

The Dirt | May, 2024

Mobile County Master Gardeners



The President's Message

by Carol Williams

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As you know, Alabama Master Gardener State Conference just concluded in Daphne! The BCMGs worked for three years putting things together and it was a real delight. Beginning with a birding tour at 7 AM, BCMG offered participants 12 choices of field trips and demonstrations before the opening reception at 5 PM Monday. I took the ride on a pontoon boat up the Fish River in the Weeks Bay Reserve. Heron rookeries, eagles and their nests, lots of turtles on a log, and a hasty alligator highlighted our one-hour excursion on a perfect, sunny afternoon. Others enjoyed birding tours, historic homes tours, and garden-themed craft and building workshops, plus shopping dozens of garden-themed vendor booths and a very large silent auction. Our own agent, Jack LeCroy, presented a workshop on creating drip irrigation for your garden. He plans to repeat that for us at our June 12 general meeting. All MCMGs commented on how much they learned and how much fun all the workshops and outings were. The keynote speaker, John Bowen, PhD, reminded us that gardening is a life-long passion and endeavor. "People don't quit gardening because they grow old; they grow old because they quit gardening," encapsulating his thinking about what we can do now to make our community a better place and reap the benefit of a better life for ourselves. He also offered a one-hour breakout session introducing wonderfully useful tools that accommodate or overcome our encroaching weaknesses so we can continue gardening. I will share some of that information and the websites in a later email. The 2025 AMGA conference will be hosted by the Autauga County MGAs in Prattville April 3-5. Start saving up to attend as it will be well worth it as they have already been planning for two years!

AMGA awards to MCMGs included volunteer hours achievements:

Diamond Star, (8,000-9,999 hours): Alice Marty;
Platinum Badge, (2,000-3,999 hours): Jackie Jenkins '11
Gold Badge, (1,000-1,999 hours): Barbara Boone '21,
Lydia Criswell '18, Harry Surline '18, and Patricia Gropp '06. We will present these to our award recipients at our May General Meeting.

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MCMGs will once again gather in Baldwin County in two weeks, at a joint General Meeting May 8 at Spanish Fort Presbyterian Church, 6620 Spanish Fort Blvd., Spanish Fort, AL 36527, in their fellowship hall. Please plan to arrive at 9:30 with the usual wonderful treats we will share with our BCMG friends. At 10:00, we will all move to their sanctuary (leaving treats behind) to hear our speaker, Jared Jones, from Baldwin County's ACES Gulf Coast Research & Extension Center. Following Jared's presentation, MCMGs will reconvene in the Fellowship Hall for our customary business portion of the meeting. Next week, May 1, our Board of Directors will have our regular planning meeting. All MCMG members are welcome to attend any of our Board meetings. If you have a new project that you would like to present to the Board, please contact Jack LeCroy for a new "project form" to complete in advance of the meeting. Hope to see all of you May 8 in Spanish Fort!



Carol Williams, President

Nature Riddle:

APRIL answer: IVY!

Several people guessed, but perhaps none of us knew that IVY could have flowers!

May Riddle:

I wear a crown of petals, in colors bold and fine,
In gardens of the royals, majestically I shine.
My scent is quite enchanting, a fragrance that's divine,
In bouquets and in paintings, elegantly I entwine.

Please email your answer to Carol Williams.
(readingweeder72@hotmail.com).

May Chuckles:

vNext time you're feeling down, just remember: your plants are rooting for you.

vI want to tell a joke about a girl who eats plants. You've probably never heard of herbivore.

Carol Williams, President
251-367-0473



Please send your answer to readingweeder72@hotmail.com
All Photo sources: Mobile County Master Gardeners.



Chronicles

by Cindy Findlay

So much for putting our feet up! April seems to have started out somewhat busy with Easter bringing in abundant opportunities for all us Masters Gardeners to participate in.

Remember, our Board Meeting is now on the first Wednesday of the month and met on April 3 at 10:00a.m., in the small auditorium. Membership is welcome to attend.

Our General Meeting on April 10th was a whirlwind! Literally! The County told all of their Employees to shut down at noon, due to the weather threat! We still had a pretty successful turnout.

We had the most interesting speaker, Jett Loewen, a vermiculturist and organic gardening entrepreneur/hobbyist. She has a worm farm in Grand Bay, where she and her husband turned a hobby into an organic farming product for themselves and now for sale! They now sell, along with worms, worm castings, and worm tea (used for fertilizer also).

We then had a very fast business meeting. Alice Marty had organized a plant swap that was a success! Please do that again Alice. Plants to give away were also available.

