

THE WALTON COUNTY GARDENER NEWSLETTER
SEPTEMBER, 2023

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It has been one hot, hot, summer. I really can't remember when it has been this HOT. Our gardens are proof just how hot it really was.

In this month's issue:

“The High Cost of Gardening”

Suggestions on how to cut down on inflating in the landscape

“Recycling Your Breakfast”

Understanding the latest myths.

“Mexican Sage”

A plant you should seriously consider in your landscape!

HAPPY GARDENING EVERYONE!





THE WALTON COUNTY GARDENER

by Walton County Master Gardeners

September 2023



THE HIGH COST OF GARDENING

This has been one frustrating gardening season! If it wasn't the heat, or the unavailability of the plant you want, it is the high cost of gardening. These three reasons have caused me to rethink my gardening habits.

I consider our area to have two gardening seasons, summer and winter. I have traveled far and wide looking for specific plants that I have grown over the years and have learned to love. I actually look forward to the hunt twice a year. It was always a fun undertaking. I do a lot of research on new introductions, (YouTube, various gardening newsletters, talking to other horticulturists) checking nurseries to see if they are offering them, and finally organizing my plant shopping trips.



This summer has been a costly disappointment. Costly because I had to order many of the plants on line at double the cost, disappointing because many nurseries no longer carry the plants that I want and the cost of gas driving to them.

Let's discuss the cost. Have you notice how much plants costs these days? Inflation has reared its ugly bulb. Growers are feeling the pinch with high costs of fertilizers,

growing medium, seeds, etc. This cost, naturally, is passed on to you. Let's look into ways to help cut the costs.

PLANT PROPAGATION IN WATER

Plant propagation is not as difficult as you may think. Many plants can be propagated just by placing a cutting in a glass of water. Coleus is one such plant. Just cut off some of the plant and place in water. It will root within a few weeks. Then take the rooted plant and pot it up, using a potting mixture. You can keep these in the house, near a bright window. If you put outside, place in a protected location as the plant begins to grow, making sure to select the proper site based on your knowledge of the plant's



needs (full sun, part sun,

shade).

Plants that do well with this kind of propagation are: coleus (shade loving and sun loving), begonia - angel wing, dragon wing for example; rosemary, oregano, basil, rosemary, tomatoes, pothos and philodendron, just to name a few.



Another method of propagation is to take a cutting that has been dipped in rooting hormone and place in a growing medium such as potting mix or perlite. Sand can work as well. Plant rooting hormone is available at most stores that sell plants.

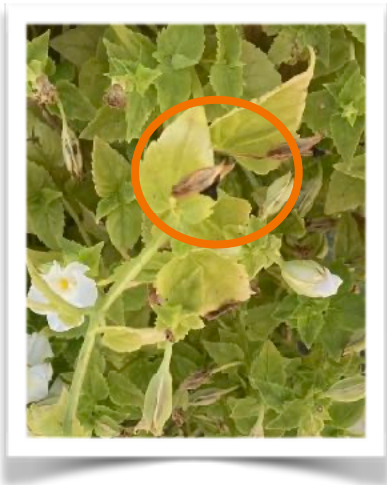
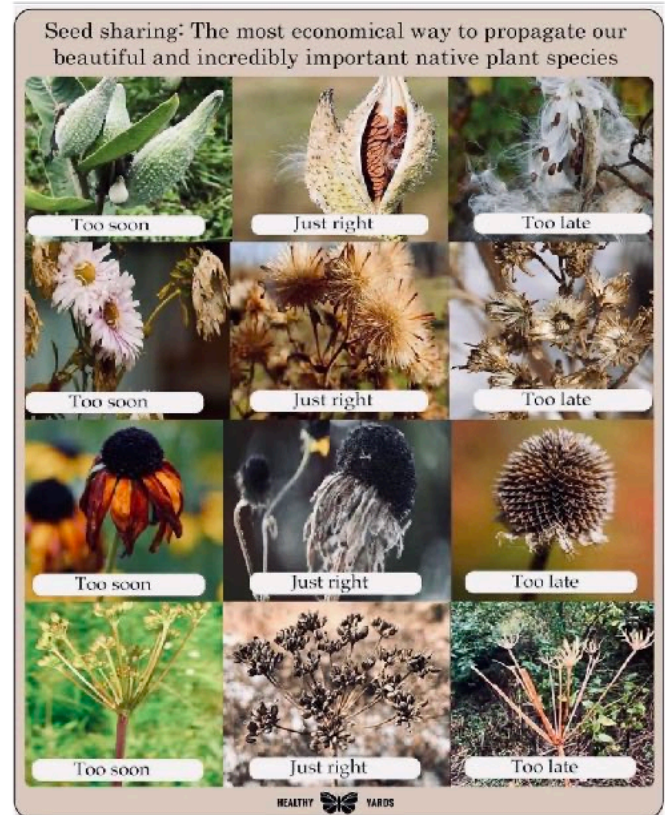
When using rooting hormone, pour a little powder in the lid of the container. This will stop any contamination of fungi or other diseases from entering the entire container. Once used, toss remaining unused hormone left in the lid. Cuttings such as these may take a while to root, so make sure you continue to water them. Plants using this method that are easily rooted are roses and hydrangeas(*Evan, other suggestions for plants that propagate using this method?*).

When choosing either method, always make sure you cut at a leaf joint (where the leaf meets the stem) as this is where the rooting will occur.

Once your propagated plants have rooted, pot them up in a clean potting mix and place in a bright window, if bringing inside, or in a sunny location outside. Don't forget to water!

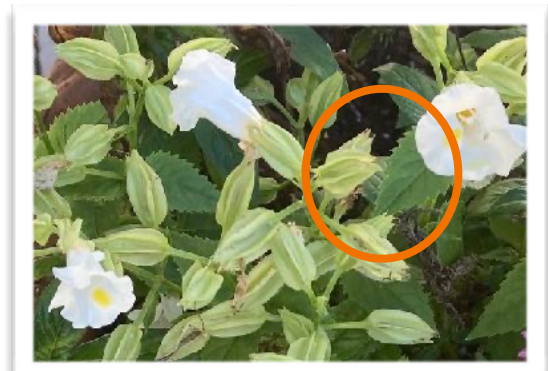
SEED COLLECTING

A fun project in the garden is seed-collecting and sharing. Flowers produce an abundance of seeds; many annuals will actually spread seed themselves. I had a garden full of zinnias this year and I didn't plant one seed, they simply reseeded themselves from last year. If you are collecting seeds, it is important to know *when* to collect; early collection produces non-viable seeds as well as too late in collecting. This illustration shows the right collection times for a few plants. Seeds should be stored in dry and cool area.



Cultivar of torenia;
no seed available

Annual torenia with
available seed.



Many of the newer varieties of annuals through cultivation have become sterile and do not produce seeds. If these plants do produce seeds, they may resemble the parent of the cultivar, rather than the plant itself.

Don't forget your perennials! Cone flowers, black eyed Susan's, etc., will grow from seed easily. Some perennials that are grown from seed may take up to two years to produce flowers (foxglove is one). Tomatoes, peppers, and squash ...are seeds you can easily obtain from the vegetable itself. Make sure to dry them properly before you put them up for next season and - once dry - store them in a dark and dry environment, not in a plastic wagon the shelf, for example. After carefully washing and saving them, it would be shame to pull them out later to find that they had become moldy.

Seed sharing is a wonderful and fun project. There are many seed swapping groups on line and through gardening clubs. A place for seed sharing and seed exchange is the "Seed Catalogue" program instituted at our Walton County Libraries. Since this is a local, you would get older heirloom varieties that aren't available commercially. You are encouraged to take seeds, and then - once you have a successful season - save your seeds and return them so that others may be able to get them for the next proper growing season. This is a wonderful way to share the bounty.

Of course, there are seed catalogs, *lots and lots of seed catalogs*. How many catalogs have you received?

ONE MORE THOUGHT...

When cleaning out your garden beds of annuals try to avoid pulling them out. Many annuals (like salvia and snapdragons) will survive our winters and will regrow next spring as the days become longer.

RECYCLING YOUR BREAKFAST

The truth about adding your leftovers to your gardens

A day doesn't go by when I read, or get an email, or perhaps a FB notification about using various items from your breakfast table in the garden. I decided to do a little investigating to see if any of the so-called miracle additives from my table were actually useful in the garden. Let's break it down myth by myth.

COFFEE GROUNDS CHANGES THE pH

An article from Kym Pokorny and Linda Brewer, Oregon State University Extension:

Used appropriately, coffee grounds improve soil and kill slugs

The most consumed drink in the world has more benefits than just keeping us awake. Spent coffee grounds can be used as a soil amendment and compost ingredient, while liquid coffee acts as an effective slug killer.

According to various sources, between 400 billion to 1 trillion cups of coffee are consumed around the world every year. No matter the number, that's a lot of coffee, which means a lot of spent coffee grounds. Using coffee grounds in the garden keeps them out of the waste stream and gives gardeners another option for caring for plants and dealing with slugs.

Linda Brewer, Oregon State University Extension Service soil scientist, said coffee grounds can be worked into the soil or added to a compost pile but should be done with some restraint.

"The big message is that generally people are too enthusiastic," Brewer said. "You really need to take the recommended dosages to heart. I've visited a site where a raised bed was ruined by too much coffee grounds. Like most kitchen waste, it is a fine amendment for the garden, but like anything else, coffee grounds can be overdone."

Contrary to popular belief, it's a myth that coffee grounds are acidic and will lower the pH of the soil. After brewing, the grounds are close to pH neutral, between 6.5 and 6.8. Research shows that whatever change coffee grounds bring to the soil is short-lived, Brewer said. So, don't depend on them to keep a lower soil pH. Some plants like rhododendrons, azaleas, blueberries, gardenias and blue-flowering hydrangeas require a lower soil pH to thrive and coffee grounds won't do that.

For more information: <https://today.oregonstate.edu/news/used-appropriately-coffee-grounds-improve-soil-and-kill-slugs>

Using Eggshells in the Garden and Compost

From Christopher Enroth at the University of Illinois, Environmental Sciences, Extension -

For years, eggshells have been recommended as an amendment to soils and containers due to their high calcium content. Some gardeners who grow tomatoes swear by adding six or more eggshells in the planting hole, with the idea that the extra calcium will reduce blossom end rot of tomato fruit. Other gardeners compost their eggshells to add calcium.

So do eggshells make a difference? Or is this egg wash? The answer – yes it works, but there is one critical step most gardeners are skipping.

Calcium carbonate is what gives the eggshell the strength necessary to protect egg within. Most home composters who toss eggs in the pile will find everything nicely composted, except there will still be hunks of eggshells visible in the finished compost. Gardeners could pull out their tomatoes after a growing season and likely find those very eggshells in the planting hole, in the same condition as they were when they were first planted. The lack of decomposition indicates the bulk of the calcium remains locked in the eggshell and is not available to plants.

How to Use Your Eggshells

The trick is to grind up the eggshells. The smaller the particle size, the better. A study from Alabama Cooperative Extension compared coarsely ground eggshells (crushed by hand) to finely ground eggshells (resembling a fine powder), along with a comparison to pure calcium $\text{Ca}(\text{OH})_2$ and agriculture lime. The Alabama study revealed the coarsely ground eggshells "were not much better than nothing at all." However, the finely ground eggshells performed just as well as the pure calcium, both also outperformed the agriculture lime. (Mitchell, 2005)

Coffee grinders work well to crush the eggshells into a fine powder, though you may want to invest in a cheap garage sale coffee grinder for your eggshells. I utilize my ground eggshells in my worm bin. The extra grit in the worm bin assists my worms in digesting the food scraps through the grinding action that takes place in their crop (similar to a chicken). You can also spread ground eggshells on the outdoor compost pile, in tomato planting holes, or around the garden and landscape if a soil test reveals a deficiency in calcium.

Don't have a coffee grinder but still have an abundance of eggshells? Another trick is to boil 10 to 20 eggshells and then let the concoction sit overnight. The next day strain the eggshells out of the water, and you have liquid calcium solution. Each eggshell adds four milligrams of calcium. Two cups of the solution per plant should be adequate. Apply about every two weeks. (Gillman, 2008)

Eggshells can be valuable to gardeners who need to manage soil calcium levels and are beneficial additions to compost, namely worm bins. Eggshells ground to a fine powder yield the quickest results, while large chunks of eggshells will take at least a year to break down making their stored calcium plant available perhaps the next growing season.

For more information: <https://extension.illinois.edu/blogs/good-growing/2018-03-28-using-eggshells-garden-and-compost>

ADDING BANANA WATER TO PLANTS FOR BETTER BLOOMS

The latest gardening hack is banana water. You simply take a banana peel and cut it up into small pieces, add water and let it sit for 2-3 days.

Since banana is a great source for supplemental potassium, it must be good for plants that need potassium (for flowering), right? The fact is, banana peels have a very small amount of potassium available for use. IF you think your plants need potassium, have the *soil tested* and proceed from there. I have heard many people say that their plants are better looking and have more flowers. But who's to say that they would do just fine without it? Unless you have done some control studies giving the banana water to one plant and not to the other of the same kind, it's difficult to say.

You're not really hurting anything, but banana peels are best used in the compost bin, as are coffee grounds and eggshells. Besides, banana water really stinks!



MEXICAN SAGE

Salvia leucantha

A tried and true perennial for the growing zones of Walton County is the Mexican Sage. The above sage is in my garden; it survived the freeze last Christmas and the horrendous heat of this past summer. The plant above flowered in spring and then again this fall. Along with its great purple color is the misty green to silvery blue foliage; a great accent to the garden when not in flower. It is a great pollinator attractor. Bees, butterflies, moths, and hummingbirds are seen at this perennial while flowering. This plant can get leggy, so it suggested that you use it in back of the border or where its stems are not shown.

An added bonus - it's deer resistant! Sages have a smell that deter deer so this can be planted in your garden without fear of it disappearing with the presence of deer.

This perennial is inexpensive and readily available at local nurseries and box stores.

What to Plant in October

EDIBLES TO PLANT IN *October*



	North	Central	South
 EASY TO TRANSPLANT	Arugula, Beets, Broccoli, Brussels Sprouts, Cabbage, Cauliflower, Chinese Cabbage, Collards, Endive, Kale, Kohlrabi, Lettuce, Strawberry, Swiss Chard	Arugula, Beets, Broccoli, Brussels Sprouts, Cabbage, Cauliflower, Chinese Cabbage, Collards, Endive, Kale, Kohlrabi, Lettuce, Strawberry, Sugarcane, Swiss Chard, Tropical Spinaches	Arugula, Beets, Broccoli, Brussels Sprouts, Cabbage, Cauliflower, Chinese Cabbage, Collards, Eggplant, Endive, Kale, Kohlrabi, Lettuce, Peppers, Strawberry, Sugarcane, Swiss Chard, Tomatillo, Tomatoes, Tropical Spinaches
 TRANSPLANT WITH CARE	Celery, Mustard, Spinach	Celery, Mustard, Pineapple, Spinach	Amaranth, Calabaza, Celery, Long Squashes, Luffa, Mustard, Pineapple, Potatoes, Seminole Pumpkin, Spinach
 USE SEEDS	Carrots, Onions (bunching), Radish, Turnips	Carrots, Onions (bulbing, bunching), Radish, Turnips	Beans (bush, lima, pole), Carrots, Corn, Cucumbers, Okra, Onions (bulbing, bunching), Peas (southern), Radish, Squashes, Turnips



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