



Gardening is not Cancelled!

Spring is here, and it is gardening time!! With many other activities and events being cancelled, now is a great time to spend some time working in your yard and garden. No matter the amount of space you have, you can plant a garden.

Container gardening is great for people who have limited space to plant a traditional garden. Containers are vessels that will stand upright, keep growing media from washing away, and allow water to leave the vessel from the bottom.

Small pots and cans that hold a quart or more can grow herbs, radishes, lettuce, strawberries, and other small plants. Tomatoes, peppers, squash, eggplant, and other large plants need a container that will hold 5 gallons or more.

Containers should be filled with a high organic-matter mix. Blend compost, peat moss, or other organic material with sand. The sand helps with drainage and provides weight for stability. Do not use topsoil in your growing containers. Topsoil contains weed seeds and possible diseases. Organic or man-made fertilizers supply needed nutrients. Water is the most limiting factor in container gardening because plant roots are restricted. Container gardens often need to be watered twice on hot summer days.

Your local county Extension Service office is here to assist you with all your gardening questions.



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Selecting Healthy Transplants for the Home Garden

Purchasing vegetable transplants is a common way for home gardeners to start their garden in the spring. While starting plants from seed offers advantages, including lower cost and greater range of available varieties, the convenience of purchasing transplants is also attractive. Transplants are available at many garden stores and nurseries. Selecting healthy transplants can help to ensure a successful garden.



When purchasing transplants be sure to select varieties that are well suited to our region. Plants are often available early in the season, which may lead to plants being transplanted prior to recommended dates. Planting too early can lead to plants being damaged by cold temperatures. When selecting plants also keep in mind varieties that are resistant to common diseases. Recommended varieties and planting dates can be found on the MSU Extension website or by calling your county Extension office.

While it is tempting to purchase the largest plants, these are generally not the best transplants. Select plants that are stocky, medium-sized, with dark green coloration. The presence of flowers or fruit may indicate the plant has been stressed and may perform poorly. Care should also be taken to ensure that plants are free from insects and disease.

Transplants should be closely inspected to ensure that no insects are present on the plant. Aphids and whiteflies are occasionally found on transplants despite the best efforts of nursery staff. Whiteflies are easy to detect as the adults will be visible flying when the plant is disturbed. Aphids may not be visible unless you check the underside of leaves. Disease symptoms on transplants may be checked for by looking for dark colored lesions on stems. Avoid plants with leaves that appear wilted or spotted, or those with brown leaf edges. Carefully remove a few transplants from their containers to check the root system. Roots should be white and fibrous. Root rot diseases are a common problem for vegetable transplants and will often result in roots that are black or dark brown.

Transplants are an easy and convenient way to start your spring vegetable garden. Taking these steps to select the healthiest plants available will help you have a successful garden throughout the season.

Garden Calendar: April

Planting

- Divide Violets, Shasta Daisies, Liriope, Ajuga, Mums and other Perennials.
- Plant Okra, Melons, Peas, Corn, Beans, Eggplant, Cucumbers, and Tomatoes.
- Set out Basil.
- Set out summer annuals if danger of frost is past: Ageratum, Allysum, Begonias, Geraniums, Dianthus, Celosia, Marigolds, Moss Rose, Petunias, Impatiens, Coleus, and Caladiums.
- Plant summer and fall blooming bulbs: Callas, Cannas, Dahlias, Gladiolus, and Gloriosa Lilies.
- Sow Zinnias for early summer blooms.



Fertilizing

- Fertilize Tomatoes with 10-10-10



Pruning

- Remove any freeze-damaged and dead wood.
- Prune Azaleas during or after blooming. Remove faded flowers from Kurume Azaleas.
- Prune flowering shrubs after they finish blooming. If pruning can be done while the shrub is flowering, the trimmed off parts can be brought indoors for floral displays.
- Disbud roses and peonies for specimen flowers.

Mulch

- Always mulch in new plantings to help assure success.



