



# Master Gardeners of North Alabama

# GARDEN THYMES

Winter 2026



## From the President

Happy New Year, MGNA Family!

As this New Year begins, I pray each of you had a wonderful holiday and remain committed to any resolutions you made for 2026. I hope many of you are snuggled in a warm room, sipping coffee or hot tea while perusing seed catalogues. Spring will be here before you know it.

Start planning now to attend the AMGA State Conference and Business Meeting, May 6-8, 2026. This conference promises to be well attended and provide great speakers. I want to express my sincere appreciation to the Conference organizers

and volunteers working to make the Conference a success. **SAVE THE DATE!** Registration will begin January 15, 2026, so be looking for a postcard with a QR code link in early January 2026.

Congratulations to the new MGNA Officers, Directors, Committee members and those of you who will be receiving gold, platinum or lifetime badges at the 2026 Conference. Thank you for your willingness to serve. Your suggestions and support do not go unnoticed.

On behalf of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual North Alabama Ag Expo, MGNA had the wonderful pleasure of receiving the Volunteer Organization of the Year. (p. 4)

If you haven't had the opportunity to visit the Tinsel Trail at Big Springs Park located in downtown Huntsville, it is a must-see annual event. (page 7)

Cookie Kruvand pours a labor of love into the quarterly newsletters. Please make time to write an article or two in 2026. What was your favorite project, tour, or favorite garden? Please remember to get permission to take photos of non-EMG attendees.

I wish each of you success in 2026.

Warmest regards,  
Acacia Moore, MGNA President



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## 2026 MGNA Officers

President Acacia Moore  
Vice President Carlita Edwards  
Secretary Cheryl Carter  
Treasurer Dee Scott

### Board members:

Cathy Hales  
Deen Rice  
Marsha Levy  
Gina Gonzalez  
Marcia Oberman  
Desiree Umstaedter

## From Our County Agent, Lilly Oaks

Happy 2026, MGNA! What a year 2025 turned out to be. We welcomed many new Extension Master Gardeners into our association and neighboring counties, had a fantastic turnout for the Great Southeast Pollinator Census, hosted wonderful community workshops, and made so many good things happen together.

I'm excited for all that's ahead in 2026. Our Extension Master Gardener training class kicks off February 5, and I'm looking forward to meeting our new interns and seeing you all connect with them as they get involved with MGNA. I'll be coordinating the mentor program this year, so thank you in advance to those who sign up to support and guide our interns.



One of the biggest highlights this year is the 2026 AMGA State Conference, hosted right here in Rocket City! Limestone County, Morgan County, and MGNA are teaming up to put on a great event at the Westin at Bridge Street Town Centre. We've got an exciting lineup planned, and you can't beat having the conference right in our own backyard. Registration opens January 15 and be sure to sign up and join us for excellent education, tours, and networking with fellow Extension Master Gardeners.

I'm also looking forward to seeing the plant sale come together and watching the community show up for all the wonderful plants you grow and prepare. And as we head into the new year, I encourage you to try something new, volunteer with a committee you haven't been involved in before. Many of our projects could really use extra hands, and your participation makes all the difference. Let's make 2026 even better than 2025!

And don't forget to mark your *calendars for this year's Great Southeast Pollinator Census: August 21–22, 2026!*

*Here's to a thriving season ahead,*

Lilly Oaks



Lilly's phone number on page 6 in the 2025 handbook was incorrect. Please add this information → → → to your handbook.



Charles Stone Agricultural Center

819 Cook Avenue NW  
Huntsville, AL 35801

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

### Lilly Oaks

Home Horticulture Extension Agent  
Madison County & Jackson County  
Alabama Cooperative Extension System  
Auburn University

Office 256.532.1578

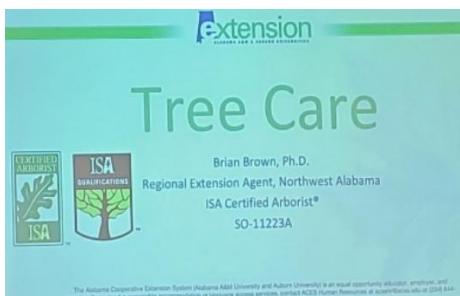
Cell 256.701.3551

Email [lilly.oaks@auburn.edu](mailto:lilly.oaks@auburn.edu)

## 2026 Officers Presented at the Christmas Social



2026 President Acacia Moore, Vice President Carlita Edwards, Secretary Cheryl Carter, Treasurer Dee Scott, Board members: Cathy Hales, Deen Rice, Desiree Umstaedter



OCT Meeting - Brian Brown, Alabama Extension Agent, informed and entertained us with expert advice on how to grow and maintain healthy trees.



