

A close-up photograph of yellow daffodils in the foreground and blue flowers in the background, all set against a green background. The text is overlaid on a semi-transparent green band.

Shades of Green  
Agriculture and Natural Resources  
E-Newsletter  
March 2024



UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

EXTENSION

Athens-Clarke County

# A Note from Athens-Clarke County

## Agriculture & Natural Resources

Hello readers!

Spring is almost upon us here in Athens-Clarke County! Bulbs are blooming and the garden is beginning to slowly wake up to warmer weather. There are many opportunities in March for you to glean some gardening know-how! On our calendar page we have events from State Botanical Garden of Georgia, Lyndon House Art Center, Sandy Creek Nature Center, Beech Hollow and various gardening groups.

We hope you enjoy this month's issue of "Shades of Green".

Take care,

Athens-Clarke County Agriculture and Natural Resources

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# SPRING FLOWERING BULB SALE 2024

## Athens Area Master Gardener Association

For descriptions and photos of the bulbs and the order form, please visit:

<http://tinyurl.com/aamga2024bulbsale>

**Order bulbs through May 1**

*Sale proceeds benefit local community gardens  
and UGA Horticultural Scholarships.*



# Dahlias

By Paul A. Thomas, Extension Horticulturalist



Dahlias are among the most spectacular flowers you can grow in your garden. Hundreds of varieties are available, with flower sizes ranging from 1 to 14 inches in diameter. Almost any color except true blue can be produced in Georgia.

In exchange for their beauty, dahlias require dedicated care. Most of them need special soil preparation, staking, watering during dry periods, disbudding and a strict insect control program.

Dahlias grow to perfection in the cool, moist summers of the north Georgia mountains. They are also well adapted to the state's Piedmont area. Dahlias are more difficult to grow in the Coastal Plain area because of its high summer temperatures, but you can expect good flowers here, especially during cool, cloudy periods.

## Getting Started

Named dahlia varieties are usually bought as tubers, which are simply enlarged roots. You have a better chance of good results if you buy named varieties instead of those labeled only by color.

Tubers are available in late winter and spring. Most dahlia authorities, however, are in no hurry to plant tubers. They know that the most beautiful flowers come from late plantings that flower at their peak in September and

October. Tubers are often planted in April in south Georgia and May in the northern half of the state. June plantings often give the most perfect fall flowers. If tubers are planted early, cuttings can be taken from them in May to produce a late-flowering crop.

## Location

Dahlias thrive in the sun. Place them so they get at least a half day of direct sunlight. They seldom do well in heavy shade or in competition with trees. The location should also have well-drained soil. Dahlias will not grow well in areas where water stands for any length of time.

## Soil

The top growth of dahlias is in direct proportion to the extent of the root system. A good root system can be obtained only by proper soil preparation. This means digging a large hole- 24 inches wide and 18 inches deep is a good goal.

The ideal soil is loose and crumbly, holds moisture well and provides good aeration. Most soils fall short in all these characteristics, but a desirable soil for dahlias can be created easily by incorporating organic matter in the soil removed from digging the hole. The old standby organic matter is

# Dahlias

(Continued)



well-rotted cow manure. If this is not available, materials such as peat moss, pine bark or decomposed leaf mold are acceptable substitutes. Mix 1/3 organic matter with 2/3 soil. If your soil is on the acid side, add a cup of agricultural lime to the mixture.

## Planting Procedure

If you are short on time, plant the tubers in pots or gallon cans and transfer them to the ground when you have time to prepare the soil properly. The tubers are usually placed 4 to 6 inches deep. Be generous in spacing. Most varieties need to be at least 3 to 4 feet apart.

## Staking

You'll be in for a big disappointment if you don't stake your dahlias. Since most of the better varieties grow tall, they cannot support themselves when they reach maturity. A heavy wind or rain will destroy them.

Stakes need to be at least 6 feet long to be useful. Drive them about 1 foot into the ground. The easiest time to do this is at planting time. Some growers prefer two stakes about 18 inches apart to support each plant.

