



# DIRTY DIGS



Autauga County Master Gardeners Association

December 2014

*ENTERTAIN, EDUCATE, ELEVATE*

**Next Meeting  
December 11,  
2014**

**Meeting Location:  
Extension Center**

**Guest Article: Submitted by Carolyn Gray**

## Herbs



When I first started with growing herbs, I really didn't know much about them. I decided to get a few herbs I had heard about or seen in recipes in the cookbooks. I have enjoyed learning about the different herbs and I am still learning. I found out growing your own fresh herbs has a much better flavor than any you can find in the grocery stores.

Another benefit is an herb you grow will be readily or seasonally available, while you can't find it at the local market. If you have children or grandchildren this is a good way to get them involved in gardening. They can learn a lot about the natural world by growing herbs.

Selecting your herbs is deciding what you want to grow. For beginners, I recommend basil, chives, mint, dill, parsley,

oregano and rosemary. For a little more adventure, try lemon balm, anise, and chamomile. Your choice should be purely personal.

Mostly grow the herbs you like to cook with. You will not need a large quantity of any one herb because you just need a few snips to flavor a meal.

In addition to culinary herbs, aloe vera is a great one to plant. When its leaves are sliced lengthwise it is perfect for relieving pains of cuts and burns.

Any type of container is suitable for herbs, as long as it has drainage holes. A terra cotta pot is great if you will water frequently as the pot dries out quickly in hot or windy weather. A plastic container would be a better choice if you don't water often.

A strawberry pot is perfect for growing herbs. I suggest placing a coffee filter in the bottom of a pot before filling it with potting soil. It will allow the water to drain while holding the soil in place. Most herbs do well in good, preferably organic, potting soil but don't need to be fertilized. Put herbs in sun.

Herbs in containers (miniature gardens) can be fragrant centerpieces during a meal. Encourage guests to pinch the

leaves to release their scents or pluck some to add to their food or drink. An urn with holes in the bottom followed by a layer of potting soil is an excellent choice. Plant your herbs in a symmetrical design, taking into consideration color, size, flavor, and scent. Add more potting soil to cover roots. Add a layer of pea gravel or grit to the surface to help retain moisture and deter weeds.

There are so many ways you can use herbs. You can add herbs to your flower garden. They add a

great addition to your flower blooms. Let me encourage you to plant a herb and see how you can enjoy and use them in different ways.



## What's Bugging You?



Do You know the name of this critter? Is it beneficial  
or  
destructive or both?

Answer and information can be found on Page 5

# December 2014

Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat

	<b>1</b> <i>Governor's Mansion 8-11</i>	<b>2</b> <i>Demo Garden 8:00 AM</i>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b> <i>Prattvillage 7:30 AM</i>	<b>5</b> <i>ACMGA bd meet</i>	<b>6</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>8</b> <i>Governor's Mansion 8-11</i>	<b>9</b> <i>Demo Garden 8:00 AM</i>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b> Christmas <i>Luncheon</i> 	<b>12</b> <i>Prattvillage Garden— install edgers</i>	<b>13</b>
<b>14</b>	<b>15</b> <i>Governor's Mansion 8-11</i>	<b>16</b> <i>Demo Garden 8:00 AM</i>	<b>17</b> <i>Happy Hanukkah</i> 	<b>18</b> <i>Prattvillage 7:30 AM</i>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>21</b> Winter Begins 	<b>22</b> <i>Governor's Mansion 8-11</i>	<b>23</b> <i>Demo Garden 8:00 AM</i>	<b>24</b> 	<b>25</b> 		<b>27</b>
<b>28</b>	<b>29</b> <i>Governor's Mansion 8-11</i>	<b>30</b> <i>Demo Garden 8:00 AM</i>	<b>31</b> 			