NOV Meeting -Melissa Kirkindall shared pictures from Butchart

## Highlights from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual North Alabama Ag Expo 2025

By Acacia Moore, MGNA President

On November 1<sup>st</sup>, I attended my first Alabama A&M University's 2nd Agricultural Expo. This expo was an opportunity for you to share knowledge and network with peers. Whether you are a dedicated professional, student or curious child, your participation is what makes this event so unique and invaluable.

There were 800+ attendees, exhibitors, vendors, sponsors, volunteers, public officials and university leaders at the expo. I had the pleasure of meeting Majed El-Dweik, Ph.D., Vice President, Division of Research and Economic Development from Alabama

A&M University. I was afforded the opportunity to reconnect with Violet Edwards, Madison County Commissioner, District 6 and Sinead Lounmala, County Extension Director, Madison County.

As an exhibitor, MGNA provided booths for the Plant ID, Composting, Ask A Master Gardener and a children's activity during the event. Our volunteers were Acacia Moore, Connie Carr, Deb Bonkoski, Carlita Edwards, Jim Mullens, Sangeetha Bathala and Mary Howe. Due to the large crowd, I didn't see everyone from MGNA. If I inadvertently left your name off this list, please forgive me.

Donna Gilbert, Rosie Landers, Andrea Crain and Wendi Williams extended their deepest gratitude to



MGNA for their unwavering volunteerism and commitment to excellence. Three outstanding contributors whose passion and service made a lasting impact:

- Volunteer of the Year – Mr. Dennis Jackson
- Volunteer Organization of the Year – Master Gardeners of North Alabama
- Above and Beyond Award – Ms. Debbie Hunter

As stated at the event, "These individuals exemplify the heart of our mission - bring people together to make great things happen. We are grateful for their contributions and for everyone who played a role in making this year's Ag Expo a success". I accepted the award on behalf of MGNA.

# Master Gardeners Growing Curiosity at Morris Elementary

By Julie Anderson

Over the past six weeks, North Alabama Master Gardener volunteers have had a wonderful time working with third grade students at Morris Elementary, bringing plants, science, and creativity into the classroom. Together, we've been digging into hands-on activities that spark curiosity and show students how plants connect to their everyday lives.



One of the students' favorite activities has been learning how to propagate houseplants. Using both water and soil cuttings, students watched roots develop and discovered that with a little patience and care, new plants can grow from a single cutting. It's been exciting to see their pride as they check on "their" plants each week. We also explored how light affects plant growth by placing plants in different lighting conditions. Students observed changes in growth and leaf

color and eagerly shared their predictions and conclusions. These simple experiments gave them a chance to practice real scientific thinking—asking questions, making observations, and comparing results.

In addition to science investigations, students enjoyed creating holiday crafts using plant-based materials, blending art with nature. Another highlight was exploring plant scents. Students smelled a variety of plants and talked about how certain scents can help us feel calm, energized, or remind us of special memories. The conversations that came out of this activity were thoughtful, funny, and sometimes surprisingly heartfelt.

This program has been incredibly rewarding for everyone involved. The students are enthusiastic and curious, and it's clear how much they enjoy learning from volunteers who share their love of plants.



**We would love to have more Master Gardeners join us!** Having additional volunteers allows us to work with smaller groups and bring even more activities into the classroom. You don't need teaching experience—just an interest in plants and a willingness to share your knowledge and time.

If you're looking for a meaningful way to earn volunteer hours and inspire the next generation of gardeners, we'd love to have you be part of the Morris Elementary program. Please contact me at [julie@windforge.com](mailto:julie@windforge.com)



## As Seen on TV

On Dec 16 Jim Mullen appeared on WHNT TV's "Growing the Valley" with host Caroline Campbell to talk about composting at the DVG. See it here:

<https://whnt.com/as-seen-on-19/growingthevalley/growing-the-valley-upcycling-waste-through-compost/>



For tips on composting, visit the [EPA's website](#).

