

Master Gardener Extension Volunteers of Union and Towns Counties

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Meetings: Unless announced otherwise, 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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Reminders

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January 14, 2021—Ashley Hoppers
(New Fannin/Gilmer Extension
Agent), Fruit in the North Georgia
Landscape

February 11, 2021—Becky Griffin,
Fireflies



Left: Bigleaf Magnolia
From the Garden of Tommy
Westbrook, Right: Camelia
'Leslie Ann' From the Garden
of Jo Anne Allen



Editor's Words

Winter here in the North Georgia mountains has the potential for many different kinds of weather which affect gardening. Happy is the gardener who accepts what the weather brings and does his or her gardening whenever the weather cooperates.

Master Gardener Extension Volunteers have been busy getting gardens, like the gardens at Hamilton Gardens and the Gold Medal Garden, ready for the winter months ahead and crafting treasures for the Kris Kringle Market. Check out a picture of a sampling of the results of their efforts on page 12.

Our featured Master Gardener Extension Volunteer for this quarter is Reecie Campbell. I truly enjoyed getting to know more about Reecie and seeing her beautiful garden, please see pages 3-6. Tommy Westbrook shared many pictures of his garden on pages 14-16, read about *The Winter Garden* by Jared Ogden on pages 17-18 and on page 18, read about Hamilton Gardens, *A Legacy Within A Legacy*, shared by Grace Howard.

Winter is the season where you can enjoy the structure of your garden, the branches of a tree without the foliage, the exfoliating bark of trident maples and crape myrtles and the brilliant color of the bark of the coral bark maple. There are many things to see and enjoy in the winter garden.

Happy gardening,

Jo Anne

Winter begins on December 21, 2020 at 5:02 a.m.



Fall Flowers

Picture contributed by Tommy Westbrook

Meet Reecie Campbell

Our featured Master Gardener Extension Volunteer for this quarter is Reecie Campbell. She completed her Master Gardener Extension Volunteer training in 2019 and was certified in 2020.

Reecie grew up in Nashville, Tennessee and when she was 13 years old, moved with her family to Manchester, a small town in Tennessee.

In 1979, Reecie earned a BS in Merchandising from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. She worked as an assistant buyer at Macy's in Dallas, Texas and later as a buyer at Strouss in Youngstown, Ohio. When she moved back to Nashville, Tennessee, she owned a lingerie importer business and after moving to Dunwoody, Georgia, she was owner/operator of the Huntington Learning Center.

Her husband, Dave, is from Pittsburg, Pennsylvania and they have three daughters who are all married. They have two granddaughters and two grandsons.

Reecie and Dave retired to Blairsville in December 2017 but had owned a house here since 2005, four houses away from their current home. They moved into their current house in June of 2018 and have been Vista Pruning for two years. The previous owner of their house was a plant-a-holic but became unable to care for her gardens so the gardens became quite overgrown. New things are coming up with the change in sunlight due to the pruning of the trees and shrubs and Reecie is trying to get rid of the multitude of Japanese hollies that seem to be growing everywhere.

Even though retired, she is very active in the Towns Union Master Gardener Association where she volunteers working on various projects such as 'Ask A Master Gardener' booth at the Union County Farmers Market and crafting for items for the Kris Kringle Market. When her daughters were growing up, she was very active in the Parent Teacher Association and the youth group at the Alpharetta United Methodist Church. She also served as a Girl Scout assistant leader for five years.

Hydrangeas are her favorite plants. She has many different varieties growing in her garden and she is still learning about their care and about deer abatement for them. One of the plants that came up due to the pruning of overgrown plants and increase in sunlight was a hydrangea. Year one resulted in plant growth and year two produced blooms. Reecie was very excited.

Hobbies and passions include gardening, pickleball and hopefully traveling more. Favorite foods include sushi and most any cooked fish.

