



Fall 2016
Volume 19 Issue 3

Over the Garden Gate

Published by the Hall County Master Gardeners

President's Corner

Weed or Native Plant? THAT is the Question!

As we all know, a weed is merely a plant that's in the wrong location. Okay - so what that really implies is that we need to know the name of the plant.

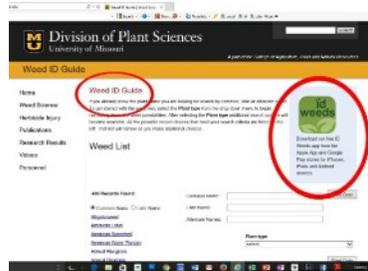
What to do? Perhaps look for an identifying or unique characteristic and then search the Internet via Google.



This plant has an interesting variegated leaf, so I did a search for plants with variegated leaves. There were many images, but none matched my unidentified plant.



Then I searched for "Weed Id.edu". I included ".edu" to get results that included university web sites. The circled site shows the Weed ID Guide/University of Missouri. After selecting that site, you'll see "Weed ID Guide" and to the right a notice that you can



download a free "ID Weeds" app.

After adding the app to my phone, I began answering questions about the unidentified plant: broadleaf or grassy, habitat, leaf arrangement, and, way at the bottom of the list, "Presence of ochrea on the stem?". Ochrea, not Okra, so back to Goggle for a definition of ochrea and an image: "An ochrea (Latin ocrea, greave or protective legging), is a plant structure formed of stipules fused into a sheath surrounding the stem." (Wikipedia)

And, sure enough, my mystery plant has ochrea. After selecting "Present" for the presence



of ochrea, and selecting "identify", the app yielded the name "Pennsylvania Smartweed".

Okay, it's a weed. Well, maybe, depending on whether you like providing nectar for pollinators and seeds for birds. Only you can determine if it actually is a weed, but now you have the name of a new "id weeds" app available from the University of Missouri web site.



Write for Us!

Like to write? Have something to say? Your fellow master gardeners want to hear from you! Email Rick at rsfreeland@charter.net for details.

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Nurturing the Natural/Growing Gardeners

by Kathy Lovett

"If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder, he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement and mystery of the world we live in."

Those words by Rachel Carson in her book *Silent Spring* were the inspiration for an exciting recent conference in Gainesville.

An event for anyone influencing the life of a child came to life on Friday and Saturday, September 9 and 10, at Gardens on Green and in next-door classrooms at the Hall County Education Building and at First Baptist Church. Sponsored by Hall County Master Gardeners and the Hall County School District, the conference "**Nurturing the Natural / Growing Gardeners**" was attended by slightly more than one hundred people. Those included about fifty local teachers and school administrators, community leaders, interested parents and leaders from several counties, and Governor Nathan Deal and Georgia's First Lady, Sandra Deal. Hall County Schools Superintendent

Will Schofield extended a welcome to everyone, conveying his personal support for teaching children to know and grow what we eat and for providing natural experiences.

Keynote speaker Robin Moore, director of the Natural Learning Initiative at NC State, cited multiple studies showing the **positive effects when children learn with, through, and about nature**. Attendees at the conference had opportunities for many hands-on nature experiences themselves through the five sets of break-out sessions offered. Topics ranged from vegetable gardening and food on my plate to a walk in the woods to butterflies and other incredible insects. All of these were designed to instruct, inspire, and inform participants relative to specific activities for children.

One of these was "Building Fairy Houses," a class conducted by Betsy Williams, a creative thinker from Massachusetts who hosted the first "Fairy Festival" in the U. S. in 1988. Another class presented by one of the speakers was "Gardening by the Book – Plants

Kids Love." In it Jane L. Taylor shared ways to bring alive books by authors such as Roald Dahl and Beatrix Potter in the garden. Jane, who now lives in Maine, is the founding curator of the first public children's garden in the country—the 4-H Garden at Michigan State University.

Hall County Master Gardeners Dave Rusk, Linda Sloyer, Robbie McCormac, Rose Barton, Carol Sowers, Patti Lewis, Karen Bird, Dr. Danny Askew, Lee Lovett, Andrew Linker, and Hall County Master Gardener Coordinator Robin Friedman were among other session presenters that included several local educators. Much gratitude goes to them and to the committee members whose commitment made the conference a huge success: Sarah Galshack, Mindy Wade, Patti Lewis, Sandra Edwards, Bobbett Holloway, Lee Lovett, Robin Friedman, and retired teacher Kathy Head.

