

The Dirt | March, 2025

Mobile County Master Gardeners



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Master Gardeners,

The Dream Garden on the east side of the Jon Archer building is an iconic element of our experience as Mobile County Master Gardens. Why do we call it the Dream Garden? Joann Ortmann, an esteemed member of the class of 2000, enlightened us during a general meeting about 3 years ago. Joann explained that the name was an acronym:

- D-Demonstration -what you can do
- R- Research -solving and improving
- E- Education -sharing with others
- A- Activity -staying healthy in body
- M- Mind -growing our understanding

The Mobile County Master Gardeners came into being in 1992, and the Dream Garden was the earliest manifestation of the ideals of being a Master Gardener. It was dug and planted with the efforts of over 300 Master Gardeners in the years since.

The Dream Garden contains many plants, but it also showcases horticultural features in its design. The dry creek is a *Rain Scaping* feature-the ground drops from an eastern edge of the garden, but this bed allows the water to spread along a North/South axis and soak in before it cascades off to the east due to the topography. The creek also gave cause for the bridges that connect the west and east sides of the garden. One of those bridges gave rise for the Gateway into the Garden.

The Dream Garden is the place for flowers and vegetables. BUT it is a place for people.

Part of our Mission as Master Gardeners is to help others, and that is exemplified in our Dream Garden.

Mary Ann Days, Class of 2011, is a lioness in the Dream Garden along with Marsha Stolz. Those two ladies put in a great deal of time and effort in the Vegetable Garden. Master Gardeners grow and contribute over 700 pounds of vegetables to a local food pantry-every year.



Our association is also active in support of multiple community gardens in the Mobile area.

Our Mission and Purpose as Mobile Master Gardeners are symbolized in our Dream Garden. It's just what Master Gardeners do!

www.aces.edu/blog/topics/lawn-garden/garden-recovery-after-a-snow-event-in-alabama

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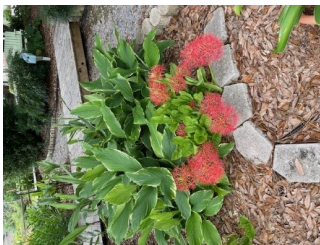
The Dream Garden People and Plants



Path through Dream Garden



Bridge in Dream Garden



Dream Garden Flowers



Dream Garden Flowers



Dream Garden Flowers



2023 Intern Class



Marsha Stolz 10,240 hrs



Grandma's Garden



Chronicles

by Cindy Findlay

Can you believe how fast this year is flying by? Then, our, once in a lifetime snow event? I'm sure everyone's plants and yards didn't appreciate the snow or the many freezing days we have had. Gives our Mobile County Master Gardeners (MCMG) a chance for to do some garden assessment. (See also survival photos below.)

The MCMG Board of Directors (BOD) met on February 5th at the Jon Archer Center. MCMG members are encouraged to attended.

Because of the upcoming Jon Archer roofing project, the MCMG general meeting was moved to Friday, February 14th at the West Mobile Library. The meeting was well attended and I heard that John Nodar meteorologist for WKRG did a fabulous presentation!

Cards were sent to **Linda Kloter**, Get Well for **Paul Barnes**, Sympathy card for **Sharon Claseman**, and lastly, Thinking of You cards for **Marion Platt** and **Barbara Boone**!

March has crept up on us, so get ready for all the volunteer opportunities: The Spring Festival committee is in full planning process, recruiting help for that week and the day of the Festival. Last chance to order Spring Festival T-Shirts is March 5th. This is also the March BOD meeting. The reason we like our volunteers to wear this T-shirt, is so the customers can clearly identify as a MCMG worker. The turnaround time is 3 weeks, that is why we have a hard stop date. **Marion Platt** headed up the caladium bagging event at JAC Friday, February 21 which is preparation for the annual caladium sale.

Immediately following the caladium bagging, the Public Information committee headed by **Judy Weaver** met to plan for Lagniappe articles for 2025 into early 2026. Prior to this week the Public Information met by Zoom to plan for Plant of the Month.

I see a few more volunteer ops next week, **Jack LeCroy** will be hosting a Soil Testing event again this year. The event will be held on February 27th from 9am-11am at the Jon Archer Center.

If you can be anything, be kind.



Mark Your Calendar

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.

Registration is now ongoing.

Jack LeCroy announced JAC will host a Soil Test Day on February 27 9:30-11:00. Plan on helping Jack read test results. Jack needs your help!

A Punny Funny

Old gardeners never die, they just spade away. -Anonymous



Master Gardener of the Month

by Bob Howard (for Emily Arrellano)

Sometimes, our Master Gardeners of the Month is an obvious choice, but other times, it is a quiet choice – that seems so very obvious.

A Master Gardener came up and asked, "Has (this Gardener) ever been recognized? She/He does a lot for Master Gardeners!"

And she does. She's like Marion Platt and Marianna Parker– quiet, but steady, reliable 'worker bees.'

- She has supported our colleagues at the Mobile Botanical Gardeners at their plant sales since she was an intern – and at every sale since then.
- She also works in the Greenhouse on Tuesdays, waiting for 2 years for a spot to open up.
- She created beautiful hanging baskets for the Dream Garden.
- She has served as the Recording Secretary and now serves as Corresponding Secretary for MCMGA.
- She is active in Crew 22. (They meet regularly at Mulherin and other locations. And they meet monthly for lunch.)
- She's an "Okra" person – contributing to our successful Greenery Sales.
- And, she is a regular Master Gardener Volunteer.

Our Master Gardener of the Month of January is Lisa Davis, Class of 2022.

Paul Barnes is Master Gardener of the Month for February, 2025. His time to shine to follow.

Four-Leaf Clovers: Why Are They Lucky?

The four-leaf clover, *Oxalis deppei*, is a small plant with four distinct leaves. It is an extremely rare variation of the common three-leaf clover. Because your chances of finding one with four leaves is about 1 in



10,000, they are considered lucky. The four leaves are said to stand for faith, hope, love, and luck



Extension Volunteers Enhancing the Community

Wilmer Hall update: **Jack LeCroy** reported that the irrigation system is complete. Winterization is complete as well. A meeting with Pratt is to be scheduled soon to discuss Spring planting.

Above lower photo: Crew 22 is volunteering at a different venue which is Mitchell Cancer Center (MCI), a part of USA Medical Center. The rose garden at MCI is receiving a lot of attention by: **Lisa Davis, Paul Ezell, Earl Gochey, Carolyn Rooks, Carol Mackey, and Kathy Deckbar.**



Sowing Seeds

Dirt Under Your Nails

"Now entering the seedy part of town..." Part 2 Seeds: Size Matters

After a garden plan is made, and seeds procured, the next step is actual direct sowing and herein lies the conundrum: how deep to sow the seeds. As a general rule, seeds should be planted at a depth that is roughly two to three times the width of the seed itself. Plant larger seeds deeper and tiny seeds should only be lightly covered with soil.

Seed packets have sowing information and there are charts available for seeds vs planting depth. Even plant seed varieties may have different depth requirements.

Sowing too deep can hinder germination as seeds struggle to reach the surface. Soil type can also affect depth. Well amended soil may allow for slightly deeper sowing depths than sandy soils.

Compiled by Dirt Diva

Source: www.gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu

Gardenology

Feng Shui in the Garden

Editor's Note: Several garden types have been highlighted in this newsletter. Each type harks back to the gardener's personality. Read on for yet another garden environment to consider. Our Mississippi friend, Felder Rushing, contributed to this article.

Feng shui (pronounced "fung schway") is not a phrase that shouldn't be repeated; it is the ancient art of good placement, indoor or out. Simply put, it is the practice of object placement, so that placement is comfortable, relaxing, or soothing.

If you have a landscape that needs taming when surveyed, it leaves an unsettled feeling. Feng shui is not a complicated concept. All that is needed is to create a harmonious setting with appropriate plant arrangements.

Feng shui works with nature, not against, taking into consideration wood, fire, earth, metal, and water. Examples of each element includes live plants, terra cotta pots, stones, some kind of water feature, metal sculptures or wind chimes. Monitor each element so that none is dominant over others.

Some existing elements that should be replaced include straight lines, sharp angles, clutter, and poor plant choices. Adding curved, wide walkways leading to a

comfortable seating area is a good start. Then add those plants considered to be the "right plant, right place" choice, especially if red or yellow. In the background wind chimes add to that Zen feeling.

Imagine you are seated in a circle around a fountain or a firepit. What could be more relaxing except maybe holding a glass of Chardanay.

Compiled by Dirt Diva

Source: HGTV, Felder Rushing, Jan 2025.



Out My Window

by Debra Morrow

Stealth

My backyard led to the alley-yard, which was the portal to the streets behind my house. The alley-yard was overgrown, scary, and a dare for this nine-year old at the time. I had to bolt through so that the monsters would not grab me by the neck or trip me. Sometimes the spiders'

webs would win — face, neck, hair, arms — no matter how I ducked and dodged. If there were spider bodies in those webs, they became spider mash. But the yuck would have to wait. The alley-yard was the shortcut to adventures. After a day's adventures, I was braver upon my return through the alley-yard. And it, too, became an adventure; so I meandered — looking, touching, sniffing, and tasting. No monsters. But there were lizards. At the time, I did not know what they were called. They were anoles. I had seen a few of them occasionally in the backyard, but there were a lot more in the alley-yard. In the alley-yard, the grass was taller, bushes were bigger, and the honeysuckle vines were longer. The anoles also meandered — stalks, leaves, ground, tree bark — basking in the sunlight, surveying me, eyeballing insects, and flourishing their coral-colored dewlaps** all the while orchestrating their skins in taupe, olive, or lime.

Beyond the alley-yard as an adult gardener, anoles* and I began a relationship about twenty- two years ago. We talk and garden together now. They seem to understand my broken anole. Our connection began one afternoon when I was watering my potted pink petunias. I did not know that an anole was in the terracotta tray. In its startled escape, its taupe body dashed up the side of the pot and around part of its rim. But anole paused and assessed the situation: me then water; and almost without caution, did an about face scurrying to the pour from the watering can — gulped, gulped, gulped. By the third gulp, I was enamored. On another anole occasion, I tried to take a picture of a baby anole that I discovered while tidying my clerodendrums. I guess I took too long because anole hopped onto my knuckles and ran up my arm. Once, while I was taking a respite from threading my bleeding-heart vines, an anole lept from my potting table onto my outstretched legs, using them as a bridge to get to a beetle on the other side. And as though they are my garden helpers, anoles are always around for the crawlers that I disturb while weeding. One time, I rescued a juvie anole. Anole was writhing to free its hind leg and shedding from a strap of a Queen Emma crinum. I moved the strap and anole fell to the ground, stayed a while, breathing hard, and then wandered away for a more private respite. Albeit, adventuresome marked another anole as it appeared as a hood ornament while I was driving home one day. I do not know when it hitched a ride — my house or the parking lot, but either way, anole would not make it far as a mascot. I pulled into the parking lot and gave anole a

chance to move to the mulch around a live oak. My encouragement was not working; so I got out of my car and held out my hand near anole. Anole moseyed into my palm; and I gingerly carried it and lowered my hand onto the mulch, whereupon, anole strolled from my cradle to the bark. Anoles and I have history together.

Be that as it may, I am only observing this time. At the moment, I see anole on the right-of-way among the white flowers of the turkey tangle frog fruit, white day lilies, and goldsturm coneflowers contemplating the bees, flies, and wasps. He is stealthy, camouflaged, and in no hurry. Finally, a winged meal presents itself and anole moves fast. There anole goes – claws, slender head, front and hind legs, and long slender tail all in taupe. Eyelids shut forever, though. Anole's abdomen rests in the beak of a female bluebird. She heads over my neighbor's roof, probably toward the wateroak in my other neighbor's backyard. With anole seized, she flew well past the utility wire where she perched just moments ago — dimgrey back feathers, dull bluish wings, and hints of drab russet just under them. She was stealthy, camouflaged, and in no hurry. She had watched however long the orchestration of taupe, olive, and lime as anole crept among the white flowers of the turkey tangle frog fruit, white day lilies, and Goldstrom coneflowers.

