

The Dirt | November, 2024

Mobile County Master Gardeners



MCMG
Officers

The President's Message

by Carol Williams

Dear Mobile County Master Gardeners,

Many of you may be reading this newsletter later than usual because you have spent part or all of October 24-26 volunteering at the Mobile Botanical Gardens Fall Plant Sale. Its importance to the maintenance and continuation of the Gardens and programs makes all the hours worthwhile. The Fall Sale offers plants suitable for planting this time of year, including my favorite, blueberries! Next spring, the MBG will offer many other varieties so it's worth shopping and volunteering for both annual sales!

Following the design class in October, the 2024 Annual Greenery Sale is officially underway with our order page now active at www.mobilecountymastergardeners.org. You may also have seen our own **Emily Arellano** on Studio Ten on Thursday, October 24, explaining our purpose for the sale and inviting all the Mobile public to order their beautiful greenery in advance. Our first crafting for the designs will be the Pinecone Party on Thursday, November 14. Our volunteers will again be painting, glittering, and drilling pinecones, okra, and lotus seed pods and gluing them on sticks for the centerpieces, swags, table toppers, mailbox toppers, mantelpieces, ornaments, and Cuppa Cheer, both preordered and store stock. There will be another gathering to convert the large painted okra and some newly harvested cotton bolls into the cutest tree ornaments!

Good news! We have all been praying for the people of Asheville, NC, since Hurricane Helene paid them a visit. We were also concerned about the nursery and nurserymen who create and send our Frasier fir wreaths each year, as that is where we have always bought them. Thankfully, their nursery is intact, and they will have our wreaths ready on time! We are so grateful that **Judy Stout's** grandson's Boy Scout Troop transports them to Birmingham where an MCMG will meet them and load all the wreaths into a van for transport to our Christmas Shop!

We will follow last year's schedule for pick-up of all pre-orders at the Archer Center on Thursday, November 30. In addition, we will have our own Christmas Store December 1-2 in the small auditorium of the Archer Center and will also offer some of our designs for sale on the Patio at the Mobile Botanical Gardens Gift Shop.

What do we plan to accomplish by working so much? This is our largest fundraiser of the year. The funds are used for education of our members and the public, but the most important education goal is donating \$2,500 again to the Auburn University Scholarship Fund. MCMG established this annual scholarship in

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2007. Over \$18,000 has been awarded from this scholarship to Auburn Horticulture students. Our MCMG advisor, **Jack LeCroy**, majored in Horticulture at Auburn so he could teach us how to serve the public with gardening wisdom.



The scholarship is given to a junior or senior from Mobile County enrolled in Auburn Horticulture with a minimum GPA of 3.0. This year we added that if a Mobile County student is not available, then one can be chosen from our nearby Clarke, Conecuh, Escambia, Monroe or Washington counties to receive the funds. We donated the full amount this year from proceeds of last year's Greenery Sale. Because those additions were made, our deposit arrived a little late to be distributed this year but will be distributed in 2025 along with the 2025 deposit of \$2,500, all coming from the proceeds of the Greenery Sale. Makes the work worth it!

The trip to the Crosby Arboretum provided the participants a beautiful walk, new discoveries, and a serene forest to study. We wished that more MGs had taken the time away from their everyday to enjoy this getaway. Below are a couple of pictures that I took.

Due to technical difficulties for this edition, I've had to omit the riddles and giggles. Thank you for your understanding. Enjoy all the work and parties of this month and have a happy and bountiful Thanksgiving!

Carol Williams, President
Mobile County Master Gardeners
251-367-0473



Pitcher Plant Bog at Crosby



Pond Reflection at Crosby



Chronicles

by Cindy Findlay

October has given us some nice cool weather to plant our winter gardens and enjoy the outdoors. Now we need it to hang on for our busiest time of the year, our Greenery Sale!

Our October General Meeting was held on Wednesday October 9th. Raffles, good food, MCMG merchandise, plus some new products for order and sale by Pottery maker, Susan Helton MCMG. Greenery Sale t-shirts will certainly make us stand out for costumers to identify helpers. **See below T-shirts for purchase.**

Auburn University Ornamental Horticulture Research Station has again this year offer the Mobile County Master Gardeners (MCMG) some of their plants that are "overstocked". This year was a little different as they sent out a list and you pre-ordered with an online form and a pick-up date of October 28th from 8-10am.

