

## SUSTAINABILITY DEPARTMENT



WELCOME TO OUR

# Monthly Newsletter

We are thrilled to 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!



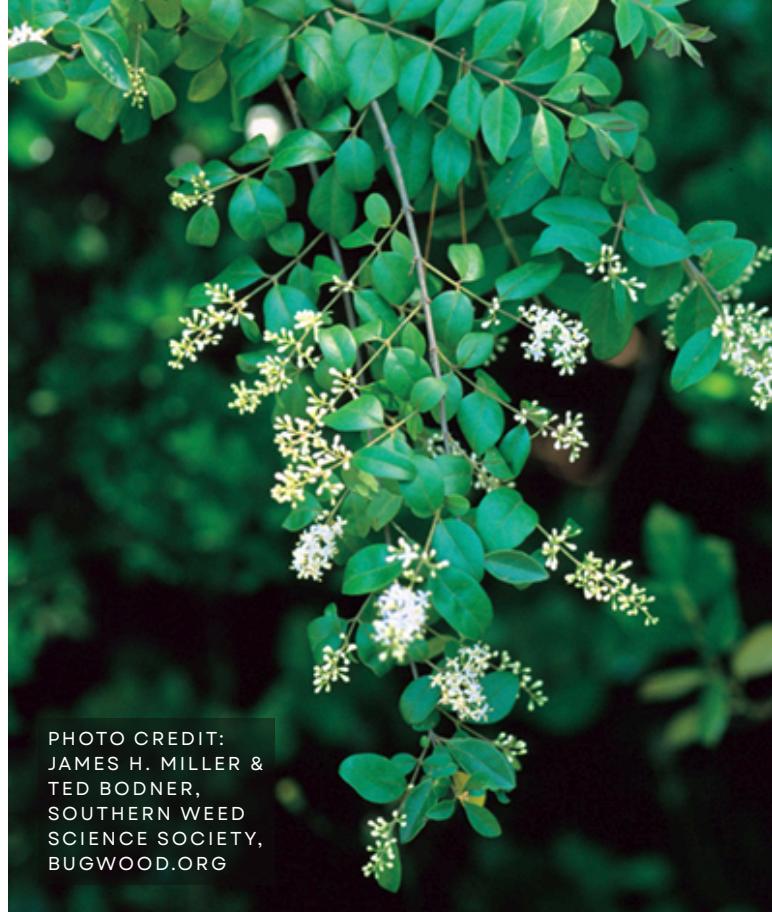
# Chinese Privet

## INVASIVE SPECIES OF THE MONTH

CHRISTIAN SNEAD & STEPHANIE GREEN

An evergreen shrub that blooms with sweet smelling white flowers in April and can be shaped into a hardy, attractive hedge that thrives in the Georgia climate. Sounds like landscaper's dream, right? That type of shrub sounds like just the ticket for lining the sidelines of a SEC Football Stadium.

PHOTO CREDIT: KARAN A. RAWLINS, UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA, BUGWOOD.ORG



The beloved Hedges that stand sentinel over the field at The University of Georgia's Sanford Stadium, are indeed made up of one of the most highly invasive and ecologically detrimental species in the Southeast, Chinese Privet (*Ligustrum sinense*). In the Hedges defense- when they were originally planted in the 1929, the full extent of privet's invasiveness and was not known. Chinese privet was brought to North America from Asia in the 1800's, and by the 1950's it had showed its ability to dominate entire forest understories. Despite its invasive nature and threat to local ecosystems, privet is often still used in the landscaping industry and stadiums, because- tradition, Y'all.

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



UGA

PHOTO CREDIT (LEFT & BELOW): JAMES H. MILLER, USDA FOREST SERVICE, BUGWOOD.ORG



PHOTO CREDIT (BELOW): DAVID J. MOORHEAD, UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA, BUGWOOD.ORG



With glossy, football-shaped leaves and fragrant white flowers blooming in Athens' off-season (mid-April to mid-May), Chinese privet might seem like a landscaping MVP. Its fruit matures from green to deep purple by fall, and birds act like nature's quarterbacks - spreading seeds far and wide. But privet doesn't just score through seeds; it also runs a ground game, sending out root suckers that clone the parent plant and help it dominate disturbed areas like forest edges and urban fields.



