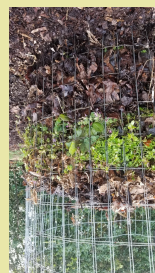




GARDEN THYMES

Master Gardeners of North Alabama, Inc.



[Spring Compost
Setup Page 12](#)

2019 - Quarter 2

2018 Reach for the stars

Sandra Pape (F'06)

Give A Hand

The Give a Hand winner for January 2019 was Elouisa Stokes for all of her tremendous help with Habitat for Humanity. The February 2019 winner was Kathy Gardner for her dedication to chairing two committees - the Composting Committee and the Awards Committee. The March recipient was Kendra Spadoni for the outstanding work she does as the Hospitality Committee chair. Please take a moment to fill out a Give A Hand Nomination form at our next meeting to recognize a hard-working fellow Master Gardener!

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www.Facebook.com/MGofNA

Reach for The Stars is a program that tracks Master Gardener's volunteer hours and rewards them for the hours they have given to the community. During the February MGNA general meeting, Bronze, Silver and Gold star pins were awarded and advanced badges and pins, which will be awarded during the 2019 AGMA Conference in May, were announced.

Dorothy Thomas earned the honor of Top Hours of the year by posting 1,275 volunteer hours for 2018!

Josie Asquith was honored with the MGNA Jean Lee Lifetime Hours Award with a total of **7,129.14** volunteer hours since becoming a Master Gardener in 1984! Josie was submitted to the state level to vie for the AMGA Jean Lee Lifetime Hours award.

Other awards were announced for:

Beam, Susan	Bronze Star	Voekel, Dee	Bronze Star
Gardner, Kathy	Bronze Star	Knox, Hiltraut	Bronze Star
Garrett, Martha	Bronze Star	Carr, Connie	Silver Star
Hansberger, Karen	Bronze Star	Cook, Carol	Silver Star
Harrison, Leigh	Bronze Star	Fletcher, Shireen	Silver Star
Icenogle, Rita	Bronze Star	Gwyn, Revelle	Silver Star
Jacobson, Kay	Bronze Star	Jones, Jane	Silver Star
Mann, Robyn	Bronze Star	Lindblom, Walter	Silver Star
Oberman, Marsha	Bronze Star	McGill, Karon	Silver Star
Patterson, Elizabeth	Bronze Star	Parker, Susan	Silver Star
Poehlman, Karla	Bronze Star	Thornburg, Jessica	Silver Star
Roberts, Eugene	Bronze Star	Wood Sanders, Sonja	Silver Star
Schroetter, Ann	Bronze Star		
Sisco, Cindy	Bronze Star	Hess, Harriet	Gold Star
Smith, Sandra	Bronze Star	Johnson, Jennifer	Gold Star
Spencer, Patricia	Bronze Star	Meyer, Susan	Gold Star
Stansky, Barbara	Bronze Star	Moore, Acacia	Gold Star
Stasiak, Mary Ann	Bronze Star	Nohrstedt, Jill	Gold Star
Sturgis, Opal	Bronze Star	Rushton, Judith	Gold Star
Turner, James	Bronze Star	Severn, Deborah	Gold Star
Vemmer, Sherry	Bronze Star	Tippie, Kenneth	Gold Star
		Whitt, John	Gold Star

[Awards continued on Page 6](#)

From the President

Cyndi Lindblom (F'13)

Hi everyone I hope you have had a **restful** wet winter. I thought about kayaking in my back yard in February but now I know where I want my pool.

We are off to a busy start to the year. We were invited to participate in the Home & Garden Show March 1 – 3. There were many people with lots of questions and many of you were there to answer them.

We have some fun events coming up in April and May: The Greenway Energy Ribbon Cutting April 6, Earth Day April 30 at Hays Nature Preserve, Lowe's in Hampton Cove has requested Ask A Master Gardener to come out to answer plant questions May – September as well as continuing with North Parkway Lowe's. Oh , don't forget the plant Sale at the Huntsville Botanical Garden. We will be working in the Vegetable Tent April 11 – 14.



A

reminder too to be saving your rummage items for the MGNA Plant Sale May 11. Save that date as we will need you to help us with setting up, selling and clean up.

For all of these events be on the lookout for SignUpGenius and sign up for any or all of them.

I look forward to seeing ALL of you at our next MGNA meeting.

