



The Garden Bench

The Garden Bench is a free bi-monthly newsletter from the University of Georgia Extension in Houston County. For more information see these websites: Houston County Extension - www.ugaextension.org/houston; the Georgia Center for Urban Agriculture – www.gaurbanag.org; and Georgia Weather – www.georgiaweather.net

March - April 2007

Willie Chance, Houston County Extension Agent

March comes in like a lion and leaves like a lamb! If you haven't already, start seed of tomatoes, peppers and annual flowers indoors. You'll need six to eight weeks or more to grow many transplants. Save yourself some frustration and don't plant tender annuals in the garden too early. Typically, our last frost is around mid-March but it can vary by two weeks before or after. To be safe, you can wait until the first week of April to plant cold tender plants. Early March can be a great time to get the garden ready for planting.

General Landscape

Aphids, azalea lace bugs, many types of scale insects, white flies and pine bark beetles become active in March and April. Scout for them and treat as needed. Read and follow all label directions when using pesticides.

Protect young trees or newly planted trees from Asian ambrosia beetles. Spray Permethrin on the trunks before the leaves emerge and again in 30 days. These pests bore holes in trees creating toothpick-looking columns of sawdust on the plants. Young (slick-barked) and weak trees are more susceptible. Also trees may be more susceptible as they leaf out.

March is not too late to plant bare root roses. A new rose for middle Georgia is the Double Knock-out Rose. Knock-out and Double Knock-out roses are easy to care for and more disease resistant than hybrid tea roses. If you want great roses, plant in full sun, water so as to keep the foliage dry (try a drip system) and till your beds well before planting! Yes, soil test and amend the soil as needed.

Prune spring flowering shrubs and trees (azalea, camellia, forsythia, spirea) after they bloom but before mid-July. Heavy pruning should be done in early March. Prune non-blooming shrubs and trees from January through mid-September.

Apply the first application of fertilizer to trees, shrubs, and perennials in early April. Use a soil test or apply one- half pound of 12-4-8, 16-4-8, 10-10-10 or 18-0-18 per 100 square feet. Broadcast the fertilizer over planting areas or beds uniformly (prior to a rain, if possible). Don't be afraid to fertilize azaleas and other spring-blooming plants. Fertilizer will not affect flowering. Most trees, shrubs and groundcovers will require only one fertilization for the growing season.

Lawns

Time to get those lawn mowers tuned up, blades sharpened and ready for a new season. Worn mower blades tear the grass blade and may even pull out sections of the lawn. Fertilize your lawn after it fully greens up usually in April or May. Fertilizing too early and improper care can severely damage your lawn. Control lawn weeds now through late May, before they get large and the temperature gets too high to apply herbicides safely.

The Garden Bench, a gardening publication of the University of Georgia Extension Service in Houston County, is published in both English and Spanish. If you would like to receive it by email, contact us at tberry1@alltel.net It is also available in bulk for clubs and organizations or as single copies at Houston County garden centers. Call the Extension Office for details on receiving bulk copies – (478) 987-2028.

Flowers

To increase bloom and color, continue deadheading and fertilizing pansies. Fertilize pansies monthly with granular fertilizer or bi-weekly with liquid fertilizer. Fertilize daylilies in late March. Check for aphids and treat if needed.

Clean up winter weary liriope by trimming with a mower or weed eater. A mower, set to its highest setting, is the best tool for large areas. Do this before new growth begins.

Gladiolus, canna and caladium bulbs need warm soil to grow. Wait until mid-April to plant.

Fruit Trees

Fertilize pecans in early March. Use 1 pound of 10-10-10 with zinc for new trees and 4 lb. per inch of trunk diameter for older trees. Use the rate on the label when using other fertilizers. Scatter it evenly around the tree from trunk to beyond the drip line. These fertilizer rates can damage centipede lawns. In fertilized lawns, the pecan trees will get some left-over fertilizer from the lawn and this may be enough to keep them growing well. Do not spray fruit trees with products containing insecticides during bloom. Begin using the 'Home Orchard' or 'Home Fruit Tree' sprays on peaches and apples as per label directions. Start sprays early to get ahead of pests. These sprays should contain Captan and Malathion. Read and follow all label directions. Plums may also need spraying.

Fertilize fruit trees. Contact your local Extension Office for the amount and type of fertilizer to apply.

Thin fruit if set is too heavy. This helps to keep the limbs from breaking and can produce better quality fruit. Remove apples, peaches and pears until you have one fruit every six inches along the stem. Remove plums until you have one fruit every five inches.

Vegetables / Herbs

Plan your vegetable garden. Leafy vegetables need at least 6 hours of sunlight to develop properly. Fruiting vegetables such as tomatoes, squash, eggplant and peppers prefer 8 to 10 hours of full sun. Run vegetable garden rows east-west to maximize use of sunlight. Plant the tallest vegetables on the north and west sides of the garden.

Before planting transplants, harden them off by decreasing water, fertilizer and growing temperatures.

Transplant on a shady day in late afternoon or in early evening to reduce transplant shock. Mulch to prevent weeds. Plan on fertilizing vegetables at least monthly.

Transplant by March 31: cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, collards, and greens.

Begin planting around April 1: beans, cantaloupe, sweet corn, cucumber, eggplant, okra, southern peas, peppers, squash, tomatoes and watermelons. Erect trellises at planting for beans, cucumbers and tomatoes.

After April 15: Plant sweet potatoes. Peppers, okra and southern peas may do better if planted after soils warm well. Plant tender herbs in late April when the soil is warmer.



Miscellaneous

Beltista Home & Garden Show, the largest middle Georgia spring home and garden show is scheduled for March 31st (10 – 6) and April 1st (12 – 5). The location is the Georgia National Fairgrounds and Agricenter in the Miller, Murphy, Howard Building. Tickets are now on sale for \$4. Tickets will be sold at the door for \$5. Sponsored by Beltista Club of Perry with all proceeds going to local charities. For more information call Sally Stanley at (478) 987-7827

Get your birdhouses put up so early arrivals will choose your garden for their nesting site.



The University of Georgia

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