The idea for the conference was born last summer when health issues prevented our attending the National Youth/Children Garden Symposium sponsored by the American Horticulture Society.

Unable to do much physically while taking chemo, I thought: Why not plan such an event here in Gainesville? Thus, it happened.

It is my hope that in some form a similar event will happen again in Georgia. It is imperative that we teach children to know and grow what we eat. Physical well-being sits at the top of the reasons why. It is imperative that we guide children in a connection with our natural world. Multiple studies show the multiple benefits—emotionally and physically, as well as in academic performance. It is imperative that we teach children to love our natural world. Thus, they will take care of it. Though we have made such advances industrially and technologically, children need to understand that it is the natural world that sustains us.

"The flowers of tomorrow are in the seeds of today."

May we continue planting seeds in the lives of children.

A Fall Vegetable Garden

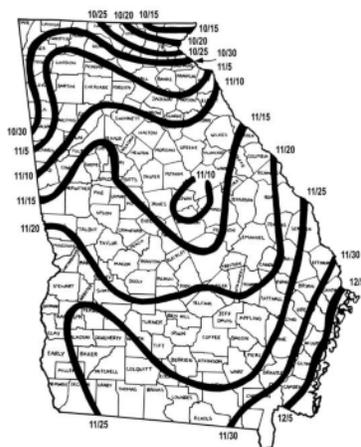
by Hugo Kollmer

Many gardeners consider fall, with its cooler weather and vibrant colors, their favorite season of the year. Moderate weather also provides opportunities for creating a new crop of cool season vegetables.

A successful fall vegetable crop is largely dependent on proper preparation and careful timing. Begin by removing and disposing of any existing unwanted vegetation. Till the soil only if it is compacted. Where seed is to be sown, cultivate only deep enough to provide conditions suited for germination. If you do not have a current soil test report, do not add lime, and fertilize sparingly. To determine when to seed, first estimate the date of the first killing frost. Then, using information on the seed packet or a

Seed/Harvest chart, ascertain the total days required for germination plus the days to harvest and count backwards.

Georgia Fall Frost Dates Map



Vegetables which can be started directly from seed include lettuce, spinach, carrots, radishes and arugula. Obtain transplants if growing larger vegetable species such as cabbage, turnips, kale, Swiss chard, collards, broccoli, and Brussel sprouts. Plant onions, garlic and shallots for harvesting next spring.

Weed control, especially among carrots and leaf vegetables is very important. These vegetables also require thinning to prevent crowding, thereby encouraging maximum plant development.

Protect your plants from insects and foraging critters. Tender leafy vegetables are particularly attractive to rabbits and deer. If your garden is not fenced, netting

suspended and draped over your bed will discourage browsing.

What the Heck?

Coir

Coir is the short fibre of a coconut husk, which is used as a substitute for peat to amend heavy soils and in potting mixes. It's not as acidic as peat, and is similarly low in nutrients. Coir holds moisture well, wets more easily than peat, drains well, decomposes more slowly, and compresses less than peat. *Source: Oregon St. University Extension*

We gardeners are passionate about our pastime. Many look on it as not just a hobby, but a calling. As our bodies age, however, the chores of gardening can take their toll. Joints rebel. It becomes harder to get down in the dirt – or back up again.

Further, if you have a disability, access to the garden can become increasingly difficult. This is especially true if you must use a wheelchair for mobility.

By adopting these accessible gardening techniques, you can continue your passion for gardening, no matter your age or health.

Construct Raised Beds

Raised beds raise the garden up to your level. No more stooping and bending with bad backs and aching joints.

Linear raised beds from 18” to 32” high bring the garden within easy reach of a wheelchair. Keep the beds about 3’ wide if there’s access to both sides. Otherwise, a more narrow bed will work better. A “U” shaped bed with a 2’ to 3’ width and enough room in the opening of the “U” for a wheelchair is another option.

For the ultimate in wheelchair access, raise the bed high enough to allow for knee space under it.

Raised beds have other practical uses. They solve the problem of bad soil, can be used to grow edible plants as well as ornamentals, and put the garden work area

within easy reach of the whole family.

Garden Paths

Paved paths are essential for wheelchair access. Paths should be at least 4’ wide, and should easily allow turning and maneuvering. Make sure all paths are accessible – and connected - to both the garden and the house. And keep in mind that if your path needs ramps or landings, railings may be needed for safety purposes.

Good materials for accessible garden paths are stamped concrete pavers, brick pavers, or stone. Joints should be flush and even and the paving material level for a smooth travel surface.

Trellises

Installing trellises at the edge of garden paths can bring crops like beans and tomatoes within easy reach. Trellises can even be fitted with hinges, allowing them to be lowered to easily gather the harvest. For a more economical solution, wire supports or frames can stand in for trellises.

Irrigation Systems

Soaker or ooze hoses are perfect for applying water to raised beds or small garden plots. These hoses come in 50 or 100 foot lengths, and distribute water through small pinholes, as either a fine spray or small droplets. Ooze tubing is perfect for watering larger

beds. Lay it in rows spaces 2 to 3 feet apart.

An automatic drip irrigation system is the most efficient watering solution. Designed right, it distributes water only where needed, using just enough water to meet the plants' requirements. And drip systems can be put on an electronic timer for truly automated operation and hands-free watering.

Garden Tools

If you're disabled, you can purchase specialized tools that make playing in the dirt a breeze. These tools may have extra-long handles and padded grips which make reaching into the beds from a wheelchair much easier.

Mulch

Adding mulch – whether pine straw, hardwood shavings, or landscape fabric – will cool the ground, keep weeds under control and save water.

Plan for Low Maintenance

When designing your easy-access garden, think about on-going maintenance. Reducing the size of your lawn cuts back on time spent mowing and feeding. Select trees that don't drop a lot of litter to avoid cleanup chores. Choose trees and shrubs that are sized appropriately and look good without constant pruning.

Pest and disease control can take a lot of time and effort. Choose

disease and pest resistant varieties, and consider cutting back on perennials that must be divided every 2 to 3 years.

Garden in Containers

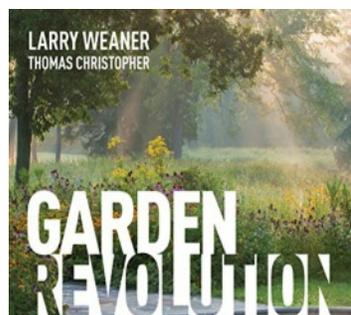
For a really care-free, flexible garden, plant ornamentals, herbs and vegetables in pots. Container gardening allows disabled gardeners easy access to their plants. Pots, troughs and hanging baskets can be moved and rearranged to change the look of the garden, or take advantage of sun and shade. Use fiberglass or plastic pots for lighter arrangements, and place pots and troughs on wheeled pot caddies for easy relocation.

Containers can be staged at various heights on pedestals, wire stands, stacked concrete blocks, benches or inverted pots to bring them within easy reach of wheelchairs. And watering containers is easy when they're fitted with the aforementioned drip irrigation system.

With a little forethought, a garden can be laid out that is perfectly accessible to older or disabled gardeners and is comfortable and safe to work in – all without sacrificing aesthetic appeal. Gardening can truly be a life-long passion.

Book Review: “Garden Revolution”

by Rick Freeland



In this book, garden designer and horticulturist Larry Weaner introduces the concept of “ecological landscaping”, basically letting nature take it’s successional course in the garden (guided by the landscape designer/gardener as a composer directs a symphony).

From his early boyhood days, Weaner has been fascinated by how native plants “fill in” and claim their natural slots in an ecosystem. *Green Revolution* intro-

duces us to his system, a new way to create a garden, based on his observations over the years.

The book is comparable to *The Living Landscape* and *Bringing Nature Home*, by Doug Tallamy. Think of it as a study in practical ecology written for everyday gardeners. If you want a wilder, more spontaneous look over a traditional landscape design, this is the book for you. While more useful for larger lots and acreage, the tenets apply to even smaller

properties. Weaner will teach you how to: learn what your property wants to be; analyze your site and develop a project master plan based on sound ecological principles; then create planting lists perfect for establishing meadows and prairies, shrublands and woodlands. He also touches on maintenance.

If you ever thought about going back to nature in a controlled manner, this book may be for you.

Both large and small trees can grace your garden with flowered gowns in the spring, and dresses of green throughout the summer months. But in the fall, trees show off their beautiful autumn petticoats.

Fall color in Southeastern deciduous trees can range from bright yellow to vivid scarlet to deep red. Used alone (as a specimen tree), or in groups, these trees can brighten the garden with their many different hues.

What Makes Fall Color in Trees?

A tree's fall color depends on several factors, including overall health, available moisture, and soil conditions. In his book *Tough Plants for Southern Gardens* (2003 Cool Springs Press), Felder Rushing explains how being too nice to a tree (by providing amended soil and lots of water) may be detrimental to its fall color display.