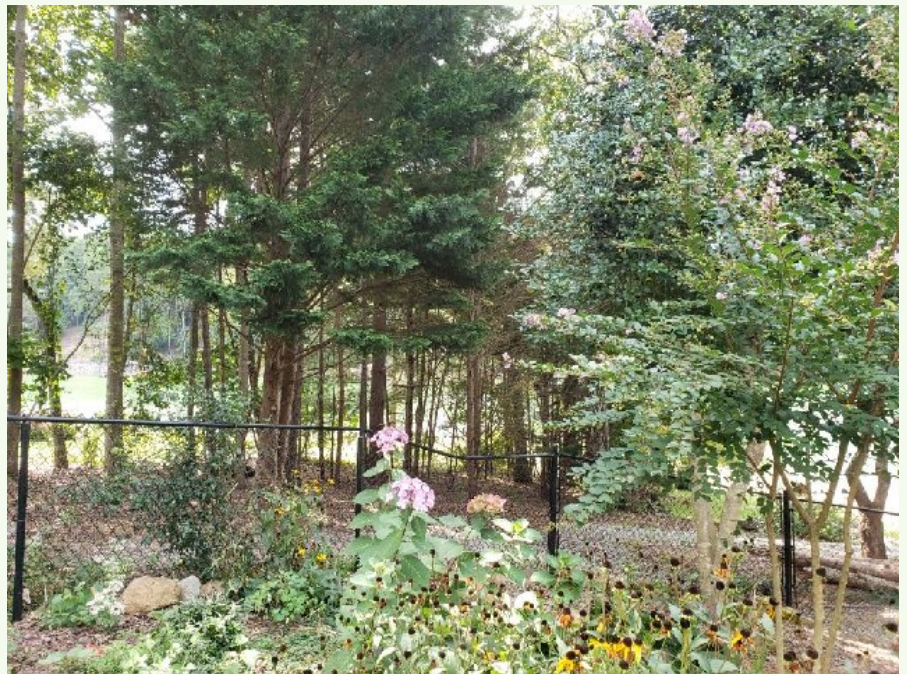
Italy is her favorite travel destination, she loves all of it, from Lake Como in the north to Capri and Positano in the south. She would love to go to Istanbul and wants to visit all of the National Parks in the United States.

I thoroughly enjoyed getting to know Reecie better and hope you will too.

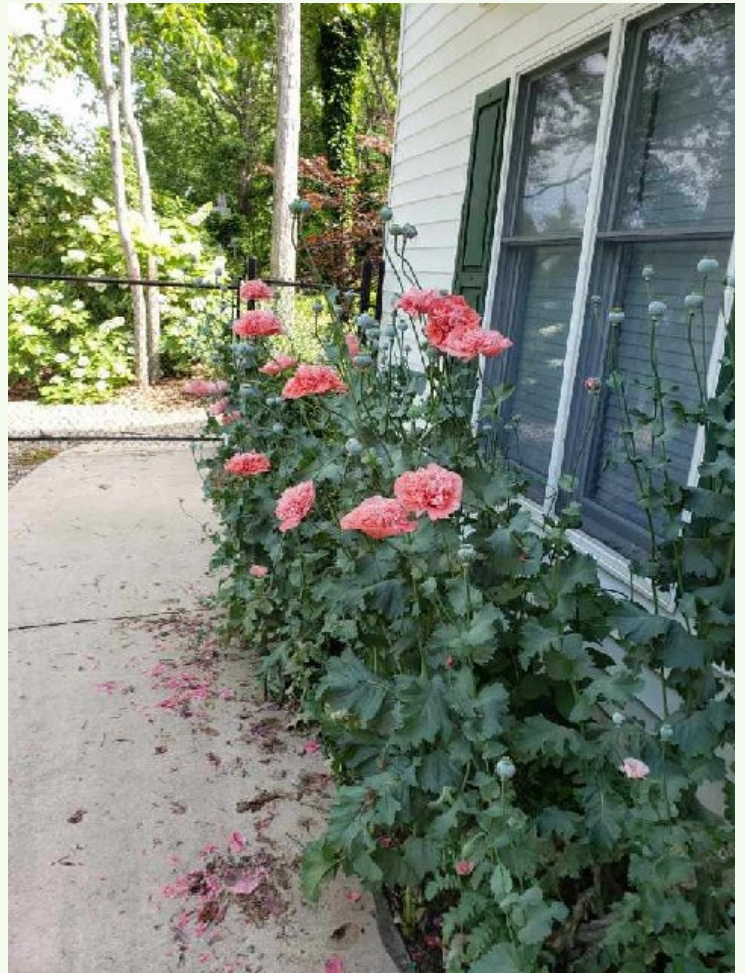
Jo Anne Allen
Master Gardener Extension Volunteer

