MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™ EXTENSION

County Gardeners Extension Express

MULTI COUNTY

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Gardening Tips

You should design your garden to meet your needs. Careful planning reduces work and can make the garden more productive. Planting seeds and plants at random frequently results in waste and disappointment.

Are you going to plant in containers or in the ground? If planting in the ground, consider the selected method of cultivation in designing your garden. Where the work is done with a tractor, long rows are practical; but when cultivation is by hand, short rows give a sense of accomplishment as work on each is completed. You also need to consider the slope of the land; run rows at right angles to the slope, especially on sandy-textured soils that tend to wash and erode. Where the land is uneven, contour the rows.

Rows for vegetables with small plants (carrots, onions, radishes, and others) can be closer together for hand cultivation than for power equipment. Planting double rows or a broad band on a bed can increase the yield from a small garden plot. Closely spaced rows and vegetable plants help shade out weeds, but the close spacing makes weeding difficult when plants are small. Closely spaced plants also reduce water loss from the soil surface by protecting the surface from drying winds and hot sun. The reduced air movement, however, may increase chances for diseases.

Plant perennial vegetables like asparagus where they will not interfere with yearly land preparation. Plant season-long vegetables like tomatoes, okra, peppers, and eggplant together where they will not interfere with short-term vegetables and replanting. Plant corn, okra, pole beans, tomatoes, and other tall vegetables so they will not shade or interfere with the growth of shorter vegetables.

Sweet corn produces fuller ears when planted in a block of rows than in a long single row because of better pollination. When possible, group vegetables according to their lime and fertilizer needs, and treat accordingly. Southern peas, lima beans, snap beans, and peanuts do not require as much nitrogen fertilizer as some other vegetables.

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Cherokee Rose

Native to low elevation mountain areas in Southern China, Taiwan, Laos, and Vietnam, Cherokee rose, *Rosa laevigata*, was introduced into the southeastern United States around 1780. It was originally used as an ornamental plant due to its distinctive flowers as well as a hedge and barrier to prevent the movement of livestock. The name Cherokee rose was given to the plant as it was widely believed to have been cultivated and distributed by the Cherokee. Due to its wide distribution, Cherokee rose was believed to be native to North America. Because it was thought to be native, it was designated as the state flower of Georgia in 1916. Cherokee rose grows prolifically and has become naturalized throughout the Southeastern United States. Because of its tendency to climb over other vegetation and form thick hedges, it is considered an invasive in several states including Alabama, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida and Texas. Though Cherokee rose is not native, it is a significant food source for animals including a variety of birds and butterflies.

Cherokee rose is a climbing plant that grows arching stems with numerous hooked thorns. As a free-standing shrub, it generally stands five feet tall, but will climb established plants to heights of greater than fifteen feet. Leaves are trifoliate and leaflets are coarsely toothed. Cherokee rose flowers in early spring and blooms are maintained for several weeks. Cherokee rose flowers are two to four inches in diameter with five petals. Flowers petals are pure white with yellow stamens. The fragrance of the flower is somewhat similar to clove. Flowers cleanly drop their petals to show star shaped sepals. Flowers are followed by red and bristly hips (fruit) which are up to an inch and a half in diameter. The hairs on the hips and seed of Cherokee rose can cause irritation if eaten. Despite this, Cherokee rose is used in traditional Chinese medicine for a variety of ailments including detoxification, reducing cholesterol, as a diuretic, and to cure dysentery.

Garden Calendar: May

Planting

* Plant Crape Myrtles when plants are in color.
* Plant annuals and perennials early in the month and keep well watered.
* Set out Chrysanthemums.
* Continue planting Gladiolus. Can also plant Calla Lilies, Ginger Lilies, Tuberose, and Cannas.
* Take Hydrangea cuttings and let root in coarse sand.
* Plant in the shade: Impatiens, Coleus, Sweet Alyssum, Lobelia, and annual Dianthus.
* Plant in the full sun: Verbena, Periwinkle, Ageratum, Marigolds, Zinnas, Petunias, Wax Begonia, Clematis, Four-o'clocks, and Portulaca.
* Plant these Vegetables and Fruits this month: Cucumber, Tomato, Pepper, Squash, Peas, Beans, Eggplant, Corn, Okra, Parsley, Watermelon, and Cantalope.