# January 2015

Sun      Mon      Tue      Wed      Thu      Fri      Sat

				1 	2 ACMGAoBd Meeting TBD	3
4	5 Governor's Mansion 8-11	6 Demo Garden <u>8:00 AM</u>	7	8 Prattvillage <u>7:30 AM</u> ACMGA Meeting—Planning 6PM FBC	9	10
11	12 Governor's Mansion 8-11	13 Demo Garden <u>8:00 AM</u>	14	15 Prattvillage <u>7:30 AM</u>	16	17
18	19 Governor's Mansion 8-11	20 Demo Garden <u>8:00 AM</u>	21	22 Prattvillage <u>7:30 AM</u>	23	24
25	26 Governor's Mansion 8-11	27 Demo Garden <u>8:00 AM</u>	28	29 Prattvillage <u>7:30 AM</u>	30	31

# What's Bugging You Answer



This is a very dangerous bug and you should be on your highest guard not to encounter this horrible creature. Its main target is human beings who like to play in the dirt (soil). This is called the gardening bug. It usually hits around the first week of January but is very weather dependent.

With the onset of warm weather the first part of December, the first symptoms may not appear till a little later. But I assure you cold weather is on the way which will cause a high proliferation of this beast. First, what are the symptoms of the gardening bug? Some time in January you will get an insatiable desire to look through the latest garden supply and seed catalogue. Next you will find yourself ordering all kinds of seeds and gardening equipment. You probably will order way more seeds than you can use and you start worrying about a depleted bank account. Then, if weather turns warm in February, you will find yourself planting spring/summer veggies. Which will be followed by a severe cold snap in March killing everything you planted. (Thank goodness you ordered more seeds than you could use because you can now replant).

Hope you got a little chuckle out of this! And, my hope for you during this Christmas season is that you have all the peace and joy you can stand for not only you but your families. Just remember, the gardening calendars published by ACES for when to plant is there for a reason.

Merry Christmas from me and Happy New Year!





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

### Selecting a Locally Grown Christmas Tree

Can you believe Christmas is right around the corner? Next week many people will start putting up their Christmas trees. Here are some helpful tips and things to consider when purchasing a Christmas tree.

You often hear “Buy Fresh, Buy Local” and that not only goes for fruits and vegetables, but also Christmas trees. There are many advantages to buying an Alabama-grown Christmas tree instead of an artificial tree or a live tree grown in another state. Alabama has between 50 and 60 Christmas tree growers representing a \$3 million industry which helps the economy of Alabama, but there are also many other benefits to buying a local Christmas tree.

Buying a locally grown Christmas tree guarantees its freshness. From the standpoint of freshness, Alabama-grown trees have a distinct advantage as they are chosen and cut from the farm nearby. In contrast, many of the trees you purchase at grocery stores or other retail outlets --- typically firs, spruces and scotch pines were grown in another state and were likely cut weeks earlier which tells me they will be shedding their needles in my living room.

With an Alabama farm-grown tree, you’re also buying a unique experience. Choosing and cutting a tree from an Alabama farm guarantees you and your family the freshest trees that will last much longer and a Christmas memory that you will cherish for a lifetime.

So if you are heading out to a Christmas tree farm in Alabama, what type of trees will you find and what should you be looking for?

The most popular Alabama-grown tree is the Leyland cypress tree (widely known as the Southern Christmas tree), the Arizona cypress which is typically available in two varieties, ‘Blue Ice’ and ‘Carolina Sapphire’ and the Virginia pines.

The Leyland cypress has a natural color and, unlike many northern-grown varieties, it doesn’t shed after cutting. In fact, as long as it receives an adequate amount of water, Leyland cypress trees can last from Thanksgiving well past New Year’s.

A few people still prefer the red cedar, though one disadvantage is that they are extremely sticky compared with other varieties. Still, it remains the preferred tree among a small number of Alabamians who remember this very fragrant tree from childhood.

Leyland and Arizona cypress trees are considered especially safe for the home and are far less prone to drying than northern-grown trees such as firs and spruce. Fir and spruce trees are characterized by heavy sap which tends to clog after the tree is cut and prevents the uptake of water causing the tree to dry out much faster resulting in needle shed.

