



March 2016

Volume XXIV Issue III


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President's Notes by John Fitzhugh

An old gardener was once overheard to say, "**A butterfly is a flying flower with a dancing heart.**"

Baldwin County Master Gardeners know that in March we emerge from the cocoon of winter and begin to fly around our area spreading joy and delight to those who love gardening and the other gifts of nature. This month is that special time of the year when Master Gardeners join hands to put on the Spring Plant Sale at Weeks Bay, create a floral masterpiece at the Festival of Flowers in Mobile and help our Baldwin County neighbors prepare for spring planting by hosting Spring Workshops. Like the life cycle of a butterfly, there is so much to do and only a short time to get it done. If you have not already signed up to help with one or more of these important projects, please do so. We need your help.

Speaking of butterflies, we are very fortunate to have the authors of *Butterflies of Alabama*, Paulette Haywood Ogard and Sara Cunningham Bright, as our guest speakers at the Spring Plant Sale Preview at Weeks Bay on March 31. Plants and raffle tickets go on sale at 1:00 pm with the program beginning at 2:00 pm. I urge all Master Gardeners to bring a friend and enjoy this colorful and interesting program and a chance to shop early for spring plants.

As a final thought to share with you this month, this passage from Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*, reminds me of working at the Spring Plant Sale.

"It was one of those March days when the sun shines hot and the winds blow cold.

When it is summer in the light and winter in the shade."

I look forward to seeing everyone at the Plant Sale.



Tuesday Nights with Master Gardeners — Spring Workshops:



March 8

6 pm Landscaping: The Plan..... Terry Plauché
7 pm Landscaping: The Plants Terry Plauché

March 15

6 pm Shade Gardens.....Diane Hall
6:45 Growing African Violets & Propagation..... Jere Trigg
7:30 Growing Bromeliads & PropagationSharon Thoele

Baldwin County Master Gardeners General Meeting, February 11, 2016 Notes by Mary Hamilton, Recording Secretary

The meeting was opened with comments from President, John Fitzhugh. This is a very important business meeting because there is so much on the calendar for March. Jim Whitson (email list) Judi Smith, and Myra Lassere (Policy and Procedure Manuals update) were called to the front to receive Busy Bee Awards.

Tanys Waldron gave a presentation for volunteers for Arbor Day and the Spring Workshops. This year the Spring Workshops are starting a little bit early. This year's speakers are Myra Lassere, Marilyn Mannhard, Diane Hall, Jim Gaines, Cecil Christenberry, Jere Trigg, Sharon Thoele, and John Kitch. Infomercials will be given each evening by Gene Sellier on a number of short topics. Fliers are at the back of the room. Master Gardeners that bring food get in for free. Tanys then talked about Arbor Day. The Coordinators are Gary Wallace, Daphne; Gene Sellier, Fairhope; Carolyn Koch, Silverhill; Paula Pritchett, Bay Minette; Joy Zeanah, Magnolia Springs.

Selena Vaughn talked to the club about the Spring Plant Sale which is the first week-end of April this year. March 31 is our general meeting with our speakers being the authors of "Butterflies of Alabama: Glimpses Into Their Lives". Set up will be March 29th and 30th. Please come and help those days. All the set-up needs to be done on Tuesday and Wednesday. Moe Nation will be in charge of the kitchen all week. Selena will email copies of the flyer out to the membership.

John Fitzhugh asked the interns to stand. There were six attending the meeting. All are asked to please make the interns feel welcome. Pam Tucker spoke to the club about this year's interns and the Festival of Flowers. Festival of Flowers is March 10th through the 13th. March 10th is our regular general meeting day. Sign up sheets are on the back table. You get in free wearing your apron and name tag. Otherwise It costs \$14 to get in. Help is needed on March 4th and 5th. Man power (i.e., men with strong backs) are needed for unloading and to go to Charles Phillip's to pick up and deliver the items that we borrow. Ladies, don't stay home. You are needed as well. Bring gloves and a strong back. People really needed to "man" the booth, greeting people and answering questions during the festival.

