

DIRTY DIGS

Autauga County Master Gardeners Association Newsletter

January, 2018



President's Corner

Wow! What a way to end the year! Any plant needing chilling certainly got it and more! But, aside from the weather, I want to thank each and every one of you for making 2017 a year of successes! You supported ACMGA through your membership, your hands-on work, your ideas to better serve our community and your commitment to make this the best Master Gardener Association ever! I am so grateful for your

support this past year and your willingness to lend a hand when needed. We all have different skills and talents we bring to this group. Thank you for sharing yours. Without your help we would not have been able to accomplish our goals. I look toward the future and see so many opportunities for ACMGA to serve Autauga County. A woman I greatly admire, Helen Keller, said, "*Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence.*" So, let's look forward to 2018 with great optimism!

Master Gardener of the Year 2017

The Autauga County Master Gardeners are so very happy to announce that Glenn Huovinen has been selected as the Master Gardener of the Year for 2017. His tireless work on so many different projects throughout the year was nothing short of great.

Glenn worked at the Prattville Autauga Demonstration Garden all through the year. His hands were in the dirt from the beginning of the planting season until the end of the harvest season. With his enthusiasm for trying new planting ideas, the garden was a willing partner for him. Glenn's work and ideas

have resulted in in Rose McCauley asking him to take over leadership for the 2018 season.

Glenn also designed and made the hardwood bowl that was offered as the silent auction during the 2017 Alabama Master Gardeners conference. The bowl was a beautiful piece of workmanship.

When ideas were being talked about for getting the new members involved and the ACES building landscape was mentioned Glenn volunteered to head the committee that would consider the feasibility of such a project. After it was determined that the project would be welcomed by the owner of the building and the occupants, he stayed on as the leader of the project. With his leadership

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a plan was developed and executed that made a remarkable change in the entrance of the ACES building.

Glenn took on the committee leadership of the bamboo identification and naming project at the Wilderness Park. The work of that committee involves identifying the different species of bamboo growing in the park. It also involves designing suitable signage for each species.

The Lunch and Learn program last year was a success in large part because of Glenn's leadership and guidance of the program. He always made sure that the meeting room was set up and ready. The presenters were always made welcome, and if they needed anything special for their presentation Glenn made sure their needs were met.

Again, ACMGA is proud to give the Master Gardener of the Year award to Glenn Huovinen.



The December meeting and luncheon was a great affair. It took place in the conference room of the Autauga County Extension Office building. The settings on the tables were very colorful and received rave reviews from everyone. Cheri Cook, Bea Hill, Lanell Tatum, Elsie Jones, and Carolyn Gray are to be commended for their work. Ofie McCoy presided over a very short meeting where she talked about a few changes in the upcoming year. The board will meet on the first



Monday of each month and the Lunch and Learn is moving to Trinity United Methodist Church. She presented the outgoing officers with a gift, thanking them for their support and help.

Ofie then turned over the meeting to Debbie Boutelier. Debbie installed the new officers with much flourish and aplomb. A good time was had by everyone. The new officers installed were Ofie McCoy president, Charlie French vice-president, Tim McCoy secre-

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tary, and Cheri Cook treasurer. The master gardener of the year was awarded by Mallory Kelley to Glenn Huovinen. The meeting was adjourned, and the luncheon was set out. Glenn Huovinen showed a YouTube video of his son singing *Hallelugah*. Dale Huff gave the devotion-
al for the meal. A feast was set out with a tasty ham as the main meat. Everyone who brought a dish filled the tables with color, taste, and aroma. I personally had to make a minimum of three trips around to make sure I got at least a taste of each dish. Oh, what a celebration my taste buds had. Then on the other side of the room were the desserts. So rich and decadent. My mouth waters now just remembering how wonderful the tastes. Don Armstrong coerced and strong armed everyone into buying tickets for the rototiller that was being raffled during the meal. At the end Mallory pulled the winning ticket from the hat and Linda Blackwell was the lucky winner.



Article submitted by Tim McCoy



Hummingbird Award

The winner of the Hummingbird Award for December goes to Tana Shealy. Tana has worked so hard behind the scenes of our Association all year. She published the Dirty Digs for the year. Without Tana the handbook would have been way behind schedule. Her work on the AMGA newsletter Pathways was a great help. All of the announcements about ACMGA that she put out everywhere she has a contact were a Godsend. Tana has been one of those behind the scenes members who exactly exemplify what the hummingbird award stands for. In addition to all the work provided by Tana to

the Association, she is the mother of a preschooler and all the work and time that entails. And, Tana is currently working on her Masters Degree. Congratulations go to **Tana Shealy.**



Spring plant SALE

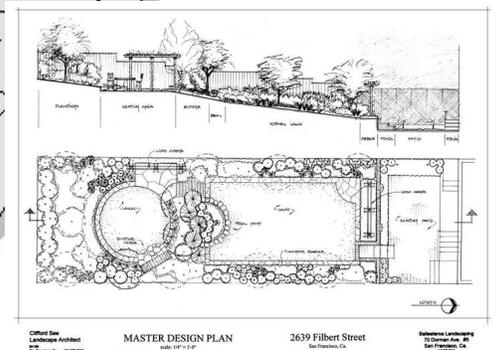
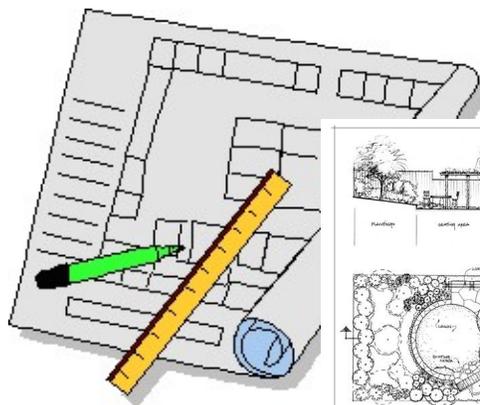
The plant sale for 2018 is set for the 28th of April. This is the last Saturday of April and if you are getting ready to do your propagating and planting, here is a list of plants that we had few of or none of which people asked about: Bee balm, Blue hosta, Citronella, Fig tree, Hostas, Lamb's ear, Larkspur, Lemon grass, Lenten roses, Little

gem magnolia tree, Muellin, Parsley, Sweet shrub, Umbrella plant, and Vegetables. Perhaps some of y'all have some space to put some of these on your list of plants that y'all are bringing to the sale. I know y'all have been thinking ever since last



THOUGHTS FROM A GARDENER

A garden plan is always good, but random planting, like random thoughts are good too. The gardening picture in the mind of a Master Gardener is always a Picasso. January is a good month to work on your garden plan.



DON'T LET THE COLD OF JANUARY KEEP YOU FROM WORKING IN YOUR GARDEN

Don Armstrong

ANR-0047 Alabama Gardener's Calendar gives us a whole list of things to do in our garden in January, but there may be some other things to do too.

Pull all of the dead plants from your vegetable garden and look for the weeds that like to spring up in your landscape beds. How is it that weeds can "spring up" in our gardens in the winter? They do. So, take a tour of your yard and get the little critters before they get toooo big.



Don't forget to water your garden. Remember the rule of one inch. If we do not have an inch of rain during the week then the garden may need watering, especially the plants you put out this winter. Don't forget your pots. Some of them need to be watered twice a week, or more often, in the winter time.



Now is the time to prune off dead branches. Be sure the branch is really dead. Remember to cut back to a good, living, bud. Use great caution on larger limbs – remember the three-cut rule as even dead limbs can pull back the bark when they fall down. Be sure to dispose of the diseased branches correctly.

The wonderful winter winds that blow in the snow also blow tree limbs into our gar-



dens. In the country this can be a daily project for me. City tree limbs can fall too.



They have a bad habit of falling into the middle of our bushes, crushing them and hiding them from view.





By Mallory Kelley

Regional Extension Agent

Home Grounds, Gardens, Home Pests

What to do with those Holiday Plants?

The poinsettia is one of the most popular holiday plants along with the Christmas cactus. As the holiday season ends and the poinsettias start to lose their leaves and the Christmas cactus loses its blooms people often ask the question what to do now?



Too many poinsettias are seen in dumpsters and sitting out by the road side ready for trash pick up. With a little work and some special attention the poinsettia can be kept for the following year. This is sometimes hard to accomplish due to our low

degree of light intensity, but if you are willing to give it a try, here are the steps to bring your poinsettia into a healthy life just in time for next year's holiday season.

When the bracts (colored leaves) begin to turn and fall from your plant, cut the plant back leaving 4 to 6 buds and keep in a sunny window or greenhouse if you have one and continue to water and fertilize regularly. By the end of May you should see vigorous new growth appearing. The poinsettia will begin to set buds and produce flowers as the nights become longer. In October, you should move the plant into complete darkness for 14 continuous hours and in the day allow 6-8 hours of bright sunlight. Continue this cycle for 8-10 weeks and your poinsettia will develop a colorful display of holiday blooms just in time for the holiday season.

If the process of salvaging your poinsettia seems too demanding, a compost pile is always a great alternative. Poinsettias are not much of a financial burden and buying a new one the fol-

lowing year will contribute greatly in supporting our growers.

While the poinsettia remains the most popular holiday plant, a healthy Christmas cactus in full bloom is always a beautiful sight. To keep your Christmas cactus blooming longer keep it in well-lit, cool area, but once these blooms are gone many are left with the questions, what now? The best advice we can give you is neglect. Only a little extra care will bring it back to full bloom next year.

Watering seems to be the source of most problems with the Christmas cactus. The plant is a tropical type plant, but is not quite as drought tolerant as the name implies. Water thoroughly when the top half of the soil in the pot feels dry to the touch. Well-drained soil is a must for Christmas cactus and should be repotted every 2-3 years. A commercially packaged potting mix for succulent plants or a mixture of two parts potting soil with one part clean sand or vermiculite will work great. Pruning your cactus should be done after blooming and will encourage branching. The sections pruned out can easily be rooted in moist vermiculite to propagate new plants.

Much like the poinsettia, the Christmas cactus blooms according to the change in day length and light intensity. Too much direct light during the summer months can turn the leaves a bit red and cause them to look burned and become limp.



Follow the same light pattern instructions as the poinsettia beginning in October and you will have a beautiful blooming cactus just in time for Christmas.

For more information on Poinsettias <http://www.aces.edu/pubs/docs/A/ANR-1222/>

For more information on Christmas Cactus <http://hort.purdue.edu/ext/cactusFAQs.html>
http://www.hort.purdue.edu/ext/christmas_cactus.html

White Bean Chicken Chili

Ingredients

- ◆ 2 white onions, diced
- ◆ 3 garlic cloves, diced
- ◆ 2 tbsp. olive oil
- ◆ 1 tbsp. cumin
- ◆ 1 tbsp. chili powder
- ◆ 36 oz. chicken stock
- ◆ 2 cups shredded chicken
- ◆ 2 cans (4 oz.) mild diced green chilies
- ◆ 2 cans (15.5 oz. each) white beans, rinsed and drained

Sautee onion and garlic in olive oil until onion is transparent. Add cumin, chili powder, chicken stock, green chilies, chicken, and one can of beans. Bring to a boil, then lower heat to simmer. Mash or puree the other can of beans, then add it to the chili to thicken. Simmer for 20 minutes, then serve.

Garnish: Sour cream, shredded cheese, lime wedge or tortilla chips.

Mellissa Morgan, Hoover



Monthly Meetings

Second Thursday of each month at First Baptist Church, Prattville (unless otherwise notified)

⇒ All odd-numbered months: January, March, May, July, September, November will have 6:00 p.m. meetings.

⇒ Most even-numbered months: February, April, June, August, October will have 9:00 a.m. meeting.

⇒ January meeting to feature Darrue Sharpe, Autauga County Extension Coordinator.

Things to do.....

- ◆ Start thinking about propagating for the plant sale.
- ◆ Set out fruit trees.
- ◆ Prune dormant trees.
- ◆ Visit nurseries and garden centers to select new rose varieties.
- ◆ Soil test lawns before setting up fertility programs.



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