If you prefer not to cut down a tree only for a few weeks of decorations there are other alternatives. Christmas trees that either have been bagged in burlap or planted in a container have become a popular alternative for environmentally conscious consumers. It’s best to keep these trees away from heaters or warm areas in the home. Otherwise, the tree will have a harder time adapting to the colder conditions outside after planting. Also, avoid buying live firs and spruce trees as neither of these are adapted to Alabama’s warmer climate.

The Leyland and Arizona cypress make excellent additions to the landscape and are well-suited as screening plants. However, they grow to be very large trees, as high as 50 feet and should be planted at least 12 feet apart. For this reason, many homeowners would not find it practical to plant a live tree every year after Christmas.

Finally, if you do decide to go to the farm and cut that locally grown Christmas tree make sure you recycle it. Many communities throughout Alabama have established Christmas tree recycling programs. You should call your city hall for more details.

Source: Dr. Ken Tilt, Professor of Horticulture, Auburn University



## Hummingbird Award for November



The Hummingbird Award for the month of November went to Elsie Jones. She has done an outstanding job in facilitating and providing refreshments and decorations for the intern class. Hats off to Elsie for a job well done.

# Alabama Gardener's Calendar

## December

### Fruits and Nuts

- Plant young pecan and other deciduous fruit trees and grapes.
- Select budwood.
- Start dormant pruning of established fruits.
- Protect all young trees from rabbit damage by placing wire around the base of the tree.
- Put on dormant oil spays for scale.

### Shrubs

- Planting is still the main activity but delay in case of freezing weather.

### Lawns

- Control wild garlic, chickweed, *Poa annua*, dandelion, and other weeds.
- Read label on each package of weed killer used.

### Roses

- Add plants to rose garden.
- Mulch all plantings.

### Annuals and Perennials

- Plant hardy annual seed without delay. Have you tried violas?

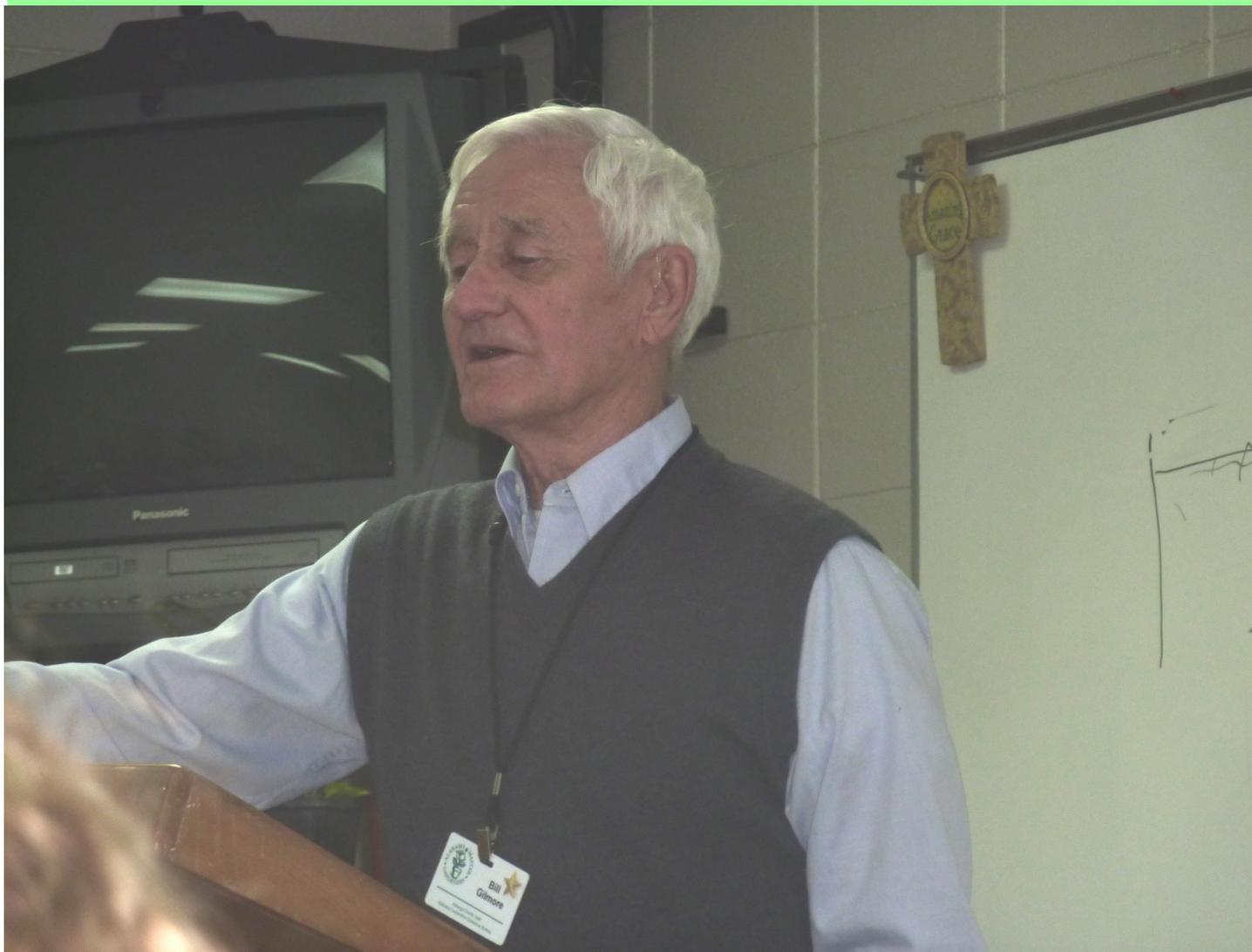
### Bulbs

- Continue spring bulb planting.

### Miscellaneous

- Shrubs, trees, and indoor plants make excellent gifts.

# November Monthly Meeting



Our own Master Gardener, Bill Gilmore, gave the program at the November monthly meeting at the First Baptist church in Prattville. He talked about growing and caring for muscadine grape vines and how to make wine from this delicious fruit.

## 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.

### New Item Requested for "Cultivating Our Community" Project

We have a new item to add to the other six we regularly collect for AICC – **adult toothbrushes**. The center has finally run out of the generous supply donated by a local dentist. Thank you for your generosity. AICC is always grateful for our donations.

### **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



## *Forget-me-nots*

By Pam Olson

### **Editing an Entry**

I was asked at the final Intern class to explain how to edit an entry on the service report website, so here's the explanation in print. Log in and click on the "Hours" tab as usual. You'll see the list of activities you've entered for the year. Move your cursor to the project title of the entry you want to edit. The project title color will change from blue to green, and a box with the words "Edit Entry" will appear. Click without moving the cursor. You want to click on the project title and not the Edit Entry box. You should now see the information you originally reported for the activity. Categories can be changed by clicking on the drop-down arrow in either category box and selecting a different one. To remove the category completely, click on the little dashes at the very top of either list of categories. They're just above "Drive Time" in the list of volunteer categories, and they're just above "Receive Training" in the educational hours list. Backspace over any numbers you want to change. When you're finished making changes or adding new data, be sure to click on "Submit" at the bottom of the screen.

### **How Does Autauga County Stack Up Against Other Associations?**

You can see for yourself on the service report website. Next time you log in to record hours, take an extra couple of minutes and click on "Vol Reports" to the right of the "Hours" tab. You'll be taken to the list of all your fellow Autauga Co. members along with the number of hours each one has reported this year. Just above the thin gray line, you'll see "Select Report." Click on "By County" and you'll see where we rank in the list of all local MG associations throughout Alabama, arranged according to total volunteer hours for the year. Click on 2013 to see where we finished last year. There's lots more information on the site. Start clicking and see what you find.

*Now's the time to make sure you've entered all your hours for the year, not just for the benefit of our county but for ACES and our remarkable agent, Mallory. Remember August's Forget-me-nots: "If it's not reported, it didn't happen."*

You know I'm always ready to help members enter their hours, so please email or call me: [polsonhome@charter.net](mailto:polsonhome@charter.net), 361-7030.

The year is ending and so is this series of articles. Have a Blessed Christmas Season and your best-ever gardening year in 2015!!!

Autauga County Master Gardeners Association  
Membership Form

Annual County membership dues for 2014 are \$10. State dues, are \$10 and optional. State dues entitle you to State membership and **Garden Pathways** newsletter. You can also receive state awards such as, Reach for the Stars. Please complete this form and return it to our Treasurer, **NO LATER THAN**

**OCT. 15<sup>th</sup> 2014.**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_ CELL \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_ DOB \_\_\_\_\_

(Only give email address if you wish to receive info via email) mm/dd

COUNTY OF TRAINING \_\_\_\_\_ YEAR OF GRAD \_\_\_\_\_

TYPE OF MEMBERSHIP:

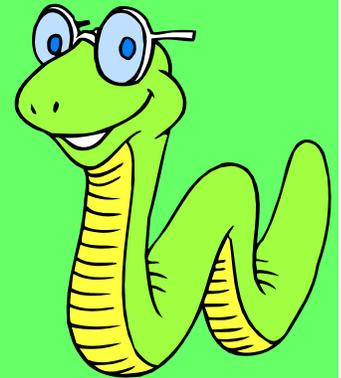
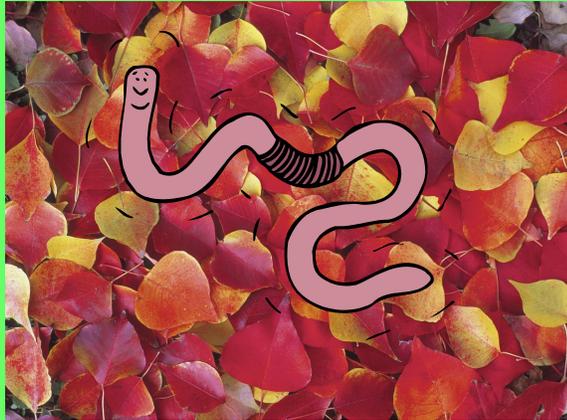
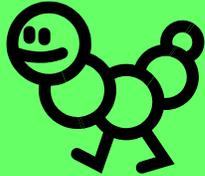
	Local Dues	State Dues
___ Active Member Local & State (includes graduating interns)	\$10	\$10
___ Active Member Local Only (includes graduating interns)	\$10	\$0
___ Active Member w/ current State Lifetime	\$10	\$0
___ Active member w/ new State Lifetime	\$10	\$100 (One-time fee)

\_\_\_ Yes, I am a dual member. County of primary membership \_\_\_\_\_

Make check payable to ACMGA. Mail or give to:

Tina Reed  
1936 Tara Dr.  
Prattville, AL 36066

On Wednesday, November 12, Anthony Yarbrough and Rose McCauley taught the ACMGA interns class in Autaugaville. Anthony, filling in for Paula Seamon, taught the class the basics of "Backyard Composting" and the benefits of recycling your yard and kitchen waste into "Black Gold". Rose taught the class the art of Vermicomposting or worm composting. She of course brought her working worms, to the delight of the intern class. Anthony and Rose enjoyed meeting these future Master Gardeners and they look forward to teaching "Vermicomposting" and "Backyard Composting" in the future.



## Working at the 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.

### Future Events Schedule

November 13: ACMGA Meeting will be at First Baptist Church and the presentation will be on wine making by Bill Gilmore.

Christmas Luncheon on December 11, 2014 at Autaugaville Extension Center

AMGA Convention in Cullman last week of March.

Jim Scott Tour in May and Youngs Plant Farm tour in June

Anthony Yarbrough, Editor  
Email: ayarb@knology.net

# 2014 in Pictures





## **ACMGA Board of Directors Positions 2015**

**Officer positions are in bold type and must be voted on by membership.**

**President – Rose McCauley**

**Vice President – Ann Fuller**

**Secretary – Kathryn Whaley**

**Treasurer – Deb Hill**

Database Manager – Leanne Wadsworth

Helpline Coordinator – Glenda Armstrong

Newsletter Editor – Anthony Yarbrough

Volunteer Hours Coordinator – Pam Olson

Historian – Carroll Bonifay

Advisory Council Rep. – 1<sup>st</sup> half yr.: Pam Olson, 2<sup>nd</sup> half yr.: Paula Seamon

Immediate Past President – Rose McCauley

Non-board contacts:

Prattville-Autauga Demonstration Garden – \*\*\*\*\*will be finalized Tuesday\*\*\*\*\*

Prattvillage Garden – Linda Parrish

Other volunteer positions:

Directory/Handbook – Anthony Yarbrough

Telephone Committee chair – Helen Allen

Advisory Council Alternate Rep. – 1<sup>st</sup> half: Paula Seamon, 2<sup>nd</sup> half: Pam Olson

Assistant to Helpline Coordinator – Anthony Yarbrough

Assistant to Historian – Paula Seamon

Prattvillage Garden Committee – Shari McCandless

Refreshments – Jean Hare

Autauga Co. MGA quarterly articles for *Garden Pathways* – Nancy Waggoner

Farmers' Market booth – Lynn Yarbrough

2014 Nominating Committee

Paula Seamon, Anthony Yarbrough

Pam Olson

REPORT FROM AMGA ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING

November 5, 2014

The points below are those of more concern to our local association.

If you'd like a copy of the secretary's minutes, contact me.

Please read with care the sections in bold type..

**It's official! Alabama is hosting the 2018 Southern Regional MG conference.** This will take the place of a state conference that year and will be a coordinated effort among local associations statewide. Work will begin soon.

AMGA will donate \$10,000 to set up a second scholarship endowment fund. Current fund is for Auburn U. horticulture undergraduates. Second fund will be for graduate students and will require return service to the MG program.

**Cost of registration for the 2015 and 2016 state conferences will be all inclusive due to the present ability of AMGA to underwrite some conference expenses.** Cost will increase from the previous \$100 to \$125, but it will include both the banquet and the first-night social. This will save \$45, compared with last year's registration costs. Cost of optional workshops and commemorative T-shirt not included.

**2015 state conference will offer a round table discussion on publicity** by Andria Cummings, who was a career journalist. I know Andria through the Advisory Council, and she's full of good ideas and enthusiasm. She plans to include ways to successfully advertise MG classes.

**Conference dates: March 23-25, Tuesday through Thursday. Location is Cullman and, as always, registration is open to the public.**

Reminder from state Membership Chair, John Baker – dues amount and number of members reported on membership/dues-tracker database should match up.

Ona Garwood, state newsletter editor, added that anyone not listed on membership side of database will not receive paper copy of winter *Garden Pathways*, which will contain conference registration info.

Beginning next year, AMGA will give two newsletter awards instead of one, based on number of members in an association. Small association = less than or equal to 60. Large association = greater than 60.

**Chilton Co. MGA is sponsoring a Christmas tour. Contact the Chilton Co. Extension office if interested in purchasing tickets: 205-280-6268.**

Chilton Co. MGA is looking for someone from another association to audit its books. Contact me if interested and I'll put you in touch with the association's AC rep.

– Submitted by Pam Olson, AC Rep., November 11, 2014

# Miscellaneous

Don't forget Christmas Luncheon (potluck) on December 11 at Extension Center. And don't forget you need to pay dues and sign up if you haven't already and are tardy..

Overheard at a Master Gardener Booth—a farmer came up to me and said that he had decided to raise some chickens. He planted them feet first and they died. So he got some more and planted them head first and they died. He called the ACES hotline and they replied they would contact Auburn. He contacted Auburn and even sent a couple of the dead chickens. Auburn replied, please submit soil sample. I'm sorry, I know I just ruined your day with this joke.



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