

DIRTY DIGS

Autauga County Master Gardeners Association Newsletter

February , 2020



President's Message

Seriously. Is the rain ever going to stop? I've had over 5.5 inches of rain in my yard in the last 48 hours! My ducks love it, but I'm beginning to think it's time to build an ark. Sure makes it hard to get anything done in the garden. So what's a gardener to do? This is the time of year to dream a little. Okay, dream a lot and plan way more than I can possibly get accomplished. But that's one of the things I love about gardening – the possibilities!

It's less than two months until the plant sale (April 25th) and time to start some seeds. Since we were studying a unit on plants for homeschooling my granddaughter, it was perfect timing. And I love seeing the miracle of life beginning through the eyes of a child. Vivian has also enjoyed digging up existing plants and dividing them to make more plants! All of our work will benefit our association. I hope each of you are doing your own dividing and propagation so that we have a great sale to finance all of our community operations.

We are starting to spend the two grants we have received to improve both the Demo Garden and Prattvillage Garden. There is a lot of work to accomplish before spring planting so if you have any time available on Tuesday, please plan to come down and help. Work starts at the Demo Garden at 8 am



and at Prattvillage Garden at 9 am. It's exciting to see all of the improvements being made knowing that it will increase production of the vegetables we are able to donate to AICC.

Our community Arbor Day celebration is quickly approaching. This is another opportunity to educate the public on proper planting and pruning techniques. This is a joint project with the City of Prattville, Autauga Forestry & Wildlife Stewardship Council and the Autauga County Master Gardeners Association. Each year, tree giveaways take place in both Autaugaville and Prattville with hundreds of tree seedlings finding new homes.

Our membership chair, Bionca Lindsey, has asked that each Master Gardener try to recruit just ONE person for our upcoming intern class. Just one. That's not too hard; I've already identified who I am going to recruit. Plus, it sounds like there may be some incentives to be had! I will be including the information flyer with the registration information in each Weekly Happenings throughout the spring and summer.



Always remember, time began in a garden!

Debbie

Reach for the Stars Award Recipients



Bronze Star (100+ cumulative hours)

Karen Bell – 130

Kathy Chapman – 121

Karen Powell – 126 (not pictured)

Angie Shields – 105



Silver Star (300+ cumulative hours)

Linda Blackwell – 306

Patrick Cook – 335 (not pictured)

Bionca Lindsey – 479

Kathy Quinn – 362 (not pictured)

Ange Trimble – 443

Adrienne Yarbrough – 335



Gold Star (500+ cumulative hours)

Cynthia Salyer – 653 (not pictured)

Lanell Tatum – 571

Congratulations go out to all these hard working Master Gardeners. Know that without you and your dedication to our great organization could not be such a visible and viable part Autauga County.

Your volunteer work helps ACMGA entertain, educate, and elevate the people in our county and statewide.

Be proud of yourselves. Don't stop, inspire other ACMGA members to become more involved in our organization.



OUR SISTER COUNTIES L&L SCHEDULES

Capital City Master Gardeners Association

LUNCH & LEARN 2020
1ST WEDNESDAY OF EVERY MONTH

12:00-1:00 P.M.

FREE PROGRAMS

Armory Learning Arts Center
1018 Madison Avenue, Montgomery, AL 36104

- 8 January **Healthy Trees**
Dr. Beau Brodbeck, Specialist, ACES
- 5 February **Hay Bale Gardening**
Eric Schavey, Horticulturist, ACES
- 4 March **Landscape Design**
Renee Thompson, ACES
- 1 April **Shade Gardening**
Mary McCroan, Advanced Master Gardener
- 6 May **Fruits in the Backyard**
Mallory Kelley, Horticulturist, ACES
- 3 June **Hydrangeas**
Mary Long, Master Gardener
- 1 July **Happy Hostas**
Bionca Lindsey, Master Gardener
- 5 August **Hype on Hemp**
Jessica Kelton, Agronomist, ACES
- 2 September **Succulents**
Barbara Witt, Master Gardener
- 7 October **Container Gardening**
Tracy Britnell, Petals From The Past
- 4 November **Composting**
Karin Carmichael, Master Gardener
- 2 December **Decorating for the Holidays**
Anna Owen, Master Gardener

For more information, contact
Montgomery County Extension Office (334) 270-4133
BRING A SACK LUNCH DRINKS PROVIDED

Central Alabama Master Gardeners Association

LUNCH & LEARN 2020
2ND TUESDAY OF EVERY MONTH

12:00-1:00 P.M.

