

Cultivators & Master Gardeners



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What to do as Cultivators and MGer's now?

I'm not going to rehash what has already been said about the Covid-19 Pandemic. We have all watched the news and realize what we need to do to keep ourselves and family safe.

Some may have questions about "community service hours," or "service projects." As with most everything, there will be concessions made as long as everyone keeps health and safety at the forefront of all they do.

So with safety in mind, do get out and work on projects; but do it without gathering. Plant and maintain projects; but do it without gathering. This is a great time to work on designs and ideas for landscapes. Try something new. Study something innovative. I recently wrote an article on Moss. Plans are to gather different mosses and plant them at the pocket park in a collage of some kind. Maybe even create a drawing with "Moss Milkshake" as my ink. It could happen.

What about creating your own Facebook live video? Many of you have a hobby or expertise worth sharing. I've already seen some of you posting pictures of blooming flowers and shrubs. Share some of your favorites with us and take

lots of pictures. I hear there will be a calendar developed with pictures from Cleveland County, so this may be an idea to pursue in the near future.

The weather will be cooperating soon, I hope. But do not be too hasty in your gardening endeavors. I'm looking at this beautiful sunshine today (April 1, 2020) and wanting to get out and plant something. I looked at the Farmer's Almanac and it says April 1st is a great day to plant seedbeds and start flower gardens. Maybe I will. Some things we can plant like sweet corn and snap beans. And later in the month some of our favorite warm season veggies. But be careful; it wasn't too many years ago we got snow in April. Keep covers handy is all I'm saying. If you have questions about which vegetables can be planted in April and May, check out our Extension publication MP422 planting chart. It's a great resource.

Oh, just FYI, the hummingbirds are beginning to migrate back. I've had 3 at the house in the past couple of days. If you put out hummingbird feeders, please make sure they have been washed well before putting them out. Save the hummingbirds!!!

March-April

Calendar:

- Most everything has been cancelled or postponed.
- Stay tuned for updates.

April-May to do list:

1. Manage Strawberries.
2. Keep mulch on hand for a possible late frost.
3. Prune and fertilize spring blooming trees and shrubs after bloom.
4. Plant warm season vegetables.
5. Cut foliage from spring bulbs 6 weeks from bloom.
6. Manage Bagworms on evergreens.

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Diversity: Many wildlife species rely on a diversity of habitat to survive. Diversity includes providing all the habitat components that wildlife need in your yard - food, water, shelter, and nesting habitat. **Food sources.** Food can be provided in a variety of ways. Are there flowers for nectar, weeds for seeds, shrubs and trees for fruit or acorns? Nectar plants, such as butterfly weed, butterfly bush, cardinal flowers, asters, and zinnias, attract butterflies and hummingbirds. Even "weeds" such as goldenrod, chicory, pokeweed, thistle, and honeysuckle are beneficial nectar producers. **Artificial feeders.** Do you need artificial feeders to attract birds, squirrels, deer, or butterflies? If you decide to include feeders, make sure you match the food source to the wildlife you're trying to attract. **Water sources.** Water is important for drinking, bathing, even egg-laying for frogs, toads, and insects. Water depth of 1/2" is needed for smaller birds, while larger birds can use 1" to 2" depth. Placement of feeders and water sources should be carefully considered, such that there is enough open space to see an approaching predator, yet protective habitat is available close by. **Cover or shelter.** In your yard, also consider that wildlife need shelter for protection against rain, snow, ice, sun, wind, and predators. Dense evergreens, large broad-leaved shrubs and trees, thick grasses, and brushpiles provide protective cover for a number of birds and mammals.

Design: Besides diversity, designing your yard properly will benefit wildlife and improve viewing opportunities.

- Design your yard to create vistas for

Three D's of Successful Backyard Habitat

"A garden's beauty never lies in one flower." **Matshona Dhlwayo**

- seeing wildlife near windows and decks.
- Place feeders and nest boxes in locations that are visible from your home.
- Use varied heights of vegetation, with taller shrubs and trees placed around the border of your yard.
- Plant multiple species of plants. Create natural effects by planting in groups of 3, 5, or 7.
- Design curved (not straight) borders.
- And be sure to plan for year-round beauty and habitat needs.

Diligence: Be diligent in maintaining your habitat.

- Some plantings may die and need to be replaced.
- "Weeding" may be necessary to control successful plantings which, without thinning, could take over the yard.
- Bird boxes need to be cleaned.
- Water needs to be periodically drained and containers sanitized.

This information has been provided by our Wildlife Specialist, Dr. Becky McPeake and can be viewed on our website at www.uaex.edu.

As always; if you have questions please contact your local County Extension agent. Be Safe.