Pest Control

* Keep an eye on garden pests and diseases: red spiders, thrips, aphids, lacebugs, lacewings, mealy bugs, caterpillars, slugs, snails, mildew, fungus, and crown rot.

Pruning

* This is the last month to prune Azaleas and Camellias as new buds are formed in June.
* Gardenias can be pruned by bringing a bouquet inside to beautify the house.
* Cutting bouquets regularly will keep your plants pruned and prolong the blooming season.
* Cut in early morning or late afternoon and put into water immediately.
* Remove seedpods from bulbs and irises; they sap the plants' strength.

Mulch

* Mulch layer helps maintain moisture and can protect roots from extremes in temperature.

Miscellaneous

* Water deeply during weeks that it does not rain.

Home Accent

* Repot house plants during their active growing period: April through September.
* May is a good month to repot and divide overcrowded ferns.

In Bloom

Confederate Jasmine, Gardenias, Begonias, Impatiens, Salvia, Geraniums, Roses, Hydrangeas, Magnolias, Azaleas, Clematis, Phlox, Sweet William, Deutzia, Honeysuckle, Golden-Rain Tree, Pomegranate, Mock Orange, and Weigela.





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Algal Leaf Spot

I have received several calls over the last few years concerning spots on leaves of Southern magnolia (Magnolia grandiflora). This magnolia is susceptible to Cephaleuros virescens, a parasitic alga that causes leaf spots and twig cankers. Warm, humid weather common to Mississippi encourages the growth and spread of this pathogen. Algal leaf spot begins as a round, green, somewhat fuzzy or velvety colony on the leaf surface. The green spot will turn reddish-brown with age. Often a fungus grows along with the alga, giving the spot a grayish appearance. The fungus is not parasitic on the magnolia nor the alga. Algal leaf spots that have been colonized by fungi are referred to as being lichenized. The alga spreads by rain-splashed or windblown spores that are produced in wet weather. The pathogen overwinters and weathers adverse environmental conditions in twig cankers and leaf spots. Algal leaf spot is most severe on magnolias that are weak and in poor vigor. Trees that are open-grown and subject to direct sunlight, high temperatures, and excessive leaf wetness from rain or irrigation are more likely to get the disease.

Algal Leaf Spot of Southern Magnolia

Algal Leaf Spot is very common on the MS Gulf Coast

To help manage algal leaf spot, you can do the following: 1. Maintain vigorous trees with proper watering and fertilization; 2. Avoid irrigation systems that spray water onto leaves; 3. Rake and destroy fallen leaves. You may also want to pick off infected leaves from trees that have very minor infections; 4. Prune overhanging branches of surrounding plants to reduce humidity by improving air circulation; 5. Apply a copper-containing fungicide such as Southern Ag Liquid Copper Fungicide, Monterey Liqui-Cop, or SePRO CuPRO 5000. Please read and follow all label directions.

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Termites

Termites are active 365 days a year, but we tend to be more mindful of them in the spring because this is when they swarm. Having large numbers of termite swarmers emerge inside a building is a sure sign the building is infested and needs to be professionally treated. It is also a good idea to be alert for signs of termite infestation when doing home repairs or maintenance or when working in flower beds around the foundation of a building. It is even more important to know when your house was last treated for termites.

Swarming termites are attracted to light at night. In the spring when termites are swarming, you can prevent attracting the swarms by turning off external lights around your home. Limiting the internal lights will also help keep the swarming termites from trying to enter your home.

If you don't have an active termite contract on your home or at least have a record of when the house was last treated, it is probably time to have the house treated. See Extension publication 2568, Protect Your House from Termites, for information on how to recognize signs of termite infestation and for answers to common questions about termite treatments.

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Cogongrass

If you have been on the road in the past few weeks unless you were driving with your eyes closed you have seen lots of white feathery plants in the ditches. This noxious weed called (Cogongrass) is a major problem in southeast Mississippi. Cogongrass has no nutritional benefits and is detrimental to forage crops and hinders the growth of timber.

Cogongrass is most commonly seen in pastures/hayfields, wooded areas and roadsides. The easiest time to identify the weed is now when it's blooming and in the winter while it is dormant. Now of course it can be identified by the white feathery-like seed heads. It also typically grows in a large circle, and during the winter it has a color that is different from surrounding dormant grasses.

The most effective form of treatment is through the use of herbicides. The use of Roundup (Glyphosate) or Arsenal (Imazapyr) solution twice a year where cogongrass has surfaced seems to be the most effective. These products can be found in many different brand names but the active ingredient of (Glyphosate) or (Imazapyr) is what you should seek. The first of those two applications should be a spray mix containing 0.6 fluid ounces of herbicide per gallon of water, which should be applied just before flowering starts in late April or early May.

The second spray should be a heavier dose applied in September or October four to six weeks before the first frost with a spray mixture that contains 2.6 fluid ounces per gallon of Roundup or 1.3 fluid ounces per gallon of Arsenal. There is more flexibility if you're using Arsenal, in terms of when that application can be made. The downside of using Arsenal is if you have hardwood vegetation close to the treatment zone, you may kill the hardwoods. It won't damage pine trees, but it can hurt hardwoods.

There has never been a major concern that the cogongrass may invade agronomic crops, such as cotton, corn, peanut or soybean. Rather, the greatest threat is for no-till crops, such as timber, pecans and blueberries. Cogongrass is a major problem in areas where there is little to no soil disturbance. If you are vigilant in fighting cogongrass with herbicides you can usually gain effective control on your property but this will be an ongoing battle.

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Resurrection Fern

Resurrection fern (*Pleopeltis polypodiodes* var. *michauxiana*) is a common plant in the Eastern United States found from Florida to Texas and North to New York. This fern is an air plant, attaching itself to other plants and absorbing water and nutrients that accumulate on the outer surface of the bark. While air plants, or "epiphytes", grow on other plants, they are not parasitic and do not harm their host. Resurrection fern is a true fern that reproduces via spores rather than seeds. Spores occur on the underside of leaves in clusters called “sori” with spores forming in late summer and early fall. The root system of resurrection fern consists of long, winding rhizomes which tuck into the crevices in the trees bark. Resurrection fern can be propagated by taking a section of rhizome several inches long and placing it in a bark crevice. Resurrection fern is very common on the branches of large trees such as cypresses and live oaks alongside other air plants such as Spanish moss. It will also grow on fallen trees and rocks. Frequently, resurrection fern is found in association with mosses and it has been proposed that this association serves the water needs of the fern.

Resurrection fern gets its name because its fronds will curl up and turn grayish-brown under dry conditions appearing as if the plant has shriveled up and died. When wet conditions return, the fern will uncurl and reopen, turning bright green and appearing to come back to life. This resurrection can be caused by anything from an increase in humidity to a heavy rain shower. The resurrection fern can survive in its dried state for years, with some researches estimating that it will survive for up to a century. The response of the fern to moisture can take as little as one hour, so resurrection fern makes a great experiment for young children. The plant can lose as much as 97 percent of its water and remain alive. The majority of plants can tolerate only a 10 percent water loss before beginning to die back.

Resurrection fern was carried aboard the Space Shuttle Discovery in 1997 in order to observe its biology under microgravity. It demonstrated that its remarkable ability to resurrect can be completed even in space.

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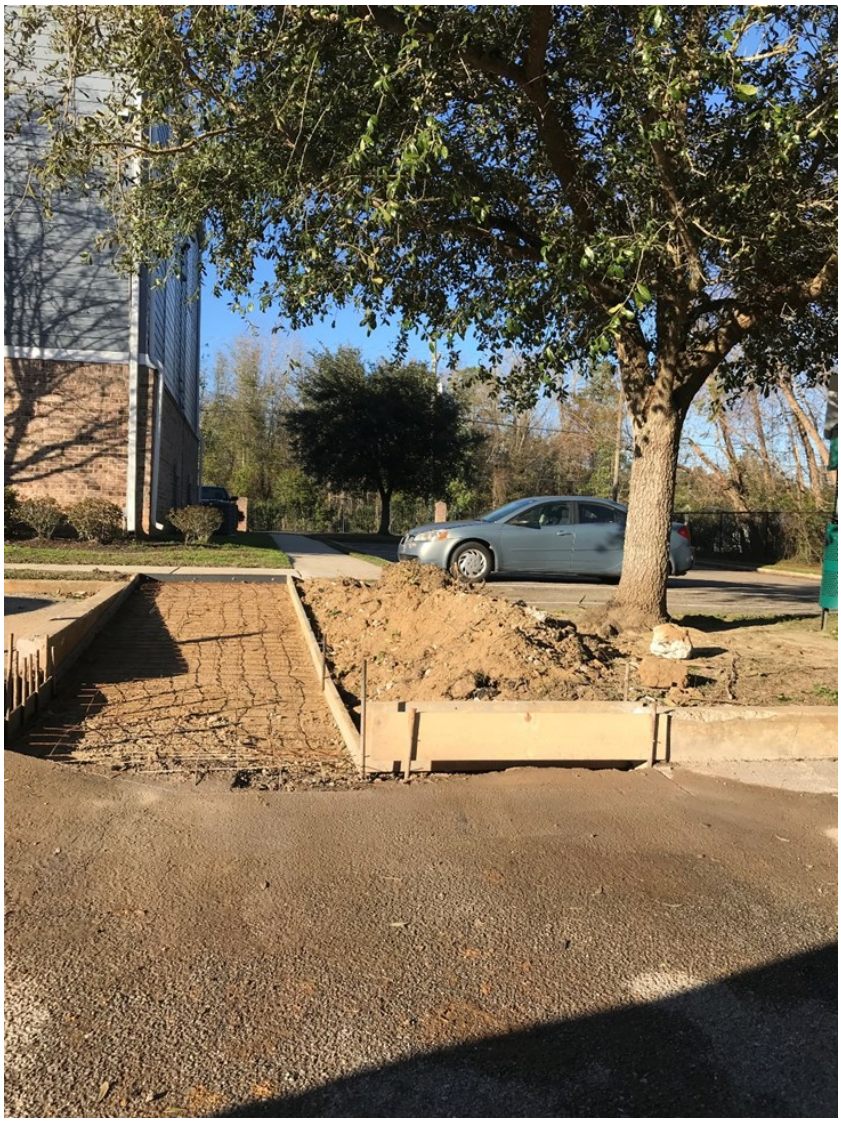
Protecting Trees during Construction Projects

One advantage of being home more than usual may be that you have extra time to work on or plan projects in your landscape. Whenever a landscape is altered, whether through small or large changes, it is important to pay attention to any existing desirable trees in your landscape and determine whether there is any chance of causing damage to those trees. Trenching for a new irrigation system, installation of a new hardscape or patio, or even the installation of a large new landscape bed are some small-scale projects that can have a big impact on your trees. Most of the damage to a tree from construction results from root damage, as it is much easier to see and protect the above ground portion of the tree.



The installation of a walkway will cause future health problems for this oak.

A tree's root zone may be much larger than you realize. The majority of a tree's root zone grows in the top 18 inches of soil and can spread up to three times further than the drip line. If you are working within a tree's root zone, even just for a large planting, you could be disrupting the roots of the tree enough to cause stress. This may go unnoticed for a while, but when another stress is introduced (such as a drought), this could cause enough stress for you to notice a decline in the tree's health. It may even take a year or two before a large tree shows symptoms of decline due to large construction projects.

Many clients come to me wanting help with their declining tree months after installing a new patio, driveway, or retaining wall, but by this time it is usually too late to be able to help. It is so important to assess your site and trees before any work is done. If you are planning a large renovation or construction project, you might even consider having a certified arborist assess the site and give recommendations for protecting your trees. Depending on the size of your project and whether others will be coming in to do the work, you may want to set up a protective fence to prevent as much root damage and soil compaction as you can.

Regardless of the size of a landscape renovation, you will be ahead of the game if you think about protecting your trees before any work starts. Consult MSU Extension Publication 2339, Preserving Trees in Construction Sites, for further information.

Harmful Garden Insects

For information on insect control visit: https://extension.msstate.edu/node/6945

Southern Green Stinkbug

Leaf-footed Bugs

Colorado Potato Beetle

Aphids

Cutworm

Adult Leaf Miner

Bean Leaf Beetle

Whiteflies

Armyworm

Tobacco Hornworm

Spider Mites

Squash Vine Borer

Squash Bug