



Over the Garden Gate

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President's Corner

by Don Linke

Spring is almost here. How do I know? My Dutch iris (*Iris reticulata*) is blooming.



Photo: Don Linke

Ok, I know it's not a native plant. Well, I believe balance is a way to truly promote native plants without causing an overreaction from homeowners. Traditionally our home landscaping has been based on what we thought was a beautiful, car stopping landscape plan, not thinking that it was also an insect stopping plan. Remember Doug Tallamy telling us how

many native insects are supported by our ever popular crepe myrtles? Zero! And, I admit, I love the beauty of the flowers of the Empress tree (*Paulownia tomentosa*). And, then I found out it was from China and considered an invasive tree. How invasive? Consider that the fruit is brown, woody, beaked, ovoid capsules that are 4 cm (1.5") long, borne in terminal clusters. The seed pod has four compartments that contain as many as 2,000 tiny winged seeds. Two thousand seeds. I actually had two small trees that were growing in my garden and after attending the Arbor Day celebration, I dug them both up and replaced them with bare root native



Photo: James H. Miller

elderberry trees. Two thousand seeds! How could it be so invasive? I feel much better now. The real point is that I didn't change my entire landscape plan, but I did one good thing by replacing the exotic invasive empress tree with a native elderberry. If we can all encourage a neighbor to change just one exotic plant to a native plant we have taken "one small step for a homeowner, one giant step for natives over invasive exotics".

Designing a Sustainable Landscape

by Rick Freeland

Sustainability means meeting our own needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The following approach is one method gardeners can use to create a sustainable landscape. (1) perform a site inventory and draw up a base map. (2) develop a design program that provides for your family's needs and wants. (3) design the landscape,

incorporating sustainable principles.

- Use repurposed or recycled building materials sourced locally when possible.
- Use native plants, supplement with a 'smart' irrigation system, apply mulch, reduce lawn area, harvest rainwater for future use.
- Incorporate plants that

provide food, shelter and nesting areas for wildlife and beneficial insects.

- Avoid chemical fertilizers. Use compost made on-site, and select plants with low nutritional requirements.
- Plant the right plant in the right place. Specify pest and disease resistant varieties. Import beneficial insects.

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Winter Sowing: What is it and is it for me?

by Robbie McCormac

The method of winter sowing your seeds is a low-maintenance and cost-effective way to start vegetables and flowers for your garden. Basically, you sow your seeds in recycled containers, like milk jugs, take out containers with clear lids or even large Ziploc baggies that can be sealed. The containers are put outside while the weather is still cold, and they act like mini greenhouses causing seeds to germinate as soon as conditions allow, and usually several weeks ahead of sowing in the ground. There are other advantages besides the costs savings. Seeds sown outdoors in unheated environments are already temperature hardy. And since the seeds undergo several freeze/thaw cycles you eliminate the need to scar or break the seed coat before planting (stratification).

Milk jugs are the containers most often used for winter sowing. They are readily available, inexpensive and have a handle already built in for carrying. You'll need to use the translucent kind because light still needs to get into the

jugs. Punch holes about 1" apart in the bottom of the jug using any sharp tool. Starting at the handle, cut around the "waist" of the jug, leaving about an inch connected right at the handle. This acts as a hinge for closing the jug. Label the jug with the seed type. Then using either a seed-starting soil free mix or a potting soil, add at least 2" to the bottom of the jug. Then....plant the seeds! Here are some suggested plants that work well:

Sow in March - Perennial, Hardy Annuals, Cold-Crop Vegetables: these seeds often require cold stratification.

Applies to some natives, many perennials, wildflowers. Look for packet instructions that say "*sow 4-6 weeks before average last frost*", "requires a period of cold to grow well", "hardy annual; sow in fall or winter". Examples: Butterfly Weed (Asclepius), Columbine, Kale, Broccoli, Lupine, Salvia, Bee Balm, Parsley, Coneflower, Catmint, Thyme, Impatiens.