### Online Plant Sale By Anita Reeves

Introducing the Master Gardeners of North Alabama's Ongoing Online Plant Sale! All proceeds support our non-profit MGNA association. Cash and check accepted. Pick up to be arranged in the Huntsville area. No plants will be shipped/mailed. Any plant in a mug has a drainage hole. To view what is currently being sold, prices and who to contact to purchase a plant visit: <https://mg.aces.edu/madison/plant-sale-online/>



## Tinsel Trail 2025

By Acacia Moore, MGNA President

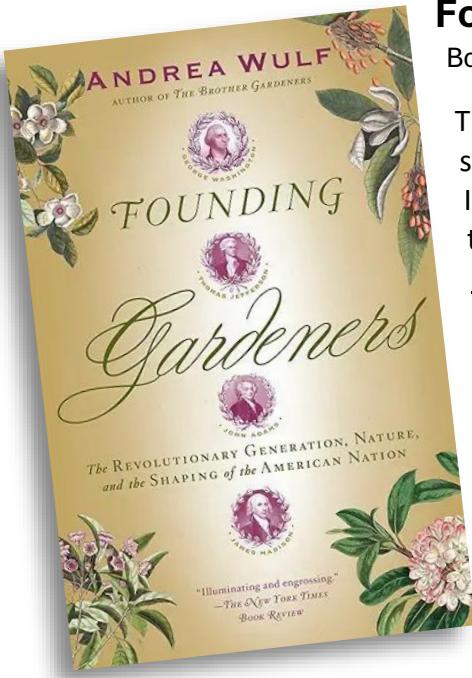


It was a beautiful, 73 degree day on Saturday, November 22<sup>nd</sup>. I had the honor of selecting the MGNA tree at Tinsel Trail located at Big Springs Park in downtown Huntsville, AL. There were over 400 trees in various stages of decorating. To enhance the experience, there were musicians, food trucks and photographers to capture the moment.



Our tree was beautifully decorated on Sunday, November 23<sup>rd</sup> by Barbara and Keith White (left), Tricia Cantrell-Teetor and Lilly Oaks. When you see any of our volunteer decorators, please thank them for doing a wonderful job. Our tree was located near the parking garage a few short steps past the mayor's tree.





## Founding Gardeners

Book by Andrea Wulf, Review by Paula Wheeler

The United States will celebrate the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 2026. If you run out of seed catalogs to ooh and ahh over during the next month or so, I highly recommend Founding Gardeners as an entertaining and enlightening look at our Revolutionary War heroes from a different perspective.

One of the most fascinating eye openers for me is that these great men (and women) had an agricultural vision for the nation. Their devotion to creating a nation, willingness to die for their ideals, and eventual service in public office wasn't what they considered their primary vocation.

Washington wrote detailed letters of instruction to his estate manager through even the worst periods of the war; Jefferson smuggled in contraband seed from other nations; Adams filled a diary

one summer with entries about compost. Humorous anecdotes make these men so relatable as regular guys who had a passion for the agricultural opportunities the new nation would provide. Even the political adversaries shared plant information with one another.

This was one of those books I wished had been longer. It also provided a stark contrast to the career politicians on both sides of the aisle in the US today. Although we're now an industrialized nation, there's much we can learn from the example of these founding gardeners as we consider the gardening legacy we leave for the next generation.



<https://alabamamga.org/event/2026-amga-annual-state-conference/>

**The 2026 Alabama Master Gardeners Association (AMGA) State Conference will be held May 6-8, 2026.** The Conference meetings will be held at The Westin at Bridge Street Towne Center in Huntsville. Registration will open on January 15 and will be included in the AMGA Winter newsletter available on that date. Early registration will be available from January 15 to February 15, 2026. Jennifer Johnson will send out a Sign-Up Genius January 15.

All volunteers are required to register for the Conference.

## Workshops By Suzanne Kirkhuff

### October Bonsai Basics

Philip Terry, president of the Living Art Bonsai Society, presented an in-depth presentation on the art of bonsai on October 21, 2025. Philip brought four of his large bonsai and some of the tools needed for their care plus samples of his planting medium. It was an enjoyable way to spend a rainy morning. The audience was very enthralled with his presentation and gave him all 5s on the evaluation form plus several comments such as "great" and "best workshop yet".

The thing that is so outstanding about this workshop and most of our workshops is that the majority of the attendees were and are "general public". Everyone checked that they learned something which is the goal of the Workshop Committee.



Workshop all set up for the arrival of the attendees



### November Wreath Workshop

With Christmas music as a background, master gardeners got together for a hands-on workshop to build themselves a holiday wreath. Loretta Stinnett coordinated the workshop by ordering everything needed and she also made a variety of lovely bows to choose from. Lilly Oaks provided helpful instructions and advice. When finished, everyone was eager to take their treasure home and display it on their own door.



