

# DIRTY DIGS

Autauga County Master Gardeners Newsletter

AUGUST 2017

## Nature's Smile: Sunflowers !



Above: Sunflowers growing in a field off Highway 14 between Autaugaville and Selma.

Every year, commuters on Highway 14 between Prattville and Selma are treated to the beautiful vision of rows and rows of Sunflowers.

I had planned to write an article about sunflowers, but I found a wonderful Extension Daily article that serves the purposed better than anything I could write. It is on **page 8**, and I hope that you will enjoy it.

I did write a short piece about my son's recent experience with sunflowers. Please read it on **page 9**.



Continued on page 8

## This Issue

- Hummingbird Award Winner, p. 2
- The Dew of the Sea, p.3
- Planting Fall Gardens, p. 5
- Sunflowers, p. 8
- PawPaw Trees, pp. 3 & 8



E-mail your gardening stories, tips, etc.. to [tshealey@auburn.edu](mailto:tshealey@auburn.edu). Or call Tana Shealey at 334.361.7273.

## July Hummingbird Award Winner: Sheila Pearson

The July recipient of the Hummingbird Award is Sheila Pearson. Sheila is receiving the award for her fabulous work in the Prattvillage Herb Garden.

Each month, the Autauga County Master Gardeners Association Board selects a Hummingbird Award recipient whose volunteer work for ACMG is as full of energy as our fine feathered friend, the hummingbird.

The Autauga County Master Gardeners Association Board of Directors selected the name hummingbird Award for this local recognition because hummingbirds are both fast and beautiful, characteristics that reflect the wonderful efforts of our members.



**August 3, 2017 Lunch & Learn participants pay close attention to Dr. Sue Webb, with Petals From the Past, as she discusses the topic “Tough Native Wildflowers”.**

## Way Down Yonder in the Paw Paw Patch

Contributed by:

Tana Shealey

One day I was bugging the Master Gardeners who were answering the Helpline, when I mentioned some trees that I have managed to keep alive in our back yard.

“Soon”, I proudly stated, “We will have lots of shade in our back yard”. Beatrice Hill looked up from her work and said, “Tana, have you ever eaten a paw-paw?” That conversation peaked my interest.



Paw fruit is described as tasting like a banana, mango and melon.

Oh, and the best news about learning about the

I remembered a song that someone used to sing about a Paw Paw plant. According to my research, the paw-paw plant was once plentiful in America. The Paw

paw-paw plant is that Mrs. “B” is going to give me a sapling pawpaw plant for my yard. I sure hope I don’t kill it.

I hope that you will read the re-

search prepared by Kentucky State University Cooperative Extension System team . **Much of that re-search is on page 10.**



*Pickin' up pawpaws, puttin' 'em in your pocket,  
Pickin' up pawpaws, puttin' 'em in your pocket,  
Pickin' up pawpaws, puttin' 'em in your pocket,  
Way down yonder in the pawpaw patch.*

--American Folk Song

## The Dew of the Sea: Growing Rosemary Anywhere

By: Extension Daily



***Rosmarinus officinalis***, commonly referred to as rosemary, is an evergreen plant, as well as an herb. The term rosemary is derived from a Latin word and means “dew of the sea”, according to Medical News Today. The sea cliffs near the Greek Islands are a common place for rosemary to be found growing.

### Growing Rosemary

Growing rosemary in your backyard is simple. You don’t have to live near the Mediterranean or sea cliffs to grow this herb.

Rosemary can be grown in your backyard in a pot or in the ground, according to Mallory Kelley, a regional Extension agent specializing in

home grounds, gardens and home pests for the Alabama Cooperative Extension System.

“Rosemary is great in your garden any time of the year. I think it is a great addition to the landscape as a foundation plant or a border shrub as it stays evergreen,” said Kelley.

Growing rosemary requires full sunlight and the perfect amount of watering. Kelley says it is important to not overwater rosemary. Overwatering the plant could kill it. Hot and dry climates are considered prime conditions for the Mediterranean plant.