When the plants are about 1 foot tall, tie them to the stakes with soft string or cloth strips. Repeat about once a month as the plant grows taller. The limbs that bear the flowers especially need support.

## Fertilization

If cow manure is used as a soil amendment, it is not necessary to add fertilizer at planting time. If peat moss, pine bark, leaf mold or similar materials are used, about 1/4 cup of balanced fertilizer per plant should be adequate when preparing the soil. Each month thereafter, fertilize the dahlias with 1/8 to 1/4 cup per plant of balanced fertilizer. When the plants are large (5 to 6 feet), increase the rate to 1/2 cup per plant. An analysis with a 1-1-1 ratio such as 8-8-8 is good. Most other fertilizer analyses that give satisfactory results in vegetable and flower gardens can be used successfully for dahlias.



## Watering

Dahlia plants are composed mostly of water. Don't expect good flowers unless you plan to water during dry periods. Give the plants a good soaking once a week. Light surface applications will not do the job.

To conserve the water you apply, mulch the plants. A wide variety of materials can be used successfully, including pine straw, grass clippings, pine bark and black mulching plastic. If a mulch is not used, watering twice a week during dry periods will be desirable.

# Dahlias (Continued)



## Disbudding and Pinching

When the young plant has produced three or four pairs of leaves, **pinch** out the top. This is done to cause the plant to produce side limbs.

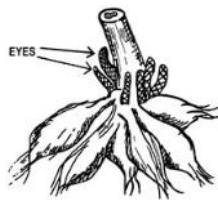
**Disbudding** is another vital cultural practice. It involves nothing more than removing some of the flower and growth buds on each flower stem. Beginners are sometimes reluctant to do this. Unless dahlias are disbudded, however, they will not produce large, perfectly formed flowers on long stems.

When the flower buds of the tip cluster are about the size of peas, remove all but one. At the same time, pinch out the small, tender growth buds in the leaf axils of the top set of leaves on the stem. You might also need to do the same for the buds coming from the base of the next set of leaves if the variety produces short stems.

Remember that dahlias produce more flower buds than the plant can supply with food. Disbudding is necessary to channel sufficient food to a select number of flowers.

## Digging Tubers

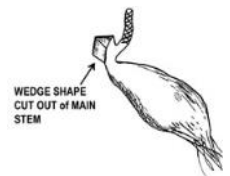
Overwintering tubers of good dahlia varieties in the ground is an unwise practice. A severe winter may kill them all. Most dahlia growers dig the tubers after the first frost. Careless digging can destroy the tubers. Note in Figure 1 that the “eyes” or growth buds occur only in the area connecting with the underground stem. If the tubers are pulled off or if they break off, the buds are almost always lost and the tubers are worthless.



Allow the dug tubers to dry for a day before you store them. A 35 degrees F to 50 degrees F storage temperature is desirable. If the storage area is moist, store the clumps without packing. Many growers store them in large boxes and cover the clumps with dry vermiculite or similar dry materials.

## Dividing Tubers

A single tuber planted in the spring will multiply into a number of tubers by late summer. If the clump is not divided, many stems will emerge the following spring. This is not desirable. The most vigorous plants with the best flowers come from individual plants and not from clumps. For this reason, divide dahlia tubers each year. This is done by carefully cutting the tubers apart with a sharp knife as illustrated in Figure 2. Since each tuber must have an eye or growth bud, many dahlia growers delay dividing until early spring when the buds have swollen and can easily be seen.



## Cutting Flowers

To prevent wilting, cut only in the early morning or late afternoon. Place flowers in warm water immediately after cutting. The temperature should be warm but not uncomfortably hot to the touch. Cut flowers only after they open to mature size. They will not open after cutting. Also, they are less likely to wilt after reaching maturity.

# Prepare For Your Spring Garden Now

By Bob Westerfield for CAES News

You may still be scraping frost off your windshield in the early morning this time of the year, but it is not too early to begin planning your spring vegetable garden.