Busily working

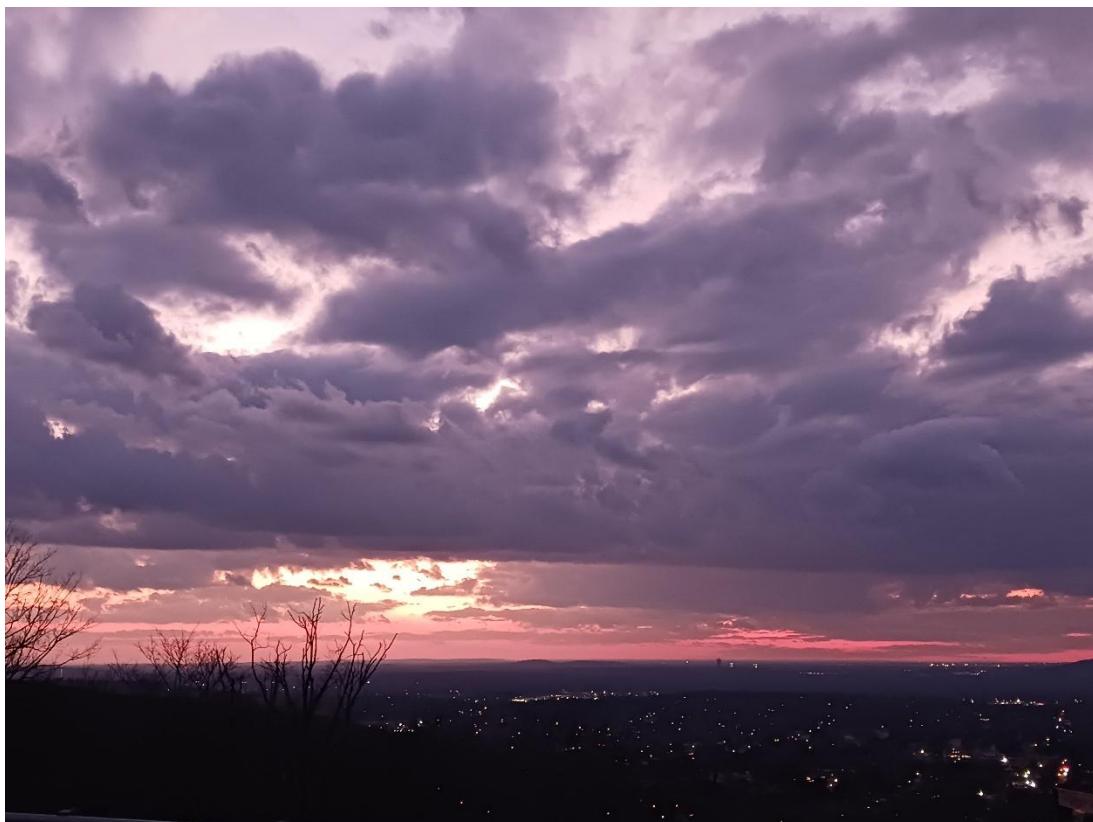


Almost finished with our wreaths

## Adopt-a-Spot • Blevins Gap Land Trust Pollinator Garden

By Valeta Wheeler

There was a final 'clean up' session for the Land Trust of North Alabama's Pollinator Garden at Blevins Gap in December. We closed out with a beautiful sunset. The crew and the plants will be taking a rest for a couple months until it is time to start tending it again – probably in February - when we'll start preparing for spring. Dates will be provided to MGNA gardeners via email once we have them. Hope to see lots of pollinator enthusiasts there in the spring!



The Land Trust of North Alabama, Marie's Garden at Blevins Gap – overlooking south Huntsville.



## Demonstration Veggie Garden

by Susan Parker, DVG Chair



Some of the DVG regular Wednesday Crew on Wednesday November 5, 2025, displayed just a little of the harvest that day. Clementine Brulin (Fall 2025), Bob Houseman (Limestone Master Gardeners), Connie Carr, Susan Beam, Kim Robbins, Tina Cehovic and Susan Parker. Our harvest was 56.67 pounds and was delivered to the Rose of Sharon. At the end of November, the DVG had donated over 1,500 pounds of produce.



New Master Gardeners from the Fall 2025 class, David Lounmala and Elizabeth Gauthier prepared Bed N for planting assorted Brassicas by seeding Komatsuna tender green mustard and Salad Blend Siamese Dragon Stir Fry Mix October 13, 2025.

## Landscape Design Course

By Karen Kirk-Williams

Please accept our apologies: Our Master Gardener of North Alabama Design Your Home Landscape Course, which was scheduled to start on January 14, has been postponed.

