

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: I want to grow some gourds to make into houses for purple martins. What gourds are best for this? Where can I find more information about purple martins? I want to attract these beautiful and interesting birds to my farm.

A: The gourds most often used for birdhouses are usually referred to as "birdhouse gourds" or "bottle gourds." The seeds are often sold by garden centers, grocery stores, mail-order catalogs or by fellow Georgians in the Farmers and Consumers Market Bulletin. They are easy to grow. For more information about purple martins, contact: Purple Martin Conservation Association, 301 Peninsula Dr., Suite 6, Erie, PA 16505; Telephone: 814-833-7656, www.purplemartin.org.

The association's website has much information about the birds and how to attract them. Purple martins depend on birdhouses (either gourds or colonial nesting boxes) in order to have places to nest. Purple martins will return year after year to the same nesting site. Many Georgians look forward to the return of their colonies of purple martins in early spring and enjoy watching

their aerial maneuvers.

Q: What makes Vidalia® onions sweet?

A: Southeast Georgia's mild climate, the area's sandy, low-sulfur soil, exclusive seed varieties and precise farming practices make this original sweet onion mild and flavorful.

Q: What can I plant in my garden to attract goldfinches?

A: Sow sunflowers. Goldfinches love to eat the seeds. Choose varieties with lots of flowers instead of a variety that produces only one giant flower per plant. Goldfinches also eat the seeds of purple coneflowers. Purple coneflowers are perennials and though they may be grown from seed, they are more commonly acquired by purchasing the plants from your local nursery or garden center. To a lesser extent, goldfinches will eat the seeds from Mexican sunflower (tithonia), zinnias and black-eyed Susans. They love to eat seeds of dandelion and thistle and will use thistle down in making their nests.

Q: My neighbor has a shrub with small flowers that smell like banana Popsicles. What is its name?

A: It is appropriately called "banana shrub" (Michelia figo), and it does indeed smell like banana-flavored Popsicles or Creamsicles. The fragrance is strongest in the afternoon. The flowers are cream

to creamy yellow, edged in purple and not particularly showy. The fragrance is unique and wonderful. The shrub is an attractive evergreen and can reach 10 feet high and 15 feet wide but is usually much smaller. With occasional pruning it can easily be kept as an informal hedge. It is a good shrub for planting next to a patio or porch where its fragrance can be appreciated up close. It is best for coastal, southern, and middle Georgia. It may be killed or suffer winter damage in the mountains.

Q: What is surimi?

A: Surimi is a minced fish product used to manufacture simulated crabmeat, lobster and other seafood.

Q: When do Georgia peaches come in season?

A: Some early varieties from South Georgia become available in May. The season extends through August and even into early September thanks to late varieties and Georgia's geography and topography. Trees in north Georgia and at higher elevations will bloom and bear later than their South Georgia counterparts.

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.

Baseball's Best The great Cobb lived here

By LAMAR GARRARD
Baseball historian



"I never could stand losing. Second place didn't interest me. I had a fire in my belly." — Ty Cobb

On a very pleasant and beautiful Sunday afternoon after church a few days ago, my wife and I paid a visit to 2425 William Street in Augusta, in the Summerville district not far from Walton Way and Augusta University. The tiny two-block street close to Reid Memorial Presbyterian Church is obscure but was the home of one of Augusta's most famous citizens during the 1920s and early 1930s.

World famous Tyrus Raymond Cobb and his wife, the former Charlie Lombard native Augustan, raised all of their five children in this house. Bev Ford, the current and only the second owner since Cobb resided there, was gracious in giving us a short tour of the home and the surrounding yard and out buildings. The house is almost untouched since the days of Cobb and no major changes or renovations have been done. It is stunning in appearance and the grounds reflect loving care and attention.

Of particular interest to me was a small cottage in the rear of the property that Cobb used for his office and getaway. An early version of today's "man cave" would be a fitting description.

We were able to go inside the small compact house, maybe all of 400-500 square feet, and it seemed like we were in a time warp. A small living area connected to a tiny kitchen area, then a hallway and a bathroom leading to a private office. One could visualize "The Georgia Peach" sitting there opening his fan mail and business propositions and daily correspondence

Visitor center opens

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Hartwell Project Office, will reopen the project's visitor center May 24, after more than a year of closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Hartwell Project Visitor Center closed to the public in March 2020. As COVID-19 conditions improved and vaccines are more available, recent Corps of Engineers guidance allows for reopening visitor centers in compliance with existing requirements and guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Visitors must continue to follow CDC guidance regarding COVID-19 mitigation while inside the visitor center.

Starting May 24, visitor center hours are:

Monday-Friday: 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
Saturday-Sunday and federal holidays (Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day): 9 a.m.-5:30 p.m.

"The Hartwell Project looks forward to re-opening the Visitor Center to the public and re-engaging on a more personal level with our customers," Kenneth Bedenbaugh, Natural Resources Program Manager at the Hartwell Project, said. The visitor center is located at 5625 Anderson Highway, Hartwell, Georgia.

For more information, please contact the Hartwell Project Office at 888-893-0678 or go to <https://go.usa.gov>.



Home of Tyrus Raymond Cobb

all the while pouring over the stock market reports in various and sundry newspapers. The decor and the construction reflect the style of this type structure unchanged in over the 100 years since it was built.

Cobb, whom the Augusta papers called the "World's Greatest Baseball Player," surely needed this retreat to calm himself from all of the pressures of his involvement with baseball and also his many business and civic and community activities.

A very popular Augustan, Cobb entertained many notables in his fashionable "hill" residence over the years such as Bobby Jones, Judge K.M. Landis, John Phillip Sousa, Robert Woodruff of Coca-Cola, and many others.

He started his professional baseball career in 1904 with the Augusta Tourists at Warren Park, now the Exchange Club Fairgrounds. Playing for the Detroit Tigers for 22 years, he played the last two years of his 24 years in the big leagues with the Philadelphia Athletics.

Always referring to Augusta as his home, he came back for his

retirement years and was active in many phases of Augusta life. He played golf and won the Augusta City Wide tournament at the Augusta Country Club, a course where Bobby Jones had played. He owned a tire company on Broad Street and built the Shirley (Cobb) Apartments on Greene Street in downtown Augusta. He was asked but declined to be the Mayor of Augusta. He was the chairman of a fundraising effort for the Medical College of Georgia. He had a huge interest in bird dogs and the field trials in Waynesboro. He tried his hand at polo and was also an avid quail hunter in addition to hunting big game out west.

My thanks to Ms. Ford for allowing us to enjoy a few moments at her iconic home. Ty Cobb invested his money wisely and instituted the Ty Cobb Scholarship that has currently given away \$20,000 worth of college scholarships to deserving young students.

There is a historical marker in the front yard of this home, in case you want to take an automobile or walking tour by this landmark some beautiful Sunday afternoon.

Georgia Red Cross offers safety tips

The Memorial Day holiday is just around the corner, marking the unofficial start of summer and outdoor fun. Georgia's Red Cross wants everyone to have a safe summer and offers the following resources for the entire family:

Water Safety

Before going in, on or around the water, every family member should become "water smart." This starts with learning to be safe, making good choices, and learning to swim to at least achieve the skills of water competency. Everyone should be able to enter the water, get a breath, stay afloat, change position, swim a distance and then get out of the water safely. A variety of water safety courses and resources are available to help. To help keep your family safe, the Red Cross offers these tips:

1. Prevent unsupervised access to water. Fence pools and spas with adequate barriers and keep a constant eye for any water dan-

gers such as portable splash pools/slides, buckets and bathtubs.

2. Adults should actively supervise children and stay within arm's reach of young children and new swimmers. Kids should follow the rules. Designate a "water watcher" to keep a close eye and constant attention on children and weaker swimmers in and around the water until the next water watcher takes over.

3. Always wear a properly fitted U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket when on a boat and if in a situation beyond someone's skill level.

4. Swim as a pair near a life-guard's chair — everyone, including experienced swimmers, should swim with a buddy even in areas supervised by lifeguards. Always maintain constant attention and actively supervise children even when lifeguards are present.

5. Download the Red Cross Swim app for safety tips, kid-friendly videos and activities, and take the

free Water Safety for Parents and Caregivers online course.

Grilling Safety

Grilling food is so popular that more than three-quarters of U.S. adults have used a grill — yet, grilling sparks more than 10,000 home fires on average each year. To avoid this, the Red Cross offers these grilling safety tips:

1. Always supervise a barbecue grill when in use. Don't add charcoal starter fluid when coals have already been ignited.

2. Never grill indoors — not in the house, camper, tent or any enclosed area.

3. Make sure everyone, including pets, stays away from the grill.

• Keep the grill out in the open, away from the house, deck, tree branches or anything that could catch fire.

• Use the long-handled tools especially made for cooking on the grill to help keep the chef safe.

Accidents and Emergencies Happen

The Red Cross has several resources to help people learn how to treat bee stings, burns and heat emergencies including online and in-person training courses, a free First Aid app and a First Aid Skill for Amazon Alexa-enabled devices.

Help Save Lives this Summer

Part of a safe community is a strong blood supply for hospital patients. Give blood, platelets or plasma this summer to help ensure patients get the medical treatments they need. Download the Red Cross Blood Donor app, visit redcrossblood.org or call 800-RED-CROSS for more information or to schedule your donation.

Follow COVID-19 Guidelines

Remember to review the latest COVID-19 pandemic guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) with your family before you head out.

DNR offers tips on how being bearwise can protect yourself

A bear on the back porch, a bear in the trash, or a bear destroying a bird feeder are all relatively minor situations and almost all could be avoided by Becoming BearWise, according to the Georgia Department of Natural Resources' Wildlife Resources Division (WRD).

"Avoiding problems with bears is usually simple, though it may not always be convenient," says Adam Hammond, WRD's state bear biologist. "One of the six BearWise Basics is about securing food, garbage, and recycling. When bears have access to human-provided foods, regardless of the source or the intent, they will take advantage of them, and that often leads to further problems."

Why is it such a big deal? A bear that repeatedly finds food from garbage cans, bird feeders, and pet food bowls is unlikely to leave, and will become bolder in its search for easy food. This leads to potential property damage of homes, garages, vehicles, and more. Once bears have learned bad habits and have come to rely on people for a "free meal," they never change those behaviors, and this type of behavior progressively gets worse with time and experience. If you really care about bears, please make the extra effort to ensure that your home and yard are "unattractive" to bears — to protect yourself, your family and pets, and bears.

BearWise is an education program developed by bear biologists

from each of the 15 state wildlife agencies that make up the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (SEAFWA). The program, anchored by the website www.bearwise.org, offers citizen specific, detailed, and high-quality information to help people live responsibly with bears and to keep bears wild.

The black bear is a symbol of Georgia's natural diversity, the only bear found in the state and a conservation success story. Though now considered the most common bear in North America, the species was nearly eradicated from Georgia in the 1930s due to unregulated hunting, illegal harvest - including the killing of bears as "vermin," and large-scale habitat loss. Sound wildlife management practices have restored Georgia's black bears to a thriving population estimated at 4,100 bears statewide.

Black bears may legally be taken during the hunting season, which occurs each fall in Georgia (<https://georgiawildlife.com/hunting/hunter-resources>). However, the taking of bears during any other time of the year, or the taking of bears illegally during the hunting season is called poaching. Prevent poaching of bears (by email, phone or in person) by reporting any illegal activity. Visit <http://gadnr.org/ranger-hotline> for more information.

For more information on living responsibly with bears, visit www.bearwise.org.

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