The Botanical Gardens Fall Plant Sale begins Thursday, October 24th, but many of you have been working unloading, tagging, placement and all the other hard work that goes along with getting the sale ready for the public. Many fun times are had working the check-out lines, pulling the wagons and all the other jobs! One of the most important is representing MCMG's.

Our condolences go out to **Linda Kloter** on the loss of her husband Brian! He was a dear friend to the MCMG and gentleman to all. Our heart and prayers are with you, Linda. Our condolences also go out to **Chris Lawson**, Intern '24, on the loss of his father this past summer. His memorial was held in September. Our thoughts and prayer are with you and your family also.

We had 14 birthdays in the month of October! So, Happy Birthday to you! If we missed you, please let us know, we love birthdays and anything else to celebrate!

October 23rd was the bus trip to the Crosby Arboretum in Picayune, MS, where a tour, an arboretum presentation, and ability to purchase plants that were left over from their fall sale.

The Interns of '24 have been so busy on the phone lines and all of our other volunteer positions. They are learning something new every day to include floral design and bow making for the Greenery Sale on site at JAC and MBG.

Wait!! Isn't that what we should all be doing?? Just a thought!

Going forward into November, keep up with **Theresa Davidson's**, In the Loop, and sign-up sheets. All things Greenery Sale will be happening soon!



Mark Your Calendars

January						
			1	2	3	
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

Oct 24-26-->MBG Plant Sale

Nov 14-15-->Pinecone Party-more info to follow

Dec 5-7--->Christmas Shop at JAC and some items at MBG

Save the Date: April 3-5, 2025, to attend 2025 AMGA Conference & Business Meeting located in Prattville, AL

Hosted by Autauga County Master Gardeners Association. Theme at the conference is "Fountains of Knowledge." Details will follow.

We Need You!

Fall activities are in full swing. That means volunteering at the Mobile Botanical Gardens plant sale, Pinecone Party, and the Master Gardener Greenery Sale. Look for reminders and details for all these events, If you would like a Pinecone Party T-shirt or a Greenery Sale T-shirt (new this year), purchase by Oct 24. See In the Loop for dates and times. Also save the date for the end of year banquet, now scheduled for Sunday, December 15. Time TBA.



Master Gardener of the Month

by Bob Howard

Some of you might wonder how the recipient of this award is selected. Well, several factors come into play. Principally, we look at how many volunteer hours they have **POSTED** on the ACES website. Sometimes we look at individual contributions and work during significant events on our calendar such as the Spring Festival or the Greenery Sale. Then there are times when we just marvel at what a Master Gardener has consistently done over a longer period of time --

- Attending MBG events, like Lecture Series, Tails & Trails, and plant sales.
- Working special events like the Festival of Flowers – making Waxed Camillas, assisting with creating the exhibit, and working the event.
- At the Caladium sale: organizing, bagging selling: attending meetings.
- MCMG Spring Festival: up planting the vegetable plants, then tagging and transporting the plants, and worked sale & seminars, even being a Dream Garden Docent.
- Speaking of the Dream Garden: cleaning the beds, planting vegetables.
- Working the Helpline and training an Intern on how it is done.
- Attending the Annual Conference in Baldwin County, and other seminars.
- Interacting with the public at Market in the Park handing out brochures answering questions.
- Mentoring an Intern: absorbing the Mentor training, mentoring 2024 intern, attending classes and working ed with the Intern.
- Always being ready to work with the Greenery sale with all its many tasks.
- Taking every opportunity to learn more through the Smart Yards program, as well as the Monthly Meeting speakers at meeting, and Seminars at MBG like the First Friday series.

I have probably skipped something, but she is always there to help and to work and to learn. AND she always brings the prettiest blue-eyed dog, **Beaudreaux**. Our Master Gardener of the Month is **Marion Platt**, Class of 2021.

Extension Volunteers Enhancing the Community

Mobile Master Gardeners relish giving back to the community. Giving back ticks off so many boxes: beautification of the grounds where gardens are restored and plantings are installed, healthy vegetables for resident consumption, and teaching staff members and/or residents about plant maintenance, not to mention fresh air and exercise for MGs. Mulherin Home, future work at Wilmer Hall, and in progress Kensington Rehab Center are featured below.