The pictures on the following three pages are from Reecie's garden.





Roses



Oakleaf Hydrangea

December Garden Chores

Deciduous trees and shrubs can be pruned as needed when they are fully dormant.

If you have not already done so, mulch all trees, shrubs, perennials, and bulbs. A four to six-inch layer of mulch is good, placing the mulch close but not touching the stem or trunk of the plant.

To keep your pansies healthy and blooming, deadhead (remove faded blooms) and fertilize, following label directions.

Continue raking leaves from your lawn and apply lime if your soil test indicates that it is needed. A hand-held shredder that acts like a vacuum is an alternative to raking. The shredded, bagged leaves can then be deposited in your garden.

Cut chrysanthemums back to about two to three inches once blooming is complete.

Rake and dispose of fruit and leaves around fruit trees to help minimize over-wintering insects and diseases.

Prepare next year's garden soil by turning it over and incorporating organic materials such as pine bark, compost, or shredded leaves.

Plan ahead. Order gardening catalogs and start planning your spring vegetable and flower gardens.

Spring flowering bulbs can still be planted this month.



Trees, shrubs, and perennials can still be planted or transplanted to a new location this month if the ground is not too frozen to work properly. Some trees and shrubs that will provide food for birds are dogwood, crabapple, holly, hawthorn, and pyracantha.

As winter approaches, take time to review your past gardening year. Look at your successes and failures and make your next year's plans and goals accordingly.

If you decorate for the holidays with a cut Christmas tree, recycle the tree by pruning off boughs for use as frost and wind protection for tender and newly planted perennials and shrubs.

Clean up flowerbeds and remove annuals killed by frost. Work old mulch and organic matter into beds before the soil freezes.

Prepare your garden tools for winter storage. Clean, sharpen, and store them in a bucket filled with oiled, coarse sand. They will be ready for you when spring arrives.

If you have not already done so, shut down outdoor irrigation systems to prevent freezing.

If rain and snowfall are inadequate, water all new plantings and bulb beds.

Keep newly planted broadleaf evergreens well watered.

Apply pre-emergent herbicides to control winter weeds.

Pull any weeds that remain in your garden.

Don't forget to feed the birds because as winter approaches, they may not be able to find an adequate supply of food. Keep fresh water out for the birds as well.

Cut any remaining tops off of asparagus plants and add a winter dressing of aged manure to the bed.

Do not over water houseplants during the winter months as this could lead to root rot.

Lightly trim evergreens in your garden to use for holiday decorations. Magnolia, euonymus, boxwood, laurel, holly, cypress, and juniper all make long-lasting cut stems indoors.

Look for after Christmas sales on garden tools and equipment.

Make a wreath of dried herbs and flowers from your garden.

If you do not have a garden journal, get one and start keeping records of your garden. Record information such as future plans for design, plant and seed orders, planting schedules, insect appearances, garden highlights (like the date when you first see blooms on your spring bulbs), and more.

Celebrate the winter solstice (the arrival of winter) December 21st.



January Garden Chores

For winter blooms, plant flowering quince, witch hazel, and leatherleaf mahonia.

If you have Helleborus orientalis (Lenten rose) planted in your garden – look for blooms beginning now to mid-spring.