Myra talked about the advisory council meeting. AMGA has a new logo which we can add with our line. They are setting up a store on-line to sell aprons, t-shirts and visors. It will be done by the date of the annual AMGA conference, May 12-14.

Joy Zena announced that on March the 13th from 1-5, Magnolia Springs is having a tour of homes. Tickets are \$15 before the tour and \$20 at the date. See Joy for tickets. It is very good with excellent history.

Sharon Thoele announced that we will be doing a project for a home for girls, "Under His Wings." The first work day will be the first Saturday in March. Volunteers will meet at 104 and go together to the work site.

John announced that Ottie's family wants to give the plants in Ottie Daley's garden to Master Gardener's. There is still a lot there in her yard. If you dig something up, please put the ground back.

Patsy Conner was introduced and will be a new member to BCMG from Huntsville.

Loree Hadley has the 2016 pictorial directory for sale for \$5.

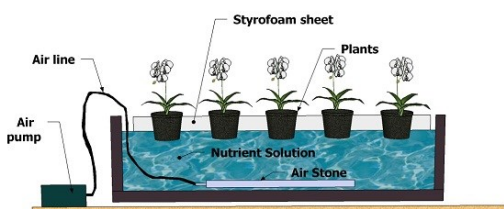
Our Speaker for February 11 is Dr. Jeremy Pickens, from Auburn University's Ornamental Horticulture Research Center. His email is pickej@auburn.edu. His topic is 'Hydroponic Vegetable Production' and how to do in your own backyard. He was introduced by Sharon Thoele.

Dr. Pickens first discussed the commercial greenhouse vegetable industry. There are now 7.1 billion people on the planet, by 2050 it will be 9 billion. By 2030, there will be a much larger middle class in China and India. In Almeria, Spain, there are miles of greenhouses. 42% of all USA tomatoes are grown in greenhouses in Mexico and Canada. Per capita consumption of lettuce is 11 pounds a year. There is a ton of potential in this industry.

He started with using a 50,000 gallon fish tank. This is known as Aquaponics. In Hydroponics, it is plants that are grown without soil to hold them up. The system acts as a reservoir for nutrients. We make our own soil solution. Almost like the plant is on life support.



Typical Water Culture System



Hydroponic Cropping Systems: Raft culture--primarily used for leafy green plants. Plants grown on foam rafts. Butter and Bibb types of lettuce are commonly grown this way and they have more flavor.

Deep water culture--can be done on any size or scale one wants. Selling produce is tough. It is hard to compete. California has beneficial economics of large scale. Local grown vegetables stay longer because they are fresh.

Nutrient Film Technique (NFT)

(Continued on next page.)

(Continued) Baldwin County Master Gardeners General Meeting, February 11, 2016 Notes by Mary Hamilton

There are more hydroponic lettuce grown here in Baldwin County than anywhere else in the state. Plants are grown in plastic gutters. In a soilless culture, plants are watered every 20 minutes they get watered. Peat moss, Vermiculite, Pearl lite, and bark mulch are the growing medium used for the plants.

An irrigation controller is used with lateral lines to emitters. Fertilizer injectors cost \$500. Use a Syphonex or Hozon instead of piston type injector. It is much cheaper, costing \$20. They have a 1:16 ratio.

In a hydroponic system, tomato plants are grown from September to Early June. The plants do not do well in the heat. Plants are grown vertically with a trellis system. You must have a robust system of support for the plants. It is recommended to pull the suckers off the tomatoes stems every week and attach your one strong vine to the vertical string with tomato clips. Grow indeterminate tomatoes. Leaning of tomatoes makes an L shape vine. Take off the leaves on the lower vine. You will have 3 to 5 feet of leaves and tomatoes.

Topsy Turvy Tomato planters are "junk" but you can use them with cucumbers. For growing cucumbers, use the burpless cucumbers as they are good for those who have digestive problems with them. Dr. Perkins' recommends Johnny's seeds.

To build a box for the water reservoir system, use lumber or concrete blocks with 4 mm plastic sheeting, HDPE (20mm). Use 4 ft. increments to hold the water fertilizer mix. Dr. Perkins gave construction tips. Fill reservoir with water and let sit for 12 to 24 hours. With Raft construction, you can use blue insulation or white foam, both work well. Pull the film off, cut the insulation or foam like sheet rock in 4 by 4 blocks. Grow the transplants in the blocks. Oasis, commercially available as a box of 5000 at growers' suppliers. Net cups are great for the hobbyist, but medicine cups with punch holes is best and cheapest. Used Keurig cups can also be used. Omaha Steak shipping cooler foam is the best.

Plant spacing at 8 inch centers are best. Pelleted seeds are best. You want about 3 true leaves for a transplant, bigger is not better.



For Deep Water Culture Fertilization, use 150mg/L of nitrogen, 50 mg/ L of magnesium, Epsom Salts. Typically it is a two part fertilizer of 8-5-16 with equal parts of calcium nitrate. Dr. Perkins recommends making your own or buy a commercial blend. He was asked how much fertilizer to use. Veg Grow, 3-19-27, 22 oz. per 100 gallons. Calcium Nitrate, 15.5-0-0, 8 oz. per 100 gallons. Epsom Salt, 5 Oz. per 100 gallons. An Aeration pump is used to put oxygen in the water. Deeper water is easier to aerate.

The advantages of this method of growing, Deep Water Culture, is there are no weeds in this type of system and no sand on your greens. You can get two crops a year out of one raft system. Mosquitos don't like the nutrient formula. Don't allow light to get in the nutrient solution because it causes green algae to grow.

Recommended books:

Hydroponic Food Production, by Howard M. Resh; CRC Press.

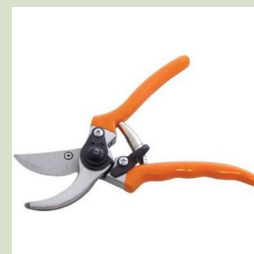
Hydroponics A Practical Guide for the Soilless Grower; by J. Benton Jones, Jr.; CRC Press.

Gordon Cooper won the door prize. It was moved by Jere Trigg and seconded by Bernie Fogerty and the meeting was adjourned.

Selecting Pruners, by Barb Comstock

After a lifetime of using various tools for pruning new growth and old, I have come to some pretty solid basics of pruner selection.

- 1) Hardened steel, not stainless steel. Stainless steel, though attractive because of the lack of rusting, is softer and more likely to become out-of-true with hard use. Don't stress your pruners by cutting branches that are too large.
- 2) No springs to lose in the dirt. Nothing is more annoying than to have to replace the spring mechanism on a pruner. Look for a metal coil instead of a spring.
- 3) No pinch points. I still have calluses from a pruner that was suppose to be top-of-the-line, but repeatedly caused blood blisters on my palm. While trying out potential new pruners, make repeated motions you would use as you prune.
- 4) Self Sharpening Blades. These are blades that sharpen each other while moving against each other. [Self sharpening does not mean self cleaning - they still need to be wiped down with alcohol between plants and light oil after use.]
- 5) Choose by-pass style pruners unless you have a special need for the anvil style. Anvil style crushes that tissue at the cut, but are useful for dead-heading annuals and for dead wood. By-pass pruners offers a cleaner, faster healing cut.
- 5) If not already an easy to see color, paint or dip the handles of your pruners into something easily seen. Bright yellow, red, or orange are my favorites - preferably fluorescent.
- 6) Unless you lose your pruners a lot (in that case buy an inexpensive pruner), save on your labor and be easy on your hands and buy the best pruners.



FEED THE BIRDS! By Jim Greer

From our seats at our kitchen table, we have a nearly unobstructed view through a double window, out through the screened porch and across the back yard to the privacy fence. There are two bird baths, Hummingbird and seed feeders on standing hangers area along the back fence. There are daffodils, lilies, roses, a rosemary bush, a banana bush, beach rosemary, and many Mexican petunias along with two raised beds for vegetables around the yard. It is basically a bird friendly yard with no pets, with the exception of a couple neighborhood cats that roam through.



Nine years ago, when we moved in, there were three lots facing our yard, and many more unimproved lots within the community that still had Pines with an understory of other trees and common local flora; i.e. still a bit of wildness to the area then. Owls visited the pines next door regularly and their calls could be heard often around the neighborhood. There were coveys of Bobwhites, and lots of doves as well as other birds commonly seen in our area of the Gulf Coast. I put out dove and quail food mix on our back deck, and one morning I found Mourning, White Wing, Common Ground and Eurasian Collard Doves all feeding together there.

About two years after we moved into our home a lightning strike killed three of the pines on one of the vacant lots, and we watched them die and lose their bark. Within a year or so Red Headed Woodpeckers nested in a cavity they made. Over the next several years we enjoyed having these beautiful birds in our world, and to be in a part of theirs. In brilliant flashes of red, white and black they would fly down from their nest in the pine tree to our bird baths to drink, and we'd hear them drumming, strangely so, in the metal rain gutters. I felt privileged over the years to be in the company of these beautiful woodpeckers, to be greeted by their calls almost invariably whenever I was in the back yard. The raspy calls of woodpeckers could hardly be described as beautiful. But no bird call is more evocative of the deep woods, of big trees, forest glades and a call that is the very essence and aura of wildness.

The neighborhood has changed now, with all but a few of the piney woods gone and the last few vacant lots with houses under construction. Over the years as each successive lot was cleared, one more bit of wildness destroyed to accommodate one more Human dwelling, I was filled with a sense of foreboding, and a dread of the day when the next door lot was cleared, the dead pines hewn down. Our Red Headed Woodpeckers, the doves, wrens and nuthatches that nested there would be gone from our yard, and from our lives. The lot was cleared a week ago, but I'm thankful it happened in winter, with the birds gone and no chicks in the nests.



And so, as knowledgeable gardeners, we will continue to be aware of the impact our gardening and landscaping activities have on the birds, and on all of the creatures with which we share the planet. At the very least, we are faced with uncertainty about the effects of the changes in climate we are witnessing. Be aware, be informed, follow the logic – and FEED THE BIRDS!

For those that enjoyed the **KUMQUAT NUT BREAD** brought to *Tuesday Nights with Master Gardeners* by Pat Greer, here it is!

2/3 cups milk Beat milk with eggs; add oil and

1/2 teaspoon salt

2 eggs, beaten sugar. Mix well. Add the sugar

1/2 teaspoon baking soda Mix into the milk and egg mixture.

2 Tablespoons oil and mix in.

3/4 cups pureed kumquats

3/4 cups sugar

3/4 cups chopped pecans Fold kumquats and pecans into

2 cups flour Sift together flour, salt, baking soda

Pour dough into a greased and floured loaf pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 50-60 minutes

1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder and baking powder

First 2016 BCMG Spring Workshops "Tuesdays with Master Gardeners" by Tanys Waldron

It was an excellent start to the 1st night of the BCMG Spring Workshops "Tuesdays with Master Gardeners". Many thanks go to the workshop speakers Marilyn Mannhard and Jim Gaines for giving their time and expertise to making it a very educational evening. At the end of the night we hand out surveys to the attendees to find out how we are doing. Marilyn and Jim both got 5 out of 5 for their presentations. Yeah!!

In total there were 106 attendees. There were 47 paid attendees for a total of 235. There were 59 Master Gardens and Interns attending. The MG's and Interns brought food for the refreshment table so there was an excellent selection which helps keeps our expenses down.

The Workshop titles were:

6pm *Growing Summer & Spring Vegetables Instructor: Marilyn Mannhard*

7pm *Growing Camellias Instructor: Jim Gaines*

As part of the Workshop series there is a short bonus talk - a Gardening Infomercial presented by Gene Sellier. The topic was "How to do a Soil Test". Gene Sellier also created a looping power point that played before the workshops began. The information presented was on our upcoming April Plant Sale and How to Become a MG.

A big Thank You to Judi Smith- the Kitchen Coordinator. Judi made sure we all ate well and everything during the evening went smoothly. Thank you to everyone who brought food.

Thank you to all the Volunteers - you make the evening happen: Darlene Anderson, Ann Brun, Donna Burnham, Bonnibel Byars, Barb Comstock, Maura Daniell, Gail Floyd, Bernie Fogarty, Jim Greer, Pat Greer, Harry Hopkins, Carolyn Koch, Myra Lassere, Jacqui Stuart, Anita O'Connor, Don Ouellette, Pauline Ouellette, Gene Sellier, Steve Urbanek & Tanys Waldron.

(If I have missed your name, please forgive me. It was a busy night.)

The behind the scenes Volunteers were: Cathy Banning from the Bay Minette ACES office who designed the Workshop flyer, Mike McQueen -our ACES Agent and Shasta Boothe in the Research Station office.



Another great evening at the second night of the Spring Education Workshops "Tuesdays with Master Gardeners". Written by Tanys Waldron

The weather cooperated and we had sunshine and warm temperatures. The predicted rain did not show up. Many thanks go to the workshop speakers Myra Lassere and Cecil Christenberry for giving their time and expertise which made it a very educational and entertaining evening.

Many thanks to Cecil for his auctioneering skills and his donated tomato plants.

In total there were 108 attendees. There were 47 paid attendees. There were 61 Master Gardens and Interns attending. The MG's brought food so there was an excellent selection of refreshments. Intern Barbara Phillips brought a big crockpot of soup - so everyone was well fed. A big thanks to Connie Griffin - Kitchen Coordinator who made sure everything ran well. (Photo of Cecil by Peggy Loefstedt)

The Workshop titles were:

6pm Organic Gardening Myra Lassere

7pm Recommended Plants from "Old Tyme Feed" in Fairhope Cecil Christenberry



As part of the Workshop series there was a short bonus talk that we call a Gardening Infomercial. This was presented by Larry Lutz, who is the Coordinator for the HelpLine. The topic for the Infomercial was "How to call the HelpLine".

Everything went well because of our MG & Intern Volunteers. A big thanks go to: Donna Burnham, Barb Comstock, Maura Daniell, Joni Euler, John Fitzhugh, Gayle Floyd, Sallie Grass, Jim Greer, Pat Greer, Connie Griffin, George Holman, Harry Hopkins, Carolyn Koch, Myra Lassere, Peggy Loefstedt, Larry Lutz, Don Ouellette, Pauline Ouellette, Barbara Phillips, Gene Sellier, Diana Spillman, Jacqui Stuart, Tanys Waldron & Terri Withee.

Photo - BCMG volunteers plus the 2 Instructors: Myra Lassere and Cecil Christenberry.

Back Saving Tips for Gardeners

Paraphrased from an article on www.DavesGarden.com, <http://davesgarden.com/guides/articles/printstory.php?rid=0&bn=%2Farticles%2F10-back-saving-tips-for-gardeners>

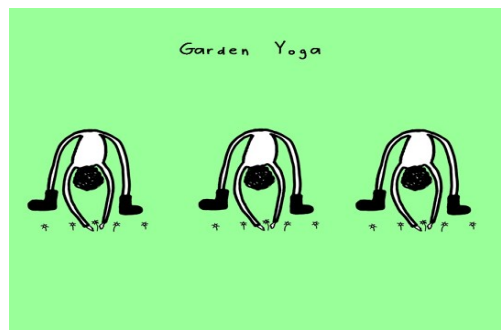
Gardening isn't easy on your back. Here are some back saving gardening tips to help you stay limber and strong.

1. Core Strength

The best way to protect your back is a strong core. A daily abdominal workout routine goes a long way towards a healthy back. Your workout doesn't have to be intense, and there are hundreds of free workout routines on the internet to choose from. A strong core also comes with other benefits, including better posture and more endurance for gardening tasks.

2. Body Mechanics

As tired as I am of hearing the phrase, "always bend and lift with your legs," it is good advice. Proper body mechanics while gardening prevents back injuries and strain. It does require thinking about your actions. Take a moment to consider a strenuous task and determine the best way to accomplish it instead of jumping straight in.



3. Leverage

A lot can be accomplished with the right amount of leverage. Adding length to a tool handle like a wrench makes it easy to loosen a stubborn bolt. All you need is a sturdy piece of piping to slip over the handle, and, of course, WD-40.

4. Attainable Goals

Set attainable goals for yourself. The only thing worse than being limited by back pain is hurting yourself further, taking you out of the garden for days or even weeks. If you have a serious back injury or suffer from chronic back pain, your garden goals are going to need to accommodate that. Instead of planting a 1/4 acre of potatoes by hand, consider cutting back or try growing your potatoes in barrels.

5. Stretch Breaks

I can easily spend a few hours on my knees transplanting or weeding without giving a thought to my body, something I regret the minute I stand up. Stretch breaks are important no matter what your hobby, but they are especially crucial for gardeners. Take a moment to stretch out your back and legs. This limbers you up, preventing and soothing muscle and back pain and increasing your efficiency. Plus it feels really good!

6. Ergonomic Set-Up

Since new backs weren't available at the hardware store, I had to alter my routine to accommodate my back. Despite my attachment to my farm's set-up, I forced myself to examine my garden and figure out where I could make things easier on my back.

Where possible, I switched to raised beds for my vegetables and containers for my herbs, limiting the distance I had to bend down to work from. I switched to using long-handled tools, especially for weeding, and tried to keep up on the weeds so that I didn't need to bend down to pull out stubborn dandelions. I made sure my tools were the appropriate weight and length for both me and the job, and when they weren't, I broke down and bought a more appropriate tool.

The most important change I made was to storage. I downsized my storage bins and put weight limits on them for myself. While I previously prided myself on my ability to tote 50 pound of root vegetables around, now I limited the bins to 35 pounds. I also no longer stack heavy bins higher than my waist. While this took up more space, I don't regret it for a minute.

7. Stack the Deck

I like to do my own lifting even with a bad back. The secret to my success is simple - stacking. If I am storing vegetables or rearranging a cooler, I stack bins so that I only have to lift things a short distance at a time.

The flip side of this is slightly more costly. Purchasing large, bulk items is cheaper. Buying smaller bags of fertilizer or potting soil costs more. They are also lighter and easier to transport. Sometimes you have to swallow the cost or accept help.

8. Listen To Your Body

You are the best judge of your own strength. When your body starts to twinge, take a break to stretch or call it a day. Pushing through back pain is not like pushing through the burn of a workout. There is nothing to gain, only pain. Rest when your body demands it and pace yourself.

9. Ask For Help

This was the hardest thing for me to learn. It took throwing my back out a few more times before I understood that there is no shame in asking for help. What was shameful was confessing that I had knowingly pushed myself past my limits and lost valuable time in my garden.

UPCOMING VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

These are opportunities to help your communities and to add to your volunteer hours:

TUESDAY NIGHTS WITH MASTER GARDENERS, MARCH 8. Help set up the food, chairs, tables, and outreach material for the workshop, plus clean up after. and tables Arrive before 5.

Again on MARCH 15. Help set up and clean up after for the last night of 'Tuesday Nights with Master Gardeners'.

FESTIVAL OF FLOWERS: Contact Pam Tucker, Anita O'Connor, or Tampa Sykora to find out where and when they need help with our outreach booth. March 10-13 in Mobile.

PLANTASIA! At Mobile Botanical Gardens: March 18-20. Contact Marie Dyson, 251-490-5878, mnosyd@comcast.net

SPRING PLANT SALE: Set up at Weeks Bay is Tuesday and Wednesday, March 29 and 30. Arrive before 9 and work as long as you can. Lunch will be served both days. Please bring your garden carts, labeled with your name, to be used by customers during the sale.

SPRING PLANT SALE: March 31: Bring finger food to share with garden club members and salads to share at lunch time. Bring food before 10 am. Help customers by helping them select the right plant for the right space.:

HELPLINE: As always, we need people to "man" the phone lines and answer questions. Go to [aces website](#) (as if you are entering hours), click on 'Helpline' to sign up, then show up! Questions? Call Larry Lutz, Coordinator.

LILLIAN RECREATION PARK AND LILLIAN PERDIDO LIBRARY: Advice on the revamping and maintenance of gardens. Contact Jan Sanders, 251-961-1530, jansanders@gulftel.com

EARTH DAY: April 16, Foley, April 23, Fairhope. More information will be forthcoming.

DELTA WOODS AND WATERS EXPO, Fiver Rivers, on the Causeway, Family Day, Saturday, April 30, Volunteers are needed for two shifts Saturday, 8:30 am to 12:30 pm, or 12 pm until 4 pm. Please contact Carolyn Walthall at 251-621-3459

New Projects that need project coordinators: Contact Projects Chairperson, Gary Wallace

Eastern Shore Art Center: Fairhope, needs a garden maintenance plan for the volunteers.

George P. Thames Senior Center, Robertsedale, needs landscape advice and plan.

Daphne Baptist Church, needs help in planning and starting a community garden.



Another recipe from January's general meeting, another one by Gene Sellier

Tomato and Mozzarella Salad (Insalata Caprese)

16 ounces ripe tomatoes, either 16 oz of grape or cherry tomatoes * or 2 or 3 regular size tomatoes**

8 ounces fresh mozzarella cheese, use pearl mozzarella cheese if using grape tomatoes.

1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil

1/8 teaspoon kosher salt

1/8 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

1/4 cup fresh basil sliced into thin strips or fresh oregano leaves

* If using grape or cherry tomatoes, wash tomatoes well, shake most of the water off. Slice in half or quarter. Place tomatoes in a shallow bowl, add the mozzarella pearls, sprinkle the herbs over them and season with salt and pepper. Drizzle the olive over the salad and stir gently to coat the tomatoes and cheese.

** If using regular size tomatoes, wash well, dry, and slice into 1/4 inch slices. Using sliced mozzarella slightly thinner than the tomato slices, arrange alternating tomatoes and cheese on a serving plate or platter. Sprinkle the fresh herbs over them. Drizzle the olive oil over the arrangement. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Serve with slivers of a good quality rustic bread to soak up the tomato juice and olive oil.

Options: You might like to add a gentle garlic flavor. Put 1/2 cup olive oil in a small sauce pan. Grate or mince a medium sized clove of garlic and add to the oil. Turn on the burner to a low-medium heat. When the olive oil becomes fragrant and starts to shimmer, remove from heat and allow to cool to room temperature. Strain the oil and use this on your salad. Any leftover oil can be safely stored in the refrigerator for 3 to 4 days.



The Benefits of Gardens submitted by Sam Andrews from the March 2016 Real Estate Advisor

<http://media.reliancenet.com/Media/Global/newsletters/monthly/2016/March/REA>

It seems as though in the past few years gardening and backyard farms have become more and more popular throughout the United States. With spring quickly approaching in the northern hemisphere, many homeowners throughout the U.S. will take to the outdoors with the intention of sprucing up winter-wrecked yards. While many homeowners will concentrate on their yard, many others will focus on their backyard gardens. Traditionally, a garden is assumed to be a place to grow fruits and vegetables, but gardens can take on a many different looks and styles. Whether mainly for food, or for the beauty and aroma only flowers can produce, home gardens have a number of benefits for homeowners, and should you consider giving your yard a revamp this spring, consider adding a garden or a small garden area to your outdoor space.



Benefits of Home Gardens

Gardens, whether for the joy of flowers or for fruits and vegetables, come in a number of shapes and sizes. While providing a great sensory experience and a way to reconnect to the natural world around us, gardens also help to keep the body limber and improve overall mood. A study done in the Netherlands <http://www.cnn.com/2011/HEALTH/07/08/why.gardening.good/> suggests that the relaxing nature of gardening can help fight stress, and a study in Norway <http://www.cnn.com/2011/HEALTH/07/08/why.gardening.good/> found that people who suffered from depression and other mood disorders showed measurable improvements in their symptoms after three months of gardening (where six hours per week were spent in

the garden). If you're not interested in the potential health benefits of gardening, adding plants and flowers to your yard is a great way of updating a meager outdoor space and makes a backyard more enticing to potential buyers from additional textures, scents and organization. Also, adding touches of color by way of plants and flowers is an excellent way of improving curb appeal should you consider putting your home on the market in the coming months.

Community Gardens

Don't have time for an outdoor garden, or are you lacking a space large enough for a garden? There are a number of alternatives to bring the joy of gardening into your home or life. A very popular option that has popped up around the U.S. is community gardens. Located throughout communities from the east to the west, community gardens have helped provide a place of retreat from urban areas plagued by noise, or for those individuals who want a relaxing place to go to when they have free time. Community gardens provide a number of benefits, from a place for recreation and exercise, to providing health benefits by easing stress and helping to improve overall mood. Studies http://www.gardeningmatters.org/sites/default/files/Multiple%20Benefits_2012.pdf have also shown that those who participate in a community garden generally eat healthier, more nutrient dense diets, and a community garden helps to create and foster relationships throughout a community.

Container Gardens

Another option for those who don't have a yard or outdoor area large enough for a traditional garden is a container garden. Another trend gaining popularity throughout the U.S., container gardens allow homeowners to have small gardens in tight spaces. Plants (which can be anything from traditional flowers and shrubs to fruits, vegetables and herbs) are placed in containers, usually one plant per container, and allow the gardener the ability to choose specific plants for their needs and wants. Only interested in succulents, or just interested in plants that require little water and maintenance? A container garden is a great option. Container gardens can range from small to robust, and they provide an excellent alternative to a traditional garden. Other popular options for 'alternative' gardens are hanging gardens and indoor gardens. These gardens can be fully indoors and very much take on a container garden feel. Container gardens can also help add pops of color to porches and patios, and they are a great way of adding appeal to drab areas for potential home viewings.

Backyard Farm

Do you feel particularly adventurous when it comes to adding a garden or outdoor feature? If you have the time, resources and space, consider a backyard farm. Chickens have become a popular backyard feature throughout the U.S., in both urban and rural communities. Chickens can provide a number of benefits to a yard or outdoor area: they act as natural pest control; they produce eggs; they will eat table scraps as well as weeds and garden clippings, and chicken manure is also considered one of the best fertilizers for gardens due to its high nitrogen, potassium and phosphorous content. While not for every homeowner, backyard chickens can be fun for every member of a household.



- March 10 General Meeting at 104, 10 am, Fred Nation on Longleaf Pines and Turpentine Industry
- March 10-13 Festival of Flowers at Providence Hospital in Mobile. Please volunteer!
- March 16 Intern Luncheon, 11 am.
- March 17-20 Plantasia! At Mobile Botanical Gardens. Thursday is Preview night (\$25)
- March 21 Lunch & Learn with Mobile County Master Gardeners, Jon Archer Ctr., Hydroponics
- March 29-30 Spring Plant Sale Set up; it's a volunteer opportunity!
- March 31 Spring Plant Sale Preview, 1 pm raffle begins, Salad lunch, 2 pm Seminar starts,
- April 1-3 Spring Plant Sale. Volunteers needed to help customers and at the Outreach booth.
- April 1 Webinar 2 pm, 'Help Pollinators Cope With Pesticides'
- April 16 Earth Day in Foley, details to be forthcoming...
- April 18 Lunch & Learn with Mobile Master Gardeners, Rick Crow teaching layering camellias.
- April 23 Earth Day at Fairhope Pier park. Volunteers needed for Outreach booth.
- April 28-30 Delta Woods & Waters at 5 Rivers on the Causeway.
- May 4 2016 Interns lunch and presentations, begins promptly at 9 am.
- May 5 BCMG Board Meeting, 9:30 am.
- May 8 Camellia Club, Fred Nation giving talk at Splinter Hill Pitcher Plant Bog
- May 12 BCMG General Meeting at 104.

Grass Roots is compiled and edited by Barb Mühl Comstock. The publisher is Sandra Walton at the Baldwin County ACES office in Bay Minette. The newsletter is available before the monthly general meeting on our website:
www.baldwincountymastergardeners.com.

Submission of articles, items of interest, photos of BCMG events, garden tips, garden jokes, etc. are greatly encouraged and appreciated. Send to grassrootsnews@gmail.com



Baldwin County Master Gardeners
 % Baldwin County Extension Office
 302-A Byrne Street
 Bay Minette, AL 36506
 Attn: Sandra Walton

Next meeting: Mar 10

Location: 104, 10 am
 Fred Nation will talk on
 Longleaf Pines and the
 Turpentine Industry

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