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Hall County Soil & Water Conservation News

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When selecting plants, make sure they are adapted to your area. Consider both the minimum and maximum temperatures, amount of moisture, amount of sunlight, and soil characteristics. Ask yourself: Do you want an annual that will need replanting every year or a perennial that comes up year after

year? Do you want cut flowers for inside your home or to give to friends?

Consider native plants. They are usually better adapted to local conditions and need little maintenance. Be cautious about introducing exotic species that can become invasive and are prohibited in many states.

Above all, choose what you like. There is an enormous va-

riety of plants that will provide food and shelter to a wide variety of wildlife. With a little planning, you and the local wildlife can both enjoy the yard of your dreams.

For more information on Backyard Conservation practices, contact the Hall County Soil and Water Conservation Office at 770-531-6827.

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Backyard Conservation - “Dream Yard”

Do you ever dream about what your yard could look like some day? As you look through garden catalogs filled with beautiful trees, shrubs, flowers and pictures of beautifully landscaped yards—complete with ponds and garden sculptures—the choices seem endless. Before ordering hundreds of plants or giving up because you cannot decide what you really want, here are a few things to consider.

A common issue in landscaping is creating a peaceful, private environment. While fencing can provide immediate privacy, consider a buffer strip of shrubbery between your yard and the one next door. Many shrubs will grow quickly—within a couple of years—and act as a screen while providing habitat for a variety of birds. Consider planting native shrubs because they are usually well adapted to local conditions and may provide the best habitat for local wildlife. Other considerations: whether the plants have special characteristics such as flowers or fruits, how large they will eventually become, and how much maintenance they require to remain healthy and in scale with your yard. Check with a local nursery or garden center for recommended species. If you always thought it would be fun to have a pond, try it. With the variety of materials now on the market, anyone can have a garden

pond, regardless of the size of the yard. If you have a lot of space, you can build one right in the ground. You can purchase a pre-formed mold or dig a hole and line it with a plastic pond liner. A simple type of pond consists of a plastic lined barrel or tub. Just add water, plants, a pump. Also, make sure you use caution and take security measures if small children have access to your yard and the pond. Another factor to consider is maintenance. A pond can require a lot of effort to keep it clear of algae, leaves, and debris.



If you do not want to spend your weekends maintaining a yard, turn part of it into a wildflower garden. Some communities have not yet recognized the value of “native landscaping” and may consider this a nuisance area. If you want a more maintained yard, consider ground covers instead of grass and use mulch to control weeds in foundation plantings and flower beds.

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Streambank Stabilization

Streambank erosion is a growing problem in Hall county and North Georgia. It is certainly easier and more cost-effective to prevent streambank problems than it is to cure them. We will look at prevention and different restoration techniques in future newsletters, but in this newsletter we would like to look at a technique new to Georgia called Tree Revetments. A tree revetment is a relatively inexpensive, (compared to other restoration methods) effective way of stopping streambank erosion. The revetment greatly slows the current along the eroding bank; this decreases erosion and allows sediment to be deposited along the bank in the revetment. The deposited sediment forms a good seedbed in which the seeds of riparian trees such as sycamore, and maple can sprout and grow. The resulting trees spread roots throughout the revetment and streambank. As an added benefit, tree revetments provide excellent fish and wildlife cover. Hall county is the location for two of the first revetment sites to be installed in Georgia. Todd Chapman and Dr. John Hemmer have agreed to implement this new method as demonstration sites on their farms. If you have any questions concerning stream protection and restoration please give the district office a call at 770-531-6827.



Eroding streambanks are a critical problem in Hall County and North Georgia.



Installation of the tree revetment began with the placement of trees on the eroded streambank.



After a mixture of large and small trees have been placed on the eroded streambank, the trees are tightly compacted into a dense mat on the eroding streambank.



The tree revetment is then anchored in place using cables attached to a log called a "deadman" which is then stretched tight and buried approximately 15' away from the streambank.



The completed tree revetment completely protects the eroded bank, and helps it to begin healing itself.

Nitrate Poisoning by Gene Anderson County Extension Coordinator Hall County Extension Service

Nitrates are compounds commonly found in forages. If ingested, nitrates undergo reduction to nitrites which are readily absorbed by the animal. Once in the bloodstream, nitrites bind with hemoglobin, thus preventing transfer of oxygen. Depending upon the amounts consumed, clinical poisoning can cause lowering of milk production, abortion, breeding problems, as well as an interference syndrome that appears as a nutritional deficiency. (Vitamin A and E, rickets, phosphorus, or calcium imbalance.) Interference with Vitamin A and E occurs at levels as low as 5 ppm with poor management and poor quality rations. Cattle are 2-3 times more susceptible to nitrate poisoning than sheep on a per pound body weight basis. The form of nitrite will greatly influence the symptoms, treatment and expected results. Nitrites are considered to be 5-10 times more toxic than nitrates.

Crops known to be bad offenders as green chop, silage, fodder, hay and/or pasture are corn, sorghums, oats, sudan, alfalfa, wheat, rye and barley. Safe and acceptable hay and straw may be made toxic under warm, wet conditions by bacterial that rapidly reduce nitrates into the more toxic nitrites. Because of the variety of crops being grown for green chop and silage, the various rates

of fertilizer application and variable weather conditions, it is difficult to predict when high nitrate levels will occur.

Samples sent to laboratories may be reported in parts per million (ppm) rather than percentages (%). Levels exceeding 1000 ppm may be mildly toxic. Levels exceeding 3500 ppm in the total daily intake of cattle should be considered toxic and levels approaching 10,000 ppm—lethal. Information concerning nitrate testing can be obtained by contacting the Hall County Extension Service at 770-535-8293.

Upcoming Events

July – October

*Hall County Farmers Market
Open Tuesday & Friday Mornings*

**September 26, 2000
7:00 p.m.**

*Affiliate Member Banquet
Chicopee Woods Agriculture Center*

November 9, 2000

*Farm City Program
Location TBA*