The New Year is an exciting time to reevaluate your life and your garden. Cold days are great for sitting by a fire and planning your spring landscape changes and vegetable garden.

For winter interest in your landscape, birch trees, crape myrtle, deciduous magnolia, coral bark maple, kousa and red-twig dogwood, stewartia, and trident maple all have interesting bark.

If you have not already done so, prepare your vegetable garden area for spring planting when the ground is frost free and not soggy. Apply lime if your soil test indicates that you should. Contact your County Extension office for soil test directions.

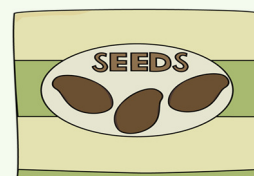
Watch for poison ivy when working outdoors. Even though the vine is leafless this time of the year, the branches can still cause a powerful reaction if accidentally touched.

Prune trees and shrubs while they are dormant with the exception of those that bloom in the spring. They should be pruned just after they bloom. Evergreen shrubs can also be pruned late this month.

When pruning, make sure that your tools are sharp. For large branches, first cut through the bark on the underside of the limb to be pruned to keep it from tearing the bark. Next, cut from the top, close but not flush with the trunk. The swelling at the base of each branch is the branch collar and this should not be cut.

To encourage new blooms, deadhead pansies (remove spent blossoms) and fertilize monthly with fertilizer that contains nitrate nitrogen (best for plants growing in cold soils).

Request mail-order seed and plant catalogs.



Plant ornamental trees and shrubs this month if the soil is not frozen.

Instead of salt, use sand on icy walks and driveways. Salt can damage plants and lawns.

Watch for borers, over-wintering insects, and scale on broadleaf evergreen trees, fruit trees, shrubs, roses, and perennials. Apply dormant oil spray when these pests are detected, always following label directions.

Have your lawnmower serviced so it will be ready when you are for spring grass cutting.

Water trees and shrubs during dry periods.

Use water at room temperature when watering houseplants. Spray houseplants with insecticidal soap if you detect spider mites, mealy bugs, or scale on the leaves, always following label directions.

Now is a good time to install edgings around flowerbeds and construct walls, terraces, and walkways, when weather permits.

Inventory your garden tools and replace or repair as necessary. Sharpen your tools and clean rust from them with steel wool. Coat blades with a light oil and rub linseed oil on wooden handles to help preserve them.

Remove amaryllis stems with the faded blooms. Keep it indoors with your houseplants then plant it outdoors in May.

Be sure to water evergreens before the soil freezes if severe weather is forecast, because the roots are not able to take up water when the soil is frozen.

Prune nandinas any time between now and early spring by cutting out one third of the oldest canes.

If the ground is dry, till soil in your vegetable garden to help eliminate insects and weeds and incorporate manure or compost to get the soil in good shape for spring plantings.

Chop unwanted bamboo and English ivy to the ground. Follow up with weed killer on the leaves in April. More than one application of weed killer may be necessary, always follow label directions.

Water outside containers planted with pansies and evergreens regularly.

Order flower and vegetable seeds for starting indoors.



Give houseplants a half turn every month so they do not become misshapen.

Shrubs such as forsythia, spirea, and kerria can be divided now.

Repot houseplants as needed and fertilize using a water-soluble fertilizer at eight-week intervals at half the recommended strength.

Apply herbicide to winter broadleaf weeds.

February Garden Chores

Clean out the old nesting materials in your bluebird boxes early in the month and they will be ready when the bluebirds are ready to nest.

Fertilize established ornamental trees and shrubs always following label directions.

Observe Arbor Day by planting a tree on February 19th. In Georgia, Arbor Day is celebrated the third Friday in February.

February is a good month to plant and transplant trees and shrubs.



Prune flowering shrubs that flower before May just after they bloom; prune those that bloom after May prior to spring growth.

Prune ornamental grasses down to 12-18 inches to expose base of clump to sunshine.

Cut back butterfly bush to 12-18 inches to promote thicker growth and more blooms.

