

May 2015

Master Gardener Volunteers

## Norwood Learning Gardens

Jefferson County MGs support a community project in the historic Norwood neighborhood

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## Lunch & Learn

Take a look and see what Lunch & Learn Programs are being put on with the help of our Master Gardeners this month!

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## Search for Excellence

Congratulations to the 2014 Search for Excellence winners!

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## Garden Spotlight:

### The Norwood Learning Gardens

By: Sarah Bettinger, Jefferson County Master Gardener

The Norwood Learning Gardens (NLG) is one of four community gardens in the historic Norwood neighborhood on Birmingham's Northside. The project was conceived and implemented by a group of Norwood residents in collaboration with the Norwood Resource Center, our neighborhood non-profit that provides services designed to promote a healthy and productive community. Funding was initially provided by a seed grant awarded through the University of Alabama at Birmingham and UAB's Center for Clinical and Translational Science. The NLG motto is "Creating a Culture of Family Gardening in a Community Setting", and we have been realizing that goal since our founding in 2013.

Pictured above: Neighborhood gardeners learn proper seed-starting techniques at NLG's monthly "Garden Days."

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Spring bed planting at Norwood Learning Gardens.

## (NLG Continued)

The gardens are strategically located throughout the neighborhood; one at the soon to reopen Norwood Elementary School and three on what were abandoned, tax-delinquent lots, so situated that a garden is within walking distance of many of our neighbors. Each garden has either six or eight one-hundred-square-foot raised beds that are available to Norwood residents for renewable periods of one year, as well as a common fruit crop that is tended by all of each garden's participants. Garden Managers, Norwood residents that have become Master Gardeners, direct and manage the operations of each individual garden.

Our inaugural year (2013) saw the establishment of the Norwood Learning Garden at Norwood Elementary, the genesis of our Junior Master Gardener (JMG) summer camp, and the NLG booth at the Market at the Trolley Stop, the neighborhood's weekly summer farmers market. Our second year (2014) was our "building" year, as the project built and filled the raised beds, planted the common fruit crops, recruited gardeners, and established a presence in the neighborhood.

This year is our "growing" year as we refine our techniques and focus on community outreach and making an impact in the lives of all our neighbors. The JMG summer camp has expanded to be a year-long after-school program that combines hands-on learning in the Gardens with classroom skills, environmental stewardship, and entrepreneurship. The Gardens host monthly "Garden Days" for our gardeners, neighbors, and wider community, which will include both workdays in the gardens and workshops on composting, pest management, harvest preservation, and more. This summer, we will continue to make our neighborhood-grown produce available at the Market at the Trolley Stop. And this fall, we will be producing a fundraising cookbook that highlights our gardeners' favorite recipes featuring fresh, seasonal vegetables, fruits, and herbs.

If you would like to volunteer, learn more, or simply follow our progress, please visit us at: [facebook.com/NorwoodLearningGardens](https://facebook.com/NorwoodLearningGardens)

## Alabama Master Gardeners



### Mission:

The Alabama Master Gardener Program is an educational outreach program provided and administered by the Alabama Cooperative Extension System. It is a program to train individuals who volunteer their expertise and services in support of the Extension effort related to education. The key to this mission is creating an environmental awareness and enhancing the development of an environmental ethic in the citizens of Alabama.



## 2014 Search for Excellence Winners

### Reach 'Em, Teach 'Em Classroom

**Youth Programs Category:** The Blount County Master Gardeners have supported an outdoor classroom at Locust Fork High School's consolidated campus for six years.

The educational goals are to use hands-on activities to teach: the benefits of gardening, healthy eating and nutrition, sustainable garden management, and instill an appreciation of the outdoors in all K-12 students at this campus.

Over 1,200 students have lessons in or interact with this garden each year through summer camps, JrMG clubs, counseling, and/or curriculum and enrichment activities.

