

A scenic view of a tree-lined path. The path is paved and runs through a lush green area with large, mature trees on both sides. To the right of the path, there are vibrant pink flowering bushes. In the background, a road with cars and streetlights is visible. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and well-maintained.

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The wonder of wildflower

By Vicki Brown

Even though it is June, it is not too late to plant wildflowers. Wildflowers native to the southeast are beautiful, hardy, and usually, drought resistant. They adapt perfectly to weather conditions, are perfect pollinators and require less maintenance. But there are a few instructions that need to be followed to correctly plant and maintain wildflowers in your garden or field.

Choose a site with at least 6 hours of sun. Prepare your soil by removing grass, weeds, and debris. Wildflowers, when first planted, will need less competition for water and soil nutrients. Wildflowers do not need fertilizer to grow because they adapt well to poor soil. But good drainage is necessary; no standing water after rain.

Watch the weather before scattering seeds. You need to choose a string of several sunny, windless days to plant. You will also need a location within reach of the water hose.

Mix one part seed with 8 parts dry sand. Then scatter evenly on the soil. More seeds do not always mean more blooms. Be sure to use the correct amount listed on the package.

Do not bury or cover wildflower seeds. For small areas, simply walk over the seeds and let them lightly

sink into the dirt. For larger gardens or fields, you can use a roller. You can even place a layer of cardboard over the seeds and walk on it to evenly distribute your weight on the soil.

Wildflowers need sunlight. If you want to protect the seeds from wildlife, lightly cover with straw so the sun can still shine through. You can also purchase “Deer Off”, a deer repellent, and plant deer resistant wildflower seeds. Some of those are:

- Achillea millefolium (White Yarrow)
- Coreopsis tinctoria (Plains Coreopsis)
- Digitalis purpurea (Foxglove)
- Eschscholzia californica (California Poppy)
- Gaillardia aristata (Blanket Flower)
- Lobularia maritima (Sweet Alyssum)
- Lupinus perennis (Perennial Lupine)
- Lupinus succulentus (Arroyo Lupine)
- Lupinus densiflorus (Golden Lupine)
- Papaver rhoeas (Red Poppy)
- Rudbeckia hirta (Gloriosa Daisy)
- Salvia coccinea (Scarlet Sage)
- Salvia farinacea (Blue Sage)
- Zinnia

Lightly water your seeds until the seedlings are 4 inches tall. Keep soil moist.

These flowers should bloom late summer and into early fall.

LOWCOUNTRY LIVING | 2022

Tired of watering during the summer? Try Xeriscaping

By Vicki Brown

Two of the banes of living in the Lowcountry are the extreme heat and summer drought.

As the summer progresses, many of us grow weary with having to consistently water our gardens or pay a higher water bill for the irrigation required to keep our ornamentals attractive.

For those of us who are tired of being tied to our gardens, perhaps Xeriscaping is the answer.

Xeriscaping, which sounds like “sarah scaping,” is landscaping in an area which requires little or no irrigation. The idea is to create a beautiful landscape while conserving water resources.

This includes utilizing drought tolerant plants, boulders, white rocks, gravel or attractive stones.

Most people will develop an ornamental garden by using plants as the focal point. Then they will surround the plants with mulch or pea gravel. With xeriscaping, you can actually use differently colored and sized rocks as your focal point, and accent with drought resistant ornamentals.

How to Xeriscape

For anyone planning to xeriscape, there are certain preparations needed prior to installing drought tolerant

plants.

First, choose a sunny, well-drained location for your garden. Then clear the area. If you use a rain barrel or other water conservation alternative, make sure your garden will have access to water.

Next, look for drought resistant plants that appeal to you. You can find drought tolerant plants and shrubs in reds, yellows, greens, purples and many other colors. Try using native grasses as well. Some of the best drought resistant plants are:

Switchgrass, Indiangrass, Eastern gamagrass, Big bluestem, Little bluestem, Coneflower, Catmint, Agastache, Lantana, Salvia, Lavender, Russian Sage, California Poppy, Artemisia, Rosemary, Yarrow, Sage and Creeping Thyme.

Once you have chosen your favorites, draw out a diagram of your future garden and where you will place each plant. You can outline a rock garden with the plants or intersperse them throughout the garden.

Next, learn soil requirements for your plants and then prepare your soil. Put down landscaping weed cloth over the surface of the soil, making holes for your plants. This will limit the number of weeds cropping up and ruining the landscape. Add your plants, then mulch.

Last, add your landscaping rocks. They are just as visually appealing as plants and never need watering!



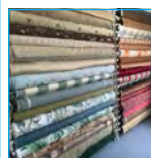
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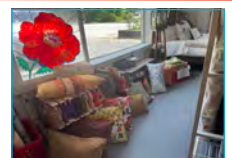
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Rizer's Pork and Produce supplies Colleton with great food

By Vicki Brown

Whether it is catering, a meal, meat, or fresh veggies, Rizer's Pork and Produce has what everyone needs.

Phillip Rizer and his brother, Marion, both share ownership of Rizer's Pork and Produce. Their father, I.N. Rizer, started the farm in 1951, and the brothers began taking over the family business in 1975, farming produce and raising hogs.

Their empire, on Highway 641 in Lodge, now includes several businesses and a restaurant that has been open for 21 years. Marion manages the farm and Phillip oversees the farm-to-table restaurant.

The farm produces row vegetables, corn, and small grains, and the restaurant serves fresh, home-grown food. The farm recently sold string beans, sweet corn, and is expecting butterbeans and peas in the next few weeks.

"At the restaurant, we raise hogs and process our animals and sell the meat from the store," said Phillip. All of their produce, no matter the season, is sold fresh in their restaurant/retail space.

Phillip believes the business is successful because of the quality of the vegetables and meat sold. "We're not opening

a can of beans and putting it on a buffet," he said.

The farm surrounds the restaurant, so patrons can actually see the produce that is served there.

"Everything we serve in the restaurant is fresh from our farm and from our animals. We make our own sausage, and we have several varieties of that. We cook anything dealing with pork, from cracklings to pork chops to ribs and hams."

One of the most popular times at the farm from January through August is on the second and fourth Saturday night of every month when steaks are served, along with pork chops and fried shrimp. The meat is fried or grilled and served with a baked potato or fries and two veggies. The food is fresh, well prepared, and delicious. Besides steak night, the restaurant is also known for its lunch buffet, sweet tea, and friendly people.

With so much success in their store and restaurant, the brothers ventured out into the catering business, and now serve clients from across the entire Lowcountry. A presence on social media has helped the business grow.

It's worth the drive to eat and stock up on meat and produce at Rizer's.

Phillip said it all when he stated, "It's a good life in the country."

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Bees need our gardens, and our gardens need bees

By Vicki Brown

Bees are invaluable to humans, and most people are unaware of just how important they are.

According to Marion Barnes, agent for Clemson Extension, honey bees are beneficial pollinators that support agriculture and native plant communities. It's estimated that honeybees pollinate 75 to 85 percent of all food crops.

Bees pollinate agricultural plants such as apples, watermelon, melons, squash, broccoli, cabbage, and blueberries, just to name a few of the over 45 varieties of vegetables and fruits that depend on bees. If the blooms are not pollinated, the plant will not produce at all, or will produce damaged fruit. Almonds won't grow at all without pollination from bees.

Creating a garden that attracts bees is one way to help the environment and care for the honey bees. With honey bee populations decreasing, more effort by gardeners is needed to keep them healthy and thriving, to pollinate agriculture, and produce honey. To make one pound of honey, a hive of bees must travel over 55,000 miles and visit two million flowers.

Homes and Gardens author Holly Reaney knows a lot about bees and what they need. "Something to note when adding flowers that attract bees to your yard is that you need flowers that produce both a lot of nectar and pollen. Unlike when planting to attract butterflies, you'll need flowers that produce both pollen and nectar, which bees need – the first offers a source of protein and the latter, a source of sugar. It is also important to ensure that you have a wide variety of flowers to attract as many different bee species as possible," Reaney said.

Bees are particularly attracted to bee balm, echinacea, snap-dragon, and hostas, as well as a number of other wildflowers like California poppies and evening primrose. They are especially drawn to flowers with strong odors like gardenias, lilies and phlox.

Charlyne Mattox, Food and Crafts Director for 'Country Living' magazine, also gives good advice for attracting

bees. "Fun fact: Did you know that bees have excellent color vision? For this reason, they flock to yellow, purple, blue, and white flowers. It's best to avoid eucalyptus, ferns, and lemongrass, and skip toxic pesticides and herbicides that can be harmful to bees. Instead, choose bee-friendly organic fertilizers," said Mattox.

For attracting bees in the early winter, plant mahonia. This is a slow-growing shrub with yellow flowers enjoyed by bees. For late winter, plant hellebores. They bloom from late winter to early spring. This evergreen perennial is disliked by deer and most pests. All parts of the hellebore plant are poisonous, so take care to keep children and pets away.

In the Lowcountry, bees flock to magnolia blossoms year-round, as well as Camellias, which are a valuable source of nectar and food for bees and all other pollinators.

Primroses and bulb flowers like snowdrops and crocuses through to daffodils and tulips, are good spring flowers and are loved by bees and all pollinators. They are easy to grow and resistant to pests. For the summer, foxgloves are a good choice and come in a range of colors. Carefully read up on growing foxgloves because of the many different varieties of annuals and perennials.

Sunflowers and dahlias make beautiful autumn flowers for pollinating, but collarette dahlias have open centers that make it easy for bees to pollinate.

"Unlike flowers like dahlias and roses, sunflowers have an interesting secret. A single sunflower is not actually one flower, but hundreds. Hundreds of mini flowers housed in one super-structure that we know as the sunflower," explains Ashely Densham from the University of Melbourne. "As a result, from a single sunflower, you are offering bees a world of nectar and pollen. This makes sunflowers one of the most cost and space-efficient ways to attract and feed bees."

Dicentra is a bee favorite and grows well in gardens with lots of shade. Lavender not only looks beautiful and is a flower that attracts bees, but it also has wonderfully scented blooms, and Hylotelephium are drought-resistant plants are extremely hardy and draw bees to the tiny flowers.





Make a patriotic DIY Rag wreath

By Vicki Brown

June and July are patriotic months for the U.S.A. with Flag Day on June 14, and the Fourth of July just around the corner.

So with red, white, and blue on the brain, now is the perfect time to make a patriotic summer wreath.

This has to be one of the easiest wreaths to make. The instructions are simple, the pieces are easy to find and inexpensive, and it doesn't take a lot of time.

Mix up patriotic patterns for your wreath to make it pop.

Here are the materials you will need:

A foam or wire wreath or embroidery hoop.

Red, white, and blue fabric cut into 4-5 inch strips. If using a foam wreath, you will need to make the strips 7-8

inches long. You can also use ribbons. You will need about 22-25 yards.

Scissors

Optional- 2 inch wooden stars painted white, glue gun, glue sticks.

With those materials, you are ready to begin.

Cut your fabric or ribbon into 4-5 inch strips.

Wrap the fabric or ribbon around the wreath and tie into knots facing the front.

Push the strips close together tightly.

If you want to affix stars, hot glue them on the knots of the fabric near the top, and about 3 inches apart.

That's it!

This is a quick, fun, and easy wreath to make. This also makes a great craft idea for kids.

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Does My Garden Need Lime?

Courtesy of Marion Barnes, Senior County Extension Agent with Clemson University.

Does my garden need lime? If you live in the southern part of the state, the answer is most likely maybe! This is because our southern flat woods soils are characteristically acidic, low in organic matter and have low nutrient holding capacities. Over time our soils become acidic because calcium and magnesium are leached from the soil by rainfall. The decomposition of plant residues and organic matter and the addition of certain types of nitrogen fertilizers such as ammonium sulfate and animal manures also increase soil acidity. As a general rule, in order to produce healthy, high-quality plants most soils require liming every few years.

What is lime?

Agricultural lime is a soil amendment made from ground limestone rock that contains calcium and/ or magnesium that is capable of neutralizing soil acidity. Agricultural lime can be either calcitic or dolomitic. Calcitic limestone is a naturally occurring rock that is comprised primarily of calcium carbonate. Dolomitic limestone is also a naturally occurring rock that is composed of primarily calcium-magnesium carbonate. Lime comes in several forms, finely ground or pelletized, being the two most common types used by homeowners. The finer the grind of limestone the faster it will react and change the acidity of the soil.

What does lime do?

In addition to supplying calcium and/ or magnesium, lime makes the soil less acidic. Plants develop healthier root systems because they are exposed to less potentially toxic aluminum in the soil. Plants with aluminum toxicity may also experience calcium or magnesium deficiencies. Nutrient availability is improved so plants have a better nutrient supply. The optimum soil pH for most garden plants is 5.8 to 6.5. Nodulation of legumes is enhanced, which improves nitrogen fixation.

How long will it take lime to react and how long will it last?

Lime will react completely with the soil in two to three years after it has been applied: although the benefits of the lime may occur within the first few months after application. How long the effects of the lime will last will depend on the type of lime used, total acidity of the soil, amount of organic matter, type and amount of clay in the soil and type and amount of fertilizers used.

How can I tell if my soil needs lime?

The only accurate way to determine if your soil needs

lime is to have it tested. Soil test kits can be purchased through garden stores or online, but they are not as accurate as having your soil analyzed at an accredited soil testing laboratory and may not tell you how much lime you need. The Clemson University Ag Service Laboratory will test your soil for a nominal fee and send you the results. Each soil test provides unbiased scientific information on soil pH value, current soil levels of phosphorus, potassium, calcium, magnesium, zinc, copper, and boron. Fertilizer and lime recommendations, if needed are also provided for the plants you are growing.

Should lime be worked into the soil or placed on the surface?

Whenever possible, tillage should be used as the tool to incorporate lime into the soil. When lime is worked into the soil a larger portion of its surface area is exposed to the soil allowing for faster reactivity. Surface applied lime moves into the soil at a slower rate.

For more information of liming your soils contact your local Clemson Extension Service office at 843-549-2595.

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Moving up with a Vertical garden

By Vicki Brown

Simple vertical gardens can be a back saver as well as a space saver.

If you don't have a lot of yard space or if you need a garden close to a water source, try a vertical garden. They are incredibly simple.

The only materials you need are a wooden pallet, six-inch flower pot rings, hammer and nails (or screws and drill), six-inch pots, soil, and plants.

First, find a pallet. Many shipping companies actually give these away and are happy to be rid of them. Call around and find one.

Next, attach the flower pot rings to the pallet. The rings should be staggered on the slats, and not directly on top of each other.

Fill your pots with soil and plants.

Most people just lean their wooden pallet against the house or fence. After you do this, place your flower pots into the rings, and you are finished.

There is another vertical pallet garden that also requires very little effort. To make this garden, you will need a pallet, landscaping weed block material, staple gun, and staples. To make this garden, staple landscaping material in between the front and back slats of the pallet, leaving the material very loose to form deep pockets. Fill with dirt and plants. See the related picture as reference.

Here are a few things to consider, though.

Choose plants that will not have deep roots. Usually, herbs or flowers are the best bet for this type of garden.

You can leave the wooden pallet in its original condition, or you can stain the wood. Some folks even paint the slats different colors for a colorful addition to the garden. Another idea is to label the herbs by painting the names above the pots on the pallet.

Whatever you do, you can make a quick, easy vertical garden for very little money and effort.



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One planter can hold a vegetable garden

By VICKI BROWN

The word “vegetable garden” brings to mind rows upon rows of vegetables in mounds of healthy soil in the ground. But it doesn’t have to be that way.

You can actually plant all of your favorite vegetables in one large container. This is so handy for people who have a lack of space in their yards or don’t want to spend a lot of time caring for an acre of veggies. It is also less work and maintenance.

Vegetables that are ideally suited for growing in containers include peppers, eggplant, tomatoes, green onions, pole beans, lettuce, squash, radishes, parsley, herbs and cucumbers.

How can all of this fit in one container? Easily, by going upward.

First, choose a large container, a size that corresponds with the number of vegetables you want to plant. Some gardeners are using galvanized feeding troughs or extra large buckets. If you use these, you must drill holes near the bottom for drainage. Many companies now have large size fabric containers they call Grow Bags or Geo Grow

Bags. These are made out of breathable felt fabric or canvas and are not expensive. They are lightweight and easy to transport and fill with dirt. A few of these products can even hold over 100 gallons.

Next, add soil and plant pole beans, tomatoes, and any other vine vegetable in the center. Install stakes around those plants and loosely tie them. Around those, plant other vegetables according to the height the plant will reach and their need for sunlight. Plants that grow low to the ground need to be near the edge of the container. Squash and cucumbers also need to be near the edge due to the sprawl of the plant.

A few hints:

Tomatoes: pinch off all lower leaves from tomato plants before planting and settle in soil up to the top few stems.

Peas: pinch off their tips down to the first leaves when they reach about 4 to 8 inches to make them grow bushier.

Layering: Potatoes get going once the radishes are ready for harvesting. Plant beans, and when they start climbing up a stake, sow some leaf lettuce under. The lettuce will appreciate protection from the sun as it gets hotter.



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Okra, the most versatile vegetable in the Lowcountry

Courtesy of Marion Barnes, Senior County Extension Agent, with Clemson University

I've found people either like okra or hate it. You can fry it, grill it, pickle it, stew or steam it. Those who like it have their favorite way of cooking and eating okra. This versatile vegetable can be used as an appetizer, a side or main dish and is a staple at the dinner table, as well as in the home garden. The immature pods are the edible part of the plant and mature pods can be dried and used in flower arrangements. This warm season vegetable, which originated in Africa, is a member of the Mallow family, which includes cotton and hibiscus.

Sites and soil

Okra can be planted on a wide range of soil types, but grows best on well-drained sandy soils, high in organic matter. For greatest productivity, plant in full sun and align rows east/west to capture maximum sunlight. Optimum temperatures for seed germination are between 70 and 95 degrees Fahrenheit. If soil temperatures are less than 65 degrees at the 4-inch depth, planting should be delayed

until the soil warms up, as cool soils lead to slowed growth and disease.

Planting & recommended varieties

Okra can be direct seeded in rows 3 to 6 feet apart. Many gardeners soak their seed in water for several hours or overnight before planting to enhance germination. Sow seed 3/4 to 1 inch deep and 4 to 6 inches apart in the row. When seedlings are several inches tall, thin the row so that remaining plants are 16 to 24 inches apart to reduce competition between plants. Spring planting dates for coastal areas of the state are April 1 through June 30 with fall seeding dates August 1 through August 30. Several different varieties (cultivars) are available to home gardeners and differ in plant size and fruiting characteristics. Some popular varieties include, Clemson Spineless 80, Lee, Annie Oakley, Cajun Delight, Choppee (from the Clemson Heirloom collection), and Burgundy.

Fertilization

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fertilization requirements of any crop. Information on soil testing is available in the Home Gardening Information Center publication,

HGIC 1652, Soil Testing or at: <https://hgic.clemson.edu/factsheet/soil-testing/> . Okra plants have a sensitive balance between vegetation (leaf production) and reproduction (pod production). Nitrogen applications should be managed on vigorous stands to ensure the proper balance between vegetative growth and pod production occurs. Nitrogen applications will depend on rainfall and how long the okra is expected to produce.

Watering

Okra can tolerate dry conditions; however, during extended dry periods, watering may be necessary. Pod set and pod development are critical periods of development, and plants need adequate moisture during these growth stages. Soaker hoses or drip irrigation works well and should be used to provide supplemental moisture during dry periods. These methods of irrigation keep foliage dry, and target application areas, therefore conserving water.

Weed control

Okra is harvested over a long period of time and season long weed control is important, especially in the seedling stage. When mechanical cultivation is required it should be done shallow and only as often as necessary to control weeds. Organic mulches can be employed to control weeds, as well as conserve moisture.

Ratooning

Okra production often slows during the middle of the summer, especially during hot dry weather. If harvest tapers off and flowering ceases, home gardeners may try ratooning spring planted okra. Ratooning in the process of cutting the stem back (usually around mid-July or early August) causing the plant to put out new growth and produce another crop into the fall. Prune okra 6 to 12 inches above the soil line and add a fertilizer containing a 1 to 2

ratio of nitrogen to potassium to stimulate new growth and flowering.

Insects and diseases

Like all vegetable crops grown in the south, okra is not without its pests' problems. Seedling diseases are most prevalent when the crop is planted in cool wet soils. Southern stem blight and wilt are diseases that sometimes affect okra. Root-knot nematodes (small microscopic worms that live in the soil) can be a major problem, especially on sandy soils. Nematodes damage roots and cause yellowing, stunting and loss of production. If you suspect a nematode infestation, check the roots of unhealthy plants for galling. With no chemical control methods for nematode infestations available, home gardeners must rely on crop rotation, sanitation and removal of infected plants as a means of nematode control. Check out Clemson's Home and Garden Information Centers publication HGIC 2216, Root-Knot Nematodes in the Home Garden or at: <https://hgic.clemson.edu/factsheet/root-knot-nematodes-in-the-vegetable-garden/> . Aphids, corn earworms, stinkbugs and leaf footed bugs can also be a problem during the growing season. Aphids feed on the sap of the okra plant and often attract ants. Corn earworms feed on pods, and stinkbugs and leaf footed bugs cause distorted and twisted pods.

Harvest

Okra should be ready to harvest approximately 60 to 70 days after planting when pods are 2 to 3 inches long and still tender. Larger okra pods tend to more fibrous and tough. Due to the fast growth of the okra plant, pods should be harvested at least every 2 days. Allowing pods to mature on the plant will reduce total productivity by inhibiting new pod development.

For more information on growing okra in the home garden, checkout HGIC Factsheet 1313, Okra at: <https://hgic.clemson.edu/factsheet/okra/> or contact your local Clemson Extension Service Office.



Let's have a Patio Party!

By Vicki Brown

Having a patio party can be a lot of fun...but it can also be a lot of work!

Here is a way to make things easier and give you something to think about before you plan your party.

Invite and inform

Whether you invite people online, by text or actually send out invitations, you need to give important information. Keep invitations simple with a small amount of text and let guests know the date, time, address, purpose, what to wear and what to bring, like lawn chairs. Make it clear whether you will be serving either a full dinner or a small BBQ with finger foods. Also mention any outdoor games or activities that will be available to give your guests an idea what to wear. Also, make it easy for guests to RSVP quickly.

Plan your menu

It's fun to plan a themed party. It can have a Mexican, Hawaiian, or even a downhome BBQ theme. The more elaborate, the more work you have to put into it. If you keep the party simple, it will not be as stressful and will leave you more time to enjoy friends. You can always hire a caterer to do the cooking for you, but you will have to plan several months in advance. Another idea is a potluck patio party; have each friend each bring a dish for your themed party and vote on the favorite.

Think about decorations

Coordinate your decorations with the food you plan to serve. From matching plates, tableware and napkins to something a little more elaborate like Chinese lanterns, Mexican pinatas, Hawaiian luau and tiki torch décor or checkered tablecloths and mason jars with iced tea for BBQs, decorations can be fun and make the party more festive.

Make your patio guest ready

Declutter the area and clear pathways of debris. Cut grass and clean the grill if you plan on using it. Put fresh mulch down, and invest in an outdoor rug. If you have unsightly areas or equipment that needs to be hidden, purchase a few rolls of bamboo fencing that can be temporary and a quick fix. Make sure you have enough seating for everyone, which can include having guests bring their own lawn chairs, to stacking wooden pallets and covering the surface with pillows or heavy quilts. It would also be worth the money to invest in citronella torches or candles and mosquito repellent wipes.

To make your patio even more attractive, add potted plants. If you want those plants to serve a purpose other than to be visually pleasing, use plants that repel mosquitoes. Those plants are:

Citronella Grass

The citronella candles on your patio are made with the oil that comes from this plant and repels mosquitoes. Some people add the grass in centerpieces on the patio.

Rosemary

This herb adds flavor to your dishes, but it also keeps bugs away. It likes to be dry, and mosquitoes can't stand it.

Petunias

These flowers are also known as "nature's pesticide," because they repel aphids, tomato hornworms, asparagus beetles, leafhoppers, and squash bugs.

Lavender

Lavender smells wonderful to us but it deters mosquitoes. This is a good plant for the patio because it likes to be hot and dry.

Nasturtium

This plant repels whiteflies, squash bugs, aphids, several beetles, and cabbage loopers. It produces an airborne chemical that repels insects.

Lemongrass

Lemongrass is closely related to citronella and repels mosquitoes, but it's edible and can grow three to five feet tall. It would make a nice taller hedge near the house.

Basil

This annual herb and repels houseflies and mosquitoes, but its soil needs to stay moist and well-drained.

Mint

Mint can be used in dishes and cocktails, but it is also a perennial that repels mosquitoes.

Party favors can raise the bar

If you are hosting a casual gathering of family and friends, party favors are not a big deal. But they can add to the décor and be fun for guests to take home. They can be simple, like tiny jars filled with candy or leis and grass skirts for a luau.

Play a game

For guest who just can't sit still and chat, or those who are obviously uncomfortable at a small party, have a few lawn games available for entertainment like a pinata or corn hole. Keep the music low, too, for easy conversation.

Cocktails (or mocktails) make a splash

You can find a great refreshing cocktail online, or create one yourself. Plan on a cocktail that can be made in large batches before the party so no one will be stuck making drinks all night. Make alcoholic and non-alcoholic versions to accommodate all of your guests. But in the summer, nothing is better than sangria with fruit.

Here is a basic sangria recipe:

1 bottle of red wine

1 cup of orange juice

4 shots of brandy or rum

Fruit (like oranges, limes, and pineapples) chopped into chunks

Sugar to taste

Cut up your fruit and place it in your pitcher or other drink dispenser. Mix in the wine, juice and liquor, then add sugar to taste. Chill the mixture for at least a few hours or overnight before serving over ice.

Another good cocktail is Spiked Lemonade.



Outdoor lighting is a must

Outdoor lighting illuminates the yard and gives party areas a festive vibe, and can accent your patio or special features in your yard. String lights on poles around the patio or tiki torches add amazing touches. Setting poles or beams in stylish buckets or planters filled with concrete or sand means they can be easily moved around and placed where guests can see more clearly at night and enjoy.

Not too hot; not too cold

If it gets a little chilly at night, plan on having a firepit or portable heaters around the yard and patio. If it's hot and humid, a few portable fans scattered around the outdoor

area are perfect to keep guests comfortable. Make sure your guests stay hydrated with plenty of water. Alcohol can make hot evenings worse. Be sure there is plenty of shade from the sun, too. Use an awning, hand fans and portable misters that cool the area with a fine mist.

Have a backup plan for rain

If you have to go indoors, make sure you have space and make plans accordingly.

Plan for smokers and non-smokers

Accommodate smokers on your guest list while keeping non-smoking guests clear of the smoke.

Hummingbirds: tiny and terrifi

By VICKI BROWN

Hummingbirds belong to the avian family Trochilidae, and are among the smallest and most curious birds in the world. Their life is spent searching for food.

According to the Smithsonian National Zoo, most species live in the tropics, but 17 species regularly nest in the United States near the Mexican border. Only the ruby-throated hummingbird nests east of the Mississippi and here in Colleton County.

They are beautiful to watch as they quickly zip in and around gardens and sometimes hover over open flowers, windows or at feeders.

But these creatures are even more amazing than most people know.

Ornithologists report that hummingbirds weigh between 2 to 20 grams and be about 3 to 3 and 1/2 inches tall. A large female has the same weight as four jellybeans. The bee hummingbird of Cuba weighs only 1.95 grams. If you mailed 16 of them in an envelope, it would only take one stamp. The calliope hummingbird found in the mountains of western North America weighs in at 2.5 grams, less than an ounce.

Males, and sometimes females, often have a colorful throat and upper chest that has highly reflective, colored feathers. These shiny feathers around the head may look black until a hummingbird turns its head to catch the sun and then the color becomes metallic.

It is not surprising that that the smallest bird come from the smallest egg. The ruby-throated hummingbird usually has one to

two eggs in a clutch that are the size of small peas and are placed in a walnut shell-sized cup woven from spider webs and plant material.

Hummingbirds are able to fly upwards, downwards, upside-down, backwards and can hover. Their power and small size give them amazing agility while flying.

They also have speed and stamina. They have been clocked at close to 30 mph indirect flight and more than 45 mph during courtship dives. Migrating hummingbirds fly 18 to 20 straight hours to cross the Gulf of Mexico, by using their fat stores and help from winds.

A ruby-throated hummingbird's heart beats 225 times per minute at rest. When it flies, it increases to more than 1,200 times per minute. Their wings beat 70 times per second in direct flight and more than 200 times per second while diving.

Hummingbirds have long, narrow bills and small pointed wings shaped like swords which give them very little insulation, so they are one of the few birds that go into torpor. Torpor is a very deep, sleep-like state similar to hibernation, where their metabolism slows to a minimum, and they maintain a very low body temperature. Their normal body temperature is 105 degrees Fahrenheit. So hummingbirds can go into torpor any night of the year when the temperature drops and food sources are low.

The high-energy of hummingbirds means that they need to find reliable food resources. Feeding on flowers puts hummingbirds at the mercy of the spring and summer, and some fall flow-

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ering weeds. They also catch insects and follow woodpeckers to snack on the sap from holes pecked into trees.

Hummingbirds are unsociable, do not like each other, and abandon a mate after mating. They are extremely feisty and will try to chase the others away from a feeder since they are all competing for food. In many cases, hummingbirds defend small territories around a favorite flower patch. But oddly enough, they do occasionally enjoy being around people and recognize the people who feed them. There have been reports of the tiny birds flying around a homeowner's head if the feeder is empty or bad, and some have actually followed the homeowner into the house and flown next to the person for an extended time.

Flowering plants need their pollen carried from the stamens of one flower to the pistil of another so pollination occurs. This occurs when clouds of pollen are carried by the wind to settle on cars, front porches and occasionally on a plant of the same species. But other flowers provide a nectar reward for hummingbirds and bees who will come, take the nectar and transfer it to another plant for pollination. Hummingbirds unknowingly carry the pollen on their heads.

To help hummingbirds you can provide sugar water in hummingbird feeders.

Ingredients:

Refined white table sugar

Water (use tap water)

Directions for making safe hummingbird food:

Mix 1 part sugar with 4 parts water (for example, 1 cup of

sugar with 4 cups of water) until the sugar is dissolved

Do not add red dye

Fill your hummingbird feeders with the sugar water and place outside

Extra sugar water can be stored in a refrigerator

Change feeders every other day and thoroughly clean them each time to prevent harmful mold growth

Place feeders out of direct sunlight and away from constant shade. Dappled sunlight is best.

Humming birds love to feed mainly at afternoons to dusk, and dawn to early mornings.

The best idea is to plant hummingbird friendly plants. The birds would rather have flower nectar. Some good hummingbird plants include:

Bee balm

Cardinal flower

Trumpet creeper

Coral honeysuckle

Columbine

Another way to help the species is to drink a hummingbird friendly coffee. More than half of the species of hummingbirds live in the tropics and enjoy the coffee plants that bloom with loads of flowers in the spring.

According to the Smithsonian National Zoo, shaded coffee farms support large numbers of hummingbird species. In Peru, Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center scientists recorded 24 species over the course of a year. Ruby-throated hummingbirds are also abundant in coffee farms in Mexico and Central America after spending time in the tropics.





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