FREE PROGRAMS

First Presbyterian Church
100 West Bridge Street, Wetumpka 36092

- 14 January **Soils of Alabama**
Dr. Charles Mitchell, Retired Professor, AU
- 11 February **Houseplants**
Elizabeth Leatherwood
- 10 March **Gardening With Climate Change**
Lee & Amanda Borden, Adv. MG's
- 14 April **Invasive Plants**
Nancy Lowenstein, Professor, AU
- 12 May **Southeastern Natives**
Dr. Sue Webb, Petals From The Past
- 9 June **Herbs**
Betsy Smith, Master Gardener
- 14 July **Fermentation**
Deborah Kelso, Master Gardener
- 11 August **Bulbs & Tubers**
Karen Weber, Horticulturist & MG
- 8 September **Coping with Aging Gardens & Gardeners**
Mike Rushing, Master Gardener
- 13 October **Bugs In and Around the Home**
Dani Carroll, Horticulturist, ACES
- 10 November **Holiday Decorating**
Anna Owen, Master Gardener
- 8 December **Transplanting Trees & Shrubs**
David Doggett, Master Gardener

For more information contact
Elmore County Extension Office (334) 567-6301
BRING A SACK LUNCH TEA & WATER PROVIDED

Hummingbird Award

Glenn Huovinen received the Hummingbird Award for February. Glenn is involved in more than a couple of projects. Besides the demo garden and squirrel capture project, he takes his trailer everywhere that something needs to be hauled for the organization. Without Glenn's involvement, the Marbury Junior Gardener project, would not be as successful as it is.



Master Gardener Helpline Not so scary after all....

By: Angie Shields



As a graduating intern last year, the requirement to work the Master Gardener Helpline caused more than a little anxiety. How could a very new Master Gardener Intern possibly know the answers to difficult gardening questions that would surely be asked? I soon discovered that volunteering for the Helpline provided opportunities for fellowship and learning in the air-conditioned office of the Extension building.

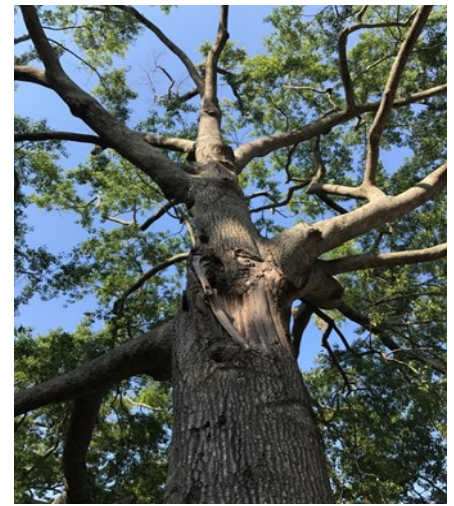
The Autauga County Master Gardener Helpline operates one day a week, Wednesday, from the beginning of March through the end of August. From 9:00a.m. – 1:00p.m. on those days, there are ideally two interns and two experienced Master Gardeners manning the phone lines. When a call comes in, a volunteer records the question, as much information as possible about the issue, and a contact phone number and/or email from the caller. The volunteer then assures the caller that the issue will be re-searched, and any information will be sent to them as soon as possible. That is when the fun begins!

I was relieved to learn that my limited knowledge would not be the only source of information available. The volunteers work together to search for an answer to the question utilizing several resources available through the extension office. There are numerous publications available on the extension website covering a variety of topics, which

can be attached to an email and sent to the caller. Many other research publications are available in hard copy in the filing cabinet. The volunteer may also search the internet for publications from other states' extension programs. If the volunteers have difficulty identifying a problem or finding an answer, the issue can be forwarded to the extension agent to confer with an expert in the field for clarification. All the information is logged into the Helpline System for future reference and reporting purposes.

Each call provides an opportunity to learn something new about gardening and to have fun interacting with other volunteers. I had a great time getting to know the Master Gardeners volunteering with me. Take a break from the hot sun and sore muscles and enjoy fun fellowship with other fabulous Master Gardeners this year!





