

DIRTY DIGS

Autauga County Master Gardeners Association Newsletter

October 2020



President's Message

Another month, another tropical storm. Thankfully, it lost much of its fury by the time it reached us. Loved, loved, loved the rain. I know for people on the coast, the storm was not welcome, but it brought much needed rain to our area. I worked out in it most of the day because it was a great day to plant!!! What did you do on these rainy days?

Great meeting on Zoom last week! We had 38 people attend. I believe we are going to have to rely on Zoom for a while longer, especially after the weather gets cold. For those of you that haven't connected via Zoom yet, would you be interested in learning how to do it? Mallory and I would love to help you get connected. Please contact me for more information.

Mark your calendars now for a change in time and location for the November membership meeting. Typically, that is an evening meeting, but we are going to move it to 10:00am so that we can meet at Prattville Garden. Our speaker for the month doesn't need PowerPoint so that was a perfect opportunity for us to move outside.

We're planning the Christmas gathering for our December meeting. It will look different this year, but we do plan to gather to conduct our year end business and fellowship with each other while maintaining safety guidelines.

An exciting event that was approved at the October membership meeting is a Spring Garden Tour. We plan to offer the opportunity for the public to visit six MG gardens and our two public gardens. If you are interested in serving on the planning committee, please contact me soon. There are a number of logistics to consider so we need to start planning this event in the next month.

Keep in touch! Always remember, time began in a garden!

Debbie



- Registration Link: <https://conta.cc/36NruTN>
- Clickable Flyer Attached (registration link embedded)
- Flyer on Website: <https://bit.ly/34qdi01>
- Event on Website: <https://bit.ly/30BshTU>

Raising & Storing Common Herbs

Ag & Stewardship Workshop

Presented by the Pike Road Ag & Stewardship Club & the Montgomery
County Branch of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System

Oct. 23 • 9-11 AM

VIA LIVE WEBINAR • FOLLOW ALONG FROM HOME

With ACES Agent & Horticulture Specialist Mallory Kelley and
Herbalist Debbie Boutelier

Prepare to unlock the full potential of your herb garden. Don't
have an herb garden? That's okay! This virtual workshop will
teach you what you need to know to start and maintain an herb
garden at home. We'll also cover various culinary and
homeopathic uses of herbs, just in time for the holidays!

Whether you were thinking about testing out your gardening
skills with herbs, preparing a delicious fall feast or looking for
useful home-made gifts for the whole family, this Ag &
Stewardship installment is the right one for you!

This is a FREE event, but registration is required!
Click here to register through October 22.

Questions? Contact Katy Garren: katy@pikeroad.us
Town of Pike Road • www.pikeroad.us • 334.272.9883 • 9575 Vaughn Rd



"Mary, Mary, Quite contrary, How does your garden grow? With silver bells and cockle shells and little maids all in a row." The secret to Mary's garden success is quite peculiar in nature: "With silver bells and cockleshells and pretty maids all in a row." Most of us lack the silver bells or cockle shells or pretty maids, but we do have other interesting, colorful and sometimes spectacular plants in our gardens that should be shared with our MG family. Ms. Jane McCarthy suggested some time ago that everyone share pictures of their gardens along with the scientific name for each plant. What a great challenge! This will be a standing article every month in the Dirty Digs and your pictures and stories are welcome! Stories are slow in coming in so here are a few more pictures from the McCoy garden.



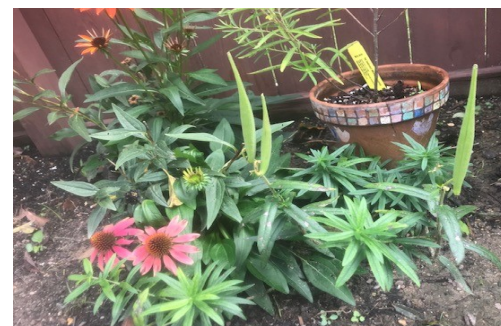
This is a picture of our loofah vines growing over a metal trellis. Loofah, (genus *Luffa*), is also called a vegetable sponge, sponge gourd, or rag gourd, genus of seven species of annual climbing vines of the gourd family (*Cucurbitaceae*), native to the Old World tropics. As you can see, under this beautiful, bright yellow flowering vines are the large loofah pods which will be harvested as soon as they dry on the vine. Great for bathing and so fun to see!