Completing a few essential steps will ensure that you will have success in your garden when warmer spring temperatures arrive.

## Choose Your Plants

One of the most important parts of preparing your spring garden is determining what you would like to grow. Keeping careful records of what you planted and what did well each year can help you make decisions. Seed catalogs are showing up in our mailboxes and vegetable plants will soon be available locally as well. Be sure to check out University of Georgia Cooperative Extension publications, searching for specific vegetables, to help you decide which varieties to grow.

Remember that some vegetables — such as tomatoes, peppers, and eggplants — do best when started as a transplant. There is still time to order seed and grow your own transplants if you desire. Otherwise, you can wait until we get closer to the planting season and purchase them from your local garden center.

Other vegetables — such as squash, cucumbers, okra, beans and sweet corn — grow best when directly seeded into the garden soil. Soil temperatures should be at least 65 degrees Fahrenheit for planting most spring vegetables. Soil temperature can be checked by visiting our weather station website at [georgiaweather.net](http://georgiaweather.net). If ordering garden seed now, store it in the crisper drawer of your refrigerator until you are ready to use it.

## Get Your Soil Tested

If you have not already done so, now is a good time to take a soil sample from your garden.

Pull soil from about 4 inches deep from eight to 10 different locations in the garden. Mix these samples together as one and take approximately 1 full cup to your local UGA Extension office. For a nominal fee, you will receive an analysis of your soil pH and fertility.

This is by far the most accurate way to address the nutritional needs of your vegetables. If lime is called for in your soil test, apply it as soon as possible. Fertilizer can be added when you plant.



# Prepare For Your Spring Garden Now

(Continued)

## Turn the Soil

Soil can be tilled or turned with a shovel as soon as it is dry enough to work in.

Gardeners should avoid working in heavy, wet soils, as compaction will occur. Turning the soil now will help expose some overwintering pests and diseases that can be harmful to our plants.

## Plan Irrigation

Now is the time to think about how you will supply water to your garden. While overhead sprinklers are popular, they are not the best way to deliver water to your plants.

Soaker hoses or drip irrigation are by far more efficient and allow the foliage of the plants to stay dry. This can cut down on disease issues. Drip irrigation systems are not difficult to put together and can often be purchased locally at hardware stores or online from companies specializing in irrigation.

The addition of an affordable, battery-operated water timer can also save time and labor when it comes to irrigating the garden. These can be set up to water at

different intervals for different lengths of time. Typically, most gardens do best when watered deeply and thoroughly once or twice per week.

## Consider Raised Beds



If you have not tried them before, you may want to consider raised beds for your garden.

Raised beds can be constructed from a variety of materials including wood, bricks, metal or plastic. The key is to make sure they all drain easily and are filled with good, organic soil. Raised beds should have a minimum height of 6 inches and the distance across the bed should be between 4 and 6 feet. This allows you to reach over the center of the bed without stepping into it.



# Prepare For Your Spring Garden Now

(Continued)

The length of the bed is up to the individual and the materials on hand. Raised beds do well when filled with a combination of one-third composted manure, one-third plant compost and one-third bagged garden soil.

## Identify Weed Control Measures

Another important planning consideration is how to deal with those pesky weeds. No matter how hard you try, it seems weeds want to pop up everywhere.

Planning your weed control strategy now will help save on a lot of headaches later. Consider purchasing mulch material such as pine straw, wheat straw or wood chips that will be placed around your plants to block out weeds.

Weed fabric is also a popular way to suppress weeds and can be ordered in bulk online or at garden centers. Chemical weed control is also an option but is not normally applied until the time of planting. Consult with your local Extension agent to get the best chemical recommendations for your garden.

## Start Seeds Now

While it may still be cold out, a lot of garden prep can be done inside from the warmth of your home.

Ordering and starting seeds, making a garden plan and acquiring other needed materials can be done from your home computer or local store. Mild afternoons will allow you to get outdoor garden preparations completed.

The take-home message is to prepare now for success and, hopefully, reap a bountiful harvest starting in late spring.



# Local March Events

## Heirloom Southern Apples State Botanical Garden of Georgia

March 23rd

9:00—4:00 p.m.

2450 S. Milledge Avenue

## Diamond Hill Farm Stand

Every Thursday, 4-6 pm

Vegetables and fresh flowers are available on hand and pre-ordered. Every Thursday, 4–6 p.m. at Authentic Brewing Company.

[www.diamondhillfarmathens.com](http://www.diamondhillfarmathens.com)

**UGA Extension** offices around the state are working hard at developing quality online presentations on various topics.

Visit the UGA Extension [event calendar](#) to see

## ACC Green Thumb Lecture Series Native Host Plants for Butterflies

March 13th, 6:00—7:30 p.m.

ACC Extension Office

275 Cleveland Rd.

## Easter Egg Scramble

March 23rd—10:00 a.m.—11:30 a.m.

Lay Park Gymnasium

[accgovga.myrec.com](http://accgovga.myrec.com)

## State Botanical Garden of Georgia

### Questival

March 17th

1:00 p.m.—5:00 p.m.

2450 S. Milledge Avenue

## Family Saturday Art Workshop

### Lyndon House Art Center

March 9th & March 30th

12:00 p.m. –2:00 p.m.

211 Hoyt Street

## Adopt-A-Stream Workshop

### Sandy Creek Nature Center

March 30

9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

## Preclude to Spring: A Garden Symposium

### Mountain Ivy Garden Club

March 19th, 8:00 am—4:00 pm

St. James Episcopal Church

260 Warwoman RD, Clayton GA

Tickets sold in advance: \$50, lunch included

## Athens Farmers' Market

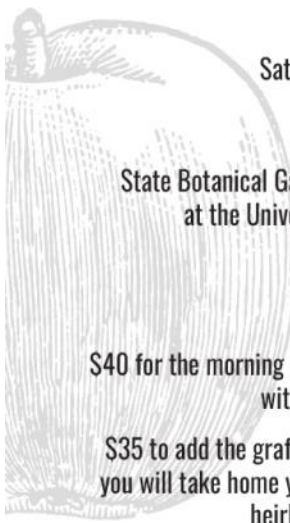
Saturdays Year Round

8:00 a.m.—12:00 p.m.

Bishop Park



# HEIRLOOM SOUTHERN APPLES: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE



## WHEN

Saturday, March 23

## WHERE

State Botanical Garden of Georgia  
at the University of Georgia  
Athens, Georgia

## COST

\$40 for the morning panel discussion  
with lunch included

\$35 to add the grafting class where  
you will take home your own grafted  
heirloom apple trees

The morning session begins with a presentation by orchardist and author Diane Flynt, founder of Foggy Ridge Cider and author of "Wild, Tamed, Lost, Revived: The Surprising Story of Apples in the South." Next, Dr. Stephen Mihm, head of the Department of History, and Gareth Crosby, Heritage Garden Curator at the State Botanical Garden will discuss their efforts to preserve heirloom southern apples and educate the public about this fruit. The morning session ends with a panel including Ann Marie Thornton, co-owner of James Creek Cider House & James Creek Orchards, Tom Mercier, owner of Mercier Orchards, David Anderson, Agricultural Specialist for the United South and Eastern Tribes, Jason Bowen, horticulturist at Horne Creek Living Historical Farm & Southern Heritage Apple Orchard, and Joshua Fuder, UGA Extension agent. Lunch includes book signing and heirloom apple tree sale. The afternoon session consists of an apple tree grafting class led by State Botanical Garden staff and Extension faculty. Come immerse yourself in the world of heirloom apples, past, present and future!



