeds growing at the base of your plant and add about two inches of mulch.

Continue planting annuals for summer color and to fill in bare spots in your flower garden.

Summer blooming bulbs can still be planted.

Houseplants that have been moved outdoors may require more water during summer months.

Remove small sprouts from the base and from the trunk of tree-form crape myrtles.

Prune azaleas (if needed) after they have finished blooming and make sure they have about 2 inches of mulch.

Fertilize flowerbeds.

During hot weather, raise the height of your mower to help your lawn withstand hot, dry weather.

Divide overgrown Boston ferns.

Install a birdbath and enjoy the show



July Garden Chores

If you have not planted your tomatoes, corn, beans and okra, do so by mid July to allow time for them to mature before cool weather.

Remove tomato suckers (a shoot growing between the main stem and a branch) and root them for new plants. Select 5 – 6" long suckers and root in water and then plant in your garden.

If your annuals and perennials need to be rejuvenated, cut one-third of the existing growth, water and fertilize. In about ten days, your annuals will bloom again with a fuller, healthier appearance and in September, your perennials will be more compact and less likely to topple over or split in high winds.

Cut back by half herbs like basil and oregano to promote leaves and to prevent them from producing seed.

Pick squash, cucumbers and okra regularly to keep the plants producing.

Plant pumpkin seeds now for pumpkins in October.

Cut back dahlias to half their height after they bloom for fall flowers.

It is not too late to sow seeds of quick growing annuals such as marigolds and zinnias.

Divide crowded bearded iris clumps making sure each root has a healthy fan of leaves.



A big rotten spot on the end of a ripe tomato means it has blossom end rot. Purchase a product from your garden center that specifically treats this and apply lime to your garden soil in the fall to decrease susceptibility next growing season.

Water early in the day or late in the evening for best results. Much of the water will evaporate if you water in the middle of the day. For more efficient watering, water at the root zone with soaker hoses.

Extreme heat can cause tomatoes and peppers to stop setting fruit. This is a temporary condition and they will continue to set fruit once temperatures drop.

Fireflies are fun to watch and are beneficial. The larvae eat mites, snails, slugs and other soft-bodied insects.

In addition to summer annuals, coleus and caladium, two plants with beautiful foliage color, can be planted for long-lasting summer color.

Look for and remove hornworms (big green caterpillars camouflaged among the stems) on your tomato and pepper plants.

Mulch your garden to retain moisture, lower the temperature, reduce the number of weeds and prevent the soil surface from compacting.

Japanese beetles are hard to control. Hand pick if you can but you may need an insecticide. Always follow label directions.

Remove standing water from flowerpot saucers and watering cans where mosquitoes can breed.

Cut back tall overgrown chrysanthemums in early July for compact growth. Then allow the plant to grow for fall blooms.

Cut purple coneflower and black-eyed Susan for a nice bouquet. This will help the plants continue to bloom for a longer period and give you much pleasure.

Hanging baskets continually exposed to sun, wind and high temperatures may need to be watered every day.

Remove vegetable plants from your garden once they have finished bearing to prevent disease/insect buildup.

Stake tall plants.

Water trees to keep them alive during the dry summer months. Water the ground at the base of the trunk and out as far as the limb canopy reaches.

Remove faded flowers from annuals and perennials to encourage more blooms.

Dig Irish potatoes and harvest garlic when the leaves turn yellow and shrivel up.



Trees and shrubs may need to be lightly trimmed in the summer months to maintain a desired shape but save all major pruning jobs for the late winter.

Avoid wetting the foliage of roses when watering them as this encourages leaf disease.

Remove water-robbing weeds from your garden. One weed that goes to seed this year makes many weeds next year.

To help keep your compost pile from drying out, make the top of your pile concave so rainfall is directed to the center.

For better health of your creeping juniper, prune out old, dead foliage underneath the plants.

Make sure your mower blades are sharp. A ragged cut causes grass to use more water.

Keep shovel blades sharp with a file or grinder. A sharp blade makes digging hard soil easier.

Treat mealy bugs on coleus and African violets with a cotton swab saturated with rubbing alcohol.

August Garden Chores

Plant garlic in August for harvest early next summer.