The beautiful, showy Confederate Rose. Huge blooms and an abundance of buds make this bush one of the prettiest in the fall. Showy blooms, 4 to 6 inches wide, appear in fall. They open white, fade to pink as they age, and finally end up red. Native to China, confederate rose isn't a rose, but a species of hibiscus (*Hibiscus mutabilis*)

Tomatoes Tomatoes Tomatoes

I will be the first to admit it, Tim and I went crazy on the tomatoes this year. We tried tomatoes last year (for the first time) and had miserable results. This year we bought lots of tomato plants of every kind and we were overrun with tomatoes. We used them in sauces, salads, salsa and still they came! So we sent them to AICC, friends, family, and they are still growing. When, oh when, will they stop?



"Hello Yellow" Butterfly Weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) is a native, pollinator-friendly knock-out with cheerful butter-yellow flower clusters. Flowers will bloom in summer, and the rich green foliage is the perfect complement to the flowers. This low-maintenance perennial, is drought tolerant once established, making it the perfect water-wise addition to a pollinator garden. Butterflies, bees, and hummingbirds all love butterfly weed. In the fall the seed pods will appear and are ready to harvest when the pods turn



This will be a monthly article so make certain your garden pictures are included. Share with your MG friends.



Hummingbird Award

Our president, Debbie Boutelier, was selected as the Hummingbird Award recipient for October. We all see what she does for our association. The serious amount of time that Debbie gave to the association in the recent months as the lead on the grants from AMGA and Mid-South RC&D deserves to be recognized. Making sure that the grants came to fruition from the beginning, administration, and final report consumed hundreds of hours. Congratulations Debbie.



JAPANESE MAPLES, BONSAI, MINITURE GARDENS AND HYDRANGEAS...

Glenn Huovinen

On September 25, 13 members of ACMGA traveled to the home of Rhona Watson, a member of CAMGA, to tour her vast collections of Bonsais, Japanese Maples and Miniature Gardens. Rhona grafts Japanese Maples to root stock that comes from Japanese Maples that pop up in her yard and from root stock that she purchases online. She creates Bonsais from nursery stock. Plus, her miniature gardens portray mini landscapes. The tour was very enjoyable and educational.



HEART OF DIXIE RAILROAD AND MUSEUM

NOV. 7, 2020



COST \$14 PER PERSON

CARPOOL FROM FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH PRATTVILLE

BE AT THE CHURCH BY 8:00

DIRECTIONS

TAKE I-65 NORTH TO CALERA EXIT # 228. DRIVE .6 MILES SOUTH ON ALABAMA HIGHWAY 25 AND TURN LEFT ON 9TH STREET, AT THE SAV-MOR FOOD OUTLET .

PROCEED 1 BLOCK TO THE PARKING AREA ON THE RIGHT.

THE MUSEUM ADDRESS IS: 1919 9TH STREET, CALERA,
ALABAMA 35040

To reserve your spot, contact Glenn Huovinen 334-312-9873

William Butler Yeats' 1917 poem lyrically describes another lush autumn day. It can be enjoyed for its beautiful imagery, but the poem's subtext is the pain of the passage of time. In the final image, Yeats writes of the longing and lack that autumn evokes as he imagines the departure of the swans he is observing and waking one morning to their absence.

The Wild Swans at Coole

"The trees are in their autumn beauty,
The woodland paths are dry,
Under the October twilight the water
Mirrors a still sky;
Upon the brimming water among the stones
Are nine-and-fifty swans.
The nineteenth autumn has come upon me
Since I first made my count;
I saw, before I had well finished,
All suddenly mount
And scatter wheeling in great broken rings
Upon their clamorous wings...
But now they drift on the still water,
Mysterious, beautiful;
Among what rushes will they build,
By what lake's edge or pool
Delight men's eyes when I awake some day
To find they have flown away?"



MONARCH CATERPILLAR FOOD GATHERING

By: Glenn Huovinen

On October 1, a group of ACMGA members traveled to a farm in South Montgomery County to search for Butterfly Weed, varieties of the genus *Asclepias*. The group included Bionca Lindsey, Soyna Moore, Lanell Tatum, Kathy Quinn and Glenn Huovinen. We trekked through grassy cow pastures and cow patties. We found the plants but discovered that the prairie soil in South Montgomery County is very difficult to dig and the plants had a large tuber (as seen in the photo) that broke easily when dug. According to research they are hard to transplant due to the tubers. We all took home plants to be potted and are keeping our fingers crossed for success. We had lots of fun on a beautiful Fall day.





Alabama Garden Walks

A virtual visit to gardens in North and Central Alabama

Field trips are not possible right now, so let us bring the gardens to you! Join us as we stroll through gardens around North and Central Alabama to learn new plants and new practices to help make your garden a more diverse and sustainable place. Each session will visit a different public or private garden to look how they approach landscaping. Learn new plants and new landscape ideas all from the comfort of your own home!

12:00-12:45 PM

1st and 3rd Fridays of the month

Register at:

www.aces.edu/go/GardenWalk



- October 2 - A Sustainable Approach: Common Ground Community Garden with Allyson Shabel
- October 16 - Connie Mac Dobbs' Backyard Oasis with Hayes Jackson
- November 6 - A Plant Collector's Garden: Jim Allen's Backyard Hideaway with Allyson Shabel
- November 20 - Longleaf Botanical Garden's Sensory Garden and Tropical Cascade Garden with Hayes Jackson

For more information, contact

Hayes (jacksha@aces.edu) or Allyson (ams0137@aces.edu)

www.aces.edu
Master Gardener Helpline (877) 252-4769

The Alabama Cooperative Extension System (Alabama A&M University and Auburn University) is an equal opportunity educator and employer. Everyone is welcome! Please let us know if you have accessibility needs.

Reintroduction of the Eastern Indigo

Snake in the Southeast

Posted by: Mary Leigh Olive



AUBURN UNIVERSITY, Ala. – The Eastern indigo snake, one of the longest snakes native to the United States, calls the Southeast home. Unfortunately, this staple reptile's survival is at risk, especially in Alabama. In fact, these snakes are a federally threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. In order to decrease the chances of their extinction, reintroduction programs are crucial.

Historically, Eastern indigo snakes were found in the coastal plain regions of Southern Georgia, Alabama, Southeast Mississippi and Florida. Currently, they are found in parts of Southern Georgia and Florida. Typically, these snakes live in longleaf pine ecosystems within the coastal plain and adjacent drainages.

"The decline of the species throughout its range is one of the big drivers for reintroduction," said Bence Carter, an Alabama Extension forestry, wildlife and natural resources regional agent.

Also, people consider these nonvenomous snakes an apex predator and are an important part of the ecosystem, making it even more essential to reintroduce the species to its environment.

Reintroduction Efforts

The first attempt to reintroduce these snakes in Alabama occurred in the 1980s on multiple sites in the Southern region of the state. Auburn University's Dan Speake spearheaded these initial attempts. Surveys conducted from 2004 to 2006 showed that these first attempts did not establish any viable populations.

In 2008, interest arose to attempt to reintroduce

Eastern indigo snakes in hopes to create a viable population in the Conecuh National Forest. Jimmy Stiles, a doctoral student within the Auburn University School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences, has been a part of the reintroduction project.

"To have snakes to release, females with eggs were captured from Georgia and taken to Auburn where they laid their eggs," Stiles said.

The females were then released back where they were captured from. Out of each clutch of hatchlings, professionals kept both male and female snakes to create a captive breeding program.

"This captive breeding program now produces all of the snakes currently released," Stiles said.



Young Eastern indigo snakes

Image by Raymond Corely

In 2010, after two years of growth, the snakes were released again in the Conecuh National Forest and have been continuously released over the last decade. So far, the project released approximately 190 Eastern indigo snakes into the Conecuh National Forest. After their release, professionals monitored the snakes and conducted several studies about the snake's ecology.

"This project has shown several signs of success including a high survival rate and habitat use that mirrors wild indigo snakes," Stiles said.

Recently, wild reproduction has been documented, indicating that the population is increasing on its own.

Proper Habitat

In addition to the reintroductions to unfragmented sites, like the Conecuh National Forest, there is a push to increase available habitats through management practices like longleaf pine restoration and prescribed fire. In Alabama, Eastern indigo snakes rely on open pine savannas managed with frequent, low-intensity fire. Habitat fragmentation played a part in the species decline, so large uninterrupted tracts of land are important as well. The pines are critical because they provide fuel to carry fire. This in turn reduces woody shrubs and promotes native grasses and forbs.

Carter said this management process can help set up a chain of events that eventually helps Eastern

(Continued on page 9)

indigo snakes.

"This process increases the potential for gopher tortoise populations," Carter said. "Gopher tortoises make burrows in the ground. These are important to the survival of the species (Eastern indigo snakes) because they provide refuge during the colder months."

Stiles said early radio telemetry work done on the released snakes shows that over 90 percent of the snakes use gopher tortoise burrows to survive the winter.



Image by Jimmy Stiles

Eastern indigo snakes use both upland pine and lowland hardwoods during the year. They will use the pine uplands for breeding and will hunt in wetlands and creek bottoms during the summer. Recent studies have also shown that the indigo snakes' preferred prey are venomous pit vipers, such as rattlesnakes and copperheads.

More Information

With the combined reintroduction efforts and positive reproduction results, the future for the Eastern indigo snake is looking up. However, continuous monitoring and preservation is necessary to ensure the species stabilizes their population. For more information about the Eastern indigo snake, or other snakes in Alabama, visit the Alabama Extension website www.aces.edu.

Busy Pollinators in Our Gardens



Marty Roney Montgomery Advertiser

AUTAUGAVILLE — If you're looking spend a lazy day in the country getting lost, picking pumpkins and getting plenty of fresh air, Southern Pumpkin Co. has you covered.

Located just west of Autaugaville, the operation

is the brainchild of Matt Graham, of Diebel Nursery, and Drew Wendland of Autauga Farming Company. The six-acre pumpkin patch and 10-acre corn maze is on land that wasn't being used on the nursery, which grows varieties of crepe myrtle trees for the wholesale market.

"We wanted to come up with something to use the land," Graham said. "With everything going on this year, this is a great way to get families out and have fun."

And if you're worried about crowds in this age of the coronavirus, safety steps have been taken.

LAWN BURWEED----

PREVENTING THIS PRICKLY PEST



Your thoughts of those pesky stickers in your turfgrass this summer may be a distant memory now, but if you do not want to battle them again next early summer, now is the time to act!

Lawn burweed (*Soliva sessilis*) is a winter annual that germinates throughout thin turf in the fall months as temperatures cool. It is small and not very noticeable during the cold winter months. However, as temperatures warm in the early spring, lawn burweed initiates a period of rapid growth and begins to form spine-tipped burs at the base of each leaf. The seed is contained within the hooked bur.

Now that you know what it is, the most important question remains – how can you get rid of it? The best strategy in controlling lawn burweed is to apply a preemergence herbicide, containing the active ingredients atrazine or isoxaben in early October, before the winter weeds germinate. This method will kill it upon sprouting and greatly reduce its presence in your yard next spring. One point to mention – these products are available in either a granular or liquid form. Granular products require ½ inch of rainfall or irrigation to become active.

Just in case you have a few weeds that escape the preemergence herbicide (which is not unusual), you can also spot spray with a postemergence herbicide. The key to success is to treat between November and February, when lawn burweed is very small and much easier to control. During this time, the weed has yet to develop the spine-tipped burs. Spray your lawn with a postemergence herbicide containing the active ingredients of three broadleaf weed killers: 2,4-D, dicamba, and mecoprop (MCP). Many brands of broadleaf herbicides on the shelf contain these ingredients. Using the herbicide 2,4-D alone may not be quite as effective, so a three-in-one product is preferred. Keep in mind that broadleaf herbicides are not effective unless applied when the air temperature is above 68 °F. The window of opportunity can be extremely limited during the winter season. Again, another reason to use pre-



emergence herbicides in the fall.

Unfortunately, most people do not notice a lawn burweed problem until warmer temperatures arrive. However, waiting until spring is too late. If you delay until April or May to attempt lawn burweed control, you are fighting a losing battle. Once the weed has reached a more mature state, multiple herbicide applications may be necessary, which can increase the potential for turfgrass injury. Because lawn burweed is a winter annual, it will begin to succumb to the warmer air temperatures (~90 °F); however, the spines have already formed and will remain after the weed withers and dies. Mowing the area at an extremely low height and bagging the seeds might offer some relief.

Some severe situations may call for killing the entire area, including the turfgrass, with a non-selective herbicide, such as glyphosate. Of course, one will have to replant grass or lay new sod, but this method may be worth it, since it will ensure no more lawn burweed!

Dead or alive, lawn burweed poses a painful problem. The only solution is early identification and control. Remember lawn burweed is an annual and will come back from seeds that develop each spring. Take action now for prickly-free turf later.





At Home Beekeeping Series

Distance Learning for Beekeepers

We're offering beekeepers the chance to attend virtual meetings from the comfort of one's own home using a computer or mobile device. Each event will bring participants up to date on timely beekeeping topics. Time for Q&A included.

ALL ARE WELCOME! IT'S FREE!

- Sept 29: Winter bee biology & management, with Jack Rowe (Alabama Extension)
- Oct 27: Creating & maintaining a wildflower meadow, with Anthony Abbate (Auburn)
- Nov 24: Getting started and staying in beekeeping, with Jeff Harris (Mississippi State)
- Dec 29: Beekeeping boxing day sales, with vendors & Geoff Williams (Auburn) & Anne Marie Fauval (Bee Informed Partnership)

Last Tuesday
of the month

6:30 – 7:30 pm
Central Time

Watch via Zoom Webinar

<https://auburn.zoom.us/j/904522838>

or Facebook Live: <https://www.facebook.com/LawrenceCountyextension/>

Questions? Email Allyson Shabel ams0137@aces.edu

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Natural Resources Webinar Series

SELECT WEDNESDAYS FROM 12 PM – 1 PM

PRESENTATION FROM 12 - 12:45 PM, Q&A FROM 12:45- 1 PM

Date	Topic	Speaker	Credits
Oct. 7	Alabama Extension Natural Resources Management Team: How we can help	Norm Haley, Alabama Extension	n/a
Oct. 21	The Natural Shift: Converting from loblolly or slash pine to longleaf over time	Ryan Mitchell, Alabama Extension	
Nov. 4	Deer Management Wild Cards: Predators, baiting, & disease	Norm Haley, Alabama Extension	
Nov. 18	Alabama Black Bears	Hannah Leeper, Auburn University, M.S. Student	
Dec. 2	Longleaf Establishment and Management on Private Lands	Ryan Mitchell, Alabama Extension	
Dec. 16	Drone Applications in Forestry	Kelvin Daniels, Alabama Forestry Commission	

FREE TO ATTEND

ON-LINE REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED FOR EACH INDIVIDUAL WEBINAR

To Register Visit:

www.aces.edu/go/registration



For questions contact:

Bence Carter, jbc0057@aces.edu

Norm Haley, nvh0001@aces.edu

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RECIPE IDEA

Roasted Pumpkin Soup

Ingredients:

1 (3-lb.) sugar pumpkin, butternut squash, or kabocha squash
4 tablespoons olive oil, divided
1 1/2 cups chopped yellow onion (about 1 large onion)
1 1/2 cups chopped celery (about 3 stalks)
1/2 cup chopped carrots (about 2 medium carrots)
6 garlic cloves, crushed
4 thyme sprigs, plus more for topping
1 sage sprig
1 oregano sprig
3/4 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon ground turmeric
6 cups chicken broth
2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
4 tablespoons sour cream
3 tablespoons whole milk
Pomegranate seeds for topping (optional)
Pumpkin seeds for topping (optional)



Directions:

Step 1

Preheat oven to 425°F. Cut pumpkin into quarters; discard seeds. Place on a baking sheet, and drizzle with 2 tablespoons of the olive oil. Bake in preheated oven until tender, 45 minutes to 1 hour. Cool until easy to handle. Remove skin, and discard. Set aside 1 1/2 cups (about 15 ounces) cooked pumpkin; reserve remaining pumpkin for another use.

Step 2

Heat remaining 2 tablespoons olive oil in a large saucepan over medium. Add onion, celery, carrots, garlic, thyme, sage, and oregano; cook, stirring occasionally, until vegetables are very tender, 8 to 10 minutes. (Do not brown.) Add salt and turmeric; cook, stirring often, 1 minute. Stir in chicken broth and 1 1/2 cups cooked pumpkin; bring to a simmer. Cover and simmer 15 minutes. Remove and discard herb sprigs.

Step 3

Place half of pumpkin mixture in a blender. Remove center piece of blender lid (to allow steam to escape); secure lid on blender, and place a clean towel over opening in lid. Process until mixture is very smooth, 1 to 2 minutes. Transfer to a large bowl. Repeat procedure with remaining pumpkin mixture. Stir in the apple cider vinegar.

Step 4

Whisk together sour cream and milk in a small bowl. Divide soup evenly among 6 shallow bowls; drizzle with sour cream mixture, and sprinkle with pomegranate seeds and pumpkin seeds, if desired.

Active Time

25 Mins

Total Time

1 Hour 40 Mins

Yield

Serves 6 (serving size: about 1 1/3 cups soup, about 1 tbsp. sour cream mixture)

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. meet-

October

Things to do.....

Shrub plantings can be made.

Start mulching all shrubs that do not have a mulch.

Continue to mow lawns until no new growth is noticeable.

Continue insect and disease control on roses.

Add some new rose varieties to your list.

Plant tulips, hyacinths, daffodils, crocuses, Dutch irises, anemones, and ranunculus's.

Watch planting depths. Dig caladiums; clean and store in a warm place.

Loosen mulches that have packed down.

Spray with oils before freezing weather to kill scale, mites, etc.

Transplant into small pots any cuttings taken earlier.

Plant turnips, mustard, kale, rape, spinach, and onion sets.



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

PLACE
STAMP
HERE

To: