

Editorial page

Nolia's Notes
**Super Coach,
 Super American**
 by NOLIA BIGGERSTAFF



I saw a fabulous video of the Virginia Tech basketball coach and his team the other day. The coach was on the court and his team was there.

Chairs were lined up where the players normally sit and the coach said to the team, "You did not earn the right to sit in these chairs."

The players were bewildered but they listened as the coach continued to explain.

Then the players looked up at the double doors leading into the gym and down walked people from all branches of our military. There were also veterans of war. They were all in uniform and came down and faced the players.

The coach then said, "These are the people who have earned these chairs. These people gave up their youth and chose to serve our country to give you the right to be here today and enjoy playing ball and have the freedom to play. These people deserve our gratitude and respect."

The coach went on to say, "When the National Anthem is played, it is played to honor our country and these great Americans who serve and have served our country. As a team we will stand at attention. We will not sway and fidget and roll our eyes. We will stand up straight and put our right hand over our heart and our left hand behind our back and we will show respect. You do not have to sing but you will know the words!"

Then the coach placed each

player to stand between the veterans and service men and women. The National Anthem was played and the coach modeled the correct way to stand at attention and all the players followed.

This coach taught the team about respect. He taught them why they should be grateful and respectful.

Obviously, teachers, parents, and society have failed to teach some of our young people this valuable lesson and those who do not respect our flag and country are only displaying their lack of knowledge and understanding of what it means to be fortunate enough to live in America.

When I see an athlete being disrespectful when the flag is raised or the National Anthem is played, I cannot help but wish that at that moment I could stop time, pick that person up and transport them to a battle field, transport them to a country where they had to live every moment in fear, without clean water and food, much less, a cell phone and Starbucks!

I think these disrespectful individuals are spoiled, uninformed, and self-centered.

There are ways to exercise your rights as an American and correct problems you may feel that need to be corrected, but acting like a fool disrespecting our flag and country is not one of them.

But I gotta say that if you chose to look like an uneducated fool, in America, it is your right!

Just sayin'.

This weeks tips from the BBB

According to reports, more than 28% of us returned a holiday gift during last year's holiday season. Clothing topped the list with shoes and electronics following close behind. With the rise of online shopping due to COVID 19, this number is sure to rise in 2020.

But with holiday returns also comes holiday return fraud. Return fraud comes in many forms, including purchasing merchandise for short-term use and then returning the item, returning stolen merchandise, or using reused, stolen or falsified receipts to return merchandise for a profit.

But in most cases, consumers are just trying to return wrong sizes or items. Many retailers, both online and brick and mortar, have return policies in place to not only protect the consumer but their businesses as well.

If you have something that doesn't fit, or you already have the item or it's just the wrong thing, BBB offers the following tips for returning holiday gifts:

- Know and understand the seller's return policy. We know that most stores list return policies their website or on the back of the receipt. Make sure you fully

Bowling named to Distinguished List for fall at ABAC

Students who achieved academic excellence in their course work during the fall semester were recently recognized at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College. ABAC cites its top academic students each semester on the President's Honor List, the Dean's Honor List, and the Distinguished Achievement List. Andrea Bowling of Lincolnton, was one of the students named to the Distinguished Achievement List.

The Distinguished Achievement List is composed of students who complete between six and 11 hours of academic work with a grade point average of 3.5 or higher. The purpose of this list is to recognize excellence and scholastic achievement among part-time students.

Ellis fund set up

The Coach Ellis Dedication Fund has been set up at Farmers State Bank for those wishing to make a contribution to help with funding the sign and plaque recently approved for the track and field at Lincoln County High School and to initiate a scholarship fund in his honor. Those wishing to contribute can drop a check off at FSB or mail to P.O. Box 99, Lincolnton, GA 30817. Make the check payable to the Coach Ellis Dedication Fund.

understand what is required for a return or exchange, and if you have questions, call the store directly to ask about your specific situation. Brick and mortar stores may have different return policies than online counterparts.

- Keep the receipt. Include a gift receipt with all gifts, so it is easier for the recipient to return or exchange the gift if it's not the right fit.

- Keep original packaging and ask about restocking fees. Some stores may require products be returned in original purchase condition, unused or unopened. In addition, some merchants charge a restocking or "open box" fee for returns of electronic products or large-ticket items. Make sure you read about these policies and ask questions through email or live chats to make sure you understand the policy.

- Bring identification. Because of return fraud, some retailers will ask for identification when making a return. If you are returning or exchanging a gift that you bought, make sure you bring the credit card used to make that purchase in case you don't have the receipt.

- Read product warranty first. In some cases, retail stores are not liable if the product turns up defective or damaged. They may require consumers to mail the product directly to the manufacturer in order to receive monetary refunds, credit or product replacement.

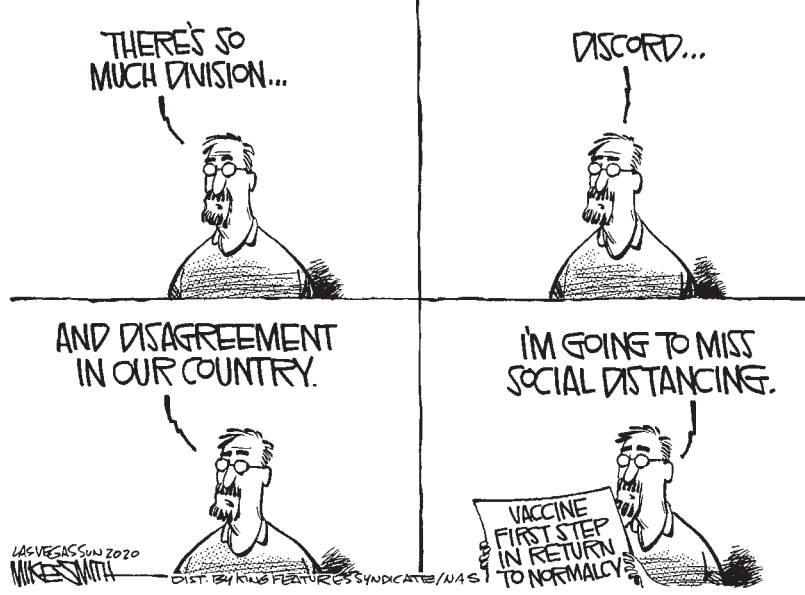
- Don't delay. In almost every case, stores require you to return within a specific time frame. If you wait too long, you may miss your chance.

- Read the fine print before purchasing a rebate-eligible item. Rebates are great for getting a good deal but can come with strict requirements.

- Make sure you understand how the rebate will be issued. Some rebates need to be redeemed immediately and expire after a certain period of time. Read the instructions carefully and check the return policy. You may experience difficulty returning an item if the rebate requires you to open or send in part of the packaging, such as the UPC or box top. Keep a copy of the submitted rebate materials and note the date on which you sent it in. Mark your calendar for when you should receive the rebate.

Simply knowing a store's refund and exchange policies before making a purchase can save lots of frustration and help you avoid standing in long lines after the holidays are over.

For more holiday tips that you can trust, visit bbb.org.



Consumers get answers from Ga. Department of Agriculture

Consumer Q's is a weekly question-and-answer column by Arty Schronce at the Georgia Department of Agriculture. Please share your thoughts, questions and suggestions with him by phone, mail or email.

Q: What kind of kerosene should be burned in a home heater?

A: Only K-1 kerosene should be burned in a home heater. Also, heater manufacturers and the Georgia Department of Agriculture recommend clear, non-dyed fuel for home use because over an extended period of time, dye can damage a heater. Be sure to follow all the manufacturer's safety instructions when using a kerosene heater.

Q: Where do mosquitoes go in the winter?

A: In Georgia some species of mosquitoes overwinter in the egg stage and some in the adult stage. The adults that overwinter are females that will be able to start laying eggs again when warm weather returns in the spring. Mosquitoes that overwinter as adults undergo changes in body chemistry that enable them to endure the cold.

Q: My house has a Southwest desert décor. I want to use cactuses indoors. Do they make good houseplants?

A: There are numerous types of cacti that may be used as houseplants. Visit a local garden center to see some of the options. Cacti do have a high light requirement and are unsuitable for dark rooms.

Q: I like sweetgum trees (Liquidambar styraciflua), especially their multicolored leaves in autumn, but don't like raking the

gumballs out of the lawn and neither does my husband. Are there any varieties that don't produce the gumballs? My husband wants to cut ours down.

A: The fall foliage of sweetgums is amazing. Some trees turn pale yellow and others deep maroon, orange, red or combinations of all these. There is a variety named 'Rotundiloba' that does not produce fruit. Its fall color is not as spectacular as other sweetgums, however. Sweetgums are valuable and undemanding trees. It seems sad to cut one down just to have a lawn. Consider eliminating the lawn near the sweetgum and converting it into a mulched area in which you plant shrubs or spring bulbs. That way you never have to rake. Besides the beautiful colors and interesting star-shaped leaves, sweetgums provide food for numerous Georgia birds including American goldfinch, Carolina chickadee, tufted titmouse, Carolina wren and various species of warblers and nuthatches.

Q: What are some houseplants that will tolerate low levels of light? My apartment only has windows that face north.

A: A few suggestions include Chinese evergreen, snake plant, peace lily, pothos or devil's ivy, cast-iron plant, rohdea, heart-leaf philodendron and parlor palm.

If you have questions about agriculture, horticulture, food safety or services or products regulated by the Georgia Department of Agriculture, write Arty Schronce (arty.schronce@agr.georgia.gov) or visit the department's website at www.agr.georgia.gov.

Homeowners should test for deadly, invisible gas

By Pamela Turner
 for CAES News

As it is every year, January is National Radon Action month. However, this year feels different, as many people are spending more time at home to keep each other safe and healthy. This makes it even more important that we test our homes for radon, a colorless, odorless gas that is the second-leading cause of lung cancer.

Over the course of many years, exposure to this gas can cause lung cancer, even in nonsmokers. In fact, radon is the leading cause of lung cancer among nonsmokers. About 800 Georgians die annually from radon-induced lung cancer.

Radon is a naturally occurring gas that comes from the breakdown of uranium in soil and rock. Often granite rock naturally has high levels of uranium, which is part of why radon is such a persistent problem, especially in north Georgia. The gas seeps out of the soil and rises up through crawlspaces, foundations and basements into a home. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, about 1 in 15 homes have a radon level that should be reduced.

Fortunately, testing for radon gas is simple and inexpensive. A short-term radon test is hung in the lowest level of the home for three to seven days before being mailed to the laboratory. The laboratory will then send the homeowner results after it processes the test kit. Test can be obtained from the UGA Radon Program website or from a hardware or big box store. During the month of January, Georgians can receive \$5 off their online radon test kit order at radon.uga.edu by using the code NRAM2021 at checkout.

If the radon level in your home is high, you can install a radon reduction system. A radon reduction or radon mitigation system reduces high levels of indoor radon to acceptable

levels. The system most frequently used is a vent pipe system and fan that pulls radon from beneath the house and vents it to the outside.

Radon exposure from drinking water is primarily a concern in private wells. In Georgia, wells drilled into granitic crystalline rock aquifers, usually in the northern part of the state, are at risk of naturally occurring radon contamination. This is where the uranium that decays to radon can be found at higher levels. If you don't know whether there is radon in your well water, have the water tested.

The University of Georgia Agricultural and Environmental Services Laboratories in Athens test water samples for the presence of radon. To get a water testing kit, contact your local UGA Extension office or call 1-800-ASK-UGA1.

Did you know that cold damage to ornamental plants can be a significant issue in Georgia? Now that temperatures are starting to drop just in time for Christmas, there are a few practices you can follow to help protect your plants this winter.

Most ornamental plants actively grow and reproduce during the warm, long days of the summer, and during this time any frost or cold weather can cause significant damage. Come late summer and early fall, the plants undergo a process called cold acclimation, which is triggered by cooler temperatures and shorter day lengths. If the plants undergo cold acclimation too early, they have a shortened growing season. Too late, however, and they may be injured at an unexpected early frost. While we unfortunately cannot control the weather, practices like plant selection and maintenance can affect how plants acclimate for winter.

There are several types of damage you might see on an ornamental plant that are due to cold weather. The most common damage is characterized by brownish-black, mushy, dead leaves and stems on the plant. This occurs when the water in the plant cells freezes into ice, killing the tissue. Plants that are acclimated to the cold will usually survive this type of injury, but plants who are not acclimated may have extensive injury to their root system, resulting in extensive damage or death. Typically, you will not notice this damage until the next spring when the plant won't leaf out.

Another type of damage is desiccation, or the drying out of the plant due to windy, cold weather. The leaves may be partially or completely brown and defoliate from the plant. In fluctuating temperatures, flower and leaf buds can be damaged, which can reduce or eliminate blooms and foliage the following spring. A final injury you may see is bark splitting, which appears as loose bark in various areas on a tree's trunk. The split can expand into a frost canker, which can cause

structural damage to the plant and result in death.

There are a variety of different cold-related injuries a plant can experience, but there are also a variety of things you can do to prevent them. The best, most effective way to prevent cold damage is to select plants that can tolerate the environment in your area. We are in plant hardiness zone 7B in Lincoln County, so selecting plants that are graded for our area will help them survive both our winter and summer climates. Furthermore, placing plants in the most appropriate spaces on your property is important too.

The coldest spots on a property are often on the north and northwest areas of the property or in low spots, while the warmest areas are usually on the southern end of the property. Windbreaks and canopy plants like trees can help protect plants from cold injury as well. Other things to consider are elevation, soil property, and proximity to structures and other plants - all of which can affect the temperature and microclimate of the area.

Maintaining proper soil nutrition can help a plant stay healthy throughout the winter, and this includes timing your fertilization and pruning properly. Do not fertilize or prune plants in the fall as these practices can cause a flush of new growth that can be damaged when temperatures drop.

A final way to protect your plants is to consider covering or heating them. This might be bringing them in a house, shed, or greenhouse, or by placing a protective cover such as a sheet or cardboard box on them. Generally, container plants are more susceptible to cold weather than ground-planted plants, so consider wrapping their containers, covering them, or relocating them. The use of mulch can also help protect root systems and reduce soil heat loss.

If you have questions on how to protect your valuable ornamental plants this winter, let us know at uge3181@uga.edu or 706-359-3233.

Corps accepting Christmas trees for recycling now through Jan. 17

The J. Strom Thurmond Project began accepting real Christmas trees for recycling as fish habitat on December 21, and will continue through January 17, 2021, according to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers - Forest, Fish, and Wildlife Section.

The trees may be dropped off at Below Dam South Carolina Park, located in Clarks Hill, S.C. or ramps listed below. Artificial trees will not be accepted. All decorations including tinsel, lights, garland, yard debris, and household trash at the sites is prohibited.

Recycled trees will be staged at select ramps around the lake to be used by the public to create fisheries habitat at a location of their choosing. Christmas trees, when placed with concrete blocks at depths of 15-20 feet out of main navigable channels, create shelter and food for bait fish which in return attracts crappie, bass, and sunfish species.

These holiday creations in return benefit the fish as well as the angler.

Current locations available for Christmas tree recycling dropoff and public use are at boat ramp areas in Georgia:

- Amity Day Use Area
- Chamberlain Ferry Ramp
- Keg Creek Boat Ramp
- Leathersville Boat Ramp
- Morrads Boat Ramp
- Murry Creek Ramp
- Boat ramp areas in South Carolina include:
 - Calhoun Falls Ramp
 - Dorn Boat Ramp
 - LeRoys Ferry Boat Ramp
 - Parksville Day Use Area

The J. Strom Thurmond Project will no longer be accepting Christmas trees at Riverside Middle School and thanked the school for its long-standing support of the Christmas Tree Recycling Program.

For more information, contact Conservation Biologist Evan Brasher at 864-333-1159.

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