

Master Gardener Volunteers

March 2015

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**Alabama Master Gardener Helpline**

The spring season is right around the corner. More time spent in the garden usually means more questions. The Master Gardener Helpline is ready!

**1-877-ALA-GROW (1-877-252-4769).**

It's open Monday-Friday from 9:00-4:00. Callers can leave a message if the line is busy.

Our new routing feature directs calls right to a Master Gardener who has training and experience with the plants, pests, and conditions in each Alabama region. Master Gardeners also have close contact with Extension Agents and the Diagnostic Lab for extra support whenever needed.

Please spread the word about this toll-free number to neighbors, friends and family. Use the signs, table cloths, and roll-shade banner to help publicize.

This valuable service would not be possible without the support of Master Gardeners statewide! Get in touch with Extension Agents Chris Becker, Ken Creel, Bethany O'Rear, Nelson Wynn, Mallory Kelley, Mike McQueen, or Ellen Huckabay if you are interested in volunteering on the Master Gardener Helpline in your area.



*March 2015*

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

## Lunch & Learn Programs

Lunch and Learn occurs once a month and shares a new topic every event. These programs are a great opportunity to meet new people and expand your gardening knowledge! Drinks are provided, but **bring a sack lunch**. L&L are a cooperative effort between Regional Extension Agents, Lucy Edwards, Mallory Kelley and Ellen Huckabay, and several hard working crews of Master Gardeners. Are you hosting these in your area?

### Autauga County

On **Thursday, March 5th**, come to the Christ Lutheran Church in Prattville from **12:00—1:00 p.m.** to learn about “Multiplying your Plants.” Here you will learn how to grow more of the beautiful plants you already have at home in your garden.

### Dale County

Do you have a compost pile at your home? If not, are you interested in this sustainable practice? The Dale County Extension Office will be hosting “Composting at Home” on **Tuesday, March 10th** from **12:00 — 1:00 p.m.** This will be the perfect opportunity to delve deep into the topic of composting, and it may even inspire you to start your own compost pile at home.

### Elmore County

Stop by the Elmore County Extension Office on **Tuesday, March 10th** from 12:00—1:00 p.m. to learn all about “Fantastic Ferns.” Ferns are fascinating plants that are a valuable part of the shady spots of your landscapes (both indoor and out)!

### Mobile

Your front door is one of the first things visitors to your home will see. Learn how to spruce up this area using plants. MaryJo Broussard presents “Front Door Gardens” from **12:00 — 1:00 p.m** on **Monday, March 16** at the Jon Archer Ag Center.



### Montgomery

Fresh, ripe tomatoes can be sourced throughout the summer seasons from more locations than just your local Farmer’s Market — including your own backyard! Come prepare for the summer growing season and learn about “Backyard Tomatoes” from **12:00 — 1:00 p.m.** at the Armory Learning Arts Center on **Wednesday, March 4th**.

### Calhoun County Opportunities

The Cane Creek Community Gardens Outdoor Classroom is a project of the Calhoun County Extension Office, the Calhoun County Commission, and the Calhoun Co MGs. This space is used to host a variety of educational events for local school children and groups. Both the Outdoor Classroom and Community Gardens provide important services to the community and they need MG volunteers! Come out to assist with maintenance and garden development on **Tuesdays** from **8:00 a.m. — 12:00 p.m.**

The Tree Amigos 4-H Club is a horticultural therapy program that



pairs Calhoun County Master Gardeners with children and staff at Coosa Valley Youth Services. Meetings are on **Wednesdays** from **8 a.m. — 12:00 p.m.** Get in touch with Extension Agent, Hayes Jackson, for more information.

### Wiregrass Area Opportunities

Rural Heritage Day at Landmark Park is on **Friday, March 20th**. At least 100 students come to the Kitchen Garden and plant vegetables that were seeded by our Wiregrass MGs in the WMGA greenhouse at Dothan Area Botanical Garden. Help is needed from MG volunteers to teach kids how to plant.

Spring Farm Days will be held on **Saturday, March 21st** at Landmark Park Dothan, AL. Wiregrass Master Gardeners, along with members of the Houston County MG Class, are invited to volunteer to teach kids about the history of the Kitchen Garden and the process of planting vegetables.

The spring planting date at Elba Giving Garden will take place on **March 21st** from **8:00 a.m.—12:00 p.m.** This a project developed by Restoration 154. The MG’s and local volunteers will install seven new raised beds and plant them. We’ll also plant the new tunnel house!

**Every Saturday in March**, the Coffee Master Gardeners will be hosting “Ask a Master Gardener” at the Lawn and Garden Center in the Lowe’s in Enterprise. Master Gardener volunteers are needed to make these question sessions a success.

The Houston County Master Gardener Class Graduation will take place on **Wednesday, March 25th** at **12:00pm**. All interns who have met the required education hours will receive certificate of completion. Congratulations to those finishing step 1 toward certification!

# New Plant Diseases to Know

## Boxwood Blight

Boxwoods are a staple of many Southern gardens. A potential new threat to boxwoods is Boxwood Blight; a recently introduced fungal plant disease. Boxwood Blight was found in Georgia and Tennessee in 2014, and in Alabama in 2015. Boxwoods showing symptoms of the disease were found in a newly planted landscape. It is hoped that the problem was identified early and that the plants were destroyed quickly enough to eradicate the presence of the fungus in the landscape.

Distinctive symptoms of Boxwood Blight include leaf spots, dropping of leaves, and brown, turning to black stem lesions. It is easily spread by infected leaves transferred to new locations via air, shoes, clothing, or tools. Once infection begins, boxwood blight cannot be effectively controlled. It is recommended that infected plants be burned. See Timely Information, PP-737 at [www.aces.edu](http://www.aces.edu) for more info.



**Infected boxwood showing black stem-streaking.**

Photo Credit: Mary Ann Hansen, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, [Bugwood.org](http://Bugwood.org).

As with any new plant disease, it is important for home gardeners to be aware of the threat and to keep an eye out for it in order to help stop its spread. Inspect plants before you buy. If you observe any symptoms of boxwood blight on your boxwoods, contact Dr. Kassie Conner at the AU Plant Diagnostic Lab.

Dr. Kassie Conner  
334-844-5507  
[connekn@auburn.edu](mailto:connekn@auburn.edu)

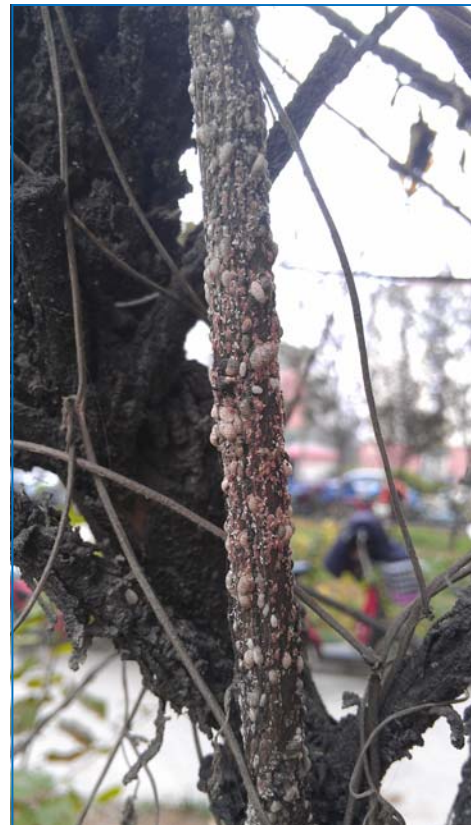
<http://www.aces.edu/dept/plantdiagnosticlab/>

## Crape Myrtle Bark Scale

Another newly introduced pest to be on the lookout for is the Crape Myrtle Bark Scale. Crape Myrtle Bark Scale is an Asian insect that has recently made an appearance in the Southeastern US. It was first found in 2004 in Texas and has since been seen in other SE states including Arkansas, Tennessee, Oklahoma, and Louisiana.

While there are no reported sightings of this insect in Alabama, due to the Crape Myrtle Bark Scale's rapid spread, this is an insect that we may be likely to see soon. This is currently the only recognized bark scale that affects crape myrtles, which makes it easy to identify, especially in the winter when there are no leaves to obstruct inspection of the bark.

If you see symptoms of scale infestation on your crape myrtles in Alabama, please contact the Plant Diagnostic Lab and send them a sample.



**Crape Myrtle twig covered with overwintering nymphs of the Crape Myrtle Bark Scale.**

Photo Credit: Mengmeng Gu, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, [Bugwood.org](http://Bugwood.org).