Prune climbing roses after the first flush of blooms. Now is a good time to tie main canes to a support before they leaf out and remove any stray canes.

Prune apple and pear trees.

Forsythia and quince are easy to force into bloom indoors. Cut branches when the buds show a touch of color and place them in a vase of water. They should bloom within a week or so.

Fertilize spring bulbs as they emerge with 10-10-10, following label directions. Note gaps in plantings and plan fall bulb order.

Take soil samples from your garden area in order to plan your fertilizer program. Contact your County Extension Agent for instructions on having your soil tested.

Prepare vegetable garden area for planting. Add fertilizer and lime if indicated by your soil test.

Check the mulch around your landscape plants and add some if necessary. Trees and shrubs should have about a six-inch-thick covering layer of mulch.

Continue dormant pruning; prune out any tree branches that are crossed, broken, or diseased.

Divide ground covers that have become too thick and prune back liriope before new spring growth begins by setting your lawn mower to its highest setting and cut.

Prune overgrown broadleaf shrubs late this month.

Prune evergreens. Do not severely prune pines, spruce, or junipers as they are unable to generate new growth from old wood.

Feed birds and provide them with a fresh supply of water.



If necessary, prune crepe myrtle by selecting 3, 5, or 7 main stems. Prune old seed heads and twiggy growth that grow from the base of the plant.



Look for blooms on your Lenten rose (*Hellebores orientalis*).

Use cat litter or sand on icy sidewalks instead of salt. Too much salt can burn nearby plant roots.

An occasional lukewarm bath in the sink or shower is a tonic for houseplants that overwinter in hot, dry rooms.

When the weather is extremely cold, close the window shades or place protective cardboard between houseplants and window glass to protect houseplants.

Service your lawn mower so it will be ready when you are for spring grass cutting.

Keep faded flowers and weak growth removed from pansies and keep them well watered and fertilized.

Prune Clematis armandii immediately after it blooms.

Add any remaining leaves and garden debris to your compost pile if you have one. If you do not have a compost pile, start one.



A sampling of the treasures created by many of our crafty Master Gardener Extension Volunteers for the Kris Kringle market.

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

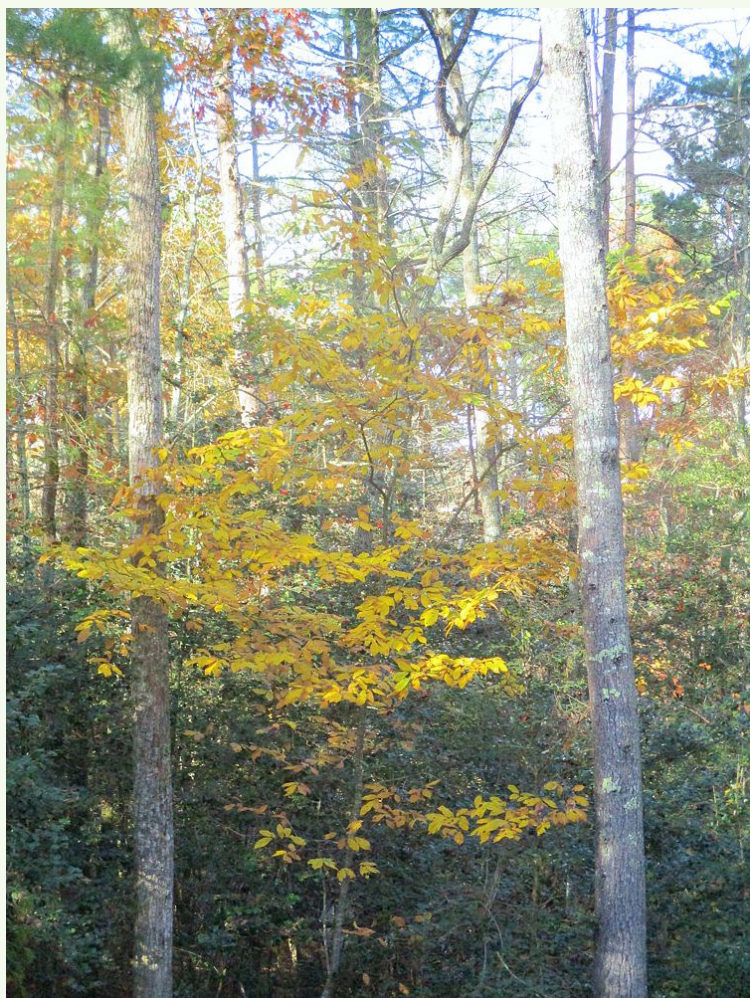


The above two pictures were contributions from Elaine Bliss. The one on the left, a sourwood displaying its fall foliage, taken on an afternoon walk in early November. The one on the right, an oak, taken on a hike on the Benton MacKaye Trail, also in early November.



Yikes! A zebra in my garden? This picture of a zebra longwing butterfly or zebra heliconian (*Heliconius charithonia*) was taken on October 20th in the garden of Tom and Jo Anne Allen. This species is common in Mexico and Central America and is also found in most of Florida and some areas of Texas. It is enjoying a Tithonia bloom. Spent bloom below is that of a moonflower from the night before.

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



Chinese Chestnut

Edgeworthia chrysantha





Oak Tree

Fatsia japonica





Oak Leaf

Beautyberry



Pineapple Sage

The Winter Garden

This Winter, I visited the Ethnobotanic Gardens at the Georgia Mountain Research and Educational Center (GMREC) in Blairsville. The weather was cold. The remaining leaves had long shed their colors. The sky was grey; the wind sharp. Never-the-less visiting the GREMC gardens in Winter brings joy, happiness, and hope.

I volunteer in the gardens during the spring, summer, and fall, but not this year. The gardens were closed due to COVID. No memories from this year bring joyful thoughts to entertain me this Winter. Fortunately, over the 5 years I have volunteered at the gardens, reservoirs of warm, pleasant memories are stored, and they will return to entertain me on dreary days.

In past years, I am usually a weed puller, mulch hauler, and occasionally a tour guide. My tours are rather neanderthal. I provide the basic information with cave-mannish grunts like: "Me like, smell good, very pretty," and the old standby, "Read sign." Often, I'm most expressive when I repeat the phrase, "Don't eat, poisonous!" I have fun. More importantly, the guests enjoy hearing off-beat tidbits about native plants, usually the medicinal purposes; for instance, after explaining that yarrow was used during the War Between the States to stop bleeding from bullet wounds. The reactions of saintly older ladies are priceless when I follow up by suggesting that if they ever get shot, they should visit the gardens, make a poultice of the yarrow, and avoid the hassle of going to the hospital. Sometimes I simply point out black cohosh. The women visitors usually have a great interest in seeing the native black cohosh plant. In contrast, the men visitors appear dumbfounded as to why that innocuous little plant could be of such interest.

Gardeners define a weed as a plant growing where it does not belong. This Winter, an extreme example of a weed is being removed. About 15 years ago, garden planners decided on a perfect spot to plant a native white pine. The pine grew rapidly. As a guide, I pointed to the well-formed tree and commented that it was only 15 years old. Visitors were amazed that a tree could grow so large and beautiful in such a short time. Unfortunately, the tree's size is causing its demise. The tree is shadowing sunlight from wildflowers and other native plants of distinction. So, the tree, now deemed a weed, is being removed. Such is the dynamic nature of the gardens.

Other white pines are being removed, too. These pines were not carefully planned. They simply grew wild on a dry ridgeline. White pines are known as succession trees, trees that grow earlier in the life-cycle of a forest. You can see pines growing in abundance, reclaiming abandoned fields of the subsistence farms from years gone by. The white pines to be removed are mature, and in a few years, nature, disease, or perhaps wildfires will take them anyway. Fortunately, they will be harvested, and the wood repurposed for other uses.

