

DIRTY DIGS

Autauga County Master Gardeners Association Newsletter

March, 2018



What a whirlwind of a month it has been! Not only the weather but the many requests for help from the community.

I know all our yards have suffered with this freeze. My fig trees look traumatized by the freeze with their leaves wrinkled up like they've given up hope. And, I find myself hoping that the tiny baby green plums and pears will not turn into hard little brown balls and fall off with the anticipated freeze later this month. Recently, I was relieved to hear from Dr. Jason Powell at a seminar presented by Dr. Sue Webb, that our peach tree's beautiful pink blossoms will tolerate cold down to 28° F. Hooray!

During the last weeks our association has been blessed with requests from the community for MG assistance. High school seniors and graduates of the Chick-Fil-e Leadership Academy accepted a project to develop a healing garden behind a Cancer Center. They asked MGs for assistance. We anticipated helping in the development of a landscape plan, but the youth simply needed advice on how to add year-round color to the already established landscape.

A request from parents at Prattville Elementary School who are renovating an exiting garden area, turned to MGs for ideas on how to mitigate a mud situation and irrigation issues. A small group of MGs responded and were able to give helpful suggestions based on scientific information by Debbie Boutelier, Tim McCoy and Bob Scheffler. These parents had also discovered pieces of metal which, when put together, revealed a composting barrel. A help request was sent out to composting Advanced MG's. Paula Seamon responded, contacted the parents, and offered to work with them to start their composting barrel. The parents were very appreciative!

And, as we look forward, on April 11, we will host our sister MG association, Chilton County, on a tour of the Wilderness Park, Prattvillage, our Demo Garden, and finish with a lunch and tour of the Armstrong Farm. Thank you Don and Glenda for your generosity .

Still ahead are numerous opportunities to work with children. Glenn Huovinen and Bea Hill recently taught the first JMG gardening class at Marbury Elementary School. At Pratt Pond, we are invited to help with the annual Kids' Fishing Rodeo. The AF&WSC will host "Creek Life" at the Library, a kids' experience which was outstanding last year. Also on the calendar is the annual Friends of the Forest" for elementary school children and fun at Lanark "Flora and Fauna: Pollinators Festival" where we have again been asked to make our now famous paper hats for children and adults. Later in the summer, we will plan and teach a class on how to build a "Fairy Garden." And, let's not forget the tremendous effort being done by MGs in helping with set-up at our Lunch & Learn classes. These efforts have resulted in increased attendance. A special "thank you" for everyone who has helped spread the word. There is just not enough room in this Newsletter to share what MGs are doing to better the quality of life for our residents.

I am incredibly proud of our association, all the work that members do but most importantly, the wonderful, positive attitude, and cheerful generosity of our members. As we receive calls for assistance in educating, beautifying, and teaching preservation of our environment, the willingness of our members to participate in these activities is heartwarming. Thank you all!

A late note! I just received word from AMGA that our grant for \$1,775 to put new sod at Prattvillage has been approved! Way to go ACMGA!



Have fun in your garden as you grow your cuttings to share.

Cutting Method

- Detaching portion of the selected motherplant for the purpose of producing new plants
- The three main types of cuttings are...
 - Stem
 - Leaf
 - Root



APRIL SHOWERS BRING MAY FLOWERS

By Don Armstrong

Thomas Tusser's 1557 collection of writings *A Hundred Good Points of Husbandry* includes this ditty:

Swéete April showers,
Doo spring Maie flowers.

In Merry Ole' England, April is traditionally a rainy period that does bring in May flowers. Here in Alabama many of the flowers are in full bloom in April when we are enjoying lots of warm sunshine. May, of course is a lot warmer and some flowers start to fade.

As our spring blooming shrubs fade it is time to prune them back. All Master Gardeners know how to prune these beautiful blooming shrubs, but we sometimes forget this is also the best time to propagate them for our Master Gardener Plant Sales.

Let the gloom of this proverb (April showers) remind us that the proverb has a second bright spot (besides the May flowers), and that it is time to propagate our shrubs so we can share them. OK, so this propagation is more work for the already overworked Master Gardener. But, remember how big a smile you get on a friend's face when you share a plant that you have propagated.

