



# MG SPROUTS

Volume 15, Issue 1

January 2016

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## ***Message From The President*** ***By Sheila Anne Webb***

Happy 2016 New Year! My very best wishes to you for a happy year.

The December Awards banquet closed out 2015. It was very successful, beautifully decorated, great food, and lots of fun. Kris Schmit received the red bandanna award for outstanding service this year. The following 13 interns were recognized as Master Gardeners: Linda McDaniel, Joan Alexander, Johnnie Alexander, Mary Banks, Ronald (Dale) Cox, Linda Emmanuel, Jennifer Gann, Myra Gann, Susan Gibbons, Cheryl Heines, Judy Shew, Edwin (Skeeter) Sims and Joe Trawick. They received their certificate of completion, Master Gardener name tags, \$25 check, and a Master Gardener t-shirt. We have a busy group, devoted to stewardship and learning. Thanks for all your time and contributions. In early winter we will award service pins.

For those attending the November business meeting, you may recall our discussion of including travel time for volunteer hours. Don't forget to add your time traveling from home to the site where you're volunteering. Jimmy Sloan shared his great humor as he suggested how to equalize time for those living far and those living close to the site; those closer should just drive slower. Love these moments of laughter. Hope we all have a fun-filled year and lots of laughter during 2016. (Thanks, Jimmy, for your cleverness.)

Winter provides a combined view of your garden and landscape. Imagine these as one large room with walls, ceiling and floor. Then, consider the basic structure and outline of the scene including form, shape, space and weight. Trees and shrubs become the backbone and dominant figures of the winter garden. Shapes stand out, especially for weeping trees, contorted Harry Louder's walking stick, curly willows, V-shaped Hackberry, columnar Lombardy Poplar, pyramidal Pin Oak, round White Oak, oval Sugar Maple, etc. The weight of thick branches, trunks, or delicate, light thinner branches or evergreens with deciduous trees create silhouettes and balance considerations. As you read seed and garden catalogues this winter, consider if you also need to plan to improve your winter garden and landscape design for next winter. Besides winter flowers, don't forget to also count berries as a color accent.

An aside: Harry Louder's Walking Stick also known as Contorted Filbert, *Corylus avellana*, "Contorta" refers to the Contorta cane that Sir Harry Louder used. He was a popular Scottish entertainer knighted by King George V for his entertainment of WW I and WW II troops.

You may also want to keep and grow your tropical poinsettia for the 2016 holiday season. Joel Poinsett brought the plant to the USA in 1825 from Mexico while serving as ambassador. Find a sunny window and keep watering as needed during the winter months. Sometime during March-May prune back to 6"-8" and water only when soil is completely dry. You can keep the plant outside when temperatures are above 50 degrees and fertilize every other week. In October you need to monitor light/dark periods. Use a cardboard box or black bag to create 12 hours of complete darkness and add 6 hours of sunlight for about 8-10 weeks. Continue to water and feed. Once blooms appear put in a sunny window and water only as needed.

The winter months for our MG meetings will include sharing of food. January will be soups and sides. As usual, our meetings will be the 2nd Wednesday of each month at noon with the Board meeting at 11. The speaker for our January 13th meeting will be Dr. Randy Haddock from The Cahaba River Society speaking on "Finding the Cahaba Lily." Please join us as we begin 2016.

Like us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/CalhounMGs>  
Follow us on Twitter at <https://www.twitter.com/CalhounMGs>



## MG Calendar

MG Board Meeting	11 a.m.-noon, January 13, Cane Creek Community Gardens
MG Business Meeting	12-1 p.m., January 13, Cane Creek Community Gardens

### From Our Advisor

The weather has not been so frightful this winter. I enjoyed a recent weekend of spring-like weather outdoors in short pants and a t-shirt. I even mowed some real grass along with the many winter weeds that have sprouted. For the first time ever, my white oaks and sawtooth oaks are almost bare in winter following lots of rain and a few windy days. Usually, spring buds have to push those old leaves off. Our plants and turf are not getting much of a rest. Many camellias look especially nice right now.

But, there will be a price to pay for this warm weather. Some plants may not meet their chilling needs. Insects may enjoy the warm weather along with us (I got a few mosquito bites yesterday). People will apply herbicides to actively growing grasses. Should the warm weather persist into January, it will be difficult to hold back spring fever for many.

We had a wonderful Master Gardener Awards dinner December 4. Thanks to the Master Gardeners who decorated for the event. Thanks to the successful MG interns for completing their commitments. Most of them easily completed their 50 hours. Thanks to the established Master Gardeners who served as mentors for the 2015 class. There was a great deal of success for us to reflect upon. Thank you all for your work!

In particular, I am thankful for our MG Board members. They have volunteered for some challenging work, and they have worked to make our organization stronger. They have listened to the concerns of members and others, and they have done their best to make good decisions. Board members are often hard to find, and I appreciate this group's ability to stay focused on local needs, become involved and informed beyond our County and shine a light on your good works. Thank you to them and to all of you who have let your light shine in 2015.

Best Wishes to all for a joyous Holiday Season!

**David West**

## Calculating Master Gardener Service Hours

### Intern Master Gardener Volunteers

- Any activity accepted or approved by the Local MG Coordinator counts as volunteer hours. An Extension agent may request some of the Interns' time be done on a specific project or type of volunteer service. Interns are required to participate in and report a minimum of 50 volunteer hours to accomplish certification (2009 new requirement).
- Attendance at extramural educational meetings counts as volunteer hours.
- **Travel time to and from a volunteer activity counts toward volunteer hours.**
- Participation in Alabama Master Gardener association meetings (local and/or state) counts as volunteer hours.
- **Drive time to monthly MG association meetings ONLY counts when you are involved with a committee or have a specific responsibility at the meeting**
- Interns do not need CEUs. They are in the training classes this year.

### Certified Master Gardener Volunteers

- Any activity accepted or approved by the Local MG Coordinator counts as volunteer hours. To encourage Certified MGs to stay active in the program, we request that they report half the volunteer hours required of Intern MGs. This is a minimum of 25 volunteer hours
- Time spent in Master Gardener Association business meetings counts as volunteer hours.
- Drive time to monthly AMG association meetings ONLY counts when you are involved with a committee or have a specific responsibility at the meeting.
- Travel time to and from ALL other educational or volunteer activities counts as volunteer time.
- Time spent listening to an educational speaker or topic should be counted as CEUs. Certificates stating the number of CEUs are strongly recommended when organizing such events. Otherwise, a description of the location, speaker, topic presented, and amount of time can be included in the service report.
- Labor in your garden or someone else's in preparation for a program is volunteer time.
- **Hours accumulated from one year to the next are called Lifetime Hours. The initial 50 hours earned upon certification are included in the Lifetime Hours total.**

From *AMGA Local Association Handbook*  
<http://alabamamg.org/amga-local-association-handbook-2/>

## **MG Notes**

Congratulations to our thirteen newly certified Master Gardeners; welcome!

Our meeting for January 13 will be a presentation about the Cahaba Lily, one of our state's treasures. We are fortunate to have Dr. Randy Haddock from The Cahaba River Society as our speaker. Lunch will be soup and sides; please remember to bring a serving utensil.

Please remember our fund for a new lawnmower for Cane Creek. Any amount would be appreciated. Let us all show how proud we are of this amazing facility by helping to keep it beautiful.

The 2016 MG training class is planned for January.

Wishing each of you a happy, healthy, and peaceful New Year.

### **SB**

#### ***January Gardening Tips***

Protect your pipes, your pets and tender plants during January's coldest days. Remember to keep bird baths clean, filled, and defrosted and feeders stocked for visiting feathered friends.

Although winter usually provides enough rain for newly installed plants, check them periodically during dry spells to make sure they do not get dried out.

Remove spent blossoms and leggy growth on pansies. Water pansies if necessary and give them a shot of liquid fertilizer for a quick boost of energy since the plants can get a bit tired in the cold.

January is a great month to take stock of what worked over the past year. Keep a garden journal to help plan for the new growing season.

January remains a good month to add new ornamentals and trees as long as the ground is not frozen.

This is a perfect month to add a layer of mulch to the landscape—mulch warms the ground as well as cools it in the summer.

Don't stay in the house—time outside in the cold makes us healthy!

***Happy New Year!***



*Myra and Skeeter helped with clubhouse decorations*



*MGs at Holiday Party and Award Ceremony*



*Barbara helped plant bulbs in our flower garden*

## **Boxwood Blight in Alabama**

By [Justin Miller](#)

AUBURN, Alabama-- Boxwood is seen in many landscapes all over the South. Unfortunately over the past few years, a fungal disease--boxwood blight-- has made its way to the United States from Europe and is attacking this Southern favorite.

Dr. Kassie Conner, a plant pathologist with the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, said that the disease was first found in the U.K. in 1994 and then was later identified in New Zealand in 2002.

"In 2011, it was found in the United States in Connecticut, North Carolina and Virginia. It is currently reported in 19 states," said Conner.

The first discovery of the disease in Alabama was in a newly planted landscape in Birmingham, where many of the boxwoods were showing the symptoms of the disease. According to Conner, approximately 15 cases have been found in Alabama to date, which includes residential settings as well as retail garden centers.

The early symptoms of boxwood blight appear as light to dark brown spots on the leaves. The affected leaves will fall off, almost completely defoliating the plant. Lesions, brown to reddish-brown in color, with light brown or tan centers form on the shoots and larger stems. Later these lesions will turn black. Typically, the disease does not kill the plant; however it makes the boxwood unattractive and unsalable, which is devastating to producers and consumers alike.

Conner said that the disease can be moved intermediate distances by anything that comes into contact with the spores including clothing, tools, water hoses, animals and insects.

"This is a fungal pathogen that has very sticky spores. These sticky spores can be spread short distances by splashing water within a plant or between plants. The pathogen is spread long distances on infected plants," said Conner.

Dr. Jim Jacobi, Conner's colleague and an Extension plant pathologist based at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens, said that boxwood blight had an ally in this past spring's cool, wet weather.

"We had the perfect environmental conditions this spring for the development and spread of this disease," said Jacobi.

If you find that your plants are infected with boxwood blight, Conner recommends disposing of them in the proper way.

"If a homeowner has a boxwood plant that has been confirmed to have boxwood blight, they should remove the plant from the landscape, carefully bag the plant in a trash bag, remove all fallen leaves from the ground, and send the plant to the landfill."

Boxwoods are not the only plants that are in danger of catching the disease. Jacobi said that pachysandra and sweet box are also susceptible to boxwood blight.

"Only plants in the boxwood family, which include pachysandra and sweet box, are known to be hosts for the boxwood blight pathogen" said Jacobi.

Conner added that the sweet box have only been shown to be susceptible to boxwood blight under experimental conditions and have not been found in a landscape setting.

Jacobi says if you are worried about planting boxwoods, there are several plants that can be used instead of boxwoods "For many people, boxwoods are a traditional and irreplaceable part of the many Southern landscapes. That is one of the things that make this disease potentially devastating. However, some of the possible alternatives are the Inkberry, Yaupon and Japanese holly, the Boxleaf Euonymus and Globe Dwarf Cryptomeria."

For more information about the boxwood blight or any other disease that may affect your landscape, visit the [Alabama Extension](#) website or contact your county Extension office.



### **Officers - Calhoun County Master Gardeners**

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