“Cut off a shoot or tip of a branch that is 4 to 6 inches and remove the bottom leaves, about an inch and stick it in the soil and keep it moist. If drying out is a possibility, cover it with a plastic bottle or container to create a mini greenhouse over the cutting and very soon roots will develop,” said Kelley.

### Using Rosemary as an Herb

Rosemary is not only an ideal evergreen to use for landscaping, but also an herb that is great for cooking.

“Rosemary is an herb that has health benefits, such as phytonutrients, antioxidant and essential oils,” according to Dr. Onikia Brown, RD an Extension nutrition specialist.

Phytonutrients, plant-based nutrients, appear to lower the risk of cancer and heart disease, according to The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition. The herb is also a rich source of potassium, which helps control the heart rate and blood pressure, according to Brown. This may be beneficial in helping to deal with the side effects of stress.

Rosemary is a multipurpose plant that looks great in your backyard but also has health benefits. Next time you are thinking about planting an evergreen, consider rosemary.

## Easy Banana Pudding Contributed by : Beatrice Hill

### What you will need:

Large bowl  
3 ripe bananas  
Vanilla wafers  
1 qt. Mason jar with tight fitting lid  
1 large package of Instant Vanilla Pudding Mix  
Ingredients listed on the Vanilla Pudding Mix package  
Whipped cream (optional)

### Directions:

Slice ripe banana and layer with vanilla wafers in a bowl. Pour the Instant Vanilla Pudding ingredients into the Mason jar. Place lid on the Mason jar and shake vigorously for approximately 3 minutes. Pour the pudding mix over the wafers and bananas (create

layers if you would like). Let set (stand) for 5 minutes. Place whipped cream on top of the pudding in the bowl.



## Seed Starting Tips Contributed by: Glenn Huovinen

Here is a method that I am using to start my fall seeds. I stuff the Net Cups (you can get them on Amazon) with Seed Starting Mix. Put the seed in the cups. Set them in a tray of water about an inch deep. The water will wick into and up the net cup. When the mix is totally wet monitor the water, and only add water when it is totally gone from the tray. Works for me!



# Planting a Fall Vegetable Garden

Contributed by: Mallory Kelley, Regional Extension Agent

If your summer vegetable garden was a bust, you are not alone. The cool late spring weather was wonderful and all this rain after the drought in the fall was much needed, but the problems they caused on our summer vegetables has been severe. If your tomatoes, peppers, beans and squash didn't survive, don't give up, you must try again and why not with a fall garden? Fall vegetables are really my favorite to grow and I have just about decided I will leave the peppers and tomatoes to my grandfather and avoid the summer heat, afternoon rain showers and weeding all together and take my turn providing for the family in the fall. We are blessed by our warm Alabama climate that we can grow vegetables year round.

Many cool-season vegetables, such as carrots, broccoli, cauliflower, collards, lettuce and Brussel sprouts, produce their best flavor and quality when they are maturing during cool weather. In Alabama, the spring temperatures often heat up quickly causing vegetables such as lettuce and spinach to bolt (flower) or develop a bitter flavor. This is why planting these veggies late in the summer or early fall when we are transitioning to cooler temps is more ideal than in the spring.

Growing a productive fall vegetable garden requires thoughtful planning and good cultural practices. In Alabama, August and September are the ideal months for planting a fall garden. For a more accurate planting schedule, determine the average date of the first killing frost in the fall, and then count backward from the frost date, using the number of days to maturity to determine the best time to plant in your area.

Alabama in August and September is usually hot and dry. If you choose to plant your fall veggies from seed during these months you must be care-

ful to keep the soil moist. Incorporating organic matter into the soil will help add nutrients and increase water holding capacity. Lettuce and spinach seeds will not germinate if the soil temperature exceeds 85 degrees F so for these you may need to wait a bit longer before sowing or plant from transplants. Also remember to mulch the garden to moderate moisture levels as September and October are our driest months with very little rainfall.

You can extend your summer vegetable crop and your semi-hardy vegetables on into the fall and winter easily by protecting them from frost. In Alabama, we often enjoy several weeks of good growing conditions after the first frost. Cover growing beds, rows or individual plants with burlap or a floating row cover supported by stakes or wire to keep the material from directly touching the plants. Most hardy vegetables require little or no frost protection, but semi-hardy vegetables should be protected or harvested before a heavy freeze. Root crops such as carrots and radishes should be harvested or mulched heavily before a hard freeze. Mulched root crops can often be harvested well into the winter, and during mild winters, harvest may continue until spring.

So, if your summer garden was a flop, or you're wanting to continue your progress of home vegetables into this fall and winter, it's not too late. There is still time to plant, especially the HARDY vegetables that can withstand a light frost such as: Broccoli, Brussel Sprouts, Cabbage, Carrots, Collards, Kale, Kohlrabi, Onions, Radishes, Spinach and Turnips.

# What's Buzzing Around?

A recent caller to the MG Hotline had questions about flying insects in her yard. Regional Extension Agent Mallory Kelley and Auburn University's Dr. Charles Ray took a look at a photograph and surmised the insect was a Tiphiidae, of the genus *Myzinum*.

Dr. Ray says these insects are interesting because, "They parasitize white grubs so they are good for your lawn. Will not sting unless absolutely forced to do so".

You can learn more about this insect by following this link:  
<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/in857>



Picture presented on the University of Florida IFAS Extension website.



## 2017 All Bugs Good and Bad Webinar Series: Meet Our Native Pollinators

Pollinators have been in the news a lot in the last couple of years.

While many of us are familiar with the European honeybee, we are not so familiar with our native pollinators. Join Molly Keck, Texas A&M Agri-Life Extension as she introduces us to some of our native pollinators, their habitats, and ways to preserve them. Moderated by Dani Carroll and Sallie Lee, Regional Extension Agents, Alabama Cooperative Extension System. Note: on September 1, the link to the live webinar opens about 15 minutes before the webinar. If you try to log in earlier, you will get an error message.

For more webinars in this series, see [2017 All Bugs Good and Bad Webinar Series](#). The webinars are brought to you by the following [eXtension](#) Communities of Practice: [Ant Pests](#), and [Urban IPM](#); and by the [Alabama Cooperative Extension System](#), the [Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service](#), [Clemson Cooperative Extension](#) and [University of Georgia Extension](#).



Photo Courtesy Dani Carroll

Event starts: Friday, September 1 at 2:00 pm EDT

Capital City Master Gardener Association presents

# CUT and COLOR for the Fall Season

Wednesday, August 23, 2017

9:30 am - 2:00 pm

Location:

Grace Episcopal Church  
906 Pike Rd, Pike Road, AL

*Learn or enhance  
your knowledge and skills  
for fall pruning and  
for selecting and planting  
for fall color.*

9:30 - 10:00 Registration

10:00 - 11:30 Fall Pruning  
Karen Weber, Horticulturist  
Alabama Shakespeare Festival

11:30 - 12:30 Lunch

12:30 - 2:00 Planting for Fall Color  
Jason Powell, Owner  
Petals from the Past

*Plants from Petals from the Past for sale.*



Registration Fee  
\$20 - includes lunch

**To register send**

name  
address  
email address  
phone  
lunch choice  
Ham Sandwich  
Roasted Turkey Sandwich  
Chicken Salad Sandwich  
Spinach Veggie Wrap

Make check payable to  
CCMGA, addressed to  
CCMGA  
c/o Margaret Cully  
3300 Evergreen Hill  
Montgomery, AL 36106

Registration deadline: August 18

**For more information**

go to  
[capcitymga.org](http://capcitymga.org)  
or email  
[capcitymga@gmail.com](mailto:capcitymga@gmail.com)



## A Beginner's Guide to Growing Sunflowers

Posted by: [Molly Lawrence](#) May 27, 2016 in [Gardening in the South](#) Comments Off on A beginner's guide to growing sunflowers

Auburn, Alabama—Gardeners, flower lovers and even children can all easily recognize this unique breed of flower that grows heads and shoulders beyond the rest. It's the sunflower of course, and a field of them can put a smile on your face.

What makes the sunflower so unique? Firstly, the sunflower, or *Helianthus annuus*, is the only seed crop which was domesticated from an American native. In turn, this is important because native plants support native pollinators.

Alabama Cooperative Extension System Regional Extension Agent Mike McQueen gave insight on the differences of sunflowers. "Sunflowers are known for the way the blooms or flower heads turn to face the sun throughout the day," McQueen said. "This is a phenomenon known as heliotropism. Sunflower heads are composed of 1,000 to 2,000 individual flowers joined together by a receptacle base."

Sunflower breeding can be difficult, but it can be done. Different modern hybrids can combat some of the pests, diseases and other issues that make growing sunflowers difficult. To grow the best possible flower, it is important to consider growing conditions, planting and protecting sunflowers.

Like most plants, sunflowers need just the right growing conditions to grow properly. Sunflowers specifically need fertile soil, regular watering and a pH of 6.0-7.5. While best

known as a summer flower, sunflowers can actually be planted just after all danger of spring frost is past. Sunflowers can be continuously planted and bloom until about the first frost of fall.

"Annual sunflowers grow in most parts of Alabama," McQueen said. "There are some annual and perennial varieties that are native to Alabama."

Some of the native varieties are:

- Swamp Sunflower (*Helianthus augustifolius*) is found in moist soils of open fields and roadsides and grows 2 to 5 feet tall. – perennial
- Beach Sunflower (*Helianthus debilis*) is found naturally along the coast but adapts well for inland use. Grows 2 to 4 feet tall. – annual
- Muck Sunflower (*Helianthus simulans*) is a wetland species that grows in full sun and moist soil. – perennial

Once the seeds are planted, be aware of the pests and critters that might harm the new seedlings. Common pests to be aware of include slugs, rodents, rabbits, deer and birds. To protect your sunflowers, it is recommended to use snail bait, cutworm cuffs or a netting or other kind of barrier.

As a southern summer beauty, sunflowers are a great flower to use for summer or early fall centerpieces and bouquets for weddings and other events. It is important to know that they are not long-lived flowers once cut.



# My Junior Master Gardener , Sunflowers and Me

Contributed by : Tana Shealey



“RJ” is forever being forced to take pictures, and anyone who knows me is forced to look at them. So here is one of my favorite pics of him with his favorite “big yellow flower” (as he calls them). They are now taller than he is.

My own little sunflower, Robert Junior, likes to help with my gardening.

He sows widely and wildly, gleefully running through the yard tossing seeds everywhere. Because of that, we sometimes reap sparingly.

This year was a beautiful exception. My 5 year old cast a wide area with Sunflower seeds (packs purchased for a dollar each) in the soil that I prepared in two locations around our home. I ran behind my happy little boy covering the seeds with a little soil. Then we watered. Every day, my son watered.

Just as I began to fear we had watered them too much, our son made a discovery.

“Look, Mommy!”, “RJ” screamed.

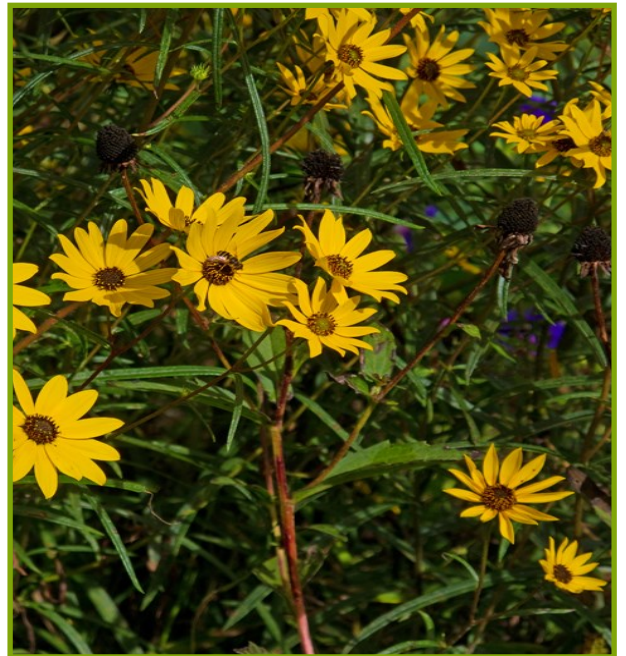
I jumped fearing a snake, but it wasn't a snake. Little shoots were poking out of the ground. It was our boy's first Sunflower plants!

We put a little pine straw around them and the ones growing in the back yard. Robert Junior called Daddy at work, and we all celebrated! We snapped pictures and sent them to Me Maw and Paw-Paw.

“RJ” was so proud of himself because he had created something that grew taller and taller. I was so proud of him because we had done this together. This fall, we will plant something else from seed. Mostly, I will do it to see our boy's sweet grin.

They grow up so fast...and the Sunflowers do too!

***Helianthus angustifolius***  
***Helianthus angustifolius* L.**  
**Swamp sunflower,**  
**Narrowleaf sunflower,**  
**Narrow-leaved sunflower**  
**Asteraceae (Aster Family)**  
**USDA Symbol: HEAN2**



# PawPaw Planting Guide

By : Kentucky State University Cooperative Extension Program

Pawpaw Research Project, Community Research Service, Atwood Research Facility, Frankfort, KY 40601-2355

by Snake C. Jones<sup>1</sup>, R. Neal Peterson<sup>2</sup>, Terrih-Angelah Turner<sup>3</sup>, Kirk W. Pomper, Ph.D.<sup>4</sup>, and Desmond R. Layne, Ph.D.<sup>5</sup>

This bulletin was created to meet the increasing demand for information on cultivation of the native American pawpaw, *Asimina triloba*. Very little scientific research has been done on pawpaw. The advice given here is based partly on research and partly on the experiences of many pawpaw growers. These guidelines should help you to become a successful pawpaw grower.

The pawpaw is a tree of temperate humid growing zones, requiring warm to hot summers, mild to cold winters, and a minimum of 32 inches (81 cm) of rainfall spread rather evenly throughout the year, with the majority falling in spring and summer. It can be grown successfully in USDA plant hardiness zones 5 (-15° F/-26° C) through 8 (15° F/-9° C). Pawpaws grow wild over a wide range of latitude, from the Gulf Coastal plain to southern Michigan. However, the trees may not receive adequate chilling hours if planted too close to the Gulf Coast. Most named cultivars originated in the Midwest, which is the northern portion of the pawpaw's range. A national regional variety trial is underway to determine which varieties perform best in different parts of the country, and results should become available in the next several years. In the meantime, for best results, choose cultivars that were selected in a climatic zone and latitude similar to the area where they will be planted.

Although the pawpaw is capable of fruiting in the shade, optimum yields are obtained in open exposure, with some protection from wind (on account of the large leaves). Germinating seedlings, however, will not survive under those conditions because they are extremely sensitive to full sunlight, which can kill them. (Containerized seedlings may be grown without shade **in a greenhouse**.) Shading for the first year, and sometimes the second, is normally required outside, and it is for this reason that pawpaws are almost always found in nature as an understory tree. The soil should be slightly acid (pH 5.5-7), deep, fertile, and well-drained. Good drainage is essential to success. Pawpaws will not thrive in heavy soil or waterlogged soil. In habit it is a small tree, seldom taller than 25 feet. Grown in full sun, the pawpaw tree develops a narrowly pyramidal shape with dense, drooping foliage down to the ground level. In the shade it has a more open

branching habit with few lower limbs and horizontally held leaves.

Trees normally begin to bear fruit when the saplings reach 6 feet, which usually requires five to eight years.

## **Vegetative or clonal propagation**

Pawpaw clones are easily propagated by a number of grafting and budding techniques, such as whip-and-tongue, cleft, bark inlay, and chip budding. The only method that does not produce good results is T-budding. Softwood and hardwood cuttings have proved virtually impossible to root. Although it is common for a pawpaw to sucker from the roots, propagating a clone by transplanting root suckers is often not successful. Pawpaws are ordinarily quite difficult to transplant. They have fleshy, brittle roots with very few fine hairs. Experimentation has shown that, to be successful, transplantation should be done in the spring at the time that new growth commences, or soon after. (This is basically the same as for magnolia.) If many roots are lost, it may be desirable to prune the top to bring it into balance with the remaining roots. Grafted trees may bear fruit in as few as 3 years.

Pawpaw trees available from nurseries are generally either seedlings or grafted named cultivars. Seedling trees are typically one year old at time of purchase, and they are less expensive than grafted trees. Since seedlings are not identical to their parents, fruit quality cannot be guaranteed. Trees that have been grafted to named cultivars are usually 2 years old at time of purchase, and they are more expensive than seedling trees. Since they retain the clonal identity of the parent, fruit quality is assured, given adequate cultural conditions. If fruit production is desired, purchase at least two genetically different trees (i.e. two different cultivars, or at least two seedlings), to ensure that cross pollination can occur. Container-grown trees may have a higher establishment (survival) rate than field-dug trees; pawpaws have a long tap root and delicate root system that can be damaged by digging.

When planting trees, allow 8 feet (2.5m) between them. Water newly planted trees immediately after planting, and as needed throughout the growing season. Pawpaw trees require adequate soil moisture, especially in the first two years after planting. Transplant shock may be reduced by providing temporary partial shade to newly planted trees. Application of a balanced fertilizer (20N-20P-20K) every few weeks during the first half of the growing season may also improve growth and establishment of young trees.

## Event Registration

**\$25 per Person**

(Includes Lunch)

Register by calling Tallapoosa County Extension at (256) 825-1050.

(Online Registration Not Available)

DO NOT MAIL REGISTRATION FORM WITHOUT CALLING FIRST  
SEATS ARE NOT RESERVED UNTIL PAYMENT IS RECEIVED  
SPACE IS LIMITED TO FIRST 350 PARTICIPANTS

Registration Deadline: **September 22, 2017**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Total Amount Enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_

Tallapoosa County Extension Office  
125 N. Broadnax Street, Room 23  
Dadeville, AL 36853

Make check payable to:  
Alabama Cooperative Extension System

## The 2017 Fall Gardening Extravaganza

will be held at the  
Betty Carol Graham Technology Center  
located on the campus of  
Central Alabama Community College  
1675 Cherokee Road  
in  
Alexander City, Alabama



The Betty Carol Graham Technology Center ( X )  
is on the east side of campus. Parking for the  
building will be on the left just past the pond.

# Fall Gardening Extravaganza

**September 29, 2017**  
Alexander City, Alabama



Hosted by  
Tallapoosa County Extension Office and  
Tallapoosa County Master Gardeners Association

**extension**  
ALABAMA A&M & AUBURN UNIVERSITIES



Mexican Sage



Coleus



Container Gardening

# Things to do...

- **ACMGA Lunch & Learn**, 1st Thursday of each month, Christ Lutheran Church, Prattville, AL., 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM, bring your lunch.
- **ACMGA Meeting/Graduation**. August 10, 2017, 10:00 AM, Autauga County Extension
- **Cut & Color for the Fall Season**, CCMGA, August 23, 2017, 9:30 AM-2:00 PM. Grace Episcopal Church, 906 Pike Road, Pike Road, AL. \$20.00 Registration fee—includes lunch. Contact the Capital City Master Gardener Association via Montgomery County Extension at (334)270-4133.
- **Fall Gardening Extravaganza**, TCMGA, September 29, 2017, Betty Carol Graham Technology Center, Alexander City, AL \$25.00 registration fee includes lunch. Call Tallapoosa County Extension at (256)825-1050 to register.

Entertain, Educate, Elevate

## 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. meetings.
- ⇒ The December Meeting/ Christmas Luncheon will be announced during the November meeting. It will be held at 11:30 a.m. in the Ag Center Building in Autaugaville.

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

PLACE  
STAMP  
HERE