

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

# OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

## Not just another holiday

By the time this is published we will have witnessed and hopefully participated in another Memorial Day in the spirit for which it was intended. Tears, prayers, love of nation, et al! I was reminded by a WWII Veteran, just yesterday, that I should have written a Memorial Day article last week, as a reminder for this tribute honoring those who sacrificed their lives for our Sovereign Republic, hence all of us, thus our entire civilized world. However I had already prepared and deemed the article on "Agent Orange" to be of utmost importance, in hopes of assisting our current aging Vietnam Era Veterans, their families, encouraging them to take necessary steps to help themselves and our nation to pursue the necessary means and attempt to make much needed amends for the toxic devastation still being done to so many of our Veterans and families.

Just today, I received the following message in an email from another USCG Veteran and was inspired to do a "post Memorial Day" message: "The last Monday of this month is Memorial Day. For many of us, it's just a holiday we celebrate by getting the day off from work. For department stores, it's a day to have a sale so all the people getting the day off will come in and buy their goods. But, the truth is, it's a day we need set aside to remember the men and women that have fought and died so we can have the few freedoms we have left. They deserve so much more than just one day of remembrance, but let's give them at least that much.

Let's honor them this year by being thankful for what they gave for us.

This is a powerful story in history. Only a few Americans are alive now who lived in those times. I would guess that a lot of college students are not aware of these places, or how they happened. Sad commentary on History teachers."

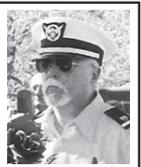
We, those of us who have been blessed to live here in Towns County and our wonderful North Georgia Mountains, also live amongst a large percentage of Veterans, many of whom have moved here for the obvious reasons, as well as to live the remainder of their lives in the peace, harmony and our relatively quiet, safe lifestyles provided by this small region of our America. However many of our Veterans, families and friends still work, volunteer their time, efforts and money, not just for community service, but to continue the pursuit and support of Honoring and Respecting those fallen Veterans and all Veterans who have served as best they can for you and I.

With that being said, and Memorial Day behind us, hopefully leading the way for a wonderful summer, let us all join our Veterans and never forget to honor Memorial Day and our Veterans Day. In our hearts, and our minds, these tributes should stand strong each and every day of the year.

*Semper Paratus*

### The Veterans' Corner

Scott Drummond  
USCG Veteran



## No-Till Farming & Cover Crops

Chestatee/Chattahoochee RC&D Council is involved in many projects that involve conserving and managing our natural resources and helping our farmers "feed the world".

One of our current projects is Soil Health field days for small landowners where soil experts demonstrate farming methods that can conserve the soil and make it more productive. Growing crops with minimal soil disturbance by not plowing is called No-Till or conservation tillage.

No-till planting process inserts seed in the soil without breaking the surface except for a small slit where the seeds are placed by special planters. No-till planting is a method where seeds are planted in stubble from a cover crop. A cover crop is a crop planted primarily to manage soil erosion, soil fertility, soil quality, water, weeds, pests, diseases, biodiversity and wildlife. Cover crops are of interest in sustainable agriculture as many of them improve the sustainability of agroecosystem attributes. Although cover crops can perform multiple functions in an agroecosystem simultaneously, they are often grown for the sole purpose of preventing soil erosion.

Vast cover crop root networks help anchor the soil in place and increase soil porosity, creating suitable habitat networks for soil macrofauna. One of the primary uses of cover crops is to increase soil fertility. Cover Crops are used to manage a range of soil macro and micronutrients. Of the various nutrients, the main impact that cover crops have is on nitrogen management, because nitrogen is often the most limiting nutrient in crop production.

Cover crops are commonly leguminous which are typically high in nitrogen and can often provide the required quantity of nitrogen for crop production. Another quality unique to leguminous cover crops is that they form symbiotic relationships with the rhizobial bacteria that reside in legume root nodules. These bacteria convert biologically unavailable atmospheric nitrogen gas to biologically available ammonium through the process of biological nitrogen fixation. Cover crops can also improve soil quality by increasing soil organic matter levels through the input of cover crop biomass over time. Increased soil organic matter enhances soil structure, as well as the water and nutrient holding and buffering capacity of soil. It can also lead to increased soil carbon sequestration, which has been promoted as a strategy to help offset the rise in atmospheric carbon dioxide levels.