State Botanical Garden of Georgia  
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

2450 S. Milledge Ave. Athens, Ga. 30605  
botgarden.uga.edu




Beech Hollow  
Wildflower Farm

SPRING


NATIVE PLANTS  
REFRESHMENTS  
ARTS & CRAFTS  
MUSIC  
10 AM - 4 PM

MARCH 16TH

FLING

f 389 NORTH CLARENDON AVE SCOTSDALE GA 30079  
WWW.BEECHHOLLOWFARMS.COM

Instagram icon Butterfly icon



# Athens-Clarke County Extension Green Thumb Lectures 2024 Wednesdays 6 PM- 7:30 PM

ACC Extension (275 Cleveland RD, Bogart GA 30622)

**FEBURARY**

21

**Learn to Prune!**

with Dr. Laura Ney, ANR Extension Agent

**MARCH**

13

**How to grow trees from seeds**

with Mateo Fennel, ACC Community Forestry  
Coordinator

**APRIL**

17

**Beginner's Beekeeping Seminar**

with Athens-Clarke County Bee Team

**MAY**

22

**Compost (with Activity)**

With Suki Jansen, ACC Solid Waste Department

**JUNE**

19

**Gardening (Demo Garden)**

With Athens-Area Master Gardeners

**JULY**

24

**Drip Irrigation: How to Install**

**AUGUST**

28

**Fall Veggie Gardening**

**SEPTEMBER**

18

**Lawn Care**

With Victoria Clendenning, ANR Extension  
Educator

**OCTOBER**

16

**Bats and Bat House Building**

With ACC Extension and Carsen Dean, Oconee  
County Extension

**NOVEMBER**

13

**Fruit Gardening**

To register for any class, please visit  
<https://www.accgov.com/gardening>



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Athens-Clarke County



*An Equal Opportunity, Affirmative Action, Veteran,  
Disability Institution*

# MONTHLY GREEN THUMB LECTURE SERIES

Athens-Clarke County  
Extension



## MARCH 2024: GROWING TREES: BAREROOT & SEED

PLEASE JOIN US FOR A DISCUSSION ON GROWING TREES FROM BAREROOT AND SEED. MATEO FENNEL, ACC COMMUNITY FORESTRY COORDINATOR, WILL BE PRESENTING. THERE WILL BE FREE TREES AVAILABLE FOR YOU TO TAKE HOME!



### WHEN:

MARCH 13<sup>TH</sup>, 2024 | 6 PM – 7:30 PM

### WHERE:

ATHENS-CLARKE COUNTY LIBRARY  
2025 BAXTER ST, ATHENS GA 30606



### TO REGISTER:

REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED. PLEASE REGISTER BY MARCH 11<sup>TH</sup> AT: [WWW.ACCGOV.COM/GARDENING](http://WWW.ACCGOV.COM/GARDENING)

