

DIRTY DIGS

Autauga County Master Gardeners Association Newsletter

11.1.2017

A WALK IN THE WOODS: A FUNGUS AMONG US! By Don Armstrong

A walk in the woods does not always have to result in seeing Bambi, flowers in bloom, or the tree leaves changing. Sometimes it is good to see nature at work converting organic matter to soil. Here are some photos taken in the woods at the Armstrong home.



Sometimes, when you walk, you have a friend going with you who needs a photo taken, too. This is Miss Hook. She had to lay down next to the big mushroom growing under the Cast Iron Plant to have her photo taken.



These two fungi are growing on one of the roots of our biggest tree, Papa Oak. This is a good indication the tree may have a problem. A year later Papa Oak had to be removed – but first we got an opinion from Auburn. These two fungi are each over a foot across. Each one looks like a Southern ladies' bouffant hairdo! **(Continued p. 8)**

November 2017

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Send your contributions to :
Tana Shealey at tshealey@auburn.edu.

*October 2017 Hummingbird Award Winner
Anita Shriberg*

The Autauga County Master Gardeners Association awarded the October 2017 *Hummingbird Award* to Anita Shriberg. Anita is recognized for her outstanding work collecting items for AICC and operating the ACMGA Raffle.

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.



**Autauga County Master Gardeners Love to Learn!
Photos & Articles Contributed by Paula Seamon**



Fred Bassett was the ACMGA Lunch & Learn speaker for October. Fred is an expert on all things Hummingbird!

We were entertained and educated by Fred's vast knowledge of these magical creatures. Some of the topics that Fred covered included providing a description of the species and ways to attract Hummingbirds into our yards.

One interesting tip Fred offered is to leave one feeder up during the winter!



Autauga and Elmore County Master Gardener Interns are studying hard during this class being led by Regional Extension Agent Mallory Kelley.

Thoughtful Gardening By Don Armstrong

THOUGHTS FROM A GARDENER

Divide and conquer say the generals, but in the garden, it is divide and share. Master Gardeners know to divide some plants in the fall after it cools off and to get them potted for the Plant Sale.



*How Does Your Garden Grow ?
By Glenn Huovinen*

Dianella tasmanica the Variegated Flax Lily. My favorite plant!

Variegated Flax Lily is great in a grouping. They produce tiny blue flowers on a spike, followed by purple berries in the fall.

The variegated leaves are the showcase of this plant. It over winters well in zone 9-11. Frost will kill it to the ground, but it will return in the spring. Propagate by division just as you would with Day Lilies. The Variegated Flax Lily is a great plant!



I discovered a really good tasting pepper: Lunch Box Snack Pepper by Bonnie.

I bought one plant early summer at Home Depot. I go out to my garden and snack on them just as I do with strawberries.

Next year, I will by seeds and plant many. We will use these as a special treat for our donations to the AICC.

Cooking with the Autauga County Master Gardeners!

Squash Dressing **By Marjorie Hannah**

Ingredients:

- 1 cup self-rising corn meal mix
- 4 yellow squash (grated) 3½ cups
- 1 egg
- 1 medium onion (chopped)
- 1 can Cream of Mushroom Soup (or Chicken or Celery)
- Pepper to taste

Directions:

Combine all ingredients and mix well. Pour mixture into a greased, preheated cast iron skillet. Bake at 350° for 1 hour until it turns light brown. Cool in skillet before removing.



Tabouli **By Lynn Yarborough**

Ingredients:

- 3 chopped tomatoes
- 3 bunches finely chopped flat leaf parsley
- 1 cup chopped fresh mint
- 1/2 onion or 2 scallions(green onions) chopped
- 1/2 cup extra Virgin Olive oil
- 1/4 cup fresh lemon juice
- Salt and pepper to taste

Directions:

Prepare the chopped parsley and mint and set aside. In a large bowl, mix chopped tomatoes, chopped onions/scallions with lemon juice, salt and pepper. Add to them the parsley and mint and olive oil and mix, adjusting seasoning by adding more oil and lemon if desired. Serve cold garnished with romaine lettuce.



Cooking with the Autauga County Master Gardeners!

Vidalia Onion Pie

By Cynthia Salyer

Ingredients:

2 lbs. onions, thinly sliced (4 large)
1 stick butter or oleo 3 eggs, well beaten
1 cup sour cream ¼ tsp salt
½ tsp. white pepper ¼ tsp. Tabasco sauce
Grated Parmesan

Directions:

Sauté onions in butter. Combine eggs and sour cream. Add to onions. Season and pour into pie shell. Sprinkle cheese on top. Bake at 450° for 20 minutes. Lower temperature to 325° for 20 minutes or until cheese melts and is brown. This is good hot, room temperature or cold. Serves 6 - 8



Catalina Salad

By Cheri Cook

Ingredients:

1½ Head of Lettuce (shred)
2 Tomatoes (diced)
1 Can of Black Beans (drain and rinse)
12 oz. Shredded Cheddar Cheese
Large Bag of Fritos
Packages of Taco Seasoning
Large Bottle of Catalina Dressing

Directions:

Toss lettuce, tomatoes, black beans, cheese and Fritos. Mix Taco seasoning and Catalina dressing. Pour dressing over salad mixture and serve.



Fall Planting at the Demonstration Garden in Downtown Prattville
Photographs by Paula Seamon



A WALK IN THE WOODS: A FUNGUS AMONG US!



The fan shapes of these fungi, which are growing out of logs being used to mark the pathway in our garden, have very interesting shapes and colors.



These cute little white mushrooms are less than 1/2 inch across. They made quite a family group. Their "cousins" are just to their left in this photo.



Sometimes, the mushroom buttons are so good looking you need to get close to get a good view of them. I wonder if these are edible!?!?



Color can be found in a lot of the fungi. These miniature fungi are less than 1" across. Their red color was a nice contrast to the green fungi growing behind them.

(Continued p. 11)

Winter Wonders: Flowers That Bloom in Winter

Extension Daily

Winter's dreary and colorless tone can make many gardens and homes look gray and dull. But there are beautiful plants and flowers that thrive in the cold and can give you that oomph of much needed color to your backyard. Here are just a couple flower and plant suggestions to liven up your landscape. Kerry Smith, an Alabama Cooperative Extension System specialist, gives some insight on the different types of plants and flowers below.



She said that there are both cold hardy annuals which only live for a single season and longer lived perennials that are good choices for winter color.

Pansies (*Viola x*)

The pansy is a "staple" flower that blooms in the cold. The pansy comes in a large variation of colors and generally grows approximately 6 inches to 9 inches tall. "It is a low, mounding type plant and grows in full sun to partial shade," Smith explained. Pansies can be used to line sidewalks or other pathways because of the size and shape they grow. Pansies are ideal because they tend to bloom for extended periods, adding long-lasting color to your garden.

Snapdragons are vertical-growing plants that tend to bloom in dense bunches all the way up the stalk. They come in a variety of bright and light colors and are commonly paired with pansies. Snapdragons require consistent moisture and full sun to grow their best.

"While you can plant them in the winter, they actually perform even better if you plant them in the fall. This allows for better root growth and then a bigger show of flowers," Smith said.

Snapdragons grow from 1-3 feet tall.



Snapdragons (*Antirrhinum majus*)

English Daisy (*Bellis perennis*)

This flower grows close to the ground and reaches about 6 inches tall. Though it is considered an annual in the Deep South, the English Daisy can perennialize in colder regions. Colors come in pink, orange, white and yellow. English daisies should be watered often and grows best in full or partial sun.

Sweet Alyssum (*Lobularia hybrids*)

An annual flower that grow approximately 12 inches, it is used primarily to line beds and sidewalks. These flowers come in white, lavender or pink. Sweet alyssum is best grown in full sun or partial sun. "Sweet" is in their name because of their soft fragrance that catches your attention.

Honeywort (*Cerinthe major*)

With deep blue and purple flowers, honeywort is a great flower to spruce up a garden. This unusual and rare plant grows up to 3 feet in length and width and should be planted in full sun, or with a little shade.



Sweet Peas (*Lathyrus odoratus*)

Sweet peas look good and smell good. As its name implies the flowers have a sweet smell. This is an annual vine that can grow on a trellis or other upward-directing support. Sweet peas come in a variety of flower colors ranging from hot pink to deep blues and purples making it another colorful flower to add to your winter garden. **(Continued page 9)**

Winter Wonders: Flowers That Bloom in Winter

Perennials

Perennials are plants that persist for many growing seasons. Generally the top portion of the plant dies back and regrows the following year from the same root system. There are good perennial choices for the winter garden. Here are some good choices for the winter garden.



Hardy Cyclamen (*Cyclamen coum*)

This is another beautiful, low-maintenance winter flower that in addition to varying flower shades of pink, it also has foliage interest because of its dappled, silver color,” Smith said. They bloom usually in the fall or spring, depending on the species, but can be planted in the winter as well to brighten up a garden. Hardy cyclamens spread across the ground creating a “carpet in the leaf litter” as she described the plant. They grow in part shade. And a plus for growing these flowers is that they have a special quality that repels deer from eating them.

Bulbs

After the initial planting, bulbs are low maintenance and can return for many years. Bulbs can create lots of color and are perfect for late winter and early spring. Many bulbs are deer resistant as well.

Some bulb suggestions are:

- Daffodils
- Crocus
- Snowdrops
- Hellebores

Tips for preparing your flower bed for winter gardening

When getting ready to make room for your winter flowers and provide adequate living situations for your perennials, some tidying up needs to happen. Make sure you clean your garden of all old, dead and blackened annuals so they will not run the risk of spreading diseases or insect eggs to your new plants.

Once rid of old and dead leftovers, spread a new level of rich mulch over your garden to protect your plants and soil during the cold months. “Adding compost to the existing soil and gently mixing in where space allows and dividing overgrown perennials gives you more to spread around,” Smith advised.

Remember to keep adequate drainage for both annuals and perennials that live in beds. Roots do not do well with continuous water around them. Smith suggests an idea to create good drainage. “Before planting build a slightly raised, or mound bed area by adding compost or chipped leaves from your yard.

To learn more about how to enhance your garden and landscape, check out Alabama Extension’s “Gardening in the South” series. You can find the series on [iBooks](#). Based on proven Master Gardener training and seasoned with university research, the “Gardening in the South” series of books is packed with information, tips and tricks to being a successful Southern gardener.

Gardening with My Junior Master Gardener

By Tana Shealey

When last I wrote, my little “Junior Master Gardener”, affectionately known as “RJ” (Robert Junior when he is being chastised), and I shared our story of how we planted red potatoes in old cloth shopping bags and harvested a ton from just a few “eyes”. Then we planted sunflower seeds that I got from the Dollar Tree and they grew beautifully. By way of gardening, that was a lot of fun for our then 5-year-old-son. I didn’t think that I could top those adventures, but we Shealeys sure know how to have fun, so we kept at it and found some more fun stuff to grow.

Daddy, (also known as Robert-Who-Digs) cleared a nice small section near our back bedroom window, so that RJ and I could farm. I visited my uncle Ulysses and got some sweet potato “eyes” from him because my mother insisted they were the best, and I needed to drive to Greensboro, Alabama anyway. Daddy carried in the bag of Black Cow and Miracle Grow soil to our work area. Why do I use that you ask? Well, because I can’t remember what I was taught in Master Gardening class that I am supposed to add to the ground when I plant stuff. I figure mixing a little of that with the stuff we already have in the backyard should work. So far, so good.

RJ planted a few eyes and asked exactly two million questions about what we were doing. I answered one or two questions, cleared a section for my one bell pepper plant, and Daddy disappeared. Why did I plant just one bell pepper plant, you ask? Years ago, I planted three bell pepper plants and three squash plants, and I had enough produce for a farmers’ market. Plus, no one in our home likes bell pepper except me. RJ says it tastes wet—which is what he and his father both say about most raw veggies.

So, our plants were in the ground. They were covered. They were watered and mulched. And then... we forgot about them.

Every day I looked out my bedroom window thinking that I really needed to get those vines cut back to prevent snakes, but I did not. Also, I had forgotten that my uncle told me to cover up por-

tions of the vines with dirt, uhmm I mean soil, and they would root and grow more potatoes. Anyway, every other weekend after the bell pepper plants matured (they really don’t need much of anything to produce-my kind of plant), I would pull off a bell pepper and RJ would pull off a bell pepper branch. It was fun.



Well two days ago I thought that even though I had barely watered the sweet potatoes, we might have at least one sweet yet living, so, I grabbed my shovel, and RJ grabbed his

old toy wagon, and we trudged over and began our harvest.

Saying that I enjoyed hearing RJ shout “Look, Mommy!” with joy every time he dug out a potato is such an understatement. It was just thrilling to me that our son was so happy with pulling roots out of the ground! I hope to repeat this joy every season forever and ever with our little family; planting something new and watching our son shout with excitement over something we grew. Oh, and Daddy will help too.



A WALK IN THE WOODS: A FUNGUS AMONG US! (Continued from page 6)



Sometimes a whole family comes to visit in the garden. This family is at the base of a dead tree that was left in the garden for the woodpeckers and other critters to enjoy. These look like peanut butter cookies.



The views that can be found under the skirts of the fungi are just amazing. Of course, you really have to get down low to see these views. But, the preacher likes it when you are on your knees, even in the woods.

So, the next time you are walking in the woods, be sure to look at the little guys who are working so hard in the woods to convert organic matter to soil. Of course, you do not want to pick them and eat them unless you are truly an expert in this field.



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.
- Volunteer opportunities with **Farm City Day**, November 15, 2017, R.H. Kirkpatrick Agriculture Pavilion. Call 334.361.7273
- **Autauga County Fall Landowners Tour**. Nov. 16, 2017. Call 334.365.5532 Ext/2403 for details and to register. Registration is required.
- **ACMGA Christmas Party and Officer Installation**, December 14, 2017, 11:30, Autauga County Extension Building Auditorium.

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
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To: