

Apalachee Plantation Homeowners' Association Newsletter

Fire—It Can Happen to You

THIS summer fire came to Georgia, and stayed. Our own neighborhood is now considered at high risk due to the drought and lack of humidity. For your own sake,

and that of your neighbors, please be extra careful inside and outside to reduce or eliminate fire hazards. While the burn ban ended September

30, we are under daily restrictions due to high fire risk. Do not burn until you have called the Gwinnett County Department of Fire and Emergency Services at 678-518-4800, or visited their website at: www.gwinnettfire.org. Follow links to the Fire Marshall page.



Winter Home Care Checklist

- Turn off and drain outdoor faucets before freezing weather sets in.
- Clean gutters and downspouts
- Trim landscaping around home
- Check mailbox, fencing, decks and other outdoor structures for needed maintenance. This time of year is ideal for cleaning and sealing wooden decks and fences.
- Repair or replace damaged siding and rotting wood around doors
- Water seal brickwork every 5-8 years.
- Caulk around windows, doors, and vents
- Check roof for signs of leaking and replace damaged flashing
- Have chimney cleaned before using
- Repair broken and cracked glass
- Clean dryer vent and check that exhaust ducts are clear
- Have furnace inspected and cleaned and replace furnace filter
- Check for damaged electrical cords
- Check that smoke and CO alarms work and replace batteries

For more info: www.hometeaminspection.com; www.bobvila.com; centerforhealthyhousing.org

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Association Dues and Deadbeats

WE HAVE much to be proud of in our neighborhood. Most of our homeowners take excellent care of their homes and yards. We also have beautiful common areas that are protected wetlands and buffer zones. Mature trees add elegance all year long.

Our mandatory Home Owners Association is legally responsible for caring for our subdivision entrance, common and protected areas, and retention ponds, including fencing. We also are required to pay for water service and electricity used at our entrance, taxes on our common property, and legal expenses.

In order to cover our responsibilities, Association fees will be \$150 for 2008. Those over 30 days late in paying their dues will be assessed a monthly late fee of \$10. This is what many neighborhoods similar to ours are already paying. The Daniel Park subdivision pays \$350 annually in dues, not including dues for the swimming pool or tennis courts. Our modest dues should allow us to meet our legal requirements and will sustain and improve the resale values of our homes. Living as we do in a buyer's market, we will all benefit from a well-maintained neighborhood.

Dealing with deadbeats. While our assessment in 2007 should have covered our 2007 expenses, we actually have experienced a

financial shortfall due to a number of homeowners shirking their legal responsibility to pay Association dues. We have been forced to discontinue landscaping services for the past few months, and have an outstanding invoice due with our landscaping service of several thousand dollars. This will help you to understand the pileup of leaves at our entrance and along the entry drive. We have also risked fines from the county because lazy individuals wouldn't cart away their own garbage, instead, dumping it into our retention ponds. At Association expense, we/you have been forced to clean these areas, including removing a mattress from one of the ponds.

Your Association officers are volunteers, giving their time and efforts to protect our neighborhood. In your behalf, they arrange for necessary maintenance and repairs, approve landscape and architecture changes according to our neighborhood covenants, and handle communication with legal bodies. They also ensure the equal apportioning of the financial load to every home owner. Home Owners derelict by \$300 or more will have liens placed on your home. Liens include an automatic fee to cover legal expenses of \$300. In other words, everyone pays. Responsible home

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Why Don't We Put a Flower Bed There?

REMOVING lawn and creating a flower bed is not a lot of work if you enjoy gardening and the rewards are great. It is only work if you hate the gardening.

In this article I will walk you through the process of creating a new flower bed where you have grass growing.

Before you get started, check the box

1. Locate the area where you want the bed. When choosing an area for your new bed consider whether you want to grow sun bathing species or shade loving species. Consider moisture levels that will be maintained in the bed for any given species or variety of plant you may wish to grow. For example, if you are looking to grow native Lobelia, Gentiana, Hymenocallis, Zephyranthes, Liliiums, or any similar species that require even moisture you will want to locate a site that will provide shade and consistent moisture levels year round. On the other hand if you want to plant Liatris, Echinacea, Opuntia, Amsonia, Phlox, Tradescatia, Silphium, Helianthus or other similar species that require full sun, you may consider a site that is more well drained and in the sun for most of the day.

2. Drainage. Consider the rain water run-off when you design your bed line so that heavy rains do not wash or erode it away.

3. Roughly outline the bed. Using a garden hose, rope, or similar flexible object, roughly outline the shape of your bed. See how it looks from the viewing area, from an inside window or from the drive way or street. Then refine the general shape of the bed. I recommend gentle curves or curvilinear beds. Also, consider the width and turning radius of your lawn mower. A helpful hint for people with a lot of stress or those who are design handi-capped and can't loosen up their imagination, a big glass of wine will do wonders. The design part, almost instantly, becomes much easier!

4. Mark the edge. Look at your design for a couple of days to see how you like it. It is easier to change the shape now than after the bed is dug. After you decide on the final shape, take a shovel and some cordage or string. If you have a curved bed line place the shovel in the center of the imaginary circle that this curve would make. Plant the shovel up right in the center and loosely tie one end of string to the shovel handle just above the spade. Pull gently on the string to the edge of your bed line. This is kind of like using a giant drafting compass to keep the bed line smooth. Hold the string starting at one section of the bed at a curve and walk with the string along the bed line to mark the edge. Reverse the shovel to the other side of the bed line, now in the lawn, to make an arch back the other way using the same method. By adjusting the length of the string with each curve you can make sure that the lines all join as gently as possible making a smooth transition between curves. Use spray paint to follow lines by walking with the string over the spray paint head so that

the string will not slip while you walk and spray. It is still not too late to change the design, so think about it some more before the muscle work comes into play. Measure twice, cut once, or so they say.

5. Dig the edge. Take the shovel vertically, and trace the paint bed line by digging down approximately 6-8 inches deep from outside of the bed. Then from inside the bed start from 1 foot away from your traced outline and on your knees holding the shovel at around 20 degree angle (almost horizontal) dig back towards your bed line, removing wedges of soil and grass about 1 foot in length all the way around the bed. The soil and grass removed is the debris that goes onto the tarp or in the wheel barrow, but remember to drag the tarp and dump the wheel barrow before it gets too heavy

6. Remove the interior. Shovel up the lawn inside the bed line. Trenching shovels with long narrow spades work best. While on your knees, shovel at a 1 degree, almost completely horizontal. This allows you to shave off the top 2-3 inches and get 99% of the major roots and crowns of the grass. Those of you with a bermude lawn, it is a true beast and is sometimes, naah, always, defiant, so stay on top of it and kill any runners that remain with Round-up. Alternately spray all the grass/lawn inside of your the bed with Round-up over the next 3-4 weeks.

7. Turn the soil in the bed to 1 foot or more deep. If you have poor soil add generous amounts of soil conditioner. Use as much organic matter as you can. Studies have shown organic nitrogen to be slower to release nutrition and last much longer than chemical fertilizer. Another downside to chemical fertilizer is that salt is used to bind the nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium. After these types of fertilizers break down they leave the salt behind and with repeated applications the salt can build up to toxic levels and retard plant growth.

A simple test to see if you have amended your soil enough is to take a double handful of soil and compress it firmly 5 times as if you compacting a snow ball. With this ball of soil setting in the palm of your hand it should remain in a ball and crumble if you gently with you're your fingers press on it. If it falls apart before pressing on it then you need more clay. If it does not crumble with gentle pressure then you need to add more organic matter.

8. Mold, shape, and create raised areas within the bed. Some of you may wish to stay more uniform and level keeping the soil in the bed all at the same elevation. Other people including myself, prefer to create higher and lower areas within the bed. This will make your new flower bed look like a miniature mountain range and it offers a wider, more diverse micro-habitat, allowing you to plant many more species that

Supplies you will need

- Some muscle and time
- Round-up herbicide or more muscle to physically remove the grass from the area you want to create a flower bed.
- A pointed spade or flat shovel. (Flat shovels need more muscle but leave a cleaner bed line)
- Your favorite beverage (you are going to work up a thirst)
- A pair of gloves
- Soil amendment, if needed. These are products commonly called soil conditioners
- A rake
- A garden hose or watering cans (gray water if under ban)
- Some cordage or string
- A tarp or wheel barrow
- A place to put excess soils and grass that you will remove from site. If you dig up the turf properly, it can be used in another area where you want more lawn, and the waste grass and soil can be used to fill in a low area holes
- A camera to take before and after pictures

require different moisture conditions. After shaping your new bed use a rake to smooth out the soil or transitions from higher to lower areas. Now that your new flower bed is finished water it very well to saturate the soil, if you can let it set overnight. You may want to water again lightly the next day or before you begin to plant. Gray water works fine here.

9. Enjoy your garden. Now comes the fun, easy part, have fun with your new plantings!

—Article by Jim Rodgers, of Nearly Native Nursery in Fayetteville. For drought resistant plants, visit www.nearlynativenursery.com

Board Members and Contact Information

President: Lee Adkins

Vice President: Ren Burnette

Secretary: Celia Olavarria

Treasurer: Madeline Andrade

Member-at-large: Salvador Fuentes

E-mail: Contact Any HOA Board Member at: apalacheeplantation@yahoo.com

Mailing address: PO Box 923; Dacula, GA 30019

Website: www.apalacheeplantation.com

Lee Adkins can be reached at: 404-432-6878

Total Watering Ban —What You Can Do

NO OUTSIDE watering is permitted for homeowners as we enter drought level 4. This is not a happy time for gardens. But, there are a number of things we can do to keep things going until rain arrives.

Gray and Rain Water: Do you warm up your water before stepping in the shower? Collect it in a bucket and pour it on your garden. In the summer, your air conditioner will be another source for water. Simply place a container under the drip and pour it on dry areas of your garden. Installing a rain barrel at your downspouts can provide a surprising amount of water.

Fertilizer and Pre-emergents: Hose-end applications of pre-emergents and fertilizer are, of course, impossible, but many wonder if granular applications will work. Apply in the evening or early morning and the morning dew will gradually work it into the soil. Go lightly on any fertilizer as you will want to keep your grass and gardens healthy, but not growing heavily. Organic materials are easier on the ground as they contain less harmful salts and are better for your lawn and garden.

Keep Your Grass Height Up: In the spring and summer, let your grass grow taller, and cut only the top 1/3 of it off at any time. This will reduce stress and water needs for your lawn. Do not scalp your lawn at any time. This is very hard on the grass and encourages weed growth.

Triage for Trees: Give trees priority in your gray water program. They are the most valuable part of your landscaping and the most costly to replace. Next, water perennials. If drought stressed, cut them back by 1/3 to reduce water needs. For annuals, buy more next year, or whenever it starts raining again. Winter reduces but does not eliminate plants' water needs.

Mulch: Mulch deeply around plants to help conserve water. Make sure that the base of the plant or tree it is not smothered.—*Article courtesy of Green Edge Lawn and Garden. Ph: 678-425-5180, www.greenedgelawn.com*

Ads can be placed for \$15 per year for homeowners and \$25 per year for non-homeowners.

Contact the HOA

Fall Gardening: Simple Tips for Your Lawn and Gardens

January

- Plant or transplant woody plants such as trees or shrubs. Now, while it is cool and plants are somewhat dormant, is one of the best times of the year for planting. Newly planted or transplanted material will still need water through the winter. Don't forget to irrigate (See the article, "Total Watering Ban—What You Can Do") if rainfall does not supply plenty of water. January is also a good time to plant fruit trees.
- Bare root roses and many of the spring flowering bulbs can also be planted in January. Tulips and hyacinths should be pre-chilled for 6-8 weeks in your refrigerator before planting.

February

- February is an excellent time for pruning. Fruit trees, grape vines, roses, and crape myrtles should be pruned. Most evergreen plants can also be pruned. For spring flowering plants, such as azaleas, wait until after they bloom before pruning. Pruning now can reduce flower production.
- Pre-emergence herbicides for weed problems in turf can be applied at this time. Be sure to follow label directions.
- Most fruit trees and pecan trees can be fertilized in early to mid-February. Do not apply fertilizers to warm season lawns or ornamental plants at this time.

March

- If you have not already done so, prune crape myrtles and overgrown evergreen shrubs. Mulch around shrubs and trees and replace existing mulch as needed.
- Prepare a plan for planting spring and summer annuals. You can continue to plant new shrubs and trees in the warm spring weather. The sooner in spring you plant, the better, so plants will face less heat stress.
- Fertilize trees and shrubs as needed. Roses will need monthly fertilization through spring and summer. Fertilize fescue lawns only at this time. Wait until two weeks after greened up before fertilizing warm season grasses.
- * If lawn areas are compacted, now is a good time to aerate the lawn using a core-type lawn aerator to help improve drainage and loosen soils.

For further information: http://county.ces.uga.edu/gwinnett/AG/garden_cal.htm

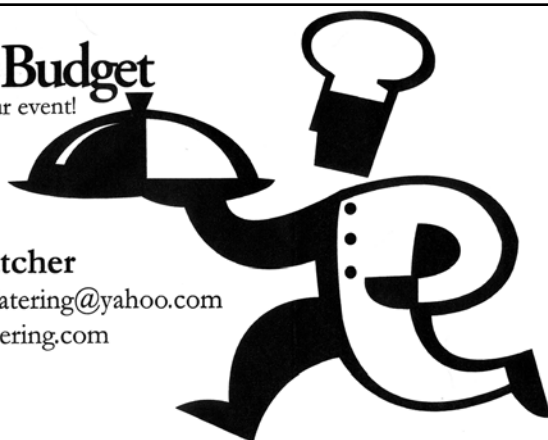
HOA Dues, cont. from page 1

owners pay promptly. Deadbeat homeowners will eventually pay, and will pay three times or more the amount they would have if they paid their dues yearly. The HOA Board has always been willing to work with those having financial difficulties or need to budget a

monthly amount. Please contact the Board to work out payment details.

Your HOA Board will continue to work for the entire neighborhood. No one should or will get a free ride at your expense.

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Bike Safety

WE HAVE a family-oriented neighborhood, where kids enjoy playing together outside. Our hilly roads can offer great temptation for racing bikes and other wheeled toys. Parents, please remind your children of the following safety precautions and Georgia laws.

1. Every person operating a bicycle upon a roadway shall ride as near to the right side of the roadway as practicable, except when turning left or avoiding hazards to safe cycling,
 2. Persons riding bicycles upon a roadway shall not ride more than two abreast except on paths or parts of roadways set aside for the exclusive use of bicycles.
 3. No person under the age of 16 years shall operate or be a passenger on a bicycle on a highway, bicycle path, or sidewalk under the jurisdiction or control of this state or any local political subdivision thereof without wearing a bicycle helmet.
- All bicycle riders are granted the rights and duties applicable to drivers of vehicles; bicyclists must obey all traffic control signals and signs, including no right turn or U-turn signs.
- Bicyclists must ride as near to the right side of the roadway as practical and may not ride more than two abreast except on paths set aside for the exclusive use of bicycles.

- When paths for bicycles are provided adjacent to the roadway, bicycle riders must use the paths and not the roadway.
- Bicyclists must yield the right-of-way to pedestrians when emerging from alleys, driveways or buildings and approaching a sidewalk. When in the roadway, they must yield the right-of-way to vehicles approaching the roadway.
- Bicyclists may not park bicycles in such a way that they impede pedestrian circulation on sidewalks or on multi-use trails.
- Bikes must be equipped with lights and reflectors if used at nighttime.
- Bicycles must be equipped with brakes that enable the rider to make the braked wheel skid on dry, level, clean pavement.

For a free safety quiz (with answers) for parents to review with their children see: <http://gwinnett.mcgruff-tid.com/safetytips.htm>

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Electric Lighting Safety

THIS is the time of year when many start putting up decorative holiday lighting. Please keep in mind the following guidelines to prevent fires.

- Inspect all wires and do not use any that are frayed or damaged. All lights should carry the mark of an approved testing laboratory.
- Do not overload electrical outlets. Do not connect more than three strings of lights.
- Connect all lighting to a Ground Fault Circuit Interrupting (GFCI) outlet.
- Use an extension cord with a higher rating.
- Periodically check for heat. Wires should not be warm to the touch.
- Do not secure wiring with staples or nails
- A blown fuse or broken circuit indicates an overload.
- Do not leave holiday lights on unattended
- Take down your lights after the holidays.

Speeding Drivers Endanger Neighborhood

Drivers and parents of drivers, please remember that you are sharing our streets with others. We have received many complaints about drivers speeding through our neighborhood and running stop signs. We have children waiting at bus stops, joggers and walkers exercising, dog walkers, and others all out when it is dark. Please do not risk their lives by irresponsible driving.

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