

## SUSTAINABILITY DEPARTMENT



WELCOME TO OUR

# Monthly Newsletter

Welcome to our monthly newsletter! We are thrilled be able to share what we are doing at the Athens-Clarke County Sustainability Department with you. Join us each month as we explore all things sustainability and how you can get involved!

*Putting Energy into  
Greener Spaces*



**In this newsletter you will find:**

Latest projects, free resources, and upcoming events!

# Mimosa

## INVASIVE SPECIES OF THE MONTH

CHRISTIAN SNEAD

Mimosa, also known as silk tree or silky acacia, is easy to spot along roadsides and woodland edges this time of year thanks to its showy pink flowers. Native to Asia, it was introduced to the United States in the late 1700s. Some sources credit French botanist André Michaux with bringing seeds from Persia to his nursery in Charleston, South Carolina. By the early 1800s, mimosa was being sold commercially, and by 1950, it had become established in the wild in Georgia. Today, it grows in more than half of the U.S. and is considered a highly invasive species throughout the Southeast.

Mimosa is a small deciduous tree that usually grows 10 to 15 feet tall, though it can reach up to 40 feet. It may have a single trunk or multiple stems. Its leaves are feathery and fern-like, with a twice-pinnate structure.



MIMOSA LEAVES  
PHOTO CREDIT: JAMES H. MILLER,  
USDA FOREST SERVICE, BUGWOOD

### COMPOUND LEAVES



TWICE PINNATE



PINNATE



PALMATE

 thedailyECO

DIAGRAM CREDIT: ["WHAT IS A COMPOUND LEAF IN PLANTS?"](#)  
BY GUILIA GRAZIATI, THEDAILYECO

JOIN US EACH MONTH IN THIS NEW SERIES AS WE LEARN ABOUT DIFFERENT INVASIVE SPECIES!

The tree flowers from May through August, producing clusters of fragrant, silky, pink pompom-shaped blooms at the tips of its branches.

Mimosa fruit forms in long, flat pods about six inches in length. These pods grow in clusters and change from light green to brown in late summer before splitting open to release 5 to 10 oval-shaped seeds. The seeds have hard, waterproof coats that allow them to stay dormant in the soil for up to five years.



Like many invasive species, mimosa spreads quickly. It produces large numbers of seeds and can also regenerate through root suckers—shoots that grow from the base roots and can form new trees. Mimosa thrives in disturbed soils and is commonly found along roadsides, stream banks, forest edges, open lots, and even shaded areas. While it grows best in full sun and well-drained soil, it easily tolerates drought, poor soil, shade, flooding, wind, and salt. Mimosa also alters the nitrogen levels in the soil, helping itself grow while harming native plants and disrupting natural habitats.

Several methods are effective for removing mimosa. For small seedlings, manual removal works well—especially if done before the plant sets seed. Be sure to remove the entire root system to prevent re-sprouting. For larger trees, cutting them down and applying herbicide to the freshly cut surface is more effective. A diluted solution of either glyphosate or triclopyr can be used to kill the remaining root system and prevent regrowth.



PHOTO CREDIT (LEFT, TOP): CHRIS, EVANS UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS, BUGWOOD

PHOTO CREDIT (TOP, RIGHT): LESLEY INGRAM, BUGWOOD

PHOTO CREDIT (BOTTOM, RIGHT): FRANKLIN BONNER, USFS(RET.), BUGWOOD

# TIPS FOR A GREENER LIFESTYLE!

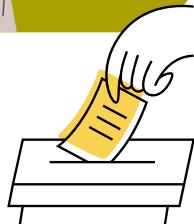
## *How can we live sustainably?*

IN THIS SERIES WE EXPLORE HOW WE CAN BE SUSTAINABLE TOGETHER, RIGHT HERE IN ATHENS-CLARKE COUNTY!



