



GARDEN THYMES

Master Gardeners of North Alabama, Inc.

Third Quarter 2023

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Podcast
- AMGA Fall Seminar

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A Word from Our President . . .

Carol Weand (F18)

The past three months have been filled with Master Gardener events providing enjoyable and educational opportunities.

In April many of us traveled to Tuscaloosa for the state conference. We heard multiple excellent speakers on diverse and intriguing aspects of gardening. We also enjoyed visiting with MGNA members and others from all over the state. And of course, most of us dropped a few dollars for plants and other needed accouterments.

Two weeks later MGNA hosted our annual plant sale at the Agribition Center. Thanks to the Plant Sale Committee and numerous volunteers whose diligence paid off in a very successful plant sale.

In May several members went to Auburn, AL, for a two-day trip to visit three different gardens: Scott’s Garden at Lake Martin, the Arboretum at Auburn and Pat Dye’s Crooked Oaks Farm with over 50 species of Japanese maples. Ameree Young planned the trip, and everyone had a great time.

We also had two informative workshops concerning propagation and nuisance wildlife management. Our next workshop in September concerns hydrangeas, presented by Gigi Bullman. Our big event in September is hosting the State Fall Seminar.

We are conflicted -- sad to learn Rhonda Britton is leaving the Madison County REA but happy she is going to a position of greater opportunities. We wish her success in her new endeavor.

At home I learned all about swarming bees when a tree fell over our fence. There were apparently three different swarms in the hollows. A Master Gardener told me who to contact -- the Madison County Beekeeper Association -- to locate a beekeeper to save the bees. He visited daily for three days to gather all the bees and remove them safely to his house. Count on a Master Gardener to help you solve your problems.

I hope each of you has a great and safe summer.

Conference picture on page 2

PODCAST

By Jean Lee (W95)



Dr. Brian Brown, Regional Extension Agent for Northeast Alabama, recently interviewed Master Gardeners Mary Lou McNabb, Elouisa Stokes, and Jean Lee. These individuals were selected because of their long association with the Alabama MG program. As we all know, Mary Lou brought the concept of the MG program to Alabama. Elouisa was a member of the first Alabama MG class in 1981. Jean, who took the class in 1995, has held many leadership roles including local and state president. The podcast, “From the Ground Up,” which focused on the MG program from its beginning to where it is going in the future, will be released later by Extension.

2023 AMGA Conference Attendees



Backrow L-R: Janet Boothe, Cyndi and Walt Lindblom, Carol Weand, Karen Kirk Williams, Debbie Bonkoski, Jean Lee, Gigi Bullman, Tom Simpson, Suzanne Kirkhuff

MORRIS GREENHOUSE

By Carolyn Wade (W12)

Another school year is over for our Morris Greenhouse program, and we are busy preparing for next year. The 5th grade teacher who has worked with us for the past five years retired this year, but we have a 4th grade teacher who is excited to step up and work with the program.

The year end plant sale was a great success. In addition to the plants raised by the students during the year, MGNA donated extra plants from their plant sale, and the HBG donated about 200 pepper plants. The sale raised \$650, and in addition EVERY 4th and 5th grade student at Morris received a free flower or vegetable plant to take home for Mother's Day. In May we also received a \$100 donation from a friend who has donated money every year for the past seven years.

"I have been so lucky to have worked with such wonderful, caring volunteers . . ."

The students decided to donate \$100 from the plant sale money to the North Alabama Food Bank. They also bought a bird bath for their teacher who retired this year and a butterfly house and insect house for Madison County Elementary School for their pollinator garden. The rest of the money was put into the Morris account to fund the project next year.

The greenhouse program started at the old Morris Elementary school in the fall of 2013, and we have worked with one or two classes each year since. We have seen many changes at the school, but the one constant has been the enthusiasm of the students, teachers and volunteers who have participated in the program. I have been so lucky to have worked with such wonderful, caring volunteers many of whom have been with the program since its start.

This fall I am stepping down as chair of the Morris program. The volunteers surprised me with a going away party and a beautiful friendship bowl for the garden. It has been a wonderful program to be involved with, and I know Carlita Edwards, the new chair, will enjoy it as much as I have.

Thank you to all the MGNA members who have supported us over the years.



Morris Greenhouse Volunteers (Lt to Rt): Julie Anderson, Jenene Castiligone, Carlita Edwards, Gina Gonzalez, Owen Hofer, Mary Ann Stasiak, Carolyn Wade, Allyson Hofer, Anita Reeves, Helen Carr, Tom Simpson, Ameree Young, Candy Trowbridge, Erin Catoire. Jan Coreyll-Mahone, kneeling. (Paul Zachary not pictured)

Master Gardener Profile

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OWEN HOFER (W 11)
MGNA DIRECTOR

Owen was born in South Dakota and raised on a farm in Bridgewater, South Dakota which is in the eastern part of the state. His father raised corn, wheat, oats, rye, flax, and soybeans plus alfalfa for the cows. In addition to raising crops, they had cows to milk, eggs to gather from chickens and hogs to feed. Owen remembers often walking barefooted out to get the cows from the pasture, sometimes seeing wild fox, rabbits, pheasants, and gophers. He had an older brother and two younger sisters. Owen learned at an early age all about farming and raising crops. He often worked in his mother's large garden though at the time he did not like gardening because you are always pulling weeds. He did like the English peas and strawberries he got to eat right out of the garden, however.

Owen went to Iowa State University where he received a BS degree in chemistry and later received his Ph-D in Chemical Physics (Lasers) from Texas A&M University. He had worked at Rohm & Haas Chemical Company in Pennsylvania where he met his late wife, Peggy. They had two children and four grandchildren. He moved to Huntsville, Alabama in 1973 to work on the Safeguard Program at SAIC which Richard Nixon started. Later he worked at Lockheed Missile & Space Company and retired after 25 years from Sparta. At Sparta he developed a laser system to neutralize landmines and unexploded ordnance. It was in Huntsville where he decided he really did like gardening and always had a large vegetable garden. Of course, you would expect Owen would garden; after all, his maternal grandfather, who emigrated from Ukraine (All of Owens' ancestors came from Ukraine) in 1875, always had a large garden and orchard.

Owen retired in 2008 after he had a heart attack and his late wife died. He then volunteered at Horticulture Therapy at the Senior Center and with the encouragement of Jean Lake he joined Master Gardeners in 2011. As luck would have it, he happened to attend a Widow and Widower's meeting and met a very pretty Master Gardener widower named Allyson Davis; they married in 2013. Allyson has two children and 5 grandchildren. It was Allyson who invited him to attend the MGNA monthly meetings and to go on field trips. They have since traveled to South America (the Peruvian rainforest, Machu Picchu, and the Galapagos Islands), gone on a safari to Africa, a European land and river cruise, and Master Gardener trips to the Canadian Rockies and New England fall colors.

Owen was the treasurer of MGNA from 2013-14 and introduced the use of Quick Books to track the finances. Owen & Allyson have volunteered at Morris School for the last 6-7 years.

MASTER GARDENER OVERNIGHT AUBURN FIELD TRIP

By Ameree Young (F13), Field Trip Coordinator

A group of master gardeners drove to Auburn for an overnight field trip May 9-10. Our first tour was the Davis Arboretum. Patrick Thompson, Arboretum Specialist, was our tour guide. The arboretum is located in downtown Auburn, and provides visitors a place to enjoy nature and experience the native plants and habitats of Alabama. It functions as an outdoor classroom for the Auburn horticulture students. Its primary mission is to display and preserve living plant collections and promote education, research and conservation. The Founders Oak tree is more than 150 years old and can be seen in the park. The pitcher plant bog was really enjoyable to see.

After completing our tour there, we drove to Pat Dye's Crooked Oaks farm in Notasulga, Al. We saw many varieties of Japanese Maples cultivars along with a waterfall surrounded by azaleas, camellias and roses. The farm features a hunting lodge with an outdoor pavilion which is used for many different local and regional events. Since Pat Dye passed away in 2019, the farm and surrounding 400 acre property will be given to Auburn University as he was a former football coach.

Our second day tour was at the home of Jim Scott on Lake Martin. Our tour was led by Jennie Curtis. This beautiful, enchanting botanical garden uses creative landscaping and hardscape to delight the eyes. It overlooks Lake Martin and has treetop walkways that lead to many garden rooms with unique vistas. There is a secret garden area that features a hidden cave. Every piece of rock, stone and brick had to be delivered to the location. A beautiful canopy of trees provides shade to all visitors. There are many water features, statues and whimsical play areas. There is a very large pavilion with lots of picnic tables and seating to enjoy the view of Lake Martin.

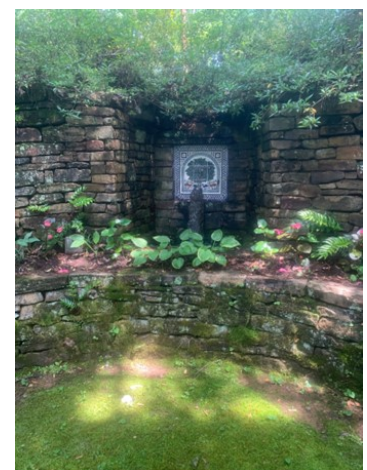
The garden has limited visiting time and is open only three months for large groups by reservation only and has been featured in *Southern Living* magazine.



At Jim Scott's Garden

At Pat Dyes: Tom Carr, Carlita Edwards, Loretta Stinnett, Gayle Stinnett, Bill Young, Ameree Young, Connie Carr & spouse

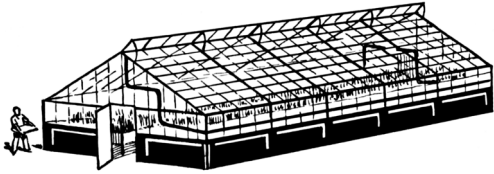
Seated: Lesha Martin, Carol Weand, Helen Carr, Allyson Hofer, Owen Hofer, Jennifer McCool



A couple pictures of Jim Scott's garden

Tales from the Greenhouse

Article and photos by Carol Umstaedter (W05)
In Corroboration with Josie Asquith,
Master Gardener Greenhouse Manager



Immortal Gift Plants. Aunt Bea's plant is failing, and you, MASTER GARDENER (insert superhero music here), can help her regenerate it to a young plant. All that is required, is to take a leaf cutting (knowing that you, MG, have looked up the type and ability to be leaf propagated). So, you take out your ever-ready, sharp pruners and carefully cut a two-inch cutting (or as many as you can if this is your first time) with a leaf bud near the bottom and remove the excess leaves down to two or three. Dip the stem end into rooting powder, make a hole in the potting mix in the small pot or seedling tray cell, and gently lower the stem into the soil. Be sure to plant it deep enough that a leaf bud is covered with soil. This will allow the bud cells to transform into root cells.



Keep the leaves moist so they won't wither and die before the roots can emerge. A simple way would be to place the top half of a clear plastic soda bottle on top of the seedling. When condensation gathers on the bottle sides, just unscrew the soda top to let the humidity rise out of the bottle, and then screw the top back on. Be patient and wait a few weeks. To test it, pull very gently on the stem. If it resists your pull, it has roots and is ready for a bigger pot. If you pulled it all out and no roots, you still have others to tug later. Remember Aunt Bea is counting on you!

ASK-A-MASTER-GARDENER

By Tom Simpson (W12)

Hi all! I am the chairman of Ask-a-Master-Gardener. All who volunteer and myself enjoy what I call the round table. We answer a variety of questions about gardening, “where, when, and how to plant. Some people are very knowledgeable and need just a little help while others we just send to the produce department, just kidding. This year we have worked at the Madison Public Library a couple times, the master gardener plant sale, Hays Nature Preserve and the Madison Garden Club plant sale. This program is a great outreach for Master Gardeners of North Alabama and we always have a good time.



Lois Stratton and Tom Simpson



Leigh Harrison and Lois Stratton

If you are interested in joining us, contact me at tmslv@gmail.com.

AMGA Fall Seminar September 26, 2023

Celebrating 50 Years of Master Gardening

**Location: Huntsville Botanical Garden Nichols Arbor
8:30-3:00**

**Price is \$40 which includes celebration cake, lunch, several
guest speakers, and garden tour**

**Refer to your June 20 MGNA email
for details and sign up form.**



DVG Happenings

Photos and captions by Susan Parker (F17)



This colorful planting of Merlot, Forellenschluss, Heatwave Mix and Red Salad Bowl lettuce was planted in late February and ready for harvest on April 23



Connie Carr and Jim Mullen (not pictured) constructed the bean hut. Connie planted rattlesnake pole beans.

May 23



Lynn Myers harvested garden peas on May 24, Carouby De Maussane. A snow pea was planted on February 27. Soil temperature was 60 degrees.



On May 24, Teri Estes harvested carrots. Not all carrots are orange. Teri harvested Cosmic Purple and Lunar carrots.



ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING, May 20, 2023

By Cyndi Lindblom (F13)

The State Conference in Tuscaloosa was a great success. The next conference will be in Daphne, Alabama at the conference center on April 22-24, 2024.

The hours reporting will be changing to a more concise format using drop down boxes in the future. Also there will be a QR code to put on the back of your badge that will take you directly to the hours reporting site for ease of entering your hours.

Workshop Happenings

By Suzanne Kirkhuff (W07)

We have had some very interesting and informative workshops. In April we had Extension Agent Marcus Garner present a program on *Propagation*. In June we had a program by Extension Agent Norm Haley titled *Nuisance Wildlife Management*. There were 65 attendees to this workshop. It was extremely interesting to homeowners dealing with wildlife pests.

In September we will have a workshop program on *Hydrangeas* by Gigi Bullman, our very own master gardener. Information on this workshop will be sent out closer to the time.



The *Nuisance Wildlife Management* workshop was very well attended.



GARDEN THYMES

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*Thank you to everyone who submitted articles
and pictures and to our proofreaders. We would
have no newsletter without you. . . . Editor*

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