Tackling privet isn't easy. Small plants can be pulled by hand, but once it's established, you'll need to bring in the heavy defense—herbicide. For tough terrain like stream banks or steep slopes, avoid pulling roots to prevent erosion. Instead, go for a cut-stem herbicide play to keep your soil - and your ecosystem - intact.

[FOR SOURCES CLICK HERE!](#)

# 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:

## SUSTAINABLE CLEANING PRODUCTS

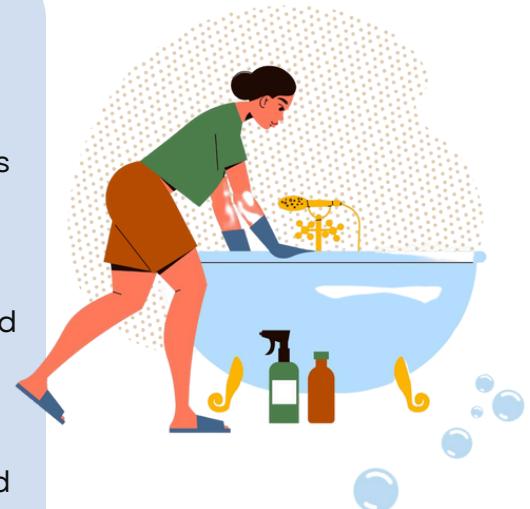
RILEY JAMES

Do you ever catch yourself wondering what's really lurking in that bottle of cleaner under your sink? That same spray you use every week, maybe even daily? The truth is, many conventional cleaning products contain chemicals that aren't just tough on grime - they can be tough on the planet and our health, too. So, let's clear the air (literally and figuratively) and talk about how to make cleaning a little greener without getting duped by what we call "greenwashing".

First off, it's no secret that what we spray on our counters and floors eventually makes its way into the environment (think water supplies, air quality, and ecosystems). Many traditional cleaners are made with chemicals that don't easily break down. Instead, they stick around, polluting our waterways and sometimes harming wildlife.

But before you load up your cart with "eco" everything, here's the truth: the most sustainable thing you can do is use what you already have. After all, reduce is the first R in "reduce, reuse, recycle" for a reason. Using up your current cleaning supplies (even if they're not perfect) before buying new ones prevents unnecessary waste and keeps products out of landfills.

After that, focus on reusing. Refillable bottles and concentrated refills are game changers when it comes to reducing plastic use. Look for cleaners you can buy in bulk that can be distilled into refillable bottles. Some brands, including Blueland, Grove, and even Windex, offer refillable cleaning solutions that cut down significantly on package waste.



When it is time to buy something new, the ingredient list is your best friend. Here's what to watch out for:

#### Ingredients to Avoid:

- Ammonia and chlorine bleach: effective but harsh on your lungs and toxic in waterways.
- PFAS (Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances): These “forever chemicals” are found in stain-resistant and water-resistant products - and they don’t break down in the environment. Avoid them when possible by steering clear of vague claims like “stain-resistant.”

#### What to Look For:

- Low VOCs (Volatile Organic Compounds): VOCs are chemicals that evaporate into the air and can cause respiratory irritation, especially indoors. Look for products labeled “low VOC” or “no VOC.”
- Eco Labels: Trusted eco labels can help quickly identify which products are reputable.

I know cleaning labels can be confusing and overwhelming at times. With so many labels on the shelf, it's hard to know what's green and what's just a green label. Here are four legit ones to look for:



**EcoLogo**  
One of the most credible eco-certifications, covering the entire life cycle of a product from production to disposal.



**Green Seal Certified**  
Focuses on health, environmental impact, and performance (so you're not sacrificing effectiveness!)



**Safer Choice**  
Verified by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, these products contain safer chemical ingredients for human health and the environment.



**BPI Compostable**  
For compostable cleaning wipes or packaging; if it carries this label, it will break down in a commercial composting facility.

For more guidance, check out the [EPA's greener products guide](#).