"A plant grown on the 'lean' side generally has better fall color," Rushing says. "Its nutrients - the ones used in its leaves - get used up as leaves begin to shut down for the fall and winter." Rushing goes on to say that a tree grown in ideal circumstances will not be able to prepare for winter as well as one grown under tougher conditions.

Where Fall Color Comes From

Rushing states that the pigments making up fall color are

always present in a tree's leaves. They're just masked by the dominant green of chlorophyll. But once photosynthesis stops, other colors start to seep through - the reds, golds, yellows, purples and scarlets.

The following eight trees present a variety of fall color options for the Southeastern garden. Selected varieties are shown, but probably there are others available.

Good Tall Trees for Fall Color

Black Gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*) - a good shade tree, the Black Gum has vibrant fall color that starts as yellow, changes to intense scarlet, and matures to a deep purple-red. It grows from 50' to 70' with a 30' spread. May be hard to locate in nurseries, but sprouts of mature Black Gums growing in lake or woodland environments are easily transplanted (just ask permission from land owners first, and don't harvest from public lands). Suitable for larger gardens, but it doesn't tolerate pollution well so should not be used as a street or urban tree. Varieties: 'Miss Scarlet'; 'Forum'

Ginkgo (*Ginkgo biloba*) - this tree has an ancient lineage. Once prolific in North America, it died out due to climate change. Today's Ginkgo hails from Asia. It grows to 70' tall and 50' wide. Buy a male from a reputable nursery, as the female produces a noxious smelling fruit. A Ginkgo's fall color is an intense buttery yellow. The tree will hold those

beautiful leaves till late fall, when they all fall almost as one, creating a wonderful gold "carpet". Plant only ground cover or bulbs underneath a Ginkgo. Upright shrubs will break up that carpet look. Varieties: 'Autumn Gold'.

Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*) - the fiery red autumn color of Red Maple makes this a perfect specimen tree for larger spaces. It's a quick grower, and its dense shade makes it perfect for blocking the sun's rays from a house. Grows from 40' to 60', and 30' to 50' wide. Don't plant close to walks or patios, however. The close surface roots tend to buckle paving. Varieties: 'Red Sunset'; 'October Glory'.

Sugar Maple (*Acer saccharum*) - This spectacular tree grows up to 60' and has a beautiful fall color ranging from yellow to yellow-orange to scarlet. This is the tree best known for producing maple syrup up north. Varieties: 'Arrowhead' (yellow to orange autumn hues); 'Bonfire' (bright red fall color). There are many more available.

Smaller Trees with Great Fall Color

Yellowwood (*Cladistis kentukea*) - a 40' by 40' rounded-from tree, Yellowwood pleases the eye with bright yellow to muted soft gold fall color. Its showy white racemes in summer are a pleasant bonus, but the tree only blooms every 2nd or 3rd year. A fine small shade tree, it may need to be ordered from a specialty nursery. Best planted in full sun. Varieties: 'Rosea'

Japanese Stewartia (*Stewartia pseudocamellia*) - under-appreciated in the landscape, Japanese Stewartia resembles a Camellia, with white flowers

that bloom in early summer. Fall color is a vibrant, bright orange-red. Use as a specimen tree, or group several together in a large garden. Stewartia grows to 40' high and up to 40' wide. It's not drought tolerant, however, and may need supplemental watering in dry summer months.

Japanese Maple (*Acer palmatum*) - this is a plant of many forms, from bush like shrub forms to small open-limbed tree forms. Depending on variety, Japanese Maple can grow from 2' to 20' high, with a 4' to 20' spread. Autumn colors range from scarlet to orange to yellow. Makes a good accent or specimen plant, especially if used with a water feature. Varieties: 'Autopurpureum'; 'Bloodgood'.

Downy Serviceberry (*Amelanchier arborea*) - a small native deciduous tree, the Serviceberry is another underused tree perfect for the smaller garden. It's a multi-season performer, producing fragrant white flowers in spring, followed by red-purple berries in summer that are supposedly sweeter than blueberries. Vivid yellow and red leaves brighten the fall. Makes a good alternative for Bradford Pear, and has a better aroma. Use as a specimen in a small garden, or group in an understory setting at the edge of a woodland. Varieties: 'Autumn Brilliance'; 'Ballerina'; 'Princess Diana'.

These eight trees are perfect for adding fall color to the garden, either as accent specimens, woodland understory trees, or shade trees in groups or by themselves. Used correctly, they can add beauty and utility to your garden and enhance your outdoor living experience for years to come.

Upcoming Events

Extension Office

- Need hours? Want to learn while serving? Pull a stint answering community garden questions at the Hall County Extension Office. Call Robin for details on available times.