

DIRTY DIGS

Autauga County Master Gardeners Newsletter

JULY 2017

Bountiful Blueberry Bushes Contributed by: Bob Scheffler

I have a pair of blueberry bushes that provide a fantastic crop every year, and I have received several requests to share my story. The success story is that I pick 40-50 pounds of blueberries from just 2 plants!

I planted one each of 3 different varieties of Rabbit eye blueberries to get a good cross pollination - Premier, Climax, and Brightwell, all early season providers. The Premier and Climax bloom and ripen at the same time but the Brightwell is later & underdeveloped and just hasn't been a good choice.

The plants are grown in sandy clay soil in the country so they are watered using a drip irrigation along with my garden, about 45 minutes 3 times per week. The soil was acidified to a pH of 4.7 and is fertilized once a year, usually in early fall.

All that sounds good and is probably done by most Master Gardeners who grow blueberries. So why is my crop so good? Because I totally protect it from the birds! The birds love blueberries and will easily steal half or more of your crop. Not mine! I fenced in the berry plot with some spare chain link fencing I had, plus a

gate. Then every spring, about the 1st of May, I erect a PVC framework over the fence and cover it all with bird netting. (See photos) It has to go all the way to the ground, fastened well, and not a small gap anywhere or the birds will find it and get in. When the berry picking is finished in early July I take the netting and PVC down and store it until next year. Great for a small berry plot but not for a berry farm.



PVC is sun proof gray electrical

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E-mail your gardening stories, tips, to tshealey@auburn.edu.
Or call Tana Shealey at 334.361.7273.

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June Hummingbird Award Winner: Glenn Huovinen



Autauga County Master Gardeners selected Glenn Huovinen as its **Hummingbird Award** recipient for June 2017. Glenn is recognized for many contributions, including spearheading and implementing the landscaping of the entryway to the William Howard Smith Agricultural Building in Autaugaville.

The Ag Building houses Alabama Cooperative Extension System's Autauga County office, the Alabama Forestry Commission's Autauga County Office, Natural Resource & Conservation System, and the Farm Services Agency.

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.

Above: Left, Ofie McCoy presents Glenn Huovinen, right, with the **Hummingbird Award** for June 2017.



Pictured above left: Glenda & Don Armstrong receive their **Reach for the Stars Awards**.



Pictured above right: Albert Striplin (far right) receives his **Reach for the Stars Award** from Pam Olson.

Container Gardening: A Snapshot of My Back Yard Garden

Contributed by: Cynthia Salyer



June flooding in Cynthia's backyard!



Cynthia is growing: Jalapeños, onions, egg plants, tomatoes, squash, bell pepper, beans, butternut squash. Some pictures are not included—I ran out of space.

Giving to the AICC Contributed by: Anita Shriberg



Pictured left:
Baskets made up to
give out at AICC

Every donation
touches lives!

Just a reminder to bring your AICC donations to our July meeting. If you have back-to-school kid's clothes...GREAT. If not...the current needs for AICC are: Body wash, lotion, small containers of laundry detergent, hair combs, and any small item (see picture for ideas) that would fit into a gift basket.



Kudzu Bugs

A recent caller to the Master Gardener Helpline asked about a funny looking ladybug found in a local garden. The Autauga County Master Gardeners working the helpline discovered that the insect is called the Kudzu Bug. **The information below is from the North Carolina Cooperative Extension System.**



Kudzu bugs are slightly larger than a ladybug, with square, flattened bodies.

Originally from Asia, kudzu bugs were first found in the United States near Atlanta, Georgia in the fall of 2009. They are believed to have been accidentally introduced through the Atlanta airport. Since landing on American soil they have spread throughout the southern states, anywhere their favorite food, kudzu, grows. Kudzu, which is also from Asia, is an invasive weed sometime referred to as 'the vine that ate the South'.

Kudzu bugs only feed on plants in the bean family. This includes ornamental plants like wisteria, also from Asia and a favorite of the insect, as well as edible crops like peanuts, soybeans, butter beans, green beans, and field peas. Kudzu bugs do not eat plant leaves or stems. Instead they feed on plant sap with their piercing mouthparts, through a process similar to drinking liquids from a straw. Symptoms caused by heavy feeding include stunting, brown leaf edges, wilting, and dropping of flowers and seed pods.

Though they only feed on plants in the bean family, kudzu bugs often congregate in large numbers on many plants including figs and fruit trees, but they do not cause any damage to these plants. They are attracted to light colors and often cover sides of houses, tree trunks, and even light colored vehicles. Kudzu bugs will not damage your house or harm you if you come in contact with them, though as a member of the stink bug family they do emit an unpleasant odor and may stain surfaces when crushed.

The current infestation of kudzu bugs are adults that overwintered under tree bark, within house walls, or in mulch. These adults are waiting for the kudzu to start growing. As this happens over the next month, they will fly into the kudzu, lay their eggs, and then die. A new generation will hatch and feed on kudzu and other bean plants through the summer. **Source: North Carolina Cooperative Extension System.**

Ambrosia Beetles Attacking Small Trees

Contributed by:
Mallory Kelley, Regional Extension Agent

The Granulate Ambrosia beetles have been causing quite a stir in home landscapes over the past few weeks.

This beetle was introduced into the United States in the early 1970's in South Carolina and has since spread throughout the southeast and as far north as Maryland. This tiny beetle is a pest of woody ornamentals, fruit, and nut trees and can cause significant damage in nursery, landscape, and orchard settings.

Granulate ambrosia beetles emerge in early spring and attack thin barked, deciduous trees. Tree species most commonly reported with damage are dogwood, redbud, maple, ornamental cherry, Japanese maple, and crepe myrtle. Other reported hosts include pecan, peach, plum, persimmon, golden rain tree, sweet gum, Shumard oak, Chinese elm, magnolia, fig, hydrangea and azalea.

Young trees and small branches of mature trees are where these beetles attack. Female beetles bore into the trunks and branches (1-4 inches in diameter) and excavate galleries in the wood. In addition to boring damage, female beetles inoculate trees with ambrosia fungus, which can block xylem vessels and interfere with vascular transport. Infested plants often die from boring damage, ambrosia fungus, or infection by a secondary pathogen.



These beetles attack seemingly healthy trees as well as stressed or unhealthy trees. Visible symptoms include wilted foliage and strands of boring dust protruding from small holes. Serious attacks that result in tree death usually occur during leafing-out stage.

Infestations can be easily be identified by toothpick-like strands protruding up to 1.5 inches from the bark of the host plant. The strands of boring dust are produced by the female beetle as she excavates her gallery. The strands are fragile and are easily broken off by wind or rain leaving only pencil-lead sized holes. This being the case, your tree may be infected and you would not even know it until you start seeing the dieback of the foliage.

Preventative applications of pyrethroid insecticides can protect trees by preventing Granulate Ambrosia Beetles from excavating galleries. However, once beetles are inside trees they cannot be killed with insecticides and fungicides are ineffective against the ambrosia fungus. Thus, the timing of pre-

ventative insecticide applications is crucial to protect trees from damage by this pest. Dr. Charles Ray, Auburn University Extension Entomologist says "recent research of the first flight of granulate ambrosia beetle in spring has found it occurs at almost exactly the same time as Bradford pears beginning to bloom. This gives a clear sign to a homeowner of when they should apply the preventative sprays."

If you notice the white strands protruding from the branches or main trunk of your trees or shrubs the plant parts should be removed and destroyed.



UGA5159028

Sources: Dr. Charles Ray, Auburn University, Extension Entomologist.

Flooding and Fire Ants

Extension Daily



Featured image by Dr. Bart Drees

AUBURN, Ala.— When floodwaters come, humans are not the only ones looking for dry ground. In areas infested with red imported fire ants, these ants and their colonies can present a potentially serious medical threat to people and animals during and after a flood.

Flood Waters and Fire Ants

Floodwaters will not kill fire ants. Instead their colonies will emerge from the soil, form a loose ball, float and flow with the water until reaching a dry area or object.

Floating colonies can look like ribbons, streamers or a ball of ants floating on the water. These amoeba-like masses contain all of the colonies' members—worker ants, brood (eggs, larvae, pupae), winged reproductive males and females, and queen ants.

When flood waters begin to recede, floating fire ant colonies will clamber on to anything they come in contact with. Fire ants are attracted to anything with the potential to provide shelter until a mound can be reestablished in the soil. Debris piles and piles of items from flooded homes are very inviting. Ant colonies encountered during a flood must be dealt with quickly.

Fire Ants During Flooding

During the flood, there are several tips [Alabama Extension](#) entomologists recommend.

- Avoid contact with floating masses of fire ants.
- If you are in a rowboat, do not touch the ants with oars.
- When working in floodwaters, dress appropriately if possible. Rubber boots, rain gear and cuffed gloves can help prevent ants from reaching the skin.
- If ants contact the skin, they will sting. Remove ants immediately by rubbing them off. Ants will only cling to the skin if submerged. Even a high-pressure water spray may not dislodge them. However, a spray of diluted, biodegradable dishwashing liquid

may help immobilize and drown them.

When returning to flooded structures, floating ant masses are occasionally encountered—even indoors.

Fire Ants After the Flood

Fire ants can be under anything. When debris is picked up, pay attention to what is on, under, or in it—especially if the debris has been sitting in the area for several days.

Protect yourself. Wear gloves, long-sleeved shirts, long pants, socks and shoes. Consider spraying insect repellent onto your shoes and lower pants legs. Insect repellent may deter foraging fire ants from climbing onto the legs, but it may not repel ants defending their colony.

Treatment

If fire ants are seen in a pile of debris that must be handled, use a shovel or another tool to avoid ant contact. Consider treating the pile with a fast-acting household or lawn and garden insecticide. Use aerosol spray products containing pyrethrins or pyrethrin derivatives that are labeled for ant use, and have a quick knockdown. These sprays also break down quickly.

Spray as many of the ants as possible. Keep in mind insecticides can be toxic to aquatic organisms. Spray surfaces and cracks of infested objects and debris. Then come back after the product has had time to act.

Fire ant bait products should not be used at this time because they are slow-acting. Flooded mounds will be disorganized and worker ants will not be foraging for food.

More Information

The [Emergency Handbook](#) brings together recommendations from national emergency response agencies and major universities into one easy-to-understand, interactive reference. It also addresses nearly 50 disaster preparation and recovery topics in four broad categories, including: People and Pets, Home and Business, Landscape and Garden, and Farms and Livestock.

For more information on emergency preparedness, visit www.aces.edu. The [Emergency Handbook iBook](#) is also available in pdf form and on iTunes. Contact your [local Extension office](#) for more information.

ACMGA Field Trip Contributed by : Paula Seamon

The ACMGA met at Sandy and Glenn Huovinen's home after the June meeting concluded. Glenn toured the group around his yard and explained the many variations he used in growing his bountiful and beautiful produce. Refreshments were provided and a good time was enjoyed by the ACMGA. Thanks to Sandy and Glenn Huovinen for their hospitality!





Above: Keeps deer and birds out, and it has a gate for me to get in.

A word of advice when picking your blueberries: If you freeze them, write the dates on the containers and use them all within 6 months. The berries will turn sour if frozen longer than that. Plus, with a generous harvest berries can be used in many ways and here is one that goes over well - a blueberry pie! See the recipe below!



Above: What's left after the 4th picking.

Fresh Blueberry Pie

- 3/4 cup sugar
- 4 Tablespoons cornstarch
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 cup cold water
- 5 cups fresh blueberries, divided
- 1 Tablespoon butter
- 1 Tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 deep dish pastry shell, baked & cooled
- Cool Whip Topping (if desired)

In a medium size saucepan over medium heat, combine sugar, cornstarch, salt and water until smooth. Add 3 cups of berries. Bring to boil, cook and stir for about 2 minutes or until thickened and bubbly. Remove from heat, add butter, lemon juice and remaining blueberries, stirring until butter is melted. Cool.
Pour into pastry shell. Refrigerate until served.

Autauga County Master Gardeners Recognized for Landscape Project Contributed by: Glenn Huovinen

Last fall we were approached with a project to landscape the front entrance of the Extension Office. With funding supplied by the Autauga County Commission, and with the help of Regional Extension Agent Mallory Kelly, we came up with a design and plant selection that will enhance the appearance of the entrance of the building.

On June 14, the Autauga County Extension Office hosted a meeting to discuss the first phase of the work (below) and future Autauga County Master Gardener projects.



Prepare for Fall Gardening Now Contributed by: Glenn Huovinen

I know that you are tired of the heat, bugs and the weeds by now...but don't forget to plan and plant a fall garden.

According to ACES ANR -0063, these can and should be planted by mid August: Bush Snap Beans, Lima Beans, Beets, Broccoli, Brussels Sprouts, Cabbage, Carrots, Cauliflower, Collards, Kale, Kohlrabi, Lettuces, Mustards, Irish Potatoes and Summer Squash.

Just keep them well watered and you will be rewarded for your efforts!

Critter Management

Workshop

“Wildlife and Insect Control in and out of the Home”

Hosted by the
Alabama Cooperative Extension System

Monday, July 17th 2017

Macon County Extension Office
207 N Main Street
Tuskegee, Al

9:00-12:00 p.m.



**CHRIS JAWOROWSKI & MALLORY KELLEY WILL TEACH
BEST MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR:
FLEAS, TICKS, MOSQUITOES, FIRE ANTS, DEER, SQUIRREL, BATS,
SNAKES, VOLES, MOLES AND MORE!**

To sign-up or for more information, contact the Macon County Extension office at 334-727-0340. There is NO Cost, but you must be on the list to attend. **PLEASE Call by Wednesday, July 12th.**



Backyard Berries

Fruit Growing Workshop

Hosted by the
Alabama Cooperative Extension System

Thursday, July 20, 2017

Coosa County Extension Office

13999 AL Highway 22

Rockford, Alabama 35136

11:00 am - 1:00 pm



**LEARN HOW TO GROW AND PROPERLY MAINTAIN BERRIES
IN YOUR OWN BACKYARD!**

**BLACKBERRIES, BLUEBERRIES, STRAWBERRIES,
MUSCADINES AND FIGS**



To sign-up or for more information, contact the Coosa County Extension office at
256-377-4713. Registration is FREE, but required!
Pre-Registration required by Wednesday, July 18th.

PRE-REGISTRATION FORM- Backyard Berries

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Zip Code: _____ County: _____

Phone #: _____ E-mail address: _____

Return Pre-Registration Form by Wednesday, July 18, 2017 to:

Coosa County Extension Office

P.O. Box 24

Rockford, AL 35136



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**, July 13, 2017, 6:00 p.m., First Baptist
- **Autauga County Extension Office's Grassroots Meeting**, July 13, 2017, 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM, RSVP at 334.361.7273.
- **Critter Management Workshop**, July 17, 2017, Macon County Extension Office, 9:00 a.m.—12 Noon, call Macon County Extension office to register 334-727-0340.
- **Backyard Berries, Fruit Growing Workshop**, July 20, 2017, Coosa County Extension Office, 11:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m., Call the Coosa County Extension Office to Register 256-377-4713.
- **Controlling Fire Ants**, August 1, 2017, Coosa County Extension Office, 11:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m., Call the Coosa County Extension Office to register at 256-377-4713.

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