A Guide to Healthy Landscape Trees

Drought, Pests, Disease and Risk Management

Monday, March 9, 2020

Autaugaville, AL

CEU Available: ISA, CFE, PLM and Landscape Architect HSW points.

LOCATION:

Autauga Extension Auditorium

2226 Hwy 14 West

Autaugaville, AL 36003

TIME:

9:00 AM – 2:00 PM

QUESTIONS:

Autauga Extension Office

334.361.7273

brodbam@auburn.edu



To Register & Cost: \$20

https://secure.touchnet.net/C20021_ustores/web/product_detail.jsp?PRODUCTID=4033&SINGLESTORE=true

Program Agenda:

| Time | Topic | Speaker |
|------------------|--|---|
| 9:00 – 9:30 AM | Tree Variety Recommendation for Central Alabama | Mallory Kelley- Auburn University Extension |
| 9:30 – 10:00 AM | Abiotic Disorders | Dr. Jim Jacobi – Auburn University Extension |
| 10:00 – 10:15 AM | BREAK | |
| 10:15 – 11:00 AM | Drought: Emerging Pests and Disease of Landscape Trees | Dr. Jim Jacobi – Auburn University Extension |
| 11:00 – 11:45 AM | Drought: Understanding and Managing Pine Bark Beetle in Urban Landscapes | Dr. Beau Brodbeck – Auburn University Extension |
| 11:45 – 12:30 PM | LUNCH | |
| 12:15 – 1:30 PM | Tree Safety: Identifying Tree Defects, Assessing Risk & Tree Removal | Dr. Beau Brodbeck – Auburn University Extension |
| 12:30 – 1:30 PM | Proper Tree Pruning Techniques & Chainsaw Safety | Spenser Bradley- Auburn University Extension |
| 1:30- 2:00 PM | Evaluation & Conclusion | |



Become an Autauga County Master Gardener!

Do you love plants?

Then you are a great candidate for the Master Gardener Intern Training!

You do not have to be a garden expert, just come with a desire to learn and grow!

As part of the Master Gardener intern class, you will receive horticultural training specific to Central Alabama's soils and climate, training materials, and best of all, you will make great new friends, and have an opportunity to give back to your community through volunteering.

2020 Session: September 2 – November 11 – Wednesdays 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM
Free Lunch Provided at Each Class

Application Deadline August 7, 2020

The course fee is \$150 – Early Bird registration gets a \$25 discount

Early Bird registration deadline July 10, 2020

***You will be contacted for a class orientation prior to the start date.**

The eleven-week Master Gardener training course is held at the
Autauga County Extension Office, 2226 Hwy 14 West, Autaugaville, AL 36003.

Classes are taught by professors and specialists from Auburn University, Extension agents, and veteran Master Gardeners.

More information, can be found at <http://mg.aces.edu/autauga/>
or by contacting Natalie Rimel at 334-361-7273

PRE-REGISTRATION FORM- Autauga County Master Gardener Intern Class

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Phone #: _____ E-mail address: _____

Return Pre-Registration Form by August 7, 2020 to:

Autauga County Extension Office
2226 Hwy 14 West, Suite E
Autaugaville, AL 36003

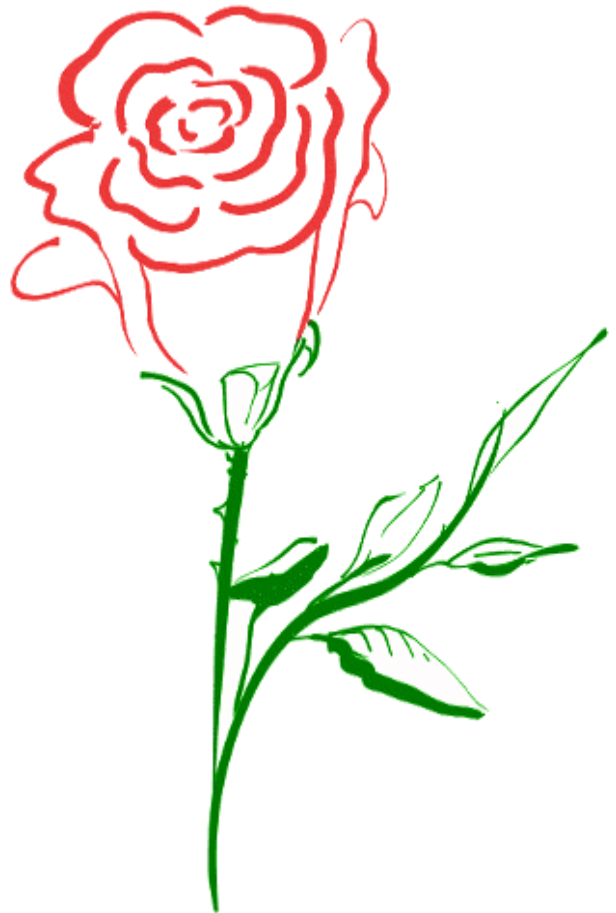
**Autauga County
Master Gardeners Association**
Gardening Lunch & Learn
2020

BRING A SACK LUNCH FREE PROGRAM DRINKS PROVIDED
THURSDAY, 5 MARCH
12:00-1:00 P.M.

Trinity United Methodist Church
610 Fairview Avenue, Prattville 36066

Let's Learn About Hostas
Varieties & Tips for Success

Bionca Lindsey
Autauga County Master Gardener



For more information, please contact
Autauga County Extension Office
(334) 361-7273



Special Recognition

By: Tim McCoy

At the February meeting a very special recognition was presented to one of our hard working master gardeners.

President Debbie Boutelier presented Shari McCandless with a bird house made to look like the chapel in Prattvillage Garden.

Debbie said that when it looked like the organization was going to lose the maintenance and use of Prattvillage Garden and almost everyone gave up working on making the garden beautiful for the public Shari kept going and working on the garden like she does all of the time. Shari kept working to keep the flowers and beds looking clean and loved.

Shari kept the faith, and when ACMGA was asked to keep up the work in Prattvillage Garden there was already someone taking care of the garden and that was Shari.

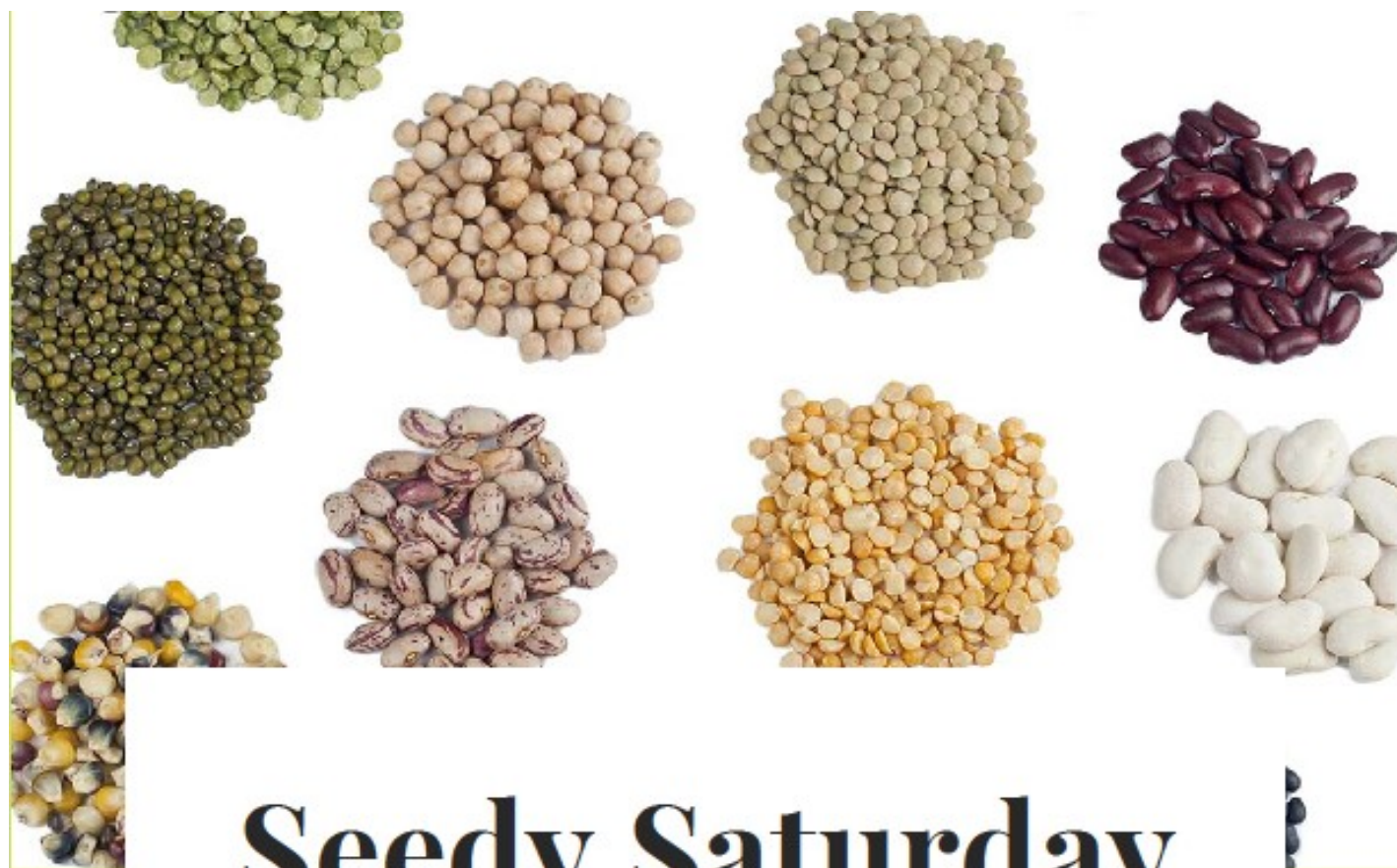


Congratulations

Pearls and rubies bloom
on shimmering jade platters
Silky petals fall away,
scatter across the surface
of the pond
leaving behind
a spaceship,
woody and brown,
its scalloped edges
cradling
a seed in each berth.
Sleeping lilies,
waiting for the kiss
of the spring sun
to wake them.

by Catherine Flynn





Seedy Saturday

**SEED SWAP, WORKSHOPS
KIDS' CRAFTS**

**FEBRUARY 29, 2020 | 10 A.M. - 12 P.M.
485 MOLTON ST., MONTGOMERY, AL 36104
FREE**

Get ready to garden with E.A.T. South!
If you have extra seeds, bring them.
If you need seeds, take some.
Find out more at [facebook/eatsouth](https://facebook.com/eatsouth) or eatsouth.org.

**Seedy Snacks by Carolyn
Sweet Hemp Seed Balls
and Seed Crackers**



ASU Teaching Garden

Meeting Our New Interns



Beverly Coutts is one of our interns that is here for a good time, but not a long time, because as a gardener on-loan from Canada, she will be shortly returning North once the ice

thaws and crocuses spring. Beverly has studied herbalism under Tamara Segal and Philis D. Light, and currently holds a certificate in horticulture while also working on a diploma from Guelph University. She credits her newfound green thumb to the Master Gardener's program and the expertise of local participants and regional experts from Auburn University. While she is as industrious as a squirrel, she has yet to help solve the squirrel problem, and looks forward to resolving that mystery before the end of her tenure here.

MULCHES FOR THE



HOME LANDSCAPE

Nature mulches plants with fallen leaves and other organic materials. Mulching, as practiced by gardeners, is merely an adaptation of this natural process.

Advantages of Mulching

Adding a layer of mulch around trees, shrubs,

and planted beds offers several advantages. Mulch conserves soil moisture. Evaporation of water is greatly reduced when the soil is protected from the direct rays of the sun and moving air. Mulch prevents rain from compacting the soil surface as well as decreasing soil erosion.

Another important advantage of a mulch is the control of weeds. Mulch greatly reduces germination of weed seeds and can smother existing weeds. Mulch can be used with a preemergence herbicide, which kills weeds before germination, as an additional weed control strategy. It is especially important to mulch rather than cultivate around shallow-rooted plants, such as rhododendrons, azaleas, and camellias.

Controlling soil temperature is another plus with mulch. Lower and more uniform soil temperatures in summer favor root growth and beneficial bacterial activity in the soil. High summer temperatures may injure roots and soil microorganisms near the surface of the soil. In winter, mulch insulates the root zone and protects roots from frost penetration and buffers against freeze-thaw cycles. Mulch maintains moisture in the soil, which is especially important for evergreen plants that continue to absorb moisture during the winter months.

Organic matter used as a mulch can improve soil structure, drainage, and aeration. As it decays, the organic mulch material becomes incorporated into the topsoil. Decaying mulch adds nutrients to the soil.

Mulching material, such as pine bark or pine needles, improves the appearance of the garden. It is valuable for covering beds near the house or in areas where neatness is important. Mulch can replace grass or groundcovers in areas that are difficult to mow or maintain. Mulching around trees and shrubs can prevent damage to plants from mowers and trimmers.

Disadvantages of Mulching

Mulching has a few disadvantages. First, the cost of some materials can be a drawback to large-scale mulching. Some mulches are also not readily available. If large quantities are required, buying bulk loads of mulch is less expensive than buying mulch by the bag.

Sawdust and wood chip mulch have a high carbon content and can remove nitrogen from the soil. This is easily corrected by using additional nitrogen fertilizer.

Heavy mulching over a

Continued on pg. 11

period of years results in a mat of mulch and soil covering the crown area of the plants. Plant roots can also develop in excessive mulch layers. Rake old mulch to break apart matted layers before applying a new mulch layer.

Avoid piling excessive mulch at the trunk of trees. This volcano mulching causes rot by holding moisture against the trunk.

Materials for Mulching

Rotted Manure

Apply 1 to 2 inches. May contain weed seeds. Should be well composted to prevent burning plants and minimize weeds sprouting

Sawdust

Apply 1 to 2 inches. Sawdust is low in plant nutrients and decomposes slowly. Sawdust tends to pack down and prevent water penetration. Additional nitrogen fertilizer is recommended when using sawdust.

Wood Chips

Apply 2 to 3 inches. Well-rotted materials preferred. Wood chips decompose slowly. Chips can be used fresh if additional nitrogen fertilizer is added to the soil at a rate of 1 pound of fertilizer per 100 square feet. Keep away from building foundations as wood chips can encourage termites.

Pine Bark

Apply 2 to 3 inches. Bark is ground and packaged commercially and can be found in various sizes. Pine bark is an attractive, dark-colored mulch in the landscape.

Ground Corncobs

Apply 2 to 3 inches. Ground corncobs are excellent for improving soil structure.

Pine Needles

Apply 3 to 6 inches. Pine needles will not mat down, are fairly durable, and allow good penetration of water and air into the soil. Great for winter protection on perennials because of its nonmatting quality.

Compost

Apply 2 to 3 inches. Compost will slowly release nutrients into the soil for plant uptake.

Whole Tree Leaves

Apply 3 to 6 inches. Leaves are an excellent source of humus. They rot rapidly and are relatively high in nutrients. Not recommended for herbaceous perennials

Shredded Tree Leaves

Apply 2 to 3 inches. Shredded oak leaves as a mulch are especially valuable around acid-loving plants, such as azaleas, camellias, and rhododendrons. Shredded tree leaves are less prone to matting than whole leaves.

Hay

Apply 3 to 6 inches. Hay is often considered unattractive and may contain weed seeds, but it is readily available.

Grass Clippings

Apply 1 to 2 inches. Grass clippings tend to mat and can repel water if they dry out. Should not be applied deeper than 2 inches. This material is high in nitrogen. Mixing grass clippings with other mulch materials will add nitrogen while preventing matting. Do not use grass clippings from a lawn that has been treated with a weed killer.

Hay Straw

Apply 6 inches. Hay straw is unattractive but readily available. Hay straw is lower in nutrients but can supply considerable potassium.

Pecan Hulls

Apply 1 to 2 inches. Pecan hulls as a mulch are safe for landscape plants and durable, but their availability is limited. Pecan hulls will stain concrete and are prickly if walked on.

Gravel

Apply 1 to 2 inches. Limited use but particularly good for rock garden plantings

Stone Chips

Apply 1 to 2 inches. Stone chips are extremely durable; holds down weeds but does not supply plant nutrients or humus.

Newspaper and Cardboard

Apply 1/2 to 1 inch. Should be covered with another mulch to improve appearance and prevent scattering.

Weed Fabrics

Landscape weed fabrics will allow water and air to penetrate into the soil. Will prevent most weeds, but grasses may grow through the fabric. Can be covered with another mulch to improve appearance.

← RECIPE IDEA →

GRANNY'S ASPARAGUS CASSEROLE

KAREN POWELL

INGREDIENTS:

4 Small cans all green asparagus (or 3 tall skinny cans), reserve liquid from 1 can
1 Jar mushrooms
4 Hard-boiled eggs, sliced
10 3/4 oz Can cream of mushroom soup
3/4 Sleeve of saltine (or Ritz) crackers, divided
8 oz Shredded sharp cheddar cheese

INSTRUCTIONS:

Cover bottom of casserole dish with cracker crumbs. Arrange drained asparagus on bed of 1/2 the cracker crumbs. Drain mushrooms and spread them over asparagus. Layer sliced eggs over mushrooms. Mix mushroom soup and asparagus liquid. Pour over casserole and cover with remaining cracker crumbs. Arrange pats of butter on crumbs. Heat in 300° oven until hot. Remove from oven and spread with sharp cheddar cheese. Return to oven until cheese melts.



SOIL SAMPLING: IMPORTANT PART OF SPRING

AUBURN UNIVERSITY, Ala. – Show off a green thumb and ensure growing conditions are right by collecting soil for soil samples prior to planting. The Auburn University Soil Testing Laboratory offers this service to help growers make informed decisions about soil nutrients and soil composition on the farm or in the backyard. By supplying recommendations to help growers maintain plants and create a more sustainable growing environment, soil testing can help get spring gardens off on the right foot.

Importance of Soil Testing

“Soil is the basis for most of what we do as gardeners and without healthy soil, you cannot grow healthy plants,” said Taylor Reeder, an Alabama Extension

home grounds, gardens and pests agent.

It is important to grow plants in the right environment. Adequate soil nutrients, in addition to the correct soil type, will help gardeners create and maintain a growing environment where plants can thrive.

Preparing Soil Samples

To begin the soil testing process, pick up a soil sample kit from the local Extension office. It will include a form explaining how to properly collect a soil sample.

“It is best to send soil samples that are dry,” Reeder said. “Laying the soil out on newspaper to dry before sending it off is suggested.”

Collect soil from the garden site or flower bed. According to Reeder, it is important to dig deep enough into the soil to collect an adequate sample. This could range from 2 to 8 inches deep, depending on the types of plants or seeds growers choose to plant in a given area. It is also important to include only soil in the sample. Make sure to remove as much plant and debris as possible.

Soil Test Results

Soil tests determine the pH and nutrient content of soil. This is beneficial as different plants often thrive in different pH ranges and require different nutrient concentrations. It is also advantageous to know soil nutrient levels, including calcium, magnesium, phosphorous and potassium. These levels will help growers make informed decisions regarding fertilizer types and frequency.

Growers can also do an analysis to test levels of micronutrients such as zinc in the soil. This analysis will include liming suggestions.

“Add lime to your soil in order to raise its pH if it is too acidic for what you are intending to grow,” said Reeder.

Sending the Soil Sample

Soil samples should be sent to the Auburn University Soil Testing Laboratory. The form available at local Extension offices with the sample box will include the sample mailing address. Each sample costs \$7, with an added cost to perform a micronutrient analysis. Note: results are available by mail or electronically.

For more information, visit www.aces.edu. Read more about soil sampling at home in [ANR-0006 A, Home Soil Testing: Taking a Sample](#). [Find additional information on submitting a sample.](#)

Posted by: Tim McCoy

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.



Things to do.....

Planting season continues for dormant trees.

Fertilize fruit trees.

Apply half of the fertilizer recommended for grapes now, apply the other half soon after fruit sets.

Start strawberry plantings.

Spray all shrubs with a fungicide before new growth starts.

Good time to prune all shrubs before new growth starts.

Don't prune early-blooming species because flower buds will be removed.

Prune hybrid tea roses.

Replant early plantings of hardy annuals.

Plant some vegetable seeds listed for January in central Alabama plus collards, salsify, and Swill chard.

Add tomatoes, peppers, eggplants, cauliflower, and Brussels sprouts to cold frames.

Plant cabbage, lettuce, broccoli, and Brussels sprouts.



Autauga County Master Gardeners

Assoc.

c/o Autauga County Extension Office

2226 Highway 14 West

Autaugaville, AL 36003

PLACE
STAMP
HERE

To: