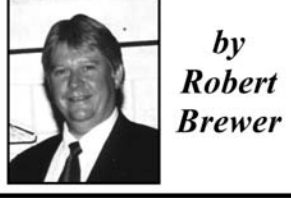


DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Extension Tips



by **Robert Brewer**

Avoid "Top 10 Landscape Mistakes"

Think like a plant. Would you like your feet strapped to a cage, your arms amputated, be buried alive in compost, smothered in mulch or shrubbed? To avoid in some tree, flower and lawn problems, remember this Top 10 list:

1. Don't leave burlap, straps, ropes or wire cages on newly planted tree or shrub root balls. Any material left on the root ball could restrict root growth and create a "pot-bound" root system. Also, remove all stakes, ties or tags to avoid girdling plant stems.

2. As a general rule, it is better not to use soil amendments than to use them incorrectly. Soil amendments or compost should never be backfilled into a planting hole with new trees or shrubs. Soil amendments act like a sponge and either stay too wet or too dry. Extreme changes in soil moisture can cause problems for plant roots. Soil amendments are better used over large planting areas, like vegetable gardens, by thoroughly mixing 2 to 3 inches of compost over several inches deep.

3. Planting trees and shrubs too deep creates long-term irreversible problems. When plants are buried too deep, there is potential for root rot, stem rot, bark cracking and disease. Prior to planting, find and expose the root flare, or where the first set of major roots meets the stem. The root flare should be level with the grade around the planting hole or slightly higher for plants like azaleas that need well-drained roots. A firm foundation of soil under larger trees will ensure they don't settle after planting.

4. Know your plants and their needs. Find out how tall and wide the plant will be and plant it in a spot that allows enough room for it to reach its mature size. Plants placed too close will eventually shade each other out, compete for water and nutrients and diseases will spread more quickly between them.

5. Read and follow the label before using any chemical or pesticide. This rule applies to organic or natural products, too. All chemicals have the potential to cause damage if applied at the wrong rate, time or in the wrong place. Also, follow safety precautions. Make sure your lawn type or plant is listed

on the label. Consider all other alternatives before applying a pesticide.

6. Trees should never be topped. This destroys the branching control and shape. Improper pruning and topping often leads to branches dying and shortens the tree's life. Trees that may need topping are those planted in the wrong place or are growing toward obstacles. Never plant medium or large trees near or under utility lines, awnings or anywhere that will require extensive pruning to keep them from damaging property. Pick the right tree for the right site.

7. Apply the right amount of fertilizer or lime. Applying too much fertilizer is not only a waste of money, but it can potentially burn plants. Excess nutrients can become a source of water pollution. Fertilizer applied at the wrong time can cause major weed and disease problems. A soil test will determine how much lime or fertilizer to apply, if any, and when to apply it. For more information on soil tests, contact your local University of Georgia Cooperative Extension office. Here in Towns County that number is 706-896-2024.

8. More plants are killed in Georgia from too much water than from lack of water. Many root and disease problems are the result of overwatering. As a general rule, established landscape plants and lawns only need 1 inch of rain every 7 to 10 days. If that much rain falls in one week, irrigation should be turned off the following week and not turned back on as long as there is rain in the forecast.

9. Plants don't live forever, and some plants are short lived. Bradford pear trees live 15 to 20 years and they have weak branches. Strong winds can cause them to self-destruct as their branches break. Euonymus shrubs are short lived as they are often infected by powdery mildew and scale insects. Red tip photinias succumb to a major leaf spot disease that kills every leaf in just weeks. Avoid plants that are not recommended for Georgia.

10. Do not apply too much mulch. Mulch is a valuable tool for conserving soil moisture, protecting tree roots and suppressing weeds. Many people apply deep mounds of mulch, or "mulch volcanoes," at the bases of trees. This increases root rot, stem rot, disease and insect problems. Avoid raking leaves or pine needles into piles at the bottom of tree trunks. Never apply more than 2 to 3 inches of mulch around the root zone of trees and shrubs. Go as far as twice the canopy width of trees to protect tree roots, but never go too deep.

The Middle Path

by **Don Perry**

Many times when I sit down to write the weekly column, I begin with a quick scan of the headlines, looking for items of interest. This morning the permanent emergency headlines were characteristically dark and depressing. Drawn in by the drama and sensationalism, I found myself beginning to mirror the dark mood of the media, and as I frequently do when so challenged, I remembered the words of wisdom given to me by two dear friends, so many years ago. I offer those words to any of you this morning that may have turned off the television, shut down the computer or put down the newspaper in dismay, or to anyone who woke up on this Monday morning without remembering that it is a good thing to wake up on a Monday morning.

"Happiness is a choice," the old man said to me as he sat across the table holding hands with his wife of 55 years, "but nobody can tell you how to make it." My wife and her wife were both in their early eighties, vibrant, mischievous and full of life. Grace and Arnold were always on the move; never idle, frequently visiting friends or attending events. Getting them to sit still long enough for an in depth conversation was a rare treat.

I smiled back at them because their mirth and good humor was infectious, but remained silent. Everything that occurred to me to say in response to their declaration was either skeptical or patronizing. Several friends at that time were going through what I perceived as a new-agey, fuzzy positive thinking phase and I was ready to paddle the behind of someone's "inner child." It is easy, I thought, to talk about positive thinking when you're life has been overwhelmingly positive, when you are well to do or when you have been spared the trials and tribulations which most of us must face.

I was about to discover that this sine qua non for a happy life did not apply to my octogenarian friends. Accurately interpreting the skepticism in my silence, they began to relate some of their life story, and it was interwoven with more than their share of tragedy and hardship: the death of a child, the loss of their home and all their possessions in a fire, sickness and financial hardship. Somehow they had discovered a way to transcend the horror and the loss.

"Faith is a key element in making the choice to be happy," Arnie began in response to my skeptical demeanor. "We need to believe that existence has meaning, that we are part of something larger than ourselves. Grace and I are both Christian, but we were never comfortable with the guilt and fear, you know, the 'low hanging fruit' on the tree of life. Whenever I hear fire and brimstone pounded across a pulpit, I want to put my hand on my wallet to make sure it's still there."

"We don't disagree that there are consequences for bad choices or that there will be a reckoning for evil," Grace interjected. "We just feel that this is only part of the story. Christ spoke about heaven a lot more than about hell."

"That's right," Arnie said. "But you can start getting happy way back in Genesis. Most people remember the story of how Adam was charged with giving names to the creatures of the earth, but there is a deeper meaning there. Adam is representative of mankind, and this was the first documented case of mankind exercising free will in giving meaning to the elements of life. We still have that responsibility today."

"But you can't just talk yourself into being happy," I objected. "You can't change a train wreck by calling it an ice cream social!"

"No, it's not as simple as that," Arnie chuckled. "We can't always banish pain and suffering by thinking it or talking it away. But we can re-train ourselves to think differently. Most of us have a constant conversation running inside our heads that comments on everything we experience. 'This is good. This is bad. This is something else. I like this. I don't like that.' We are better off when we can simply experience life without having to label everything, without having to assign value to everything, but when we do assign value, better that it be something, well, 'valuable!'"

"What many people end up with," Grace added, "is a conditional kind of happiness. If this is good and that is bad, the bad starts to pile up in a world that likes to dramatize everything and the good is usually on the other side of that pile, just out of reach. 'I'll be happy when I grow up. I'll be happy when I get married. I'll be happy when this work week is over and the weekend is here.' It's a carrot on a stick



"IT'S ON MY MIND..."
by **Danny H. Parris**

Preparation for Your Appointment

Death is one of those experiences where people have thousands of differing opinions. Studies of various kinds have been made dealing with people in the last days of their lives. Books have been written containing the "last words" of famous people. One little boy was asked what his father's last words were before he died, and he said, "None, my mother was with him to the very end." Books have also been written about people who have had near death experiences and returned. However, in spite of the best information we have, man has contributed very little knowledge to the after death experience. We don't have much data from those who have died except the Bible's revelation about death. Mostly, we deal with the responses of people who lose family, friends and loved ones to death. At the loss of her husband, a crushed wife had engraved on his headstone: "My light has gone out!" A few years later she met and became engaged to a fine man. She said to her minister: "What shall I do about that inscription on the tombstone - have it taken out?" "No," he said, "Just inscribe under it, 'I've struck another match!'" In spite of all the humorous ways that we may deal with death, it is according to most people, the most dreaded, devastating and unwelcomed experience of

life. Is there anything that we can do to get ready for death? Yes, there is. Let me suggest four things that Jesus teaches us from John chapter 11. Jesus tells us about a very loving family that he visited quite often while here on earth. This family consisted of two sisters: Mary and Martha, and one brother, Lazarus. The brother, Lazarus, got sick and died. Jesus had been summoned by the sisters, but when he arrived Lazarus had already been buried. This story teaches us that we need to have an intimate relationship with Christ during life. Jesus was always welcome in this home. He ate at their table and slept in their bed. He was indeed a close friend, companion and counselor to this family. Sad it is that some families have zero thoughts of God until death or tragedy strikes. We should live so closely to Christ that when we lose a loved one He will be the first one on which we call. Jesus wants to be our Friend and Savior in life but He also wants to walk with us in our sorrow. Thirdly, we need understand that death is in God's plan. It is an appointment that all of us must meet. There is nothing more real than death, yet our sinful nature rebels and rejects death as being part of life. This leads to the fourth and final observation about death. Death makes possible a resurrection. Therefore, we are to believe in Jesus for a new life. Jesus said, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this (John 11:25-26)?"



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and we can miss at least half of our lives trying to catch it." Exactly!" Arnie said, "But it's not necessarily easy. The mind is conditioned by years of input from parents, teachers, peers, television; re-training takes time and discipline. You

have to get into the habit, first of being aware of how you are constantly talking to yourself and second, of taking charge of that conversation. In time, the choice to be happy will be easier simply because you have improved the menu."



RARE KIDS; WELL DONE

By **Don Jacobsen**

A couple of columns back I talked about some things parents can do to help their early middle school youngsters change their behavior. Some readers have asked that I tackle the same issue with teens.

When your youngster moves from middle school to high school the game changes. Big time. Parents' role in the life of their kids changes. Mom and dad's goal in the teen years is to prepare Homer and Ermilene to move out into the world on their own, so the strategy moves from management to mentor. We call the process emancipation. It changes how

the game is played.

The teen years are that time in a youngster's life when he/she needs to have the space to begin making more and more of their own decisions. Can you spell s-c-a-r-y? But, if dad and mom continue the same management practices they used in middle school the stage is set for some big-time family tensions. S-time I call it: shout; sulk; swear; sarcasm, and sass. I know, your mid-teens don't, but some do.

So, here are some suggestions for making the transition from having a youngster in your home to a pre-adult. And

let me warn you, it will take some serious and intentional attitude adjustment from mom and dad.

1. Hand off all the decision-making your teen can handle. Re-think how important their dress code really is to you. Re-think whether it's really essential that you like their music choices. Re-think (as in re-negotiate) curfew rules. Don't give away the farm; just help them begin to learn how to manage it.

2. Surprise them with your approval whenever possible. "Honey, we told you we would approve your having a cell phone when you were 16, but you've been doing well in handling responsibility lately so we're going to move that up a year. Happy 15th birthday."

3. When they disappoint you - and they will - be respectful in your reaction. If you could trade places, what would you want your parents to say to you? Something like, "Homer, if you could do that over what would you do differently?" That's a respectful comment and it puts the decision-making back on their shoulders. Kind of like you were talking to a pre-adult, maybe.

GUEST COLUMNS

From time to time, people in the community have a grand slant on an issue that would make a great guest editorial. Those who feel they have an issue of great importance should call our editor and talk with him about the idea. Others have a strong opinion after reading one of the many columns that appear throughout the paper. If so, please write. Please remember that publication of submitted editorials is not guaranteed.

Community Calendar

Towns County Water Board Meeting 3rd Monday of each month at 6 p.m. in the TC Water Office Building.

Mountain Community Seniors meet the second Thursday of each month at the Senior Center in Hiawassee at 2 p.m.

Towns County Democratic Party meets the 3rd Thursday of every month. Please call Kim Bailey at 706-994-2727 or 706-896-6747 for details.

Towns County Republican Party meets the 2nd Thursday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at Daniels Steak House. Dinner at 6 p.m., 706-896-7281.

Towns County Planning Commission is held the 2nd Monday of each month at 7 p.m. in the Courthouse.

Towns County Commissioners meeting is the 3rd Thursday at 5:30 p.m. in the courthouse.

School Board Meeting, 2nd Monday each month at 7 p.m. in the auditorium.

Hiawassee City Council 1st Tuesday of month 4 p.m., at City Hall.

Young Harris City Council, 1st Tuesday of month at 7 p.m., Young Harris City Hall.

The Hiawassee River Valley Kennel Club meetings are held at 7 p.m. the 1st Monday of each month at Brother's Restaurant on Hwy 64 in Murphy, NC. Call President Kit Miracle: 706-492-5253 or Peggy Moorman: 828-835-1082.

The Unicoy Masonic Lodge #259 meets on the 2nd Monday of the month at 7:30 p.m.

Stephens Lodge #414 F & AM meets the 1st Thursday of each month at 7:30 PM in Young Harris.

Board of Voter Registrars meets the 3rd Wednesday of the month at 4:30 p.m., Courthouse.

Towns County Board of Elections holds its monthly meetings on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at 4 p.m. at the Elections Office (Old Rock Jail).

Towns County Historical Society meets the 2nd Monday of each month at the Senior Center in Hiawassee at 5 p.m. Annual dues \$15, PO Box 1182, Hiawassee, GA 706-896-1060, www.townshistory.org

Bridge Players intermediate level meets at 12:45 p.m. on Mondays & Fridays at the Towns County Recreational Dept. Call Eden at 706-896-6921.

Mountain Regional Arts and Crafts Guild, Inc (MRACG) meets the 2nd Tuesday of each month at ArtWorks Artisan Centre, located at 308 Big Sky Drive (behind the Holiday Inn), Hiawassee. Refreshments at 6 p.m. & the meeting begins at 6:30 p.m. Contact us by calling 706-896-0932, mtnregarts-craftsguild.org, mtnregarts-craftsguild@hotmail.com.

VFW Post #7807 Fish Fry will be 2nd and 4th Friday of the month, 4:30-7 p.m., \$9 a plate, all you can eat.

Mountain Computer User Group meets the 2nd Monday of each month at the Goolsby Center at YHC. Q & A at 6 p.m., meeting at 7 p.m.

FPL Retirees Breakfast will meet the 2nd Tuesday of each month at the Hole in the Wall Restaurant on the square in Blairsville at 9 a.m.

Chattahoochee-Nantahala Chapter, Trout Unlimited meets

2nd Thursday of each month at Cadence Bank in Blairsville. 5 p.m. Fly Tying - 7 p.m. General Meeting. Everyone welcome. www.ngatu692.com.

Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) meets the 3rd Monday of each month at various area restaurants. For information call John Quinlan at 706-896-2430 or visit www.moaa.org/chapter/blueridgemountains.

Alcoholics Anonymous: 24-hour phone line 828-837-4440.

Mothers of Preschoolers meets on the third Thursday of each month at First Baptist Church of Blairsville from 6 - 8 p.m. Call the church office at 706-745-2469 for more information.

Chatuge Regional Hospital Auxiliary on the 3rd Monday of each month, except the months of July, October and December, in the hospital cafeteria at 1:30 p.m.

Mountain Magic Table Tennis Club meets 6 p.m. Thursdays at Pine Log Baptist Church Fellowship Hall in Brasstown. Ping Pong players welcome. Call Lee (828) 389-0924.

We do Family Oral History of all of our residents. If you have not had your family history recorded and would like to do so, please call the Towns County Historical Society at 706-896-1060.

Prostate Cancer Support Group meets the 3rd Monday of every month from 5-6 PM in the Cancer Treatment Center Auditorium in Blairsville. For more info call Steve 706-896-1064.

GMREC Native Plant Garden Tours: Mondays 9 AM-1 PM. May-Sept. (except holidays). 706-745-2655.

Towns County Herald

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