Sometimes the best cleaner is the one you make yourself! Not only is it cheaper and often just as effective, but you know exactly what's in it. Here's a simple DIY general purpose cleaner:

### Ingredients

- Distilled white vinegar
- Distilled water
- Fragrance



### Steps

1. Mix equal parts vinegar and distilled water. The acidity in vinegar kills a range of pathogens, including E.coli. If you don't have distilled water, boil water and allow it to cool. Water free of minerals and chemicals is important because sometimes hard water from the tap can create water marks or leave scratches. Boiling your water first can fix that.
2. Add a fragrance of your choice. The smell of vinegar can be a bit rough for some people. Adding a fragrance can help mask the smell of vinegar and leave your home smelling as clean as it feels. Essential oils are a perfect option for giving your cleaner the perfect scent. If you don't have any essential oils, throw in a lemon peel (or any nice smelling citrus) or herbs that you like (rosemary and mint are good options).
3. Put your mix into a spray bottle and you're ready to go!



For more DIY cleaning recipes, check out [The Spruce](#).



Switching to sustainable cleaning doesn't have to mean tossing out your entire cleaning cabinet and buying a Pinterest-worthy zero-waste kit. Remember, we don't need a handful of people doing zero waste perfectly; we need millions of people doing it imperfectly. It's about making conscious choices, one step at a time - finishing what you have, reusing what you can, and choosing better when it's time to replace.

So go forth and scrub with purpose. You've got this!



# MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD!

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

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

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

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 SPECIAL ELECTION: MONDAY OCTOBER 6<sup>TH</sup> '25**

### ADVANCE VOTING

**Tuesday October 14<sup>th</sup> - Friday October 31<sup>st</sup>**

Advance voting for the GA Public Service Commission Election will take place Tuesday, October 14<sup>th</sup> through Friday, October 31<sup>st</sup>. The location and times were discussed during the Board of Elections meeting on September 9<sup>th</sup>. The location and times will be posted on the Athens-Clarke County Website closer to the dates. That information can be found [here](#).

All persons registered to vote in Athens-Clarke County may use any location for advance voting, but must vote in their own precinct on Election Day Voting. For Advance Voting, you will need to bring a valid photo ID or a voter identification card.

**For more information on Advance Voting specific to Athens, click here!**

Don't live in Athens? No problem! To find information on Advance Voting locations near you, you can search based on the county you live in.

**Find Advance Voting information in every county, click here!**

### ABSENTEE VOTING

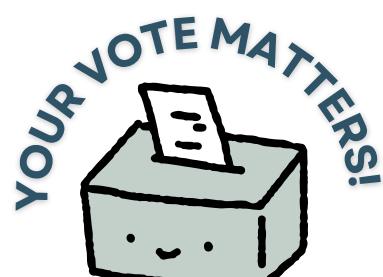
To request an absentee ballot for the Special Election, you'll need to complete an Absentee Ballot Application. Your application must be received by October 24<sup>th</sup> to the registrar's office of the county you are registered to vote in.

**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!**



# UPCOMING EVENTS:



JOIN OUR  
**Parks for Pollinators**  
**BI<sup>O</sup>BLITZ**

**DID YOU KNOW?**

“Monarch butterflies migrate 3,000 miles each year and can travel as many as 100 miles per day.”

**NRPA** NATIONAL RECREATION AND PARK ASSOCIATION

THE **Scotts Miracle-Gro** FOUNDATION

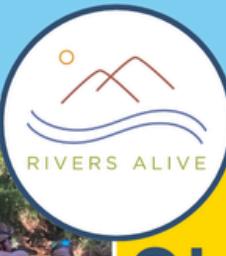
Join ACC Leisure Services for a pollinator bioblitz throughout the month of September. Participate in any ACC Leisure Services park and submit your observations on **iNaturalist**. All you need is a camera and an account on **iNaturalist**.

Contact Kate at Sandy Creek Nature Center for more details. [Kate.Mowbray@accgov.com](mailto:Kate.Mowbray@accgov.com)



# UPCOMING EVENTS:

## ATHENS WATERWAY CLEANUP



HELP US  
CLEAN ATHENS'  
LOCAL RIVERS  
AND CREEKS

REGISTRATION OPENS  
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER  
15<sup>TH</sup>



[ACCGOV.COM/RIVERSALIVE](http://ACCGOV.COM/RIVERSALIVE)

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 11**

KICK OFF AT 8:45 / CLEAN UP AT 9:30

PUTTING ENERGY INTO GREENER SPACES  
Athens-Clarke County Sustainability Department

[www.accgov.com/green](http://www.accgov.com/green)

706-613-3838