



MG SPROUTS

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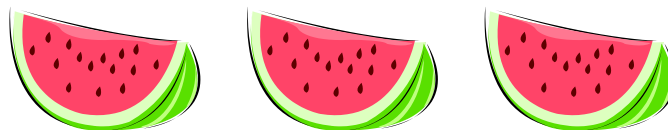
Message from the President ***By Sheila Anne Webb***

Loved how Stephen Faughn described how meaningful his live animals and reptiles are for student learning and engagement. We always enjoy his presentations as well and learn more about the creatures who share the earth with us. Speaking of creatures, as your gardens sprouted perhaps you witnessed the emergence of multiple black and orange grasshoppers. I still prefer my grasshoppers green but that's other areas of the country.

With weeds controlled and plants growing, relax and watch the wonder of birds. Bird flight is fascinating since man tried to imitate it via aircraft but we still can't land in a tree, take off from a forest, or dive into the waves of the ocean to catch fish then take off again, etc. Check out some flight patterns that birds also use for migration. For example, hummingbirds, ducks and geese use powered flight, which is continuous flapping on typically a level flight course. Small birds such as thrushes, robins, warblers, etc. use bounding, a variation of powered flight with bursts of flapping wings to gain altitude, followed by descents with the wings folded against the body to create a climbing and descending pattern. Larger birds like hawks, woodpeckers, and crows employ undulating with bursts of flapping wings and holding wings out to glide. Some smaller birds such as the small hawk fly in a partially powered glide not to gain altitude but to move between thermal areas and gain thrust to glide with the wings extended. Swallows, swifts and some sea birds may enjoy a powered take off but like to glide on air currents and some even circle in glides. Sometimes the birds are at a distance and it's easier to identify a pattern first and then the bird. A few years ago, I volunteered to count fireflies in this area. Various types are identified by their flight pattern since it's harder to tell if they are yellow or lime yellow, etc. That was still difficult so I settled on counting birds.

I find myself reading the newspaper with a gardener's view. A story in the June 22, 2017, Anniston Star reported the police "found him (the suspect) in a patch of kudzu hiding out on the trail (Ladiga)." My thoughts: wrong plant, wrong place for the function of camouflage.

2017 has been wonderful for us. The intern class is great and we hope they'll join us for our monthly meetings and Lunch and Learn. All our programs have been interesting and well received by MGs and public guests. The grounds at Cane Creek look terrific. Reports from other projects yield positive outcomes. Hope your microclimate has and is receiving adequate rainfall this spring and now summer. May your blooms and happiness be plentiful.



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MG Calendar

MG Board Meeting	10:45 a.m.-noon, July 12, Cane Creek Community Gardens
MG Business Meeting	12 p.m., July 12, Cane Creek Community Gardens
Sprouts Deadline	July 25



MG Notes

We thank Stephen Faughn for bringing some of his amazing animals for our June meeting. As usual, Stephen had a wonderful program and two of our attendees were brave enough to hold a snake. Hayes had another terrific presentation at our June Lunch and Learn on one his passions, caladiums.



Barbara McCray visits with one of Stephen's snakes



Hayes and a few caladiums at Lunch and Learn

Our Association is fortunate to have such talented local professionals willing to share their knowledge. (Thanks to Stephen my encounter with a snake went well; I ran in the house and the snake, a non-poisonous one, left for other parts)

July brings two more interesting and informative programs for our Association and the public. Marchale Burton will be presenting "Ways to Enjoy Summer Fruits" at our monthly July meeting (July 12 at noon). She always brings some delicious treats and has unusual ways to use nature's bounty. Lunch is brown bag. We look forward to having members of the 2017 intern class with us.

Our July 26th Lunch and Learn will have Dr. Jim Jacobi from the Extension Pathology Lab; his topic will be "What's Wrong with My Plant?" He is an expert on plant diseases; this promises to be another educational Lunch and Learn. Please bring a friend. If you have a plant that needs a diagnosis, bring a piece of it. Dr. Jacobi is a favorite in the Master Gardener Intern Training Class.

Fall Fest is just around the corner—the third Saturday in September. We will be asking for volunteers soon. Please say yes. For interns in need of service hours Fall Fest as a Cane Creek activity counts for service hours. We will need help getting set up and working the day of the Festival.

Just a reminder, service hours are due November 8th at our annual business meeting. As usual that is also the day we pay our dues.

Please remember five gallon buckets for Don Crowe's greenhouse project. He will be growing vegetables for the MGs to share.

With this rain, all of our MG projects need volunteers to keep up with the weeds. Lend a hand if possible.

I have sent out several recent requests for volunteers for various projects, please help if you can. You will learn a lot and enjoy the experience.

Please remember that we would like to hear from our volunteers with reports from their projects.

SB



Gardening tips for July

June's rain can bring diseases to our vegetables and our flowers. Be sure to scout both on a daily basis to deal with problems before they multiply.

Mulch in gardens will help cut down on weeds; use it generously.

If it stops raining, as it often does in an Alabama summer, water efficiently and effectively, especially newly planted trees, shrubs. Check the ground for moisture as the quickest way to kill a plant is to over water it. Water between the hours of 4 and 9 a.m. to make the most use of your water and allow plants to dry out before night time.

Replant some crops such as tomatoes to extend your growing season.

Shop local; shop fresh. Most of Calhoun County's cities have organized Farmers' Markets; support your local farmer. The peach man is in Anniston and Jacksonville again this year; although the peach crop is greatly smaller than in the past, the peaches are delicious.

Annuals may need pinching toward the end of the month to keep them healthy and bushy. Use the clippings to root extras.

Take advantage of sales at local garden centers; trees and shrubs might be better saved until the fall planting season and summer's heat diminished. If you put them in the ground now, water them on a regular basis.

Lunch and Learn 2017

July 26, What's Wrong with my Plant?
Dr. Jim Jacobi, ACES Plant Pathology Lab

August 23, Inviting Good Insects into Your Garden
Dani Carroll, ACES

September 27, "T" is for Tropical
Hayes Jackson, ACES

Lunch & Learn is held the 4th Wednesday of each month and Cane Creek Gardens from noon- 1 p.m. Bring your own lunch!

**Dates and speakers are subject to change. Contact the Calhoun County Extension Office at 256-237-1621 to confirm.*

MG Happenings

July Lunch and Learn at Cane Creek Community Gardens will be July 26th from noon to 1 p.m. Free and open to all Master Gardeners and the public. Dr. Jim Jacobi, plant pathologist, will talk about various plant problems and solutions. You are encouraged to bring your lunch.

The Tree Amigos Master Gardeners had a successful plant sale in June. Despite last year's drought, our community is optimistic and still planting new shrubs and trees.

The Tuesday Cane Creek volunteers always need help with weeding, pruning and mulching. It is our meeting place; offer your time to keep it beautiful.

I would like to invite you to attend my program on creating a beautiful lawn, "The Grass is Always Greener," at the Public Library of Anniston-Calhoun County, July 18th from 2 to 3 p.m. Free, no reservations required. Program counts for CEUs.

The July 20 Third Thursday program "Gardening for the Birds" sponsored by Lingleaf Botanical Gardens will be held from 10-11:30 a.m. The program will be held in the auditorium at the Anniston Museum Natural History. Speaker Herb Lewis will share effective techniques for developing a backyard wildlife habitat to attract a wide variety of birds. Call 256-237-6766 to make a required reservation. The cost is \$5 per person or free to members.

The Jacksonville Pocket Park has had an overwhelming infestation of lubber grasshoppers. Many plants have been decimated or eaten completely. Anyone come up with a solution other than a shoe or the backside of a shovel?

