

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Smoke Alarms

RC&D
Frank Riley
Executive Director



This is an article that I write every year because it is about something most of us take for granted, but can be the most important appliance we have in our homes and we need a reminder each year to check our smoke alarms and make sure they work. That annoying little twitter that we hear is a reminder that it is time to change smoke alarm batteries, not to dismember them because the noise is annoying. When a smoke alarm detects smoke, it emits a shrill sound that as my granddaddy said, "could wake the dead", which in the case of a house fire is critical so we don't become one of those. Most deaths in house fires are caused by inhalation as it overtakes its victims who never wake up. A smoke alarm can give us a head start so we can survive a house fire. We should have smoke alarms in each bedroom in the house so when a fire starts, and smoke begins to flow along the ceilings we can be alerted to the danger and escape. National estimates of reported fires show that in 2011-2018, fires in homes with no smoke alarms caused an average of 940 deaths per year. An additional 510 people per year were fatally injured in fires in which smoke alarms were present but failed to operate. Power source problems were the leading cause of smoke alarm failures. Hardwired smoke alarms were more likely to operate than those powered solely by batteries. In reported home fires in which the smoke alarms were present but did not operate, almost half of the smoke alarms had missing or disconnected batteries. Nuisance alarms were the leading reason for disconnected smoke alarms. The risk of dying in reported home structure fires is cut in half in homes with working smoke alarms. Half of the home fire deaths resulted from fires reported between 11 p.m. and 7 a.m. when we are usually asleep and not aware of what is going on around us. Statistics show that the percentages of home structure fires and civilian fire deaths reported between 11 p.m. and 7 a.m. were higher for properties with smoke alarms that did not operate or with no smoke alarms than in fires in which smoke alarms operated. Most home smoke alarms use either ionization, photoelectric, or both sensing systems to detect a fire. Alarms designed solely to detect smoke should be replaced every 10 years. Buying, installing, testing, and maintaining home smoke alarms is essential protection from fire, but it is not enough. Many households have not developed the escape plans that would allow them to use the extra warning time smoke alarms provide effectively. Escape plans identify any obstacles to secondary exits if the main door is blocked, a meeting place outside the home for household members to gather and makes provisions for household members who need help. We can "Firewise" the outside of our homes to lower the risk of destruction by a wildfire, but we also need to protect our families on the inside by installing, maintaining, and regularly testing our smoke alarms that are our first-line of defense against fire and smoke while we sleep.

For more information on Smoke Alarms, contact your local Fire Rescue Department or Chetatee-Chattahoochee RC&D at: info.ccrd@gmail.com.

Discernment

The Middle Path
By: Don Perry
onthemiddlepath.com

Sorting through some old files we came across this piece from eleven years ago. It still seems relevant today, and that is more than a little bit sad. At the time this was written, we were on the verge of the worst financial disaster in modern times. The world did not end, and there is more than a little hope in that. Let's go back in time...

We have discussed the hope for freedom and democratic principles that is afforded us by the onset of the Information Age. Never before has information been so widespread or readily available, nor communication so effortless. The gathering of freely available information from the Internet, with discernment, can provide the average person an opportunity to enhance and expand his education in ways that have never been available before.

Discernment is the key to sifting truth from fiction and fact from theory in what can be an overwhelming amount of information. Knowledge is not wisdom, and since the Internet itself offers no resistance (and no guidance) to those seeking information, there is always the risk of confirmation bias. For this reason I try to consult a variety of sources when researching a topic, making sure to include in my research sources that disagree with each other – and equally important, sources with which I disagree. (This process has allowed me on more than one occasion to stumble upon flaws in my own thinking.)

If the question is scientific or technical, there is a wealth of scientific and technical journals available for free or for a nominal charge. With a little bit of extra effort you can sometimes even discover the source of funding behind the research, and this can sweep the truth out of a theory faster than a frying pan sweats the water out of a Wal-Mart rib eye. If the topic is economics, conflicting theories around the question are readily available, along with the political agenda that sometimes drives the "theory." Political questions are anybody's guess, but there are a number of universities working diligently to sift the facts from political speeches and debates.

We know they're lying, but now we can at least discover to what extent. Unfortunately it seems that the speaking of truth is not, for many people, even part of the criteria when judging the worth of a political candidate, but that is a topic for another day.

The effort to seek truth and sift fact from interpretation is not helped by the ongoing corporate consolidation of American media sources, and since everyone with a phone is now a reporter and commentator, competition for our attention is enormous. This drives the trend towards sensationalism. Media knows from experience that we will gravitate towards what is sensational, tragic, dire and imminent. Even local television stations are not immune, and in order to provide their own corporations with the most advertising dollars they will spend the day collecting the worst news they can possibly find, knowing full well that many of us would prefer to hear about someone gunned down in the street rather than a healthy baby born on the same day.

The point is this: We have a choice if we will simply exercise it. We can choose a healthier diet of information beyond the nightly shooting report and beyond just the opinions with which we already agree. One of the effects of the trend towards sensationalism is that many Americans are of the opinion that the future of the world is dismal, that civilization is a fell beast slouching towards Armageddon, that if global warming doesn't get us, terrorists or stray asteroids will.

Certainly we have problems of great concern and certainly the world has pockets of deep and long lasting misery, but the facts – if we take the trouble to gather them – would indicate that on any given day the world is not nearly the horrible mess that we sometimes think it is.

If you would seek information that can bring hope, you have made a good beginning with the hometown newspaper that you now hold.

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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.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR SHOULD BE EMAILED OR MAILED TO: Towns County Herald, Letter to the Editor, PO Box 365, Hiawassee, GA 30546. Our email address: tcherald@windstream.net. Letters should be limited to 200 words or less, signed, dated and include a phone number for verification purposes. This paper reserves the right to edit letters to conform with Editorial page policy or refuse to print letters deemed pointless, potentially defamatory or in poor taste. Letters should address issues of general interest, such as politics, the community, environment, school issues, etc. Letters opposing the views of previous comments are welcomed; however, letters cannot be directed at, nor name or ridicule previous writers. Letters that recognize good deeds of others will be considered for publication.*

Note: All letters must be signed, and contain the first and last name and phone number for verification.

Green in Winter

UGA extension
Watching and Working
Jacob Williams



Most of the landscape around is brown or is turning that way. Some weeds are coming up since we have cooler weather that make the ground dotted with green. Let's talk about these weeds and how to identify them. We'll also discuss different ways to control them.

Henbit, common chickweed, and speedwell are all annual weeds. The issue with winter weeds is that they can slow down the growth of desirable plants in the spring. The winter weeds are bigger and stronger than other low growing plants early in the spring. This size advantage means they shade desirable plants around them and use the nutrients that are in the soil. This can lead to difficulties with summer weeds, because the winter annuals reduce the competitiveness of your desirable plants.

Henbit is a weed that is in the mint family, Lamiaceae. You can easily tell the mint family because the plants have opposite leaves and a four-sided stem. If you roll the stem between your fingers, you can feel the ridges on each side. The leaves for henbit attach directly to the stem. It has small pinkish-purple flowers at the top of the plant that are in a tube shape.

Common chickweed is another plant that has opposite leaves. Chickweed has small white flowers and is in the Caryophyllaceae family, commonly called the carnation family. It usually grows about 3-6 inches tall. The seeds from chickweed can remain viable for up to 10 years. There are a couple of different species of chickweed out there. Mouseear chickweed has hairy leaves and stems.

Speedwell is a clumping plant that has very small bluish-purple flowers. It grows in patches up to one foot tall. The upper leaves on speedwell are narrow, while the lower leaves are more rounded. It is in the Scrophulariaceae family, which is also the family that has weedy plantains. There are several different species of speedwell, but they all have the same general characteristics.

When controlling weeds it's best to start by looking at your site. Knowing the pH and nutrients that are in your soil by taking a soil test through your local extension office is a good place to start. Then think about the drainage of your site. Sloped sites will drain more quickly. Does the soil need mulch to maintain soil moisture and add organic matter? If your site is in good condition and properly cared for and you are still having weed issues, then it might be time to start thinking about using an herbicide to control weeds.

It's best to control annual weeds early on with a pre-emergent herbicide. A pre-emergent herbicide is put down before weeds begin popping up. Post-emergent herbicides are used once the plant is already present and growing. Post-emergent herbicides can be effective if used when problems are noticed early. They become less effective as weeds grow in size. Pre-emergent herbicides containing the active ingredient benefin will be effective on henbit, chickweed, and speedwell. Benefin can be applied on established fescue and zoysiagrass lawns. Post-emergent herbicides containing 2,4-D + MCPP + dicamba can be sprayed on established fescue and zoysiagrass lawns as well. Whenever you apply an herbicide, make sure to read and follow the label before making the application.

If you have questions about winter weeds and how to control them contact your local Extension Office or send me an email at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu

Letters to The Editor

Carbon Tax Scam

Dear Editor,
Our resident climate change alarmist is correct when he states that the carbon dividend plan "still causes controversy." Instead, of all the bad ideas on energy, a carbon tax takes the cake. It includes big government, big deception, job losses, and big taxes on all of us. Its a tax on carbon producers like oil refineries, coal mines, oil and gas production. According to the advocates of this bad idea, these taxes would flow to the government and then the feds would give the money to you. What could possibly go wrong? Since energy is a part of everything we do, in a word, everything. The reality is when the carbon producers are taxed, the cost is passed on to the consumer and everything will get more expensive. Of course, the government assures us that the tax on the carbon producer will be returned to us in the form of a rebate check. But why does the government make me pay more for everything so the government can maybe give some back later? Well, they say, this is what the government must do to fight climate change. The idea is that if fossil fuels cost more then we as consumers will buy less of it. But thats not entirely true. Rich people who pay more for energy will continue to do so. But those people who are the poorest among us and pay more of their income on energy will suffer the most. But the government tells us that the poor will get more of their money back through the rebate. Well, then this looks like another wealth redistribution scheme. And of course, if manufacturers are being taxed more, then they will be tempted to move to other countries and job losses will result. A recent study entitled "Economic Outcomes of a U.S. Carbon Tax" found that a carbon tax would destroy 4-20 million American jobs. So it is imperative that we all do our homework before jumping on the carbon tax bandwagon.

Tim Groza

I'm From the Government.....

Dear Editor,
Let us recall the wisdom imparted on us by Ronald Reagan when he quipped that the 9 most terrifying words in the English language are: "I'm from the government and I'm here to help!"
I think it would be wise for us all to consider this gem of a quote when the climate change alarmists propose that the Federal Government institute a tax on the production and thus consumption of carbon based products. This tax, purported to discourage the use of carbon based energy and all related products which are based on that "miraculous carbon atom", while redistributing funds to the poor and middle class is a complete farce to say the least! Just think of the new government bureaucracy that gets to decide how and when to tax our consumption of propane, natural gas, gasoline, jet fuel, and yes even electricity (which is primarily generated from the burning of fossil fuels)! Everyday items such as plastics, textiles, dyes, cosmetics, detergents, building materials, and even cell phones are carbon based.
Of course, the overall motivation of a carbon tax is to eliminate these products and services all together! The very thought that we will change the weather by the discontinuation of these products is sheer arrogance! I for one do not want any more government interference in our lives; we need to let our representatives in Washington know that a proposed government expansion, all in the name of a "climate emergency" is an unacceptable infringement on our very freedoms!..... "I'm from the government and I'm here to help!"

Kevin P. Cannon



Towns County Community Calendar

	Every Monday:	
Bridge Players	All Saints Lutheran	12:30 pm
Free GED prep.	Old Rec. Center	4 pm
Alcoholics Anon.	Sharp UMC (Men)	7 pm
	Every Wednesday:	
Alcoholics Anon.	Hiawassee UMC	Noon
SMART Recovery	Red Cross Building	7 pm
	Every Thursday:	
Bridge Players	All Saints Lutheran	12:30 pm
Free GED prep.	Old Rec. Center	4 pm
	Every Friday:	
Movers & Shakers	Sundance Grill	8 am
Alcoholics Anon.	Red Cross Building	7 pm
	Every Sunday:	
Alcoholics Anon.	Red Cross Building	7 pm
	First Tuesday of each month:	
Alzheimer's Supp.	McConnell Church	1:30 pm
American Legion	VFW Post 7807	4 pm
Hiaw. City Council	City Hall	6 pm
Young Harris Coun.	YH City Hall	7 pm
	First Wednesday of each month:	
Quilting Bee	McConnell Church	10 am
	First Thursday of each month:	
Stephens Lodge	Lodge Hall	7:30 pm
	Second Monday of each month:	
Chamber Board	1411 Jack Dayton Cir.	8 am
VFW	VFW Post	5 pm
Historical Society	Hist. Soc. Bldg.	6 pm
School Board	Auditorium	7 pm
Unicoy Masonic	Lodge Hall	7:30 pm

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