

Opinions

Everybody has one...

StormReady® Certification

Union County Renews StormReady® Certification - The weather has been a major topic in the last couple of weeks. We have had some unusually warm weather and a significant storm came through on January 11th. This storm brought rain, high winds, and an EF1 tornado which touched down in the Cooper's Creek area at the Fannin/Union Line. This storm resulted in some damage to buildings, power outages, blocked roads and downed trees throughout Union County. It was a good example of why we must keep informed and be prepared for weather.

Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief
David Dyer



A significant amount of the Emergency Management's time is spent preparing for, responding to, or recovering from a severe weather event. Preparing for severe weather is not only an Emergency Management responsibility but a community's responsibility. The National Weather Service recognizes a community's effort to be prepared for severe weather with its StormReady® program.

Union County is proud to be a StormReady® Community and has been for over 18 years. According to the National Weather Service, "Some 98 percent of all presidentially declared disasters are weather related, leading to around 500 deaths per year and nearly \$15 billion in damage. The StormReady program helps arm America's communities with the communication and safety skills needed to save lives and property--before, during and after the event." Being a StormReady® Community, Union County is better prepared to deal with severe weather.

To become a StormReady® Community, a community must complete the requirements established by the National Weather Service. The requirements include: establishing a 24-hour warning point and emergency operations center; having more than one way to receive severe weather warnings/forecasts and to alert the public; creating a system that monitors weather conditions locally; promoting the importance of public readiness through community seminars; and developing a formal hazardous weather plan, which includes training severe weather spotters and holding emergency exercises.

Union County has met all requirements for the StormReady® Community. We have recently renewed our classification which is

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Lasting Beauty

Julie Andrews famously sang about "raindrops on roses and whiskers on kittens." Her favorite things included "girls in white dresses with blue satin sashes, snowflakes that stay on my nose and eyelashes."

The lyrics work because we never tire of beauty. C.S. Lewis wrote, "We want something else which can hardly be put into words -- to be united with the beauty we see, to pass into it, to receive it into ourselves, to become part of it" ("The Weight of Glory"). God has created us with a yearning for more of the beauty we see, but that desire will not be satisfied this side of eternal glory.

About glory the Bible says, "We do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the (temporal) things which are seen, but the (eternal) things which are not seen" (2 Cor. 4:16-18). Whatever weighty glory awaits, it is beyond our earthly experience, we won't know it until we see it, and it is beautiful beyond imagination. Is that not the beauty we truly desire?

In a fable, Lewis describes a woman thrown into a dungeon where she bears and raises a son. A grating above is the only glimpse of the outside world. With pad and pencil, she sketches fields, rivers, and mountains to explain that the world is far more glorious than their dungeon. One day, she realizes that he doesn't get it. "You didn't think that the real world was full of lines drawn in lead pencil?" "What?" says the boy. "No pencil marks there?" He could not imagine the color, contours, and movement of nature that would make the black, static lines disappear. Likewise, we cannot imagine the "things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard...that God has prepared for those who love Him" (1 Cor. 2:9).

You are hard-wired with an appreciation for beauty. Not only is that evidence for the existence of God (for what evolutionary purpose are you enraptured by brilliant sunset hues of orange and pink?) but also it hints at what is to come. When you experience beauty, remember the promise of an eternal weight

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All Things New
Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

I received this question and it reminds me that there are people who may be new residents or who simply do not fully understand the inner workings of different governments and the laws related to living in Georgia. I will try to explain some of these differences through the following questions.

Q. I live in a subdivision and my neighbor has given someone permission to hunt on their land. Can you do an ordinance to prevent him from being able to do this in our subdivision?

A. Residential subdivision covenants and restrictions are not county ordinances, but rules that subdivision owners must follow. Like any rule of law, if no one enforces them then they have little to no impact. Few, if any, subdivisions that have covenants and restrictions allow hunting or gun use. The problem with covenants and restrictions is that no two subdivisions have the same requirements. They are usually all slightly different. Covenants and restrictions are created when individual developers subdivide the property. Homeowners should look carefully at the covenants and restrictions when purchasing property. I suggest that all persons looking to purchase property first look to see if covenants and restrictions exist. Then be sure the requirements are something that you agree with prior to purchasing.

Q. Who controls subdivision covenants and restrictions?

A. Usually it is the property owners as a group. You would need to carefully read your documents and consult an attorney if you have questions.

Q. How do we change our covenants and restrictions, if needed?

A. Covenants and restrictions usually provide guidelines on how/when they can be changed or updated. If there is no direct guideline in your document, all property owners will need to get together and agree to any changes needed. Some subdivisions have homeowners' associations and these homeowners associations usually have elected officers to help facilitate the change process.

Q. So, if my neighbor has the legal right to let his friend hunt on his adjacent property, what if he shoots a deer and it

Q & A from Union County Commissioner
Lamar Paris



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Drug Free Mountain Life

The Importance of Early Prevention

Why is adolescence a critical time for preventing drug addiction? Early use of drugs increases a person's chances of becoming addicted. Remember, drugs change the brain—and this can lead to addiction and other serious problems. So, preventing early use of drugs or alcohol may go a long way in reducing these risks.

The DRUG FREE MOUNTAIN LIFE campaign supports an overall safe community by providing information, education and support services to children, families, and community toward prevention of illegal substance abuse.

Risk of drug use increases greatly during times of transition. For an adult, a divorce or loss of a job may increase the risk of drug use. For a teenager, risky times include moving, family divorce, or changing schools. When children advance from elementary through middle school, they face new and challenging social, family, and academic situations. Often during this period, children are exposed to substances such as cigarettes and alcohol for the first time. When they enter high school, teens may encounter

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Why teacher pay raises should matter.

Why teacher pay raises really matter.

Chamber of Commerce

With the new opportunities available in Blairsville we need to continue to search for ways to grow our workforce. We are working with the Union County School System, North Georgia Tech, University of North Georgia and Young Harris College to grow our workforce from within. With an unemployment rate ranging from 3% to 3.5% we are at full employment and this basically means that everyone that wants to work and can work is working. Commissioner Paris and Mayor Conley continue their efforts to make Blairsville-Union County one of the best locations to live in Georgia, while Union County Health System continues to expand services that best serve our population. We recently heard from Dr. Jacob Stirton at our Monthly Hearing discussing what is going on with the Union General Sports Medicine Program. It wasn't long ago that we had to travel over the mountain to get our Orthopedic needs met and now we have a Sports Medicine Clinic that is using some of the most

Blairsville - Union County Chamber President
Steve Rowe



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Letters to the Editor

Thank You

Dear Editor,
Thank you for including in the Jan. 15 edition of the North Georgia News the article written by Mark Smith concerning the ultrasound machine donation to the Georgia Mountain Pregnancy Center (GMPC) by the Knights of Columbus at St. Francis of Assisi parish.

On behalf of the Knights and GMPC, we are grateful that Mark spent a goodly amount of time to visit us on Dec. 20, 2019, to gather pertinent information and document the significance of this event. Please thank him for his commendable effort.

We thank you again for including our story in the newspapers serving our area.

Sincerely,
Ron Chmiel, Knights of Columbus
St. Francis of Assisi, Blairsville

Climate Change (Global Warming)

Dear Editor,
After their teachers tell some youth about the dangers of climate change they experience anxiety levels that are extreme! Why would teachers do this, what is their goal for doing this? Someone said we only have 12 years to save the earth. I wonder what God says?

Well, let's try talking about the facts. Climate Change is a natural phenomenon and it has been going on since the beginning of time! Climate change occurs as the Sun and Earth change positions in our solar system. Changes happen four times a year and the seasons are called Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter! Now for some real scientific analysis.

Scientist Joseph Priestly (1733-1804) is credited with discovering oxygen. He found a definite relationship between plants and animals living together. It was not until the 1940s that scientists really began to unravel the mysteries of plant growth through the dynamic process called Photosynthesis.

All life on earth depends directly or indirectly on Photosynthesis - the process by which plants transform light energy from the sun into chemical energy that drives the plant growth process. The chemistry for this to occur is complex, involving more than 16 chemical reactions, but this can be summarized by the following simplified equation:

Chlorophyll (a green pigment found in plants) + Carbon Dioxide (6CO2) + Water (6H2O) = Glucose (C6H12O6) + Oxygen (6O2) + Energy (ATP), a high energy molecule.

Light energy trapped by the chlorophyll molecule causes carbon dioxide and water to combine and form glucose and other sugars, ultimately

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Ichauway Plantation

This week I am honored to be a guest at the Woodruff House on Ichauway Plantation in Baker County, GA. I lived for two days like the elite did in years past, when many well-known, famous people spent time as Mr. Woodruff's guests on Ichauway. I know it is a tough life, but somebody must do it!

I tried my best to endure the wining and dining and waiting on hand and foot that they provide just like when Mr. Woodruff was here. I spent a whole day on a horse riding with bird dog handlers and horse handlers hunting wild quail on Ichauway. There were only two of us on each hunting party attended by five hunt guides and a matched pair of mules pulling a wagon that carried six bird dogs and a Labrador retriever as we hunted the elusive wild quail. We found 10 coveys under the longleaf pine stands that are well manicured and maintained just for quail hunting.

You can't ask to go to Ichauway but must be invited by someone there who has permission from the Woodruff Foundation that runs the plantation, and invitations are hard to come by. The governor could not get an open date to go there! There were only four of us on our two days there: Chuck Williams, Director of Georgia Forestry Commission, Shardul Raval, Director of Fire and Aviation for Region 8 U.S. Forest Service, Mike Worley, Executive Director and CEO of the Georgia Wildlife Federation and me. We are all part of the Georgia Prescribed Fire Council (I am President), and our host was Mark Melvin, who works at the Joseph W. Jones Ecological Research Center. Mark is also leader of the national Prescribed Fire group of councils. I felt like I was in the presence of Royalty! In fact, I told the horse handler that I wasn't Royalty, and he said, "But I will treat you like you are!"

The Joseph W. Jones Center for Ecological Research is located on Ichauway and was founded on a longstanding ethic of conserving land and water resources, and many scientists use it for research on many natural resource subjects. Ichauway is maintained as the tangible expression of this natural resource management philosophy. Central to this philosophy is the conviction that management and research inform each other and are partners in their contribution to knowledge. The Joseph W. Jones Ecological Research Center is located on Ichauway, a 29,000-acre property in rural southwestern Georgia. Ichauway was established as a quail hunting reserve in the 1920s by Robert W. Woodruff, who became the long-term chairman of The Coca-Cola Company. An avid outdoorsman, Woodruff recognized

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RC&D Executive Director
Frank Riley



Shirley's Memories

Her father was a man of few words, and although he seemed to enjoy life, I can only remember hearing him laugh a few times. But, each time I heard his laughter it was always a subdued chuckle. But, that night in 1954 was a night which was extremely enjoyable for him, because he experienced both joy and pride in his daughter's accomplishment, and he exhibited that joy for all to see and hear.

His daughter, Shirley, was a ninth-grader. She was in her last year of Junior High School and playing on the girls basketball team at the Enterprise School located over around the Gray Rock Community. In those days, the girls played only half court. Now, she was not the most gifted athlete, but, she enjoyed playing and being with her friends at the games. During a time when there were few televisions and radios, ball games were events which drew the entire community together. There were few seats in the small gymnasium, yet that particular night the place was full with people standing anywhere there was a space available.

The girls team was playing, and she received a pass. After her first dribble, she side-stepped the defender and drove to the basket for a layup. The timid young lady had never been a scoring machine, and it was a surprise to her when the ball dropped through the net. This happened three more times, and each time, the ball went into the basket. Soon her teammates were feeding her the ball, and she missed only a few shots that night. It was a magical night for her. The crowd was enjoying the game which was demonstrated to her and the team by their loud applause. But, what really was pleasing to her was the laughter of her Daddy.

Each time she scored, Bill Adams could be heard laughing, and the laughter was louder than the other 300 people attending the ball game. He was proud of his young daughter. Her best friend was Geneva Trapp, whose father was Skeeter. Shirley spent a lot of time with her friend whose place was across Little Bear Creek. When traveling between the Adams place and the Trapp place, the girls had to walk by the old home place of Maw Baker.

The girls' friendship was forged here because the old home place was rumored to be haunted by my mother's great-grandmother. It was said that late at night you could see Mandy Baker rocking in her rocking chair while sitting on a natural rock bridge along the road between the two girls' houses. So, each time they walked past, it was always in the daylight, and they never tarried too long.

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Around The Farm
Mickey Cummings



Mulch

Mulch is a very important tool in any gardener's toolkit. In addition, it does a lot more than simply make beds look nicer. Mulch serves a variety of different purposes that are beneficial to plants around your house. Let's talk about the different types of mulch that are out there and how they can help you have healthy plants.

There are many different types of mulches out there. Some of the most common kinds of mulches are bark, compost, leaves, newspaper, pine needles, straw, and wood chips. If you are using bark for mulch usually small chunks is going to be better because large chunks are more susceptible to being washed away. Compost can be a very beneficial mulch. What separates compost from the other mulches on this list is that compost is capable of providing nitrogen to plants. Leaves are a good cheap source of mulch for many people. Many times, there's nothing wrong with taking leaves that have fallen and applying them around the base of plants. The only time when applying leaves as a mulch is not a good idea is if the leaves have a disease in them. Those leaves should be removed to prevent the disease from spreading to the next season. It's also good if you can shred the leaves before applying them so that they don't become matted. Newspaper serves as a good undermulch. Placing pine needles or straw on top will keep the newspaper from blowing away. Pine needles look good as mulch. They can make the soil more acidic over time, but that is a slow process. Straw can be an effective mulch, but it's not as long lasting as some of the other mulches described here. Straw will also sometimes contain weed seeds. Wood chips are a long lasting mulch. They can last two years.

One of the benefits of mulch is weed suppression. When it's applied thick enough, mulch creates a barrier that blocks sunlight and creates a physical barrier preventing unwanted plants from growing. Once summer is in full effect mulch can go a long way to make your job of weeding easier. Mulch can help with disease suppression in the case of mummyberry on blueberries. Mulch will bury the disease.

Mulch also benefits moisture retention in the soil. When there are hot dry summers the mulch will serve as insulation against the sun and the wind, reducing the amount of water that is lost. The insulation from mulch also helps moderate soil temperatures. That doesn't mean mulch can keep your soil from freezing, but it can give you a buffer of a few degrees if temperatures are fluctuating.

One thing to keep in mind when applying

Watching and Working
Jacob Williams



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