SB

Gardening for the Birds By Sherry Blanton

One day last winter I noticed that we did not have our usual hungry crowd of birds hanging around the feeder. Some of the seed had gotten hard and was no longer as appetizing as it should have been; we replaced it with a feeder that held less seed and was easier to clean. We added fresh seed every day instead of filling it to the top every week. The seed did not get a chance to go past its prime. Old, moldy bird seed can actually make our feathered friends sick. Cleaning the bird feeder and the bird bath may be two tasks that can slip our minds but the feeder should be cleaned frequently

depending on the condition of the seed. Clean the bird bath every couple of days in the summer. . . to keep the water fresh and to make sure mosquitos don't use the bath as a breeding ground. During the winter give it a regular cleaning and fresh water as well. If the water freezes in the birdbath, there are little devices that can be put into the baths to keep the water from freezing. One of the most charming garden sights is the birds splashing in the bird bath. During the summer months I often run the sprinkler just for the birds and they will gather to bathe in the water that collects in the driveway. Not very water wise but a real pleasure for the birds.

Attracting birds to a garden is not difficult. Simply look at your yard as if you were a bird. They are seeking water, food, shelter, and places to build nests to raise their babies. They like to perch on branches; they like places to hide from predators. Choose plants that provide a variety of food; include plants that have seeds, nuts, berries, and fruit. Many native plants can be especially attractive to birds. Birds love the seeds in coneflowers so when the flowers die back leave the seed heads for the birds to munch on. One summer we were gardening in Jacksonville's Pocket Park. A little goldfinch was snacking on the seed heads of the yellow rudbeckias, completely oblivious to all the activity in the park as he enjoyed the treat. Supplement your plants with feeders with various kinds of birdseed. There is a style of feeder for every bird and every human taste.

One trick to keeping a feeder stocked for the birds is to figure out how to keep the squirrels away. A squirrel baffle that keeps them from climbing the pole helps. Enterprising squirrels leap from far distances to get to the seed. We have tried mixing hot pepper in the seed which can be a delicacy for the birds. It was supposed to help keep the squirrels at bay but they went right on eating. A special feeder that gives the squirrels a little jolt was an experiment. We did not have a squirrel problem with that feeder (until the batteries died and the wires rusted). The squirrels were so smart they knew when to come back. Most birds will eat black oil sunflower seeds; however, there are many kind of seeds available that appeal to different birds. Black oil seeds with the husks removed tend to make less of a mess under the feeder. Birds love suet which can be homemade or purchased in any hardware, big box, or pet store.

Just as there are a multitude of bird feeders on the market, the gardener can purchase just about any kind of bird bath. Cleanliness again is the watch word for both of these products. Birds need fresh water twelve months of the year.

Obviously, birds need shelter from predators as well as to nest. The best way to provide this is to have a variety

of shrubs of all sizes and shapes – both deciduous and evergreen – in your landscape. Well-placed bird houses are also important, especially to attract bluebirds to your yard. Houses specially made for bluebirds are easy to find. Watching a pair of bluebirds line a blue bird house is one of the nicest experiences in the garden. The bluebirds in the Jacksonville Pocket Park raise two sets of babies every year in the middle of an urban park.

It goes without saying that to have birds it is critical to be careful with chemicals. Harsh chemicals – pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers and birds are not a good combination. Be prepared to accept less than perfect in your plants to make sure the birds stay healthy.

Mulch also makes a yard more inviting to the birds. Not only can they use mulch material, like pine straw, for their nests mulch improves the soil bringing the earthworms, a treat for the birds. Watching the birds scratch around the mulch looking for a tidbit is a treat for the humans.

As far as predators, some situations may be out of our control (however, providing lots of good shelter is vital to help keep birds safe). Consider keeping cats indoors or placing a feeder so it does not become a snacking station for visiting cats. Some gardeners put branches with thorns under the feeders. If the seed spills, and the birds gather to eat the spilled seeds, the thorns will help keep the cats away. I have even seen one cat try to jump in the feeder to catch a bird. That definitely ranks as one of my husband's top pet peeves.

With a little effort and some planning any yard can be haven for birds of many sizes and colors and will only make the garden a more delightful place for the people and the birds.

Officers - Calhoun County Master Gardeners

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