### *For questions:*

Contact Laura Ney, Extension Agent at  
706-613-3640 or lney@uga.edu



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# *Prelude to Spring*

## *A Garden Symposium*

**An Event Celebrating MIGC's 30th Anniversary**

**March 19, 2024 • 8 a.m. till 4 p.m.**

**St. James Episcopal Church • 260 Warwoman Rd., Clayton, Georgia**

**All Tickets Sold in Advance \$50 • Price Includes Lunch**

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### *Speakers*



**Firmly Rooted  
Flower Farm's  
Victoria Carver**  
*How To Plant  
a Cutting Garden*

**Native Appalachian  
Plant Expert  
Adam Bigelow**  
*A Discussion on  
Native Plants*

**UGA Extension Agent  
Dr. Laura Nye**  
*Importance of  
Pollinators and How  
to Plant for Them*

**Floral and  
Landscape Designer  
Gail Bell**  
*How To Create a  
Container Like a Pro*



**FOR TICKETS  
CONTACT BESS  
AT 706-491-5577  
OR VISIT US ON FACEBOOK  
MOUNTAIN IVY GARDEN CLUB**



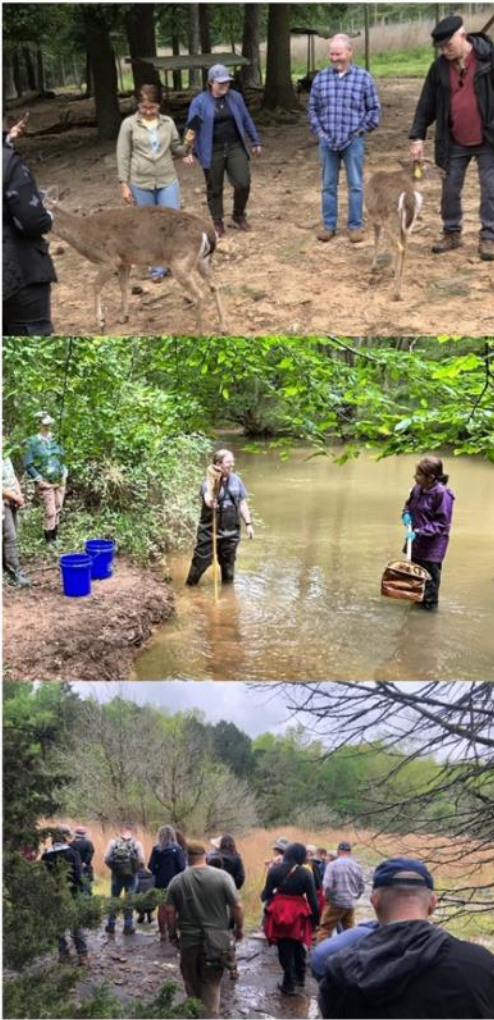
*Event dedicated to the  
memory of Mrs. Carol Reeves*

# Become a Georgia Master Naturalist!

The Georgia Master Naturalist program is a series of weekly programs with specific environmental topics. This program is a hands-on environmental education course that explores habitats and ecosystems in Georgia and human impacts on those environments.

This program is a combination of lectures and outside hands-on learning through field studies and relevant resources.

After completing this fun and interactive program, Georgia Master Naturalists are encouraged to share their knowledge with their communities by volunteering in local schools or nature centers.



## Course Topics May Include:

- ◇ Tree Health and Identification
- ◇ Ecology
- ◇ Environmental Awareness/Human Impact
- ◇ Native Plants
- ◇ Birding
- ◇ Wildlife Issues
- ◇ Entomology
- ◇ Herpetology
- ◇ Water Issues and Stream Monitoring
- ◇ Invasive Plants and Pests

## 2024 Athens-Area Master Naturalist Program

### DATES:

Fridays from  
April 5—May 31, 2024

### TIME:

9:00 AM—4:00 PM

### COST:

\$250, mail or bring cash or check to office, or pay over the phone at 706-613-3640

### TO REGISTER:

Fill out registration form on website, email to [vlc74120@uga.edu](mailto:vlc74120@uga.edu) or include with payment.

<https://extension.uga.edu/county-offices/clarke.html>



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Outreach  
Warnell School of Forestry & Natural Resources  
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

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**HELLO  
ATHENS-CLARKE  
COUNTY**

**Concerned about the  
state of your garden?**

**Are weeds taking over  
your landscape?**

**No need to fear,  
Clarke is here!**

Follow @gardenwithclarke on Instagram  and learn how to battle pests, identify weeds, build your soil and so much more as you garden alongside Clarke, Athens-Clarke County's super gardener!



**gardenwithclarke**  
UGA Extension Athens-Clarke County







## Helpful resources online:

[Find My Local Extension Office](#)

[Georgia Turf](#)

[Free Online Webinars](#)

[Pest Management Handbook](#)

[Pesticide Applicator Info](#)

[Georgia Certified Plant Professional](#)

[Bugwood— Pest Images](#)

[UGA Center for Urban Agriculture](#)

[Extension Publications](#)

[OnlineLandscape Alerts](#)

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## Athens-Clarke County Extension Agriculture and Natural Resources

### Mission Statement

The UGA Athens-Clarke County Extension's mission is to respond to the people's needs and interest in Agriculture, the Environment, Families, and 4-H/youth in Athens-Clarke County with unbiased, research-based education and information.

**Visit us online:**



**Contact us:**

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