

# The Garden Bench May / June 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.

## Home Garden and Landscape Tips for Middle Georgia

While we have enjoyed the warm, wet Spring weather, it has increased our home gardener calls!

White fly and mosquitoes are not early this year, just more plentiful! Keep mosquito breeding grounds to a minimum by preventing standing water.

We have had many calls related to Leaf Gall and Fire Blight.

Leaf gall is a fungus which attacks the leaves and flowers of azaleas, camellias and sometimes blueberries. The leaves or flowers become thick and fleshy. The top of the leaves may look waxy and light in color. Eventually, the leaf surface turns white as the fungus produces spores. Later in the season, the galls harden and turn brown.

Typically, this disease does not severely damage the plant. The homeowner can pick off the galls and throw them away. Do not throw them on the ground since this can allow the fungus to remain in the landscape.

Spraying now will do little to control the disease. We recommend that the home gardener pick the galls and throw them away. Some azalea varieties are more resistant or susceptible to the disease.

Apples, pears and some other plants can get a bacterial disease called fire blight. The tips of the branches turn black as though they were burned by fire. The end of the branch bends over like a shepherd's crook. You may not see the crook on every branch. The disease can progress into the tree and kill it. Infected limbs and branches may ooze a dark sap. Insects spread the disease during bloom through the flowers they visit.

The main control for this disease is to plant resistant varieties. Bartlett pears and some ornamental pears are not very resistant to fire blight. These trees may grow well until the disease finds them and then they get sick and die.

Always plant fire blight resistant varieties! Look online or contact your local Extension Office for

a list of varieties. A short list of resistant varieties can be found at

<http://apps.caes.uga.edu/urbanag/Home&Garden/indexFS.cfm?storyid=2684>.

Fire blight can infect apple, pear, flowering pear, pyracantha, loquat and other plants. Some of the resistant varieties either will not get the disease or will survive once they get the disease.

Do not fertilize heavily with nitrogen as this may make the disease worse. Be careful about damaging the tree since the disease can enter through wounds.

If you do not control this disease it may kill your tree. Even with the best of controls, the disease may be terminal.

Carefully cut out dead branches if you can. Prune them 8 to 12 inches below the bottom of the brown part. The disease is easy to spread. Clean your shears between every cut by rubbing them with a cloth soaked with rubbing alcohol. Collect all clippings, seal them in a bag and throw them away.

## Mulch Tips & Tricks



- ◆ The Use of Mulch :
  - deters the growth of weeds.
  - helps to maintain moisture
  - helps to maintain temperature of soil.
  - unites the appearance of landscape beds, trees or shrubs.
- ◆ No volcano mulch piles! This can damage trees and shrubs.
- ◆ Mulch should not touch tree trunk. Leave a space of 2 inches between tree between the trunk and mulch .
- ◆ Mulch trees 3-4 inches deep out to tree drip line.
- ◆ Keep mulch 2 –3 inches from home or building foundations.

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In the flower garden watch for Aphids in daylilies and slugs on hosta plants. Treat as needed.

The right plant in the right place prevents loss. Some recommendations for flowers in sunny areas: cockscomb, zinnias, amaranth, purslane, and marigolds. For shady areas consider begonias, impatiens, caladiums, pentas, and hostas.

Plant your favorite heat tolerant perennials when temperatures climb. These include lantana, cannas, Mexican petunia, annual periwinkle, summer phlox, salvia and others.

Prune spring flowering shrubs (azalea, camellia, forsythia, spirea, etc.) anytime after bloom through mid-July.

Replenish the mulch around your shrubs and trees.

Plant container-grown shrubs and trees. Do not stake trees unless absolutely necessary.

When buying plants, always make sure they have a good root system. The plants should look healthy (not pot bound or dying). Short, stocky, and full shrubs may be better than very tall ones.

Some timely tips for lawn care: If needed, core aerate through June and dethatch in May and June.

Mole crickets are hard to control now. It is best to wait until June if you can. If you must treat, use insecticide baits. Carefully follow instructions on the label.

Some lawns are still greening up and may be patchy. Be patient! As the weather warms up into the eighties, the small patches should fill in for a better looking lawn.

Lawns reflect the total of their care from the time they were first planted or installed until today. Following a few basic care principals will help maintain your investment.

Water lawns deeply about every 7-10 days, as needed, with approximately one inch of water. This practice promotes good root growth.

Fertilize your lawn after it fully greens up – usually in May. Don't over fertilize your lawn. Centipede turf doesn't need as much nitrogen as St Augustine, Zoysia or Bermuda grass.

Mow with sharp lawn mower blades to prevent scalping or tearing the lawn. Remove no more than 1/3 of the grass blade when mowing.

If your lawn doesn't improve after green up or develops large patches of missing turf, call us. We may be able to help you identify the cause.

Plant a first or second crop of the following warm season vegetables: beans (snap, pole, or lima) cantaloupe, sweet corn, cucumbers, eggplant, okra, field peas, peppers, squash, tomatoes, watermelons.

Control grass and weeds; they compete for moisture and fertilizer.

After plants are well established, use mulch to control weeds and maintain moisture around tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, Irish potatoes, okra and lima beans.

Stake or trellis tomato plants to support the plants and improve air flow around the plants. Remove suckers. Root and plant suckers for a later crop of tomatoes.

Watch out for the "10 most wanted" culprits: Mexican bean beetle, Colorado potato beetle, bean leaf beetle, Harlequin cabbage bug, blister beetle, cabbage worm, tomato hornworm, tomato fruit worm (and corn earworm), cucumber beetle and squash bug. Early discovery makes possible early control.

Begin disease control measures as needed. Call your county extension office for more information.

### Web Page Links

Houston County Cooperative Extension Homepage

<http://www.ugaextension.com/houston>

Middle Georgia Master Gardeners Home Page <http://www.mgceg.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)



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