Sow in April - Tender Annuals, Summer Vegetables: these seeds require warmer temperatures to germinate and don't reach

maturity until summer. Look for the following "*sow after danger of frost has passed*". Examples: Basil, Tomatoes, Peppers, Cucumbers, Melons, Sunflowers, Yellow Squash, Zucchini.

Plant your seeds paying attention to package instructions regarding soil depth. Mist the soil well but don't drown the seeds. Then seal the cut seam of your jug with duct tape. Take off the lid to let heat escape as needed. Depending on the temperatures, sunny days and rainfall you should see growth begin within 10 days. Make sure the soil stays moist. If temperatures get into the 60's remove the duct tape so you don't cook the seedlings. Once they have produced 2 true leaves they are ready to transplant.

I use the 'plant plug' method of transplanting because seedlings seem to survive better. With the lid of the jug tipped back, use a sharp knife to cut the soil and seedlings into 1" squares. Then transplant each square as you would a plant plug. As the seedlings grow you can thin them as desired and pass along the extras to other gardeners!

Extension Office News

by Robin Friedman

Congratulations to all of the Master Gardener Class of 2015 Trainees! They are 'Certified' and ready to go!

Linda Conover, Todd McAlister, David McCarroll, Dee Scarpellino, Brian Schuster, Linda Sloyer Maureen Smith, Gail Stanton, Terrie Thamer, Andrew Linker, Angela Halstead, Sue Holbrook, Marcia Tague, Sarah Krouse, Kathy Keel and Jean Ward.

Congratulations go out to David McCarroll in becoming INTERN of the YEAR! He was recognized at our March monthly meeting for his team building spirit and active leadership in many of our HCMG projects. Please congratulate Dave when you see him. KUDOS!

Congratulations to our 2015 Lifetime Master Gardeners for completing 10 years of volunteer service to our communities!

Elizabeth Brotherton, Danny Askew, Tim Attaway, Mark Bell, Kerry Edwards, Diane Korzeniewski, Polly Reins and Tom Reins.

Please welcome our newest class of interns! Come March 30th, you will find them at the Extension Office answering the phones, at the EXPO and in our many community garden projects. We welcome HCMG to be a formal or informal 'mentor' to our interns out in the gardens as they learn the ropes. Interns have been warmly invited to 'try out' a diversity of projects, getting a feel while learning out in the field. Thanks for welcoming and

mentoring our newest class.

Kathy Smith, Ted Brown, Sue Adams, Brandy Pethel, Laura Graham, Holly Sparrow, Krista Lay, Beverly Gilbert, Rose Barton, Mark Barton, Donna Gray, Rhonda Milam, Frances Floyd, and Kris Steinmann
Thank you to those who have been diligent about recording your hours in 2016 on mglog.org. A reminder to log both volunteer hours AND continuing education. This year we will be summarizing quarterly reports and need all your first quarter hours logged in through April 2. Please include all your EXPO hours in our first quarter. Thanks!
Our webmistress, Facebook mistress and photographers work hard to keep you updated on volunteer opportunities and

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Uncommon Fruits

by Hugo Kollmer

Many Master Gardeners have successfully or perhaps unsuccessfully grown the more popular fruits including peaches, apples, pears and plums, all requiring intensive care, especially pest management. If your efforts have produced disappointing results, there are many alternatives. The following are just a few you may care to try:

Dwarf Asian Persimmon *Diospyros* spp. Variety: Ichi-Ki-Kei-Jiro (aka ‘itchy’)

Bearing medium size orange fruit, this variety is non-astringent. Mature trees reach a height of 8 to 10 feet. Asian persimmons are relatively pest free. However, they are occasionally attacked by scale, persimmon psylla, twig girdlers, borers and stink bugs. Asian persimmons require little fertilizer but like to be mulched. The fruit is harvested by cutting the branch to which the fruit is attached. Persimmons are delicious and rich in vitamin C and antioxidants.

Kiwi (*Actinidia deliciosa*), Varieties: Matua, Bruno & Hayward

This popular relatively easy to grow fruit requires its vines to be supported on a trellis or arbor. Plants begin producing two to five years after planting. Pruning of these rapidly growing vines is essential to a good crop. Since they are heavy feeders, Kiwis need to be fertilized adequately. Most kiwi varieties are dioecious, requiring plants of each sex for pollination. There are also a few monoecious varieties but they have been found to produce poorly. Kiwis are relatively free of insect pests and disease.



Photo: eattheweeds.com

Wolfberry, aka Gojiberry (*Lycium barbarum*)

The viney shrub bearing bright red, sweet, nutritious berries grows eight to ten feet tall.

Its fruit, also high in antioxidants, can be eaten fresh or dried. Relatively drought tolerant Gojiberry prefers soil with a pH between 6.5 and 8. If desired, plants can be container grown. They can also be trained to grow on a structure similar to grapes.

Pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*) Varieties: Peterson’s, Overleese, and Mango

Pawpaw is our largest indigenous edible fruit. Beneath its greenish skin lies a sweet custard like spoonable flesh. The tree, which grows to a height of approximately 35 feet, is deer resistant and virtually insect free. It does require pruning and its fruit may need to be thinned. Pawpaws are dependent on flies as pollinators. In their absence, hand pollination becomes necessary. Pawpaws prefer soil with pH of between 6.0 and 6.5, so test your soil.

All of these plants require full sun and well-drained soil. They will not tolerate soggy ground. I encourage additional research prior to purchasing or planting.

Sustainable Landscape (cont. pg. 1)

Use drip irrigation to place water where it’s needed to keep weeds down and help prevent diseases.

- Avoid fossil fuels. Use hand tools where appropriate. Cut back or eliminate chemical fertilizers and pesticides (made primarily from petroleum).
- Use suitable trees and shrubs to cut down on pruning and yard waste that must be transported to a landfill. Compost green waste when possible.
- Eliminate chemical fertilizers and pesticides that can wind up polluting streams or the groundwater. Utilize rain gardens to filter pollutants before water percolates into the ground. Using hand-powered equipment eliminates air and noise pollution entirely.

- Plant vegetables, berries, herbs and fruits throughout your garden for your consumption and to donate to others.

A well-designed garden based around sustainable principles can save you much time, energy and money over time, and provide beauty and joy for years to come. The benefits are well worth it.



Mark Your Calendar

April 19th Professor Elizabeth Little, UGA Entomologist speaking on bad insects and plant diseases transmitted by them

May 17th Plant Auction & Pot Luck Dinner @ Chicopee Ag Center Meeting Hall

Extension News (cont. pg. 2)

events. Please utilize our online presence and remember to ‘like’ us. I believe you can even ‘love’ us now.

The Extension Office appreciates all your volunteer service. KUDOS to all!

GGLA Wintergreen

by Mary Richards

January in the green industry brings Wintergreen, a conference and trade show brought to us by GGIA, Georgia Green Industry Association. Each year there are classes to choose from to tell us what's new in the industry: plants, legislation, laws and bugs. This time, I decided on a class called *New Plants*. Speakers included Dr. Dirr and Vince Dooley, among others, so I figured it would be both informative and entertaining. If you've ever heard Dr. Dirr speak, you know that he spews a wealth of information very quickly, so you'd better open your ears and shut your mouth cuz here it comes! So I thought I'd share my notes from the day.

Dr. Dirr spoke about trees and shrubs, new ones in the pipeline, and those which deserve wider use:

Amaelanchier arborea, *Camellia oleifera*, *Styrax formosanus* or *japonicas*, *Ilex* 10-11S (not yet named) a *latifolia* cross when left unpruned maintains a nice form. *Milletia pulchra*, a mounding wisteria perennial, five feet wide in 10 years. *Prunus caroliniana* - new breeding happening now for a more compact, dwarf plant. The latest introduction on its way in the Endless Summer Series: *Bloomstruck*. Compact habit, red stems, purple flower. I'll have to have at least one of these! *Loropetalum Crimson Fire* 3x3, *Loropetalum Purple Diamond* 4-5', *Distylium* the best alternative to *Otto Luyken Laurel*: *Vintage Jade*, *Coppertone*, *Cinnamon Girl*, small, medium and large size ranges, sun or shade....Yeah! *Sunshine Ligustrum*, *Fatsia 'Spider Web'* - variegated, *Magnolia stellate 'Centennial Blush'*, 15-20'.

Dr. Dirr had a clear message: plant a tree or trees! He even sent each one of us in the class home with a tree. Cool! Mine is a *Katsura* x.

From Proven Winners:

Baptisia Decadence series: *Pink Truffles* and *Sparkling Sapphires* (deep dark blue) 2.5-3'

Dianthus Fruit Punch: *Cranberry Cocktail* - large 2" dark pink flowers. *Sweetie Pie* - light pink.

Hibiscus Summerific: *Berry Awesome* 4x4.5-5' bright lavender pink, 7-8" flowers.

Perfect Storm 3x4.5-5' white flowers with red eye.

Monarda: *Leading Lady Lilac*, lilac flowers and *"Leading Lady Plum"* with purple flowers, 10-14" - 22-28", compact plant, fragrant, powdery mildew resistant.

Phlox 'Opening Act' series: *'Opening Act Blush'*, *'Opening Act White'* 18-20", mid-May blooms, earlier than most *paniculatas*.

New in 2016:

Paint Me Pink Dianthus and *Paint Me Watermelon Dianthus*

Heuchera Dolce 'Appletini' with red flowers, replaces *Key Lime Pie*

Heuchera Primo 'Black Pearl' with large leaves, white flowers with pale pink cast, 8-10" x 18-20", zone 4-9

Hibiscus Summerific series: *'Ballet Slippers'* 4x5' ruffled white with pink flowers.

Note that the presentation from Proven Winners was general, across the board, not specific to the South. I would do some further research of these cultivars to see if they can handle the heat and humidity of our Southern summer climate.

Native non-patented plants, Matthew Chappell, UGA

Matthew had a fantastic presentation showing great plants, native and/or non-patented. My take away here is: tried and true.

Nothoscordum sellowianum - yellow flowers, looks like a crocus, blooms Thanksgiving, then sporadically throughout the winter.

Hosta 'Fragrant Blue' - very heat tolerant

Thermopsis caroliniana - yellow, Lupinus-like

Amsonia tabernaemontana - Eastern *Bluestar*

Deutzia gracilis 'Nikko' - dwarf *deutzia*, white spring flowers

Sasa veitchii - short, non-invasive *Bamboo*

Agave Americana

Viburnum dentatum 'Christom' 4-5'

Edgeworthia papyrifera

Cercis Canadensis var. *texensis* *'Oklahoma'* - shiny leaves, part sun

Chionanthus retusus 'Tokyo Tower'

Chionanthus virginiana

Magnolia x Jon-Jon - 25', fast grower, blooms later to avoid late frost damage

Acer miyabei - 35' maple

Araucaria araucana - *Monkey Puzzle Tree*

Acer palmatum 'Hefner's Red Select' alternative to *Bloodgood*, 20-25', looks good in full sun, late season

Ilex rotunda - 20-25' tree, evergreen, good berry production (held in clusters), smooth, entire margins, no spines

Quercus coccinea (*Scarlet Oak*) - very nice form, naturally lobed leaves, good fall color-always

Quercus acutissima (*Sawtooth Oak*) - nice fall color, adaptable to poor soil

Keteleeria evelyniana - pine family, perhaps eventual alternative to *Leyland* and *Cryptomeria*

It was a fun day of learning, catching up with colleagues and talking points. Can't get much better than that!

Garden Tip:

Ruby-throated hummingbird migration is underway. Hang up those feeders to attract these feisty birds to your garden. Hummer food is 1 part sugar to 4 parts water. NO DYE NEEDED!