

Spring 2012

# Gwinnett Extension News

## Proper mowing keeps lawns healthy and attractive

By: Timothy Daly  
Gwinnett County Extension Agent

One of the most important components of lawn maintenance is mowing. It directly affects the health and quality of the turfgrass. Improperly mowed lawns will suffer and develop an unsightly appearance. Proper mowing consists of cutting the grass at the correct height and frequency. Doing so will create a healthy lawn by encouraging the development of a dense stand of turfgrass, which helps reduce weeds and other pests.

The proper mowing height is determined by the particular type of grass. Zoysiagrass should be mowed at 1 to 1 ½ inches. Hybrid bermudagrass prefers a height of a half inch to 1 ½ inches while common bermudagrass should be cut 1 to 2 inches high. Centipedegrass likes to be maintained at 1 to 1 ½ inches while St. Augustinegrass and tall fescue need to be cut at 2 to 3 inches.

During hot dry periods, raise the mowing height half an inch. The longer leaf blades will shade the soil which will keep the grass roots cooler and reduce moisture loss. When adjusting the mowing height, measure the distance of the mowing blades to the ground and make sure all four wheels are set at the same height.

When mowing, remove no more than one-third of the grass blade. For example, if you want to maintain the lawn at a height of 2 inches, mow when it is 3 inches high. Removing more than one-third will increase the lawn's susceptibility

to pests and environmental stress. A sudden reduction in height greater than one-third can be damaging to the turfgrass. If the grass becomes too high between mowings, increase the height of the cut and then gradually lower it until the recommended height is reached for the particular type of grass.

The blades should be kept sharp at all times. Dull blades will shred the ends of the grass. The ragged blades will cause the lawn to develop an unsightly brown-to-white appearance. Also, the grass is more prone to diseases and water loss. Sharpen the blades as needed or replace with new ones.

While mowing, the best course of action is to let the grass clippings fall back onto the turf where they will break down and release nutrients. This will help provide organic matter for the soil and reduce the need for fertilization. Some people are concerned this will increase thatch, which are dead roots, stems, and grass blades that have accumulated between the surface of the soil and the green blades of the turf grass. Thatch can lead to increased pest problems and other difficulties. If the lawn is cut on a regular basis by removing no more than one-third of the leaf blade, the clippings should not form a thatch layer.

Remember, correct mowing is an important component of lawn care. Make sure it is mowed at the correct height and frequency using a sharp blade. Doing so will help ensure a healthy and attractive lawn.

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**“The grass may be greener on the other side of the fence but you still have to mow it.”**

## Tips to respect and protect teens using the Internet

By: *The University of Missouri Cooperative Extension*

Although raising teenagers has always been a challenging part of parenting, it is more different now than it has ever been. One of the biggest challenges parents of teens face today is all the technology that is available. Social networking sites, e-mails, and text messages enable teens to have relationships with almost anyone. This new technology can make it difficult for parents to know what their teens are doing and with whom they are spending their time.

Just as you show interest in your teens' everyday activities, it is also important to keep tabs on what they're doing online. Talk with teens to learn who they are chatting with, but avoid sounding accusatory. Parents should think of the Internet as another public place where teens are going. Just as you would monitor what teens do when they leave home, you should also monitor teens' online activities.

**The following list of tips can help you keep teens safe on the Internet:**

**Monitor usage:** When possible, keep computers in public areas of the home rather than in bedrooms. Set limits on when and how often teens use the Internet. When computers are used in teens' bedrooms, have them keep the door open and position the monitor so it is visible from the hallway. Install parental monitoring software to limit what sites are accessible and periodically visit the list of recently visited sites to ensure that only appropriate sites have been accessed.



**Monitor content:** Know what social networking sites your teens are using and join those sites to keep an eye on their profiles. In the past, parents only needed to ask about who their teens were friends with at school, but now it is just as important to monitor who they are friends with online.

**Discuss safety:** Warn teens about the dangers of chatting with strangers and establishing online relationships with people they don't know. Many tweens and teens use social networking sites to talk with friends they know from school, but others become friends with strangers.

**Set privacy settings:** Help teens set their online privacy settings at appropriate levels to limit who is able to view their profiles. If privacy settings are too loose, their profiles are available to virtually anyone on the Internet.



**Set information guidelines:** Make teens aware of potential far-reaching consequences of their postings. Some teens share personal thoughts and feelings just as they would in a private journal or diary. Sharing too much personal information can make them vulnerable to others. In addition, college admissions staff or potential employers may view their postings, which could potentially hurt their future prospects.

**Be aware:** Despite parents' efforts to monitor teens' behavior and activities, teens are able to find ways around them. For example, teens may delete their Internet histories, hide their phone when sending a text message, or create profiles using a different name or age so parents cannot find it.

## Gwinnett triumphs over stiff competition as students compete at 4-H District Project Achievement

While most 4<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> graders spent their weekends playing video games or watching television, 23 Gwinnett Cloverleaf 4-H'ers and 32 Gwinnett Junior and Senior 4-H'ers traveled to Rock Eagle 4-H Center in Eatonton, Georgia to participate in District Project Achievement on February 18, 2012, and March 2 – 4, 2012.

4-H'ers selected from over 50 project areas for their demonstration. Each student was required to present a five-minute speech as well as produce posters and other visual aids to help them better explain their demonstrations. Each demonstration was observed by a panel of judges who have had experience in the field, as well as other spectators. After completing their demonstrations, 4-H'ers were scored based on their presentation skills, visual aids, knowledge of the subject, and several other factors.

In their downtime, students were able to visit the Rock Eagle Effigy as well as enjoy the great weather on the basketball and volleyball courts.

A group of Gwinnett 5<sup>th</sup> grade boys said, "We won ribbons and we played putt putt. It was an awesome day!"

After all demonstrations were completed and the judges' scores were tallied, everyone gathered for the closing assembly where the winners were announced with ribbons being presented for first through third places.

Anyone at the event can attest that 4-H has evolved from its agricultural roots and is way more than corn and cattle. With demonstrations being presented on an array of topics from crafts, veterinary science, workforce preparation, history, computers, photography, wildlife, and dog care and training just to name a few, 4-H truly has developed into a program that has something to offer everyone.

Gwinnett was well represented at the competition with several 4-H'ers bringing home top prizes. These 4-H'ers spent months researching and practicing their projects. We would like to congratulate all of our 4-H'ers on their hard work.

District Project Achievement is one of the biggest events put on by Georgia 4-H with over 1,000 youth competing between these two weekends alone. For more information on Gwinnett 4-H, call 678.377.4010 or visit [www.gwinnettextension.com](http://www.gwinnettextension.com).



## Georgia 4-H hires 2012 summer camp counselors

*By: Katie Comer and Tyler Ashley, Georgia 4-H State Staff*

**Victoria Kotkiewicz** and **Kevin van Mansfeld** of Gwinnett County are two of 90 young people from across Georgia who have been hired as camp counselors for the 2012 Georgia 4-H Summer Camping Program accepting an assignment to serve at Rock Eagle 4-H Center near Eatonton, Georgia.

**Arch Smith**, State 4-H Leader and Director of Georgia 4-H, says it is young people like Victoria and Kevin who have helped Georgia 4-H's camping program gain a national reputation for excellence. "Georgia 4-H is fortunate to have one of the strongest summer camping programs in the United States. The 90 young people we hire to work as summer camp counselors are a very important part of our 4-H summer camping success," said Smith.

Over the course of summer 2012, Georgia 4-H expects 9,000 – 10,000 campers, ages 9 – 18, along with their adult and teen leaders, to attend a week of camp at one of the five 4-H centers across Georgia. The desired end result of the camping experience is a future in Georgia 4-H.