Miscellaneous

- National Arbor Day is the fourth Friday of April.
- Paint and repair garden furniture and other hard construction (bird bath, bird houses, mailbox, deck, etc.).
- Buy Azaleas in bloom to be sure of color.





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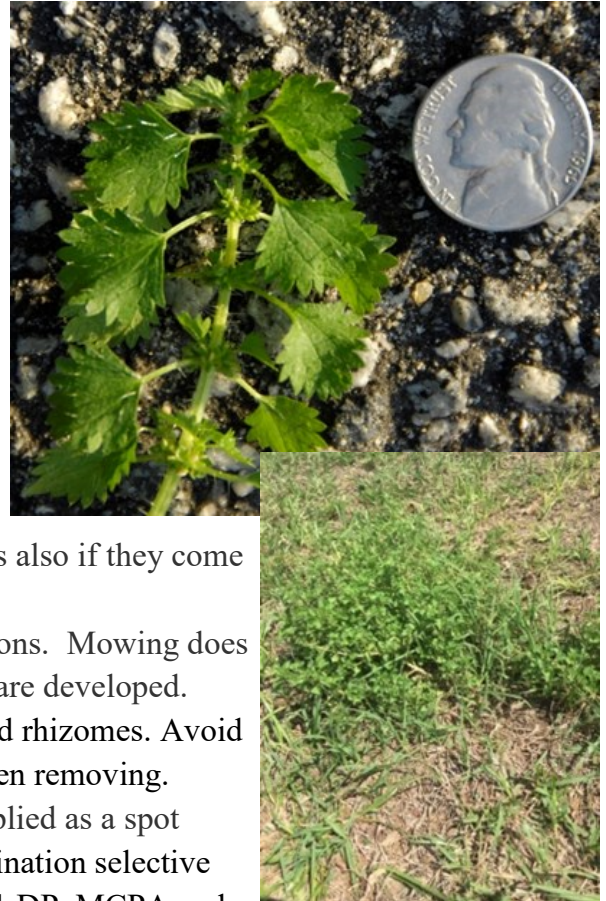
Stinging Nettle

Over the past few years, we have been getting more and more questions about a plant seen growing in many areas this time of year that causes a painful, burning irritation to the skin if touched. This plant is called stinging nettle.

Stinging nettle (*Urtica chamaedryoides*) is a winter annual that is commonly seen in late winter and early spring. While there are some medicinal uses for this plant it is often considered a weed. It can be found in pastures, livestock pens, around buildings, and in shaded areas of lawns. Each plant has hundreds of tiny, barbed hairs on it that easily embed in the skin when touched. They contain a toxin that can cause severe irritation that can last for hours. It can cause a burning and stinging sensation wherever it contacts your skin. It can cause problems with animals also if they come in contact with it.

Stinging nettle can be difficult to control, but there are options. Mowing does not help control this weed and can spread it to other areas if seeds are developed. Cultural Control options are mostly limited to digging out roots and rhizomes. Avoid contact with foliage and stem pieces; wear gloves and clothing when removing. 2,4-D gives little to no control of this weed alone. Glyphosate, applied as a spot treatment, does not always provide effective control either. Combination selective postemergence herbicide products that include triclopyr, 2,4-D, 2,4-DP, MCPA and dicamba are usually more effective than other combinations or when used separately.

Repeat applications of herbicides may be needed. If left untreated, stinging nettle will usually die off in May as the weather starts to warm up.



2020 Landscape & Garden Symposium

Once again it is time for the annual Landscape & Garden Symposium in Stone County. The date is April 11, 2020, at the Stone County Fairgrounds Exhibit Building. Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. and the program will begin at 9:00 a.m. Make the date and join us. Master Gardener training hours are available. Lunch is included. Pre-registration is available at 8:00 p.m. Basic topics include: Rose Care, Mushrooms, Irrigation, Self-Contained Gardens, and Living Wreaths.

The fee for the Symposium is \$10.00 and pre-registration is required by March 31, 2020. Check or Money Order should be made payable to the Stone County Master Gardeners. Payment should be **mailed to:** Stone County Master Gardeners, 214 N. Critz Street, Sallis Crosswiggins, MS 39577.



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Tung Tree

The tung tree, *Vernicia fordii*, is native to southern China, Burma, and Vietnam. In their native environment these trees can grow as tall as 60 feet. In South Mississippi, these trees are often seen along roadsides and in home landscapes and tend to grow no taller than 40 feet. Tung trees have simple leaves that may be either heart-shaped or have three maple-like lobes. They can be easily identified by a pair of red glands where the leaf meets the petiole.

Flowers of the tung tree are just over an inch across and pale pink with streaks of darker red at the base of the petals. The flowers bloom in early spring and due to the attractiveness of the flower and the early bloom they were frequently planted as ornamentals. Tung trees produce a large woody, pear-shaped berry which is initially green but turns dull brown as it ripens. Though the tree is very attractive, all parts of the plant are toxic and should not be eaten. Leaves of the tree can also cause irritation resulting in a rash similar to poison ivy. The nuts of the tung tree are able to last a significant time on the ground making them very successful at spreading.

Tung trees were introduced into Mississippi in the early 20th Century with the intention of establishing their production as a sustainable industry. Oil from tung trees has been used to waterproof wood, in paints and varnishes, making adhesives, as well as in insulators for electric wires. Tung oil is also used as a drying agent for inks and after processing, as a motor fuel. Tung oil trees were once referred to as the most profitable cash crop grown in its climactic area and a godsend for Gulf Coast farmers seeking a replacement crop for large areas of cut-over pine.

Commercial production of tung oil trees in the United States began in the early 1900's with the center of production being the panhandle of Florida and between Poplarville and Picayune, Mississippi. Production of tung oil trees remained important for Coastal Mississippi through the late 1960s. Hurricane Camille in August of 1969 resulted in the destruction of as much as 40,000 acres of tung trees. This, combined with increased labor costs and competition from importers, led to the end of large scale tung tree production. Tung trees were grown in Stone County in the mid-1990s but the largest orchard, located near Lumberton, MS was destroyed by Hurricane Katrina in 2005. At the time that orchard produced 20 percent of the domestic supply of tung oil.



Tung tree leaves and blossoms



Tung Nut



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Lawn Care

Lawns are now beginning to show spring growth. Be careful not to push the grass by forcing early growth with lots of fertilizer. If fertilizer is put on too early, it will feed winter weeds and not the turf. A good rule of thumb to follow is to mow your lawn twice before fertilizing. Typically this begins in April in the coastal counties and into May moving northward. This is when you should begin to fertilize your lawn. A soil test is recommended to determine your soils nutrient levels.

Fertilizer analyses are listed on the bag as percentages of Nitrogen, Phosphorous, and Potassium (N-P-K).

In order to convert the fertilizer product you have available into units of nitrogen, divide the desired amount of nitrogen by the percentage of nitrogen found in the product you have available. For example, for most applications you will want to apply 1 pound of nitrogen per 1000 ft², divide the desired 1 pound by the percentage of that nutrient found in the product, .13 in the case of a 13-13-13 product. (1lb N/.13 N=7.69 lbs of actual fertilizer product to equal 1 pound of nitrogen).

Along with fertilizer applications, cutting heights are important for healthy grass. Cutting grasses that need to be left tall is a common mistake. Choose an even higher cut for grass in shade. Sharpen your mower blade before the season and at least once a month while the turf is actively growing to ensure a quality cut which can help prevent disease and insect damage. Replace that old oil with new and stale gas with fresh before you start your mower this spring.

Recommended cutting heights for the different turfgrasses are:

Common bermudagrass:

1½ inches

Hybrid bermudagrass:

1 inch

Zoysiagrass:

1-1½ inches

Centipede/carpetgrass:

1½-2 inches

St. Augustinegrass:

2½-3 inches



For shady areas raise the mower deck another ½ inch for all species



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Gardening for Hummingbirds

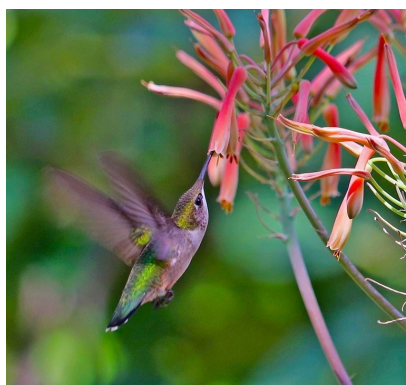
With some of our normal activities suspended, you probably have found yourself at home more than usual lately. Hummingbirds, however, are continuing life as usual and they can be exciting to watch from your own window or garden. Even though hummingbirds are small, they use a lot of energy flying around and have a fast metabolism. They will feed about four times an hour in order to support their active lifestyle. While insects make up a small part of their diet, they mainly rely on their specialized tubular tongues that extend deep inside flowers to feed on nectar.

Plant plenty of plants with trumpet-shaped or tubular flowers in your garden to attract hummingbirds. Red flowers are most effective, and you may have noticed that most hummingbird feeders are also red. Perennials such as salvias, hummingbird mint (*Agastache*), butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*), and crossvine (*Bignonia capreolata*) can be great additions to your garden to attract hummingbirds. Many summer annuals are effective food sources as well, such as firecracker cuphea (*Cuphea ignea*), million bells (*Calibrachoa*), and pentas.

Earlier or later in the season when hummingbird food sources may be limited, you might substitute a hummingbird feeder in place of blooming plants. For a homemade nectar solution, mix 1 part table sugar to 4 parts warm water and allow the solution to cool before filling the feeder. Make sure to keep feeders clean and rinse them at least once a week. If temperatures exceed 90 degrees, you will need to change the solution every two days. When your garden is in full bloom later in the season, you may find that you do not need to use a feeder. If you choose to supplement with feeders later in the fall, leave your feeders up for as long as the birds use them - they will know when it is time to migrate south.



Tubular-shaped flowers will provide a nectar source for hummingbirds in your garden.



Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) and you

What is coronavirus disease 2019?

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. The virus that causes COVID-19 is a novel coronavirus that was first identified during an investigation into an outbreak in Wuhan, China.

Can I get COVID-19?

Yes. COVID-19 is spreading from person to person in parts of the world. Risk of infection from the virus that causes COVID-19 is higher for people who are close contacts of someone known to have COVID-19, for example healthcare workers, or household members. Other people at higher risk for infection are those who live in or have recently been in an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19.

Learn more about places with ongoing spread at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/transmission.html#geographic>.

The current list of global locations with cases of COVID-19 is available on CDC's web page at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/locations-confirmed-cases.html>.

How does COVID-19 spread?

The virus that causes COVID-19 probably emerged from an animal source, but is now spreading from person to person. The virus is thought to spread mainly between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet) through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It also may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads. Learn what is known about the spread of newly emerged coronaviruses at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/transmission.html>.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Patients with COVID-19 have had mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms of:

- fever
- cough
- shortness of breath

What are severe complications from this virus?

Some patients have pneumonia in both lungs, multi-organ failure and in some cases death.

People can help protect themselves from respiratory illness with everyday preventive actions.

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.

If you are sick, to keep from spreading respiratory illness to others, you should

- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

What should I do if I recently traveled from an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19?

If you have traveled from an affected area, there may be restrictions on your movements for up to 2 weeks. If you develop symptoms during that period (fever, cough, trouble breathing), seek medical advice. Call the office of your health care provider before you go, and tell them about your travel and your symptoms. They will give you instructions on how to get care without exposing other people to your illness. While sick, avoid contact with people, don't go out and delay any travel to reduce the possibility of spreading illness to others.

Is there a vaccine?

There is currently no vaccine to protect against COVID-19. The best way to prevent infection is to take everyday preventive actions, like avoiding close contact with people who are sick and washing your hands often.

Is there a treatment?

There is no specific antiviral treatment for COVID-19. People with COVID-19 can seek medical care to help relieve symptoms.