THIS MONTH'S TOPIC:

## SUMMER ENERGY SAVINGS

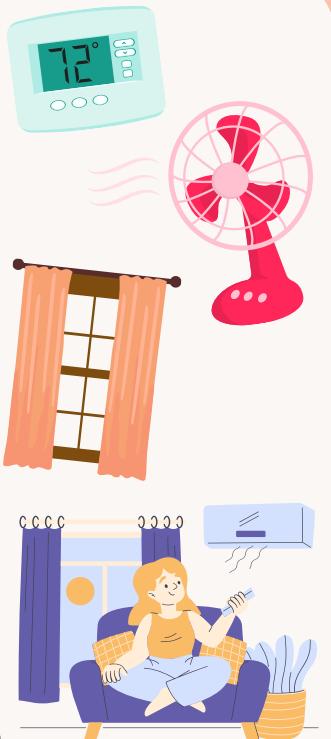


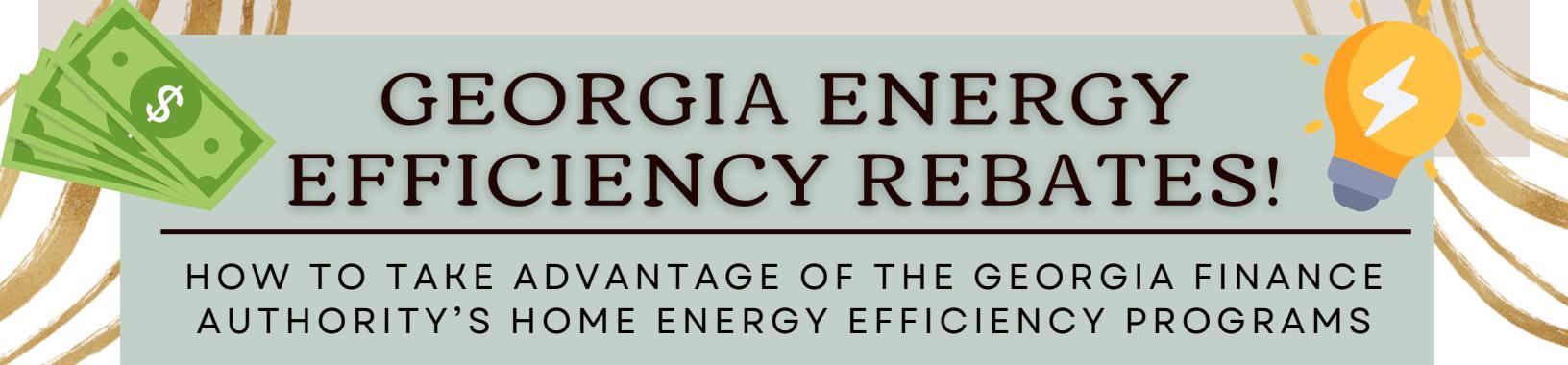
HANNAH CHAFFEE

School may be out but summer is in! Whether you're headed on a lavish tropical vacation or simply trying to beat the heat in town, we've got a couple tips and tricks to help keep your energy bill low —even in rising temperatures!

### SAVE MONEY ...AND ENERGY

- It is generally recommended to **keep the thermostat set to 78 degrees in the summer** for optimal energy savings ([Georgia Power](#)).
- We've said it before, and we'll say it again: **turn on your fans!** Fans can make your space feel 5 degrees cooler improving your comfort without having to turn down the AC ([Georgia Power](#)).
- And remember to **close your blinds or curtains during the day** to block sunlight from adding extra heat to a room.
- **Bump up your AC when heading into work or going on vacation!** The US Department of Energy reports households can expect to save ~10% of energy costs by bumping up the temperature by 7-10 degrees for the work day. Note: It is generally not recommended to simply turn off your AC as it takes more energy to cool down a very hot house vs keeping a unit at a specific temperature. Also, remember to be mindful of the comfort of pets (or plants!) along with the temperature range any medication should be stored at. ([US Department of Energy](#))





# GEORGIA ENERGY EFFICIENCY REBATES!

## HOW TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE GEORGIA FINANCE AUTHORITY'S HOME ENERGY EFFICIENCY PROGRAMS

The Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA) is a state managed organization that provides financing for water, wastewater, solid waste, and land conservation investments while also administering energy efficiency and renewable energy programs. GEFA currently has two rebate programs for home energy efficiency, electrification and appliance upgrades:

### HOME ELECTRIFICATION AND APPLIANCE REBATE (HEAR) PROGRAM

The Home Electrification and Appliance Rebate program (HEAR) provides point-of-sale rebates to households on specific energy efficiency home upgrades, primarily focusing on appliances and electrification. The contractor/installer passes on rebate savings to the household. This program also offers a DIY Pathway for homeowners or tenants interested in replacing/installing kitchen appliances themselves. HEAR is open to Georgia residents with less than 150% of the areas median income (AMI) in their county.

Income Eligibility	Rebate
Below 80% AMI	Up to 100% of the total project cost.
At or above 80% to 150% AMI	Up to 50% of the total project cost.

### HOME EFFICIENCY REBATES (HER) PROGRAM

The Home Efficiency Rebates (HER) provides Georgia households rebates for energy saving home improvements. Households must first have a program-approved contractor conduct a home energy assessment. This assessment will determine which home upgrades will improve the comfort and energy savings of a home. Contractors pass rebate savings on to the homeowner. This rebate ranges from \$2,000 to \$16,000 per household. The rebate value is determined by a combination of a household's income relative to their local area's median income (AMI) and the total expected energy savings of the home improvements. This program is also open to multifamily buildings.

AMI Category	Savings Range	Incentive Limit	Max Incentive
Less than 80%	20%-34%	Up to 98%	\$10,000
	Greater Than or Equal To 35%	Up to 98%	\$16,000
Greater Than or Equal to 80%	20%-34%	Up to 50%	\$2,000
	Greater Than or Equal to 35%	Up to 50%	\$4,000

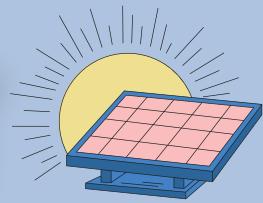
[US Housing and Urban Development Department FY 2025 Income for Athens-Clarke County](#)

	Persons in Family							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
80% of AMI	\$52,850	\$60,400	\$67,950	\$75,450	\$81,500	\$87,550	\$93,600	\$99,600

**TO LEARN MORE AND APPLY [CLICK HERE!](#)**



# Memorial Park Solar



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Hannah Chaffee

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Located just south of Five Points, [Memorial Park](#) holds a special place in Athens' heart. Home to Athens Creative Theatre (Quinn Hall) and the Bear Hollow Zoo which shelters a variety of non-releasable native animals, park goers can enjoy both black bears and ballads!

The parks' 72 acre expanse features a pool (recently opened for the summer season), a dog park, several basketball courts, and the scenic Birchmore Trail.

... And as of last week, the park also boasts a ~30 kilowatt (sized) solar system located on the Recreation Hall! While you may not be able to see this system from the ground, these panels —funded through SPLOST 2020 Project 11— will produce over 30,000 kilowatt hours of energy a year, equivalent to ~40% of the buildings' energy needs and three times what an average household uses in energy annually.

"We certainly look forward to [the energy saving]," said Memorial Park Facilities Supervisor John McKinney about the solar installation.

When asked what the resident bears Athena (15) and Yonah (15) thought of the newly installed solar, Kelly Garrison the Zoo's Coordinator said "As the trouble-maker, Athena would think the panels were a new toy to break, but Yonah who is the rule-follower would try to explain to her that renewable energy is the best practice for a sustainable future." Luckily for Yonah, the bear enclosure is more than capable of keeping Athena's mischief from Memorial Parks' solar panels!



‘Winded Energy’ AFTER EMPLOYEE VOLLEYBALL FINALS

## Employee Volleyball

‘Winded Energy’ FOR THE WIN!

HANNAH CHAFFEE

Athens-Clarke County Sustainability Department rounded out their first foray into the annual ACC Employee Volleyball League earlier this month, making it to the semi-finals in the season-end tournament. The team, known as Winded Energy, primarily consisted of Sustainability Department staff but was lucky enough to also have Tucker Duval from the Finance Department and Dogacan (Will) Williams from the ACC Police Department on the team.

The team also included Habitat Techs Imir Robinson and Bay Noland-Armstrong, Ecological Resource Coordinator and Team Captain

Stephanie Green, Program Support Specialist Hannah Chaffee, and “Energy Guy” Joey Crews who could be seen wearing his game day Bluey shirt to every match.

The team won the unofficial ‘Most Improved’ award thanks to Stephanie Green’s killer serve and the expert coaching of the team’s MVP Will. Habitat Tech Bay Noland-Armstrong was a key player throughout the season but was offered a job conducting avian field research in Oregon and had to leave before the season concluded. She will be deeply missed both on and off the court!

The team is excited to play again next year with championship hopes. Until then they’ll be “warming the bench but not the planet!”



SUSTAINABILITY STAFF (LEFT TO RIGHT) IMIR ROBINSON, HANNAH CHAFFEE, BAY NOLAND-ARMSTRONG, CHRISTIAN SNEAD, AND STEPHANIE GREEN AT AUGAR PLAZA CLEAN-UP VOLUNTEER DAY

# MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD!

## GEORGIA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSIONER ELECTION FOR DISTRICTS 2 & 3

**SPECIAL PRIMARY: JUNE 17<sup>TH</sup> 2025**

**(IF NEEDED) SPECIAL PRIMARY RUNOFF: JULY 15<sup>TH</sup> 2025**

**SPECIAL ELECTION: NOVEMBER 4<sup>TH</sup> 2025**

**(IF NEEDED) SPECIAL ELECTION RUNOFF: DECEMBER 2<sup>ND</sup> 2025**

All Georgia residents vote  
for every district,  
regardless of where you live  
in Georgia!



### REGISTER TO VOTE

Are you registered to vote? If this will be your first time voting you will have to register to vote. You only have to register to vote once, however if you have moved, you may have to update your voter registration. To do so or to register to vote [here](#)!

**LAST DAY TO REGISTER TO VOTE IN THE SPECIAL ELECTION PRIMARY: MONDAY MAY 19<sup>TH</sup> '25**

**LAST DAY TO REGISTER TO VOTE IN SPECIAL ELECTION: MONDAY OCTOBER 6<sup>TH</sup> '25**

### EARLY VOTING

Early voting takes place Monday through Saturday May 27th through June 13<sup>th</sup>. Below are the Early Voting locations and hours for Athens-Clarke County. You can vote at any early voting location within your registered county (compared to Election Day voting which requires you to vote in your precinct). You will need to bring a valid photo ID or a voter identification card.

**Athens-Clarke County Elections Office  
155 E. Washington Street Athens GA 30601**

**Tuesday May 27<sup>th</sup>-Friday May 30<sup>th</sup>:** 8:00am-5:00pm  
**Saturday May 31<sup>st</sup>:** 9:00am-5:00pm  
**Monday June 2<sup>nd</sup> -Friday June 6<sup>th</sup>:** 8:00am-5:00pm  
**Saturday June 7<sup>th</sup>:** 9:00am - 5:00pm  
**Monday June 9<sup>th</sup> -Tuesday June 10<sup>th</sup>:** 8:00am-5:00pm  
**Wednesday June 11<sup>th</sup>:** 8:00am-7:00pm  
**Thursday June 12<sup>th</sup> -Friday June 13<sup>th</sup>:** 8:00am-5:00pm

**Athens-Clarke County Regional Library  
2025 Baxter Street Athens GA 30606**

**Saturday June 7<sup>th</sup>:** 9:00am - 5:00pm  
**Monday June 9<sup>th</sup>:** 8:00am - 5:00pm  
**Tuesday June 10<sup>th</sup>:** 8:00am - 5:00pm  
**Wednesday June 11<sup>th</sup>:** 8:00am - 7:00pm  
**Thursday June 12<sup>th</sup>:** 8:00am - 5:00pm  
**Friday June 13<sup>th</sup>:** 8:00am - 5:00pm

If there is a Special Primary Runoff, early voting for such election will begin as soon as possible and no later than **Monday July 7<sup>th</sup> - Friday July 11<sup>th</sup>**.

Advanced voting for the General Special Election will begin as soon as possible and no later than **Monday November 24<sup>th</sup> - Friday November 28<sup>th</sup>**.

[Learn more about early voting!](#)

### ABSENTEE VOTING

To request an absentee ballot, you'll need to complete an Absentee Ballot Application. Your application must be received by June 6th to the registrar's office of the county you are registered to vote in.

[Click here for the Georgia Official Absentee Ballot Application!](#)

### ELECTION DAY VOTING

You will need a valid photo ID or a voter identification card to vote in person. Polling places are open from 7:00 am to 7:00 pm on Election Day. If you are in line by 7:00 pm, you are allowed to cast your ballot.

[Find more information here!](#)

