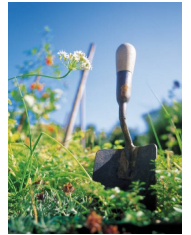


DIRTY DIGS



Autauga County Master Gardeners Association

July 2014

ENTERTAIN, EDUCATE, ELEVATE

Next Meeting

July 10, 2014

Meeting Location:

First Baptist
Church

@6:00 PM

Guest Article: Submitted by Glenda Armstrong

SUNFLOWERS

**"Keep your face to the sunshine
and you cannot see the shadow.
It's what sunflowers do."
by Helen Keller**

We have a bumper crop of sunflowers this year, and we did not plant any of them! Feed the birds and let them do the planting. God knows where to plant the seeds.

All types of sunflower seeds originate from the common sunflower, *Helianthus annuus*, though there are many specialized and hybrid flower varieties that create different bloom size, stalk heights and seed yields. The seeds they produce are similar, and sunflower seeds are a universally popular birdseed. When compared to striped sunflower seeds, black oil seeds are meatier and have a higher oil content, giving birds more nutrition and calories in every bite. Black oil seeds also have thinner shells, making them easier for small birds to crack. The general nutritional components of black oil sunflower seed are: 28 percent fat, 25 percent fiber, 15 percent protein, calcium, B vitamins, vitamin E, and potassium. This makes black oil sunflower seed a valuable part of any backyard bird's diet.



We use black oil sunflower seeds in our bird feeders which are just outside our kitchen windows. Sunflower seeds are best offered in hopper, platform or tray feeders. Tube feeders with large holes also work. Black oil sunflower seeds can be fed as whole seeds. Birds will crack the hulls to get at the nutritious meat. The local birds such as cardinals, wrens, doves, and titmice love the seeds. The birds crack the seeds and throw the hulls on the ground below the feeders along with uncracked seeds.

The only mess from the hulls will be the occasional spilled seeds. Ground feeding birds love this! Many birders opt for hulled sunflower seeds or sunflower chips rather than whole seeds.

Sunflower hulls on the ground will prohibit other plants and weeds from germinating. This can be both good and bad. Bad if certain plants you want under the feeders won't grow. Good if you like the "clean" look of hulls on the ground.

The seeds on the ground, after warm weather and some rain, sprout and grow into a lovely sunflower garden. Some of our

stalks are over 10 feet tall. Some stalks have a single large bloom at the top. Others have smaller blooms coming out all the way up the stalk. These plants are very sturdy and do not need staking. In spite of the strong winds we have had during storms this spring, none of the plants have blown over. We have volunteer zinnias come up beneath the sunflower stalks (one of the few that does

germinate because of the hulls.) The color they add is a nice touch to our sunflower garden.

We will leave the plants until after frost because the birds will feed on the sunflower blooms. They are especially popular after the seed heads dry. Another thing we do for the birds is leave the feeders out all winter. This helps the migrating birds find food easier during their long journeys. We have had blue buntings, grosbeaks, grackles, bushtits, and purple and yellow finches feed at our feeders. We also had a “stray” parakeet this winter. Don’t know if she was wild or an escapee.

Sunflower seeds are the easiest type of birdseed to grow. You can plant seeds directly from your birdseed supply or purchase different varieties of sunflower seeds. Roasted seeds that are meant for human consumption will not germinate and should not be used to try to grow birdseed.

Plant the seeds 1-2 inches deep and 8-12 inches apart in loose soil and full sun. For the best results, plant sunflower seeds only when the spring is warm and all danger of frost is past. Stagger plantings over several weeks to allow plants to mature at different times to ensure an ongoing supply of ready-to-eat birdseed. Sunflowers can be planted in all types of soil, and supplemental fertilization is not necessary – in fact, too much fertilization can decrease the seed yield by increasing the height of the stalks and the leaf growth. Water the seeds daily (twice daily in very hot or dry climates) until the young plants are well established, then water thoroughly every other day.

So, when you plan your flower garden don’t forget the sunflower (or feed the birds and they will plant them for you.) Remember this when you consider the sunflower: pansies and violas make you smile, roses soothe your emotions, lavender awakens your senses, and sunflowers do it all and brighten your day, too.



Glenda Armstrong



July 2014

:Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat

		1	2	3		5 <i>Farmer's Market</i>
6	7	8 <i>Demo Garden <u>8:00 AM</u></i>	9 <i>Helpline</i>	10 <i>Prattville <u>7:30 AM</u> ACMGA meeting <u>FBC 6-PM</u></i>	11	12 <i>Farmer's Market</i>
13	14	15 <i>Demo Garden <u>8:00 AM</u></i>	16 <i>Helpline</i>	17 <i>Prattville <u>7:30 AM</u></i>	18	19 <i>Farmer's Market</i>
20 <i>National County Agent's Confer- ence in Mobile Al</i>	21	22 <i>Demo Garden <u>8:00AM</u></i>	23 <i>Helpline</i>	24 <i>Prattville <u>7:30 AM</u></i>	25	26 <i>Farmer's Market</i>
27	28	29 <i>Demo Garden <u>8:00AM</u></i>	30 <i>Helpline</i>	31 <i>Prattville <u>7:30 AM</u></i>		



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

Tips to Keep your Tomato Plants Healthy

The tomato is by far the most popular plant in the vegetable garden, but it can also be the most problematic. There are so many things to watch for when growing tomatoes to insure you have a healthy crop. I hope these tips below will help keep your plants healthy the further we go into summer.

Start with drip irrigation or hand watering only at the surface of the soil to avoid splashing. Then prune all lower limbs off the tomatoes that are touching the soil and apply mulch. Mulching your tomatoes keeps the plants moisture level consistent and will help prevent blossom end rot. Mulching helps control weeds where insects like to overwinter and eliminates their competition for the fertilizer you have applied. Mulch also creates a barrier between the plant leaves and the soil to help control many of the fungal problems that come from the surface of the ground.

Remove yellow and brown spotted leaves as soon as they appear and if not already, start a fungicide application to prevent "Early Blight." No tomato grower can avoid this problem so apply the PREVENTATIVE fungicide before the tomatoes get the fungus. Products with the active ingredients: Chlorothalonil, mancozeb or copper will control Early Blight.

Scout daily for insects. Go out and inspect for armyworms, fruit worms, hornworms along with stinkbugs. (The main insect problems on tomatoes). Products that contain *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) will work when the WORMS are young or use products containing carbaryl if the worms are larger. Another insecticide that will control stinkbugs and some of the other pests you may find is bifenthrin. Don't wait until your plant has no more leaves before you start your search for the hornworm. Scout today cause the plant may not be there tomorrow!!!!

Weather challenges, garden insects, viral, fungal and bacterial problems, and disorders are all challenges we face with growing our own backyard tomatoes. Like I said, they are the most popular vegetable/fruit to grow, but also the most problematic. If you have more questions on what may be affecting your tomato plants and what you can do to stop it. Please call our Master Gardener Helpline at 1-877-ALAGROW (252-4769).

Also there will be a Master Gardener Course offered in Autauga County on Wednesdays and Elmore County on Thursdays 9-2:00 starting the first week in September. If you would like more information or would like to apply please call the county extension office.



Alabama A&M and Auburn Universities

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Autaugaville, AL 36003
Telephone: (334) 361-7273
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For Immediate Release

Beat the Heat Protect Yourself with Natural Sunscreen

Nothing is better on a hot summer day than a garden, fresh tomato sandwich or a sweet, refreshing slice of watermelon. Now, researchers are promoting the consumption of these foods as a means to protect ourselves from sun damage. Studies in the United States and Britain, conducted on both animals and humans, have reached the same conclusion that there is a secret ingredient in certain foods that can reduce skin damage and the aging effects of harmful sun rays. That ingredient is a super antioxidant known as lycopene. It is the red pigment found in tomatoes, watermelon, pink grapefruit, apricots, red oranges, and paprika.

Tomatoes are very high in lycopene, but watermelons have 40 percent more of the age defying chemical. Other foods, such as, broccoli, green leafy vegetables, bran, legumes, orange zest, green tea, pomegranate, and omega-3 fish contain other antioxidants that help protect the body against the sun's radiation and reduce inflammation caused by the sun. However, watermelon and tomatoes are the stand outs.

On the flip side, there are foods that can make your system more susceptible to sun sensitivity. Foods not to take on a picnic include carrots, celery, parsley and limes. Drinking margaritas beside the pool while munching on celery and carrot sticks would definitely be a bad idea.

As a precautionary note, please don't think that antioxidant foods can replace your sunscreen. Sun damage should not be taken lightly because it can lead to skin cancers. Lycopene foods should be thought of as added protection, not as a cure-all.

Submitted by
Valerie Conner
Regional Extension Agent
Human Nutrition, Diet, and Health

The article below was sent to the media and is included for your information.



Master Gardener Program Announcement

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

Would you like to become a Master Gardener? The Autauga County Extension office is in the process of recruiting a Master Gardener class for Fall 2014. Classes will begin Wednesday, September 3rd so get your applications in now. The deadline to register is Friday, August 15th, 2014.

The Master Gardener Program is a nationwide Extension Education Program designed for non-professionals with interest in increasing their gardening skills and helping others with the knowledge they have gained.

The program will consist of 12 weeks of class and hands on training. After completing the courses, the Master Gardener interns will be expected to give 10 hours of service to the Master Gardener Helpline and 40 hours of volunteer service to Extension and/or their communities.

Examples of volunteer efforts include: Talking to Garden Clubs, community garden projects, outdoor school projects, educational workshops, or assisting the local Cooperative Extension Office in some way.

The courses on gardening will be taught by specialist, county agents, and veteran Master Gardeners on subjects such as: Soils and Plant Nutrition, Plant Physiology, Plant Propagation, Care of Landscape Plants, Landscape Design, Lawn Care, Weed Identification, Vegetable Gardening, Herbs, Composting, and many more.

The Autauga County Master Gardener class will be held on Wednesdays from 9-2:00 at the Autauga County Extension Office in Autaugaville beginning September 3rd through December 3rd 2014.

****If a fall class does not make, your applications will be held for the potential of a spring 2015 course on the same day and time (February 11th- April 29th).**

For an application please contact the Autauga County Office at (334) 361-7273. The fee associated with this class is \$125.

WE NEED YOUR HELP

A class is being planned for this Fall. Please help us find interested people who might want to take the class and get them an application. As of now we need about eight more people to register to have a class.

Autauga County Fall Master Gardener Class

Important Facts to Know:

Application should be mailed to Kerry Smith (Autauga County Master Gardener Program):
101 Funchess Hall, Auburn University, Al 36849

The background check forms will be placed in a secure location until time for the class to begin.

Your application must be in no later than Friday August 15th to be considered for the class.

Auburn will provide the Autauga County Extension office with the names of applicants who passed the background check. Approximately 20 applications will be selected for the class. Those selected will receive an acceptance letter in the mail around August 20th.

The fee of \$125.00 is due after you are selected, but before the first class to secure your seat.

Classes will be held at the **Autauga County Extension office in Autaugaville** each **Wednesday from 9-2:00** starting **September 3rd through December 3rd**.

Graduation requirements for Master Gardener Certification include:

- 1. Class Attendance (missed classes must be made up)**
- 2. A passing grade on the weekly take-home tests**
- 3. 50 hours of Volunteer Service (10 of the 50 hours) are to be done at 2 Mandatory 5 hour sessions on the telephone helpline.**

Graduation will be held in August of 2015.

You are considered an Intern until graduation.

Deadline for applications: Friday, August 15th.

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 18

Lunch and Learn



Maria Pacheco-West, Lanark Grounds Specialist/Tour coordinator, presented our Lunch and Learn Program on June 3rd at Saint Joseph Catholic Church. She gave a very informative program on native ferns and the life cycle of ferns. Approximately 30 people were in attendance with about 12 people being non Master Gardeners.

Alabama Gardener's Calendar

July

Fruits and Nuts

- Protect figs and other ripening fruit from birds.

Shrubs

- Continue to root shrub cuttings until late in the month and mulch to keep soil moist.
- Remove faded blooms promptly from crape myrtle and other summer-blooming plants.

Lawns

- Watch for diseases.
- Mow regularly.
- Water as needed.

Roses

- Keep roses healthy and actively growing.
- Apply fertilizer.
- Wash off foliage to prevent burning if any fertilizer falls on plants.

Annuals and Perennials

- Water as needed to keep plants active.

Bulbs

- Iris and spider lilies may be planted late this month.

Miscellaneous

- Keeping flowers, shrubs, trees, and lawns healthy is the major task this month.
- This demands close observation for insects and diseases.
- Water.

Vegetable Seed

- Plant beans, field peas, rutabagas, squash, New Zealand spinach, and Irish potatoes.
- Plant cabbage, collards, broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, and celery for the fall crop.

Vegetable Plants

- Plant tomatoes in central and north Alabama.



All Bugs Good and Bad

2014 Webinar Series

Please join us for this webinar series for information you can use about good and bad insects. Webinars will be on the first Friday of each month at 2 p.m. Eastern.

- February 7** If Flowers are Restaurants to Bees, Then What Are Bees to Flowers?
Dr. John Skinner
- March 7** Straight Talk About Termites
Dr. Xing Ping Hu
- April 4** Get TickSmart: 10 Things to Know, 5 Things to Do
Dr. Thomas Mather
- May 2** Are Those Itsy Bitsy Spiders Good or Bad?
Dr. Nancy Hinkle
- June 6** Fire Ant Management
Elizabeth Brown
- August 1** Minimize Mosquito Problems
Molly Keck
- September 5** Kudzu Bug Takes Over the Southeastern U.S./Brown Marmorated Stinkbug—All Bad
Dr. Michael Toews/Dr. Tracy Leskey
- October 3** Alien Invasions, Zombies Under Foot, and Billions of Decapitated Fire Ants
Dr. Sanford Porter
- November 7** Where Have All the Honey Bees Gone? Hope for the Future
Dr. John Skinner



For more information on the series and how to connect to the webinars, visit: <http://www.extension.org/pages/70120>.



Brought to you by these eXtension Communities of Practice: Imported Fire Ants, Urban IPM, Bee Health, Invasive Species, & Gardens and Landscapes.



Citations for pictures: Jim Occi, BugPics, bugwood.org; Jerry A. Payne, USDA-ARS, bugwood.org; Nadeer Youssef, TN State Univ.; USDA ARS Photo Unit, USDA-ARS, bugwood.org; David Cappaert, Michigan State University, bugwood.org; Sturgis McKeever, Georgia Southern University, bugwood.org.

Hummingbird Award for June.



Shari McCandless was awarded the Hummingbird Award at the June meeting. Shari has been instrumental in getting the Prattvillage Garden in beautiful shape for the plant sale. She put in many hours and deserves a special thanks. Her contribution helped this year's plant sale be the best ever.





June Monthly Meeting

Our regular meeting was held on June 12, 2014 at the First Baptist Church. Patrick Cook, Regional Extension Agent gave the program during our monthly meeting. His area of expertise includes forestry, wildlife and natural resources. He is based out of Chilton County but he covers eight counties in central Alabama. His talk was on invasive plants and how to identify and control them.

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 Note

By Pam Olson

Converting Time to Decimals

Yes, I know! School's supposed to be out for the summer, but let's take a minute for a quick math lesson. Each year someone asks me to explain how to record parts of an hour as decimals when reporting service hours.

To keep things simple, we only break our time down into quarters of an hour – 15 min., 30 min., 45 min., or a full hour. Then we need to translate our quarter hours into decimals, because that's what the online system accepts. And whether you report your own hours or I do it for you, they have to be entered as decimals.

Think of a dollar which has four quarters (the kind you can spend). Each spendable quarter equals 25 cents. Two quarters equal 50 cents, and three quarters equal 75 cents. I know you all know this, but I'm leading up to the point that it's the same with decimals. One-fourth (or one quarter) of an hour is 0.25 hr. One-half (or two quarters) of an hour is 0.50 hr. Three-fourths (or three quarters) of an hour is 0.75 hr.

So, 15 min. is recorded as .25 hr. Likewise, 30 min. is recorded as .5 hr., and 45 min. is recorded as .75 hr. But what if you worked 3 hours and **20 minutes** potting up plants for the Plant Sale? Round to the nearest quarter hour (3 hr. 15 min.) and record your time as 3.25 hours. If instead you worked 3 hours and **40 minutes**, round your time to 3 hours and 45 minutes and record it as 3.75 hours.

Most of us have gotten in a hurry and recorded a half hour as .30 because we had 30 minutes in mind, but if you look at your yearly total at the bottom of your "Volunteer Hours Summary" screen and make sure it ends in .25, .50, .75, or is a whole number you'll know your entries are good.

You may be thinking you already know this in your sleep, but it's not second nature to everyone, at least not right from the start. What IS second nature to all of us is growing plants and sharing our time and talents with Extension and our community. What a great group to be part of!

Questions or comments? Email or call me: polsonhome@charter.net, 361-7030.

Happy Gardening!

Integrated Pest Management

Integrated Pest management, or IPM, is the practice of using a variety of methods to manage pests. When used correctly, pesticides can be a great tool for managing pests, but they should not be the first action to manage pest problems.

Remember to do a soil test of your field or garden. Lots of time and money goes into producing a crop, and many problems are related to nutritional deficiencies. All the information for soil testing can be found at your local Extension office.

Improving the soil by adding organic matter helps as well. You can buy organic matter or compost your own. Growing cover crops when the vegetable crop is finished is also a good idea. Growing crops such as cereal rye or crimson clover during the fall and winter season will keep the organic matter from washing away from the field or garden and adds additional organic matter as well. If you have room, summer cover crops such as sorghum-sudangrass or iron clay cowpea can be planted in the spring in areas of the field or garden that is not in production. Lots of information can be found on our web site in a publication called "Cover Crops for Alabama".

When choosing which varieties or cultivars to grow, try to plant ones with disease resistance when possible. Many diseases can be avoided just by planting disease resistant seeds. These seeds may cost a little more and can sometimes be hard to find, but may be beneficial if diseases can be avoided.

Do not forget about crop rotation. This means you need to be rotating vegetable families. For example, tomato, pepper, and eggplant are in the same family and should be planted together. Next season plant another vegetable family in that spot. The crop rotation information can be found on our web site by typing "crop rotation" in the search box.

Irrigation, mulching, and weed control are three practices that relieve stress on crops. This includes sanitation such as weed control around the edge of the field.

Trap cropping has great potential and is done on commercial farms in Alabama. This is a practice of planting a crop more desirable to certain insects, such as leaf footed plant bugs, than tomatoes. The insect goes to the trap crop and leaves the tomatoes alone. This information can be found on our web site as well.

My co-workers and I hang several insect traps around the state. I have been trapping for brown marmorated stink bugs in corn and spotted wing drosophila in blueberries and blackberries. These pests can cause damage on crops. We trap in order to know how the insects are spreading and let farmers know when to be scouting for them. I also have vegetable traps on farms to monitor for squash vine borers, fall army worms, beet army worms, corn ear worms, and others. These traps are checked and the insect counts are e-mailed to farmers.

Other IPM practices can include hand removal of insects such as caterpillars from tomatoes, or using barriers to keep cutworm from plants.

Your eyes are an important management tool. Do not forget to scout the field often and identify the pest correctly. We have a lot of insect and vegetable disease pictures on our web site at www.aces.edu or simply take a few pictures and send to your local Extension office. You can also send diseased plant and insect samples to our pathology lab at Auburn or Birmingham for an analysis. If you need information on the IPM practices mentioned in this article simply contact your local Extension office.

Chip East

Regional Extension Agent

Commercial Horticulture



What's Bugging You Answer from page 6

The answer is the Sawfly larvae and adult. There are many different species that attack specific plants. A friend of mine had a hibiscus bush almost completely defoliated by this insect. There is also a species that attacks pine trees.

Source is from the ACES website

New Apple App for iPhone and iPad called SOW. Just search on the App Store and download free App. It gives you information about what vegetables to plant today for your area and information about all vegetables in Alabama. I love this App. Remember the name is SOW.



Anthony Yarbrough,
Editor