Cucumbers and squash can still be planted. It is too late for corn, lima beans, okra, pole beans, and tomatoes this season because they will not have enough time to mature before cold weather.

Test your soil now and you will have time to improve it, if necessary, before next spring's planting season. Your County Extension Agent has soil testing instructions.

Prune overgrown blueberries after harvest. Shorten tall central stems to encourage more horizontal branches.

Summer heat may cause some of the blooms on your vegetable plants to drop. The plants will hold the blooms again once the weather is cooler. To reduce some of the effects of the heat, apply a three inch layer of mulch around the plants and water regularly.

Plan your fall vegetable garden now: collards, kale, mustard, spinach, beets, onions, turnips, broccoli, and radishes. Plant mid-to-late August.



Cut back annuals, such as begonias, petunias, impatiens, and geraniums when they get “leggy”. Water them well and lightly fertilize. This will encourage compact growth and more blooms in about three weeks.

Brighten up your hanging baskets by clipping out dead leaves and flowers and fertilizing with a slow-release fertilizer. Water regularly and replace any plants that have died with new plants.

Begin planting fall blooming bulbs.

If your clematis vine has turned completely brown, do not dig it up. Prune out dead stems and leave it alone and it may sprout new growth next spring.

Rhododendrons, azaleas and camellias prefer acidic soils. Discarded coffee grounds and tea leaves added to the soil around these plants can provide a natural means of maintaining soil acidity.

Water plants several hours before applying insecticides so the insecticide will not burn them. When applying insecticides, always follow label directions.

To prevent insect and disease problems in your vegetable garden, remove plants when they have finished bearing.

Remove faded bedding plants from your garden and re-seed with marigolds, cosmos and zinnias to provide color during the fall months.

If your older peony plants had diminished flowers this past spring, dig, separate, and replant them.

Fertilize chrysanthemums and fall blooming asters regularly until the buds show color.

Divide and transplant daylilies, Shasta daisies and iris.

Be on the lookout for poison ivy along the ground and climbing up trees. To control it, spray with a non-selective weed killer, always following label directions.

Harvest squash, okra, and cucumbers regularly so your plants will continue producing. Use a sharp knife with a narrow blade to avoid damaging the plant.

Remove weeds before they make seeds.

Begin propagating outdoor herb plantings for an indoor winter herb garden.

If trees and shrubs need pruning, only lightly prune them early this month so new growth will have time to mature before cold weather arrives.

Remove crape myrtle seedpods as soon as they form to encourage late summer bloom.

Place a garden bench in a corner of your garden so you can sit and enjoy the summer evening sounds.



Collect hosta and blackberry lily seeds to save for planting next spring.

Fertilize roses with 10-10-10 fertilizer, 1 tablespoon per foot of height.

Patio plants and window boxes dry out quickly. Check their watering needs daily.

Root 4" cutting of coleus in water. After roots have formed, plant them in a pot and enjoy them indoors for the winter.

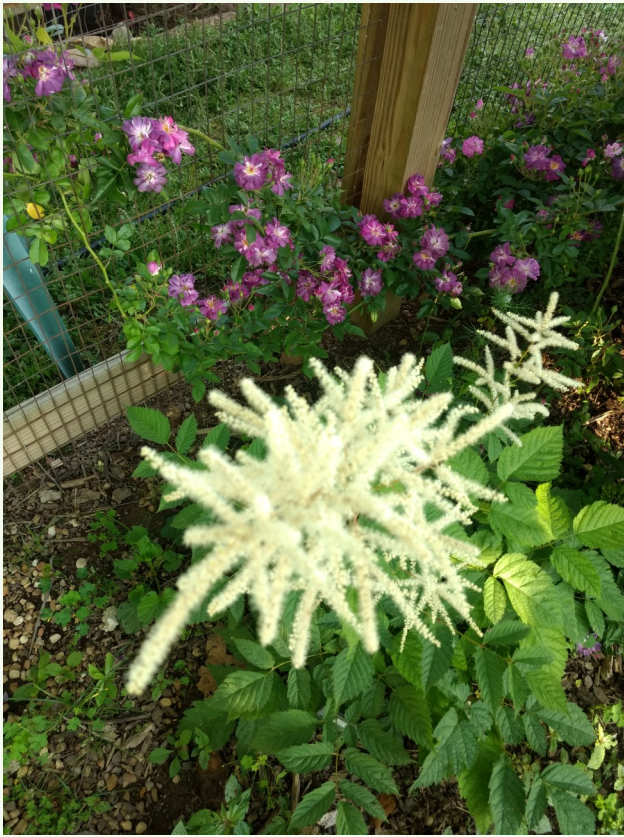
Gather wildflowers for drying.

Cut faded blooms from your roses so your plant's energy will be directed to producing new flowers instead of seeds.



Fertilize annual bedding plants that are in bloom; follow label directions.

What's Blooming Now
(or what has just finished blooming)



Aruncus dioicus

Goat's Beard

In the garden of Tom and Jo Anne Allen,
plant given to me by Elaine Bliss in 2019.

Photo credit: Tom Allen



Lupine hybrids

2 year old plants grown from seed in the
garden of Tom and Jo Anne Allen.

Photo credit: Tom Allen



Diphyleia cymosa

Umbrella Leaf Plant

Elaine Bliss found this on the trail at Soseby Cove.

The pictures on the following three pages are contributions from Tommy Westbrook.
Thank you Tommy, you have a lovely garden!



Iris cristata



Native azalea



Viburnum

Celandine poppy



Native azalea

Viburnum





Sochan—Cooked green coneflower leaves. Elaine Bliss told Tommy that the coneflower leaves were edible so he picked a “mess” and cooked them in a little olive oil with country ham and onions. He reports that they were “quite tasty”. Looks delicious!

"A weed is a plant that has mastered every survival skill except for learning how to grow in rows."

- Doug Larson

God made rainy days, so gardeners could get the housework done.

"What does the letter "A" have in common with a flower?

They both have bees coming after them."

- Kim Roblin

"Every garden is unique with a multitude of choices in soils, plants and themes. Finding your garden theme is as easy as seeing what brings a smile to your face."

- Teresa Watkins

Lazy Summer Days

As spring advances into summer and the weather becomes warmer, many gardeners look forward to sitting a spell and enjoying a glass of iced tea (or other beverage of their choice) while admiring the fruits of his or her labor. Summer is the time to abandon perspiration for inspiration, use your brain, not brawn, in your garden.

Mulch is the gardener's best friend. It keeps soil moist and soil temperatures even and also helps keep weed seeds from germinating.

Compost, another friend to the gardener, is an excellent soil fertilizer and over time will improve soil texture. Leaves and grass clippings left on the ground supply nutrients to the soil and to plants growing in it.

Keeping gardening activities simple and doing them the right way from the start is a good, sound gardening philosophy. Right from the start it is a good idea to get a soil test. It is one of the best gardening investments you can make. The basic test reveals your soil's pH and the amount of fertilizer you need to apply to your garden for what you are planning to grow. Why waste money on fertilizer if it is not needed? With your test results in hand, you know what you need and can proceed accordingly. Soil testing bags and instructions can be obtained from your County Extension office.

Choose plants that grow in your USDA Plant Hardiness Zone and plant them in the proper location. Some plants require more sun than others to perform well, some more shade.

Instead of high maintenance plants, choose no-fuss varieties.

Once planted, proper watering is essential. Water less frequently and more deeply instead. Drip irrigation is the best way to go where water is delivered to the base of the plant where it is needed and it can be soaked in to the roots.

One of the biggest thieves of the gardener's down time is mowing the lawn. Know the proper mowing height of your particular turf and mow only as needed to keep it at the right height.

To me, gardening is not only a means to an end. While gardening helps me achieve what I want, like fresh home-grown vegetables and beautiful flowers, the actual process of gardening is most enjoyable and important itself.



Jo Anne Allen

Master Gardener Extension Volunteer

Board Meeting

The Board had a social-distanced meeting on May 28, 2020 at the pavilion at the Farmers Market. Marty was presented with her thank-you gifts for having held us together for the last three years—an African market basket filled with goodies—an embroidered towel, a scarf, homemade wine, gift certificate to Lewis Nursery and more.