Here in the Georgia mountains, from the worn-out fields, grasses and small shrubs first grow, followed by succession trees like black cherry and pine. Finally, after 500 years, a mature forest blankets the mountains with stands of oaks, hickory, and chestnuts. Happily, plans to replace the harvested white pines with oak, hickory, and disease-resistant chestnuts are underway. It's estimated to take 75 years, not 500 years, to reach maturity for the new plantings. Imagine your great-grandchildren visiting the forest and viewing the forest as it once was 125 years ago. Before the timber companies harvested the mountains crowning glory to use the bark for tanning animal hides.

Being part of the effort to recreate a mature mountain forest is easy. Being able to spread our

garden of joy, happiness, and hope to others is easy, too. Just volunteer and do what you can.

Jared Ogden

Master Gardener Extension Volunteer

A Legacy Within a Legacy

Grace Howard, Executive Director Hamilton Gardens at Lake Chatuge, Inc.

Hamilton Gardens at Lake Chatuge is called a legacy garden because of a gift from Hazel and Fred Hamilton. The Hamilton's donated their extensive collection of native azaleas and rhododendrons to the citizens of Towns County in 1980. Their legacy continues today as the Garden is flourishing and attracting visitors from all over the United States and abroad. The new legacy gift is from the American Rhododendron Society, Azalea Chapter of Georgia, who offered to create a special section containing many varieties of native azaleas propagated by their members. Members of this group travel to various locations in the southeast, collecting seeds and stems from an assortment of native azaleas and rhododendrons. From there, they work diligently to bring these new plants to planting size, which takes up to three-four years of care. The Georgia Chapter members have waited a long time for Hamilton Gardens to be ready to establish and maintain this new legacy garden.

The 2020 January storm which hit the Gardens with a destructive vengeance, actually provided an unexpected gift. The loss of some 8,000 square feet of canopy at the entrance opened up a whole new section, the perfect spot for the new garden. In addition to the loss of the overhead canopy which covered this area, a significant number of rhododendrons and azaleas were destroyed in the storm. The area sits on a slope, has good drainage, newly available sunlight, and is visible from the main trail. It has been cleared of all remaining brush, tilled, and will be planted this fall. There will be approximately 40 new native azaleas and rhododendrons added to the new ARS, Azalea Chapter Legacy Garden. And there is room for more! Two members of this group have been extremely generous in assisting with repairs of the main irrigation system (remember, the original system is 38 years old) and they are supporting the installation of a zoned irrigation section for the new garden. Truly another gift to the Gardens and to the community.

Another unexpected opportunity presented itself this year with a contact from the ARS, Canadian Society. Hamilton Gardens has been selected as a test site for Canadian grown native azaleas to see how far south they can survive without succumbing to a specific type of mold. North Georgia, Zone 6 B, is as far south as they will test. The Society will ship seven varieties, two per variety, in early spring, 2021, to be planted at Hamilton Gardens. Exciting times for a garden which was on the verge of disappearing a short four years ago. Stay tuned for progress reports and plan to visit in the spring; you won't be disappointed.

Follow us on Facebook, info@hamiltongardens.org, call 706 970-0011.

Could This Be the Big One?

Do you remember what happened 17 years ago, the serenade of the cicadas? In spring of 2021, Brood X, a group of periodical cicadas that emerge every 17 years, will once again come out of their long dormancy and sing with nature. Some find their constant shrill, raspy calls unpleasant, but I view the event as a part of nature and I love nature.

Typically, they begin to emerge in mid-May and linger through June. A warm rain will trigger their emergence in large numbers. The love-starved males will rapidly vibrate drum-like membranes or tymbals on the sides of their abdomens to produce their loud mating song to attract mates. They shed their exoskeletons, attach themselves to tree branches, mate and lay eggs all in about six weeks and then die. What a life!

Hatched immatures or nymphs then drop off the trees and tunnel underground, sometimes several feet down, to live for another 17 years, sucking moisture from tree roots. This nymphal feeding on tree roots has little adverse effect on trees and shrubs.