Let the fun of this proverb motivate you to get the clippers sharpened, the potting soil mixed up, and the pots washed so you too can propagate and share your favorite blooming shrubs.



FRED GONSOWSKI



Spring plant SALE

April
28, 2018

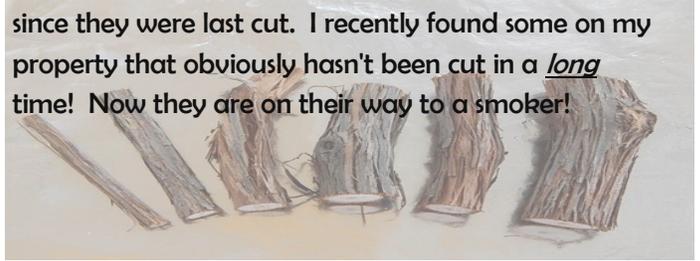
It is time for getting your plants ready for the

plant sale. It is going to be upon us next month. If you can, put the name of the plant on a stake in the pot. If any of y'all have any old mini-blind slats, bring them to the April meeting. They work well for plant identification. If it is a flowering plant, try to put the color of the blossom on the tag also. Lastly, and most importantly, put the price on the tag. Don't under-price them, check and see what they are selling at nurseries and adjust your price accordingly.

For all of you crafters that make the beautiful and amazing items for the garden and gardener, now is also your time to be getting ready to sell your items at the sale. Y'all know more about what it is worth than I. I know how much time goes into some of the wonderful creations.



since they were last cut. I recently found some on my property that obviously hasn't been cut in a long time! Now they are on their way to a smoker!



February Meeting Tim McCoy

Pam Olson presented the AMGA Reach for the Stars Awards. Pam wanted us to know that in 2017 master gardeners reported 9,618 volunteer hours and had contact with 86,000 people. Our association in 2017 was 9th in volunteer hours and 5th education hours. Ofie McCoy was nominated for Top Hours of the Year Award, and Deborah Boutelier was nominated for "Jean Lee" lifetime hours award. Our own Dirty Digs was nominated in the newsletter category. The bronze star for 100+ lifetime volunteer hours was awarded to Linda Blackwell, Patrick Cook, Carolyn McNeese, Elaina Pyle, Lanell Tatum, Ange Trimble, Cindy Salyer, and Lisa Carswell. The silver star for 300+ hours was awarded to Cheri Cook, Sheila Pearson, Anita Shriberg, and Charlie French. The gold star for 500+ hours was awarded to Glenn Huovinen, Ofie McCoy, Tim McCoy, Kathryn Whaley, and Bea Hill. Gold badges for 1000+ hours will be awarded to Shari McCandless and Lyn Yarbrough at the 2018 State Conference. Laura Tomlin has completed her requirements and was certified as a Master Gardener.

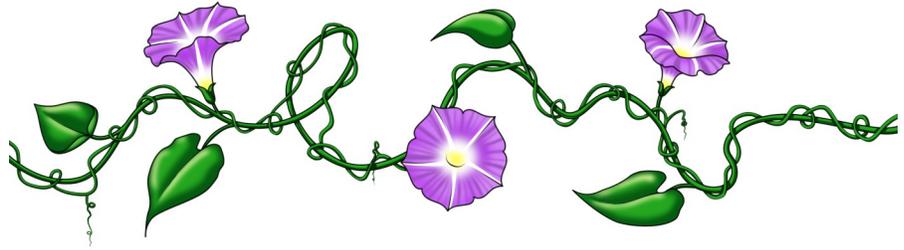
Think Smoke Bob Scheffler

Many people who use a food smoker, like the popular green egg, often search for the right wood flavor to match the food they are slow cooking. Hickory is probably the most common wood used but it can be a little strong when something milder is needed. That's when they switch to fruit woods like apple, grape, etc., when they can find them. The locally common muscadine grape vine is liked by many people for that use but is usually found on smaller vines not suitable to produce much smoke. So how big can they get? They are a relatively slow grower and depends on how long it has been



Hummingbird Award

Deb Hill is the February hummingbird award winner. Deb did a great job keeping the association's financial records for the past 3 years. And, Deb is always there with her camera whenever there is a project going on that might need photos. Her enthusiasm when she helps our association is endless. As can be attested to by the job she did at the Habitat for Humanity landscaping project in 2017. Deb is 100 % involved in any project she commits to, and will do whatever needs to be done to make it successful. A generous round of applause to our association's own Deb Hill.



Smart Yards for Wildlife From Notes Taken by Don Armstrong

Thursday, 8 February, Rachel McGuire, gave the Autauga County Master Gardeners an outstanding talk on *Smart Yards for Wildlife* at First Baptist Church.

Rachel was born in Texas. At the age of nine she was moved to North Carolina. She completed her B.S. in Fisheries and Wildlife at N. C. State University. She migrated to the land of her ancestors, Alabama, in 2012. At Auburn she completed her Master's degree in Wildlife Sciences. Her research project was the restoration of rivercane, a native bamboo of the southeast. Rachel is a certified prescribed burn manager, a licensed commercial pesticide applicator as well as a certified Associate Wildlife Biologist. She is particularly passionate about rare plant conservation and restoration, fire-maintained plant communities, and diverting conversations about politics to more positive subjects, such as puppies!

Some highlights from her talk based upon notes taken by Don Armstrong.

Birdscaping – Don's definition is selecting the plants, shrubs, and trees that attract birds to your yard.

Rachel told us to research the food your birds need. If you have the American Goldfinch, then this tile is needed. If you have the Acadian Fly Catcher which only eats flying insects, they need shrubs and

trees with open space. Also research the nesting areas your birds need. The basic needs for all birds are:

- Nesting sites
- Cover sites
- Food
- Water

Rachel cautioned us about the importance of avoiding window collisions. If your windows do not have drapes or blinds then consider using window decals. She also pointed out the importance of having your birdfeeders being squirrel proof. Birdbaths and garden ponds are good water sources for your birds.

Butterfly Garden – Don's definition is an area designed to create an environment that attracts butterflies, as well as certain moths. Of course, it will also attract other pollinators.

Rachel told us these will be very attractive gardens. The basic needs for butterflies are:

- Nectar
- Minerals
- Sunlight
- Water

Their nectar comes from the plants you select for your garden. Minerals come from putting a few rocks in your watering dish. Rachel told us about the need to help the Monarch butterfly. Their caterpillar only feeds upon milkweed. The butterfly also feeds on milkweed, but also on a few other plants. Two of the varieties of milkweed she discussed were *Tuberosa* and *Variegata*.

Continued on pg. 5

Rachel pointed out that these butterfly gardens would also attract bees – they are bee magnets. She cautioned us to not use insecticides at all and to limit the use of herbicides. Rachel told us to be sure to have a sequence of blooms so we have flowers as close to year-round as possible.

Herpetofauna – Don’s definition (ok I got this one from Google) is the reptiles and amphibians of a particular region, habitat, or geological period.

Rachel told us to include shelters in our gardens these garden friends. These shelters can be rock piles, brush piles, stumps, and upside down cracked clay flower pots. But, she cautioned, these places could also be homes for snakes! It is very important to have a water feature for these critters. Rachel told us to include a dunk in our water source to control mosquitos.

Bats – Don’s definition (ok, from Google too) any of numerous flying mammals of the order Chiroptera, having modified forelimbs that serve as wings and are covered with a membranous skin extending to the hind limbs.

Rachel concluded her wonderful talk with a few words about bats. She showed us photos of bat houses and bat boxes. She told us these could be installed as low at 12 to 15 feet high on our trees.



SHOWING OFF

Bob Scheffler sent me an email a couple of weeks ago with two very nice pictures in it. He said that he was home and was outside enjoying the weather when some turkeys came out and started walking over to him.

When the birds got close enough to him, they stopped. There were both males and females in the gaggle of turkeys. After a bit, the males started doing their mating ritual and challenging each other for the females. Bob said they were putting on a pretty good show. The males were fanning their tails and strutting around.

While watching the turkeys do their thing, Bob was able to snap some pictures. He said that he could not believe how close the birds came up to him.



SEED STARTING AND DAMPING OFF

Glenn Huovinen



Well...It is that time of year again. We are getting ready to begin another fun year of gardening. We also need to start seeds for our April Plant Sale. Seeds are planted inside the cell packs or seed starting trays and we wait anxiously for the first sign of germination. Then one day we see a little seed sprouting out of the seed starting mix. We keep it watered and the light directly overhead. The young seedlings start to grow tall reaching for the light. You are thrilled that your MG training is paying off. You strut by the tray and feel confident that you have performed the process correctly.....then you notice that your little seedlings look sick, begin to lay down and it is pinched at ground level and turning dark colored...DREADED DAMPING OFF! The seedling will eventually die...

Here is what you should have done to prevent DAMPING OFF.

- 1.If reusing cell packs from last year, clean them in a 10% solution of bleach for 30 minutes.
- 2.Use new seed starting soilless mix. You can make your own using peat moss, perlite and screened compost. It is suggested to sterilize your mix by putting it in the oven to kill any pathogens. There are many recipes on the web.
- 3.Plant seeds.

4.Water from the bottom.

5.Sprinkle cinnamon on the surface of the seed starting mix. This will kill pathogens responsible for the Damping Off.

6.Do not use dome covers. They can allow for too much humidity on the leaves that can lead to fungus development.

7.Instead of a dome cover, place a clean sheet of plastic wrap over the tray and flip it daily to the dry side.

8.When the seeds sprout, remove the plastic wrap and continue to keep a light an inch or so above the seedlings.

9.After they have formed true leave, you can put them in bigger pots ready to be hardened off in a shady spot outside.

10.Plant them in your garden after a week or so.

Enjoy!



The War against Lawn Weeds

By Mallory Kelley
Regional Extension Agent
Home Grounds, Gardens, Home Pests

Many of you have given up the battle to treat your lawn on your own and many of you are still waging war yourself and wondering what am I doing wrong? Well if you want to get ahead of the game a pre-emergent in February is the way to go! This article will hopefully give you several tips from pre and post emergent products to fertilizers to help you achieve the beautiful lawn you are hoping for.

The most popular product out there that seems to have it all, the “one stop shop” for all your lawn needs is the “Weed and Feed” products. I am often asked if this is the correct way to treat the lawn. In central Alabama, there is not a large window of time when this product would be beneficial, but it can be used in May or early June when an extra application of fertilizer would not hurt and the application of the pre-emergent chemical in the product will help prevent weed seeds from germinating through the summer and into the fall.

The best and most effect control of weeds in the lawn may take a little more effort than the “Weed & Feed”, “All in One” products, but you can save money and time in the long run applying them separately. Pre-emergent weed killers should be selected based on the type of grass you have. These weed control products are preventative so they should be applied before the weeds are visible in the lawn as they prevent the seeds of the weeds from germinating. These and can be applied any time of year except during “Green-up” or to newly seeded or sprigged lawns, but again February is a great month as we will soon have spring like temperatures and spring weeds will start to germinate. Do not reseed a lawn for 4-6 months after a pre-emergent chemical is applied and remember to always read and follow all label instructions when making applications of any chemical. I have provided information below to access our website for a list of all Pre and Post-emergent chemicals on the market so you can correctly select the chemical that is best for your lawn situation. Don't forget, a post-emergent herbicide is only going to kill a weed that has already begun to grow in the lawn.

Fertilizers are generally applied twice throughout the year, first in early spring during green-up and then again in mid-summer. Fertilizer type and amounts should be based on soil test results, not guess work and anytime is a good time to have a soil test. Soil tests will provide you with the correct type of fertilizer and amounts needed for your specific lawn and if lime is needed, lime can be added at any-time of year. Remember, lime raised the soil pH. A soil test will help you be more accurate in your fertilizer application, provide your grass with the exact nutrients it needs and save you money down the road.



For information on proper care of your turfgrass visit our publications online at www.aces.edu and search for the type of grass you have. Also for a list of pre and post-emergent chemicals that are available and the type of lawn they can be applied to, visit our website and search for: IPM Weed Control or access this link: http://www.aces.edu/pubs/docs/A/ANR-0500-B/VOL2-2011/home_lawns_weed.pdf



In Like a Lion, Out Like a Lamb By Don Armstrong



Briton Rivière, Una and Lion, nineteenth century

Growing up in Nebraska, a phrase we often used for March was “In like a lion, out like a lamb.” This proverb was surely true with our cold and snowy winters as we looked forward to warmer weather. As I write this article for the March issue of Dirty Digs, we have two inches of snow on the ground and the Autauga County roads are closed due to the snow and ice on this nice sunny January Alabama day.

The proverb might seem so simple in that spring arrives in March as winter exits. But, in Nebraska, we often had just the reverse happen. With a 28 March birthday, I can assure you there have been many a March when this proverb was reversed and March came in like a lamb and left as a lion!

The origin of this proverb is lost. According to Wikipedia it is an old Pennsylvania saw.

According to *The Paris Review*, Thomas Fuller’s 1732 compendium, *Gnomologia: Adagies and Proverbs; Wise Sentences and Witty Sayings, Ancient and Modern, Foreign and British*, has one of the earliest citations of this proverb. The authors give the word-

ing for this proverb as “Comes in like a Lion, goes out like a Lamb.”

This book listed several other March proverbs that I have never heard about:

So many mists in March you see / So many frosts in May will be.

A Peck of March-Dust, and a Shower in May / Makes the Corn green, and the Fields gay.

I must tell you that I am well aware that Alabama weather is not like Nebraska weather, even with two inches of snow on the ground as I look out our windows. A normal Nebraska 17 January day could easily have two feet of snow on the ground. But, I digress.

Alabama gardeners have already pruned their roses by the start of March, as it roars into our gardens. Now it is time to finish cleaning out our landscape beds and to sharpen our pruners so that we are ready to prune back, **and propagate**, all of our spring blooming shrubs. We need to propagate these plants now so we will have new plants for our plant sale in 2019 – yup, we have to plan ahead.

So, as the March lamb blows out softly in Alabama let us get ready to propagate our flowering shrubs. Remember, as you prune it in the spring, propagate it, and have plants ready for the 2019 plant sale.



CHILTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS

PLANT SWAP

May 8, 2018

10:00 AM

Special Guest: Michael Thomason

AMGA Vice President

Demonstration Garden/CREC

120 County Road 756

Clanton, AL 35045

What to Bring

- A plant from your garden (rooted in) or purchased and an identification label
- Any plants you want to share – please make sure plants include a description, bloom time, color of bloom, sun/shade requirements. These can be brought in a box w/plant information on the box
- Covered Dish To Share
- Chair

You don't
want to miss
any of these
seminars.

2018 Classes

Presented by Autauga County Master Gardeners Association & City of Prattville

classes!

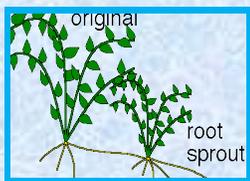
All classes are held at the Doster Center at 9:00 am

March 24— “Introduction to Hummingbirds in Alabama” presented by Fred Bassett. Don't miss this exciting presentation from a man who devotes his life to hummingbirds and travels around the United States banding them.



May 5— Karen Weber will present “Growing A Beautiful Garden” and share ideas about plants, pruning, ergonomics and bulbs.

July 14—”All About Bonsai” presented by Mark Waldo. Learn how to choose plants for bonsai, pruning techniques and examples using the instructor's many plants. Another class you will not want to miss.



September 15— “Tips and Demonstration on Plant Propagation” presented by Rona Watson. Double your plants through propagation.

November 7—”Holiday Decorating” presented by Charlotte Hall who will discuss how to decorate for the holidays through natural materials.



SAUSAGE AND CHEESE CRESCENT SQUARES



PREP	TOTAL	INGREDIENTS	SERVINGS
20 MIN	60 MIN	4	32

Ingredients

- 2 Cans (8 Oz ea.) Pillsbury™ refrigerated crescent Dinner rolls, or 2 cans (8 oz ea.) Pillsbury™ Refrigerated Crescent Dough Sheet
- 1 lb spicy or mild bulk pork sausage
- 1 package (8 oz.) cream cheese
- 2 cups shredded sharp cheddar cheese (8 oz.)

Steps

1. Heat oven to 375° F.
2. If using crescent roll: Unroll 1 can of dough into 2 long rectangles. Place in ungreased 13x9 inch glass baking dish; press over bottom and 1/2 inch up sides to form crust. If using dough sheets: Unroll 1 can of dough. Place in ungreased 13x9 inch glass baking dish; press over bottom and 1/2 inch up sides to form crust.
3. In 12 inch skillet, cook sausage over medium heat, stirring frequently, until no longer pink. Remove sausage from skillet; discard drippings. To same skillet, add cream cheese. Cook over low heat until melted. Add cooked sausage; stir to coat. Spoon evenly over crust in baking dish. Sprinkle with cheese.
4. If using crescent rolls: Unroll second can of dough on work surface. Press to form 13x9 inch rectangle; firmly press perforations to seal. Carefully place over cheese. If using dough sheets: unroll second can of dough on work surface. Press to form 13x9 inch rectangle. Carefully place over cheese.
5. Bake 21 to 26 minutes or until golden brown. Cool 15 minutes. Cut into small squares.

FELDER RUSHING SPEAKING IN PIKE ROAD APRIL 12, 2018

Dale Entrekin

thechapelatthewaters.com

We represent The Chapel at the Waters in Pike Road. As part of our Chapel Arts Series, we are hosting Felder Rushing on April 12. I would appreciate it if you could somehow let your members know about this opportunity to hear him. Thank you. Dale Entrekin

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/felder-rushing-slow-gardening-central-alabama-style-find-and-follow-personal-garden-bliss-using-all-tickets-41845871127>



Lunch and Learn 2018

1st THURSDAY of EVERY Month

12:00-1:00 PM

Trinity United Methodist Church
610 Fairview Avenue, Prattville 36066



- 4 January** Gardening 101
Amanda Borden, Advanced MG
- 1 February** Roses
Gloria Purnell, Master Rosarian
- 1 March** Butterflies, Bees, and Other Pollinators
Dr. David Held, Entomologist AU
- 5 April** Blueberries
Dr. Chip East, Horticulturist ACES
- 10 May** Figs
Dr. Arlie Powell, Petals from the Past
- 7 June** Herbs
Tia Gonzales, Medicinal Plant Garden AU
- 12 July** Cooking with Herbs & Spices
Janice Hall, Food Safety & Quality, ACES
- 2 August** Plant Propagation
Don Armstrong, Master Gardener
- 6 September** Drought Tolerant Plants for the South
Dr. Sue Webb, Petals from the Past
- 4 October** Shade Loving Plants
Jane McCarthy, Master Gardener
- 1 November** Growing Citrus Trees in Containers
Tom McLemore, Master Gardener
- 6 December** Insects-Good Guys or Bad Guys
Dr. Fudd Graham, Entomologist, AU



For more information, contact
Autauga County Extension Office 334.361.7273

BRING A SACK LUNCH

DRINKS PROVIDED

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,



Things to do.....

- ◆ Start getting your plants ready. In their pots, tags with what they are, price, and color of blossom.
- ◆ Prepare vegetable garden soil (soil test).
- ◆ Plant fruits, plant trees and shrubs.
- ◆ Seed and overseed fescue lawns. Plant perennials.
- ◆ Prune (not murder) your crape myrtles.
- ◆ Fertilize perennials and bulbs (soil test).



**Autauga County Master Gardeners
Assoc.
c/o Autauga County Extension Office
2226 Highway 14 West
Autaugaville, AL 36003**

PLACE
STAMP
HERE

To: