

JUNGLE TAMING

MONTHLY HORTICULTURAL NEWSLETTER

803.463.2655

Volume 2, Issue 1

January, 2013

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

Amy's January Horticultural Tasks

Written by Amy Bledsoe

Annuals



Turf



Perennials



Roses



Shrubs



Trees



Annuals

To save money this spring, start your annuals indoors from seed. Flower seeds are very inexpensive and offer a great selection of choices. In Columbia, our last frost date is around March 21st. Seed packet instructions indicate how many weeks from time of sowing to outdoor planting are needed. Count backwards from March 21st to see when the seeds should be sown. The last frost date is a guideline, and actual weather conditions may not cooperate: Check the local forecast before actual planting outdoors!

Helpful tips:

- Use potting soil, not topsoil to grow your seeds.
- Moisten potting soil before planting seeds.
- Use clear plastic produce bags from grocery store purchases to enclose seed trays - this will create a mini-greenhouse effect for the seeds. Watch carefully, though! The bag should be removed at the first sign of emerging seedlings to prevent a fungal disease caused by too much moisture which could kill young seedlings.



To help the seedlings germinate, place the seed tray on top of the refrigerator, wasted space in many homes. The refrigerator will generate warm bottom heat which seedlings love. Be sure to use a cookie sheet or pie tin to catch any water runoff.

Turf

Enjoy the break from the heat and mowing, and plan for any spring soil improvement. Have you had a soil sample taken in the last three years? It takes about three months for the pH level of the soil to change, so a soil test now

Continued on Page 4

SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

It's easy to subscribe to the FREE monthly e-Newsletter. Email your request to JungleTaming@earthlink.net.

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

Visit www.JungleTaming.com for more information.

Disclaimer

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**Soil Amendments—Improving Your Lot***Written by Donald McInnes, Ph.D.*

In working at the Richland County Extension office, I see the wide range of soil types we have in the Midlands. It seems most residents are blessed with an abundance of clay or sand. Very few of the samples that I see are nice, loamy soil—the sort of soil that elicits thoughts of “I wish my soil looked like that!” Most of the good stuff comes from vegetable plots where the owner has repeatedly amended the soil, building it and improving it over several years.

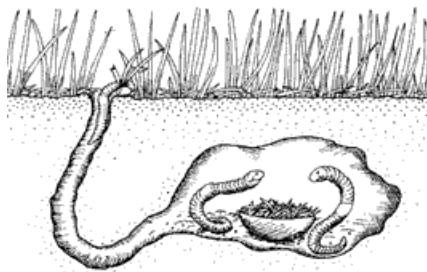
If your soil is so clayey that it would do better on the potter’s wheel than on the potting bench, how can you make it more hospitable to your plants? How can you improve your soil if your home parcel is ancient beachfront property and you got the beach but not the ocean view? The answer to both questions is by adding organic matter.

For gardeners, organic matter pretty much means any material derived from plants: compost, peat moss, wood chips, sawdust, leaves, bark, manure (from cattle, horses, poultry or other vegetarians), etc.



The problem with clayey soil is one of drainage. While clay has it all over sand in times of drought and in nutrient holding capacity, the lack of drainage can easily lead to plants suffering root suffocation and rot and gardeners having to rely on raised beds. The spaces between the particles of a clayey soil are so small that water (and plant roots) can’t easily penetrate.

Can sand be added to loosen clay? Theoretically yes, but it takes such a huge amount of sand (or gypsum or expanded stone) that it’s not practical. To avoid the soil “setting up” and becoming even harder, like brick or adobe, the soil mixture must be mostly sand. If you can add a foot or more of sand and thoroughly mix it in, it might work, but few of us can raise the grade that much.



By adding organic matter, you can improve the tilth (the suitability of the soil texture for plant growth) of clayey soil. As the organic matter decomposes, compounds are produced that cement the small soil particles together into aggregates. Bigger particles mean bigger spaces between them and room for water and root penetration. Unlike with inorganic amendments, earthworms will continually redistribute organic matter throughout your soil long after you’ve put the tiller away, and their burrowing creates even more channels for water and roots. Decomposition also changes the organic matter into inorganic nutrients that can be used by growing plants.

Sandy soils, on the other hand, suffer from excessive drainage. Water percolates quickly, taking nutrients with it. Organic matter can act like a sponge, holding water and binding nutrients, keeping them longer in the vicinity of plants’ roots.

Because our soils never get cold enough to shut down the decomposition processes, it’s tough to maintain a high level of organic matter in them (that’s why our soils are much poorer than those of the Midwest). Therefore, amending soil is not a one time job. Frequent topdressing should be part of our routine as gardeners (as should

Continued on Page 6

Subscribe to Monthly Horticultural Tasks!
EMAIL: JungleTaming@earthlink.net. TEXT: JUNGLETAMING to 22828.

Professor Ron's Timely Tips

Traditional Vegetable Garden Planning

By Ron Cowart

As stated in last month's article, there are three major methods of gardening: (1) **Traditional**; (2) **Raised**; and (3) **Container**. Regardless of which method you choose, it is time to determine and select the name and variety of vegetables to be grown.

There are three ways that you can determine the variety of vegetable you are to grow: (1) Recommendations of friends; (2) Beautiful, colorful pictures in a seed catalog; or (3) The wonderful flavors of vegetable memory lane. For example, to me, there are tomatoes and then there are **tomatoes**. Each variety has its own particular taste. I love the taste of the Best Bush tomato but dislike the taste of Mortgage Lifter, or others with an acid taste. The sense of smell and taste are a strong human trait. If you are new to vegetable gardening, you will have to depend on the first two ways.



If you are a novice gardener, and you plan to have a new traditional vegetable garden this year, you are probably one year late. It takes a minimum of one year to transform a plot of land into a desirable garden spot. The following is a list of cultural practices to be conducted the first year.

1. Measure and stake the garden perimeter area. A garden covering 700 to 800 square feet is ample for a family of two participating in a giveaway food program to their neighbors. Most neighbors would rather you do the work, like harvest, wash and package the produce, than for them to do so. Why? Two reasons: One, they feel awkward because they fear they may harvest too much or too little, and two, they feel overwhelmed, knowing that once they harvest the vegetables, they will have to prepare and cook them at home. Properly cooking vegetables is another subject not covered in this article!
2. Rototill any existing vegetative debris as deeply as possible and remove all rocks and wood that do not pass through a garden rake.
3. Apply three inches of composted organic matter and incorporate six to eight inches deep.
4. After 30 days collect a soil sample to determine nutrient levels and pH of the soil.



5. Amend soil with fertilizer and lime as recommended.
6. Control weeds with hoeing and/or post emergent herbicide. Make sure the maximum rate of herbicide per year is not surpassed as per chemical label. This initial weed control is very important, especially if you have obnoxious weeds such as Bermuda grass and nut grass.

Note: If your garden is a seasoned garden, one that has been actively used over the period of years, collect soil samples and determine the required nutrient levels and pH **every other year**. Do not forget crop rotation. If you want a tomato crop failure, plant tomatoes in the same spot yearly.

There are many rewards in traditional vegetable gardening. There is nothing like smelling the earthy odor of freshly tilled soil in March. This is when a soil micro-

Continued on Page 4

Growing Little Green Thumbs

Liven Up Winter!

Written by Ruby Haydock DeLoach

December 21 marked the first day of winter in 2012, and roaring, whistling, winter winds blew in a cold January. Winter paints our landscape views using all the colors of gray between black and white. After the holidays, winter blues can set a somber mood, as what goes up must come down. To liven up your winter, use colored plants to brighten your path, window box, and flower pots.

Ornamental cabbage and kale are on sale at the garden centers. Pull off the withered leaves and plant into the soil so that the crown of leaves is flush with the soil surface (roots will grow along the buried stem). Rosemary is a hearty evergreen for colorful accents and a delightful addition to roasted potatoes. Pansies, Viola and Johnny Jump Ups love the cold and will thrive even through a winter snow. These plants are edible and can be used to add beauty to a cake or to top off a tossed salad or pancake breakfast. Fertilize, keep soil moist and pinch off faded blooms to encourage new ones.



Pick picturesque blooms, pinch off stems as close as possible to the petals and dry press between wax paper and the pages of an old phone book or large catalogue. Place flowers face down on a tee shirt or card stock, cover with a paper towel and hammer all over the surface to force the pigments of the flower onto the new surface. Allow to dry and brush from the paper. Enhance with colored pencil, watercolor or ink. Blooms can be placed on the copy machine and printed on card stock or regular paper as a stationary header. Find joy in this first season of the year!

