

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY
OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Letters to The Editor

Spay and Neuter

This is a response to prior letters written to the Editors who wanted Towns and Union Counties to start euthanasia again. What should be considered is spay and neuter on all Towns County and Union County cats and dogs with exemptions given to hunters and breeders with a yearly license. The state of Rhode Island has had a mandatory spay and neuter on cats for 3 years and it is working out fine. The city/county of Los Angeles has done it for both dogs and cats and it is also working out well. There is no excuse now for those financially in need not to have their pets s/n as the N. GA. SPCA will s/n all dogs and it covers 90% of the fee. Their number is 706-745-7722. Currently both counties are giving certificates to the vets that will cover for cats \$35 (M), and \$45 (F). And for dogs, \$55 (M), and \$65 (F). Just call the vet of your choice and ask to use the certificate and pay the difference that it does not cover. N. GA. will also give \$30 for owed cats and, a group called Operation PUP (prevent unwanted pets) is getting donations to cover cats in Towns County. Do consider calling them at 888-496-2387 if additional help is needed after using the county coupons or have any questions on the above. And for any unwanted litters of puppies, contact Castaway Critters Pet Rescue as they will see that the pups go to foster homes up north and the mothers will be spayed at no charge here. Their number is (706) 781-3992. If spay and neuter were mandatory, there would be no more wandering cats and dogs and the existing shelters would not have to send pets up north as they must do now. Please cut out this info and pass it on to friends and neighbors who may not have had their pets altered.

Ann Bitting

Thank You

Towns County Elementary School would like to thank Robin Henson for the front decorations and Catherine Hansen from The Plant Stand for the beautiful flower pots she keeps up for us each year. Also we would like to thank Down to Earth Garden Center for their generous donation of the mums, pumpkins and scarecrows

Mildred Rogers

What am I missing

Would someone please explain the benefit of proposed legislation to be voted upon during the upcoming election? On the surface it appears to represent a reduction in property taxes for everyone. However, since both the commissioner and the board of education have authority to raise millage rates, it seems to me that if the larger homestead exemption is approved and tax revenues reduced accordingly, then the millage rate will be raised to cover the shortfall. I am too skeptical to believe that governments at any level would actually reduce spending, and believe this action will raise, not lower, taxes for most of us who continue having to pay. So what am I missing?

Wm. Ronald Gibson

The Middle Path

by Don Perry

Human behavior often appears to defy logic. This observation comes as no surprise to anyone mindful of the emotional content of the decisions that human beings make. Sadly our educational system does little to improve this process save to provide a few tools for rationalizing our decisions later in life. However, when apparently irrational decisions are made by government or by international organizations and defended by rhetoric devoid of factual information, we look for the "rest of the story." We assume that anyone who has survived the gauntlet of competition to occupy a position of power or influence has not done so by making a habit of irrational decisions. Conspiracy theories are born in this void of information and these are useful mainly for selling books or ad space on websites, but when someone in a public position makes a decision that appears from our limited perspective to be ill advised, we have to wonder about what

information they have that we don't, and we have to wonder about the motivation behind the decision.

When the Norwegian Nobel Committee awarded the Nobel Peace Prize to Barack Obama, many of us were surprised, to say the least. A freshman Senator elected to the US presidency on a wave of popularity and not even a year into his first term - did not seem like a logical choice compared to, for example, someone like Jimmy Carter with a lifetime of accomplishments on the international stage under his belt. A president prosecuting war on two fronts and on the verge of sending more troops to Afghanistan did not seem like a logical choice for a peace prize. We were under the impression that Nobel candidates were chosen for their accomplishments, rather than their rhetoric or their intentions, so we had to wonder about the logic of this choice. We are still wondering.

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Extension Tips



by
Robert
Brewer

Pansies and other annuals

Gardeners have to plan and plant ahead. If, for example, you wish to have colorful flowers this winter or early next spring, October and November are the months to plant. Pansies, snapdragons, petunias, dianthus, sweet alyssum, lobelia, and flowering cabbage and kale are among the cool-season flowers that you may set out as plants. Of these, are the showiest and the most popular.

Gary Wade, University of Georgia Extension Horticulturist, says he's seen pansies tolerate temperatures as low as 8 degrees above zero, freeze solid, and then bounce back with vigor when warmer weather returns.

Pansies need a sunny, well-drained spot in which to grow. Dig or till the soil in the planting area thoroughly before planting. Keep the plants watered during dry weather, and fertilize them regularly. Wade recommends that you make sure to use a fertilizer that contains some of the nitrate form of nitrogen. So, before buying a fertilizer, check the fertilizer tag for nitrate nitrogen. Plants absorb nitrate forms of nitrogen more readily than the ammoniacal form of nitrogen from the cold winter soils.

You'll hear a variety of recommendations as to what specific fertilizer analysis to use. The same 15-0-15 or 15-5-15 that you use for other landscape uses will work just fine. Or you may use a 20-20-20. To provide the most continuous flow of nutrients possible, you may wish to select one of the time-release fertilizers. Many experts also recommend using a liquid fertilizer weekly.

If you use a granular fertilizer, other than one of the time-release types, fertilize the plants lightly on a monthly basis. If you use one of the time-release types, follow the label recommendations as to frequency.

Before planting, make sure the plants are well-watered. A dry root ball is hard to re-wet once it's in the ground. For the best color display, a 10-inch spacing between plants is ideal. This will require 144 plants per 100 square feet of bed area. (That's a 10 x 10 foot area.) Mulch the plants well to keep soil moisture from fluctuating between waterings.

To keep pansies blooming well, remove the old blossoms as they fade. Though it's not absolutely necessary, this "dead-heading" keeps seed pods from forming that would rob the plant of its energy. Deadheading the bed may be a once-a-week chore throughout the winter, but it leads to much better flowering.

Pansies come in a variety of colors and sizes. The largest pansies are 'Majestic Giant', 'Crown', and 'Bingo'. 'Crown'

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 E-MAILED OR MAILED TO: Towns County Herald, Letter to the Editor, PO Box 365, Hiawassee, GA 30546. Our email address: tcherald@brmemc.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.

is a solid color, whereas 'Majestic Giant' and 'Bingo' are bicolored with the dark blotches or "faces". 'Majestic Giant', though released back in the 1960's, is still a best-seller. Many growers, however, are promoting 'Bingo' as being an improved 'Majestic Giant', with shorter stems that make the flowers stand up better, especially after rains.

'Crystal Bowl' and 'Maxim' are medium to smaller pansies. 'Crystal Bowl' is a solid color whereas 'Maxim' has the faces. An advantage of the these smaller pansies is that they stand up better, especially after rains that may weigh down the larger-flowering types.

Among other cultivars that you may see are 'Fama', 'Atlas', and 'Imperial'. You really won't go wrong with any of the pansy cultivars you find in the nurseries today, though. Where and how you plant and care for the pansies has much more effect on the success of the planting than does cultivar selection.

Seeds you need to plant in the fall

If you get busy in November, you can have a beautiful early spring flower garden that will be the envy of your neighbors. Brilliant California poppies, sweet peas, larkspurs, and bachelor buttons! Even better, the plants providing all the color can be purchased for just a few dollars. That's because they can be seeded from just a few small packets of flower seeds.

It is amazing what can happen from a few packets of seeds. But then that's one of the wonderful things about gardening. Gardening reminds us the value of planning and investing for the future. It teaches us of the importance of doing the right thing at the right time and then sitting back and being patient.

Make sure you select a sunny spot with well-drained soil. Break up the soil by thorough shoveling and turning or with a rototiller. Then, follow the directions on the seed packets as to planting depth.

Keeping the seed bed moist will be very important. An inexpensive low-volume irrigation system, which connects to the water faucet like a regular garden hose, can really make the watering easy. It is really little more than a flexible hose snaked through the beds with micro-irrigation heads attached to the hose at appropriate points. You can install such a small system, with parts available from many garden centers, in a matter of an hour or so. But the system makes watering the newly seeded areas, every couple of days, a relatively easy procedure. The seed bed needs to be kept moist until the seedlings are up and an inch or so tall. This takes a few weeks to a month.

Through the winter, the plantings only need to be watered whenever nature doesn't provide rain every week or so. The seedlings will remain relatively small until late February or early March when they will start growing rapidly. By April, the show of color will have started.

"That's the trouble with democracy - first you let people vote, and next thing you know, they think they run the government!"



Q and A Column from John Oxendine
Georgia's Insurance and Fire Commissioner

Q: I've heard that the number of house fires goes up in the winter. Is that true, and if so, what causes these fires?

A: The number of house fires and fatalities does tend to increase during the winter months. Two of the leading causes of house fires are especially common this time of year: home heating (particularly portable heaters), and cooking accidents.

There were four fire fatalities in Georgia last year in fires caused by some type of portable heater. So far in 2009 there have already been three fatalities in fires started by a heater, and more cool weather is on the way. While portable heaters are safe if used properly - please read the manufacturer's instructions carefully - they can start fires if placed too close to beds or other furniture. Three feet is considered a safe distance. Also, extension cords can be dangerous when used on an electric heater, since the current draw can overheat the cord.

Cooking-related fires have caused eight deaths so far this year. With the holiday season approaching, much more cooking will be going on in kitchens across the state. Many of these fires are caused by a stove that has been accidentally left on. If given enough time, a stove

can heat a pan to the point that the metal melts.

That's why home safety experts recommend that you always set a timer when cooking, so you never forget to turn off the burners or oven. If a pan does catch fire, cover it with a lid immediately and turn off the burner. Don't attempt to fight a grease fire with water, as it may make the fire worse. While cooking, consider wearing clothing with tight-fitting sleeves. Loose clothing can contact a burner and ignite.

Finally, your home should have an adequate number of smoke alarms. Most fatal fires start between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m., while the family is asleep. The advance warning of a smoke alarm may mean the difference between life and death. Nine out of ten fire victims are already dead before the fire department is even called, mainly from smoke and toxic gases.

Please send your insurance questions to: Insurance Commissioner John Oxendine, 716 West Tower, 2 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, Atlanta, Georgia 30334. Or call 404-656-2070 (toll free at 1-800-656-2298), from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. weekdays, for assistance with an insurance question. Website www.gainsurance.org.



Community Calendar

Towns County Water Board Meeting 3rd Monday of each month at 7 p.m. in the TC Water Office Building.

Towns County AARP Chapter 1859 meets the second Thursday of each month at the Senior Center in Hiawassee at 2 p.m. Luncheons are held at 1 p.m.

Towns County Democratic Party meets at 6:30 every 2nd Thursday of the month at Crossroads Restaurant. Meeting begins at 6. Please call Julie Miller. (706) 896-6076.

Towns County Republican Party meets the 1st Tuesday of each month from 5 p.m.-6 p.m. Dinner at Daniels Steak House, 6:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. meeting, 896-7281.

Towns County Planning Commission is held the 2nd Monday of each month at 7 p.m. in the Courthouse.

Towns County Commissioners meeting is the 3rd Thursday at 5:30 p.m. in the courthouse.

School Board Meeting, 2nd Monday each month at 7 p.m. in the auditorium.

Hiawassee City Council 1st Tuesday of month 4 p.m., at City Hall.

Young Harris City Council, 1st Tuesday of month at 7 p.m., Young Harris City Hall.

The Hiawassee River Valley Kennel Club meetings are held at 7 p.m. the 1st Monday of each month at Brother's Res-

taurant on Hwy 64 in Murphy, NC. Call President Kit Miracle: 706 492 5253 or Peggy Moorman: 828 835 1082.

The Unicoy Masonic Lodge #259 meets on the 2nd Monday of the month at 7:30 p.m.

Board of Voter Registrars meets the 3rd Wednesday of the month at 4:30 p.m., Courthouse.

Towns County Board of Elections holds its monthly meetings on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at 4 p.m. at the Elections Office (Old Rock Jail).

Towns County Historical Society meets the 2nd Monday of each month at the Senior Center in Hiawassee at 5 p.m. Annual dues \$15. PO Box 932, Hiawassee, GA 706-896-1060, www.townshistory.org Bridge Players intermediate level meets at 12:45 p.m. on Mondays & Fridays at the Towns County Health Dept. Call Eden at 706-896-6921.

Mountain Regional Arts and Crafts Guild, Inc (MRACG) meets the 2nd Tuesday of each month at ArtWorks Artisan Centre, located at 308 Big Sky Drive (behind the Holiday Inn), Hiawassee. Refreshments at 6 p.m. & the meeting begins at 6:30 p.m. Contact us by calling 706-896-0932, mtnregarts-craftsguild.org. mtnregarts-craftsguild@hotmail.com. **VFW Post #7807 Fish Fry** will

be 2nd and 4th Friday of the month, 4:30-7 p.m., \$9 a plate, all you can eat.

Mountain Computer User Group meets the 2nd Monday of each month at the Goolsby Center at YHC. Q & A at 6 p.m., meeting at 7 p.m.

FPL Retirees Breakfast will meet the 2nd Tuesday of each month at the Hole in the Wall Restaurant on the square in Blairsville at 9 a.m.

Chattahoochee-Nantahala Chapter, Trout Unlimited meets 2nd Thursday of each month at Cadence Bank in Blairsville. 5 p.m. Fly Tying - 7 p.m. General Meeting. Everyone welcome. www.ngatu692.com.

Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) meets the 3rd Monday of each month at various area restaurants. For information call John Quinlan at 706-896-2430 or visit www.moaa.org/chapter/blueridge-mountains.

Alcoholics Anonymous: 24 hour phone line 828-837-4440.

Mothers of Preschoolers meets on the third Thursday of each month at First Baptist Church of Blairsville from 6 - 8 p.m. Call the church office at 706-745-2469 for more information.

Chatuge Regional Hospital Auxiliary on the 3rd Monday of each month, except the months of July, October and December. in the hospital cafeteria at 1:30