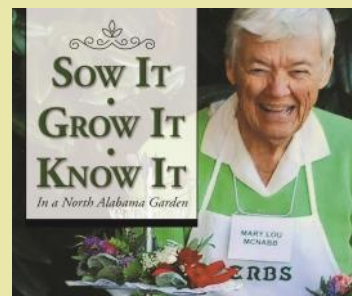




# GARDEN THYMES

Master Gardeners of North Alabama, Inc.



Book still on sale Page 8

2018 - Quarter 3

## MGNA Volunteer Open House

Ann Tippie (W'12)

On Saturday, April 28, MGNA held its second open house at the Madison County Extension Office. Many interns and master gardeners came by between 2:00 and 4:00 to check out the many project displays and talk with project leaders. The pH testing table was set up. Each project leader made a display with photos depicting what their project involved. Everyone had a great time visiting and talking to prospective members. Lots of door prizes were given out. A big thank you to the members who brought refreshments.



## MGNA 2018 Intern Graduation

Ann Tippie (W'12)

Studying done, volunteer hours put in and then it was time to celebrate. Interns from the 2017 Spring class enjoyed a dinner cooked by their class coordinator Alice Lawler and friends. The dinner was held at the Madison County Extension Office. After dinner, Alice Lawler and Rhonda Britton had the honor of handing out the certificates and badges. The decorating committee lead by Alice Brigman did a great job of transforming the classroom for this event. Seven MGNA board members attended the festivities and brought desserts. It was a fun evening with lots of laughter and fellowship among people who have one thing in common – their love of gardening.

### Like! Us on Facebook

You don't have to be a member of Facebook to view the MGNA Facebook page. If you are a member, remember to Like Us, and share the articles that interest you!

[www.Facebook.com/MGofNA](http://www.Facebook.com/MGofNA)



Left to Right: Alice Lawler, Sherry Vemmer, Diane Pratt, Hilltraut Knox, Robyn Mann, Trish Spencer, Sandra Smith, Mary Millhouse, Karla Poehlman, and Rhoda Britton Not Pictured: Dina Gonzalez

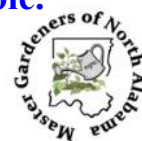
The *Garden Thymes* newsletter is published quarterly: January/February/March, April/May/June, July/August/September and October/November/December. Editorial deadline is the 15th of the month prior to publication.

Master Gardeners of North Alabama was incorporated in 1988 and is now a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation.

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**This edition is the first edited by Ken Tippie. Ken would like to thank Acacia Moore for all the help and insight that she provided to make the transition as painless as possible.**



Twelve members of MGNA and one intern attended the conference in Birmingham. We stayed at the downtown Sheraton Hotel. The accommodations were very nice and the hotel staff could not have been friendlier. We had excellent sessions, speakers and great vendors. The highlight of the conference, for me, were the keynote speakers: LEARN: Jim McClintock, “A Glimpse at the Big Picture...from McMurdo

Sound to the Cahaba River, the Vital Aspects of Climate Change”; NURTURE: Tom Underwood, “The Power of Plants - Nurturing a Sense of Place with Beautiful Landscapes & Gardens and GROW: Felder Rushing, “Yard Art - the Good, the Bad & the Unbelievable”.



Sue Bish, Sue Khoury, Diane Pratt, Mary Jane Reumann, Flo Helman, Dottye Pierce, Janet Boothe, Gigi Bullman, Ann Tippie, Cathy Brickey, Sue Toole. Not Pictured Mary Howe and Kendra Spadoni

### ***Give-A-Hand Recognizes Debi Bonkoski and Eugene Roberts***

At each MGNA general meeting, the members nominate a master gardener to be recognized for their volunteer work. The May recipient was Debi Bonkoski for her work with Seedlings and Sprouts and at the Family Fun Fest and the June recipient was Eugene Roberts for leading a fantastic Fun Fest at the VBC . Great work and thank you.

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# From The President

By the time this newsletter goes to print, we will have a new MGNA project – First Stop. Upon a suggestion from our Extension agent Rhonda Britton, we unofficially partnered with this organization a few months ago. Sue Khoury was key in getting the ball rolling. MGNA members Bill Fuller, Max Campbell, Brenda Tapp and others joined in to teach them proper gardening techniques so they could utilize their greenhouse and raised beds to their maximum benefit. They use the produce to help with the daily meals served and also sell some, along with cut flowers, at farmer's markets for much needed extra funds. Thank you to David Grey and Sue Khoury for joining me in planting the shrubs in front of the First Stop Day Center. We had lots of help from the clients there. Bill Fuller has accepted the task of keeping First Stop on track with their future plantings. Our chair for this project will be Sue Khoury.

Ask a Master Gardener is now at the north parkway Lowes the first Saturday of the month. We appreciate Mary Howe and everyone who signs up to be there. They also participated in Earth Day festivities at Hayes Nature Preserve in April, the MG Day at the DVG in May, our MGNA plant sale in May and the Family Fun Festival in June. Speaking of the Family Fun Fest, Eugene Roberts and at least nine members were there represent-

ing Seedlings and Sprouts. It's a full day but one where we bring awareness of MGNA to the public.



We had a busy month in May. A very big round of applause to Sue Khoury and Alice Brigman for the very successful plant sale on May 12. They both went above and beyond to secure plants and rummage to sell. We raised over \$4,000. on that day. There were many members who took special areas of expertise to oversee including Cyndi Lindblom with fundraising and rummage items. We cannot forget the hot dog lunches provided by Walt Lindblom. A special thanks to Max Campbell for all his help with cleanup.

Thank you to Tom Simpson for hosting the Master Gardener Day at the DVG on the 19<sup>th</sup>. The month of May also marked the end of the Morris School year. Carolyn Wade and her team celebrated with the kids on the last day for master gardeners. They

had an action packed year and are looking forward to the fall.

Our field trips have been going strong with the guidance of Allyson and Owen Hofer. In the last three months, there were field trips to the Jackson County Park, Libby Loose's garden, the Urban Gardening Festival in Tennessee, Harvest Feed Mill, Sue Toole's garden and 1818 Farm in Mooresville. There is a great trip planned to Jackson, TN on July 11 to the annual Summer Celebration. Check with Allyson and Owen for details. Hiking at McMullen Cove is the field trip planned for September. Also in September, our annual MGNA picnic takes place on Saturday, September 15 from 12 to 3. Once again, it will be held on Green Mountain. It's a beautiful place for good food and great fellowship. Don't miss it!

Jean Lake and the folks who work Horticulture Therapy could sure use some more hands. Jean says more men are needed but they would appreciate any new help.

I want to thank Acacia Moore, the former Garden Thymes editor, for all the time and hard work she put into producing the newsletter.

This summer is a hot one. Stay well and keep cool.

**Ann Tippie (W'12)**  
**MGNA President**

# Master Gardener Profile

*“Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” - John 8:32*



**Debi Bonkoski F'10**

**MGNA Secretary**

**D**ebi Bonkoski was born and raised in Southeast Wisconsin. She is married to Rusty Bonkoski and they have a son named Jacob. They currently have two adorable Shih Tzus Smores and Snickerdoodle. Since Rusty was in the military, they moved around until they settled in Madison, Alabama where they currently call home. Debi received a degree in Chemistry and worked as a pharmacy technician and a lab technician. She devotes a lot of her time to her garden. To further her knowledge in horticulture she completed the Tri County Master Gardener class in the fall of 2010. She is currently the Secretary of the MGNA branch of the Alabama Master Gardener Association. She first heard about the Master Gardener program when she lived in Washington State but didn't have the time to pursue it then. Garden interests include veggies, herbs and pollinator plants and she normally has beehives about 10 feet from her vegetable garden which makes cross pollination more likely. After Rusty got bees, she started researching more in depth what flowers bees would like. Part of her criteria for new plants in the flower beds is whether the bees will like it or not.

Debi grew up with gardening as a normal part of her life. Her dad grows vegetables and mom takes care of the flower beds. She reminds us that Wisconsin gardening can be very different than Alabama gardening. She remembers growing broccoli, lettuce and cabbage during summer. She states that she still can't bring herself to pay for rhubarb in the grocery store, rhubarb grows so easily up north whereas here her rhubarb survived and that's about it, it never produced

enough to make harvesting worth while. The three big things that surprised her when she started growing vegetables in North Alabama were: 1) The fact that there are two growing seasons, you can start things in spring and also have a second season starting crops in summer for a fall crop, 2) you can grow long season crops like peanuts and 3) cool season crops don't grow during summer in Alabama.

She is a member of the Seed Savers Exchange, She is currently growing 3 things for the Exchange, the Italian Sweet Fryer Pepper, the German Extreme Dwarf Bush Tomato and Bill Jump's Soup Peas. As a member of Seed Savers Exchange you can apply to try out seeds for their ADAPT program. In the ADAPT program the Exchange supplies you packets of seeds in exchange for reporting back on how well they did in your garden. It's a fun way to try something new and different. She said the soup peas are a beautiful dark purple and she hadn't had a chance to cook with them yet. The Ital-

ian Sweet Fryer Peppers are doing wonderfully, she could not resist picking a green one and trying it. The pepper was thin walled and very flavorful, it will be an excellent cooking pepper. The German Tomato plants are producing a few tomatoes that are on the smaller side, about 2 inches across. Her interest in seed saving started a while back. She was reading about the loss of genetic diversity in crops that are being grown and how many heirloom varieties have been lost due to neglect. She also thought that it was sad to think of how many fruit and vegetable varieties we will never have a chance to try. Her seed saving generally does not involve trying to save "pure" seed of one variety. As an example, this year she's growing 3 different kinds of sweet peppers together and states that she will harvest the seed from the plants that produce the best. "How will these seeds turn out when I grow them next time? I don't know", she states, "it's an experiment." One experiment that was successful she tried a few years ago. She took every type of cowpea seed she had, mixed them together and planted them. Some cowpeas produced early, most produced mid season and there were these pretty purple ones that finally produced in November (late frost that year). Planting a variety of cowpeas extended the harvest season.

New things she trying this year are Spilanthes otherwise known as the Eyeball Plant (the flowers resemble an eyeball). So far she has a few flowers with more flower buds ready to go. It's stated that the plant is edible but it's said to make your mouth go numb. Also, she is trying holy basil. The tea made out of dried holy basil was found to be quite good.



# Habitat for Humanity Landscape Plantings 2018

Sue Khoury (W '13)

How do we engage with and make a difference to new homeowners in Madison County and metro Huntsville? One way is through our partnership with Habitat for Humanity (H4H.) As most people probably know, H4H builds new homes for people who otherwise wouldn't or couldn't qualify for traditional home ownership loans. The houses are built using all-volunteer labor, including that of potential new owners. While that effort is underway, MGNA conducts classes designed to educate new homeowners about gardening and lawncare, and also designs and then supervises the installation of a new ornamental landscape.

I assumed the chairmanship of this partnership earlier this year, and, after assessing existing builds, installations, and the (lack of) landscaping experience of new homeowners, I engaged current North Alabama Wildflower Society President, MGNA member, and native plants expert Anna Bright about designing a landscape plan that would incorporate native plants. More drought-tolerant and less maintenance-intensive natives are also better for our local birds and pollinators, and Anna dove into the design with enthusiasm and her incredible expertise. Soon, we had a landscape design that could be customized to different home sizes but also utilized mostly native perennials, shrubs, and trees, as well as a "kitchen garden" composed of popular herbs.

We agreed to oversee the planting of 6 new landscapes for 2018, and didn't have much of a budget for the plant materials, so my first challenge was finding low-cost providers. I found plants at the HBG Spring Plant Sale, our own Plant Sale, member gardens, and online sources. Also, First Stop, a new MGNA project, is



growing some herbs for us! Most plants have spent their early lives in my yard or driveway, where I feed and water them according to their needs until the Habitat POC notifies me that a new homeowner is ready for his/her/their installation. We need large numbers of native perennials, so I hope our members will be generous in donating some in the future!

Here are a few photos from our first installation of the year, which was in NW Harvest. Habitat volunteers dug all the holes, watered everything, and covered the new Bermuda grass seed with straw provided by Habitat. The new homeowner has native perennials, grasses, shrubs, and an Eastern redbud tree, and a handout describing each and how to care for them. The H4H coordinator is delighted with our efforts to date and the homeowners are grateful to have green spaces customized to their new homes.

In addition to the six homes we'll plant this year, we are planning to add a Community Vegetable Garden adjacent to the 2017 builds on Pisgah Circle in NW HSV. We've received permission from Habitat and the next-door neighbor to construct them and will engage a Boy Scout Eagle Scout candidate to build the needed raised beds. We hope the Pisgah neighbors will bond over their new veggie beds.

If you'd like to volunteer with the Habitat for Humanity landscape installations or the new Community Garden, please contact Sue Khoury, [suekhoury@knology.net](mailto:suekhoury@knology.net). Again: H4H provides the volunteers to dig holes, rake, water, etc. We are just there to supervise and answer questions, and to provide the plant materials.



# Lets Have a Plant Sale!

Sue Khoury (W '13)

After all, we're Master Gardeners: what better way to share our expertise than to sell plants and advise people on how to care for them? We can make some money, increase our community presence, show off our knowledge...



Just 5 short years ago the decision was made to hold a fund-raising plant sale. We hadn't done so before because we'd always focused our early spring efforts on HBG's plant sale. In fact, we don't even hold a monthly meeting in April for that reason! But someone asked, "Why \*not\* an MGNA plant sale?" and we were off and running. We were pretty successful that year, raising just over \$2K by selling plants in the Extension classroom. The following year our signs were removed (by HSV city crews) from HSV right-of-ways, and the weather didn't cooperate, so our proceeds dropped a bit. Undaunted and with many lessons learned, we proceeded to exceed the first year's proceeds in year 3, hosted at the Farmers Market by \$1K. And last year, despite the MGNA-hosted state conference just the week before, we cleared over \$3K again. It was a remarkable achievement by a very dedicated team.

This year, with a new planning process, outstanding execution by the subcommittee chairs, lots and lots of diggers, a new member with a backyard greenhouse, the best Plant Sale co-chair on the planet (Alice B.), and some absolutely stunning raffle items, we actually topped \$4,000! And we're considering a smaller fall sale, with just shrubs, trees, and perennials. A huge *Thank You* to all who helped this year!

Yet, we keep hearing about the much more successful and varied plant sales hosted by other MG associations. Why are they able to raise tens of thousands of dollars? Why are their plants so mature? How is it they can host so many onsite workshops and demonstrations during their sales? How do they attract such large crowds?

First and foremost, they have or have access to large, com-

mercial greenhouse space throughout the year. While we rely on members dividing or otherwise digging plants from their own gardens (in the spring) to donate to our sales, other organizations have been growing indoors, year-round, plants to sell in April. We use plastic containers begged from other members or local big box stores. We don't furnish potting soil or anything else: we ask members and interns to furnish whatever is needed, because we expect they'll be digging up plants from the ground, soil and all. We have neither the means nor the greenhouse space to grow plants for the sale. Could we budget for some soil, seeds, etc.? Yes, but only if we had a solid commitment from a fairly large number of growers within the organization. Right now, we don't see that as a possibility.

Are there local greenhouse possibilities? The best and most centrally located is the old Home Depot greenhouse attached to Burlington (Coat Factory.) However, the developers and leasing agents have so far refused to respond to my requests. If anyone knows of a different, \*centrally located\* (to Madison, HSV, and Madison County) commercial greenhouse we could use, we'd love to hear from you! Ditto to any one who knows the developers who could give us access to the "Burlington" greenhouse!

Second, we borrow, at no cost to us, the space at the Farmers Market. It's ideal because the custom tables are just right for our needs, it's a well-known, centrally-located outlet, and it's free. But we can only use it for one afternoon for set-up and one day for sales. Other MG associations have 2- or 3-day sales! To make matters worse, this may be the last time that we can use that venue: the Farmers Market is now opening in May instead of June. (Continued Next page)





# Plant Sale (Continued)

Sue Khoury (W '13)

While there aren't many local farmers who have saleable crops in May, there are plenty who will sell imported produce. The Farmers Market administrators don't care about the difference: they just want to make money leasing the space and support their local farms and artisans. Also, we can't allow any for-profit vendors to sell with us there, because there's a strict subcontracting process in place for Farmers Market spaces.

Finally, some other organizations have 40 or 50 dedicated Plant Sale volunteers who grow, stage, promote, sell, **and** clean up after every sale! We – the largest and most active MG association in the state – are lucky to attract 20-25 plant sale volunteers, and that includes the set-up, planning, digging, transporting, and sales helpers. We know this is a very busy time of year for everyone: volunteering, tending our own gardens, kids and grandkids winding up the school year, wonderful field trips, and much more. Still, if we want our Plant Sale to be a success, and we need the resulting proceeds, we all need to commit a few hours to it. If you can't dig or divide a few plants of your own, please consider doing so in other peoples' gardens! Volunteer to store and care for potted plants until sale set-up – that's an enormous task currently executed mainly by the sale co-chairs! We always need someone to catalogue the donated plants so our sellers and helpers can easily answer customer questions during the sale. (We have a template! Just fill in the blanks!) Offer to store the "garden-themed rummage sale" items and deliver them to the Market on set-up day. Solicit plant donations from other members or interns. Solicit plastic flats from area retailers. Spread the word: share our Plant Sale flyer and info to your garden clubs, neighborhoods, church groups, PTAs, friends, and family! Offer to research and document donated plants. Offer to be a sale subcommittee chair. Create or solicit a unique raffle or silent auction item. Offer your trailer or truck to transport plants to the annual sale. Donate soil, containers, or rummage sale items! In other words, get involved!

Only with much greater participation can we hold a blockbuster plant sale each year. The proceeds fund, in large part, the MGNA projects and committees that seem to be important to you. Won't you join us in creating an event that rivals what other associations do? No matter what, you can always email us at [master-gardenersofnorthalabama@gmail.com](mailto:master-gardenersofnorthalabama@gmail.com). We will get back to you very quickly.



## 1818 Farms

Ameree Young (F'13)



There were approximately 20 Master Gardeners who came to the 1818 Farm tour on Monday, June 11<sup>th</sup>, to hear our tour guide, Natasha McCreary talk to our group about the 1818 farm operation. We saw chickens, pot-bellied pigs do tricks, lambs, goats and sheep. The farm only has egg-laying hens and the eggs are sold locally to customers. The hens are fed a special grain, but are allowed to forage for insects too. Every year there is a sheep shearing day, where all the sheep are sheared. The wool is sent to Pennsylvania to be cleaned and processed.

The flower growing operation is seasonal, and bouquets of fresh flowers are sold locally in Huntsville at various locations. They also have a delivery service.

We also learned about the wonderful 1818 products that are sold in Huntsville too at different locations.



## Earth Day

Ann Tippie (W'12)

The Ask A Master Gardener team, headed up by Mary Howe, and the Seedlings and Sprouts team headed by Ann Tippie (filling in for Eugene Roberts) spent a busy four hours at the Hays Nature Preserve on Saturday, April 21 celebrating Earth Day. The weather was beautiful and approximately 230 people came by our table. Cyndi Lindblom was on hand to answer questions with Mary. Muriel Dunlaptuk, Brenda Swanner and Susan Francis helped 100 children plant a seed.



## Family Farm Day and Market

Eugene Roberts (W'12)

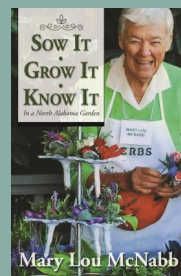
On April 7th, the Family Farm Day & Market was held by the Tennessee Valley Women in Agriculture at the Alabama A&M Agribition Center. The event was free for the public and had lots of youth friendly activities. The Master Gardeners of North Alabama had a booth where we had Plant a Seed, Ask a Master Gardener, and Composting activities and information on Alabama gardening. We had 7 people assist in the booth during the day. We had 261 people stop by. A lot of kids went home with squash, beans, or sunflower seeds planted in a cup. Adults were treated to gardening and composting advice.



## Sow It - Grow It - Know It

By our own Mary Lou McNabb

Packed with humor and great gardening tips, Mary Lou McNabb's book is a treasure "I have written this book to help others appreciate the beauty of the earth and all of its amazing creatures and to encourage all who read it to preserve it for generations to come." Mary Lou McNabb





# Morris Elementary Year End Highlights

Carolyn Wade (W '12)

Twenty eight fifth graders at Morris P-8 School completed nine months of study and have qualified as our newest class of Junior Master Gardeners. This year has been the most interesting so far. We had twice the number of students we've had any year since starting the program 5 years ago. We did not have a greenhouse or designated area for supplies or classes. We seemed to have an overabundance of rainy 'Tuesday's' (our class day). But the positives far outweighed the negatives.

We had great support from our teacher, Jan Coryell-Mahone, as well as all the staff at the school. The Leadership Huntsville Class 'adopted' our Outdoor Classroom (Courtyard) project. Helping Hands from Boeing are leading the team of volunteers to erect our new greenhouse which we hope will be completed by the end of July. Huntsville Botanical Garden and the Huntsville Community Foundation helped raise funds for the Greenhouse and Outdoor Classroom plus provided supplies, tours and support for the school and program. The HBG Guild provided vegetable plants for EVERY 5<sup>th</sup> grade student to take home in April.

Without the greenhouse this year, we had to concentrate more on 'classroom events'. These included classes on edible seeds, birds in the winter, pollinators, herbs, sun effects and precautions, composting and many more. The students made compost bins early in the year, adding items they would normally throw in the trash (plastic tops, pencils, coins) then stored the small bins until May when they were opened to see what had decomposed. It was an awesome lesson on recycling and composting that I hope will stick with them. We added in 'cooking' classes as well – making deviled eggs, guacamole, fruit pizzas and more.

We took trips to the HBG vegetable and herbs gardens, butterfly house and the Lego exhibit. Our



class went to the Spring plant sale and purchased vegetable plants to take home as well as flowers to plant in our Outdoor Classroom. Vegetable container gardens were planted by the students to take home with the help of MGNA volunteers.

We added raised square foot beds to the Courtyard area with help from Scotts Soil and North Parkway Lowes. The students each had three square foot plots that they were responsible for planting, weeding, harvesting, and watering. The students planted flowers, cool and warm season vegetables and harvested quite a few pounds which they shared. Radishes were a huge hit as were the new potatoes. In May, the students planted peanuts and sweet potatoes for the new 5<sup>th</sup> grade class to harvest in September.

This is the first year that we have tried to determine if the students are learning from our efforts. The class took a pre test in September and a post test in May. ALL of the students improved their test scores. Four of the students improved 20%, many improved 40-60%, while 6 students im-

proved 80%! The program can be improved but at least we are on the right track – and more importantly, all those involved had fun.

Thanks so much to all of MGNA for your continued support – whether through your time, support, ideas, or monetary donations – we could not continue this program without you! A huge **thank you** to those MGs and Interns who showed up on Tuesday's from September until May to work with the children. We definitely could not have had such a successful year without these dedicated volunteers who gave so much more than just their time - Ann Tip-pie, Eva Conn, Gloria Uhl, Helen Carr, Jennifer Johnson, Allyson and Owen Hoffer, Candy Trowbridge, Mary Ann Stasiak, Kay Jacobson, Karen Hansberger, Kathie Gillies, and Rita Icenogle.

There was so much more that was accomplished this year. Watching the children grow, learn and mature was awesome. Developing personal relationships with them was even better. We are taking a short rest from the classes, but there is more to be done before we start back with students the middle of August. Once the greenhouse structure is completed and the water and electric connected, we will need to build the greenhouse tables, install the raised beds around the greenhouse, and install the rain barrels on the pavilion. If you are interested in helping complete these final items, please let me know.

Also if you are interested in joining us next school year please contact Carolyn Wade – we accept all comers, whether you can come each week or every couple weeks – you are most welcome.



# Demonstration Vegetable Garden Leaps into Summer

Carolyn Wade (W '12)

The Demonstration Vegetable Garden is growing by leaps and bounds, despite all the rain we've been having. Sounds wrong doesn't it. Unfortunately, the rain has caused us to replant several times and cancel some work days. On the other hand, the rain has cut down on our need to water. We have planted okra, tomatoes, squash, potatoes, sweet potatoes, beans, eggplant..... We are trying a couple different techniques this year as well. We have planted some lemon balm near some of the squash plants to see if it really does

deter squash bugs – stay tuned for the results. We have also planted squash and cucumbers and are trying to train them to grow up a cattle panel. The cucumbers worked great this way last year, so we will see if the squash follow suit.

Our Master Gardener day at the HBG DVG was held on May 19. We gave almost 100 tours and answered numerous questions. Thanks to those who helped man our garden, worked at the Ask a Master Gardener table, pH table or brought snacks. The HBG has asked us to assist with a

'member pop up event' in late June. We will be available at the DVG to give tours one morning and promote the upcoming Master Gardener Intern class.

Our work schedule at the DVG is Tuesday and Thursday mornings from about 7 am until... Please join us if you are interested in learning more about vegetable gardening or just looking to earn some hours. We have a great bunch volunteering this year – both Master Gardeners and friends. We welcome all comers.



## June Field Trip to Harvest Feed Mill and a Visit to Sue Toole's Garden

Allyson Hofer (W '04)

On June 2nd a number of Master Gardeners assembled at the Harvest Feed Mill in Harvest, AL, to meet with Rhonda Johnson. She gave us a tour of the nursery and showed us new plants for this year and answered questions about various plant subjects. We then traveled over to Madison to tour the lovely gardens of Sue Toole. She greeted us and mentioned the many areas and special plants she has collected. Sue specializes in Hosta and has hundreds of them; many in lovely blue glazed containers. This reporter was so mesmerized by the sights, that she forgot to take any photos or request anyone else to do so! Upon leaving Sue's we went down the road for lunch at Smokey's Barbecue.



# Huntsville Botanical Gar-

Master Gardeners volunteered at the Huntsville Botanical Garden Spring Plant Sale. MGNA was responsible for the procurement and the sale of all vegetables. MGNA also conducted pH testing and supported the “Ask-A-Master Gardener” table.





# The Happy Hostaholic

Sue Toole (F '99)

I love Hosta! I think by this time, everyone I know knows this about me. I love to grow them, show them, take pictures of them and talk about them. They are just wonderful plants. I have been growing them since 1986 when I bought a green one. Boy, did I not realize that 32 years later I would have so many, close to 200 and know all their names and characteristics. There are over 6,000 named varieties of Hosta. I am on the hunt for them all.

Hosta (which is both singular and plural) came to us from China, Japan and Korea. They are tough hardy plants that require very little care to grow, even here in the hot muggy south. While they do much better in the northern states as they must have a cold time, which allows them to grow much bigger than in our area, they do well with afternoon shade and lots of water in our hot humid climate. They are grown in the ground in most parts of the country but down here, at least for me, they seem to do better in containers. That solves the problem of root competition from the trees that provide them shade and also protects them from voles who love to feast on their roots. The only things you need to watch for when growing



them in containers is that the pots are freeze proof and the plants are well drained. I have lost more Hosta to root rot than anything else. Along with getting too wet in the winter, there are a few other problems you need to watch for; voles eat the roots, rabbit and deer eat the leaves and slugs and snails make a mess leaving little holes in the leaves. There are also a few diseases that can affect them like Hosta Virus X which will kill the plant and infect any near it. If you see bleeding across the veins throw that plant away, do not compost, just get rid of it and don't grow another Hosta in the same place.



My favorite Hosta are probably the bright shiny green ones like Marilyn Monroe, Irish Luck and Invincible. I also love the soft variegated ones like Touch of Class, Island Breeze and Ambrosia. But, then again there are the blues like Blue Angel, Tarheel Blue and Ulysses S. Grant. From the smallest Tiny Tears to the monsters like Empress Wu you just can't go wrong with Hosta, the Friendship Plant.

The Hosta Society of North Alabama is very active and a fun source of information and contacts for finding great plants not available in normal retailers. We meet the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday evening of every month in the Braham Springs Rec Center on Ivy Rd in Huntsville at 6 p.m. just behind the Senior Center.



# Horseradish is for more than Prime Rib

Cookie Kruvand ( W'99 )

*Armoracia rusticana* is an herbal root with a long history. Horseradish was well-known to the Egyptians by 1500 b.c. Early Europeans primarily used horseradish as a medicine. By the Renaissance, the root was a savory meat relish in Germany, and its popularity spread from there. Horseradish is full of nutrients like vitamin C, iron, calcium, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium and zinc. It is said to be a circulatory and digestive stimulant and has antidepressant, antibacterial, anti-cancer, antioxidant, detoxifying and expectorant properties. (Note: Avoid horseradish if you have an underactive thyroid.)

Horseradish can bring out the flavor in even sweet dishes, and it's a natural decongestant. This quality probably accounts for one of its folk names, "stingnose."

**In the Garden:** Horseradish will grow in almost any sunny location (heavy soils tend to promote forked roots), and thrives in enriched, well-drained soil. Allow plenty of space, since plants get between 2½ to 3 feet tall, and at least that wide. Dig or till the ground 18 to 24 inches deep, working in some manure or compost. It is propagated by root cuttings more than by seed. Young root cuttings should be about 6 to 8 inches long and about 1/2 inch across. Plant sideways or slanted to promote more root growth, at least 18 inches apart.

Horseradish is a perennial that comes back year after year. If left



undisturbed in the garden, it spreads by underground shoots and can become invasive. The flowers, which appear in the second year, are edible and have a mild horseradish flavor. Early, tender horseradish leaves have a pleasant flavor with just a touch of pungency and can be added to salads.

## Harvesting Horseradish Root:



Horseradish grows best in cooler weather—fall is the time for the greatest growth and the peak time to use the fresh roots. Roots can be left in the garden year-round and dug when needed, or they can be dug in late fall and kept in the refrigerator or in a cold root cellar. Some sources say you shouldn't harvest the first year. Others say the tastiest, most tender roots come from first-year plants, and roots left in the ground for longer than a year tend to be pithy and are more likely to become diseased. Therefore, it is best to dig the roots every year, store them, and then plant sections of roots in early spring. That means you will miss the flowers, but will always have fresh roots.

**Buying Fresh Horseradish:** Look for long, thick, brown-skinned roots with gnarly knobs. They will be 6 to 12 inches long and should be firm and free of soft spots. Roots stored too long tend to become soft and rubbery. Roots with a greenish cast tend to have a bitter layer under the brown skin that should be trimmed away. Store roots in an open plastic

bag in the refrigerator. As long as they are firm and free of mold, they are edible.

**In the Kitchen:** Raw Horseradish is an essential ingredient for a proper Bloody Mary, cocktail sauce, and grated into whipped cream to accompany roast beef. Its bitter note has a curious effect on other flavors, sometimes creating an unexpected sweetness in cooked dishes. The grated root enlivens salads, soups and sauces, and is often added to mayonnaise and mustard to make them spicy.

In most recipes, prepared horseradish may be used in place of freshly grated horseradish. Because prepared horseradish is preserved with vinegar, you will need to deduct some lemon juice or vinegar from the recipe.

Freshly grated horseradish turns brown after grating and loses its bite after sitting a while, so it's best to grate the root just before using unless it is to be mixed into a sauce or preserved with vinegar. Fresh or bottled, horseradish should be kept refrigerated: heat is the main enemy. Even when refrigerated, prepared horseradish gradually loses its pungency. Plan to replace it after three or four months.

When cooked, heat destroys the mustard oils that give horseradish its heat, and it becomes more earthy, sweet and nutty, though still slightly pungent. You can add it to root vegetable soups, stews and chilies. It can be baked in all sorts of vegetable casseroles with root vegetables, winter squashes, and members of the Brassica (Mustard/Cabbage) family.

**The Horseradish Capital of the World** is Collinsville, Illinois (also home of the world's largest ketchup bottle). Roughly 80 – 90% of the world's prepared horseradish is produced in the Collinsville area,

More information at:

Horseradish Information Council <http://horseradish.org/>

# Cilantro: More than Just Leaves

Doty Henry (W'16)



**Common Name:** CILANTRO/coriander - *Coriandrum sativum*

**Scientific Classification**

**Kingdom - Plantae**

**Family - Apiaceae or Umbelliferae (Carrot Family)**

**Genus - Coriandrum**

**Species - Coriandrum Sativum**

Cilantro was one of the earliest herbs ever cultivated for culinary use, dating back to over **3,000 years**. The genus coriander got its name from an ancient **Greek** word **Koriandron**

*Coriandrum sativum*—better known as cilantro or coriander—is an entirely edible plant. The leaves and stems are used widely in Asian and South American cuisines. Coriander “seeds” are the dried fruit of the plant (and inside each fruit is a seed). They’re used whole, crushed, or ground and are a common ingredient in Indian and Middle Eastern dishes and in vegetable pickling. The plant’s roots, while not as widely used as the leaves and seeds, are sometimes found in Asian curries and soups, particularly in Thailand. In general, delicate cilantro leaves are used as a garnish before serving or added late in the cooking process because they quickly lose their aroma when heated, whereas the heartier roots and seeds are typically added earlier to contribute to the foundational flavor of a dish.

**Seeds:** Toasty, soft, citrus flavor reminiscent of leaves but with more “perfumy” hints of peppery spice

**Roots:** Slightly sweet, citrusy, and vegetal

**Leaves:** Floral, herbal, bright, grassy, slightly peppery

**Stems:** Similar in flavor to leaves but more potent

- **Soil:** Plant cilantro in well-drained, loamy soil that has a pH between 6.5 and 7.0. Mix a rich compost into the soil before transplanting or sowing coriander into the ground.
- **Sun:** Cilantro thrives in full as well as little sunlight. However, cilantro will bolt as soon as the temperatures rise. It is very sensitive to heat and, as a survival mechanism, the plant quickly sends up flowers and goes to seed.
- **Water:** Water the plant regularly to keep the soil moist and fertile.
- **Spacing:** Plant seeds in succession, sowing them 1 to 2 inches apart in two-week intervals. This ensures a longer, continual harvest.
- **Companion planting:** Cilantro can be planted with any herb as it is a good companion herb. You can also plant cilantro alongside tomato plants. Their added shade will enable you to stretch your tomato harvest in the warmer months.

## CILANTRO-LIME GREMOLATA

### Ingredients

- 1 1/2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh [cilantro](#)
- 1 small [garlic clove](#), minced
- 1 teaspoon finely grated zest of [lime](#)
- 1 tablespoon finely grated [parmesan cheese](#)
- [salt](#) to taste.

Mix together and sprinkle over Fish, Chicken, Beef, Pork, Pasta etc...

Photo/credit: <https://www.cooksillustrated.com>

Data Source credits: <https://www.cooksillustrated.com>

<http://thomodernvedic.com/herbs-natural-foods/coriander-cilantro>

Recipe credit: <http://www.grouprecipes.com>



# Calendar of Events

## July

**July 9** MGNA Board of Directors Meeting. 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. Madison County Extension Office, 819 Cook Ave, Huntsville.  
[president@mginfo.org](mailto:president@mginfo.org)

**July 12** MGNA Monthly Meeting. 6 p.m. Speaker Soozi Pline: Straw Bale Gardening. Murray Hall, Huntsville Botanical Garden, 4747 Bob Wallace Ave, Huntsville.  
[www.mginfo.org](http://www.mginfo.org)

**July 11-13 Field Trip:** Summer Celebration at Jackson, TN with special added tours of several gardens in the area. As well as many informative lectures, a super great plant sale, even a cooking demonstration.  
[www.mginfo.org](http://www.mginfo.org)

**July 12** Rainwater harvesting workshop at Decatur's Farmers Market, at 211 1st Ave SE, Decatur. 5:30 to 7:30pm. Reservations Myra Badger at 256.773.2549 or [mjb00017@aces.edu](mailto:mjb00017@aces.edu)

## August

**August 3** All Bugs Good and Bad Webinar Series: Bees, Wasps, and Hornets, Oh My! Event starts: Friday, August 3 at 1:00 pm CDT Event ends: Friday, August 3 at 2:00 pm CDT Location: TBA

**August 6** MGNA Board of Directors Meeting. 12 p.m. to 2 p.m. Madison County Extension Office, 819 Cook Ave, Huntsville.  
[president@mginfo.org](mailto:president@mginfo.org)

**August 9** MGNA Monthly Meeting. 6 p.m. Speaker: Sue Khoury/Tim Davis First Stop. Murray Hall, Huntsville Botanical Garden, 4747 Bob Wallace Ave, Huntsville. [www.mginfo.org](http://www.mginfo.org)

## September

**September 7** All Bugs Good and Bad Webinar Series: Winterizing Your Home to Keep Out Pests Event starts: Friday, September 7 at 1:00 pm CDT Event ends: Friday, September 7 at 2:00 pm CDT Location: TBA

**September 9** MGNA Board of Directors Meeting. 12 p.m. to 2 p.m. Madison County Extension Office, 819 Cook Ave, Huntsville.  
[president@mginfo.org](mailto:president@mginfo.org)

**September 15** MGNA Annual Picnic. 12 p.m. to 3p.m Green Mountain Nature Trail Pavilion 5000 Nature Trail Rd SE, Huntsville.  
[www.mginfo.org](http://www.mginfo.org)

**September 20 Educational Workshop:** Fall Vegetable Gardening Taught by MG Tom Simpson 10am - 12pm Alabama A & M University: Agribition Center, 4925 Moores Mill Rd, Huntsville  
[www.mginfo.org](http://www.mginfo.org)

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

**DEADLINE FOR FALL ISSUE IS SEPTEMBER 15, 2018**

# Upcoming Events




**MGNA ANNUAL**

**GREEN MOUNTAIN PAVILION**  
(Newly refurbished)


**Saturday, September 15**  
**12:00 to 3:00**

Watch for signup email  
Drinks, paper goods and utensils will be provided.

**Kendra Spadoni**  
[Kendra.spadoni@gmail.com](mailto:Kendra.spadoni@gmail.com)



Become A  
Certified




## Master Gardener Volunteer with A.C.E.S

Learn how to grow a healthy landscape or your own vegetable garden, and serve the community.

Become a certified Master Gardener volunteer under the Alabama Master Gardener volunteer program and the Alabama Cooperative Extension System.

The 2018 Fall TriCounty Master Gardener Course for Limestone, Madison and Morgan counties starts August 9 through Nov 8. Apply by Aug. 3. The Fall class meets from 5 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Thursday evenings in Belle Mina. The Cost is \$140.



For more info contact:  
Rhonda Britton at the Alabama Cooperative Extension System

(256) 532-1578 [rcb0003@aces.edu](mailto:rcb0003@aces.edu)


### Pre-Conference Activities

**May 8, Registration begins at 11:00**

- Self-guided tours of area sites. Information will be in the registration packets and at the desk.
- Meet the vendors and sign up for vendor booth prizes.
- Visit the Silent Auction room.
- Guided tours; sign up will be required. Tour times will be announced in the registration packet.
- Advanced MG Networking with Mallory Kelley

**Dr. Neil Lamb 5:00 – 6:00 p.m.**

### What's A Spouse To Do?




Choose from fishing, boating on several local lakes, antiquing, thrift stores, shopping, a-pick farms, bird watching trails, Boat Pro Shops, historic Montgomery (45 minutes south), historic Downtown Prattville (30 minutes south) and American Village (30 minutes west).

Robert Trent Jones Golf Course, in Prattville, is listed in the Top 50 Courses in the U.S.

Local RV parks for those who wish to camp: Peach RV Park, Peach Queen Campground and Minooka Park.

[www.americanvillage.org](http://www.americanvillage.org)  
[www.exploresouthernhistory.com/mcctgmsery](http://www.exploresouthernhistory.com/mcctgmsery)  
[www.rlgolf.com/espinedell](http://www.rlgolf.com/espinedell)

### Party in the Garden



## HOE! DOWN!

**PARTY MEET AND GREET  
COME AS YOU ARE!**

Tonight is laid back so y'all come, have fun and renew old acquaintances.

Meet at the watering trough at 6:15. Participate in the ice breaker games, show off your line dancing moves, play some checkers and win prizes.

**Hoodown BBQ meal**  
**Special Guest Speaker:**  
**Jason Powell**

### Conference hosted by

**Chilton, Autauga  
and Shelby Counties**

## Your Invitation To Party!

**May 8, 9 & 10**  
Clanton Performing Arts Center  
Clanton, Alabama

# 2019

AMGA Spring Conference

Hold the date - MGNA Christmas Social 13 December 2018





Master Gardeners of North Alabama  
Alabama Cooperative Extension Sys-  
tem