*anole: small lizard species

**dewlap: loose flap of skin hanging from creatures such as a lizard



Buds2Plate

A speaker a few years back at JAC and a previous newsletter article mentioned using flowers as an edible addition to recipes. Don't forget this option when you want to "gussy" up an otherwise boring salad or an uninspired dessert. Pansies, a member of the Violaceae family, or another flower as pretty as they are, must

be pesticide-free to consume as well as visualize. This is a great opportunity to utilize those blooms Ole Man Winter did not freeze. Enjoy the prettiness and charm of using the flowers from garden to table.

Farmer's Almanac 2025 Spring Update

Editor's Note: A recent article highlighted The Farmer's Almanac and its history. Let's compare and see what this upcoming season has in store in our region based on this publication's prediction.

The almanac predicts a "thunder and zing" spring. According to this publication, we should prepare for warm, wet, and thundery weather. Also, we should anticipate cooler weather lasting longer than usual due to a winter storm to occur the first part of April in the Southeast.

Easter should be ok, since it falls later in April. So, plan on donning your Easter bonnet and planning egg hunts as usual.

It's fun to compare predictions vs actuality. Cross your fingers for warm and typical Spring weather.

Source: Melissa Locker, SL, Feb 2025

Survival of the Fittest

Charles Darwin is credited with the title above with the idea that organisms best

adjusted to their environment survive and reproduce. Usually this applies to living organisms, but today we are extending this to plants that managed to survive the recent snowstorm. Actually, there are scientific reasons why this occurs. Some plants have adaptations where sugars are accumulated within cells and acts like an antifreeze, lowering the freezing point not allowing ice crystals to form. Another plant survival strategy is to move water to the root system for less freeze damage.

Photos below are from MGs who have surviving plants or shrubs. Some may not look as good as they could, but they soon will. **Long live the plants that persevered the polar plunge!**

Compiled by Dirt Diva

Source: UNC Extension, April 2016.



Jane Finley-Pansies



Jane Finley-Tractor Plant



Theresa Davidson-Variiegated
Shrimp Plant



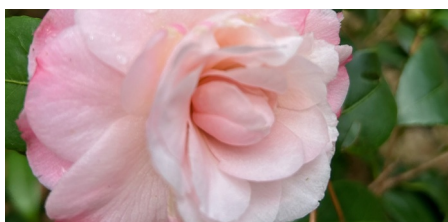
Theresa Davidson-Tongue Fern



Alice Marty-Day Lily



Alice Marty-Blackberry Lily



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

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).



Want to Learn a New French Phrase?

What is one of our least favorite weeds? That would be a dandelion. Dandelions have been officially described as "deeply rooted perennials with sharp, tooth-edged leaves." However, most notable are the yellow blooms followed by puffball seed heads. Some say the yellow blossoms resemble lions' teeth which is how its name

originated. The French *dent de lion*, or lion's tooth, became the weed name we know as dandelion. See? You didn't even need to subscribe to Babble!

Source: The New Southern Living Garden Book, 2015.



From the Greenhouse

The Frugal Gardener: Plant Markers

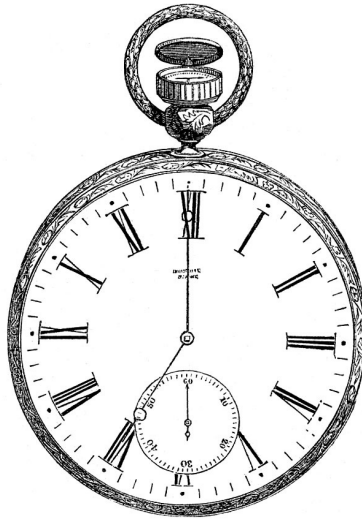
A really easy, fun, and useful activity for gardeners, especially with children, is painting wooden plant markers. Colorful and useful, these sticks will be very handy in the upcoming growing season. And did I mention they are inexpensive to make?

An available source of marker material is at your local big box store paint department. Grab a handful of paint sticks, choose paint colors, pick a marker pen, and you are on your way. It might be advisable to apply a coat of varnish to help preserve the stick.



Tick Tock...according to the watch below it is still time to plan for

Spring planting.



Remember, see separate In the Loop for all MCMG date, time and location. 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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