

THE DIRT

President's Message by Penny Claiborne

Dear Master Gardeners,

What a beautiful and blessed time of the year this is. And once the greenery sale is over everyone will have the chance to focus on Christmas and family. Each year Tim and I say we are going to cut back on what we do and what we buy but it just never seems to go that way. It's hard not to get caught up in the frenzy. What is it about the Christmas season that gets us all excited? Is it the lights, the music, the parties, the smells? For me it is all of these things and more. The magic of the Christmas season begins in our hearts. It begins with the birth of a baby born into the world to save us. I pray you all take the time to celebrate the true "reason for the season".

As far as gardening goes this month I am not sure how much time will be devoted to focusing on this matter. There are however several things that can be done without taking too much time away from the holiday festivities. This is a great time of the year to sharpen your tools, order seed catalogs, start compost piles, remulch your garden beds, just to name a few. After all, before we know it spring will be upon us.

With colder temperatures we all tend to stay indoors more and forget about our feathered friends. It is very important to continue to fill your feeders and make sure fresh water is available for the birds in your garden. I have noticed lately that the wildlife is more active than normal in the early morning hours and just before the sun goes down here at the Swamp House. We have seen numerous varieties of water fowl playing along the water's edge and swimming in the lake area. Some days it is so hard to get anything done as I love to sit on the back porch and just look at the beautiful scenery and watch the wildlife. Have I mentioned how peaceful it is living on the water?

We recently purchased kayaks and have been able to get out and paddle into the back canals and waterways. It is amazing how our perspective has changed regarding the shoreline. There are so many varieties of plants that grow along the creek that we did not notice before as we cruised up and down the water in the boat. There are flowers and ferns that we simply could not see from afar that are so beautiful. It is also fun to sneak up on the wildlife as the kayak glides across the water. If you ever want to join me for a paddle let me know.

As the year draws to an end I want to take this opportunity to thank you for all the support and encouragement you have given to me during my presidency. It has been a busy, challenging and rewarding year for me. I have enjoyed working with a wonderful team of people. And I have been so impressed with the dedication, enthusiasm, and talent this group has to offer. I wish the new board and committee chairmen the best in the coming year.

May you all have a blessed holiday season and a happy new year.

Sincerely,

Penny

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Dates to remember:

- Dec. 1-4 Greenery sale workshop
- Dec. 2 Board Meeting at MBG
- Dec. 5-6 Greenery Sale
- Dec. 7 Annual Awards Night
- Dec. 20-Jan. 5 Extension Office Closed
- Jan. 6 Board Meeting
- Jan. 8 Member Meeting

Chronicles by Nancy Adams

As the close of 2014 approaches, Master Gardeners can remember with pride the many projects and dreams that have been completed and can see more opportunities going forward. Implementation of the **DREAM Garden's** new design is underway with the able leadership of **Jan Tanner** and **Marsha Stolz**. We have had eleven informative and well-received **Lunch & Learn** programs this year, the last being **Mary Derrick's** excellent presentation in November on **Growing Citrus in the Home Garden**. **Ed Williamson** will lead the December program about **Backyard Chickens** on December 1.

The **National Association of County Agricultural Agents Conference and Professional Improvement Conference**, held in Mobile on July 19-24, is a prime accomplishment of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, the Mobile County Extension System, and Master Gardeners in 2014, and one of which we can all be proud.

We have had excellent programs following the general meetings throughout the year, including **Vertical Gardens, Interior Plant Design and Care, a Plant Swap** in April, **Growing**

and Cooking with Herbs, Community Supported Agriculture, September's **Garden to Kitchen: Seasonal Appetizers, Ferns** in October, and **brunch at Bean and Bistro in Fairhope** followed by a special tour of **Fairhope Public Works Department's greenhouses** in November.

Congratulations to the fifteen interns who graduated in the MG Class of 2014 on November 5. They spoke on a variety of interesting and informative subjects. It was a great day with happy interns, proud mentors, and a room full of Master Gardeners ready to help them to get involved. The class elected **Linda Abernathy** and **Sonja Woodruff** to represent them on the Board of Directors.

The last fundraiser for the year will be the **Christmas Greenery Sale** scheduled for **Friday and Saturday, December 5 and 6**. Preparations for the sale have been going on for some time, but MGs will be meeting at the **MBG Marketplace on Monday, December 1**, to collect greenery and supplies and use their creative talents through Thursday to make wreaths, table decorations, mailbox toppers, bows, and some surprises. If you wish to help and haven't yet signed up,

there is still time; you can bring greenery on Monday, December 1, come to the Marketplace to help, or contact Brenda Bolton, who will be happy to hear from you.

Our thoughts and prayers are with **Regina Gunn**, who has been instrumental in the success of many MG programs and activities, including the hugely successful **Farm to Table events**, and is now dealing with a serious health issue. Regina, we miss you and hope to see your smiling face and hear your beautiful laugh again soon.

The Mobile County Master Gardeners' annual **Awards Banquet** will be at Mobile Botanical Gardens on Sunday, December 7, beginning at 5:30. Participants are asked to bring heavy hors d'oeuvres or desserts. Drinks will be provided. **Barbara McMullen** and **Betsy Yeager** are coordinating the event.

Marie Dyson reported that **MBG's Fall Plant Sale** went smoothly and 129 volunteers contributed 1338 hours. She expressed appreciation to all who participated in the sale.

Happy holidays to all!!!



Arthur Bosarge explains the Fairhope Greenhouses seasonal plantings for city beautification



Mary Ann Days with daughter and owner of The Bean and Bistro- Terri Days

Peggy Wright-Master Gardener of the Month by Brenda Bolton

It was my good fortune to be in the Class of 2012 for many reasons, but one very good reason was sharing that class with Peggy Wright, this month's Master Gardener of the Month. It doesn't take long for those meeting Peggy to recognize her many talents and abilities, and it is to the Class of 2012's credit that we voted her our Class Representative.

Each month, I start my MGOM brainstorming session for this article by asking myself, "What are the things I first noticed about _____?" When I asked myself that question about Peggy, it was a bit of an overload because there are so many things about Peggy that stand out. But I made myself filter through things like this: 1) She insists she is older than I am so why does she look ten years younger? 2) How does she always seem so unruffled, so in command? 3) Why do her bows look so much better than mine ever do, no matter how often she shows me how to do them? And finally, I settled on what is the undeniable thing about Peggy that I first noticed: Peggy Wright is smart.

And it is that intellect that gives her that unruffled confidence, that always-in-command demeanor, that keeps her young and vibrant, and that enables her to do almost everything better, even making bows. I credit the MGOM committee for recognizing what Peggy has contributed recently in her work as a mentor for this Intern Class, bringing food, attending classes, leading bow-making workshops, and all of the other things she has been involved in this fall with Greenery Sale.

So, who is Peggy Wright outside of Master Gardener? A smart woman who has raised two smart daughters, one in the medical field as an RN locally and one in law as an attorney

in Birmingham. Good genes, I'd say. She has three terrific grandsons lucky enough to share in that gene pool. Peggy is a native Mobilian and Murphy graduate who started her working life with the FBI. She married during that time, and she and Billy moved to Grove Hill for 5 years, then Jackson, AL for 30 years, where she was active in a garden club and learned a lot about growing things and flower arranging.

After raising those two smart young women, at 40 years old, she went to work at what was then Ciba-Geigy Chemical Company in McIntosh, AL, starting out in purchasing, then serving as secretary to the Plant Manager for five years. (The head guy always spots the talent.) Peggy finished her degree in Business at the age of 46 while working full time at Ciba and then worked as Human Resources Manager for a Ciba division until her retirement in 2001. She and Billy moved to Saraland, AL in 2001 onto their 9 acre property that includes a 3-acre pond stocked with bream! She and Billy attend Christ United Methodist.

Peggy recalls that her family has always gardened, beginning with her maternal grandfather who farmed and her mother who loved gardening, passing that love down to Peggy, who gardened from the earliest days of her marriage, always having a vegetable garden and cut flowers for her home. She discovered Master Gardeners in the newspaper and decided to enhance her gardening knowledge by enrolling in the program in 2012. She calls that a life-changing experience, certainly a credit to the MG program, and talks about the nice people who share her love of gardening and who are so generous with their time, talents, and



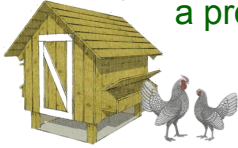
Brenda Bolton with
MGOM Peggy Wright

plants! "I love the social aspect of being a Master Gardener and also enjoy feeling like I have helped someone research and answer their gardening questions. I believe my knowledge of gardening has grown tremendously," she says, and calls having resources at ACES, especially James, Ellen, and Diane, a special bonus. "My favorite MG activity is the greenery sale, because I so enjoy the entire Christmas season. I love crafts, and I love to decorate, bake, and entertain my family during the holidays. Getting together with other Master Gardeners to prepare for the greenery sale is always a fun time. I have to say, though, that I think introducing young people to gardening is the most important project for Master Gardeners. If we catch them young and introduce them to the joys of growing vegetables and flowers, then I think they will be gardeners for life...what better legacy..." We are certainly glad someone left that legacy to Peggy Wright.

Lunch and Learn

A "First Mondays" program presented by Mobile County Master Gardeners,
a program of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System

Monday, December 1, 2014



Noon to 1 pm

Where: Jon Archer Center, 1070 Schillinger Road N., Mobile, AL 36608

Bring a friend and a lunch. Free. Drinks are provided.

For more information: 251-574-8445 or www.aces.edu/Mobile/mg

Presenter: Ed Williamson, Organizer, Mobile County Backyard Chickens Club



Ed Williamson

Topic: *Backyard Chickens-* The backyard chicken phenomenon is spreading all over the country. The Mobile Bay Area Backyard Chicken Club was organized in September of 2013 to assist owners of backyard poultry and to address concerns of those who own or want to own a few or a flock of chickens. "Most enthusiasts see chickens as pets, and the hobby has opened the eyes of thousands of people as to the pleasure in raising a backyard flock," he said.

If you have not paid your membership dues for 2015 please do so soon. The dues are \$25.00, the same as last year. \$10.00 of this goes to The Alabama Master Gardener Association. They require our dues be paid to them by December 31, 2014. Therefore I am requesting dues be paid by December 1, 2014. This will give Susan, our treasurer, time to get the payment to the State Association.

2015 Membership Dues - \$25.00

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

Please make check payable to **Mobile County Master Gardeners** or **MCMG**:

And mail to:

Susan Morrison

12915 Dauphin Island Parkway

Coden, AL 36523

Meet The Class of 2014

Robert H. Ledford



Robert H. Ledford is a family man, resident of Grand Bay and Bible believing Christian. After a variety of employment opportunities including a career in the US Navy, he currently serves as an associate minister for the Apostolic Bethlehem Ministries based in Mobile, Alabama.

Robert and his wife Dorothy (of over 33 years) have raised two daughters, Bridget and Terhonda, and one son, Robert II. We assist with eight grandchildren and one great grandchild and a host of other family members. Our immediate family resides in the Moss Point, Mississippi area. Two of our grandchildren attend school at the university level.

Robert devotes significant time to ministry, but his hobbies include photography, nature and gardening. Often these three are combined. While photography and nature are more or less occasional, gardening is rather ongoing. His gardening experiences include but are not limited to Pecan and Black Walnut trees as well as a variety of fruit trees. Additionally, he grows fruit producing bushes and vines, vegetables from time to time and an occasional flower.

As a member of the Grand Bay Senior Citizens Center Robert planted and maintains a raised bed garden consisting of tomatoes, peppers, green onions, and zucchini squash (now played out) where many of the seniors are permitted to play an active role by harvesting and preparing the produce for the other seniors to take home. He considers gardening fun, enjoyable and therapeutic as he looks forward to this exciting and challenging adventure to become a Master Gardener.

Arnold Luterman



My name is Arnold Luterman. I recently retired from being a physician. I was born in Montreal, Quebec Canada. I became an American 20 years ago after having lived in Seattle, Maryland and Texas where I trained in my medical specialty. My most recent move was from New York where I was on the faculty of Cornell University and was recruited to Mobile by the University of South Alabama to create the Trauma and Burn center. We have been here since 1981. My medical specialty was taking care of burned patients.

I was the Director of the University of South Alabama Burn Center and the Dean for Graduate Medical Education at the College of Medicine.

I am married to Joanne who is a therapist and a coordinator of an Early Intervention Program for children. I have 2 children: Samantha the oldest is a marketing manager of Cisco Computer Systems. She is married to an attorney and they live in Denver Colorado. My son is an Auburn graduate and is an IT Security Expert for the Homeland Security. He lives and works in Washington DC. He is single. I have a dog named Cookie who is still at home and is an absolutely perfect animal/child.

I have always wanted to learn about gardening but growing up in the inner city this has always had to be on the back burner, secondary to a medical career and raising a family. Now that I am retired I have the time to pursue this item from my bucket list. I have little knowledge in this area but I view this as an advantage as I am a true clean slate open book. I am an experienced teacher and hope to be able to use this experience to contribute in this manner once I have acquired some knowledge in this area.

Joan McCracken



I grew up in Mobile but moved to Houston in my twenties. I lived in Houston and loved it, for about 35 years. I became interested in gardening while in Houston and even started a small backyard garden, even though I really didn't know what I was doing. I moved back to Mobile about 3 years ago and tried some backyard gardening here. Some of it worked and some didn't. I'm still trying – and not doing very well with it.

I have done volunteer work and taken classes at the Mobile Botanical Gardens, The Bay Area Food Bank, and Lunch and Learns here at the Extension Service and also volunteer at the Probate Court downtown.

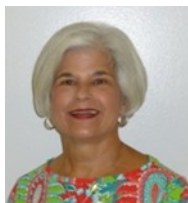
I think I need some expert help to be a better gardener and to be able to help other people start gardens. For many reasons, some of which we probably share. I think it is important for people to know where their food is coming from and how to make that happen for themselves and others.

Meet The Class of 2014 continued



Amanda Martin

Amanda is 18 years old and has just graduated high school. She was born and raised in Mobile and she loves gardening, reading, singing and acting. She also has been a part of 4-H and Junior Master Gardener for 4 years and 4-H Horse Club for 3 years. The reason she wanted to become a Master Gardener is because she wants to continue learning about gardening and help others around her. She hopes to help the Junior Master Gardener Club teach children about gardening and give back to the club that helped her grow into the person she is today.



Ellen S. McCarron

I was born and raised in Mobile, Alabama. Just recently I retired from the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers where I worked as a secretary for 16 years. I have two children and four grandchildren. I enjoy working in my yard, playing with my grandchildren and doing volunteer work. For the first time this spring I planted a vegetable garden with some success.



Addie Louis

My name is Addie Louis. I moved to Mobile in 1990 after my husband, Reuben, retired from the United States Air Force. We have been married for forty-seven years. We have two children. Our daughter, Deborah Dunbar, has two sons Brandon and Aaron. Our son, Reuben Jr. and his wife Rholandra have four children, Kevin, Typhanee, Anfernee, and Donovan.

I graduated from R.B. Hudson High School in Selma, AL and Nebraska College of Business in Omaha, Nebraska. I retired from Comcast Cable seven years ago. Since then I became more active in my church, New Shiloh Missionary Baptist and several community organizations. My hobbies are shopping and gardening.



Sonja Woodruff

I am from the Plateau area of our state. Our crop fields consisted of red clay and rocks. I am married 38 years with 3 stepchildren, seven grandchildren and 3 great grandchildren. I have always worked in the area helping people, from the Beauty industry, insurance adjusting, industrial construction, to Apartment managing and the Board of Register of Mobile County.

I am a graduate of two Bible schools and Chaplain training. Helping just seems to be my calling. I AM VERY INTERESTED IN COMMUNITY GARDENS.



Jordan Wright

I'm 30 years old and a bartender at Callaghan's Irish Social Club. I grew up here in Mobile, spending 13 years of my childhood involved in theatre at the Playhouse in the Park. I still enjoy supporting the arts, and tapping into my creative side, having recently taken courses in Darkroom Photography, Glass blowing, and Kiln Formed Glass at the University of South Alabama. Growing up, my family largely subsisted on the fresh and delicious vegetable that my Pappy grew in his vast garden. His passion for nurturing life with his own two hands and his spiritual connection to nature and the land, sowed a deep and profound impression in the soil of my soul. The physical seeds he planted grew the foods that nourished our family's bodies. However in my adult years I've come to discover his greater, undoubtedly intentional gift to us; the deep seeds of an ideology, and ethos, a respect and reverence for nature, a sense of place, and nurturing, by way of nourishment of family. These seeds have been forever sown within me, and it's exciting to know the Master Gardener course will encourage them to sprout and thrive. By joining the Master Gardeners I hope to develop a relationship with growing akin to the one my Pappy had, and to utilize what I learn to give back to my community in ways that would make him proud.

Meet The Class of 2014 continued



Roy Suberly

I was born May 19, 1947 at the Navy test pilot base in Patuxent River, MD. I was a Navy junior—my father was a senior enlisted electrician and my mother was a Navy nurse. I grew up in Jacksonville, FL attending Nathan Bedford Forest High School, and went on to attend the US Naval Academy in Annapolis, MD. I eventually married a good friend from high school (44years ago) and although we have killed many plants together, managed to raise two children who have developed into wonderful parents and people. I was a career Nuclear Submariner and Strategic Weapons Officer. I retired from the Navy in Omaha, Nebraska and wrote software for ten years. While in Nebraska I began vegetable gardening, achieving minor success. I was a night school junky and encouraged the family to continue their educations. While in Nebraska, I became an active Boy Scout dad serving in several adult positions. I also helped with our children's 4-H and athletic programs. When my wife attained her PhD. in accounting I began to follow her, eventually to the University of South Alabama.

We arrived in Mobile soon after hurricane Katrina in the peak of the azalea bloom and discovered it's endless but challenging growing season. Our first exposure to gardening in Mobile was by Becky Root and Brenda Litchfield of the Gulf Coast Camellia Club. From there we discovered the Mobile Botanical Garden, Bill Finch's classes, plant sales, control burns, long leaf pine trees, and work days improving the winter garden. We have also enjoyed tremendous encouragement from Dr. Bill Barrick and the classes at Bellingrath Gardens. We attended seminars by Oliver Washington of Shore Acres Plant Farm and treasure his continued support and counsel. I serve as the committee chairman for the landscape gardens of the Maryknoll neighborhood common areas and we are in the process of upgrading and rejuvenating our gardens. I am trying to figure out how to optimize my home landscape with its shady and poorly drained north facing front yard, it's poorly drained east and west facing side yards and its hillside south facing back yard. Twenty inches of rain is a real killer because most plants don't like to be six inches under water. At home I am being driven to raised flower beds to enhance drainage and would like to become bolder in developing gardens.

Remembering Margie Smith by Nancy Adams

Our friend and fellow Master Gardener, Margie Smith, passed away unexpectedly on November 3, 2014. She is survived by her children, Dayan, Dewey and Gabriel, as well as grandchildren, brothers, sisters, and many friends.

Although she was a private and fiercely independent person, Margie was always happy to help others however she could. She had a special love for the children at Wilmer Hall and worked tirelessly in fundraisers, such as Greater Gulf States Fair exhibits, to benefit them.

Margie and husband Jim (deceased) were beekeepers who lived in Chunchula and they were always interested in helping local beekeepers and sharing information about the importance of bees and pollinators. She and Jim were instrumental in getting honey and wax products established in Alabama as a commodity. Their bees were often sent to farmers in different areas to pollinate crops. Margie helped many people to learn about bees, and in guiding beekeepers about their care. One of her favorite sayings was, "It depends on your final goal...there are many ways to go, depending on what you really want."

In addition to her passion for beekeeping, Margie was a lover of the outdoors and all animals. Through the years, she has kept dogs, cats, geese, chickens, horses, cattle, and many other animals. It is said that her brother, Joe, teasingly called her "Mrs. Dr. Doolittle."



**Margie Smith at MBG
Nature-Blast**

MOBILE COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS

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ACES Advisor	Ellen Huckabay

Mission Statement:

The Alabama Master Gardener Volunteer Program is an educational outreach program provided and administered by the Alabama Cooperative Extension System.

Alice Marty will publish the Dirt on the 25th of each month. Articles for inclusion must be received by the 15th of the month and may be submitted to Alice Marty MCdirt@comcast.net or the Extension Office.

Issued by

Ellen Huckabay

Regional Extension Agent



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