

the signal

SSRC: The Countdown to Summer Begins

Smoketree Swim & Rec Club is already gearing up for a fun season ahead! While pool weather may still be a little ways off, planning is officially underway, and we're excited to start hosting more neighborhood events in the coming months. From casual get-togethers to family-friendly activities, we're looking forward to bringing neighbors together and making the most of everything our community has to offer.

And speaking of fun—did you know one of our tennis courts is lined for pickleball? A few neighbors have already been enjoying a game here and there, and it's been great to see the courts getting some extra action. If you've been curious about pickleball, now's the perfect time to give it a try!

More updates and event details coming soon... pool season will be here before we know it! 🎾

When to Start Planting Seeds in Gwinnett County

If you're already dreaming about spring gardens, you're not alone! Many Smoketree neighbors are starting to plan their vegetable gardens, herb beds, and flower pots—and now is the perfect time to get started.

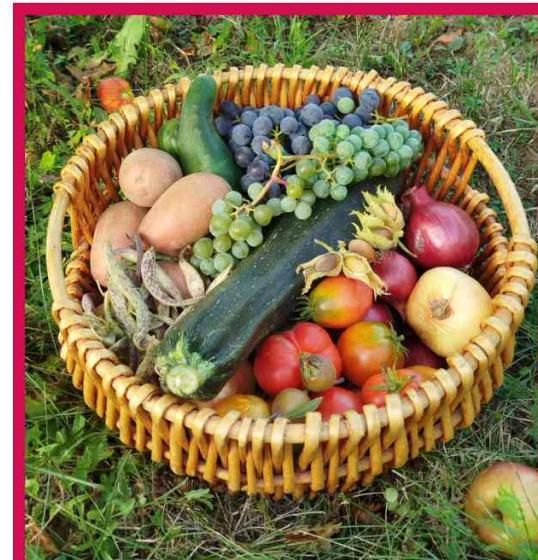
In Gwinnett County (Zone 7b/8a), our average last frost date is usually in late March, which helps determine the best time to plant.

For gardeners who like to get a head start, starting seeds indoors in late January through early March is ideal. This is especially helpful for plants that take longer to grow, like tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, basil, and many popular flowers.

If you'd rather plant directly outside, cold-tolerant crops can often be planted as early as February through March. These include vegetables like lettuce, spinach, kale, carrots, radishes, peas, and beets, along with herbs like cilantro and parsley.

Warm-weather crops should wait until after the last frost, typically early April through May. That's when it's safe to plant things like beans, cucumbers, squash, corn, sunflowers, and zinnias.

Whether you're growing vegetables, herbs, or flowers, spring is right around the corner—so now is a great time to start planning, prepping soil, and dreaming up what you want your garden to look like this year!



February Board Meeting

Join us virtually on Thursday, February 26th from 7:00–8:00 PM via Google Meet. This is a great opportunity to hear community updates, be part of upcoming planning, share ideas, and voice any questions or concerns.

Click this link on Feb 26th at 7pm to join the meeting: <https://meet.google.com/ric-uadm-aqx>

All SSRC members are welcome — we'd love to have you join the conversation!



Love Letters to Smoketree



Dear Smoketree,

I didn't know I needed a neighborhood like you until I moved here. You've turned strangers into friends and houses into homes.

Dear Smoketree,

Thanks for being the place where people show up—for events, for each other, and for the little things. It's rare, and it's special.

Dear Smoketree,

You make life better. That's it.

Dear Smoketree,

Thanks for the pool days, the group texts, and the fact that I can't check my mail without getting caught in a conversation. Never change.



COUNTY NEWS

GWINNETT COUNTY UPDATES (FROM THEIR NEWSLETTER)

Tax Commissioner

Apply for a homestead exemption by April 1. Homeowners who occupy a home in Gwinnett as their primary residence as of January 1 may qualify for an exemption this year. A homestead exemption can significantly reduce your property tax bill. If you're unsure whether you have an exemption, we can help determine your eligibility and the best exemption for you. Visit GwinnettTaxCommissioner.com/Apply to apply by April 1. If you already have an exemption in place, you do not need to reapply.

Public Safety

Avoid tax scams Each tax filing season, scammers pose as IRS agents to trick residents into sharing personal information. By sharing this information, your life savings could be compromised. Avoid tax scams with these helpful tips:

- ∞ Choose tax preparers with caution and research before handing over your information
- ∞ Watch for unsolicited emails, texts, and fake websites that might prompt you to click a link or share personal information
- ∞ Be on alert for phone scams; IRS representatives will never demand payments over the phone or leave threatening messages

If you suspect fraudulent tax activity, report it to the IRS. You can also report fraud or scams to the Federal Trade Commission. For more tips, visit IRS.gov

Apply for free tree planting in your front yard

Looking to beautify your front yard? The County's Front Yard Tree Program offers up to two free trees for eligible homeowners in unincorporated Gwinnett County. This initiative will help expand the county's tree canopy, improve air quality, and make our neighborhoods more vibrant! Explore tree types and more at GwinnettCounty.com/FrontYardTree.



High-Protein PB&J Baked Oats

- 2 cups chopped fresh strawberries (about 10 ounces)
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 2½ teaspoons vanilla extract, divided
- 1 tablespoon chia seeds
- 2 large eggs
- ¾ cup mashed ripe bananas (from 2 bananas)
- ½ cup whole-milk plain Greek-style yogurt
- ¼ cup smooth natural peanut butter plus ½ cup, divided
- ¼ cup pure maple syrup
- 1½ teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ cup whole milk
- 2½ cups old-fashioned rolled oats

Preheat oven to 375°F. Line a 9-inch square baking pan with parchment paper, allowing the parchment to extend over the sides by at least 2 inches.

Combine 2 cups strawberries, 1 tablespoon lemon juice and ½ teaspoon vanilla in a small saucepan; bring to a boil, partially covered, over medium-high heat. Reduce to a lively simmer, cover, and cook until the strawberries are starting to break down, about 3 minutes. Mash with a potato masher; stir in 1 tablespoon chia seeds. Cook at a lively simmer, stirring often, until the strawberries are almost completely broken down and the mixture is starting to thicken, 4 to 5 minutes. Remove from heat.

In a large bowl, whisk 2 eggs, ¾ cup banana, ½ cup yogurt, ¼ cup peanut butter, ¼ cup maple syrup, 1½ teaspoons cinnamon, 1 teaspoon baking powder, ½ teaspoon salt and the remaining 2 teaspoons vanilla until smooth. Whisk in ½ cup milk until combined. Fold in 2½ cups oats.

Transfer the oat mixture to the prepared pan. Dollop evenly with the strawberry mixture and the remaining ½ cup peanut butter; using a butter knife, gently swirl into oat mixture as desired.

Bake until just set and golden brown, 30 to 35 minutes. Let cool in the pan on a wire rack for 10 minutes before serving.

[Link Here](#)



February Plant of the Month: Camellias

Camellias are a perfect February plant for our area, bringing beautiful blooms in shades of pink, red, and white when most plants are still dormant. Their glossy evergreen leaves keep yards looking full year-round, and they're easy to maintain.

Camellias thrive in partial shade with well-drained soil, making them a great option to add winter color and curb appeal.

Meal Prepping With a Friend: More Fun, Less Stress

Meal prepping is already a great way to save time during the week—but meal prepping with a friend takes it to the next level. Not only is it more fun, it's also a smart way to save money, share ideas, and lighten the workload.

The concept is simple: pick a friend, choose a day to meet up, and come up with a menu of meals you want to prep together. This could include easy family favorites like casseroles, protein muffins, marinated chicken, chopped vegetables, soups, snack packs, or even pre-made lunches for the week.

Once you have your menu, you grocery shop and split the cost. Then you meet at one person's house (and alternate hosting each time). If you have kids, bring them along! While you're cooking or prepping ingredients, take turns checking on the kids. It's a great way to share the responsibility while still being productive.

The best part? You get to knock out a ton of food in a short amount of time, stock your fridge or freezer, and still have time to catch up, laugh, and maybe even get a little gossip in.

It's a win-win: less stress during the week, more home-cooked meals, lower grocery bills, and quality time with a friend. Meal prepping doesn't have to feel like a chore—make it a mini hangout!



Kid's Corner

Q: What did the stamp say to the Valentine card?

A: Stick with me and we'll go places!

Want to add to the newsletter?

Email Amber at
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