Crew 22 worked Sept 23 and continued Oct 14 planting daffodil bulbs and pansies. Mulherin residents will enjoy Fall pansies and look forward to Spring daffodils. Pictured above: Lisa Davis, Patti Hicks, Paul Barnes, Caroly Rooks, Mary Ann Tomberlin, Kathy Deckbar, Paul Ezell, Earl Gochey, Carol Mackey, and Mulherin resident.



Wilmer Hall is the upcoming site where vegetables will be planted for residents. This project is currently in the planning stage and **Jack LeCroy** is seeking volunteers. More to follow as the project moves forward.

Also keep in mind the Wilmer Hall food drive. Items to be brought to JAC.



Pictured at Kensington: Theresa Davidson, Marion Platt, Paul Barnes, Marianna Parker, Carolyn Rooks, Alissa Gochey, and John Mitchell.



Giddy Gardeners!



Wagons Ho!



Girl Power!

Prep Behind the Scenes at MBG Plant Sale

A plant sale the size of the annual fall event at the Mobile Botanical Gardens requires all hands on deck. Volunteers from MBG and MCMG provided some of those hands. Master Gardener volunteers off-loading plants, trees, and shrubs from trucks: **Judy Stout, Janine Brunet, Karen Ruckert, Lisa Davis, Gudrun Russell, Carolyn Davidson, Carol Mackey, Marion Platt, Catherine McLeod, Barbara Boone,** and mighty Volunteer Coordinator, **Theresa Davidson.**



Dirt Under Your Nails

Pansies

Editor's Note: Pansies just make us happy. Their petals look like jolly smiley faces. Keep on making us happy. Bloom on...

Pansies, a member of the viola family, *Viola wittrockiana*, rank high on a gardener's favorite list. Besides the color, pansies are easy to grow, do well in ground and in containers, and fill in a flowering gap in late Fall and early Spring because other flowers don't do well with cooler temps.

Pansies are actually perennials, but most gardeners treat them like annuals. They thrive in zones 7-10 but manage to grow in zones 4-6, although they undergo a dormancy period until temps start to warm up in the colder zones.

Plant these beauties in locations where they will get 6 hours of sun in soil rich in organics like compost. Adding a time-released fertilizer at the initial planting in beds encourages pansies to keep on blooming. In containers add a liquid fertilizer every month keeps blooms ongoing. Pansies have few pests other than possible aphids in the Spring and slugs later in the season,

both treated with insecticidal soap and slug bait respectively.

If the blooms are chemical free, they are popular as an edible flower in cakes, tea sandwiches or salads. No matter as an edible or blooms in your garden, they make us smile. Pansy Power!

Compiled by Dirt Diva

Sources:

Leanne Potts and Julie Fortney, HGTV, Aug 2024.

Fall Planting Tips

1. Focus on color (like pansies).
2. Deal with leaves. (makes good compost material).
3. Start or fill a compost pile.
4. Clean-up to start with a clean slate.
5. Don't forget about pests.
6. Protect from frost as needed.
7. Plant with Spring in mind.

Planting Bulbs for Spring Blooms

Plant bulbs such as daffodils and narcissus between mid-October and late November for zone 9a. After planting 4-6 inches deep, these bulbs need water while growing, so keep moist but not too wet to prevent rotting.

Buds2Blooms

Below: Theresa Davidson's yard full of various blooms.



Out My Window

Editor's Note: Debra Morrow is still peeping out her window. For that we are thankful.

Acquaintances

Bees are busy everywhere in my garden. Are they readying for winter: squirreling away or packing it on like bears for some kind of low-key respite? I like feeding them as much as I do birds and squirrels. I do not see their faces, but I know that they like what I am feeding them.

Part of their fall cuisine includes the fuzzy white flowers of Mexican bush sage. Coral vine twines among the plush spikes of the Mexican sage, camellia branches, the angel trumpet stalks, and the unpruned long wands of white spirea. Every coral blossom has had several visits by the same eight bees. Lots of revisits to the same blossoms. I guess the bees do not feed on all of the nectar at once. Maybe they do

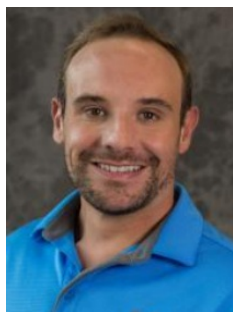
but forget where they have been.

The mealy cup salvia is another bee favorite. The flower spikes are so long that they are ringlets of purple, bobbing and wobbling with bees. Bees bump into each other. And buzz. One bee visits every small and fuzzy blossom on the entire spike. It is a long, long bob when the bee lands on the tip. Across from the mealy cup is a side dish of Turkey Tangle Frog Fruit. The bees cover this purple and white ground cover. Little bees. No where near the size of bumble bees, carpenter bees, or honeybees. There are two kinds of these little ones. One is bigger than the other and hovers before feasting on Turkey Tangle. The smaller of the two is quick. I guess he swallows fast on this Turkey Tangle crawl.

I recently discovered the green iridescent sweat bee. There were four alternating between two white Gauras. Beloved by the honeybees, also. Then, a mammoth of a bee — the biggest bee that I have ever seen — lumbers into another white blossom on the Rose of Sharon. All of its mammothness is covered in white pollen. There are about thirty blossoms on the tree! The carpenter bee likes this one, as well. The yellow cassia tree is a-hummed and a-buzzed, too, with bumble and squash bees. Neither of these two bees gives the purple and pink Mexican petunias a break.

Growing up, I was always outside in the yard. Mother insisted that I go. It was fun. I did not have toys outside, so Mother's urban backyard garden — corn, collard greens, turnip greens, tomatoes — were part of my adventures as were the flowers in the front yard. Yellow and white honeysuckle growing on the chain-linked fence. Mother did not know the name of the shrub with the big leaves and big bluish/pinkish blossoms. Hydrangea, I know now. I explored the Chinaberry tree — I remember the berries more than the blossoms. And the red rose climbing its own canes. But! I do not remember bees. I just cannot recall ever seeing any bees. Maybe Mother did not introduce the two of us. Maybe I was too young to notice them? Or too busy to notice them. Well! No more of any of that nonsense. We are acquainted now. And I am older and wiser. I take the time to notice.

by Debra Morrow



Kudos to Jack LeCroy!

Not only has **Jack LeCroy** received recognition twice in a major periodical, *Better Homes and Gardens*, he is also undertaking conducting a vegetable growing class at USA Center for Continuing Education. Regardless of the location at JAC or USA, Jack is reaching out to the community promoting education, a major tenet of Extension.

Speaker's Bureau Update

Libraries often provide opportunities to reach out to people for more than book lending. They also provide the setting for informational programs such as horticulture and gardening. AND besides lending books, some libraries also have initiated seed lending. The Moorer Branch on McGregor Ave. currently has a program in place. Library hours are M, W, F, S 9:00-6:00 pm, and T, Th 9:00-8:00 pm.

DO YOU HAVE A PET TOPIC YOU ENJOY? WE NEED SPEAKERS! WE CAN HELP YOU GET STARTED!

If you would like to be involved with the Speaker's Bureau educating and reaching out to our community with gardening and sustainability topics, please contact **Barbara Boone** (251-680-8263) or **Alice Marty** (251-709-1125).

Winter Sow with Leslie Maycock & Alice Marty

At the October MCMG General meeting **Leslie Maycock** and **Alice Marty** presented a program titled Winter Sow. Below Alice introduced attending MGs to the tried-and-true concept of seed starting using containers like milk jugs and soft drink bottles. Leslie demonstrated the "how to" of seed starting for vegetables or flowers with this method.



Weedonomics

Poison Ivy

Back in the late fifties, an old school singing group known as the Coasters sang these lyrics about a bad girl called Poison Ivy: "You'll gonna need an ocean of calamine lo-oh-oh-oh-tion..." but more to the point, let's refer to the current admonition "Leaves of three, let them be."

Any outdoors lover or gardener will tell you poison ivy, *Toxicodendron radicans*, is to be avoided at all costs, and because it grows in almost every state and in every climate and soil, the first thing to consider is to identify what might be poison ivy. The plant does, in fact, have 3 leaves, usually oval, roughly toothed and pointed. The middle leaf is the largest. In spring the leaves are shiny and reddish; in later months the leaves are reddish brown. Because it is deciduous, poison ivy loses its leaves in winter.

Why does poison ivy cause a rash? The rash is caused by an oily residue called urushiol which is on every part of the plant, leaves, stems, and roots, e. g. any plant part coming into skin contact. For some lucky few, though, poison ivy causes no rash because there is no sensitivity to urushiol.

Don't stop enjoying the outdoors, just be prepared and vigilant. If poison ivy is strongly suspected, wear gloves and long sleeves. A strong herbicide is probably warranted to eliminate poison ivy but confirm with Extension for exact chemical recommendation.

Sources:

Megan Francis, HGTV, June 2024

Caroline Bloomfield, National Gardening Assoc., Aug 2024.

American Academy of Dermatology

Mug Shots

Editor's Note: Pat Hall, a 2024 intern, comes to Master Gardeners with skills: leadership, advanced medical background, and the desire to help the community with produce and how to grow it. Pat will periodically update us with Mobile Urban Growers (MUG) activities.

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Welcome to our new column – MUG Shots. We are pleased to be invited to share with you all what is going on with Mobile Urban Growers (MUG). We are a non-profit organization that supports our local community gardeners and we currently work with 7 community gardens and 3 school gardens around town. Each garden has its own lead gardener that oversees the garden, and we support the work that they are doing – some gardens more so than others. Together we can share resources but need help from others, like the Master Gardeners and Interns. We have appreciated the help we receive from ACES and all of you and, with the expertise you bring to our gardens, we can be more successful in growing fresh fruits and vegetables that we share with our gardeners, visitors to the garden and local food pantries.

One of goals is to educate others in organic gardening practices, mostly by working one on one in the gardens. We support a Children's Garden Education Program that is part of the Methodist Inner City Mission's Afterschool Tutorial Program at Taylor Park. For the last 10 years, we have been going to Taylor Park each week during the school year and during their Summer Program, teaching the children how to grow their own fruits and vegetables. Besides gardening, our lessons support the children's school curriculum, and we also weave into each week's garden lesson life skills and STEAM \*concepts. We have a talented team of teachers we call "Team Taylor" that includes scientists, health care providers, computer scientists, engineers, public safety officers, teachers, artists and many others. These talented individuals volunteer their time each week, developing the lesson plans and working with the children in the garden. With the support from the Mobile Arts Council's Amp Up Arts Project and partnership with the FUSE\* Project, we expanded our children's garden education program to George Hall Elementary School this year and will soon be going to Florence Howard Elementary School to teach children the art and science of gardening.

There are many opportunities to be involved with MUG and we invite you to learn more about our organization by visiting our Facebook page and website (currently being revised). We are typically in one of the gardens each Saturday, weather permitting, so please join us and have some fun community gardening. For more information, please contact **Pat Hall** at 251-654-3935 or **Carol Dorsey** at 251-209-3483.

By Pat Hall

\*STEAM-Science Technology Engineering Art Math

\*FUSE-focus on giving every child an opportunity for success



## Bugs and Hisses

### The Bad Boys of Fall: Armyworms



Fall Armyworm

It's never too early or too late to be aware of those bad boys that will have a last-minute banquet or set themselves up for rest in a cozy cocoon. Listen and one can almost hear a Fall Armyworm's marching cadence "left, left, left, right, left" straight to your lawn. How can we defend ourselves? Read on...

Fall armyworm caterpillar's damage grass by chewing plant tissue. The worms are active at any time of day but are most active during the fall early mornings or late afternoons.

The moths are medium gray and have a lifespan of about 10 days. Eggs mature to larva in 2-3 weeks at which time they burrow into soil to pupate and later develop into moths. Overwintering populations in the deep South are the primary source of fall armyworms in Alabama.

During the larval stage the main turf damage occurs but depends on the turf type. Bermuda grass is the turf grass most often damaged.

Birds and wasps are predators of armyworms. Proper lawn maintenance can protect turf from heavy worm infestation. Insecticides may be warranted if initial control is not effective. Contact Extension for the recommended chemical control.

Compiled by Dirt Diva

Source:  
[aces.edu/resources](https://aces.edu/resources), Kesheimer, Held, and Cobb

### Gathering Lotus Pods at the Japanese Gardens

In Asian cultures, the lotus is considered a symbol of purity and enlightenment, however for MGs, the lotus pod is designated as an element for holiday decor fundraising. Lotus and the pods, *Nelumbo nucifera*, are the seed heads of the lotus flower. The pods start out as green and turn brown as they mature which are the decor items used.

Gathering lotus pods is a little work but fun, especially if you have the right tools to gather them, because to reach the good pods, one has to extend an implement to capture the pod on the edge of pond water, hoping not to slip and fall in. Of course, that has never happened, right?

Plucking pods is not the only satisfying part of filling a bucket. Growing around the pond are all varieties of wildflowers, a photographer's paradise. Below are a few of those flowers. Gathering below: **Cindy Findlay** and **Barbara Boone**.

By Barbara Boone



## Preparing for the Greenery Sale

In preparation for the annual Greenery Sale, interns in the 2024 class, as well as a few MGs, **Pam Noerr**, **Marianna Parker**, and **Lydia Criswell**, attended a floral design class led by Atmore florist, **Joyce Petty**, and a bow making class led by **Nina Ward**. Assisting everyone was **Paula Reeves** and **Emily Arrellano**, the Master Gardeners facilitating the design portion of the Greenery Sale. Paula reports that all interns did a good job-even the guys in the classes!



Joyce Petty Leading Interns in Design Class



Bow Making Instruction with Nina Ward



## Fall in the Dream Garden

A knowledge nugget: since the fig is highlighted in the middle photo below, did you know that a fig is technically not a fruit? According to a well-known seed and plant purveyor, a fig is actually an inverted flower, and the inside of the fig is lined with tiny blooms that will become seeds. And now you know!



Citrus



Wow! Figs in October?



Green Holly Berries



Ginger



Beauty Berry



Goldenrod



## Fall Planting in the Dream Garden

Friday, Oct 11, **Marsha Stolz**, the Dream Garden Director, led interns in fall planting. This is a great opportunity to learn from the expert AND know that produce from the garden goes to an organization where it will be put to good use. Veggies planted: arugula, turnip greens, mustard greens, and carrots. Those present: **Marsha Stolz, Mary Ann Days, Sonny Hughey, Addie Smith, Marianna Parker, Pam Noerr, Ginny Beall, Kathy Ertell, Jan Wood, Melissa Curtis, Ed Dean, Marion Platt**, and of course, **Boudreaux**.



Dream On!



## From the Greenhouse

### The Bookworm

**Editor's Note:** October 1 was the date Mobile Botanical Gardens as the venue for a program on invasive species, both flora and fauna. One video presented showcased comments by Dr. Douglas Tallamy, a renowned professor and Chair of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology at the University of Delaware. His book first published in 2007, **Bringing Nature Home**, is an important, often quoted book on sustainability and native plants. Read on...

Dr. Tallamy prefaces his book stating this: "All plants are not created equal, particularly in their ability to support wildlife." His message is that unless native plants are restored to our ecosystems, biodiversity is in jeopardy. However, he states not all is lost because two positive points are made. One, it is still not too late to restore plants and animals that sustain ecosystems on which we depend. Two, restoration of native plants to our ecosystem to encourage biodiversity is not an impossible task.

Native plants have designated insects. These insects do not readily choose invasives to nurture or reproduce because insects are specialists, and it takes millennia for insects to adapt to new plants. This also means that the flora harboring insects and fauna which consume these insects also need to adapt and that also takes time. One can view this as a time-lapsed environmental food chain.

Dr. Tallamy's book is an easy read for those versed in science terminology and also for those not comfortable with scientific jargon. The photos are excellent and illustrate his talking points. Put *Bringing Nature Home* on your reading list because this book published years ago is as relevant now as it was in 2007.

Reviewed by Barbara Boone

**Remember, see separate In the Loop for all MCMG date, time and location activities. Plus, how to capture MG volunteer hours, especially important for new interns wishing Master Gardener certification ASAP!**

### **Mission Statement**

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

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