



Our Mission

Committed to volunteering to beautify our communities, to share our knowledge of gardening, and to promote environmental awareness



DIRTY DIGS

Autauga County Master Gardeners Association Newsletter

January, 2020



President's Message

A new year. A clean slate. There's just something refreshing about a new start. I feel very optimistic for our new year.

We finally have formalized agreements for both of our gardens and the resources to improve them. What a great feeling! The Demonstration Garden is off to a rocky start due to the unwanted wildlife issues. Pesky squirrels – hopefully,

they will be dealt with soon before the spring planting season. Glenn Huovinen has increased the production goal to 1,600



pounds so we're going to have to make up for lost time. Even with the discouragement, there is a silver lining – this gives the opportunity to get the new planting strategies into place and time to replenish the soil.

Prattville Garden is undergoing its own improvements. Work is scheduled to start within the next two weeks to level and improve the walkway system in the garden. We are applying for a grant to replace the aging irrigation system. The planting design is being implemented for the fresh look. The garden should be lush and inviting by the plant sale when we officially open our doors to the public.

We have a full complement of interesting and informative educational classes to be offered for the public – Lunch & Learn, the library series, Junior MG classes at Marbury Middle School and classes at the Doster Center. The variety is such that there will be

something for every gardener!

It's our turn to host a Master Gardener intern class. We need to get out and recruit in order to bring fresh talent into our organization. The classes are scheduled to start in September so it's not too early to start asking our friends and neighbors. We will include an application in this newsletter for your use in recruitment.

We've been asked to host the AMGA Fall Seminar this year. What a great opportunity to bring Master Gardeners from all over the state to our community for a fun-filled and educational seminar. Is there a topic you would like to see covered? Please let me know as soon as possible.

As you can see, we will be busy again this year! I look forward to working with everyone to make our dreams and plans a reality.

Always remember, time began in a garden!

2019 MG of the YEAR!!

DIAN OWENS





ACMGA Members

Resolutions, resolutions, resolutions! What would we do without those moments when we evaluate the past year and decide to continue on this path or perhaps change the direction slightly? Usually it's things about health and our hobbies. And when your hobby is gardening, there is so much to be done in each season of the year. But let's begin at the beginning. Should we set up resolutions or perhaps identify intentions for the new year? What's the difference you may ask. The distinction between goals (or resolutions) and intentions is more than a semantic one. An intention is more forgiving, without the built-in succeed-or-fail dynamic that seems to come with New Year's resolutions. The idea of intention honors effort, process growth, and not just immediate results. Resolutions seem to put so much pressure on us, that we usually fail early in the year with guilt and regret heavy on our shoulders. Perhaps regular daily, weekly, and monthly intentions instead of making a big ordeal about laborious resolutions is the best path for gardeners. Practicing an attitude of gratitude throughout the year rather than consigned to one day and setting intentions will be more sustainable if we spread the effort throughout the year.

Start with the here and now

While goals are about the future, intention is rooted in the present. The future is full of unknowns and thus can make us anxious but the present keeps us grounded. As gardeners we experience joy when we see last year's bulbs peek out with the promise of beauty and color.



Also, belonging to ACMGA is helpful and encouraging when you share your intentions with someone, knowing they will be there to inquire about your progress, celebrate your wins along the way, and share in the fruits of your labor!

While January is the month to plan and dream about your yard and garden for the spring and summer, a long wish list will certainly feel overwhelming. So intend to grow your garden a few steps at a time. Select a few new intentions each season until you've built the garden of your dreams.

This winter, intend to:

- Hang a bird feeder.
- Build a compost bin.
- Check gardening tools and replace as needed.
- Order seeds for heirloom tomatoes so you can grow your own.
- Prune a crabapple or pear tree into an espalier (check with Advanced Master Gardener, Glenn Huovinen)
- Swap seeds with fellow gardeners.
- Build a raised bed.

And, look forward to a beautiful intentional garden throughout the year. Look for tips on Spring intentions in future Dirty Digs.

