

## Seasonal Disease Awareness: Fire Blight

Fire blight is caused by the bacterium *Erwinia amylovora*. It is a devastating disease to many fruit trees and ornamentals in the Rosaceae family. Pear trees in particular are extremely susceptible to fire blight. This year's spring weather had perfect conditions for fire blight to thrive. It loves slightly warm temperatures and a wet, humid environment. When a plant is infected, the flowers begin to turn black and eventually die. As the disease progresses, the young branches die, turn black, and curl-up which results in fire blight's distinctive "shepherd's crook". The leaves on the plant also turn black but hang onto the stem. The disease earned its name because the dead leaves on the branches give a burned appearance. Cankers, sunken areas, also become an issue on the branches and trunk. This disease is easily spread by rain, insects, and unsanitized pruning equipment.

Unfortunately, there is no cure to fire blight. Prevention is the best way to protect plants from contracting this disease. Choosing tolerant plant varieties is an easy way to reduce the likelihood of getting fire blight. Remember sanitary practices when pruning or handling infected plants. Remove all infected plant parts by cutting 8 to 12 inches below any tissue showing signs of this disease. Prune away suckers because this new foliage is more susceptible to the disease than the older growth. Be sure to sterilize equipment; 10% bleach solution, undiluted rubbing alcohol or Lysol.

[The photo on the left shows the distinctive "shepherd's crook" curl at the tip of the dying stem. The photo on the right shows an infected stem on a tree.]



### [Gardener Spotlight]

Tom Boyle shares about his involvement with the Kitchen Garden at Landmark Park.

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### [Mark Your Calendar!]

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# Gardener Spotlight: Tom Boyle



Tom Boyle, a member of Wiregrass MGA, was inspired by his retirement to work on his yard. Up until that point, he often called his yard a “20 year work in progress.” He grew his passion by becoming a Master Gardener in 2008. During the program, Tom and the other interns in his class were invited to work in the Kitchen Garden at Landmark Park for Rural Heritage Day and Spring Farm Day held annually in March. Even after completion of the Extension Master Gardener program, Tom has never left tending to this 50’ x 100’ vegetable garden at Landmark Park. For several years now, he has planned the garden layout, rotated crops from one year to the next, coordinated other volunteers to include the MG Interns, and most importantly, work with the kids. His favorite part about the Kitchen Garden is working with the kids throughout the year, Spring Farm Day, Fall Farm Day, Living History Programs, Harvest Heydays, summer camps, and teaching the children about where food comes from and how easy it is to grow your own vegetables. Another of Tom’s favorite events is the Watermelon Tasting Day held annually in July. However, his work starts much earlier. Once the date is set, Tom plants

the seeds, usually five different heirloom varieties to be ready by the event. In total, there are usually 3 rows and anywhere from 40 to 60 hills. One lesson Tom often shares with the children and other adults that have an interest in vegetable gardening is to do what you have been trained to do and the rest is up to God as far as plant production. In addition to that advice, he stresses the importance of doing what interests you the most and plant whatever makes you happy. In addition to working the Kitchen Garden at Landmark Park, Tom enjoys teaching and sharing with his friends and others the knowledge he has learned from his association with Extension by holding home visits or presentations for interested gardeners. Also, Tom is in his second year working with the Harvest for Health program. After having a similar experience, Tom knows how important gardening can be before and after surgery in aiding the recovery process.



Photos courtesy of Tom Boyle

# Volunteering Across Alabama

## Autauga County Master Gardeners

### **Demonstration Garden Workdays**

When: Every Tues. at 8:00 AM

### **Prattvillage Garden**

When: Every Thursday

### **Governor's Mansion Workdays**

When: every Monday

## Claybank Master Gardeners

### **Dale County Lake Walking Trail**

Contact Carole Ball at (334) 774-5353

### **Ozark First United Methodist Church Meditation Garden**

Contact Jan Lisenby at (334) 774-6998

### **The Ozark-Dale County Public Library**

Contact Carole Ball at (334) 774-5353

## Calhoun County Master Gardeners

### **Cane Creek Gardens**

When: every Tuesday morning

Where: Anniston, AL

## Chilton County Master Gardeners

### **Demonstration Garden**

When: Mondays and Thursdays at 9:00AM

Where: Chilton Research and Extension  
Center (CREC)

### **Pruning Days**

When: Mondays and Thursdays at 8:00AM

Where: CREC

### **Craft Days**

Contact Sondra Henley at (205) 567-3333

## Lee County Master Gardeners

### **Kiesel Park Demonstration Garden**

When: Most Tuesday mornings at 8:00

Contact: Charlot Ritenbaugh (334) 750-1984

### **Caroline Dean Wildflower Trail**

When: 8:00 – 10:00 AM, 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesdays

Where: Municipal Park; Opelika, AL

Contact: Spencer Roy, 334-744-0769

### **Biennial Garden Tour**

Always the weekend after Mother's Day in  
even numbered years — May 14-15, 2016

Contact: <http://www.leemg.org>

## Tuscaloosa County Master Gardeners

### **Eagles' Wings**

When: Wednesday mornings

Where: Coker, AL

### **Hospice of West Alabama**

When: Wednesday mornings

Where: Tuscaloosa, AL

Contact Judith Rives, [jjarives@gmail.com](mailto:jjarives@gmail.com)

## Shoals Master Gardeners

### **Florence Community Gardens**

When: TBA, call the office

## Wiregrass Master Gardeners

### **Dothan Area Botanical Garden**

When: Mondays, 8:00 AM

What: Maintain demonstration beds

## **Helpline Reminder!**

Please volunteer to work the Helpline this spring  
in one of the following counties.

Autauga	Etowah	Madison
Baldwin	Jefferson	Mobile
Chilton	Lauderdale	Montgomery
Elmore	Lee	



Find us on  
**Facebook**

Alabama Master Gardener Helpline

# Mark Your Calendar!

Join and promote the following events

## May Lunch & Learn:

Lunch & Learn occurs once a month, shares a new topic every event, and takes place from 12:00—1:00 p.m. Drinks are provided, but tell friends to bring a sack lunch. L&L are a cooperative effort between Extension Agents and several hard working crews of Master Gardeners.

<b>3</b>	<b>Houston County:</b> Topic: Native Plants Where: Houston-Love Memorial Library	<b>10</b>	<b>East Central County:</b> Topic: Birds and Butterflies Where: Randolph Co. Equine & Ag Center
<b>3</b>	<b>Blount County:</b> Topic: Managing Pest in the Home & Garden Where: Blountsville United Methodist Church	<b>11</b>	<b>Morgan County:</b> Topic: Roses Where: Aquadome, Decatur
<b>4</b>	<b>Montgomery County:</b> Topic: Bloom Times, Year-Round Color Where: Armory Learning Arts Center	<b>16</b>	<b>Mobile County:</b> Topic: Water Features to Set the Mood Where: Jon Archer Ag Center
<b>5</b>	<b>Autauga County:</b> Topic: Backyard Birds Where: Christ Lutheran Church	<b>19</b>	<b>Cherokee County:</b> Topic: The Fern Lady Where: Cherokee Co. Public Library, Centre
<b>10</b>	<b>Elmore County:</b> Topic: Japanese Maples with the Maple Man Where: Elmore Co. Extension Office		

**Have a cool story or project you'd like to share?** We'd love to hear what your association is doing in your community. Contact us so we can learn more and publish it in an upcoming *Volunteer Opp's!*

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