By reducing soil erosion, cover crops often also reduce both the rate and quantity of water that drains off the field, which would normally pose environmental risks to waterways and ecosystems downstream. Cover crop biomass acts as a physical barrier between rainfall and the soil surface, allowing raindrops to steadily trickle down through the soil profile. Also, as stated above, cover crop root growth results in the formation of soil pores, which in addition to enhancing soil macrofauna habitat provides pathways for water to filter through the soil profile rather than draining off the field as surface flow. With increased water infiltration, the potential for soil water storage and the recharging of aquifers can be improved.

Just before cover crops are killed, by such practices including mowing, tilling, disking, rolling, or herbicide application, they contain a large amount of moisture. When the cover crop is incorporated into the soil, or left on the soil surface, it often increases soil moisture. Cover crops can also be used as a mulch to conserve water by shading and cooling the soil surface. This reduces evaporation of soil some cover crops suppress weeds both during growth and after death. During growth these cover crops compete vigorously with weeds for available space, light, and nutrients, and after death they smother the next flush of weeds by forming a mulch layer on the soil surface.

In the same way that cover crops can suppress weeds, they can also break disease cycles and reduce fungal diseases, and parasitic nematodes. Some cover crops are used as so-called "trap crops", to attract pests away from the crop of value and toward what the pest sees as a more favorable habitat. Trap crop areas can be established within crops, within farms, or within landscapes.

In many cases the trap crop is grown during the same season as the food crop being produced. The limited area occupied by these trap crops can be treated with a pesticide once pests are drawn to the trap in large enough numbers to reduce the pest populations. No-till farming with cover crops not only improves the soil but it reduces fossil fuel use which saves the farmer money and reduces all sorts of things that affect the world around us.

For more information on cover crops or any of the programs provided by Chestatee-Chattahoochee RC&D contact Frank Riley, Executive Director at: info.ccrd@gmail.com.

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### RC&D

Frank Riley  
Executive Director



## Fire Blight

As trees begin to fruit and we look forward to harvesting our apples, pears, cherries and other tasty treats, we need to be diligent in scouting our fruit trees for diseases. One devastating disease that has plagued many in this region is fire blight. This harmful plant illness is caused by a type of bacteria known as *Erwinia amylovora* and can ruin leaves, fruit, and even kill several types of trees.

We first start to see fire blight symptoms right about now, in the early to mid-spring. The disease is worst when temperatures are between sixty to seventy degrees and the weather is moist. Unfortunately, over the past few weeks, our weather has fit this exact description. If a tree is infected, the flowers will often turn black and die, and the disease will progress up the branches until the branch tips also die. Instead of falling off the tree, the leaves will shrivel up, turn brown and hang down from the branch, giving it a characteristic "shepherd's hook" shape. On the main part of the branch, or stem, sunken areas known as cankers may appear.

This disease affects numerous species and varieties of trees. The most commonly infected are apples and pears, though plums, cherries, and almond trees are also susceptible. Even roses and other ornamental plants can be damaged by the bacteria, so it is important to keep an eye on both fruit trees and ornamentals throughout the growing season.

There is no cure for fire blight once a tree becomes infected. However, there are numerous preventative options that producers and homeowners can use to protect an outbreak on their property. Many varieties of trees that are resistant to fire blight are available for purchase. Though a resistant plant may still become infected to some extent if the local conditions are favorable enough for the pathogen, they will tolerate it better and the disease will be easier to manage. Also, always make sure all pruning and collecting equipment is adequately cleaned. Because the bacteria are found in the branches, healthy trees may be infected by dirty pruners that have come into contact with infected sap.

The best way to make sure that your trees stay fire blight free is to proactively treat them with chemicals that prevent the establishment of the disease. Treat trees before bloom with a copper fungicide, and during bloom with streptomycin every three to four days as long as blossoms are present. These are the only two times that you can prevent the spread of fire blight, because the bacteria enter the tree through the blooms. Streptomycin is only a preventative and can only be used during bloom because you cannot harvest fruit less than fifty days after application. If you use copper fungicides or streptomycin to prevent fire blight, remember to follow all mixing directions on the label very carefully.

If you do have a tree that is severely affected by fire blight, the best course of action is to wait until winter to do heavy pruning. When trees are pruned in the summer, more buds could sprout and provide more material for the fire blight bacterium to infect. Instead, remove damaged wood during normal cold weather pruning. Fire blight infected wood will be a dark brown or blackish color and have a burned appearance, much different than the reddish new growth of the previous spring. Remove all infected wood from susceptible plants as the bacteria overwinter in the branches.

For more information on fire blight resistant tree varieties, stop by your extension office.



From the Ground Up  
Melissa Mattee



## Letters to The Editor

Dear Editor:

*America, It Is Time To Open Our Eyes:*

Whether we look at the newspaper headlines, the overwhelming preponderance of scientific evidence, or even the signs nature itself is giving us, the evidence now is overwhelming of the truth of climate change, with all of its potential dangers. Recent headlines tell of record breaking temperatures, the danger of the Totten glacier in Antarctica becoming destabilized, and CO2 levels reaching 400 for the first time in 3 million years. Now over 97% of climatologists agree with the science of global warming. 195 nations have all agreed to act on climate change. Nature itself is speaking to us. Glaciers are shrinking, sea level is rising, permafrost melting, and lakes, rivers, and oceans are warming. Leaves are unfolding and flowers blooming earlier in spring, with farmers planting earlier in the spring. Birds are arriving earlier during migration periods, and plants and animals are moving their habitat northward due to warmer temperatures.

Fortunately, many studies show that we can act to combat climate change while actually helping our economy. Alternative energy is now very competitive, and switching to a clean energy economy will help America lead the world into the Green Energy future. There are many plans to do this, but the best one is Citizens Climate Lobby's carbon fee and dividend plan. This plan places a steadily increasing price on the production of CO2 to account for the external costs of fossil fuels and returns all the money to us, the citizens. Studies show that this will decrease greenhouse gases by 60% over the 20 years of the plan as well as increasing the real spendable income of 2/3 of Americans, adding 2.8 million additional jobs, and increasing the GDP by \$1.375 trillion over those 20 years.

Now, that is a plan we can all live with-a true WIN/WIN solution! For the sake of our children, let us act now! And if the 3 in 100 chances are proved true and climate change is not happening, future generations would be stuck with a healthier, more prosperous America!

*Vernon Dixon, MD*

## Have something to sell?

Let the Herald work for you!

**Deadline for the Towns County Herald is Friday by 5 PM**  
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*Note: All letters must be signed, and contain the first and last name and phone number for verification.*

## Towns County Community Calendar

Bridge Players	Village Condos Clubhouse	12:30 pm
Bingo	Brasstown Manor	9:30 am
Free GED prep.	Old Rec. Center	4 pm
SMART Recovery	Red Cross Building	7 pm
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Bridge Players	Village Condos Clubhouse	12:30 pm
Alcoholics Anon.	Red Cross Building	7 pm
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Mtn. Amat. Radio	1298 Jack Dayton Cir.	6:30 pm
Alzheimer's Supp.	McConnell Church	1:30 pm
American Legion	VFW Post 7807	4 pm
Hiaw. City Council	City Hall	5:30 pm
Young Harris Coun.	YH City Hall	7 pm
Quilting Bee	McConnell Church	10 am
Stephens Lodge	Lodge Hall	7:30 pm
Chamber Board	1411 Jack Dayton Cir.	8 am
Historical Society	Old Rec. Center	5:30 pm
Mtn. Comp. Users	www.mcug.org	6 pm
Planning Comm.	Courthouse	7 pm
School Board	Auditorium	7 pm
Unicoy Masonic	Lodge Hall	7:30 pm

## Towns County Herald

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Publication No: 635540

Advertising, News deadlines: Friday at 5 p.m.

Towns County (1 Year) \$20. Out of County (1 Year) \$30. Entered as second-class matter on November 8, 1928, at the post office at Hiawassee, Georgia under Act of March 3, 1879. With additional mailing points. The Towns County Herald is not responsible for errors in advertising beyond the cost of the actual space involved. All advertisements are accepted subject to the Publisher's approval of the copy and to the space being available, and the Publisher reserves the right to refuse any advertisement. **Postmaster:** Send change of address to: Towns County Herald, P.O. Box 365, Hiawassee, GA 30546.

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