



Gwinnett County Agent: Timothy Daly

**In this issue:**

Herbs are an excellent addition to the garden	1
Many plants thrive in the shade	2
Timely tips for spring	2
Questions and answers	3
Upcoming events for spring 2012	3

**Herbs are an excellent addition to the garden**

Since ancient times, herbs have been used for food, fragrance, medicine, and flower arrangements. Herbs have excellent ornamental features and help beautify your landscape. They are popular garden plants since most of them tolerate the hot, dry conditions of Georgia summers, have few pest problems, and require minimal maintenance.



*These herbs are planted in a more formal setting at the State Botanical Gardens in Athens, Georgia (Picture by Timothy Daly)*

They require well-drained soil and full sun. Apply mulch, like pine bark or pine straw, to help the soil retain moisture and keep weeds under control.

There are many species of herbs. Basil, a tender annual, is one of the easiest to grow. Some cultivars have large green leaves while others have purple ones. Chives are closely related to garlic and its chopped leaves are used in many recipes. Dill tolerates cold weather and produces seed in the spring. Its leaves and stems are used in many recipes and the seeds are used to make dill pickles. Fennel is similar to dill, but is larger with a different scent. Some cultivars have bronze leaves.

Lavender comes in many varieties, but English lavender is the most popular one grown in the south. Lavender has beautiful, fragrant blue and purplish flowers.

There are many types of mints including spearmint, peppermint, ginger mint, pineapple mint, and others. They all share the trait of being vigorous growers with a spreading habit that can be invasive. They prefer a moist soil and are tolerant of some shade.

Rosemary is an evergreen shrub that tolerates drought conditions. It has a very distinct fragrance and comes in several cultivars. Thymes are low growing plants with a variety of cultivars that come in many colors and shapes.

Annuals, such as basil, dill, and coriander can be sown as seeds directly into the ground. Perennial herbs, like fennel, lemon balm, and mints are usually planted as transplants.

Herbs are best dried before use in a warm, dry, dark, well-ventilated place. Tie the herbs in bunches and hang upside down from a rod, but do not let them touch each other. Herbs can also be dried by freezing. Simply remove the leaves from the stems, then place them in a plastic bag in the freezer.

There are many herbs that can be grown in the home garden. If given the proper growing conditions, herbs will thrive and the gardener will be pleased with the results.



**Basil (top) is an excellent annual herb that is used in many recipes. Rosemary (bottom) is a hardy, fragrant perennial that thrives in hot, dry locations.** (Pictures by Timothy Daly)

## Many plants thrive in the shade

Excessive amounts of shade can be a challenge for growing plants in the home landscape. Just as moisture, temperature, and soil conditions are often limiting factors in plant growth, the amount of sunlight a site receives is also a factor. Not all shade is the same. The amount of shade varies with the time of the day and from year to year as trees grow. The good news is that many garden plants do well in shady locations and some actually need to be out of the full sun. If you are struggling to get a lawn to grow under a grove of trees, consider a different approach by adding variety and class to your yard with shade loving plants.



*Big leaf hydrangeas thrive in shady areas and add color to the summer landscape  
(Photograph by Timothy Daly)*

The challenge is to figure out which plants are most likely to succeed growing in the shade. Then provide them the type of care they need. First, determine how much light the plants will receive. Deeply shaded areas under large trees or the overhang of a building present more of a challenge than areas with partial or filtered shade. Most shade-tolerant plants need well-drained, fertile soil. Incorporate organic matter such as peat moss or compost into sandy soils and heavy clay soils.

What type of plants do the best in a shady situation? Camellias, azaleas, and hydrangeas prefer shade since the full sun will cause leaf scorch and lead to a variety of other maladies. Annuals, impatiens, coleus, wax begonias, dwarf salvias, and other shade tolerant annuals can be planted after the frost danger has passed. Hosta, lilies, astilbe, columbines, bleeding hearts, and Huecheras (coral bells) thrive in filtered shade. Many shade loving perennials are woodland plants that usually blossom very early in the season. Trillium, foam flower, Solomon's seal, and wild violets are examples of woodland plants. Ferns

prosper in shade provided they have the necessary amounts of organic matter in the soil and adequate water.

Often we receive questions about turf grasses in shady areas. There are not many solutions to growing turf in the shade. Fescue, zosiagrass and St. Augustinegrass can grow in filtered shade, but will deteriorate in deep shade. The area must receive at least six to eight hours of sunlight per day. Other alternatives exist. Consider planting a shade loving perennial ground cover such as English ivy, ajuga, liriopse, vinca, and Japanese pachysandra.

## Timely tips for spring

- Apply fertilizer to ornamentals now. Remember that mature trees and shrubs usually do not require supplemental fertilizer on a continuing basis
- Squash, tomatoes, peppers, and other warm season vegetables can be planted after all danger of frost. This is usually after April 15
- Cut flower stalks back to the ground on daffodils, hyacinths, and other spring flowering bulbs as the flowers fade. Do not cut the foliage until it dies naturally. The leaves are necessary to produce strong bulbs capable of flowering the following year
- Lengthening the time between waterings combined with deep, heavy watering encourages root growth while reducing top growth in lawns. This increases the root-to-shoot ratio and produces plants that are more resistant to wilting when exposed to infrequent watering
- Lightly side dress perennials, including spring bulbs, with fertilizer such as 5-10-10 or 10-10-10, being careful to avoid the center or crown of the plant
- Birds have five basic needs: food, water, shelter from hot and cold weather, nesting sites, and protection from predators. Supply these and you will have many more birds around your home to entertain you and control insect pests
- Sharpen or replace your mower blade. Using a dull blade will shred the edges of grass blades causing a white appearance and making the grass more susceptible to diseases and dry conditions

## Questions and answers

- Q. Some of the leaves on my camellias are developing a yellow color. Is it a disease or the result of a lack of fertilizer?
- A. The yellow coloration is caused by a virus. Once the plant is infected, there is no control. Fortunately, the virus seldom causes harm to the camellias. You can prune out the branches that have leaves with the coloring, if desired.
- Q. My lawn had a lot of mushrooms appear recently after the rain. Is there anything I can do to prevent them from coming up? Can I spray something like a fungicide?
- A. The mushrooms are the reproductive structures of fungi that grow on decaying organic matter in the soil, much like flowers are the reproductive structures of plants. Mushrooms become abundant after rainfall. They will release fungus spores as they dry, which are like seeds, but since other spores are naturally found all over your yard and surrounding areas, you can't prevent future mushrooms by destroying them. They may or may not be poisonous so do not try eating them. There is nothing you can do to prevent them from coming up other than removing and disposing of them, and they present no harm to your turfgrass. There are no chemical fungicides that will prevent mushrooms from growing in your yard.



*The yellow coloring on the camellia leaves is the result of a virus. It poses no harm to the plant.  
(Photograph by Timothy Daly)*

## Upcoming Cooperative Extension events for spring 2012

### **Organic gardening • April 10**

Noon – 1:00pm. Learn about the basic principles of organic gardening and separate the myths from the facts regarding it. Gwinnett County Cooperative Extension Conference Room. There is no charge but pre-registration required by Friday, April 6.

### **Spring vegetable gardening • April 16**

7:00pm – 8:30pm. Learn about the many vegetables that can be grown in our area and how to properly care for them to produce a bountiful harvest. Centerville Community Center, 3025 Bethany Church Road in Snellville. The cost is \$2 per person in cash with exact change. To register, call the center at 770.985.4713 by Friday, April 12.

### **Attracting birds to your yard • April 25**

10:00am – noon. There are many species of birds that will visit your yard when they are provided with the appropriate food and shelter. Centerville Community Center, 3025 Bethany Church Road in Snellville. The cost is \$2 per person in cash with exact change. To register, call the center at 770.985.4713 by Tuesday, April 23.

### **The basics of landscape design • May 1**

Noon – 1:00pm. Come learn about the basic principles of landscape design that can help create an attractive home landscape. Gwinnett County Cooperative Extension Conference Room. There is no charge but pre-registration required by Friday, April 27.

For questions regarding any of these classes or for registration, please contact Timothy Daly at 678.377.4010 or [timothy.daly@gwinnettcountry.com](mailto:timothy.daly@gwinnettcountry.com).

### **Gwinnett County Cooperative Extension Service**

750 South Perry Street #400  
Lawrenceville, GA 30046  
678.377.4010