

DIRTY DIGS



The President's Message

What a year we have experienced, shared and enjoyed! If we take a moment and reflect on all that we have started and accomplished together, the list would be a long and diverse one.

I am so appreciative of this association and all the members. The help each one of you have given me is beyond words. I know that without you all, the things that we started together this year would have been impossible to get finished. Whenever there was an idea put forth in our organization, it was not "we can't do that", but "how can we make this work". You inspired me, made me want to make our association better, put us in the public eye more, do projects that would have a lasting effect on our county, our community and our families. You worked to promote our organization to the public.

The work of this wonderful association, all the work, and the accomplishments that have been achieved were done by a cadre of volunteers that give so many hours of dedicated and selfless work. Each one of you are the real association; not only the member volunteers that we see in the public eye, but also the members that give their time in the background making sure that we stay a cohesive, and viable group. I know that each of you have made my year a joy. The knowing that each time a new idea was presented that there would be no failure of members to take on the task to its conclusion.

Thank you and I look forward to an incredible 2018!

A Christmas thought from Don Armstrong.

Christmas is a time when so much is focused upon the giving of gifts, often in the name of one of my favorite folks, Santa Claus.

One of my favorite Christmas stories is *Conrad's Christmas Guest* adapted by Helen Steiner Rice from an old German Legend. Enjoy this lovely story and its message.

It happened one day near December's end
Two neighbors called on an old friend
And they found his shop so meager and lame
Made gay with a thousand bows of green
And Conrad was sitting' with face ashened
When he suddenly stopped as he stitched a twine
And he said "Oh friends at dawn today
When the cock was crowing the night away
The Lord appeared in a dream to me
And said 'I'm coming' your guest to be.'

So I've been busy with feet astir
And strewing my shop with branches of fir
The table is spread and the kettle is shined
And over the rafters the holly is twined
Now I'll wait for my Lord to appear
And listen closely so I will hear His step
As He nears my humble place
And I'll open the door and look on His face"
So his friends went home and left Conrad alone
For this was the happiest day he'd known
For long since his family had passed away
And Conrad had spent many a sad Christmas day
But, he knew with the Lord as his Christmas guest

This Christmas would be the dearest and best

So he listened with only joy in his heart
And with every sound he would rise with a start
And look for the Lord to be at his door
Like the vision he'd had a few hours before

So he ran to the window after hearing a sound
But, all he could see on the snow-covered ground
Was a shabby beggar who's shoes were torn
And all of his clothes were ragged and worn
But, Conrad was touched and he went to the door
And he said "You know, your feet must be frozen and sore
I have some shoes in my shop for you
And a coat that'll keep you warmer too"

So with grateful heart, the man went away
But, Conrad noticed the time of day
And wondered what made the Lord so late
And how much longer he'd have to wait
When he heard a knock he ran to the door
But, it was only a stranger once more
A bent old lady with a shawl of black
With a bundle of kindling piled on her back

Continued on pg. 2

November 2017 Hummingbird Award Winner Cheri Cook

The Autauga County Master Gardeners Association awarded the November 2017 *Hummingbird Award* to Cheri Cook. Cheri Cook was chosen for all of the work she has done with the garden at Prattvillage, the work she does at Lanark, the work at the governor's mansion, and everything she does that we do not see.

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.

Ofie McCoy presents Cheri Cook (right) with the Hummingbird Award.



Continued from pg. 1

She asked for only a place to rest
But, that was reserved for Conrad's great guest
But, her voice seemed to plead "Don't send me away
Let me rest for awhile on Christmas day"

So Conrad brewed her a steaming cup
And told her to sit at the table and sup
But, after she left he was filled with dismay
For he saw that the hours were slipping away
And the Lord hadn't come as He said He would
And Conrad felt sure he'd misunderstood

When out of the stillness he heard a cry
"Please help me, and tell me where am I!"
So again he opened his friendly door
And stood disappointed as twice before