By Ofie McCoy



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

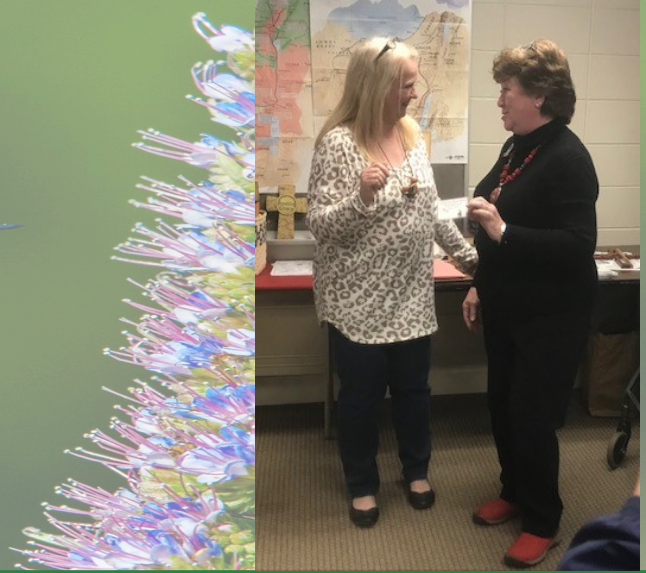
First Presbyterian Church
100 West Bridge Street, Wetumpka 36092

- 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

Cindy Salyer was the recipient of the January Hummingbird Award. Cindy does a lot behind the scenes, volunteering when there is a call out and she goes out and gets donations of items for the gardens. Cindy is also our advisory council representative to the AMGA.



Pollinator Protection Presentations

The pesticide environmental stewardship has just updated and released a few new presentations, handouts and other related information for pollinator protection education. They have also included a free training that would be excellent for master gardeners, naturalists and homeowners. These are available on eXtension.org. For more information please visit the link below.

<https://pesticidestewardship.org/pollinator-protection/presentations/>

Sonja Brannon Thomas, Ph.D.

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Alabama Cooperative Extension System
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Phone: (334)-844-8851

Cell: (334)-750-8891

Fax: (334) 844-4586



DON'T THINK
THE GARDEN
LOSES ITS
ECSTASY IN
WINTER.
IT'S QUIET,
BUT THE
ROOTS ARE
DOWN THERE
RIOTOUS.

- LUMI

Update Your ACMG Hours

If you've posted Volunteer or CEU hours online recently, you've seen the new box on the service report for entering Drive Time hours.

We've always separated drive time from CEU hours, and that hasn't changed. But now Extension wants us to separate our drive time from MG meetings. These are the meetings we report using the "MGA/AMGA meeting" category. So, drive time to monthly membership meetings, local board meetings, Advisory Council meetings, and state board meetings must be separated out from the time of the actual meetings and the two times entered in two separate boxes.

But what about membership meetings with programs? We've always separated the business portion (MGA/AMGA meeting) from the program portion (CEU). Now that we need to separate out our drive time, we'll have an entry for all three of the "Enter Hours" boxes for this scenario.

Don't separate drive time from any other activities than those listed above.

It's not nearly as complicated as it sounds. Just start doing it and you'll see. And if it helps Extension, then it's worth our getting used to something new.

A heads-up – When you post a time in the new box and then look at your list of entries for the year, you'll see that "Drive Time" is on a line of its own just under the activity associated with it.

One last thing – Make sure you keep reporting local planning and committee meetings the way we always have. These are the ones for projects like 1)Lunch and Learn, 2)Prattville, 3)annual budget, 4)Intern mentoring, ETC. Use the volunteer category of the project covered in the meeting. For the examples listed, use the following volunteer categories: 1)"Program or workshop for Public," 2)"Education/demonstration," 3)"MGA/AMGA administration," 4)"Manage/Teach/Assist Intern class." And continue to LUMP DRIVE TIME in with the time for the appropriate volunteer activity.





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

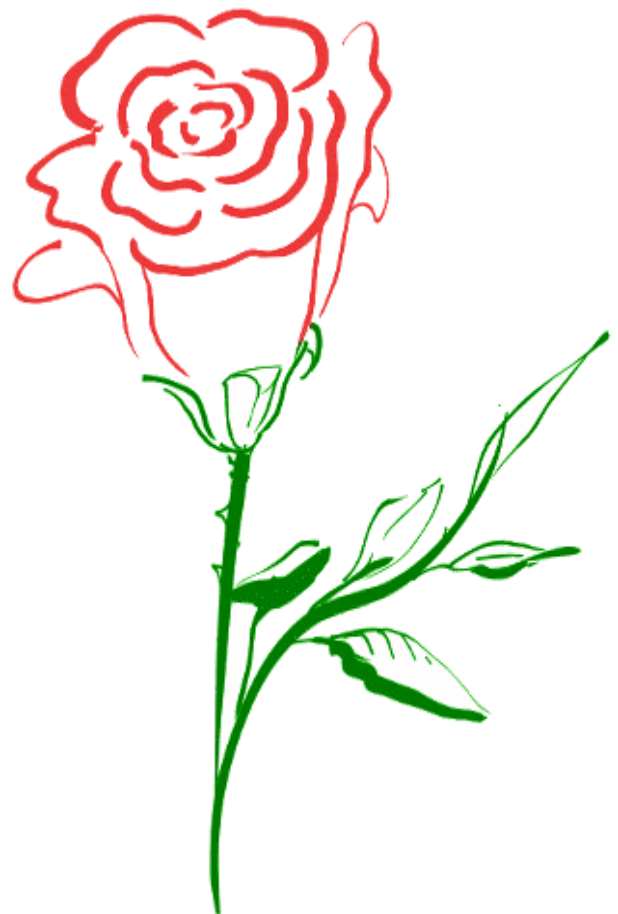
**Autauga County
Master Gardeners Association**
Gardening Lunch & Learn
2020

BRING A SACK LUNCH FREE PROGRAM DRINKS PROVIDED
THURSDAY, 6 FEBRUARY
12:00-1:00 P.M.

Trinity United Methodist Church
610 Fairview Avenue, Prattville 36066

Pesky Garden Weeds
How to Stop the Spread

Virginia Pruitt
Elmore County Master Gardener



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



Original Author: J. Raymond Kessler, Jr., Ph.D., Horticulture Professor, Auburn University

The term bedding plant is not a botanical classification, but a term that describes a method of commercial production and marketing. Bedding plants are produced in a greenhouse and marketed in garden centers and mass-market businesses as a method of adding temporary seasonal color to the landscape. They are adapted to a wide variety of growing conditions and are generally easy to grow.

Many bedding plants are annual plants that complete their life cycles in a single growing season. Others are actually tender perennials that we treat as annuals in temperate regions of the country. Still others are bulbs, herbs, ground covers, vegetables, small fruits or woody plants. Consider these steps when installing an annual bedding plant display

Determining Bedding Plant Season

Traditionally, bedding plants are planted in the spring for spring and summer color, with a second planting in the fall for winter color. However, it is possible to plant in all four seasons and have color year round with the long growing season and mild winters in Alabama.

The first planting of the year can be made in early spring as early as late February or March using semi-hardy annuals. Semi-hardy annuals can tolerate some frost and will grow and flower in the spring and early summer but will not withstand the summer heat. These include sweet peas, English daisies, hybrid petunias, snapdragons, English wallflowers, nasturtium, and sweet alyssum.

The second planting using tender annuals can be made in the spring when the chance of frost has passed. Tender annuals cannot tolerate frost but will withstand the summer heat. The list of tender annuals is extensive, ranging from impatiens to begonias.

The third planting using semi-hardy annuals a second time in the year can be made in the fall when temperatures begin to moderate in September or early October. These plants include chrysanthemums, snapdragons, ornamental cabbage, and kale.

The fourth planting using hardy annuals can be made in early winter from mid-October to November. Hardy annuals take considerable frost and freezing, and include pansies, Johnny-jump-ups, China Pinks, ornamental cabbage/kale, and hardy cultivars of snapdragons (Liberty or Sonnet series).



Figure 1: Coleus and Pentas make for a good combination in a full sun site

Table 1. Planting Dates for Annuals in Alabama

Region	Semi-Hardy Spring Annuals	Tender/Summer Annuals	Semi-Hardy Fall Annuals	Hardy Winter Annuals
North Alabama	March 1	May 1	September 1	October 1
Central Alabama	February 20	April 15	September 15	October 15
South Alabama	February 10	April 1	September 25	October 30

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Choosing Healthy Bedding Plants

The ideal bedding plant is one that blooms quickly after planting, is free of insects and disease, and is heat and drought tolerant. The plant continues to bloom for a long time, has attractive flowers and foliage that suits your design purpose, and is a plant you like. In recent years, plant breeders have developed improved versions of existing bedding plants and introduced new plants to the market. They have developed plants that grow more compactly, produce more flowers, tolerate heat and drought better, tolerate more sun or shade, and come in an amazing range of flower colors.

When purchasing bedding plants from retail outlets, be aware that the quality of the plant can vary from one shipment to another at each store. Purchase stocky, compact plants with short, thick stems, many side branches, and a healthy green foliage color. Avoid stretched or spindly plants with yellow lower leaves. Do not insist on buying plants with open flowers. Green plants with few open flowers will grow more rapidly, filling in the area allotted in the garden. Examine shoots for insects or diseases, especially on the undersides of leaves. Avoid plants with yellow spots, burned leaf margins, or excessive lower leaf loss. Most importantly, examine the root system of the plants. A plant with a poor root system will not perform well in the landscape. Roots should fill out the container completely so the soil and plant come out as one unit. The roots should be white in color, especially at the tips. Avoid plants with black or brown roots.



Figure 2: Buy plants with healthy green foliage with many flower buds, but few open flowers



Figure 2: Buy plants with healthy green foliage with many flower buds, but few open flowers

Healthy Plant Checklist

- Healthy, bright white roots that fill out the pot
- Stocky, strong stems
- Many buds, but few open flowers
- Good branching off the main stem
- No yellowing or spotted leaves
- No signs of insect damage

Deciding Where to Plant Annual Bedding Plants

Bedding plants have many uses in the landscape. They can be planted in flowerbeds (plantings that can be walked around and viewed from all sides) or flower borders (plantings with a backdrop, such as a fence, building, or woody plants on one or two sides) to provide temporary seasonal color. They can provide a bright source of color to draw the eye to a focal point in the landscape. Plant them in containers to accent decks, patios, or entrances to the home. Bedding plants can also be used in theme gardens, such as cut flower gardens, butterfly, or hummingbird gardens.

In landscaping, bedding plants are synonymous with dramatic garden color. They are the landscaper's "paint-brush and color palate" because no other group of plants provides as wide a range of flower colors over as long a time as bedding plants do. Bedding plants are often used as focal points to draw the eye of the viewer along an overall design or to highlight an object of interest in the landscape. Because they are strong visual items, it is easy to overuse them, especially in the formal area at the front of the home. Locating two or more focal points within a small area can be visually confusing. The best way to determine harmonious yet effective locations for bedding plants is to walk through the landscape and examine all viewpoints. Some natural positions

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Figure 4: A variety of textures and colors can make for an interesting annual bed.

for bedding plants are at the corner of outdoor rooms where borderlines converge, around hard-scape items, or near the entryway to the home.

Many landscape problems can be addressed using bedding plants. They provide quick growth and early color to new landscapes while waiting for more permanent trees and shrubs to develop. Use bedding plants to fill voids in newly planted shrubbery. Colorful bedding plants can create interest in established landscapes. Use them to enhance outdoor family living areas, entertaining spaces, and entry ways.

Consider the cultural requirements of bedding plants when choosing a site in the landscape. Plants labeled as needing full sun will require at least six hours of direct sunlight. Plants described as shade loving need four hours or less of direct sun, preferably in the morning. These two groups generally cannot be mixed in the same planting. Most bedding plants require well-drained soil. If the soil is heavy clay or stays constantly wet, correct the problem before planting by incorporating a generous amount of organic matter into the soil to create raised planting bed.



Figure 5: Bright pink New Guinea impatiens draw the eye to the entryway of a building.

Creating Successful Color Combinations

Give some thought to flower color combinations when planning a bed layout. The primary colors on a color wheel are red, yellow, and blue; all other colors on the color wheel are derived from mixing primary colors. Placing primary flower colors next to each other in a design produces a strong contrast that may not be pleasing. Make transitions using shades and tints of primary colors.

Several color combinations have been developed that are pleasing to the eye.

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A monochromatic scheme uses one color combined with shades and tints of that same color. Supplement this scheme with white flowers or plants with silver or gray foliage. White, gray, or silver matches almost any color scheme.

An analogous color scheme uses any two colors adjacent to each other on the color wheel, such as yellow and yellow-green or yellow and yellow-orange.

Complementary colors are any two colors across from each other on the color wheel, such as yellow and blue or red and green. It often works well to make one of the two complementary colors dominant and use the other as an accent.

The lighting in the landscape can affect colors, too. White and light blue or yellow-colored flowers brighten shaded areas while dark-colored flowers tend to disappear. On the other hand, pastel-colored flowers tend to appear faded in full sun.



Figure 6: Caladiums can add a bright spot of color to shady areas

Establishing an Annual Planting Bed

The short life cycle and heavy flowering potential of annual plants require their growing medium to be nutrient-rich and well-drained. Garden beds should be carefully prepared before planting to ensure success. Begin by removing existing vegetation and working the soil with a tiller to the depth of 8-10 inches. Work 4 inches of organic matter (such as compost or soil conditioner) into the soil, as well as any fertilizers and lime recommended by a soil test. Contact your County Extension Office for more information on obtaining a soil test. Smooth the soil and slope the edges of the bed to improve drainage.

Layer annual plants in the bed to create a multi-layered design, with taller plants in the back and cascading plants on the bed's front edge. Carefully read plant tags as to the distance between plants. If annuals are planted too closely, it will create leggy, weak stems in danger of falling over.

Take care not to plant too deeply; the plants should sit level with field soil. Add two inches of mulch over the entire bed, trying to avoid mulching plant stems, and then water the planting deeply. After watering, dig into the soil to make certain water has reached at least 6 inches down into the soil column.

The first 3-4 weeks after planting are the most crucial to success. During this time, plants are establishing root systems in the soil of the planting bed. Check for adequate moisture 2-3 times a week and water deeply as needed.

Summer maintenance will include weekly watering; beds will need approximately 1 inch of water per week, if not supplied by rainfall. Add fertilizer as needed in the form of a complete granular formulation, such as 8-8-8 or 10-10-10, at a rate of 2 pounds per 100 square feet, or based on soil test recommendations. Be sure to carefully rinse plants after applying a granular fertilizer to prevent foliar damage. Alternately, a slow-release fertilizer can be used, which is less likely to burn plants than a granular fertilizer and will give excellent growth for much of the growing season. Slow-release fertilizers such as 12-6-6 or 14-14-14,

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← RECIPE IDEA →

EASY LASAGNA

DIAN OWENS

Ingredients:

1-lb ground chuck beef
32-oz jar spaghetti sauce
32-oz Ricotta cheese
3 cups shredded mozzarella cheese
1 small can black olives
1 small jar mushrooms
2 eggs, beaten
1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese
2 tsp dried parsley
Salt and pepper to taste
9 lasagna noodles
1/2 cup water

Directions:

In large skillet over medium heat, brown the ground chuck beef and drain liquid. Add spaghetti sauce and simmer 5 minutes.

In large bowl, mix together Ricotta, 2 cups of mozzarella, beaten eggs, half the Parmesan, olives and mushrooms, dried parsley, salt and pepper.

To assemble, in bottom of a 9X13 baking dish, evenly spread 3/4 cup of the sauce mixture. Cover with 3 uncooked lasagna noodles, 1 3/4 cups of the cheese mixture and 1/4 cup sauce. Repeat layers twice. Top with 3 noodles, remaining sauce, remaining mozzarella and Parmesan cheeses. Add 1/2 cup water to the inside edges of the dish. Cover with aluminum foil.

Bake in preheated 350° oven for 45 minutes. Uncover and bake an additional 10 minutes. Let stand 10 minutes before serving.



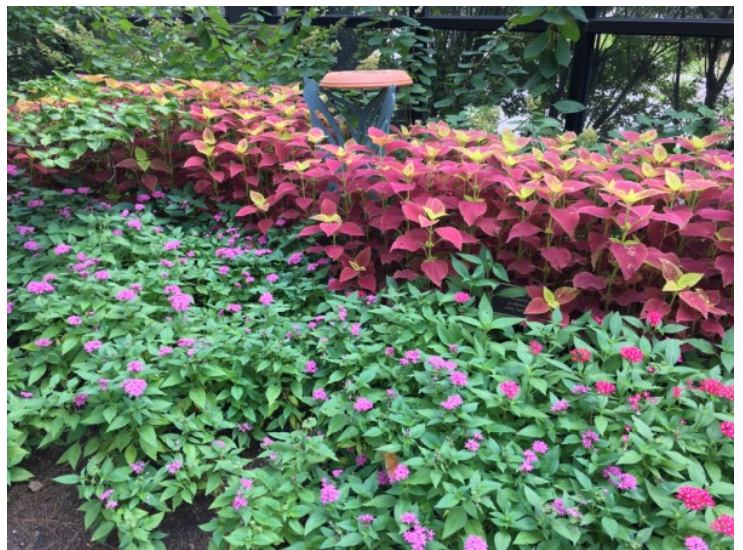
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should be added at the rate suggested on the product label.

Some annuals (such as pansies, zinnia, and salvias) need deadheading to continue vigorous flowering throughout the summer. After each flower begins to fade, remove the flower stem at the first leaf below the flower. Other plants (such as coleus and begonia) have a tendency to grow tall and spindly rather than compact. Cut these back severely mid-season to assure strong stems later in the year.

Planting Bed Prep Steps

- Remove groundcovers such as sod from the area
- Till to a depth of 8-10 inches
- Till in 4 inches of organic matter and any fertilizers recommended in your soil test report
- Slope beds away from buildings and taper the edges to improve drainage
- Plant bedding annuals at the recommended distance
- Add 2 inches mulch over the entire bed
Water 1 inch per



Monthly Meetings

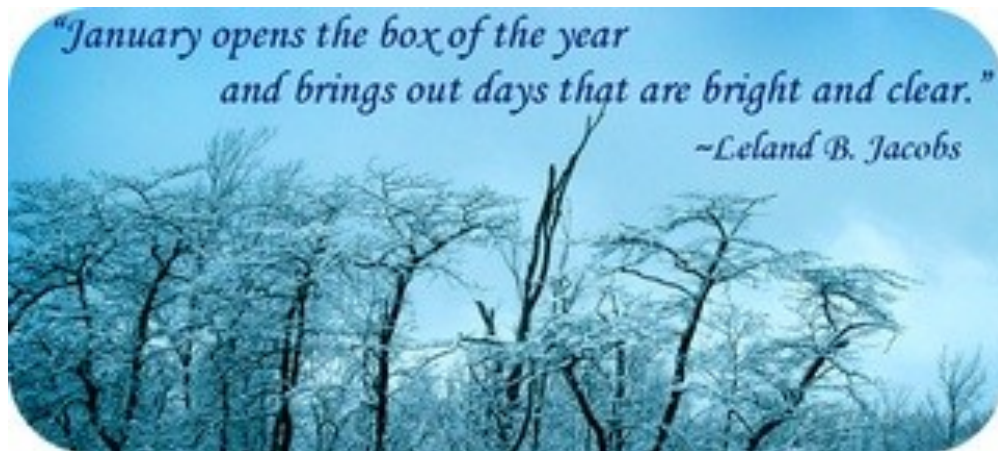
Second Thursday of each month at First Baptist Church, Prattville (unless otherwise notified)

- ⇒ 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.....

Set out apples, peaches, pears, and grapes.
Start grafting pecans. Prune dormant trees.
Plant shrubs and trees, including broadleaf, narrowleaf, and deciduous.
Spray all deciduous shrubbery with a dormant spray to control diseases and insects.
Soil test before setting up fertility program.
Plant hardy annuals.
Plant lettuce, cabbage, and broccoli seeds in cold frames.
Set out cabbage plants.
Late plantings of Dutch bulbs will flower if planted now.
Lilies of all types, except Madonna, may be planted.
Check stored bulbs and discard rotten ones.
Make indoor plantings of amaryllis, callas, and gloxinias.



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

PLACE
STAMP
HERE

To: