



## Mosquito Control Around the Home

As we move into warmer temperatures and find ourselves outside more often now that winter has mostly subsided, we are going to start encountering mosquitoes much more often unfortunately. Below are a few simple steps that you can take to help reduce the risk of being bitten and to help possibly reduce the population of mosquitoes around the home.

- Remove any standing water around your home to reduce mosquito breeding. In areas where standing water is unavoidable, the use of “Bti Dunks” (*Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis* strain) can be helpful and safe for pets and other animals.
- Always wear an insect repellent containing an EPA-registered active ingredient, such as DEET, when outdoors. Be sure to use a product that is labelled for skin use and not a clothing use as increased active ingredient concentrations can be harmful and not for on-the-skin use.
- If you are allergic to DEET, or would prefer to use a different product, there is an alternative containing the active ingredient Picaridin that is also effective for the deterrence of mosquitos and other disease carrying insects.
- Use of Thermacell or other insect repellent devices can be beneficial in certain instances in small areas
- Wear loose-fitting long-sleeved tops and long pants.
- Avoid being outdoors during the early morning and early evening when mosquitoes are most active when possible

For more [information about mosquito-borne illnesses](#) and how to protect yourself, visit the Mississippi State Department of Health website at [HealthyMS.com/westnile](http://HealthyMS.com/westnile)

Extension publication IS1960 “[Integrated Mosquito Management](#)” can help you implement a plan to reduce mosquitoes while using minimal pesticides.



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## Growing Herbs in Containers

Fresh herbs have a lot of home uses, and I love growing them in containers.

Herbs can be used for cooking, fragrance, landscaping, crafts and decoration, and even medicinal purposes if you contact your doctor before using herbs or herbal supplements. Many also perform well in containers.

Some good herbs for containers include mint, basil, chives, dill, thyme, parsley, oregano and sage. I like to mix and match different herbs to create combination containers based on the ingredients I need for my cooking.

Many of the basic herb species are available with variegated or multicolored foliage. This is important as we eat with our eyes as well as our mouths. Be sure to choose attractive herb plants so you can enjoy the visual aesthetics as well as the culinary delights.

Multicolored herbs work well in recipes, but their best use may be as flavorful garnishes.

You will be surprised at how many more herbs fit in a tight space when grown in containers. Even if you have only a small patio, balcony or a sunny kitchen window, you can still enjoy fresh herbs all year long.

Herbs planted in containers are easier to bring inside on cold nights and during the winter.

Basil is one of the top herbs gardeners like to grow. Few herbs have such an easily identifiable flavor and aroma as basil. Purple basil is in high demand, and it comes in some beautiful varieties.

Crimson King is one of my favorite basil varieties. You will smell this selection before you see it. The maroon-colored leaves release a spicy clove aroma, and it makes a great thriller plant in a container. It is fabulous for cooking or as a garnish.

Rosemary is another popular herb that I use a lot in my cooking. I like Huntington Carpet rosemary as a container spiller plant. It forms a beautifully cascading dense blanket of green to gray-green needle-like leaves that are potently fragrant from afar.

Plain Italian parsley can be used as the filler plant in a combination container planting and is a great cut-and-come-again variety that you will appreciate all season long. The large, flat leaves mince easily and can be snipped in seconds. It is favored for its deep flavor, which some say holds up better in cooking than curly parsley.

Most herb plants require a sunny site with well-drained organic soil. Remember to use a good-quality potting mix that includes peat, vermiculite and perlite. Also, use a container that has good drainage holes.

I like to fertilize my herbs at planting using 1/2 to 1 tablespoon per plant of a controlled-release fertilizer blended into the soil or top-dressed on the soil. This is enough for basic plant growth and nutrition.

Choose herbs that you use most frequently to create a combination container planting that will provide you fresh ingredients for delicious dishes all year long.



# Garden Calendar: April

## Planting

- Divide Violets, Shasta Daisies, Liriope, Ajuga, Mums and other Perennials.
- Plant Okra, Melons, Peas, Corn, Beans, Eggplant, Cucumbers, and Tomatoes.
- Set out Basil.
- Set out summer annuals if danger of frost is past: Ageratum, Allysum, Begonias, Geraniums, Dianthus, Celosia, Mari-golds, Moss Rose, Petunias, Impatiens, Coleus, and Caladiums.
- Plant summer and fall blooming bulbs: Callas, Cannas, Dahlias, Gladiolus, and Gloriosa Lilies.
- Sow Zinnias for early summer blooms.



## Fertilizing

- Fertilize Tomatoes with 10-10-10



## Pruning

- Remove any freeze-damaged and dead wood.
- Prune Azaleas during or after blooming. Remove faded flowers from Kurume Azaleas.
- Prune flowering shrubs after they finish blooming. If pruning can be done while the shrub is flowering, the trimmed off parts can be brought indoors for floral displays.
- Disbud roses and peonies for specimen flowers.

## Mulch

- Always mulch in new plantings to help assure success.

## Miscellaneous

- National Arbor Day is the fourth Friday of April.
- Paint and repair garden furniture and other hard construction (bird bath, bird houses, mailbox, deck, etc.).
- Buy Azaleas in bloom to be sure of color.





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## Expected “Swarms”

As we move into Spring we begin preparing for the “swarms” of termites we endure each year around this time. Termites can be an extremely annoying pest in more ways than one. We will get more into that a little further down in this article but, first, we will briefly discuss another insect I’ve been getting a few calls about, periodical cicadas and the 13-year, Great Southern Brood!

Periodical cicadas spend most of their lives underground as nymphs feeding on the roots of hardwood trees. They are here every year, but they are only noticed during years when adults emerge. Let’s begin the life cycle with the adults, which live about three or four weeks. The males sing to attract a female, the females deposit their eggs in pencil-sized twigs, and the adults then die, leaving the eggs of the next generation to carry on the cycle. The eggs hatch in about six weeks, and the tiny nymphs fall to the ground, dig into the soil, and search for a tree root to feed on.



After 13 years of feeding on sap from tree roots, the nymphs move near the soil surface in preparation for emergence. When they sense the time is right, based on soil temperature and other cues, the nymphs will emerge, leaving ½ inch diameter holes in the ground; crawl a few feet up a tree trunk; molt one last time, leaving their empty nymphal skins attached to the tree; and move higher into the trees to enjoy their brief life as adults.

Periodical cicadas are expected to emerge in about 17 Mississippi counties in the northeast region of the state with emergence beginning in late April. But brood XIX, also known as the “Great Southern Brood,” is the largest of all broods and will also occur in parts of many other states: Arkansas, Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee, Louisiana, Kentucky, Missouri, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, Illinois, Indiana, and Oklahoma. So, what about us on the Coast? Other than the occasional annual cicada you may see, or hear most likely, coastal counties never have periodical cicadas. So, don’t be overly concerned about a cicada invasion down this far south. We should be just fine.

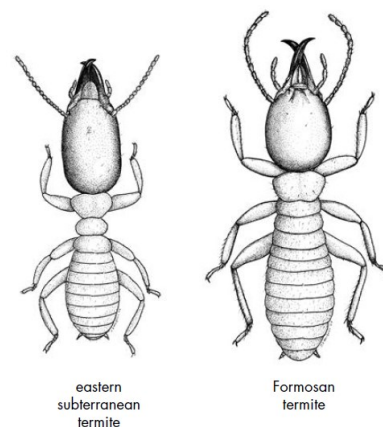
Termites, on the other hand, will be a much different story. Three major species of termites occur in Mississippi: eastern subterranean termites, Formosan termites, and southeastern drywood termites. All three species damage buildings, but their distribution varies within the state. Eastern subterranean termite is a native species that occurs throughout Mississippi, as well as through much of the eastern United States. Formosan termites are not native to the United States, but now occur in portions of 25 Mississippi counties and are continuing to spread. Southeastern drywood termites are also native but have the most restricted distribution; they regularly occur only in the three coastal counties.

Eastern subterranean termite swarmer are about 3/8 inch long, including the wings; the wings are white or translucent and their bodies are dark brown to black. Swarming usually occurs in the morning, and most swarms occur in the spring, though timing varies considerably depending on location. In the coastal counties, swarms may occur as early as late January with peak swarming activity in late February to early April, but swarming usually occurs from April through June in northernmost counties.

Formosan termite swarmer are about ½ inch long, including the wings, and are tan to light brown. In the southern portion of the state, Formosan termites usually swarm in late April through mid-May, usually within a week or so of Mother’s Day, but swarming is delayed into June in the central part of the state. Swarming occurs at night, usually at or shortly after dusk, and swarmer are strongly attracted to lights. In heavily infested areas, the number of swarmer coming to lights can be so large that they become a serious nuisance, resulting in delays of athletic activities, music events, and other outdoor nighttime activities. Fortunately, swarm season lasts only a few weeks.

Southeastern drywood termite swarmer normally swarm in May and June, with most swarms occurring at dusk. Swarmer are yellow to light brown and about 7/16 inches long, including the wings. Southeastern drywood termite swarmer are superficially similar to Formosan termite swarmer, both in general appearance and the time of year when swarms occur. Infestations of drywood termites are relatively uncommon, even on the Mississippi Gulf Coast, and drywood termite colonies are much smaller than those of subterranean termites.

Due to the nature of termite infestations, I recommend hiring a reputable pest control company for treating termites that invade the home and other structures. For information on termites and treatments, refer to publication 2568, Protect Your House From Termites, on the Extension website [extension.msstate.edu](http://extension.msstate.edu).





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## Greenhouse Tomato Production

With the right technique, growing tomatoes in the greenhouse can be a rewarding experience. Today I am going to mention some common considerations when growing greenhouse tomatoes.

The first consideration is what variety to plant in the greenhouse. Choosing low quality seed or a variety ill fitted to your production situation will have a major effect on your growing success. Greenhouse tomato varieties are suited for the growing conditions specific to the greenhouse. These include options such as the *Trust*, *Match*, *Switch*, or *Blitz* varieties. Greenhouse variety seeds can be purchased from a greenhouse supply catalog or from seed companies directly. Place extra seed in unopened or zip-locked containers in the freezer to store for future use.

Reducing production to one fruit bearing stem promotes more uniform, larger, better-quality fruit. This can be done by removing all lateral shoots, also called suckers, from the plant. Leave one or two of the smallest suckers at the top of the plant, as this will provide a backup terminal if the plant becomes damaged and the terminal breaks off.

Tomato flowers are considered “perfect flowers”, meaning they have both male and female parts within each flower. Pollination of the female flower part is required to have fruit set. There are several ways that pollination can be impeded. Examples include hot or cold temperatures, drought, high humidity, nutrient deficiencies or toxicities, and insufficient pollen transfer. For pollination, the best temperature range is 70 to 82 °F and a relative humidity of 70 percent. Commercial producers should use an electric pollinator to ensure good fruit set, but this is probably not necessary for hobby gardeners.

Blossom-end rot is likely the most common problem in both garden and greenhouse tomato production. It is a physiological disorder caused by a lack of adequate calcium in developing fruit. While the cause is low calcium, drought is often the driving factor. Without a continuous supply of water, root hairs can dry out which limits the amount of calcium absorbed by the plant. The best solution is to prevent root hair damage through consistent water application. One misconception about greenhouse production



**Blossom End Rot**



**Silver white Flies**

is that there won't be insect or disease problems. In fact, the opposite is true as the greenhouse environment is particularly suitable for propagating pests. Examples of greenhouse tomato diseases include tomato spotted wilt virus, Botrytis gray mold, and anthracnose. The worst insect pest is the whitefly. Once a disease or insect is introduced, it can become a consistent problem. Because of this, ensure disease or insect issues do not get out of control. If a pest problem does occur, reach out to your county agent if you need assistance.

For information on insect and disease management for greenhouse tomatoes, see Extension Publication 1861, *Greenhouse Tomatoes: Pest Management in Mississippi*.



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## Wisteria: Friend or Foe?

There's not a prettier sight than seeing those long racemes hanging down with purple, violet, or white showy flowers during the spring, cascading down vines wrapped around trees, fences, or other obstacles. Wisteria is a beautiful plant still grown extensively as an ornamental. But it is also very invasive and listed as a Mississippi Invasive which includes Congongrass, Chinese privet, Torpedograss and many others.



The problem with wisteria lies in its growth habit. Once established, wisteria can be difficult to eradicate. By climbing into the canopy of trees or plants, it can shade them out, impairing those plants from effectively growing. Over time, wisteria will climb and twine around other plants, eventually shading and girdling native plants. Wisteria can be a problem in fence rows, forests, and landscapes, killing or disfiguring desirable trees. Wisteria forms dense thickets, replacing the surrounding vegetation. Although these thickets may provide habitat for certain wildlife, they are a difficult barrier for human and animal activity. Wisterias are high-climbing vines reaching upward of 70 to 80 feet. In addition, wisteria leaves, fruit, and seeds are toxic.



There are two species of wisteria that have escaped in the eastern United States: Chinese wisteria and Japanese wisteria. According to recent genetic analysis, these two species have produced fertile hybrids throughout the southeastern United States. Therefore, differentiation between the two species and the hybrid can be difficult. Both species are perennial, deciduous vines native to Asia. Chinese wisteria is native to China, while Japanese wisteria is native to Japan. Wisteria species and hybrids are not regulated in the United States or the Midsouth.



Since characteristics are similar, control methods are the same for Chinese, Japanese, and hybrid wisterias. Using products containing Glyphosate and Triclopyr work best for homeowners using the frill or cut stump method. Frill (also known as hack and squirt) requires a hatchet, machete, or ax to create an opening in the bark every 2 inches around the woody stem; the herbicide is applied in these openings. Cut stump applications are made after severing the main stem. Apply herbicide to the remaining stump just inside the bark to prevent re-sprouting. Foliar applications are effective when using a nonionic surfactant but be aware of surrounding foliage of wanted plant species. Please read and follow all label directions!

# Calendar of April Events

Date	Event
	Spring Garden Day
April 13th	The Pine Belt Master Gardeners will host their Spring Garden Day beginning at 8:30 AM at the Forrest County Extension office located at 952 Sullivan Dr. in Hattiesburg.
	Square Foot Gardening Presentation
April 19th	Dr. Eddie Smith will host a Square Foot Gardening Presentation at the Poplarville Public Library from 10:00 AM – 11:00 AM.
	Private Pesticide Training
April 30th	Ross Overstreet will host a Private Pesticide Applicator Training class beginning at 6:00 PM at the Forrest County Extension office. Please RSVP to 601-794-3910 Prior to April 25 <sup>th</sup> . The cost is \$20 per individual payable by check or money order ONLY
	Lawn Management Program
April 30th	Tim Ray with Harrison County Extension will host a Lawn Management program beginning at 1:00 PM at the Harrison County Extension office located at 14281 County Farm Rd. This event is FREE! Call 228-865-4227 to reserve your seating.



MSU PINE BELT MASTER GARDENERS PRESENTS

## SPRING INTO GARDENING

SATURDAY, APRIL 13

FORREST COUNTY EXTENSION CENTER  
952 SULLIVAN DRIVE  
HATTIESBURG

FREE ADMISSION & REFRESHMENTS

BEGINS 8:30AM

REGISTRATION & SPEAKERS INSIDE  
PLANT SALES OUTSIDE

**GUEST SPEAKERS**

MS. PATRICIA DRACKETT,  
DIRECTOR OF CROSBY ARBORETUM

MS. PAIGE MIZELL,  
VP MIZELL'S CAMELLIA HILL NURSERY

PLANT VENDORS, RAFFLE,  
SILENT AUCTION, & DOOR PRIZES!



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### CREATING POLLINATOR GARDENS THAT THRIVE IN SUMMER HEAT

From selecting heat-tolerant plants to creating rain gardens, join us as Dr. Eddie Smith, MSU Extension Coordinator for Pearl River County and host of Southern Gardening on MPB, explains how to create a garden that will thrive in the Mississippi heat.



Hosted by:  
The Maritime & Seafood Industry Museum  
115 1st Street, Biloxi, MS 39530



**SATURDAY, MAY 4**  
10:00 AM

Tickets \$30 - Brunch included



Guest Speaker: Dr. Eddie M.L. Smith  
Mississippi State University Extension (MSU-ES) County Coordinator/Extension Agent in Pearl River County


Register at [www.maritimemuseum.org](http://www.maritimemuseum.org) or call 228-435-6320

### LAWN MANAGEMENT

#### WHAT HOMEOWNERS SHOULD KNOW


April 30, 2024—1:00 PM

Harrison County Extension Office  
14281 County Farm Rd, Gulfport



In this program, you'll learn how to:

- Develop an easy to understand turf management plan.
- Decrease inputs (water, fertilizer, etc.)
- Clarify differences between turfgrass species and their utility within home lawns.
- Understand cultural practices and required maintenance for each type of grass.
- Be familiar with practical pest management solutions for home lawns.
- Develop home lawn trouble shooting skills.



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