They can be very damaging to fruit trees and young trees because of the very large numbers that emerge at one time. When females lay their eggs, they saw slits in twigs and small branches where they deposit their eggs, causing the twigs and small branches to die.

They do not bite or sting, they are mainly a nuisance, hitting windshields and littering decks, porches and gardens when they shed their exoskeletons.



There are 15 broods of cicadas on life cycles of 13 or 17 years. They appear in the eastern and central parts of the United States; Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana, Maryland, Georgia, Delaware, Illinois, Michigan, North Carolina, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia and Washington D.C.

While researching cicadas, I got to wondering if there were any benefits. They do provide trees a service by pruning out weak branches when the females saw their slits when laying their eggs. They also release nutrients back into the soil when they fall from the tree branches and die. And birds and some people find them very tasty. No, I haven't given them a try but I read that they taste like corn. (I do like corn). Maybe they could be used as an alternative to your popcorn snack or perhaps, cicada pesto in lieu of the expensive pine nuts.

Jo Anne Allen
Master Gardener Extension Volunteer

Weeds I Love To Hate

Indian Mockstrawberry

Duchesnea indica

Indian mockstrawberry, sometimes called false strawberry, is a weedy, ground-hugging perennial that spreads and roots from stolons or runners. The leaves have three leaflets and have toothed margins. The flowers are solitary, on long petioles, and have five yellow petals. The main bloom period is April through June. The small fruit is “strawberry-like”, red, round and fleshy. It is not poisonous and is smaller than the commercial strawberry and is tasteless. It reproduces from both seeds and stolons. It thrives in moist, shady areas and is found in the southeast United States, west to Oklahoma, Texas, California and the Pacific Northwest, and north into Pennsylvania and New York. Indian mockstrawberry spreads easily and chokes out other desirable plants. It is considered a noxious weed by the United States Department of Agriculture.



Because this weed robs nutrients from other plants, it is important to get rid of it as soon as you notice it in your garden. To eliminate it, locate the main stalk and gently rock it back and forth to loosen the soil and then pull it up. Try to get as many of the roots as you can. Next, pull the shoot runners. Pull all that you can locate. If it is a mature weed, there will be many shoot runners. You can use an herbicide, always following label directions, on the area where the mock strawberry was growing to hinder new growth from root pieces left behind when pulled up but the weed will likely grow back. Repeat this process when you notice new growth.

Jo Anne Allen
Master Gardener Extension Volunteer

A Feast For Your Soil

For long term gardening success, it's better to feed the soil than the plant. Every season and every time you plant, feed your soil with organic matter, such as compost, rotted manure and chopped leaves. You will be well rewarded.

Easy Garlic Kale

- 1 bunch kale
- 1 T olive oil
- 1 t minced garlic



Clean kale and remove hard stems. Chop kale leaves into 1-inch pieces. Heat oil in skillet over medium heat; cook and stir garlic until sizzling, about 1 minute. Add kale to the skillet and place a cover over the top. Cook, stirring occasionally with tongs until kale is bright green and slightly tender, 5 to 7 minutes. Enjoy!

Help Backyard Birds This Winter



Birdseed Wreath

1. Feed the birds suet and black oil sunflower seeds.
2. Provide a source of clean water.
3. Provide them with shelter; evergreen trees and shrubs can keep them safe from predators and the cold.
4. Delay deadheading until late winter/spring. Leave seed heads on perennials for the birds to nibble.

Book Corner

Title: The Southern Living Garden Book

Edited by Steve Bender, Senior Writer, Southern Living

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

The complete encyclopedia of more than 5,000 southern plants. This is my number 1 go to reference book, I find this book invaluable. Chapters include: The Spirit of Southern Gardening, The 5 Climate Zones, A Guide to Plant Selection, A to Z Plant Encyclopedia, Practical Gardening Dictionary, Resource Directory and Indexes.