The University of Georgia Cooperative Extension faculty members, based in most Georgia counties, work directly with adult and teen volunteer leaders to implement the 4-H program at the local level. For more information about the Georgia 4-H Summer Camping Program or to take advantage of other opportunities in Georgia 4-H, call the Gwinnett County Cooperative Extension office at 678.377.4010 or visit [www.georgia4h.org/camp](http://www.georgia4h.org/camp) for more information.

## Spring 2012 classes

### Walk-A-Weigh fitness and nutrition • April 19 to April 24

10:30am to 12:30pm. Can't get motivated? Join us for exercise, learn healthy cooking and eating habits, and lose weight while attending. Cost for classes is \$13 (exact amount in cash) for six weeks. The class will be held at the Centerville Community Center at 3025 Bethany Church Road in Snellville and is sponsored by Gwinnett Cooperative Extension Service. To pre-register for classes, call the Centerville Community Center at 770.985.4713 or contact Ines Beltran at 678.377.4010.

### Reducing energy density discussion and food demonstration • April 25

Noon to 1:00pm. Learn what energy density is, what makes a food higher in energy density, and how foods with high or low energy density affect your weight. Recipe demonstration: Fresh spinach salad. Gwinnett Annex Building, second floor. For more information or to register, contact Tricia Smith at 678.377.4010 or at [tricia.smith@gwinnettcountry.com](mailto:tricia.smith@gwinnettcountry.com) or Ines Betran at 678.377.4010 or at [ines.beltran@gwinnettcountry.com](mailto:ines.beltran@gwinnettcountry.com).

### Eating guidelines for diabetes • May 25

Noon to 1:00pm. Why should you eat any differently than anyone else just because you have diabetes? Learn what foods affect your blood glucose and what foods to restrict in a weight loss program. Recipe demonstration: Simple Spaghetti. Gwinnett Annex Building, second floor. For more information or to register, contact Tricia Smith at [tricia.smith@gwinnettcountry.com](mailto:tricia.smith@gwinnettcountry.com) or 678.377.4010 or Ines Betran at [ines.beltran@gwinnettcountry.com](mailto:ines.beltran@gwinnettcountry.com) or 678.377.4010.

### Making the right choices to reduce cancer risk • June 22

Noon to 1:00pm. Learn how to reduce your risk of cancer, how to add more fruits and vegetables to your diet, and how to save money when buying healthy foods. Recipe: Stir-Fried Sweet-and-Sour Chicken. Gwinnett Annex Building, second floor. For more information or to register, contact Tricia Smith at 678.377.4010 or at [tricia.smith@gwinnettcountry.com](mailto:tricia.smith@gwinnettcountry.com) or Ines Betran at 678.377.4010 or at [ines.beltran@gwinnettcountry.com](mailto:ines.beltran@gwinnettcountry.com).



THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA  
**COOPERATIVE EXTENSION**  
 Colleges of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences & Family and Consumer Sciences

Gwinnett Cooperative Extension has served Gwinnett County citizens since 1919. We offer programs in the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences, Agriculture/Horticulture/Natural Resources, 4-H and Youth.

We are proud to be a part of Gwinnett County to assist with landscaping, soil testing, natural resources, promoting youth programs, teaching educational classes, and assisting consumers with unbiased, researched information from the University of Georgia.

## Learning for Life

The University of Georgia and Ft. Valley State College, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and counties of the state cooperating.

The **Cooperative Extension** offers educational programs, assistance and materials to all people without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex, or disability. An Equal opportunity/affirmative action organization committed to a diverse work force.

### Staff Directory

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Kitty Shepard	Office Manager
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Ag/ Horticulture/ Natural Resource Department	
Timothy Daly	County Extension Agent
Kathy Parent	Ag Program Assistant
Marlene Gillman	Ag Program Assistant
EFNEP Program	
Alma Rhoden	Program Assistant
4-H and Youth Programs	
Pam Schingoethe	4-H Agent
Janice Rogers	5th Grade Programs
Barbara Larson	6th Grade Programs
Family and Consumer Science Department	
Ines Beltran	County Agent/Radon Specialist
Tricia Smith	Secretary

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