

# JUNGLE TAMING

MONTHLY HORTICULTURAL NEWSLETTER

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Helping to minimize the effects of original sin in your Garden of Eden!

## Amy's September Horticultural Tasks

Written by Amy Bledsoe

Annuals



Turf



Perennials



Roses



Shrubs



Trees



**Annuals:** The kids have returned to school, and football fans are descending on Columbia to support their teams. Even though our thoughts have turned to fall, summer is not yet over. Don't neglect summer annuals—keep them weeded and deadheaded. It's too early to plant cool season annuals; the heat will cause them to stretch and become "leggy." High heat and humidity, typical this time of year as a result of tropical storms, can cause fungal problems, so be on the lookout for gray mold or powdery mildew. Butterfly caterpillars can be found munching on food plants such as parsley, dill, fennel, Queen Anne's lace, and other annual wildflowers. Don't spray! Butterflies and moths are important pollinators in the ecosystem.



**Turf:** You may find that you need to mow more often now, thanks to beneficial rains from the tropical storms and hurricanes. Do not fertilize. Check to be sure your mower blades are sharp—ragged grass blades from dull mower blades can give turf diseases an opportunity to start.

**Perennials:** See which perennials are ready to be divided. Perennials are divided for propagation, to control size, and to invigorate them. Older perennials that have been blooming sparsely can become more vigorous through division. A general guideline is that spring and summer blooming perennials can be divided in the fall. When dividing perennials, use clean and sharp shovels or garden forks to help to prevent the spread of fungal diseases. A sharp tool also makes it easier on the gardener! Once a plant is divided, place the division into a bucket of water to keep the roots hydrated until they can be planted to lessen transplant shock.

Looking ahead, order bulbs now for planting next month. Since perennials generally go dormant during the winter, under planting the perennials with bulbs such as daffodils will make for a longer color time in planting beds. Daffodils and other bulbs co-exist easily with perennials, emerging right through the perennials' root systems. There are

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Monthly Horticultural Newsletter is distributed free of charge each month by Jungle Taming, LLC, an upscale yard restoration landscaping company proudly serving the Columbia, SC area.

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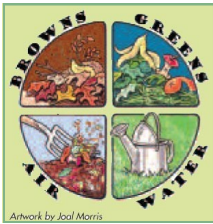
The information in this newsletter has been compiled by local experts in horticulture and landscaping, and combines scientific and practical applications of horticultural theory. Suggestions are general, and individual results may vary. Opinions of authors do not always reflect Jungle Taming's opinion.

## Gardening for Everyone

**Black Gold***Written by Donald McInnes, Ph.D.*

*Composting is a lot like sex. It's a healthy, natural process involving fertility, tumbling around, and—when it's going right—steaminess. On top of that, some people call it dirty.*

(unattributed, *Grist Magazine*, 19 August 2008)



Artwork by Joel Morris

Composting is not rocket science or brain surgery. Anyone can do it, and the results can mean wonderful things for your plants.

Compost has been called “black gold” for plants. It helps sandy soil hold wa-

ter and nutrients. By binding particles together, it helps clayey soils drain better. It provides plants with needed nutrients. Its resident microorganisms compete with plant pathogens and reduce the likelihood of disease.

Anything that is plant based can be composted—kitchen scraps (vegetable peelings, fruit rinds, tea bags, coffee grounds, etc.), paper, cardboard, garden clippings, fallen leaves, and more. You can compost paper products like pizza boxes, napkins and paper towels, take-out cups and paper plates, that are “food contaminated” or waxed and not eligible for recycling. The compost pile is a great place to put “sensitive” papers that you don’t want to put in the recycling bin or trash. Egg shells (not whites and yolks) can also be composted and add valuable calcium to the finished product.

There are a few things to avoid putting in the compost pile. Fatty or greasy foods and meats will attract vermin and make the compost smell foul. Garden or yard clippings and waste containing weed seeds should be avoided—a home composting system will likely not get hot enough to kill the seeds. Diseased plant matter should be avoided for the same reason. Waste from cats, dogs and other meat-eating pets will also lead to foul odors (but litter from rabbits, birds, horses and other vegetarian animals is OK).

You do not need a composter to compost. A simple pile can work well. The advantages of enclosing the compost are that a container can keep the compost warmer (which means faster decomposition) and it can reduce

the incidence of squirrels and other critters rearranging things. You can spend from a few tens to several hundred dollars on composters, but a home-made version made from wire fencing, wooden pallets, a trash can or concrete blocks can be as effective. A compost pile on the ground is subject to intrusion by tree roots. A layer of weed-block fabric will prevent this, and make it easier to pick up the last bit of compost when you move the pile or use the compost.

Some articles on composting get pretty technical, talking about carbon to nitrogen ratios, layering, etc. But again, it’s not rocket science. Simply, you want a mix of fresh, green stuff (like kitchen scraps, grass clippings and fresh garden prunings) and brown stuff (the drier things—fallen leaves, paper, sawdust, wood chips, etc.). Too much of the green stuff, and the compost tends to become compacted and anaerobic. The brown stuff helps maintain air circulation. Too much of the brown stuff, and decomposition slows considerably.

Upon adding some material to your compost pile or composter, add a handful or two of finished compost or soil. The organisms in the compost or soil will go to work decomposing your waste.

The other thing you might have to add every once and a while is water. A pile that’s too dry is not hospitable to the bacteria and fungi breaking down the material.

Your compost will decompose more quickly the smaller the size of the particles you add to the pile. Smaller pieces have relatively more surface area on which microbes can act.

Frequent turning can also speed-up decomposition. A simple way to turn the pile thoroughly is to move it. I have two plastic composters that are bottomless. I simply lift off the composter (the somewhat conical shape makes this easier than it would be with straight sides) and set it down a few feet away (with weed block fabric underneath). Then I use a pitchfork to move the contents back into the composter. I confess I don’t do this too often—and my compost is not as quick as it could be. Easy turning is the big advantage of the rotating composters, and they do produce compost more quickly.

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Professor Ron's Timely Tips

## Landscape Renovation in Older Homes

Written by Ron Cowart

There are many good reasons to consider purchasing an older home, i.e., one built prior to 1980. Typically, these homes offer more square footage per dollar, more character and higher quality construction. However, these homes include mature landscaping that can pose some challenges for the new home owner. The current landscape of an older home is far different from what was installed years ago. For example, the trees and shrubs are much bigger; there is more shade and less sunlight, and higher root density under shrub beds and turf grass areas.

New homeowners of an older home with mature landscaping should consider the following steps to achieve the yard of their dreams.

**Owner Profiling:** Ask yourself a series of profiling questions. Do I entertain and spend a lot of time outdoors? If so, how many guests at one time? How many members are in my family? How long do I plan to live at this home? What are my goals for this landscape?

**Site Analysis/Inventory:** Note any problems including drainage issues, soil compaction, poor turf color and density, diseased trees and shrubs, adverse topography, and limited parking. Photograph the house from the approach angle from the street. Photograph the house's center axis from across the street. These photographs will help in designing the new landscape.

Take inventory of existing plant material. Decide what plants are to be removed and those to be incorporated into the new design. Record the diameter of those to be saved.

It is very important to analyze the turf, the soil and the environment that it is growing in, regardless of the condition of the turf. Any problems should be ameliorated with proper treatment.

Regarding turf, there are four options to consider, either singly or in combination:

1. Invigorate existing turf.
2. Entirely replace the sod with new sod.
3. Patch in new sod.
4. Enlarge mulched areas where turf will not grow.

It is more economical to replace the entire lawn when 50 percent or more of the turf is affected. All biotic diseases and/or abiotic disorders should be addressed before any new sod is installed. There are three tests that should be administered:

1. Soil analysis for nutrient study and soil pH.
2. Pathogenic nematode count.
3. Plant problem clinic sample for pathogenic microorganisms and harmful insects.

Samples can be submitted to your local Clemson University Extension Office. The total cost for these services is \$26.00 as of this writing.

**Budget:** Determine what you can spend. Do you have a lump sum to spend now, or do you want to set a dollar amount each year to generally improve the landscaping and install the improvements area by area each year. What areas are priorities?

**Design:** A landscape design can now be developed using owner profiling, site analysis and

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**Professor Ron's Timely Tips** *Cont'd from Page 3*

budget. The design can be produced either by a professional landscape designer or yourself. To help the DIYer, consider taking two courses at Midlands Technical College: Landscape Design and Landscape Construction.

***Design Considerations for Mature Yards:***

Many older yards have too much shade. This problem can be solved by either limbing-up or removing trees, thus improving air circulation and allowing sunlight to shine on the turf grass and lower canopy shrubs. Wooden decks are preferred in high root density over patios. The soil excavation to install paver patios and walkways destroy root systems of prized mature trees.

**Landscape Installation:** We now come to a divide in the road. Do you provide the elbow grease or hire a contractor? If a professional landscape designer has produced the design, you may be armed with some of his or her information to communicate with a contractor to achieve exactly what you want for the design. If you take the above landscaping courses as mentioned above, you will be armed with information to accomplish the desired results. If contractors know that you have knowledge of design and installation, they will do a better job and at a reasonable price.

**Amy's September Horticultural Tasks** *Cont'd from Page 1*

generally three spring bloom times for bulbs, so careful planning can let you have bulbs in bloom anywhere from January to March. Choose fragrant varieties to plant near places where people gather so they can enjoy the fragrance. If squirrels are a potential threat to your bulbs, consider using a product like PermaTill® to discourage them.

**Roses:** If you are considering ordering roses from a catalog, place your order early. The best selections will be the first to go.

**Shrubs:** Little or nothing should be done to shrubs now. Make your replacement list now, and get orders together for fall replacement. Toward the end of the month, deciduous shrubs will start to put on their fall colors. Once leaf drop begins, be sure to keep the leaves raked out to discourage any harmful insects from being able to winter over in the debris. Don't neglect weeding, as summer annual weeds will be dropping seed heads at this point for next year's crop.

**Trees:** Fall web worms have shown up by now. While unsightly, they rarely do any major damage to trees, other than to the leaves within the webbing. You can take a "let them be" attitude, break up the nest with a stick, or prune the branch that the nest is on and dispose of it. If you break up the nest with a stick, birds will quickly find the worms and consume them, so you need not apply a pesticide. Some trees will already start showing their fall colors, soon to be followed by leaf drop. A smart way to deal with the leaves is to run a lawn mower over the leaf debris. This will shred the leaves into smaller pieces that will compost faster and add nutrients to the soil. However, you may want to first rake or blow the leaves away from the area immediately around the tree's trunk to avoid any lawn mower damage to roots covered up by leaf debris. Never blow leaf debris into the street, as this will cause our storm drains to become clogged.



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**Gardening for Everyone** *Cont'd from Page 2*

You'll want to start with only one composter (or pile) at the outset, but if you settle into a routine of composting, you'll eventually want more than one. You need to let the material in one pile finish for a few weeks or more without adding new stuff to it. I use three composters. One I add material to a few times per week, as it's generated by my family. One I stopped adding to when it got close to being full. Its contents are not yet finished decomposing. The third one has finished compost in it. If I time things just right, I'll have it emptied about the time the composter I'm currently adding to fills up and when the second composter's contents are finished decomposing.



You can find a wealth of information on composting online. Try starting with [www.composting101.com](http://www.composting101.com), [www.epa.gov/epawaste/conservation/rrr/composting/index.htm](http://www.epa.gov/epawaste/conservation/rrr/composting/index.htm) and [www.clemson.edu/extension/hgic/plants/other/compost\\_mulch/hgic1600.html](http://www.clemson.edu/extension/hgic/plants/other/compost_mulch/hgic1600.html). You can also see a variety of composters at the Demonstration Garden set up by the Richland County Master Gardeners at the Sandhill Research and Education Center (900 Clemson Rd.). If you want a simple, one page guide to what can and what should not be composted, see [www.mass.gov/dep/recycle/cmpstr.pdf](http://www.mass.gov/dep/recycle/cmpstr.pdf).

Try composting. It doesn't make sense to throw out such valuable material.

### **About the Authors**

**Amy Bledsoe**, who has a degree in horticulture, is a Certified Nursery Professional, Pesticide Applicator, Environmental Landscaper, Arborist, and Landscape Technician. She is currently the landscape designer for the City of Columbia. She has consulted on gardening articles for Columbia Metropolitan magazine and The State newspaper, appeared on ETV's "Making It Grow," and has also been a radio guest on "The Andy Thomas Show" to answer questions on gardening. Email Amy at [abledsoedesign@msn.com](mailto:abledsoedesign@msn.com).

**Patsy Cowart**, "Miss Patsy," is the eldest of four children, all born in a country house built before 1900. She was taught to cook at an early age by her mother, Miss Mildred Ross. It was and still is a sign of respect in certain pockets of Kershaw county to refer to locals by their name with Miss or Mr. preceding the first name. Simple home cooking was the rule of the day, and nothing was thrown away. A cook book was hardly followed and recipes were shared using terms like "use a pinch of this, pinch of that," and "add to taste." Miss Patsy is a pretty darn good cook—so Professor Ron married her 41 years ago.

**Ron Cowart** has 40 years of landscaping experience. Since 1975, he has owned and operated Tookeedoo Farms, a landscaping and nursery business. With two degrees from Clemson University, he is also a horticulture and landscape instructor at Midlands Tech, and owner of Cowart Landscaping Consulting, LLC. To contact Ron, call (803) 513.4242 or email [cowartconsulting@gmail.com](mailto:cowartconsulting@gmail.com). You can visit Ron's website at [www.cowartconsulting.com](http://www.cowartconsulting.com).

**Ruby Haycock DeLoach** has an Ed. D. in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of South Carolina. After retiring as an educator, she developed her artistic abilities and illustrated her first nonfiction children's science book, **Earth Turns on Its Axis, and...** She has another book under production called **Growing Little Green Thumbs**. To contact Ruby, email [rhdeloach@aol.com](mailto:rhdeloach@aol.com). Also visit her website at [www.crookedcreekart.org/deloach.htm](http://www.crookedcreekart.org/deloach.htm).

**Donald McInnes** has degrees in biology from Duke, Northwestern and Florida State. He has worked for Clemson Extension in Richland County for more than a decade, assisting thousands of consumers with landscape, garden, wildlife and pest control questions. He is also the owner of Southeastern Environmental Design, a landscape coaching, consulting and design service, and chairs the City of Columbia's Tree and Appearance Commission. He can be reached at [seenvdes@aol.com](mailto:seenvdes@aol.com).

### **About Jungle Taming**

**Jungle Taming, LLC** is an upscale yard and garden restoration company that specializes in pruning, cultivating and uncovering hidden beauty from overgrown landscapes. Call Jungle Taming for fence line cleaning, ivy and weed removal, bed improvement, trimming and cleaning shrubs, tree trimming, debris removal, herbicide application and much, much more.

Owner **Bill Kunze**, certified in Landscape Management, has over 15 years of hands-on experience in the Midlands area. For more information, contact Jungle Taming at (803) 463-2655 or email [info@JungleTaming.com](mailto:info@JungleTaming.com). Visit the website: [www.JungleTaming.com](http://www.JungleTaming.com).



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# Food for Mind, Body & Soul

## Growing Little Green Thumbs

### The Way to Grow

Written by Ruby Haycock DeLoach

**The way you grow is read, write, read.  
An open book is like a seed.  
The more you read, the more you grow,  
The world is full of things to know.**

Poem above is at the beginning of "Green Thumb Activities" from Ruby's new book, **Growing Little Green Thumbs**. She will be one of 14 local authors presenting Sunday, Sept 23 from 3:00 to 6:00 in The Lexington Library Celebrates 100 Years.

### Growing Little Green

*Thumbs* has been published. Ron Cowart, horticulturist professor, says, "Children's minds will awaken to the wonders of plants when their eyes fall upon the words and pictures in this book. The use of a garden journal to introduce children to the writing part of literacy will create treasured keepsakes."



For more information go to:

[www.theartparty.weebly.com](http://www.theartparty.weebly.com).

Books can be good friends that invite you inside and transport you into the fresh air of our world or down the rabbit hole of imaginary places. Visit your local farms, libraries and bookstores to discover where our food is before it arrives in the grocery stores. Our farming roots have been replaced with cords and flashes of technology that have transported us into cyberspace. Returning to your roots and watching plants grow can be as simple as a big clay pot or as large as you choose to make your flower or vegetable garden.

In September, the apples begin to fall from the trees. They are red, green, yellow, autumn rust and sometimes lopsided! Now, why would an apple be lopsided? It just takes a lazy bee that pollinates by reaching from the back of a blossom instead of landing full bloom and tiptoeing through the pollen. Now, you bee informed. Encourage wonderings. If a kiwi is labeled Product of New Zealand, wonder where that may be and look it up. You can learn a lot of geography by checking which state or continent grew the food. Would its price be high if it had to have a plane ticket? Children love stickers, and product labels are excellent to use on a page in the Garden Journal. Check the product labels for coconuts, pineapples, cantaloupes and apples. While you are at it, check out a new fruit, the pluot created by Floyd Zaiger.

### Miss Patsy's Secret Weapon Recipes

#### Layered Vegetable Salad

Written by Patsy Cowart

- 1 quart shredded lettuce
- 1½ cups cucumber slices cut in half
- 1 cup red onion rings
- 2 each 10 oz. packages frozen green English peas, cooked and drained
- 1½ cup mayonnaise
- ½ teaspoon dill weed
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- Croutons

Layer lettuce, cucumber, onion and peas in a salad bowl. Combine mayonnaise with dill weed and sugar, mix well. Spread over salad. Cover and refrigerate until cold. Toss above ingredients, add croutons and serve. This salad goes very well with steak or fried chicken. Makes about 8 servings. Enjoy!



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