

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

# OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

## Letters to The Editor

### What are the

### Good Ole Boys Thinking?

Dear Editor,

How in good conscience could they allow the non-profit 501 (c) (3) corporation to dissolve after volunteer gardeners revived and became stewards of Hamilton Gardens at Lake Chatuge? Does the Georgia Mountain Fair Authority (GMFA) and the Georgia Mountain Fair Board (GMF) understand they cannot afford the labor and costs it will take to maintain this beautiful garden that has been funded the last five years by volunteers and donations? Dissolution is exactly what the GMF, the GMFA, and the Towns County Commissioner are forcing on the Hamilton Gardens at Lake Chatuge (HGLC) Board of Directors at the end of October. The Gardens are unimportant to these Good Old Boys who are looking for more campsite revenue.

Why are Towns County citizens not standing behind this group of individuals who have put in thousands of volunteer hours to bring back what had become a very neglected and overgrown Secret Garden? Those who have visited HGLC are overwhelmed by the scope of the rhododendron collection in this garden that this group has rescued. Over the years HGLC has offered garden tours, Full Moon Concerts, and a wonderful free lecture series on garden-related subjects. It is also a destination wedding venue. This garden has certainly been a highlight of area tourism, all to be lost.

Go to [www.HamiltonGardens.org](http://www.HamiltonGardens.org) for items published in both the Towns County Herald and the Clay County Progress recently concerning this unfair situation and lack of political support.

This designated Botanical Garden overlooking the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds was planted by Hazel and Fred Hamilton in 1981. With TVA permission they planted their rhododendron collection along the banks of Lake Chatuge. The garden contains 400 varieties of hybridized rhododendrons, many propagated by the Hamiltons, and many native plants including a collection of wild azaleas recently donated. The total of 3,000 plants (1,500 rhododendrons) are displayed on well-groomed walking paths throughout. At 20 acres, the property is too small to be protected by a state park designation.

The garden had been given to the citizens of Towns County to be kept in perpetuity for the enjoyment of the community. However, with few stewards for the gardens, over time, it declined. In 2016 concerned citizens reached out to garden clubs and Master Gardeners for help with restoration. Mission accomplished, but now the GMF and the GMFA want to control what happens next. They will not allow the garden's board a proper sublease agreement of the property necessary to raise funds for garden expenses.

The garden's mission is "To restore, preserve, and enhance this public garden for the education and enjoyment for all who visit it." Residents of Towns County should speak up now! President Theodore Roosevelt had the foresight to create National Parks for citizens to enjoy the beauty of Nature. Don't let the short sightedness of Towns County politics to destroy the beauty of The Hamilton Gardens at Lake Chatuge!

Susan Patterson

### Appreciate the Jewel

Dear Editor,

I was so sad to hear that the group that has been tending Hamilton Gardens will no longer be the caretakers of such a beautiful place. I have visited botanical gardens across the United States and internationally. When I stumbled upon this gem in the middle of a small community, I was amazed. It is one of the most beautiful I have ever visited. I don't think Towns County and the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds appreciate the jewel in the mountains that exists here. I know that it appears an agreement cannot be reached, but I hope people of this community and nearby towns will speak up to see if some arrangement can be made. I hate to see this beautiful place become overgrown and unkempt.

Norma Foote

### From a Hole in the Ground

Dear Editor,

In a short time we are all to learn what happens to a garden, healthy and proud, when usurped by an entity which does not know the difference between a hemlock and a hemorrhoid. I won't care about being wrong if the result is right, but doubt heavily prevails.

Dale Harmon

Soon-to-be Former Latrine Queen of Hamilton Gardens at Lake Chatuge

### Who are they?

Dear Editor,

Who are the idiots at NFL headquarters who are instituting a black national anthem at all NFL games? To me, this is a giant insult to all black American citizens. What's next? Are they going to add black toilets and black water fountains to all NFL stadiums? We have one national anthem for all US citizens representing all races, religions, sexes, and financial status. We are "one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all." NFL, stick to football and stop trying to divide our country!

Jim Harrison

### We All Need to Listen about Vaccinations

Dear Editor,

I worked 35 years in the medical field to satisfy my need to help others. Now retired, I still feel that need. We need to come together against a common enemy - the covid19 virus. This is not about politics, about choosing a side. Not about Biden nor Trump. Not about being a democrat nor a republican. It is about the resurgence of the virus mutating into the delta variant. It is 225% more transmissible than the original virus, 60% more than the last variant. It is also believed to be more deadly. In our area, Towns County is highly vulnerable to the virus due to a low 45% vaccination rate. Union county is also rated highly vulnerable due to 40.9% vaccination rate and a 11% positivity rate 7/19/21 (covidactnow.com).

We need to listen now to the science and the scientists, not the politicians and conspiracy theorists. The vaccine is safe and it works! Get educated from the right sources (aamc.org). Vaccinate now! CVS, Walgreens, your health department.

Jim Grazis, CRT, RPSGT



## National Interagency Fire Center

The nation's federal wildland fire community is composed of the Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and USDA Forest Service. These agencies manage wildland fire on nearly 700 million acres of federal public land. National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) is home to the national fire management programs of each federal fire agency, along with partners including the National Association of State Foresters, the U.S. Fire Administration, and the National Weather Service. Working together, these partners provide leadership, policy oversight and coordination to manage the nation's wildland fire programs. Fire management under this larger umbrella is designed to achieve not only suppression goals, but to accomplish a broad spectrum of natural resource objectives.

National interagency coordination is based on a three-tier system of response, including local, geographic area, and national. If an incident grows in complexity, or there are multiple incidents in a local area, it may exhaust the capability of local teams, crews, equipment, and aircraft. Once an incident or multiple incidents exhaust local capability, additional help can be sought at the geographic-area level. The 10 national areas have the capability to quickly mobilize additional crews, aircraft, equipment, and other resources from a broader area within its geographic region. When incident activity increases in size, numbers or complexity to a point it strains the capability of a Geographic Area Coordination Center, the National Interagency Coordination Center (NICC) provides support and assistance by mobilizing response resources across geographic areas and across the nation. The NICC manages the mobilization of everything needed. During severe fire activity, there often is competition for resources and there are only so many air tankers, hotshot crews, engines, and overhead teams. That's where the National Multi-Agency Coordinating (NMAC) group comes in. Comprised of top fire managers for each of the federal and state partner agencies at NIFC (Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Indian Affairs, US Forest Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, US Fire Administration, and National Association of State Foresters), NMAC provides broad oversight for national response efforts and sets priorities among geographic areas regarding mobilization of national resources. NMAC doesn't manage single fires but provides direction over the wide spectrum of wildfire response.

A key component of the NICC is the Predictive Services Division. This group includes weather and fuels professionals who are adept at analyzing data and predicting both weather and fuel conditions that influence wildfire ignitions and the severity and spread of those fires. Through short and long-term products, the Predictive Services personnel provide fire managers critical information to aid in decision-making on a daily, monthly, and seasonal basis. This information allows the fire community to be better prepared for fire activity, including short-term positioning crews, aircraft, and other equipment in areas where wildfire is expected. There are 5 nation wildfire response stages that are dictated by fuel and weather conditions, fire activity, and fire suppression resource availability throughout the country. Each Preparedness Level includes specific management actions and involves increasing levels of interagency resource commitments. As Preparedness Levels rise, so does the need for Incident Management Teams (IMTs) and suppression resources, which include wildland fire crews, engines, helicopters, airtankers and other aircraft, and specialized heavy equipment, such as bulldozers. IMTs are specialized teams of experienced, interagency wildland fire personnel who manage large, complex wildland fire incidents.

Level 1 During this time, fire personnel can suppress wildfires in their respective geographic areas without requesting additional wildland fire resources from other areas Level 2 At this stage, several geographic areas are experiencing high to extreme fire danger, though they are able to manage fire activity without requesting many wildland fire suppression resources from other areas. Level 3 This stage typically involves two or more geographic areas requiring significant amounts of wildland fire suppression resources from other areas. At this point, NICC is moving an increased amount of wildland fire suppression resources around the country. Level 4 This level involves three or more geographic areas experiencing large, complex wildfires requiring IMTs. Geographic areas are competing for wildland fire suppression resources and about 60 percent of the country's IMTs and wildland firefighting personnel are committed to wild-land fire incidents. Level 5 This is the highest level of wildland fire activity. Several geographic areas are experiencing large, complex wildland fire incidents, which have the potential to exhaust national wildland firefighting resources. At least 80 percent of the country's IMTs and wildland firefighting personnel are committed to wildland fire incidents. At this level, all fire-qualified federal employees become available for wild-fire response. As of July 21st, the national Level was 5.

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## Common Vegetable Diseases

It is prime time for the early vegetable harvest for gardeners and farmers alike in North Georgia. If you planted beans, squash, tomatoes, cucumbers, or sweet corn in May, you should expect initial results soon, if you haven't already picked those first ripe beans or crisp ears of corn. However, if you venture out to the garden one cool dewy morning and notice that your plants have not fared as well as you expected, here are a few common ailments that may be causing trouble.

In tomatoes, two of the most common reported ailments are blossom end rot and late tomato blight. Blossom end rot is not actually a disease, rather it is a nutrient deficiency common in tomatoes. It occurs when the tomato fruit does not get enough calcium to aid its growth. The fruit becomes soft at the blossom end, and is then susceptible to a secondary infection, causing loss of the fruit. The best way to fix this problem is to add calcium to the soil, using products like lime or gypsum prior to planting, or by calcium nitrate fertilizer after the problem is noticed. If you have blossom end rot, a soil test before applying fertilizer is a good idea to see how much calcium should be added to the soil.

Late blight will also begin to affect tomatoes this time of year as the growing season is at its warmest. It is caused by the Phytophthora fungus. Signs of late blight are yellowing to brown dead spots on the leaves, stems and fruit of tomatoes. Plants that are treated earlier in the progression of this disease are likely to survive it, although they may not produce as well. The best treatment for late blight is to remove plants that have excessive damage (and be sure to burn them or tie them in a trash bag and throw them away) and spray the rest of them with a fungicide listed for late blight on tomatoes, such as Daconil or Bravo (chlorothalonil is the active ingredient).

On vegetables like squash, cucumbers, zucchini, beans and peas, mildew is a common disease that slows production and makes the plant less healthy. There are two common types in North Georgia: Powdery and Downy mildew. Powdery mildew is identified by large gray-white patches on the upper side of the leaves, whereas downy mildew causes many smaller light green to yellow patches on the leaves. The treatment for both diseases is the same: Remove heavily damaged plants to the burn pile or garbage, and spray with Daconil or Bravo (chlorothalonil is the active ingredient). Before using any pesticide always read the label and follow its instructions fully. The label is the law.

Another problem during extended wet periods of the growing season is root rot. This disease can affect most plants, but there are different groups of fungi that cause it depending on the plant. Common symptoms include an unhealthy-looking plant, combined with gummy, black roots, and a stem that is easily broken from the ground at the base. The reason the infection begins is usually due to excess moisture in the soil, or inadequate drainage of the soil. For the vegetable garden, the most effective way to control it is to prevent it. If you planted something there last year that got it, plant that thing in a drier area of the garden next year. If you use mulch, while it has many benefits, it may be holding too much moisture in the soil. When you water plants, remember to water deeply and less frequently, and let the soil surface become dry for a day or two before watering again.

If you have any questions or concerns related to agriculture, landscape or natural resources, contact your County Extension office or email [Jacob.Williams@uga.edu](mailto:Jacob.Williams@uga.edu).

## Our Veterans Still Volunteering

In our North Georgia mountain region our Veterans from several of our VSOs still volunteer their time and energy to aid in making many worthwhile community projects successful. These events are often held in the summertime, hence hopefully great weather events, you'll recognize most of them. However it's important to be aware that those who work there are often our Veterans and those who volunteer to work with them. Please support them and try to join one or more of our VSOs (Veterans Service Organizations.) Many folks are eligible to join one or more of these organizations alongside some of the best folks in America.

The "Snack Shack" will be serving visitors beginning Saturday August 14th and will be staffed by volunteers from VFW Post 7807, American Legion post 23, as well as Auxiliary members. Other upcoming events include the Georgia Mountain Moonshine Cruz-In from 7/20-7/31 in Blairsville, Georgia Mountain Fair Parade on 8/14 in Hiawassee, Also Mountain Country Christmas in Lights on 11/25- 12/23 in Hiawassee.

These three events already are volunteered for by members of our Marine Corps League Detachment #783. As are all our community events there will be other volunteers from other VSOs and volunteers who support our Veterans and community on hand.

Other upcoming activities will also feature our men and women who've served our great nation in uniform and those who support them, as follows: Georgia Mountain Fair, 8/13-8/21, Hiawassee, Georgia Mountain Fall Fest 10/8-10/16 Hiawassee, Sorghum Festival 10/9-10 and 10/16-17, Blairsville, Appalachian Brew, Stew and Que Festival 10/23 Hiawassee, Third Annual Welcome Home Veterans 10/30 Andrews NC, Farmers Market Veterans Car Show, 11/6 Blairsville.

Do not be surprised to meet Veterans from several different VSOs and all branches of our military at any of these events. You may be asked to join. These are ALL great people and you'd enjoy their fellowship and camaraderie.

Also amongst these outstanding volunteers are our VFW Auxiliary, American Legion Auxiliary, American Legion Riders, Sons of American Legion, Vietnam Veterans Association (VVA) and numerous volunteers.

Take note, these are but a few of the community projects, staffed by many of our local Veterans, as there are many other unmentioned services to our tri-county area which require the willing assistance of those who are willing to give of their time.

Please come and enjoy these opportunities in our wonderful home area here in our North Georgia Mountains and consider joining our VSOs in support of those who've supported and sacrificed so much for America and all of us. We may be getting older and not quite as good as we once were, but we are still very good. -Semper Paratus



Watching and Working  
Jacob Williams

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