GARDEN THYMES

VOL. XXIX, ISSUE 2

Editor

Ken Tippie (F'13)

Contributing Editor

Carolyn Wade (W '12)

The *Garden Thymes* newsletter is published quarterly: January/February/March, April/May/June, July/August/September and October/November/December. Editorial deadline is the 15th of the month prior to publication.

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Master Gardener Profile

“Whatever you do, work at it with all of your heart as working for the Lord, not for man.” Colossians 3:23

Jennifer Johnson is a native Huntsvillian and has lived here all of her life, except when she was in Auburn. She has been married to Keith Johnson for 33 years. They have two daughters. Meg lives in New York, and Emily lives in Colorado. Jennifer says both of them are too far away from their mother. Jennifer and Keith have two dogs and two cats, some of them inherited from their daughters.

Jennifer has a Master's Degree in Elementary Education. She taught for 16 years in the Huntsville City Schools and now is an Education Consultant for BVI and TVA. She is the project manager of two educational websites: TVA STEM

(www.tvastem.com) and Currents of Change

(www.currentsofchange.net).

Since graduating in the spring of 2016, she has put in over 700 volunteer hours with the Master Gardeners. Jennifer is the co-coordinator of the MGNA Education Workshop Committee with Rosie Rymut. She also volunteers every week at Morris P8 School with the 5th grade. For the past



Jennifer Johnson (W'13)

several years, she has organized the Planting for Pollinators table at the plant sales and works with the MGNA Speakers Bureau doing presentations on butterfly gardening with local groups and schools. Currently she is working on a pollinator garden on Redstone Arsenal. Jennifer became interested in butterflies while still a teacher, and she and her husband Keith have been experimenting with butterfly

gardening in their own yard since 2012. Being a teacher at heart, Jennifer loves to share what she has learned with others. She would love to see North Alabama covered with healthy, welcoming pollinator gardens that attract not only butterflies but hummingbirds, bees and other pollinators as well. Aside from education, pollinators and gardening, Jennifer loves healthy cooking and eating, walking, biking and yoga. She loves being outdoors whenever she can especially if she can take a good book with her. She and Keith are both involved in their church and the amazing friends they have there. Jennifer also volunteers with the Garden Guild and the Huntsville Botanical Garden.

Jennifer's favorite vacation destination is anywhere near water – river, lake or ocean. Her favorite vacation was walking 117 km (73 mi.) through Spain on the Camino de Santiago. She loves an adventure!

Morris Update - We're in the Greenhouse

Carolyn Wade (F'12)

We're in!!!! We still have a few last minute things to do, but we had our first propagation class in the greenhouse this week. Extension Agents Allyson Shabel and Marcus Rhodes talked with the children about seed propagation then each student planted tomato, basil, zinnia and sunflower seeds. If they all germinate, we will have enough basil for the entire county!



In addition to our propagation class, Morris garden classes have been busy the last couple months. The students learned about conserving water one week then got to use the 'new' 250 gallon rain barrels that ACES Extension Agent Rhonda Britton installed for us. One week the class made cole slaw using 5 different recipes,



then taste tested the results and discussed their favorites. Soozie Conner Pline spoke to the classes about cranes and the Wheeler Wildlife Center and played a game where they 'followed the leader' around the classroom. Can you imagine 50 kids plus several adults all roaming around a small classroom holding a card on their forehead – it was really funny and the laughter was infectious. We learned how birds survive the winter, then helped them by making and hanging bird feeders in the courtyard.



The end of February we harvested the gardens and came away with pounds of carrots, radishes, onions, broccoli and kale. The students then replanted for the spring with peas, onions, radishes, lettuce and chard. We will plant more in late March after spring break. Thanks to all the Master Gardeners and Rhonda Britton who helped get the greenhouse up and running and to those who help out on a weekly basis. If you'd like to join us, we meet with the kids on Wednesdays. The first class meets at the greenhouse at 12:15 and the second class meets at the courtyard in the back of the school at 1:15. We'd love to have you join us for one or both classes.

Maple Hill DAR Conservation Award

Mary Ann Stasiak (W'18)

On March 3, 2019, The Maple Hill Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution awarded Carolyn Wade a chapter conservation award for her leadership of weekly gardening classes with other master gardeners at Morris Elementary School (a Title 1 School) 5th Graders in Huntsville, AL.

The award citation included this justification:

“Under Ms Wade’s direction, the volunteers work with the children to:

- Plant their own vegetables and flowers on the school grounds
- Select plants at the annual Huntsville Botanical Garden plant sale
- Learn weekly about crops around the world
- Try a different kind of food each week
- Assign a student to investigate the food of the week to make a presentation to the rest of the class
- Collect seeds
- Grow plants to sell for fundraising
- Maintain a butterfly and water garden
- Harvest their vegetables
- Learn about the habitats for wildlife around the world



“She also creates crafts for the kids during indoor weeks such as painting birdhouses to take home, making shade hats out of newspaper, etc. Ms. Wade personally raised the resources to purchase, construct, and install a greenhouse, a courtyard butterfly and water garden, and planting beds for vegetables and flowers on the school grounds.

“Ms. Wade’s class exemplifies the DAR tenets of citizenship and patriotism – children learning to love their habitat and the freedoms our country provides. “

The award was presented by Mary Ann Stasiak of the Maple Hill DAR chapter (and the Master Gardeners of North Alabama).



Reach for the Stars (continued)

The following awards will be received at the upcoming AMGA Conference:

Grey, David
Rice, Deen
Uhl, Gloria

Gold Badge
Gold Badge
Gold Badge

Butler, Nancy
Goodwin, Robert

Platinum Badge
Platinum Badge

Bish, Susan
Shaw, Mary
Simpson, Tom
Stokes, Elouisa

Ruby Pin
Ruby Pin
Ruby Pin
Ruby Pin

Carr, Helen
Fuller, William (Bill)
Wade, Carolyn

Emerald Pin
Emerald Pin
Emerald Pin

The Following are Pictures of Those present at the February Meeting:



Bronze Star - Sandra Smith, Eugene Roberts, Kathy Gardner, Barbara Stansky, Robyn Mann, Ann Schroetter, Karen Hansberger, Hilltraut Knox



Silver Star - Sonja Wood Sanders, Jessica Thornburg, Carol Cook, Connie Carr, Karon McGill, Susan Parker



Gold Star - Ken Tippie, Acacia Moore, Jennifer Johnson



Emerald Pin - Bill Fuller, Helen Carr



Ruby Pin - Tom Simpson, Elouisa Stokes, Mary Shaw

Let's do Herbal Compound Butter

Doty Henry (F'16 - Limestone County)

There are no rules; for several years the buzz has been about herbs. How to use them, when to use them and where to use them. I am going to give you one EASY, QUICK, and WOWing way to use herbs in an ingredient we all have on hand and use - Salted/Unsalted Butter or Margarine.

Herbal butters are an easy way to perk up veggies, meats, fish or breads. They are easy to make, and you can use any herbs you have on hand in the refrigerator, in the garden, or pantry. They can be fresh or dried. Always start with softened butter or margarine, add your herbs or spices, mix well, pour onto plastic wrap or put into a container. They can be given as hostess gifts for holiday parties or given to family members when invited to dinner. Everyone likes a handmade gift showing you took the time to make something special. You don't need to tell them how simple and easy it was to make.

Herbal Butters - SAVORY OR SWEET

Savory: which is a butter or margarine that consists of Herbs. These can be robust herbs like Rosemary, Sage, Basil; any herb that has a very distinct strong aroma. Also Subtle understated herbs that would be your parsley, thyme, dill, fennel, french tarragon. Mince sweet red peppers and cilantro for a colorful butter. Add pepper flakes for a spicy butter with minced garlic.

Sweet: which is a butter or margarine that consists of dried or fresh fruits, mint, lemon balm, lemon verbena, and spices such as cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg, zest of lemon, lime or orange or honey. It can be as simple as mint, honey and orange zest.

Herbal butters can be made to use immediately or refrigerated for up to 3 weeks. They can be rolled into logs, or pressed into molds and frozen for up to 6 months. These butters, if frozen must be wrapped in plastic wrap then put into a ziplock bag to freeze. Remove 15-20 minutes before serving, slice into medallions and serve on a bread plate or directly on grilled meat.

USES ARE ENDLESS

SAVORY

grilled bread
grilled steaks or meat
steamed vegetable
whipped into potatoes
crackers to accompany soups, stews, chowders
added to sauce to give it luster
melt in a bread dip
melt for lobster or seafood
spread on bread for grilled sandwiches

SWEET

toasted bread
biscuits or muffins
melted to serve on waffles or pancakes
scones
used in recipes



Italian Garlic Butter is loaded with parsley, garlic and parmesan cheese. Perfect for adding to french bread, dinner rolls or on your favorite filet.

Prep Time 5 minutes

Servings 12 ounces

Ingredients

2 cups salted butter 4 sticks - softened
2 tbsp garlic paste, or make **see below
1/4 cup parmesan cheese
1 tbsp dried or fresh parsley, minced

Instructions

Add your butter to you mixer bowl & beat on high for several minutes (Stand mixer if making a large amount or hand mixer)
After the butter is whipped; add in your other ingredients & mix with a spatula to incorporate herbs in butter.
Transfer to an airtight container & store refrigerated as you would your regular butter. If freezing, pour onto plastic wrap and roll into a log. Twist both sides and place into a ziplock bag and freeze. Remove 15-20 minutes prior to serving. Can be cut into medallions or cut directly onto meat.

** Peel clove of garlic, smash with side of large chef knife to release tissue skin, remove skin. Chop coarsely, drag blade against chopped garlic to smash and paste garlic flat against chopping board.

The Demonstration Vegetable Garden at the Huntsville Botanical Garden is gearing up for the spring planting. We had a workday in mid February during the warm weather, then promptly took a couple weeks off due to the monsoon and the freeze. However, we will be back at it by the middle of March. Our work days for now will be Tuesday and Thursday mornings starting about 9. We hope to add a Wednesday evening and Saturday morning work day if we can get a 'lead' for those times. If you would like to help but can't make it to a scheduled work day, you are welcome to go at your convenience as long as you have a work buddy – we don't want anyone at the garden alone. We will have a work list posted on the door each week or you can email me and I'll let you know what's on the list and where to find the shed key. We want to increase exposure for MGNA at the garden this year and have come up with a couple of ideas. Please let me know if you think of something else that would help. For now, we will post a sign in front of the DVG each time we are working stating that "Master Gardeners are here today – come in, take a tour or ask a question." We have also posted a QR code at the garden that is linked to our website. Each week, Karen Hansberger will update the blog with information about what was planted or harvested, what problems we encountered or information we want to share. We are hoping to concentrate on the demonstration part of the garden and divide the work load. If you would like to 'adopt' a bed for weeding and maintaining please let me know. Hopefully with the help of everyone, we can make this another successful year. For further information on the DVG contact Carolyn Wade (cbwade9@gmail.com)

Container Gardening - Lunch & Learn

Ann Tippie (W'12)

There were 46 attendees at the last lunch and learn in this year's series on February 26. Russell Houser, owner of Earth Touch Garden Center, presented a program on container gardening. Mr. Houser's presentation was quite informative and injected with much humor. Some of the subjects covered were requirements for containers, potting mixtures, fertilizing and, of course, choosing the right plants to complement each other. Mr. Houser dispelled the myth that you have to plant certain kinds of

plants in your containers, i.e., spiller, filler, thriller. The presentation was followed by a question and answer period which proved to be quite interesting. Cecilia Houser and son Matt were there to lend a hand and award some great door prizes. They brought some gorgeous container gardens to give away including some with houseplants, some with herbs and one huge outdoor container garden. One of our regular attendees brought shortbread cookies and chocolate for the others in attendance and the volunteers.



Go Bananas (or Greensand)

Mary Lou McNabb (81 Lifetime)

If you are throwing banana peels in the garbage, Stop! They are a valuable source of magnesium. Just what onions need and also benefits roses and many other plants. I have been burying my kitchen waste for many years. I used to put it in the compost but found many squash and tomato plants of unknown parentage coming up wherever I used that compost. Now I dig large holes about 12 inches deep in my future vegetable garden or flower garden and bury the peelings, and parings, except orange and other citrus peels that seem to repel earthworms and are slow to decompose, However these are said to repel ants. I may try that this summer. I have occasionally buried avocado seeds and often they sprout. Of course they would never survive our winters.

If you really have had trouble growing onions, try some greensand. Yes it is really sand and is harvested on the shores of New Jersey. It is usually for sale at independent garden shops and comes in 40 pound bags. The usual application is 4 pounds per 100 square feet. It needs to be applied in advance of onion plantings but may be used as a side dressing if you were not able to get it on before. I am sure it needs to be dug in deeper than the usual side dressing so it can benefit the roots.

Of course, when using sets for onions, select the smallest ones for the most successful keeping onions as the larger sets which were grown from seeds last year will send up a seed stalk and must be used immediately or it will spoil. One of the chief pests of onions are the thrips, yes that is both singular and plural form of the word. That is why we need to rotate crops. Thrips cause the green tops of onion plants to develop streaks and dry up before the bulb has matured. Eat more bananas or buy some greensand and have a more successful garden.

2019 Huntsville Home and Garden Show

Cathy Heads (W'19 - Morgan County Intern)

What an excellent experience for an Intern! I was there all three days and had a great time. Our location was along the front wall and lots of people stopped by with questions. There was always someone around I could turn to if I felt I couldn't answer one (which was the case on more than one occasion). However, we had several good pieces of information to pass out. The Saturday traffic was heavy, and we ran out of a lot of stuff, but the best Extension Agent ever (Rhonda Britton) came to our rescue on Saturday afternoon with new supplies. Thanks Rhonda! I would say we had well over 100 people a day, we got so busy at times I lost track of how many I was talking to. Most of the time we had at least four people there working and at times the entire length of our table had people standing in front with people behind waiting. So, in one weekend I collected 10 plus hours of my 50 for certification in the "Ask a Gardener" category and had fun doing it.



Garden Tools - Lunch and Learn Feb. 19

Helen Carr (W'98)

Anyone who has never been to a presentation by Rhonda Britton, our Extension Agent, has missed a real treat. She is a hard worker. She packed the hour showing us pictures of all her garden tools explaining why some are her favorites-they perform their purpose well and last a long time. Some of her favorites are gear driven loppers, Velcro bypass pruners, sprayers that you carry on your shoulder, cordless battery saws, augers, her new soil knife and her multi tool carrier that she keeps in her car. The proper tool for the job will do the best job and will last a long time with the proper care and it's case or holster will protect it and you too. Safety is top on her list. Some safety features-for stability is the 2 wheeled wheel barrow, leg chaps when operating your chain saw, plus buying a chain saw with a lock, protecting yourself from the sun, noises, pests, poisons and bodily injury from our bad habits. Use the proper tool for the job! "Work smarter not harder" is her motto. She told us about methods for cleaning our tools. She gave us lots of gardening tips. Did you know that a ring of oil around your shovel handle will prevent fire ants from crawling up to bite? Did you know that ants "float" together so they do not drown in a flood? We heard about a lot of unplanned "incidents" that can happen if we are not careful. The room stayed quiet, not that her voice is soft but no one wanted to miss a word out of her mouth. Rhonda has hidden talents! She can turn mundane everyday occurrences into comedies.



Advanced Master Gardner Basic Pruning Workshop

Helen Carr (W'98)

On March 2, 2019, the Advanced Master Gardeners conducted this presentation at the Alabama A&M University Winfred Thomas Agricultural Research Station on Walker Lane in Hazel Green. Representatives of the counties of Colbert, Limestone, Madison, Marshall, Morgan and Lincoln, Tennessee were in attendance.

Mary Howe and Tom Simpson narrated a Power Point Presentation and fielded many questions about trees and shrubs. The rest of the Advanced Master Gardener Pruners were on hand and prepared to answer questions about pruning vegetables (Max Campbell), blueberries (David Grey), and hydrangeas (Anita Buckley). Then Helen Carr used the information just presented to prune a tree. The red Maple tree was the door prize won by Dr. Walter Meyer.

Janet Boothe organized the presentation after the Advanced Pruning Master Gardeners were given a Continuing education class by our Extension Agent, Rhonda Britton and a Certified Arborist, Lee McBride.

It was a joyful occasion since it was also the birthday of Tom Simpson. Before moving outside to the practice orchard, we all sang to Tom, ate our box lunches and cake.

Propagation Workshop

Helen Carr (W'98)

It was a dark and stormy January day...well, not really, but it was definitely cold outside with that bone-chilling feel of winter in the air. Not ideal weather for putzing around in the yard, but a fine time to attend an educational workshop with sights set on a spring garden. Madison County Extension agent Marcus Garner led the first MGNA workshop of 2019, *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Propagation*. The workshop was held in the Madison County Extension office classroom and covered all types of propagation – from grafting to tissue culture. The workshop began with a Power Point presentation detailing different ways to propagate and what works best for which type of plant, be it woody, herbaceous or annual. While most folks are familiar with how to grow plants from seed, Marcus went over some of the things that can go wrong as well as helpful hints to aid in greater success. He suggested that often times seeds are old or were not stored properly, allowing fungus or bacteria to infect them, leading to low or no germination. Not sterilizing the containers or using unsterilized potting medium can also be a problem. He also recommends that you buy your seeds from a reputable source and to always read the seed packet! He continued with several ways to propagate from stem, root & leaf cuttings; the many types of layering: tip, simple, compound, mound, and air; and then division, separation, grafting, budding, and tissue culture. After a brief break, safety was emphasized with tips for preventing sunburn (long sleeves, brimmed hat & sunscreen) and insect bites/stings (repellant, long sleeves & long pants) and avoiding injury while using gardening tools (sharpen your pruners, right tool for the job!) A variety of common and unusual tools were on display and their use explained. The hands-on portion of the workshop followed, with Marcus first demonstrating technique on clearance rack pear trees and participants following his lead. T-buds, air layers and simple grafts were tackled with much success, though time will tell if they all take. An opportunity followed for those that wished to stay to pot stem cuttings and tissue cultures. All supplies were provided, including rooting hormone, which Marcus recommends be used any time you are propagating from cuttings. “It’s not magic – it’s called propagation” stated Marcus when class participants completed a t-bud. His advice? – Try new things, have fun with it, know your goals, and have a basic understanding of the principles of propagation. Thank you, Marcus!



Setting up Spring Composting Bins and the Basics

Kathy A. Gardner (F'16)

Many gardeners ponder composting in September when leaves begin to fall, but Spring is the ideal time to begin your composting journey. As you prepare your garden beds, set aside weeds, fallen or pruned branches, and other yard debris. Think of composting as building a lasagna with multiple layers serving different purposes.

First, find a spot in your yard on a patch of ground where the bins will fit nicely. While composting will work in the shade, a spot in the sun is preferable. Be mindful that your garden hose will reach the bins, or will do so with a good sprayer attachment.

Next, determine if you have enough yard waste to warrant a three-bin system. One or two bins will work just fine if you don't have the space or enough yard waste to make three bins worth the effort.

Bins are generally 3'x3' or 4'x4', but I recommend 3x3 because I can't lift a pitchfork beyond 3 feet. Bins are typically built with 12 ½ or 14-gauge galvanized fence wire that is sold in a roll 50-foot long. This is long enough for three bins plus some overlap on each bin. Use wire cutters to cut the roll into three equal lengths, roughly 16.5 feet long, for your three bins.

I find it helpful to have a second person assist with unfurling the wire because the wire is strong and it's cumbersome to roll it out prior to making the cuts. For each bin, secure the overlap with cable ties or wire. Poultry netting is recommended for the third bin to hold the finished compost. The bins are free-standing so there's no need to purchase posts to hold them in place.

To begin filling your bins, retrieve your twigs and branches which will form your base layer. The twigs should be no more than six inches long; stacked about three inches high, this will provide air pockets as the bin fills. Next, layer raw materials, referred to as browns and greens, or carbon and nitrogen. As you fill your bin, add a shovelful of dirt from your garden beds to add microbes. Add a few inches of browns. Browns can be shredded leaves, shredded paper, or hay. Add a few inches of greens. Greens can be fresh grass clippings, vegetable scraps, coffee grounds, or weeds.

Got weeds? Fear not. The heat generated in the compost bin kills the weed seed and prevents germination. If you are still skeptical, simply dry the weeds out in the sun for a few days before adding them to the bin.

The main difference between the 3-bin system and a 1-bin system is that once the bin is full, all you need to do is aerate and hydrate. You are not adding raw materials. To aerate, use a pitchfork to turn the bin contents once every week or two. A handful of compost, squeezed, should be like holding a freshly squeezed sponge. If the handful is dry, water the pile as you turn it with the pitchfork. I call this the refresh and rest stage. Our Southern climate lets us go from raw materials to compost in a month or two, depending on how often you refresh your bins.

With a 3-bin system, remember to aerate and hydrate the bins weekly. As the compost begins to decompose in the first bin, transfer those materials to the second bin. When bin two begins to compost, transfer to the third (holding) bin for later use. When you move materials from bin one to bin two, add raw materials such as browns and greens to bin one, and add a shovelful of compost from bin two and bin three into bin one, giving bin one a boost of microbes.



[Continued on Page 13](#)

Composting (Continued)

While composting is scientific, it doesn't have to be complicated. The ideal carbon to nitrogen ratio (C:N, browns:greens) is 30:1; however, a ratio of 50:50 will work.

For a healthy compost pile, keep surface area in mind. A cucumber slice will decompose much faster than a whole cucumber. I keep a sealed plastic container under my kitchen sink for vegetable scraps (but no meat or dairy scraps). I chop everything up before it goes in the container. Big items, like watermelon rind, get chopped up and taken right outside to the pile. I dig a hole in the center of the pile and drop the scraps right in. Since the bins don't have lids, it's a good idea to cover over the hole with some of the pile materials so rodents aren't attracted to the scraps. A pile that gets too hot, above 140 degrees, could kill microbes. Frequent aerating will keep your microbes healthy.

Once you harvest that first pile of compost, you'll be hooked on composting.... or making lasagne. Your flowers, vegetables, shrubs and trees will benefit from the soil amendment and all the nutrients it contains.

For more information on composting, contact Kathy Gardner at compostdemo@mginfo.org

For further reading:

Backyard Composting - <https://www.aces.edu/blog/topics/landscaping/backyard-composting/>

Backyard Composting Tips - <https://www.aces.edu/blog/topics/care-maintenance-landscaping/backyard-composting-tips/>

Composting Good for Environment and Homeowners - <https://www.aces.edu/blog/topics/lawn-garden/composting-good-for-environment-and-homeowners/>

The Do's and Don'ts of Backyard Composting - <https://www.treehugger.com/lawn-garden/dos-and-donts-backyard-composting.html>

Composting 101: The Basics of Good Compost, by Dave Dittmer - <http://www.compostjunkie.com/free-compost-goodies.html>

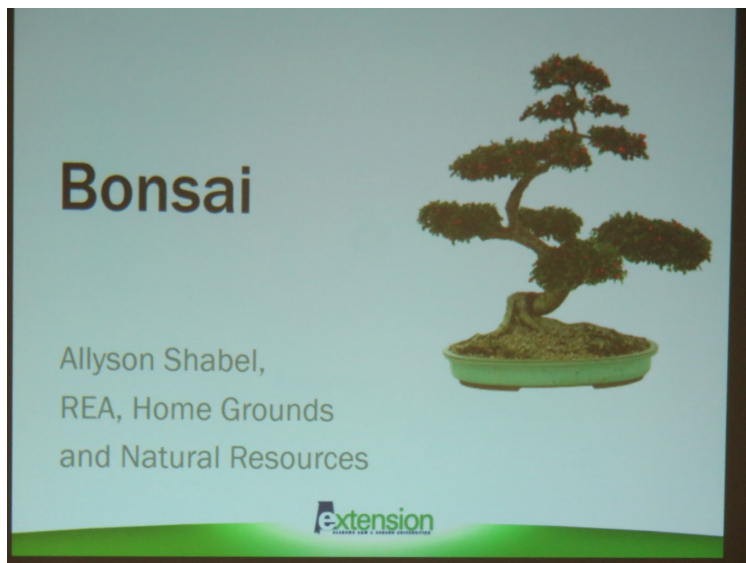
Sue Khoury to serve as AMGA Director

Kathy A. Gardner (F'16)

Sue Khoury has been nominated to be an AMGA Director at Large. She will be installed following the elections during the annual business meeting at the conference in May. She is also hoping to join the Communications committee at the AGMA level.

Bonsai Demonstration Workshop

Suzanne Kirkhuff (W'07)



You missed a good one if you did not attend the March 21 workshop at the Agribition Center. The *Bonsai Demonstration* program presented by the Limestone and Morgan County extension agent, Allyson Shabel was excellent.

We learned that the definition of a bonsai is an ornamental tree or shrub grown in a pot and artificially prevented from reaching its normal size. This was first practiced in China and later Japan and was introduced to the United States after the first world war.



Allyson showed pictures of the various styles of bonsai growth patterns and explained that the informal style is the easiest. Any tree or shrub can be made into a bonsai but for the best results, use a shrub or tree that has bendable branches. Allyson likes the Shimpaku juniper and

brought several of hers to show. Every bonsai is positioned so that the bonsai is viewed from the front. The bonsai's are trimmed and styled with that front viewing area in mind.

Since bonsai plants are formed from outside type plants, they should be kept outside in the elements not indoors in a window or they will eventually fail. The bonsai needs quite a bit more attention than I thought. They need daily watering in hot weather since their root system is modified. They need their growth frequently pinched back but only need repotting every couple years or so.

Allyson brought a shrub to show everyone how to make a bonsai. It takes time, maybe even years to get the desired look you are wanting. The plant is held in a small low pot by aluminum or copper wire and the branches are trained by using the wire to keep them bent in the desired position. You want the bonsai to look like it is an old, maybe even gnarled tree but in a dwarf form.

If you are using deciduous trees, you will need to remove the leaves. The leaves that come back will be much smaller since the root system has been altered.

For bonsai supplies Allyson suggested the Catbird Seat Nursery in Madison and Brussel's Bonsai in Olive Branch, Mississippi as a good source to order from.

Everyone left inspired to start their own bonsai plant.



2019 Workshop Schedule

2019 MGNA Education Workshops

Thursdays 10:00-12:00

Madison County Extension Office, 819 Cook Avenue, Huntsville, AL

Alabama A&M Research Station, 372 Walker Lane, Hazel Green, AL 35750

Alabama A&M Agribition Center, 4925 Moores Mill Rd, Huntsville, AL 35811

Huntsville Botanical Garden, 4747 Bob Wallace Avenue, Huntsville, AL 35805

Date	Topic	Presenter	Location	Time
May 2	Leaf & Flower Pounding	Crystal Kitchens & Ann Tippie	HBG Pavilion	4:00-6:00 then Chinese Lan-
September 19	Color in the Shade & Winter Gardening	Melissa Kirkindall & Elouisa Stokes	HBG Anderson Education Classroom	10:00-12:00
October 17	All About Pumpkins – decorating, famous pumpkins, trivia	Gloria Uhl & Cookie Kruvand	HBG Anderson Education Classroom	10:00-12:00
Nov. 21	Soap Making Demonstration	Doty Henry & Pam Price	Madison Co Extension Office	9:30-11:30, 2:00-4:00

Calendar of Events

April

April 6 Field trip to Jerry Akins' property. Meet at the Publix in Hampton Cove at 9 am

April 8 MGNA Board of Directors Meeting. 12 p.m. to 2 p.m., Madison County Extension Office, 819 Cook Ave, Huntsville. president@mginfo.org

April 11 No MGNA Monthly Meeting. Due to participation in HBG Plant Sale

April 11-14 HBG Plant Sale, Huntsville Botanical Garden, 4747 Bob Wallace Ave, Huntsville.

April 30 Earth Day at Hays Nature Preserve

Spring 2019 TriCounty Master Gardener Course continues at 9:00 a.m. and goes to 1:30 p.m. The class meets weekly on Thursdays through 2 May. Meeting locations vary. See www.mginfo.org for more information

See prior page for workshop schedule

May

May 6 MGNA Board of Directors Meeting. 12 pm to 2 p.m., Madison County Extension Office, 819 Cook Ave, Huntsville. president@mginfo.org

May 23 MGNA Monthly Meeting. 6 p.m., Speaker: Soozi Pline with a talk about Cranes, Murray Hall, Huntsville Botanical Garden, 4747 Bob Wallace Ave, Huntsville. www.mginfo.org

May 11 MGNA Plant Sale 8:00 am - 3:00 pm Madison County Farmers Market, 1022 Cook Ave NW, Huntsville, AL 35801, USA

June

June 10 MGNA Board of Directors Meeting. 12 p.m. to 2 p.m., Madison County Extension Office, 819 Cook Ave, Huntsville. president@mginfo.org

June 13 MGNA Monthly Meeting. 6 p.m. Speaker: Lauren Palmer from Bloomsbury Farms to talk about modern day farming, Murray Hall, Huntsville Botanical Garden, 4747 Bob Wallace Ave, Huntsville. www.mginfo.org

More information and registration for workshops and webinars at
www.mginfo.org. and <https://ssl.acesag.auburn.edu/mgmanager/calendar.php> (requires login)

DEADLINE FOR JULY ISSUE IS June15, 2019



Master Gardeners of North Alabama

Alabama Cooperative Extension Sys-
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