It was only a child who'd wandered away
And was lost from her family on Christmas day
Again, Conrad's heart was heavy and sad
But he knew he should make the little girl glad
So he called her in and he wiped her tears
And quieted all her childish fears
Then he led her back to her home once more

But as he entered his own darkened door
He knew the Lord was not coming today
For the hours of Christmas had passed away
So he went to his room and he knelt down to pray
And he said "Dear Lord, why did You delay?
What kept You from coming to call on me?
For I wanted so much Your Face to see"

When soft in the silence, a voice he heard
"Lift up your head, for I kept my word
Three times my shadow crossed your floor
And three times I came to your lonely door
I was the beggar with bruised, cold feet
And I was the woman you gave something' to eat

I was the child on the homeless street.

Three times I knocked and three times I came in
And each time I found the warmth of a friend
Of all the gifts love is the best
And I was honored to be your Christmas guest."

There are many ways to give gifts at Christmas time. The sharing of your time and talents as a Master Gardener is a wonderful gift to give.

This is a story about a man who gave when he saw a need, but who did not know to whom he was giving. I am not going to tell you that the unexpected gifts we give are going to Jesus, but maybe they are

I am reminded of that great song, *How Shall A King Come* when I read this story.

HOW SHOULD A KING COME?

TOM FETKE

CAROL OWENS
JIMMY OWENS

♩ 1/6
Stately (♩ = ca. 120)

Stately (♩ = ca. 120)

[6]

n

Copyright © 1980 and This Arrangement © 2006 Lexicon Music, Inc.
Administered by EMI Christian Music Publishing.
All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission. Printed in U.S.A.
SOLE SELLING AGENT FOR THIS ARRANGEMENT: ALFRED PUBLISHING CO., INC.
[THE CCLI LICENSE DOES NOT GRANT PERMISSION TO PHOTOCOPY THIS MUSIC.]

AUTAUGA COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS AWARD PETALS FROM THE PAST ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP

Written by Don Armstrong
Photos by Glenda Armstrong and MG Members

6 November 2017 the Autauga County Master Gardeners met at the Armstrong home to honor *Petals from the Past* with an Associate Membership in our Chapter. Arlie and Gwen Powell and Jason and Shelley Powell were in attendance. Don Armstrong read the citation on their certificate. It read:

"This Associate Membership is granted to Petals from the Past because your business has a mutual interest with our Association in gardening and public education.

Our honor to your firm is given in recognition of the outstanding and personalized service given to the Autauga County Master Gardeners Association and its members by Jason Powell, Dr. Arlie Powell, and all of the Petals from the Past staff who have given uncounted hours to our organization in education and training at our Lunch and Learn monthly programs. Your rose pruning demonstration at Prattvillage Garden was a very special event. The landscape design services your firm provided to Prattvillage Garden has been an outstanding guide in our renovation of this important City garden.

The management and staff of Petals from the Past are knowledgeable, helpful, professional, friendly, and available to our organization and its members whenever we have called upon them for assistance in our educational programs and special projects. Your exceptional service to Autauga County Master Gardeners Association will always be appreciated by our membership."

Don Armstrong told the gathering that Jason Powell had his first speaking event away from Petals from the Past in 2004 at the Armstrong Home. At that time he spoke to a garden club and some Master Gardeners. During this 2004 event Don surprised Jason with a large cookie he had baked. Don told how there used to be a Pringles commercial that said "Bet You Can't Eat Just One" and that he used that joke when he handed the cookie to Jason. At today's event Don had big cookies for Jason and Arlie.



Gwen Powell, Jason Powell, Arlie Powell, Shelley Powell

Following these presentations, Don Armstrong blessed the food, and lunch was served. The Armstrongs had iced tea, hot coffee, and cookies for everyone upon their arrival. For lunch they served homemade rolls, sliced pork tenderloin, vegetarian pasta salad, and Don's famous chocolate sheet cake that is like a brownie.

After lunch, the Master Gardeners toured the Armstrong Gardens. Don said the next garden to be designed and completed would be the Native Plant Garden. He will be working with Jason Powell, Petals from the Past, to get this five-terrace garden area designed later this year. A lot of photos of the gardens were taken.

Continued on pg. 4

Continued from pg. 3



Don and Glenda did not forget the ladies. Roses were given to Shelley and Gwen.



Continued from pg. 4



Don and Glenda Armstrong presented personal plaques to Dr. Arlie Powell and Jason Powell as a thank you to them for all of their help with the Armstrong Gardens.



Bloom Time for Holiday Cacti Extension Daily

AUBURN, Alabama —Holiday cacti, whether Thanksgiving or Christmas, put on quite a show during this time of year. The Thanksgiving cactus (*Schlumbergera truncata*) and the Christmas cactus (*Schlumbergera bridgesii*) are closely related.

Plant Care

“Care for them is similar, and to many, it’s hard to tell them apart. However, for



those who want to know why their Christmas cactus is blooming in November, the answer might be—because it’s a Thanksgiving, not Christmas, cactus,” said Sallie Lee, a regional Alabama Extension agent in home grounds, gardens and home pests.

Sturdy Plants

Although native to the tropical forests of South America, these plants do well in sturdy hanging baskets or containers because they can grow quite large. They do fine outdoors away from artificial light until nighttime temperatures dip into the 40s. At that point, bring them inside to a cool area as they do best when temps are between 50 and 65 degrees. Once inside, to help initiate blooming, keep them away from light from 5 p.m. until 8 a.m. Water sparingly, as too much water can cause bud drop and even root rot, so let the top inch of soil become dry to the touch before watering again.

Either *Schlumbergera* is a striking plant in full bloom. “The most apparent feature, other than when they bloom, is that the Thanksgiving or crab cactus has sharply serrated or toothed leaves. The Christmas cactus has rounded leaves. Another way of identifying which one you have is if blooms push upward, it’s a Thanksgiving cactus and Christmas cactuses hang down,” Lee added.

Plant bodies are flat. Leaves or segments are stems.

Old-fashioned cacti produce fuchsia-colored blooms. New hybrids come in white, red, yellow, salmon and even purple.

Plant Is Easily Propagated

This long-lived cacti—some varieties have been in families for 50 years—are easily propagated. You’ll need a small container



of moist potting soil, a Thanksgiving or Christmas cactus to provide a cutting or cuttings and rooting hormone, which is helpful but not necessary. Clip off a three or four segment piece of the plant and dip the cut end in rooting hormone if you have it. Then push the cut end about an inch or so into a container of soil.

Make sure the soil stays moist. Prop a transparent plastic bag over the cutting but don’t let the plastic bag touch the cactus cutting. Insert a popsicle stick in the container about an inch or so deep. Drape the plastic mini greenhouse over it. Rooted, growing cuttings make great gifts for friends and family gardeners.

Cactuses like 50 to 60 percent humidity. If your home is very dry in the winter,



fill a waterproof saucer with gravel. Add water halfway full and put the cactus (in its pot) on the gravel surface.

When flower buds drop before they bloom, it is usually because of overwatering, lack of humidity or insufficient light. Regardless of which holiday cactus you have, avoid

high and heat when flower-



temperatures fluctuations the plant is ing.

MEYER LEMONS

By Don Armstrong

The Meyer Lemons at the Armstrong home are starting to turn yellow. By Christmas they will be ripe and finally ready to pick. OK, we have picked some already.

Eat The Segments

Use your Meyer Lemons in your own favorite way. Once we have squeezed the juice out of them, I turn the rind inside little tart – it has to be as it is a Meyer Lemon is a cross between a lemon and an orange. When you eat an orange, you eat not eat the same parts from the Meyer and it is actually quite good. OK, so it is a



ite way. Once we have squeezed out and eat the pulp. Yes, it is a on. Remember, the Meyer Lemon is a cross between a lemon and an orange, so it is not as tart as “real” all of the segment skin, so why Meyer Lemon??? It counts as a fruit, little bit puckery!

Make Candied Lemon Rind

Once you have the juice out and the segment pieces gone, it is time to use the rind. Slice the rind into thin wedges, about 1/4 inch wide on the fat end. Take a plastic container, sprinkle a little sugar in the bottom. Put a layer of these wedges on the sugar. Cover this layer with sugar, just enough to cover the wedges. Repeat until all wedges are covered with sugar. Set this aside and forget about it for a couple of months, or up to a year.

Use the candied lemon rind in any recipe that calls for the store bought candied rind. Enhance your favorite sugar cookies with some very finely chopped pieces of this candied lemon rind. When you have use all of the candied rind, or almost all of it, use the sugar to make a very lemony sugar cookie.

When the world hands you a basket of lemons, make lemonade



Meyer Lemons

Magic Lemon Meringue Pie

This recipe comes from a 1952 *Borden's Eagle Brand 70 Magic Recipes* cookbook that Glenda has had since, well, since forever. The pie is great. In fact, it is so good we only get four servings out of one pie!

Perfect lemon filling without cooking. Easy as a mix, yet all the delight of real lemon flavor. (Makes an 8-inch pie.)

Filling

1 crumb or baked pastry 8" pie shell, cooled
1 1/3 cups (15 ounce can) Eagle Brand Sweetened Condensed Milk
1/2 cup lemon juice***
1 teaspoon grated lemon rind or 1/4 teaspoon lemon extract – rind is best
2 egg yolks.



***Meyer Lemons will not make as tart a lemon pie as you like. Glenda adds 1/4 teaspoon of lemon extract to the Meyer Lemon juice.

Place all of the filling ingredients into a bowl and using a rubber spatula, mix until the mixture thickens.

Pour the thick mixture into a chilled crumb crust or cooled pastry shell.

Meringue

Heat oven to 325 degrees Fahrenheit.

1/4 teaspoon cream of tartar, if desired
2 egg whites
4 Tablespoons granulated sugar



Add cream of tartar to egg whites (if you want to use it) and beat with a mixer until almost stiff enough to hold a peak. Then add sugar gradually, beating until stiff and glossy, but not dry.

Pile lightly on the pie filling and seal to the pie crust all around

Bake in slow oven (325) until the top is lightly browned, about 15 minutes.

Cool and enjoy your Meyer Lemon pie.

Store the pie in the refrigerator. It is also known as the Lemon Icebox Pie.

Master Gardeners Volunteer for Farm City Day and the Fall Landowner's Tour



Cooking with the Autauga County Master Gardeners!

Ginger Pickles By Sue Brassel

Ingredients:

1 zucchini, sliced thin
1 medium beet, sliced thin

2 T salt

Combine, let sit at room temperature 1 to 4 hours. Drain, lightly squeeze off liquid.

1/4 cup apple cider vinegar

1/4 tsp. salt

1/4 tsp. coarsely ground black pepper

1 1/2 T chopped fresh ginger

Directions



THOUGHTS FROM A GARDENER

Live today to the fullest. Yesterday is past. Tomorrow will always be tomorrow. Be a Master Gardener and tend your garden today.

Submitted by Don Armstrong



- ACMGA Lunch & Learn, 1st Thursday of each month 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM.
- NEW LOCATION for 2018: Trinity United Methodist Church, 610 Fairview Ave., Prattville 36066. Bring your lunch.
- **ACMGA Christmas Party and Officer Installation**, December 14, 2017, 11:30, Autauga County Extension Building Auditorium.



**Autauga County
Master Gardeners Association**
Lunch & Learn 2018

**1st THURSDAY of EVERY Month
12:00-1:00 P.M.**

Trinity United Methodist Church, 610 Fairview Ave., Prattville 36066



BRING A SACK LUNCH FREE PROGRAM DRINKS PROVIDED

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



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

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.

Things to do.....

- ◆ Start thinking about propagating for the plant sale.
- ◆ Plant winter and spring blooming bulbs.
- ◆ Prune hardy dormant deciduous trees, vines and shrubs.
- ◆ Apply dormant spray to trees.
- ◆ Plant fruit trees.



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

PLACE
STAMP
HERE

To: