



# DIRTY DIGS



Autauga County Master Gardeners Association

April 2015

*ENTERTAIN, EDUCATE, ELEVATE*

**Next Meeting**

**May 14, 2015**

Meeting Location:

First Baptist  
Church

@6:00PM

**Guest Article: Submitted, by Donald Armstrong**



**SPRING PROPAGATION TIME  
OR  
GROWING BUSHES FOR THE  
2016 MG PLANT SALE**

**By Don Armstrong – MG Intern**

Spring has Sprung, Grass has Riz, Wonder where the Flowers is.

Well, the old saying goes something like that. But, this old saying is a good reminder that the time to do some of that asexual reproduction of our shrubs we learned about in our Intern classes is now, just after the flowers fade.

Stem Cuttings are the most common method commercial growers use to reproduce identical plants. This is an easy way for Master Gardeners to grow plants. Your new plants will be identical to the shrub you take the cuttings from.

There are several reasons to propagate shrubs from stem cuttings:

1. To give friends a real shrub that you have grown.
2. To have shrubs ready for the Spring Master Gardener Plant Sale in 2016. YES!!!
3. It is just plain fun to see what you can get to grow.

Please remember one important item; you cannot propagate patented plants for sale.

The best time to propagate Spring blooming shrubs is just after the blooms fade. So, when you are pruning back a flowering shrub, select some of the best looking branches to use to grow some new shrubs. According to one of the publications I read, the best months for pruning for propagation are June, July, August, and September.

Remember these key steps:

- Cut
- Tip
- Strip
- Dip
- Stick
- Water
- Upgrading

**Plant Sale**

**April 25**

### **Cut**

When pruning your shrubs you will, normally, be reaching into the bush and cutting just above a branch or bud – this gives the bush the best shape. This cut is great for the bush, but is not good for propagation as it leaves a lot of stem below the lowest bud on the cutting. To make a cutting for propagation, look for the lowest bud on your cutting and make a 45 degree cut just below this lowest bud. At this point I do one extra step on Semi-hardwoods and Hardwoods; I scrape a bit of the bark off on the back side of the cutting – the side away from the bud. I want to expose more of the cambium surface to stimulate root growth. The cutting should have a minimum of two buds, in addition to the one at the tip, that are close enough together to both be covered by the soil in your pot as the new growth of roots will come from these buds. You will actually have three buds buried in the soil, the one on the bottom of the cutting and two above the bottom.

### **Tip**

Tip the cutting by taking out the top bud. This bud is sending a signal to the root system to send up more good things to make it grow. But, there is no root system. With the top bud gone, the cutting can focus upon growing roots, which is the goal of your effort.

### **Strip**

Strip all but two or three leaves from the cutting – you can do this with your fingers or with clippers. If the leaves are large, like a geranium or mop head, then you will want to leave just two leaves and cut about two thirds of the leaf off. A few leaves are needed to stimulate the cutting to grow roots.

### **Dip**

Dip the tip of the cutting, the bottom end, into a growth hormone. Some plants do not need this and some people do not recommend this step. I dip all of my cuttings. And, I dip them deep enough to cover the scraped edge. One caution, it is recommended that you take the growth hormone out of the original container and put a small amount in a separate dish and never dip into the original container. This sanitation step protects the original container from contamination with diseases that may be on the cuttings.

### **Stick**

Using a small stick or pencil, poke a hole into the small pot you have prepared with your potting soil and “stick” the cutting into the hole. I usually put six to ten cuttings into a small 3 or 4 inch pot. Remember, Green Side Up, when you “stick” the cutting into the pot, know which end of the cutting is the top when you “stick” the cutting in the soil.

Your clippers should be sterilized before you start on a shrub. And, your pots should be sterilized.

The soil in your pots should be sterilized too. Sterile soil can be Perlite, Perlite and Peat Moss, or Ground Pine Bark. I use a mix of Peat Moss mix and Pine Bark.

The soil in your pots should be moist when you “stick” the cutting into it.

If your cutting has buds that are far apart, like figs and mop heads, then you need to use gallon pots. The same techniques apply. The goal is to get a minimum of two buds, plus the bottom bud, below the surface of the soil.

### **Water**

Water now becomes key to the success of the rooting process. Commercial growers use greenhouses and have a misting system that usually comes on three times a day. The duration of the misting varies from two to four minutes depending upon the time of year. I have no greenhouse, so I set the flats of cuttings in 100% shade on the North side of our home. The sun can be brutal to the cuttings. I water them as soon as I set them down, and I water them, very lightly, every day or so. The cuttings and their leaves have to be kept moist and humid.

There are a lot of ways to cover your cuttings to try and simulate the greenhouse effect. Plastic, like a dry cleaner bag, covering with holes poked in the plastic and the plastic held off the plants is one technique. Another is to use the top portion of a two litre plastic bottle. Another way is to use Ziploc bags instead of pots and to set the bags in a case, like a shoe box, to hold them upright. I have never done any of these covering techniques as I keep the flats in full shade and keep them moist.

I have been told it takes four to six weeks for the cuttings to root. I have some native azalea cuttings that took the whole summer and barely had roots when the frost came, so I held them over the winter inside a porch. The way I check for roots is quite basic. I lift the pot up and look for roots coming out of the bottom of the pot. Simple!!!

### **Upgrading**

Once the roots start coming out of the pots it is time to upgrade the cuttings. I hold the small pot over a plastic tray, tap out the cuttings and soil, and carefully pull the cuttings apart. This does need to be done carefully to minimize the damage to the root system. The plastic tray collects any soil that falls off to be reused.

I use gallon pots that I have filled about half full of wood chips when I upgrade the cuttings. I set the cutting atop the wood chips and add potting soil, the same soil that I have propagated the cuttings in. I gently press the soil down and top with a sprinkling of Osmocote. This is the first time the cuttings have gotten any fertilizer. I then set the gallon pots in the shade under trees in the woods. After an initial watering where I soak the pot thoroughly, the pots get watered every other day in the summer.

It takes 1 – 3 years from the time a cutting has been taken before it is ready to go into the garden, given to a friend, or taken to the Spring Master Gardener Plant Sale.

It is a lot of fun to watch things grow.

Try it with a flat of cuttings from your favorite shrub this Spring.

Master Gardeners are always welcome to come by to see what I am up to with my plant propagation efforts. My success rate varies from one out of ten on the native azaleas to maybe six to eight out of ten on some of the easier shrubs. It is just fun, and I like having fun.

**Go forth and multiply!!!  
I think Genesis said this a little differently.**



# April 2015

Sun      Mon      Tue      Wed      Thu      Fri      Sat

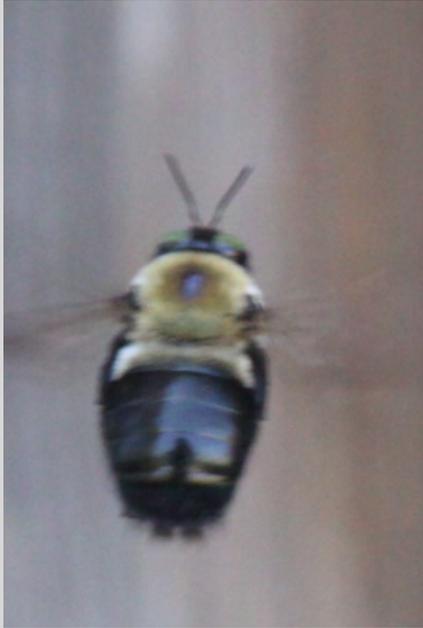
			<p>1</p> 	<p>2</p> <p><u>Prattvillage</u> 9:00 AM</p> <p><u>Holy Thursday</u> Lunch and learn—noon</p>	<p>3</p> <p>ACMGA Board Meeting</p> <p><u>Good Friday</u></p>	<p>4</p> <p><u>Passover</u></p>
	<p>6</p> <p>Governor's Mansion 9-11</p>	<p>7</p> <p>Demo Garden 8:00 AM</p>	<p>8</p>	<p>9</p> <p>ACMGA meeting 9 AM</p> <p>Work day at Prattvillage-</p> <p>Lunch at Fat Boys</p>	<p>10</p>	<p>11</p> <p>Lanark Flora and Fauna Art Day</p>
<p>12</p>	<p>13</p> <p>Governor's Mansion 9-11</p>	<p>14</p> <p>Demo Garden 8:00 AM</p>	<p>15</p>	<p>16</p> <p><u>Prattvillage</u> 9:00 AM</p>	<p>17</p>	<p>18</p>
<p>19</p>	<p>20</p> <p>Governor's Mansion 9-11</p>	<p>21</p> <p>Demo Garden 8:00 AM</p>	<p>22</p>	<p>23</p> <p><u>Prattvillage</u> 9:00 AM</p>	<p>24</p> <p>Plant Sale Set up day</p>	<p>25</p> <p>Plant Sale</p>
<p><b>Plant Sale Work Week</b></p>						
<p>26</p>	<p>27</p> <p>Governor's Mansion 9-11</p>	<p>28</p> <p>Demo Garden 8:00 AM</p>	<p>29</p>	<p>30</p> <p><u>Prattvillage</u> 9:00 AM</p>		

# May 2015

Sun      Mon      Tue      Wed      Thu      Fri      Sat

					1 ACMGA Board Meeting	2
3	4	5  Cinco de mayo AMGA state Bd meeting, Clanton Jim Scott Tour	6	7 Prattville 9:00 AM Lunch and Learn-Hydrangeas	8 height="1" width="1" border="0"	9
10 Happy Mother's Day	11	12 Demo Garden 8:00 AM	13	14 Prattville 9:00 AM ACMGA meeting Baptist church 6 PM	15	16 Armed Forces Day 
17	18	19 Demo Garden 8:00 AM	20	21 Prattville 9:00 AM	22	23
24	25 Memorial Day 	26 Demo Garden 8:00 AM	27	28 Prattville 9:00 AM	29 Learn about composting Day 	30
31						

# What's Bugging You



Can You Identify the above insect?  
Beneficial or Destructive

(Answer is on the Next Page)



By Mallory Kelley  
Regional Extension Agent  
Home Grounds, Gardens, Home Pests

### **“The Carpenter Bees are Back”**

It is officially the sign of spring, the presence of Carpenter Bees hovering around wooden structures, most likely the eaves of your house. These carpenter bees are searching for mates and favorable sites to construct their nests. Male carpenter bees are quite aggressive, often hovering in front of people who are around the nests, but are harmless as they do not have the ability to sting. Female carpenter bees can inflict a painful sting but seldom will unless they are handled or pestered.

Carpenter bees are very large and look a lot like bumble bees, but the upper surface of their abdomen is bare and shiny black; bumble bees have a hairy abdomen with at least some yellow markings and are overall a little smaller than the carpenter bee.

Despite their similar appearance, the nesting habits of the two types of bees are quite different. Bumble bees usually nest in the ground whereas carpenter bees tunnel into wood to lay their eggs. Bare, unpainted or weathered softwoods are preferred, especially redwood, cedar, cypress and pine. Painted or pressure-treated wood is much less susceptible to attack. Common nesting sites include eaves, window trim, fascia boards, siding, wooden shakes, decks and outdoor wooden furniture.

Carpenter bees overwinter as adults in wood within abandoned nest tunnels and emerge in the spring, usually in April. After mating, this is where the trouble begins. The fertilized females then begin to excavate tunnels in wood and lay their eggs within a series of small cells. The female places a ball of pollen in each cell to feed the larvae which then emerge as adults in late summer.

The entrance hole and tunnels are perfectly round and about the diameter of your finger. Coarse sawdust the color of fresh cut wood will often be present beneath the entry hole. Female carpenter bees may excavate new tunnels for egg-laying, or enlarge and reuse old ones and the extent of damaged wood that has been used for nesting year after year may be considerable.

### **Control**

Carpenter bees prefer to attack wood which is bare, weathered and unpainted. Therefore, the best way to deter the bees is to paint all exposed wood surfaces, especially those which have a history of being attacked. Wood stains and preservatives are less reliable than painting, but will provide some degree of repellent versus bare wood.

If painting the wood structure is not an option, liquid sprays of carbaryl (Sevin) or a synthetic pyrethroid (e.g., permethrin or cyfluthrin) can be applied as a preventive to wood surfaces. The effectiveness of these insecticides are often only 1-2 weeks before they need to be reapplied. Tunnels which have already been excavated are best treated by puffing an insecticidal dust such as Sevin Dust into the nest opening. Aerosol sprays labeled for wasp or bee control also are effective. Leave the hole open for a few days after treatment to allow the bees to contact and distribute the insecticide throughout the nest galleries. Then plug the entrance hole with carpenter's glue, or wood putty. This will protect against future utilization of the old nesting tunnels and reduce the chances of wood decay.

Although carpenter bees are less aggressive than wasps, female bees protecting their nests will sting. Treatment is best performed at night when the bees are less active, or while wearing protective clothing.

March through August the Alabama Cooperative Extension System offers a Gardening Helpline for the general public each Monday through Thursday from 9:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. This helpline is operated by Master Gardener Volunteers who use research based information to best answer all of your gardening questions. **If you've got home garden questions, we've got answers!**

## Call 1-877-252-GROW (4769)

Interested in learning more about seasonal gardening topics? Please join us for the FREE Master Gardener Lunch and Learn Program in your area EVERY MONTH from 12:00-1:00, Bring a Sack Lunch, Drinks Provided:

### April and May's Topics and locations:

**Montgomery:** The 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of EVERY month, Armory Learning Arts Center on Madison Ave. For more information: (334)270-4133

**Topic: April: Creative Twists on Container Gardening**  
**May: Beneficial Pollinators and Native Bee's**

**Wetumpka:** The 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of EVERY month, Elmore Co. Extension Office, 340 Queen Ann Road For more information: (334)567-6301

**Topic: April: Wonders of Herbs**  
**May: Luscious Lawns**

**Prattville:** The 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday of EVERY month, Christ Lutheran Church, 2175 Cobbs Ford Road For more information: (334)361-7273

**Topic: April: Growing Backyard Tomatoes**  
**May: Hydrangeas**



## Garden Club Talk

Paula Seamon and JC Scofield spoke to the Yaupon Garden club on March 17th on creating fairy gardens. They taught the club members how to create and make these magical gardens.

# Hummingbird Award for March



The Hummingbird Award for the month of March went to Anthony Yarbrough (Pictured on the left). He has done an outstanding job in being the editor of our newsletter, Dirty Digs, and volunteers for many other projects.. Hats off for a job well done.



# Alabama Gardener's Calendar

## April

### Fruits and Nuts

- Season for strawberry planting continues.
- Start spray program for all fruits.
- Plant raspberries and blackberries and continue budding apples and peaches.

### Shrubs

- Prune spring flowering shrubs after flowering.
- Fertilize azaleas and camellias.
- When new growth is half completed, spray all shrubs with a fungicide.

### Lawns

- Planting continues.
- New lawns may need supplementary watering.
- Also, fertilize at 3- to 6-week intervals.
- Keep ryegrass cut low, particularly if overplanted on bermuda lawns.

### Roses

- Watch for insects and diseases.
- Keep old flower heads removed.
- Plant container-grown plants from nurseries or garden centers.

### Annuals and Perennials

- Plant early started annuals or bedding plants from nurseries or garden centers.
- Divide mums or root cuttings. Dig and divide dahlias.

### Bulbs

- Plant gladiolus, fancy-leaved caladiums, milk and wine lilies, and ginger and gloriosa lilies.
- Feed bearded iris with superphosphate and spray for borers.
- Avoid cutting foliage of narcissus or other bulbs until it has turned brown naturally.

### Miscellaneous

- Spray camellias, hollies, etc., for scale insects.
- Carefully water new plantings of shrubs and trees.
- Pinching out tips of new shoots promotes more compact shrubs.

### Vegetable Seed

- Plant tender vegetables such as beans, corn, squash, melons, and cucumbers.
- Plant heat-loving vegetables in lower south Alabama.

### Vegetable Plants

- Plant tomatoes, peppers, eggplants, sweet potatoes, and parsley

# March Meeting Speaker



Mike Lamar gave an awesome talk on purple martins at our March monthly meeting. He gave tips on martin houses and how to attract them to your yard.

He also demonstrated the use of gourds for making martin housing.

## Important Announcements

**From Pam Olson:** Here's your monthly reminder to bring items for the "Cultivating Our Community" project with you to the next meeting. Pam Olson usually collects them. If she's not at the meeting, Nancy Waggoner steps in. This is our sister project to the Prattville-Autauga Demonstration Garden. Produce from the garden supplies fresh vegetables to AICC, Autauga Interfaith Care Center – our county's food bank. But people who need a temporary helping hand have many needs in addition to food. Cleaning products, both personal and for the home, can take a big bite out of one's wallet yet are essential for one's dignity. We, as individual members, help supply the non-food items. AICC is in constant need of: **adult toothbrushes, toothpaste, shampoo, deodorant, dish detergent, laundry detergent, and household cleaners.** Smaller-sized store brand cleaning products are better because your dollars put products into more bags at the center. Sample sizes of any of the items are okay, too. Anything is appreciated! As with all our MG projects, participation is optional.

Pam Olson reported that last year we donated 145 pounds of personal care and cleaning products (and most of the personal care items don't weigh very much) in addition to almost 20 cosmetic bags to be used in gift baskets for ladies, a school backpack, and a set of sheets,

**2014 was our best year ever.**

**We started off 2015 with a bang --**

### **PALS Beautification Award**

Anytime you see a yard that you would like to nominate for this award and do not have a nomination form, please get the information to me, Rose McCauley, by regular mail, email or drop it by my home. Include the following:

Your name and contact information

Category - Private House, Business, School, Government

Nominee's Name (if you have it)

Nominee's Address

Nominee's Phone Number (if you have it)

Directions

Reasons for Nomination

If you have any questions, please let me know.

Rose McCauley

## Governor's Mansion

If you are looking for a rewarding gardening project, please consider joining us for workdays at the Governor's Mansion. We meet every Monday 8:00-11:00 a.m. during the summer months to beat the heat, and--with all the beautiful blooming plants--it is a lovely place to work. Add to that the pleasant company of your fellow laborers, and I believe you'll find it a truly enjoyable way to earn volunteer hours. Please call Jane McCarthy (334-221-9936) by noon the Friday prior to any workday to be put on the list for access to the grounds. Bring your favorite tools.





Don Armstrong giving the Lunch and learn talk on propagating plants on March 5th at Christ Lutheran Church. Please refer to the guest article in this newsletter for information that was presented at the Lunch and Learn. There were over 30 participants that attended this event and all were greatly impressed with Don's presentation.

# **Autauga County Master Gardeners Association**

## **JOIN US FOR LUNCH & LEARN 2015**



**THE 1<sup>ST</sup> THURSDAY OF EVERY MONTH**

**12:00-1:00 P.M.**

**FREE PROGRAMS**

**Christ Lutheran Church, 2175 Cobbs Ford Road, Prattville 36066**

- |                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| <b>FEBRUARY 5</b>  | <b>MONTHLY GARDEN TASKS AT A GLANCE</b> |
| <b>MARCH 5</b>     | <b>MULTIPLYING YOUR PLANTS</b>          |
| <b>APRIL 2</b>     | <b>BACKYARD TOMATOES</b>                |
| <b>MAY 7</b>       | <b>HYDRANGEAS</b>                       |
| <b>JUNE 4</b>      | <b>TREE ID</b>                          |
| <b>JULY 2</b>      | <b>YEAR ROUND COLOR</b>                 |
| <b>AUGUST 6</b>    | <b>BULBS</b>                            |
| <b>SEPTEMBER 3</b> | <b>GARDEN DESIGN</b>                    |
| <b>OCTOBER 1</b>   | <b>CACTI AND OTHER SUCCULENTS</b>       |
| <b>NOVEMBER 5</b>  | <b>HOLIDAY DECORATING</b>               |



**For more information contact the Autauga County Extension Office. (334) 361-7273**

**BRING A SACK LUNCH. DRINKS PROVIDED.**



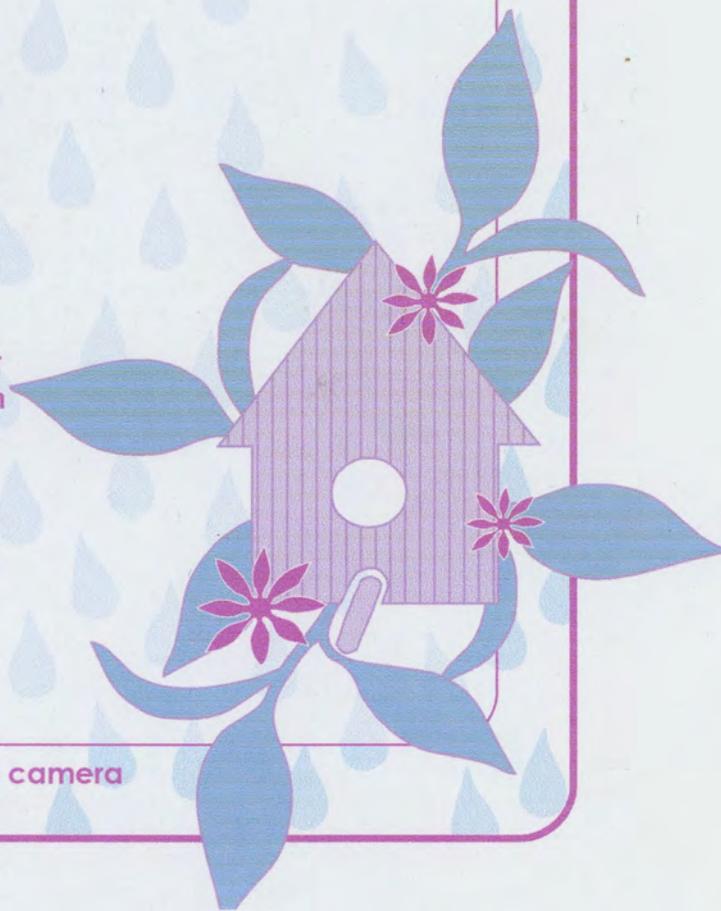
# JIM SCOTT TOUR

May 5, 10 AM

CARPOOL AT 1<sup>ST</sup> BAPTIST CHURCH PARKING LOT AT 8:30

Directions: Hwy. 14 through Prattville, Millbrook and Wetumpka until you get to Hwy. 229. Turn left onto 229 and follow until you get to Hwy. 50 at Red Hill. Turn right onto 50 and follow until you see Martin Dam. Just past the dam, turn left onto Overlook Drive. Follow that to the top of the hill and look for Cherokee Ridge Alpine Trail on the left (there's a small parking lot at the trailhead) just past that turn left onto Ghost Hollow Road. This is a dirt road, take it slow. Keep going straight until you see a sign that says Gate 1. The gate will be open but park up on the road and walk down. You'll see a brown structure "the barn" and we will meet there.

Wear comfy shoes and bring your camera and a sack lunch!



# Autauga County Master Gardeners Association

## Annual Plant Sale

Saturday, April 25, 2015

8:00 a.m. until Noon

Prattvillage Garden

- ◆ *Plants of all types available*
- ◆ *pH Soil Testing*
- ◆ *Gardening Items*
- ◆ *Yard Art*



For more information, contact the  
Autauga County Extension Office  
334.361.7273



Alabama Cooperative Extension System (Alabama A&M University and Auburn University) is committed to affirmative action, equal opportunity, and the diversity of its workforce. Educational programs of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System serve all people regardless of race, color, age, sex, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or national origin.

[www.aces.edu](http://www.aces.edu)

# The AMGA 2015 Conference in Cullman



We had so much fun. Someone asked, what did you learn. The one thing that stuck with me from the excellent speakers we had was: "If you want show in your yard, plant fewer varieties but more of each variety." We truly had outstanding speakers. Don't miss the next one in Dothan in May.



# Outstanding Newsletter Award for 2014



At the AMGA Conference, the Autauga County Master Gardener Association was awarded the Most Outstanding Newsletter for 2014 for the associations that have less than 60 members. I truly believe this is our award and not just mine. Many of you contribute to the newsletter each month. It was truly a humbling experience to accept this award on behalf of all of you in our association.

Tid Bits:

The Birmingham Fern Society Lecture Series - May 20, 2015 4:30 pm Naud Burnett, CEO of Casa Flora, Dallas Well known Landscape Architect will speak on "Propagation of Ferns" 6:00 pm Dr Eddie Watkins, associate professor of Biology at Colgate University and a native of Alabama will speak on "Searching the World for Ferns". He is currently President of the American Fern Society. There will be refreshments between the Lectures May 21, 2015. Also, The Birmingham Fern Society welcomes everyone to tour the Fern Glades at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens. We will meet on the Blount Plaza at 10:00am. Please bring a picnic lunch. For more information, please contact Bruce Steele at [bstee0324@att.net](mailto:bstee0324@att.net).

A homeowner called the helpline and said, "I got 20 chickens and planted them feet first and they all died. So I got twenty more and planted them head first and they all died." "The helpline person said I will have to contact Auburn and I will get back to you." Later on, the helpline person called the home owner and stated that Auburn advised for the homeowner to submit a soil sample. Sorry, I just couldn't help myself.

On a more serious note, some of you have asked about my health, well I did the Hokey Pokey and turned myself around.

I promise, no more.

# Future Events Schedule

ACMGA Pant Sale—April 25,2015

Jim Scott Tour on May 5th (see flier)

Youngs Plant Farm tour in June

## Plant Sale

Is Saturday the 25th at Prattvillage Garden. This is a reminder that the Plant Sale is our only fund raiser for the year and the amount we raise has a big impact on what we are able to do. Please take this seriously and lets everyone contribute the week of the 25th to make this a success. We will need lots of plants and items for the store. Please pay attention to Rose McCauley's emails this week. I have full confidence that all of you will help. Interns that want hours can really get them this week. I know that Friday will be a full day.

## Sad News

We have two members that have recently lost loved ones. Lee Thomas' wife, Henrietta, passed away around March 12th, and Billie Willis' son, David, passed away around March 27th. Please keep them and their families in your prayers.



Anthony Yarbrough, Editor  
Email: [ayarb@knology.net](mailto:ayarb@knology.net)