As a result, everyone notices the students making new food choices, enjoying academics based in the garden, and increased school pride (sense of teamwork, truancy/absenteeism <10%+, less litter and graffiti).

### Grandmother's Garden

**Demonstration Garden Category:** This garden project at Sloss Furnace National Historic Landmark illustrates an early 1900's garden the typical worker family had. The wives and children of Sloss Company workers grew much of their own food and found their pharmacy in the garden too. The garden displays period garden plants and practices.

The project goals were to educate visitors and create a new reason to visit.

Marjorie White with the Birmingham Historical Society reports that visitors increased by 800 in 2014. The Jefferson County Master Gardeners learned about heirloom vegetables and medicinal herbs through their research preparing the garden, and the park gained a new educational display.

### Florence Community Gardens

**Community Service Category:** The Shoals Master Gardeners built the Florence Community Garden located in front of the Lauderdale County Extension Office.

Their project includes 52 raised beds used for demonstration (3) and for neighbors (49) to have vegetable gardens. Special attention was given to accessibility for everyone so some beds were built 24" tall for gardeners in wheelchairs, and the path between beds was 48" wide.

Over 2,000 pounds of produce was harvested in 2014, MG's enjoyed mentoring, 49 neighboring families learned to garden and benefited from their labor, and 80% of the gardeners committed to return next year.

Many community partners: municipal, civic, commercial and volunteer, joined together for the success of this project.

# Lunch & Learn Programs

Lunch and Learn occurs once a month, shares a new topic every event, and takes place from **12:00—1:00 p.m.** These programs are a great opportunity to meet new people and expand your gardening knowledge! Drinks are provided, but **bring a sack lunch**. L&L are a cooperative effort between Regional Extension Agents and several hard working crews of Master Gardeners. Are you hosting these in your area?

## Autauga County

Topic: Hydrangeas  
 When: May 7th  
 Where: Christ Lutheran Church, Prattville

## Calhoun County

Topic: The Lowdown on Hydrangeas  
 When: May 27th  
 Where: Cane Creek Community Garden at McClellan

## Dale County

When: May 12th  
 Where: Dale County Extension Office

## DeKalb County

Topic/When: Contact Celestine Darnell  
 Where: Coal and Iron Building on the NW corner of Gault Avenue and 5<sup>th</sup> Street

## Elmore County

Topic: Healthy Lawns  
 When: May 12th  
 Where: Elmore County Extension Office

## Houston County

When: May 5  
 Where: Houston-Love Memorial Library, Dothan

## Mobile County

Topic: Ask the Agents  
 When: May 18th  
 Where: Jon Archer Ag Center, Mobile

## Morgan County

Topic: Hydrangeas  
 When: May 13th  
 Where: Aquadome Recreation Center, Decatur

## Montgomery

Topic: Beneficial Pollinators and Native Bees  
 When: May 6th  
 Where: Armory Learning Arts Center, Montgomery

## Volunteer Opportunities

### Jefferson County:

#### Ruffner Mountain Nature Preserve Workdays

Volunteer at one of the largest privately held urban nature preserves in the US! Upcoming workdays will take place on:

Tuesday, May 5<sup>th</sup>, 8 am – 12  
 Thursday, May 14<sup>th</sup> from 8 am – 12  
 Saturday, May 23<sup>rd</sup> from 10 am – 1

Contact Jamie Nobles for more information at: james@ruffnermountain.org or (205) 833-8264

#### Grandmother's Garden at Sloss Furnace

Volunteers are needed on Wednesdays from 9am to 11 am to help out the Master Gardeners at Grandmother's Garden.

Contact Sallie Lee if interested in volunteering at:

leesall@auburn.edu

Have a garden or local volunteer opportunity you want to be featured in next month's bulletin? E-mail Evan Ware at [etw0002@auburn.edu](mailto:etw0002@auburn.edu).

(Produced by Evan Ware, graduate student, Auburn University Dept of Horticulture)

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