Due to recent unanticipated challenges that created staffing issues, we are not able to provide the level of instruction and personalized guidance required.

We will offer the classes again at a later date, likely next fall, and will send out updates once our schedule is finalized.

We appreciate the interest of so many of you in our classes and understand your disappointment in the delay. We look forward to working with you again in the future.

In the meantime, Alabama Cooperative Extension System (ACES) has a wealth of research-based information and plant recommendations online. Go to [aces.edu](http://aces.edu) and select Lawn and Garden for more information. Also, watch for updates on our upcoming MGNA Workshops, beginning with a program on some of our best pollinators, A BEEutiful Day in the Neighborhood - Inside the Hive: The Secret Lives of Honeybees on Tuesday, January 20 at the Madison Public Library from 10:30-noon. We'll also have four workshops on vegetable gardening during our February Gardening Series on Tuesday mornings in February so watch for details on these and many other topics in 2026.

We wish you a happy, healthy and blessed holiday season!

Karen and the DYHL Landscape Team

### Huntsville Herb Society

invites you to join us  
for a special program

Thursday, Feb 26

11:30 am

Huntsville Botanical Garden  
Education Room, Linda Smith Building

Special Guest Speaker

Herbalist Phyllis Light

Topic: Southern Folk Medicine

<https://www.phyllislight.com/about-phyllis/>

info: Cookie Kruvand [rkruvand@gmail.com](mailto:rkruvand@gmail.com)



Our Tinsel Trail tree at night.

## Field Trippin'

By Bob Goodwin



A Master Gardener field trip occurred in Hartselle over two days.

The Gourd Festival was for two days, October 17 and 18<sup>th</sup> in Hartselle, AL, about one hour from here. They had a lot of neat stuff. One guy in particular was showing off several of his gourds and discussed how he got the odd shapes. For example, the shapes could be because it was grown in a bag...or in a cut milk container. There were gourds in the form of musical instruments. They also had a large area with awards given by the judges. Believe me there were a lot of categories. There are pictures of the largest gourd and the smallest and other categories.



If you're "into" gourds,

the gourd show is always the third Friday and Saturday in October.

Location: Sparkman Civic Center

Address: 406 Nance Ford Road S.W., Hartselle Alabama 35640

Directions: I-65 Exit #325 or #328 (West of Hwy 31)



Winners' Table



## More Gourds



Sandra Parker & a gourd vendor



## 2025 Master Gardener Awards By Helen Carr

Thank you all for the numerous nominations that you submitted for our yearly awards. All the nominations exceeded the criteria in our Handbook in both volunteer actions and hours. But unfortunately, only one winner per category is recommended. We compared all and tried to be as objective as possible.

Lilly Oaks, our Extension Agent awarded the **Intern of the Year** to **Stephen Walls**. He works full time but still managed to volunteer 152 hours and grew hundreds of plants for our Spring Plant Sale and had a Plant Sale at his home where he sold hundreds more and donated all the money to our Master Gardeners.

The **New Initiative Award** was won by **Julie Anderson** who is the project head at Morris Elementary School Garden Club. She rearranged the students schedules thereby allowing all the third-grade classes to be included in this popular educational opportunity and also providing for smaller student to volunteer ratio.

The **Project of the Year** was awarded to **Susan Parker's Demonstration Vegetable Garden** at the Huntsville Botanical Garden. She plans each day, orders supplies, directs, assists and guides each volunteer to what needed activity suits them. It takes a village of volunteers to make an outdoor classroom that educates the community of the different plants and all the different ways they can be grown.

The **2025 Lifetime Achievement Award** went to **Mary Shaw** who over these past 23 years has accumulated over 3,762 hours in many projects, esp. the H.B.G. Daylily Garden.

The **2025 Extension Master Gardener of the Year Award** went to one who gets up every weekday and volunteers until dinner time! Since Winter of 2021 she has accumulated over 2,338 hours and has been our President and involved in so many of our projects and committees too numerous to mention. There was no doubt, **Carlita Edwards** was the winner!

Our **Friend of the Master Gardeners 2025 Award** will be postponed until our January meeting, as that volunteer was occupied all week helping Santa make Christmas Parties for unfortunate children. Another true sign that we chose the right friend!



Good food and good friends at the Christmas Social, December 11

**Photos by Jim Mullen & Walt Lindblom**  
**Lilly Oaks, Helen Carr and Debi Bonkoski presented the awards.**



Stephen Walls, Intern of the Year



Carlita Edwards, EMG of the Year



Susan Parker, DVG, Project of the Year



Julie Anderson, Morris School, New Initiative



Mary Shaw, Lifetime Achievement





## The Cranes Are Here!

By Tabatha Fiacco

Wheeler Wildlife Refuge is starting to teem with sandhill cranes and whooping cranes. The **2026 Festival of the Cranes** will take place 9 – 11 January. Weekend events are all over Decatur. Many events are free, and this

year's free admission Saturday at Cook Museum provides an unprecedented opportunity to explore Decatur's award-winning natural science museum. Some performances and special programs may require tickets. Details are on the Festival web page including a downloadable/printable schedule and map. <https://www.friendsofwheelernwr.org/foc-2026>

But you are not limited to one weekend to see these amazing birds. They will hang around until mid-February. Wheeler Wildlife Refuge is a great spot for seeing these magnificent birds and they have a large glass enclosed room with seating and spotting scopes for viewing birds (nice for those chilly winter days). The visitor center is open from 9 am – 4 pm November – February; closed on Christmas day and New Years Day. See the Wheeler Wildlife Refuge web site for additional information about viewing areas and trails.

<https://www.fws.gov/refuge/wheeler>

### A little about cranes:

The **Whooping Crane** (*Grus americana*) is a migratory bird found across North America and is the continent's tallest bird, reaching about five feet in height. There are four geographically distinct populations that exist in the wild

(<https://www.fws.gov/species/whooping-crane-grus-americana>).

Whooping cranes are known to flock with sandhill cranes, so if you see a sandhill crane look around to see if you can spot a whooper. What does a whooper look like? Whooping cranes have a snowy white plumage, they have a red patch on their head, and their largest flight feathers are black (only visible while in flight or wings spread) Have you seen a whooper or want to know where you find them?

<https://savingcranes.org/species/whooping-crane/>



**Sandhill cranes** (*Antigone canadensis*) are migratory birds native to North America and northeastern Siberia. They breed in open areas (fields, wetlands, prairies) and typically group together in large numbers. These birds can be identified by their tall stature, grey bodies, and a distinctive red patch on the head; their grey coloration sets them apart from the snowy white color of whooping cranes, which occasionally inhabit the same areas. Did you know that sandhill cranes are great dancers? Have you seen a sandhill crane? Would you like to know the locations where they have been seen?

<https://sandhillfinder.savingcranes.org/>



On Saturday, **Jan. 10**, 2026, the Cook Museum of Natural Science will host a **Wild About Whoopers** event sponsored by Decatur Morgan Hospital, featuring **FREE general admission**. Visitors will be able to enjoy the Museum exhibits and learn about endangered whooping cranes free of charge with Cool Cranes! Science on the Spot presentations, a Crane Dance Party, and more fun educational offerings from partners such as the Land Trust of North Alabama, local author Phoebe Goodwin, and Laura Grace Clark Art.

#### Other things in the area:

1818 Farms – stop by on your way to Wheeler or your way back home. They are located just off Old Hwy 20, in Mooresville.

<https://1818farms.com/>

Delano Park in Decatur is a hidden gem. Although spring and early summer are great times to visit, wintertime allows for easy viewing the sculptures found in the park.

#### Crane Trivia



##### **What do you call a group of sandhill cranes?**

A group of sandhill cranes is called a *sedge*, but other collective nouns like *siege*, *construction*, *dance*, or *swoop* are also used. The term "sedge" likely comes from the marshy, grassy habitats where they often gather.



##### **What do you call a baby crane ?**

Male and female cranes are just called male and female. But the chicks are called *colts*. The use of horse terminology to refer to Sandhill Cranes seems a bit archaic and many people don't know these terms now.



## Winter is for the Birds!

**The Great Backyard Bird Count Feb 13-16, 2026** <https://www.birdcount.org/about/>



What began in 1998 has grown into a world-wide event sponsored by **Cornell Lab of Ornithology, National Audubon Society, and Birds Canada**. Over four days every February people spend 15 minutes in their favorite place identifying and counting as many birds as they can find and report them to the GBBC. Your counts feed into the massive eBird database, used by researchers to understand bird health and conservation needs.

Like the Pollinator count last August, all you have to do is spend at least 15 minutes, sometime during the four-day period. But unlike the pollinator count, you need to identify the birds you see *and hear*. You can use the [Merlin Bird ID app](#) to help you identify them. Links to the app for your phone or computer are on the webpage.

You may repeat the 15-minute observations as many times as you wish, in the same or different location, alone or with others.

If you already use [eBird](#) or [Merlin](#), your regular submissions over the 4 days count toward GBBC. You won't have to do anything extra.

Other fun things on [www.birdcount.org](https://www.birdcount.org/):

- You can upload pictures to share – of birds, yourself, or others birdwatching.
- A world map that lights up in real time as reports roll in. They say Saturday is the busiest day and the best time to watch.

**AND ONE MORE THING:** HBG offers a class with Herb Lewis on Valentines Day for \$25-\$45.

<https://hsvbg.org/calendar-event/birding-for-fun-research/>

A little more complicated, the Audubon Society's [Christmas Bird Count \(CBC\)](#) takes place from December 14 to January 5 each year. It is the nation's longest-running community science bird project. It might be too late for this year, but it's not too early to sign up for next year because you must join a circle. To find counts in North Alabama (like the [Wheeler NWR Audubon CBC](#)), visit the [National Audubon Society CBC Map](#) to find and contact local organizers (compilers) for specific count dates within that window, as counts are organized in groups on specific days in 15-mile circles.



You don't need a bird feeder for **Feeder Watch**, another Cornell Lab project. Just count the birds in your yard through your window any time. <https://feederwatch.org/> charges \$18 to join (to cover admin. costs) but you get some stuff in the mail--ID posters, a calendar-- and access to their online newsletter. Their website has information on unusual birds, tricky bird IDs, and how to identify sick birds. You can also give a **gift membership**. They'll send you a gift card PDF that you can print or email to your recipient.



If you're interested enough to take field trips to see birds, consider the **North Alabama Birdwatcher's Society** <https://northalbirding.com/>.

## The Couch Potato Gardener

Spending winter on the couch planning and plotting? Here are some favorite catalogs and sources submitted by members:

Most popular:

**Baker Creek** <https://www.rareseeds.com/> by Shireen Fletcher, Julie Anderson, Melanie Elliott, and Paula Wheeler, who added, "All of the varieties are gorgeous, and it's fun to daydream what my garden might look like someday."



**True Leaf Market** <https://trueleafmarket.com/> by Marsha Levy and Tabatha Fiacco who said, "because they have the awesome Bloom Master containers, they carry of wide variety of seeds, mushroom growing kits, and much more".



**Bluestone Perennials**, <https://www.bluestoneperennials.com/> Cookie Kruvand

**Plant Delights Nursery** <https://www.plantdelights.com/> Cookie Kruvand

**Holland Bulb Farms**, <https://www.hollandbulbfarms.com/> Melanie Elliott

**Johnny's Selected Seed Company**, <https://www.johnnyseeds.com/> Melanie Elliott

**Totally Tomatoes**, [www.totallytomato.com](http://www.totallytomato.com) Shireen Fletcher

## Not Exactly Catalogs

**Izel Plants** ([www.izelplants.com](http://www.izelplants.com)) Marilyn Porter says, "Not a nursery at all but my favorite source of native plants. Izel Plants has contracts with wholesale native plant nurseries throughout the eastern U.S. You order online through Izel, they place the order with your choice of their sources, and the nursery ships direct to you at your chosen ship date. Many of their sources only sell 32-50 plant plug trays of the same species, but several sell small pots - minimum order but your choice of plants. One sells native azaleas. Several nurseries are in the same ecoregions found in Madison County."

Magazine/you tube channel - **HARDY PLANT SOCIETY** Mid Atlantic grp (Delaware Valley)

Mike Gibson says, "The unique seed sale is worth the \$35.00 membership."

[https://hpsmag.memberclicks.net/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=14&Itemid=170](https://hpsmag.memberclicks.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=14&Itemid=170)

**Monrovia** <https://www.monrovia.com/> Jennifer Ezell said, "Katie sends out the best information! A newsletter called Grow Beautifully. All free and wonderfully done. Lots of information on the latest and greatest from Monrovia. I really look forward to getting this newsletter each month!" Sign up for newsletter here: <https://www.monrovia.com/grow-beautifully-enews>

[Note: Monrovia supplies most garden centers but does not sell directly to the public. Each garden center offers a different selection of plants. Monrovia plants are grown in Oregon, California and Georgia.]



# DATES DATES DATES

Board Meetings: The Monday before the General Meeting, at noon, at the Madison County Extension Office

MGNA General Meetings: The second Thursday of each month at location and time announced

**Jan 8 MGNA General Meeting 11:30-1:00**

Community Fellowship Church,  
7905 Logan Drive SW, Huntsville, AL 35802

Speaker: Kerry Smith, Topic MOU  
Intern Graduation  
Committee Show & Tell

**Jan.10 Bee House Class** (See p. 22)

**Jan 19 Martin Luther King Day**

**Jan 20 Honeybee Class** (See p. 23)

**Feb 2 Groundhog Day**

**Feb 12 MGNA General Meeting 11:30-1:00**

Community Fellowship Church,  
7905 Logan Drive, Huntsville, AL 35802

Speaker: Angie Barnes  
Topic: The Repurposed Garden



**Feb 13-16 Great Backyard Bird Count** (See p.19)

**Feb 14 Valentines Day** ❤

**Feb 16 Presidents Day**

**Feb 17 Lunar New Year- Year of the Horse**  
Ramadan begins

**Mar 8 Daylight Savings Time begins**



**Mar 12 MGNA General Meeting 11:30-1:00**

Community Fellowship Church,  
7905 Logan Drive SW, Huntsville, AL 35802

Speaker: Ashleigh McMullen,  
Indian Creek Nursery Owner  
Topic: Landscape Design

**Mar 17 St. Patrick's Day**

**Mar 18 Ash Wednesday**

**Mar 19 Ramadan ends**

**Mar 20 First Day of SPRING**



## AND MORE DATES

**You're Invited**



**to the**

**Herb Society Meeting**

**Thursday, Feb 26**

**11:30 am**

**Huntsville Botanical Garden**

**Special Guest Speaker  
Herbalist Phyllis Light**

**Topic: Southern Folk Medicine**

<https://www.phyllislight.com/about-phyllis/>

info: Cookie Kruvant [rkravand@gmail.com](mailto:rkravand@gmail.com)

(See p. 12)

**April 1 – April Fools' Day**

**April 1-9 - Passover**

**April 3 – Good Friday**

**April 5 – Easter**

**April 22 – Earth Day**

**April 24 – Arbor Day**

**April 10, 8 am - 4 pm**

**April 11, 8 am – 2 pm**

**MGNA Plant Sale**

**May 6-8, 8 am - 4 pm**

**AMGA State Conference**

Registration opens Jan. 15

(See p. 8)

**May 23, 10 am – 2 pm**

**MGNA Picnic**

**May 28-30**

**Dixie Regional Hosta Conference**

**Embassy Suites**

Registration is open now and limited to 125.

<https://alabamahostas.weebly.com/dixie-regionals.html>

JAN

10



## Mason Bees

### Nature's Unsung Pollinators

Time: 9:30 – 10:30

Location: Athens-Limestone Public Library, 306 S. Jefferson Street, Athens, AL

Learn about these gentle, non-aggressive native pollinators. They are safe for residential gardens and beneficial for the environment. A short presentation will be given by Limestone County Master Gardener, Betty Patterson.

**This is a hands-on class. Make and Take your own Mason Bee House.**

**Free and Open to the Public**

Presented by Limestone County Extension Gardeners

Register <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/70A0849ABA96-61149008-mason>

Find us at <https://mastergardeners-limestonecountyalabama.org/>



The Alabama Cooperative Extension System (Alabama A&M University and Auburn University) is an equal opportunity educator, employer, and provider. If you need a reasonable accommodation or language access services, contact 205-384-5130 or 205-714-0611 by Dec. 26, 2025.

# A BEEutiful Day in the Neighborhood



*Inside the Hive: The Secret Lives of Honeybees*

Presented by Allyson Shabel

ACES Urban Regional Extension Agent, Lawrence County & Alabama Beekeepers Association Member



**Tuesday, January 20**

**10:30-Noon**

**Madison Public Library**

**142 Plaza Blvd, Madison**

*Free and open to the public  
Preregistration is not required*

Ever wondered what life is like inside a bustling beehive? Here is your chance to understand how bees work together inside of a colony to produce honey and so much more.

Whether you are looking to start your own backyard hive or simply have a fascination with honeybees, you will gain new insights into the amazing life cycle of the honeybee and walk away with a new appreciation of how important these pollinators truly are.



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## TRENDING NOW Wreaths for Birds

<https://www.gardengatemagazine.com/articles/diy-projects/wildlife-pollinator/diy-bird-feeder-wreath/>

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Thank you to Extension Agent Lilly Oaks and all of the members who submitted articles and pictures, and to our proofreaders. We are grateful to all for your participation. We would not have a newsletter without all of your support.

As we finish one issue, we start on the next one. The Spring Thymes will be delivered April 1. You may send material to the editor any time up to March 15.

#### Public:

[facebook.com/MGofNA/](https://facebook.com/MGofNA/)

#### Members:

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<https://mg.aces.edu/madison/>



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