



Daffodils blooming behind Carriage House.



Spring Time in Atlanta Means Outdoor Fun

The beginning of Spring means the beginning of Atlanta's outdoor festivals. Atlanta's annual outdoor festivals bring hundreds of thousands of people to the city, and a good deal of revenue. Most of the festivals have free admission, while there is a nominal fee for tours of homes and gardens. Here is a list of some of Atlanta's largest and most popular festivals:

Atlanta Dogwood Festival: The granddaddy of them all, the Atlanta Dogwood Festival is a longtime Atlanta tradition. An impressive artists market, numerous stages of local and regional music talent, the dog-disc competition, and a whole lot more make it Atlanta's most popular festival. April 16, 17 and 18th.

Inman Park Festival: Inman Park is a historic neighborhood filled with beautifully restored Victorian era homes. The annual neighborhood festival features a colorful parade, a tour of neighborhood homes, an eclectic artists market, and kids activities. April 24-25.

Georgia Renaissance Festival: The largest themed festival in the Southeast, with plenty of colorful costumes, great food, and fun for the whole family. The festival is conveniently located just 8 miles south of Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport. April 17—June 6 (Saturdays and Sundays).

If I had my life to live over, I would start barefoot earlier in the spring and stay that way later in the fall." Nadine Stair

April Showers Can Bring May Flowers

Spring means that the garden centers are packed with people, and car trunks are packed with plants. Everybody has dirt on their knees, dirt under their nails, and is excited about gardening. The soil is thawed! It's time to plant new trees and shrubs in your yard. Installing new plants and having them grow successfully is not difficult, nor is it as complicated as some would have you think. One thing to remember when selecting plants is their location in your yard. Shady areas need shade-loving plants such as dogwoods or hostas, and sunny areas need sun-loving plants like potterias or junipers. Locate them correctly and keep them happy! Plant size is another factor to deal with and is a very common mistake when planting new yards. A popular tree in a five gallon container might look perfect when planted five feet from your garage, but ten years down the road you'll be firing up a chainsaw to make adjustments. Read the label attached to the plant so you will know it's maximum height and width. Peat moss and compost are excellent soil amendments and can be purchased through your local lawn and garden centers. Use them liberally!

“Science” of Spring Fever

Now that the daffodils are finally out, are you feeling frisky? Energetic enough to run a marathon? Have your thoughts turned to love and does the world suddenly seem a better place? If so, you may have spring fever, which scientists have confirmed really does exist.

Each year at this time millions of people begin to feel more upbeat and sexually active, if somewhat distracted, according to Professor Norman Rosenthal, a clinical psychiatrist at Georgetown University, Washington DC. The reason, he says in new research, is just that spring has sprung.

“Poets have written for centuries about the effects of spring,” Rosenthal says. “They have known, for example, that energy levels surge for many people in the spring. But we are only now beginning to understand why.” For people who suffer from seasonal affective disorder (SAD), spring fever can be particularly pronounced. “They act as giddy as a puppet on a string this time of year,” says Rosenthal. “But they are simply extreme examples of the changes that occur in all of us in spring.”

Scientists know that when seasons change, the retina — the part of the eye connected to the brain by the optic nerve — naturally reacts to variations in the amount of daylight. This triggers hormonal changes. Particularly important is the adjustment in melatonin, a hormone that affects our mood and how we sleep. As a result of light changes, the body naturally produces less melatonin during spring, causing a lift in mood, a reduced desire to sleep, an increase in sexual appetite and a need to eat less. Spring not only improves our mood and energy levels, it can protect our teeth and bones. On the first few sunny days of spring many people feel the urge to take off those winter togs and do a bit of prancing in the sunshine. This is in response to the fact that for several months our bodies have been starved of vitamin D, essential for healthy bones and teeth. And we make it only when our skins are exposed to sunlight. We’re craving a top-up.

As little as 30 minutes a day of exposure to the face and arms between April and October when the sun’s rays are at their strongest is enough to ensure that vitamin D levels remain stable. Spending time outside once spring arrives is the key and ideally people should be getting ten-minute stints in the mid-day and afternoon sun during those months when the UVB radiation that creates vitamin D is strongest. But there is a downside to spring bursting out all over. First we can pay for our urge to exert ourselves. A lot of heart attacks occur in spring because the energy surge causes many people to overdo it in the gym or in the garden.

“In the spring, at the end of the day, you should smell like dirt.”

Saint Patrick’s Day in the United States



People celebrate St. Patrick’s by wearing green and drinking at local bars. Irish-American immigrants brought Saint Patrick’s Day to the United States. The first civic and public celebration of Saint Patrick’s Day in the 13 colonies took place in Boston, Massachusetts in 1737. The first celebration of Saint Patrick’s Day in New York City was held at the Crown and Thistle Tavern in 1756. In 1780, General George Washington, who commanded soldiers of Irish descent in the Continental Army, allowed his troops a holiday on March 17. This event became known as The St. Patrick’s Day Encampment of 1780.

Today, Saint Patrick’s Day is widely celebrated in the United States by Irish and non-Irish alike. Many people, regardless of ethnic background, wear green-colored clothing and items. Traditionally, those who are caught not wearing green are pinched.

Many parades are held to celebrate the holiday. Details vary. Savannah, Georgia is a prime location for revelers. In New Orleans, Louisiana, the parades include the influence of New Orleans Mardi Gras, with float riders throwing spectators strings of beads, cabbages, and potatoes. Perhaps the smallest notable parade World’s Shortest St. Patrick’s Day Parade, is said to take place in Hot Springs, Arkansas in the United States annually held on historic Bridge Street which became famous in the 1940s when Ripley’s Believe It or Not designated it “The Shortest Street in the World.” Boulder, Colorado claims to have the shortest parade, which is also less than a single city block.

The New York parade has become the largest Saint Patrick’s Day parade in the world, outside Ireland. In 2006 more than 150,000 marchers participated in it, including bands, firefighters, military and police groups, county associations, emigrant societies, and social and cultural clubs and was watched by close to 2 million spectators lining the streets. The parade marches up 5th Avenue in Manhattan and is always led by the U.S. 69th Infantry.

Some cities paint the traffic stripe of their parade routes green. Chicago even dyes its river green. Savannah dyes its downtown city fountains green.

Attracting Birds and Butterflies to Your Yard



Establishing a small wildlife sanctuary in your backyard will reward you by attracting a variety of birds and butterflies for you to enjoy viewing. Many will visit, and some may actually stay to nest and rear their young in your backyard. You will want to create a yard or garden that will attract birds and butterflies and make them feel at home.

If birds and butterflies pass through your yard, but never seem to stay, it may be because your yard doesn't provide a varied, long-term food supply. Birds that overwinter in your garden need to find food 365 days of the year. Small birds eat almost constantly during daylight hours in the winter. Migratory songbirds need large amounts of food for varying amounts of time, often just a day or two. Creating a garden that welcomes songbirds, hummingbirds, and butterflies is a relatively simple task. It consists of supplying them with three basic requirements for survival: food, cover, and water. To birds and butterflies, the typical suburban landscape resembles an unfriendly desert. Close-cropped lawns, sheared foundation shrubs, and deadheaded flowers mean no place to nest, no food to eat, and nowhere to hide.

To create a landscape that provides birds with a guaranteed, year-round food supply, you need to plant an assortment of plant species that provides seeds, berries, nuts, or other food throughout the year. Planting a diverse selection helps ensure that a variety of food sources is always available. Choose different plantings that produce food throughout each of the four seasons.

Evergreens, which bear leaves throughout the year, offer a good source of berries and seed-filled cones. They also offer year-round shelter, protection, and breeding sites. The best way to start planning a food supply for your guests is to take an inventory of what is already growing in your yard. Begin with what your yard provides, and add to it plants you can grow that will provide more food that season. Concentrate on first adding plants that provide food during seasons when nothing much is available in your yard. Trying to transform your yard into a haven for birds and butterflies overnight is an easy way to become frustrated, so plan on making gradual changes over the course of several planting seasons. Use your notes as a guide. Identify one or two areas to concentrate on for the first year. For example, if you have a single tree in your front yard, consider adding more trees and underplanting with berry-producing shrubs and ground covers. Plan to add plants gradually as your budget and time allow. Buy only as many plants as you can care for at one time.

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Georgia Fast Facts



- ◆ Georgia was named for King George II of England.
- ◆ Stone Mountain near Atlanta is one of the largest single masses of exposed granite in the world.
- ◆ Georgia is the nation's number one producer of the three Ps--peanuts, pecans, and peaches.
- ◆ Georgia is the largest state east of the Mississippi River.
- ◆ In Gainesville, the Chicken Capital of the World, it is illegal to eat chicken with a fork.
- ◆ Berry College in Rome has the world's largest college campus.
- ◆ Chickamauga National Park is the site of the bloodiest battle in American history.
- ◆ Plains is the home of Jimmy Carter, the 39th President.
- ◆ The world's largest Infantry training center is located at Fort Benning.
- ◆ Athens is the location of the first university chartered and supported by state funds. (Go Dawgs!)
- ◆ The Cherokee rose is the official state flower, the live oak the official tree and the brown thrasher the official bird.
- ◆ In 1828 Auraria, near the city of Dahlonega, was the site of the first Gold Rush in America.
- ◆ The largest Farmer's Market of its kind is located in Forest Park.

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Daylight Saving Time



Daylight Saving Time gives us the opportunity to enjoy sunny summer evenings by moving our clocks an hour forward in the spring. Yet, the implementation of Daylight Saving Time has been fraught with controversy since Benjamin Franklin first conceived of the idea. Even today, regions and countries routinely change their approaches to Daylight Saving Time.

On August 8, 2005, President George W. Bush signed the *Energy Policy Act of 2005*. This Act changed the time change dates for Daylight Saving Time in the U.S. Beginning in 2007, DST will begin on the second Sunday in March and end the first Sunday in November.

The official spelling is Daylight Saving Time, **not** Daylight Savings Time. *Saving* is used here as a verbal adjective (a participle). It modifies *time* and tells us more about its nature; namely, that it is characterized by the activity of saving daylight. It is a *saving daylight* kind of time. Adding to the confusion is that the phrase *Daylight Saving Time* is inaccurate, since no daylight is actually saved. *Daylight Shifting Time* would be better, but it is not as politically desirable. Many fire departments encourage people to change the batteries in their smoke detectors when they change their clocks because Daylight Saving Time provides a convenient reminder.

The idea of daylight saving was first conceived by Benjamin Franklin during his sojourn as an American delegate in Paris in 1784, in an essay, "An Economical Project." Today, approximately 70 countries utilize Daylight Saving Time in at least a portion of the country. Japan, India, and China are the only major industrialized countries that do not observe some form of daylight saving.



Picture of Courtyard taken February 12, 2010.

Pop Songs For Spring



Spring is a great season to celebrate rebirth and new life. Pop music is the perfect accompaniment. This is a list of spring favorites as few pop songs speak about spring directly. These are the songs that bring to mind the hope, joy, beauty, and carefree spirit of springtime.

U2: Beautiful Day (2000). U2's anthem to recognizing the beauty in the world around you is a perfect accompaniment to the new life and new spirit of spring.

Cat Stevens: Morning Has Broken (1972). "Morning Has Broken" is one of the few overtly religious songs to make the pop top 10. Cat Stevens' version remains a spiritually affirming pop classic.

Lovin' Spoonful: Daydream (1966). The simple joys of being in love on a spring day are the subject matter of this irresistible pop classic.

Patti LaBelle: New Attitude (1985). Spring is a time to make changes in life and head in new directions. Patti LaBelle's mid-80's hit "New Attitude" is the perfect theme song for these personal adjustments.

Hanson: MMMBop (1997). Even it weren't for the delirious joyfulness in the music, the analogies between love and flowers that need to be planted and nurtured makes "MMMBop" perfect for spring listening.

Simon and Garfunkel: The 59th Street Bridge Song (Feelin' Groovy) (1966). Perfect spring bliss that clocks in at under 2 minutes.

Hugh Masakela: Grazing in the Grass (1968). It's purely instrumental, but the horns and jazzy soulful vibe of this classic evoke visions of sunshine, green grass, and a beautiful world.

Smash Mouth: All Star (1999). Self-affirmation is fundamentally important for getting in the mood and mindset for spring and few recent hit songs are better for boosting self-esteem than this Smash Mouth hit.

Dario G: Sunchyme (1998). Dario G's mostly instrumental ode to sunrise did not reach the pop singles chart, but it was a top 10 dance hit.