MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™ EXTENSION

# Out in the Garden

LEE COUNTY | MARCH-APRIL 2021

MASTER GARDENER MISSISSIPPI

SIGN UP FOR THE

## MASTER GARDENER ONLINE training

SELF-PACED AND COMPLETELY ONLINE!

Register online at **msuext.ms/mg** from **March 1 - April 15.**

1. Master Gardener Course, MG volunteer option: **$125**
2. Home Gardening Course, non-MG-volunteer option: **$200**
3. Individual classes*: **$25 per class**
   *available year-round

Courses open on **May 1** and must be completed by **June 30.**


**Every Monday on your County Extension Office Facebook Page**

Follow **leecountyextension** on Facebook

## March and April topics include:

| | |
|---|---|
| March 22 | ATV Safety |
| March 29 | Beekeeping |
| April 5 | Numbers on Fertilizer Bag |
| April 19 | Grafting |
| April 26 | Controlling Moles and Voles |

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## Winter Jasmine

This cascading deciduous shrub generally shows its bright yellow blooms in February. Often confused with forsythia, this plant has small star-shaped blooms that brighten the dreary winter landscape. The willowy stems stay green all year and will root wherever they touch the ground. Winter jasmine is generally 3-5 feet tall and wide. This is a perfect choice to use as a cover for a slope, bank or retaining wall. Winter jasmine prefers fertile, well-drained soil and will bloom more when in a sunny place. This shrub requires very little maintenance and is drought tolerant.

## Flowering Quince

This wonderful Southern pass-along shrub is one of the first to bloom each year. Flowering Quince shrubs prefer well drained soil in a sunny location. Flowers may be double or single and colors include coral, white, pink, red and orange. Leaves are red tinged when young then turn a shiny green. Most varieties have some thorns. These shrubs should be pruned immediately after they bloom; they are easy to reshape or reduce in size.

## Lenten Rose (Helleborus)

This hardy perennial will thrive in partial to full shade and add color during late winter to early spring. Lenten Rose flowers may be white, pink, cream, purplish and are often spotted with a deep purple. This plant self-seeds and the new plants take a few years to develop prior to blooming.

## Forsythia

Often called Yellow Bells, this shrub announces the end of winter with its profusion of small, golden yellow bell-shaped flowers on bare stems. Leaves appear later. Forsythia is very easy to grow provided it has full to partial sun and well-drained soil. Some varieties of forsythia have leaves that turn burgundy or purple in the fall. You can rejuvenate forsythia after they bloom by cutting a third of the older canes to the ground and removing any dead canes. This shrub looks best not sheared into a circular or boxy shape but left to gracefully arch. Forsythia has a medium to fast growth rate.

# Crape Myrtle Bark Scale Identification and Control

Crape myrtle bark scale (CMBS) is a serious new threat to southern crape myrtles. It threatens to turn what has historically been a beautiful, low-maintenance landscape tree into an unsightly, high-maintenance landscape tree. This nonnative scale was first detected in the U.S. in Texas in 2004 and was first found in Mississippi in spring of 2015. It is now well established in several areas of the state and will likely continue to spread.

## Insecticide Treatment

This pest is so new that control programs are still being developed. Treatments that have proven most effective in states where CMBS is already established are soil-applied systemic insecticides containing the active ingredients imidacloprid, imidacloprid + clothianidin, dinotefuran, or thiamethoxam. Foliar sprays containing the insect growth regulator products pyriproxyfen or buprofezin are also available for application as crawler sprays.

Note that some of these treatments are commercial products, and homeowners are encouraged to seek assistance from licensed commercial applicators to control CMBS, especially when treating larger trees. Because the cost of “homeowner products” is considerably higher than for professional products, homeowners with large numbers of trees to treat should consider getting bids from commercial applicators. The cost difference between doing it yourself and hiring a commercial applicator may not be as great as you think.

Many commercial applicators are able to apply treatments as soil-injections, which eliminates the need to rake mulch away from the tree before treating, as is required when applying soil drench treatments. Also, homeowners with large numbers of trees to treat should be aware that no special license or certification is required to purchase professional-grade products that are not classified as “restricted use,” and it may be more economical to use such products.

Infested trees should be carefully monitored and treated for at least one season following the initial treatment season. Even if treated trees appear to be free of CMBS after the first season of treatment, they should still be treated with one of the soil-applied systemic insecticides in the second year and monitored closely for recurrence of CMBS.

Because CMBS can easily spread to other trees in the area, crape myrtles that appear to be uninfested but are located near infested trees should be treated as if they are infested because new or low-level infestations are difficult to detect. Consider treating all crape myrtles in a landscape where a CMBS infestation has been found.

## Soil-applied Systemic Insecticide Treatments

Soil-applied systemic insecticides are the most effective treatments currently available for CMBS and the easiest to apply. These insecticides contain active ingredients such as imidacloprid, imidacloprid + clothianidin, dinotefuran, and thiamethoxam. All of these treatments belong to the neonicotinoid class of insecticide chemistry. Soil-applied treatments are relatively easy to apply, and some of these active ingredients are sold as brand name products labeled for homeowner use. When properly applied, these treatments usually provide effective control, but it takes several weeks for treatments to work, and sooty mold that has already accumulated will remain after control has been achieved.

Although some of the insecticides listed above are also labeled for application as foliar sprays, this use is not generally recommended because soil-applied applications of these products are generally more effective and pose lower risks to pollinators. Also, trees that have received a soil-applied application of one of the neonicotinoid insecticides listed above should not be treated with foliar sprays containing one of these products.

## Treatment Timing

Treat trees during the active growing season and as soon as possible after they are discovered to be infested. Because soil-applied systemic insecticide treatments must be absorbed by the roots and translocated to the upper portions of the tree, these treatments are only effective when trees have leaves and are actively growing. For best results, apply treatments during the early portion of the growing season, late March through May. This will target control of the first-generation nymphs for the year. However, treatments can be applied as soon as trees begin to leaf out in the spring and until trees begin to senesce, as indicated by color change and leaf drop, in the fall. For example, if you discover trees are infested in August, don’t wait until next year to treat. Go ahead and treat as soon as possible. Be sure to treat trees again the following year, even if you observe no signs of infestation in the spring. Apply only one application of soil-applied systemic insecticide per year.

For more information, see MSU Extension Publication 2938 . This publication may be picked up at the Extension office or viewed on-line at https://extension.msstate.edu/sites/default/files/publications/publications/p2938.pdf

# Garden Calendar: March

## Planting

- Plant new roses before March 15.
- Broad-leaved Evergreens such as Magnolia and Holly can be set out now.
- Plant cold weather annuals such as Sweet William, English Daisies and Pansies.
- Divide Mondo Grass, Liriope, Cannas, Chrysanthemums, Coreopsis, Phlox, and Obedient Plant.
- Start seeds for Tomatoes, Bell Peppers, and Eggplant.
- Set out Thyme, Lemon Balm, Oregano, Chives, Sage, and Winter Savory.
- Sow seeds of Johnny Jump-ups, Sweet Peas, Larkspur and Forget-me-nots.
- Flowering shrubs may be moved at this time. Larger shrubs should be moved with a ball of soil and smaller shrubs may be moved bare-rooted.
- Lawns may be sodded at this time.
- Plant Gladiolus for continuous bloom.
- Plant Hostas.

## Fertilizing

- Fertilize all the garden except acid-loving plants.
- Top dress Camellias with azalea-camellia fertilizer.
- Lime Peonies, Clematis, and Boxwoods.

## Pest Control

Spray new rose leaves for black spot weekly.

## Pruning

- Prune roses at this time. Remove dead and weak canes. Properly dispose of clippings.
- Prune Crape Myrtles and Altheas.
- Prune evergreens for shape and size as early in the month as possible.
- Cut English Ivy back very hard. It will come back very nicely in the spring.
- Trim Mondo Grass and Liriope with lawn mower set on highest setting (6 inches). Dispose of trimmings.

## Miscellaneous

- Dispose of fallen Camellia blossoms to prevent blight.
- Rake up seed hulls from under bird feeders. They will smother new growth.
- Remove dead flowers from Tulips and Daffodils. Do not cut foliage before it turns yellow and dies.

## In Bloom

Azaleas, Camellias, Carolina Jessamine, Daffodil, Flowering Quince, Forsythia, Hyacinth, early Iris, Oriental Magnolia, Pansies, Pearl Bush, Photinia, Redbud, Spirea, flowering fruit trees (Crabapple, Cherry, Pear, and Peach).

# Garden Calendar: April

## Planting

- Divide Violets, Shasta Daisies, Liriope, Ajuga, Mums and other perennials.
- Plant Okra, Melons, Peas, Corn, Beans, Eggplant, Cucumbers and Tomatoes.
  Since Mississippi has gardening five zones, you should reference page 6 of MSU Extension publication **"Garden Tabloid"** for specific dates to plant. This publication is available at the Extension office or may be viewed on-line at **http://extension.msstate.edu/publications/publications/garden-tabloid**
- 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 branches and dead wood from trees and shrubs.
- Prune Azaleas during or after blooming.
- 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 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.

## In Bloom

Ajuga, Alyssum, Azalea, Beautyberry, Bleeding-Heart, Candytuft, Columbine, Daffodil, Daisy, Daylily, Deutzia, Dogwood, Forget-me-not, Iris, Jacob's Ladder, Lilac, Lily-of-the-valley, Pansy, Phlox, Primrose, Ranunculus, Redbud, Scilla, Shooting Star, Spirea, Sweet William, Thrift, Tulip, Viburnum, Vinca, Violet, Weigela, Woodland Phlox, Yellow Jasmine, and most flowering trees.

# Fire Ant Mounds, Standing Tall

*Solenopsis invicta*
Order: Hymenoptera
Family: Formicidae

Fire ant mounds become much more obvious during late winter and early spring and this can give the impression that "fire ants are worse than usual this year." In most cases the number of colonies per acre in a given area is probably about the same as it was the previous fall; it's just that the mounds are easier to see. This is not only because the grass is shorter. During late winter and spring, fire ants intentionally build their mounds high above the soil line for two reasons. First, they want to avoid the waterlogged soil conditions that accompany heavy spring rainfall. Second, by building the mound up high they can take advantage of solar heating to warm the sides of the mounds, producing warmer conditions for rearing brood inside the mounds. They don't want to keep the young ones down in the cold, wet basement!

During the summer months the opposite situation usually prevails. Fire ants prefer to nest below ground during hot dry periods to take advantage of the cool moist soil conditions. They don't want to keep the young ones up in the hot dry attic! But even during the summer, mounds will pop up almost overnight following periods of heavy or prolonged rainfall as the ants are forced to flee underground flooding of brood-rearing galleries.

*Control:* The best way to avoid having large numbers of fire ant mounds in your yard in the spring is to apply a granular fire ant bait in the fall of the previous year. If you missed this opportunity, one of the best ways to deal with a heavy fire ant infestation is to "knock them out with a one-two punch." First, apply a granular fire ant bait to the entire area by using a small hand-held seeder to broadcast the bait according to label directions (Amdro, Advion and Extinguish Plus are examples of such baits). Wait a few days to give the ants time to collect the bait; then spot treat all the mounds you can see with a dry powder mound treatment, such as Ortho Fire Ant Killer (acephate). Plan on making additional bait treatments in mid-summer and early fall, even if you don't see any fire ant mounds in the yard, and keep spot treating any mounds that do appear. See Extension Publication 2429, Control Fire Ants in Your Yard http://extension.msstate.edu/sites/default/files/publications/publications/P2429_web.pdf for more information on fire ant biology and control.

Also see the Mississippi State University Fire Ant Web Site, http://extension.msstate.edu/insects/fire-ants , for detailed information on fire ant biology and interesting fire ant facts, as well as information on controlling fire ants in special situations, such as pastures, orchards or vegetable gardens. This site also includes information on organic fire ant control and how to control and prevent indoor fire ant invasions.

Blake Layton, Extension Entomology Specialist, Mississippi State University Extension Service

# Maintaining Your Home Lawn

Many gardeners enjoy maintaining a quality turf. Others despise lawn work and demand a low-maintenance turfgrass. Still others are confused about how to keep a lawn green. You don't have to be an expert to have a quality lawn; neither do you have to spend all your leisure time working on it. By learning a few basic facts about turfgrass, you can have the best lawn on the block. Also, you can choose a turfgrass to suit the time and money you have for maintenance.

MSU Extension Publication P1322 *Establish and Manage Your Home Lawn* provides information about diseases, fertilizing, insect control, planting, selection of grasses, weed control, and other related turf and lawn management materials. This publication may be picked up at the Extension office or viewed on-line at **http://extension.msstate.edu/publications/publications/establish-and-manage-your-home-lawn**

# Home Vegetable Garden

There are many good reasons for growing a vegetable garden in Mississippi.


GARDEN
T • A • B • L • O • I • D
Grow Your Own Vegetables
Decide What You Want to Plant
Choose a Great Location for Your Garden

A garden offers the opportunity to enjoy vegetables at their freshest. Sometimes only minutes elapse between harvest, preparation, and eating. Most fresh vegetables available at the grocery store travel about 1,800 miles between producer and consumer, and this travel often occurs over a period of several days. There's a lot to be said for "homegrown" freshness.

In recent years many people are growing vegetables to save money on their grocery bill.

A garden can be a wonderful place for children. They provide opportunities for play, learning, and for having fun.

Regardless of motive, gardening can be as simple or as complex a project as you make it. As the interest in all aspects of gardening has increased, so has the need for more information and education. Careful planning can make gardening easier, more productive, and more enjoyable. In planning your garden, it is important to consider a few basics.

The answers to most questions for the beginner can be found in MSU Extension Publication P1091. This publication may be picked up at your local Extension office or viewed on-line at ***http://extension.msstate.edu/publications/publications/***

**Have you seen this on a tree or shrub in your yard? If so, see page three of this newsletter.**

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