From left, Donni Folendorf and Marty Dellinger



From left, Nancy Peters-Benjamin, Donni Folendorf and Marty Dellinger

Photo credits: Gayle Kusak

Weeds I Love To Hate
Geranium carolinianum
Carolina Geranium

Also known as Wild Geranium, Crane's-bill and Stork's-bill, Carolina Geranium is a multi-branched semi-erect winter annual. Stems are greenish-pink to red and the leaves have long petioles and are dissected into several segments. Flowers are a light pink to light purplish with five petals. The seed capsule has five parts and forms a "stork's bill," hence the name.



Carolina Geranium reproduces from seed and is found throughout the continental United States.

If the level of infestation is low, digging or hand pulling Carolina Geranium can be effective if the tap root is fully removed. As is true with all weeds, it is best to remove this weed prior to flower and seed formation.

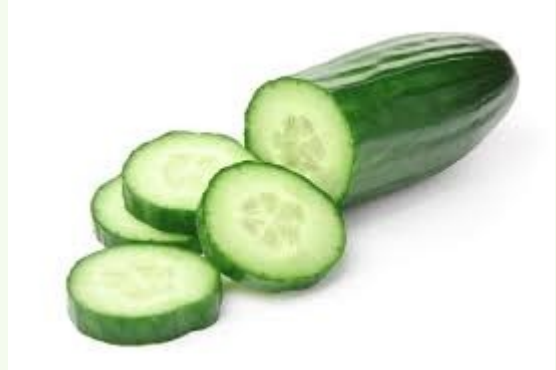
Pre-emergent herbicides can prevent the germination and emergence of Carolina Geranium and post-emergent herbicides are effective. When using herbicides, always follow label directions.

Some Common Gardening Mistakes

1. Locate vegetable garden in too much shade. Wrong. Most vegetables need full sun; eight to 10 hours a day is ideal.
2. Plant as large a garden as you have room for. Wrong. Start small, gardens are a lot of work.
3. Don't waste you time testing the soil. Wrong. Soil tests, offered by your County Extension office, evaluate soil pH and fertilizer needs.
4. Use sprinklers to water your garden. Wrong. Soaker hoses are more effective and efficient.
5. Mulch close to plants to prevent weeds and retain moisture. Wrong. Mulch your garden area but do not bank the mulch up against the base of plants where it can spread insects, fungi and/or disease.
6. Spray chemical weekly to kill harmful insects. Wrong. The best way to manage pests is early detection, proper identification, proper control and correct applications.
7. Fertilize liberally. Wrong. Apply fertilizer at the rate indicated by your soil test.
8. Give herbs plenty of water. Wrong. Most herbs are somewhat drought tolerant (after established) and do not need as much water as your vegetable garden.
9. Plant herbs only in an herb garden. Wrong. Many herbs are increasingly being used as landscape plants.
10. Not harvesting and enjoying the fruits of your labor at the proper time. Wrong. Harvest and enjoy your garden in a timely manner and your garden will keep producing throughout the growing season.

A Favorite Recipe
Cucumber, Radish and Vidalia Onion Salad
Serves 4

2 cucumbers
6 French breakfast radishes
1/2 Vidalia onion, peeled
Salad dressing of your choice



Peel cucumbers if necessary. I like to use cucumbers with a thin skin like 'Pepin English' and peeling is not necessary. Slice cucumbers and radishes and onion into bite sized pieces and mix in a bowl. Dress with salad dressing. Enjoy!

Book Corner

Title: The Herb Garden Cook Book
Author: Lucinda Hutson

From the library of Jo Anne Allen and she gives this book 5 green thumbs out of 5.

This comprehensive guide gives you creative, festive recipes as well as valuable gardening information. Discover how to grow robust and flavorful herbs using organic gardening techniques, harvest and store herbs, prepare more than 150 delicious and innovative recipes, create intensely flavored herb butters and savory vinegars, garnish and flavor recipes with beautiful edible flowers, grow and use exotic herbs from Mexico and Southeast Asia, design menus for special occasions such as a fiesta for friends or a feast for two and find the best sources for buying plants, seeds, and gourmet products.