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



will allow for adjustments to be made to the soil prior to spring growth. Clemson Extension has a wonderful website at www.clemson.edu with instructions for taking soil samples. Take separate samples for a flower bed versus the turf grass. Soil tests should be taken to the extension office located near Clemson Road at Two Notch Road. The cost is just \$6 per sample.

Perennials

- January is the perfect time to cut back liriopse, also known as monkey

Continued on Page 5

Professor Ron's Timely Tips *Cont'd from Page 2*

organism known as actinomycetes begins to flourish. (*Actinomycetes* are a large group of bacteria that grow as hyphae like fungi. They are responsible for the characteristically "earthy" smell of freshly turned, healthy soil. Actinomycetes decompose a wide array of substrates, but are especially important in degrading recalcitrant (hard-to-decompose) compounds, such as chitin and cellulose, and are active at high pH levels.)

Happy planning.

Amy's January Horticultural Tasks *Cont'd from Page 4*

grass. It can become filled with leaf debris or just look unkempt, so an annual cut back is beneficial. Use a weed eater to cut back to two inches above the soil. Rake away debris and remove.

- Monitor daylilies for aphids. Because Columbia typically has mild winters, aphids can overwinter in daylilies that have not gone completely dormant. Treat for aphids with insecticidal soap.
- January is a perfect month to enjoy early-blooming daffodils. No daffodils in the yard? Start planning where to plant them in the fall. The best places are where they can be viewed from inside the house through a window.
- Another January/February blooming perennial are Lenten roses. This plant is not a rose, as the name implies, but a terrific evergreen plant for shade.

Roses

Do not fertilize roses this month.

Shrubs

It is still a good time to plant shrubs. Check hollies and camellias for evidence of scale infestation, appearing as non-moving white or light gray specs on the underside of leaves or stems. Treat with dormant oil which works to smother this insect.

Trees

It is prime time to plant a tree.



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.

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. You can visit Ron's website at www.cowartconsulting.com.

*Ruby Haydock 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. Also visit her website at 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.

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. Visit the website: www.JungleTaming.com.*

Food for Mind, Body & Soul

Miss Patsy's Secret Weapon Recipes

Collards

Written by Patsy Cowart

Ingredients

3 lbs. collards
 48 oz. low-sodium chicken broth
 1 packet *Herb-Ox*® chicken bouillon (1.2 ox.)
 3 Tablespoons sugar
 4½ Tablespoons cooking oil
 1½ teaspoons salt
 ¾ teaspoon pepper
 3 Tablespoons sugar
 3 large onions, sliced
 9 Dashes garlic powder
 ¾ teaspoon Texas Pete hot sauce
 1½ Tablespoons apple vinegar



*Granny Marie Smith's favorite vegetable
(1913 – 2008)*

Wash leaves thoroughly, remove the center veins, roll up and make 1" diagonal crosscuts. Set aside.

In a large pot, add chicken broth, bouillon packet, cooking oil, salt, pepper, sugar, sliced onions, garlic powder, Texas Pete, and apple vinegar. Bring to a boil. Add greens to mixture and boil for 60 minutes or until tender. (If using a pressure cooker, cook for 30 minutes). Add water as needed.

Makes 6 to 8 large servings. **Enjoy!**

Gardening for Everyone *Cont'd from Page 2*

using mulches that not only conserve water and block weeds, but also breakdown and become part of the soil). Even on turf, a half-inch of compost applied a few times during the growing season will help build the soil (use a rake to spread the compost evenly to prevent the grass from being buried). Use of a core aerator before application will help incorporate the compost quickly, but the worms, ants and other soil movers will work it in.

The type of organic matter doesn't matter, not much anyway. There are differences in costs, availability, the likelihood of weed seed contamination, and nutrient content, but any of the available organic amendments will help alleviate the problems of clayey and sandy soil. If you're going to incorporate organic matter into the soil, make sure it's completely decomposed (compost, aged manure, decomposed bark), or your plants will have to compete with the saprophytes for nitrogen until decomposition is finished. Organic matter not yet decomposed can be safely used as mulch; just don't bury it.

You can do much to reduce the need for imported stuff by conserving at home—not just fossil fuel, also organic matter. Unless it's diseased, contains undesirable seeds or will take years to break down, use the leaves, debris and clippings in the landscape. Leaves and small branches make great mulch, and most other things can be composted.

Make a resolution this year to improve your soil by adding organic matter.