Market in the Park began Saturday April 6th and will run through July 6th. Mobile County Master Gardeners (MCMG's) were there every Saturday in April, as always, stepping up to help out. Thank you!

Jack LeCroy, along with the Mobile County Extension office put together an extraordinary event, Discover Alabama Extension highlighting all of the public service education and programs offered. Held in the Mobile County Government Plaza Atrium on April 8th & 9th they had a large turnout. What a fun time was had by all. Of course Jack includes Master Gardeners! Two MCMGs manned the table each morning and afternoon. Bob Howard took inspiration from how Jack had set up our information table. . . more to come on that!

On April 9th **Barbara Boone** (one of our new Speakers Bureau leaders) gave a presentation on Ornamental Grasses at Bellingrath Gardens. Barbara reported they were so very nice with about 30 people in attendance. **Alice Marty**, also Speakers Bureau leader, and **Mary Townsley** were there to support her.

Earth Day at the Japanese Gardens on Saturday, April 20th was another

successful event! They even had Electric Cars on display. This is **Don Fry's** second year hosting another superb event. Lead by **Carol Dorsey**, a team of MCMGs helped out at the Mobile Urban Gardener tent. The new Contact Cards were used and about 30 were turned in so, our contact number has increased! The Earth gave us a beautiful, sunny spring day to enjoy its natural wonders.

Anytime I drive up to the Jon Archer building, instead of "There's Johnny" I sing "There's Marsha!" The Dream Garden is a very busy place this time of year. Many MCMGs are working hard to help plant late spring vegetables and watering the many beds that need it on a regular basis. Thanks to all who help make our Dream Garden such a delightful place to visit.

The month has ended up on a very high note. Many MCMG's attended the 2024 Alabama Master Gardener State Conference – Paradise Found, April 22-24, in Daphne. More to come on conference activities next newsletter.

UP NEXT

Our May 8th Meeting is going to be a Joint meeting with Baldwin County Master Gardeners.

Remember

Our Monthly General Meetings are now on 2nd Wednesday.

Volunteers for State Helpline on Monday and Office Helpline Tuesday-Friday are still needed.

Monthly Zoom Class on 3rd Thursday of the month 6-7pm.

Live like someone left the gate open!



Honoring Women in Gardening

The past month women celebrated their presence internationally, and in May mothers get their rightful due. Parenting and careers are all parts of a woman's world. However, many women have contributed additional facets to their communities and beyond by leadership in gardening. The following are just a few notable women and women's groups whose work and passion have made their mark in horticulture. By the way, men, ladies first. Your turn is coming...

1858- Mt. Vernon Ladies Association saved Mt. Vernon's landscape, one of the first movements to preserve historic homes and landscapes.

1870- female botanist, Ynes Mexia, traveled identifying hundreds of plant specimens.

1891- first garden club was organized in Athens, GA.

1880-1920- campaign to build more city parks to promote beautiful and healthy gardens.

1899- women's landscape architects established the Society for Landscape Architects.

1914- home demonstration agents were deployed to "develop leadership abilities in rural women and girls."

1916- conservationist Mary Bell King Solomon lobbied for creation of the National Park Service.

1917-1919- Women's Land Army was deployed in WWI to grow crops and food.

1932- Ethel Earley Clark promoted African American Garden Clubs.

1943- Eleanor Roosevelt planted a Victory Garden on the White House lawn to popularize growing food during WWII.

1962- Rachel Carson published Silent Spring.

1965- Lady Bird Johnson promoted the Highway Beautification Act.

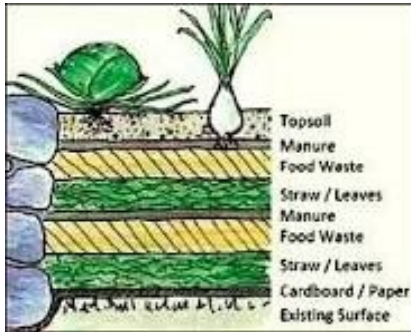
2009- Michelle Obama promoted the White House kitchen to promote healthy eating.

1923-2018-Beth Chatto, UK garden designer, author, and lecturer originated the "right plant, right place" mantra.

2003-20??- our own esteemed **Marsha Stolz** who has accrued more than 9,000 volunteer hours as a Master Garden and has been recognized by the AMGA. Overseeing the Demonstration Garden at the Jon Archer Center, she is a role model for all!



Lasagna Gardening



Who amongst us does not associate lasagna with a delicious cheesy, meaty pasta dish? Well, guess what? The term "lasagna" as a gardening term refers to a gardening method of layering just like layering different ingredients in a certain order in a tomatoey lasagna.

Here's how to start the lasagna method for in-

ground or raised beds:

- Prep work of clearing planting area of debris, rocks, etc.
- Where to add a lasagna garden is just like any other location decision, meaning choose a site that will receive 6-8 hours of sunlight /day.
- When to start a lasagna garden according to research is often in the fall so that cold weather or freezing temps are cycled until the next planting season and the layers are kept moist, breaking down the layers faster.
- Lasagna gardening is all about the layers. The first layer should be wet cardboard or newspaper about 2 in. thick which decomposes and keeps weeds down as well as being the first layer, the brown layer.
- The next layer should be a good quality compost such as chopped leaves, straw, pine needles, or whatever you have on hand.
- The next layer is a "green" layer which could be grass clippings, kitchen scraps, manures, etc.
- Continue layering alternating brown and green layers in 2 in. depths for about 12 in. total. As these materials decompose, the layers will shrink.
- The lasagna method usually takes the time required for microbes and earthworms to work their magic making nutrient-rich organic soil which depends on the composted materials, temperature, and moisture.
- The final product is ready when all materials no longer look like their beginning state.

Go ahead and plant vegetables, flowers, and herbs. Buona fortuna e buon appetito!

Compiled by Dirt Diva

Source:

National Gardening Association, 3/2024

Illustration: Revived Kitchen



Mark Your Calendars

Don't forget cicada broods to appear soon!

Time to put out your hummingbird feeders!

MCMG and BCMG combo general meeting in Spanish

Fort May 8 at 9:30. Make the trek across the Bay
to meet with fellow Baldwin BCMGs.

Meet our speaker for next month. Thanks to Brenda Montgomery, BCMG, for sharing this information:

Come and meet Mr. Jarrod Jones at Spanish Fort Presbyterian Church (6620 Spanish Fort Blvd.) at our monthly membership meeting, beginning at 9:30 on May 8. His position is Regional Director of the southern region experiment stations, including Gulf Coast Research and Extension Center and Ornamental Horticulture Research Center. Recently I posed just a few questions to him so that we might learn more about him and be eager for a very informative meeting.

1. What inspired you to work in your field? "I was born into agriculture. At an early age, I was always fascinated with tractors and farm machinery. My great grandparents were farmers. Both sets of my grandparents had small farm operations outside of Bay Minette. My father was directly involved in agriculture until I was 12 years old. When my father began working outside of agriculture, I lost some passion for agriculture and put all of my passion into sports until my junior/senior year of high school. During those last 2 years of high school, I continued to play sports but became involved in FFA and high school rodeo. The fire for agriculture was beginning to be rekindled. My senior year I began working at a local feed store and would work part time on the weekends for the Corte's farming operations. In the spring following my senior year of high school, I began working full time for the Corte's while attending classes at Faulkner State Community College. Working on the Corte's Farm lit a fire in me to pursue a career in agriculture and I haven't looked back. Agriculture has been great to me and I hope that I can make a difference for farmers and all citizens of Alabama in my current role."

2. If you hadn't pursued your current career, what other path would you have considered? "As a young teenager I thought that my career would be as a baseball player. Once I realized that wasn't going to come true, I wanted to be a forester. After conversations with people who actually worked in the forest industry about their snake encounters, I quickly realized that wasn't for me because of my fear of snakes."

3. When not working, what type of hobbies/pastimes do you enjoy? "I enjoy all types of hunting, especially in the western United States. I enjoy boating and offshore fishing with my family. I am extremely passionate about watching and coaching my kids in softball and baseball. Lastly, I enjoy playing my guitar although I'm not very good."

4. If you could have dinner with one person-past or present-who would it be? Please tell us why. "George Washington Carver. He single-handedly improved the lives of thousands of poor southern farmers by providing information and suggesting that they grow alternative crops to cotton. He is best known for research into and promoting crop rotations of peanuts and sweet potatoes in place of cotton. Dr. Carver was a progressive agricultural thinker and encouraged farmers to submit soil samples for analysis to determine their causes of poor yields. The practices that George Washington Carver taught are still being utilized today. He was a great agricultural educator, researcher and humanitarian with a lifetime of achievements in agriculture."

5. From your bio, it looks like most of your life has been in Baldwin County. What are the changes you are most satisfied with? Are there any major changes you find potentially challenging for our communities?

"Agriculturally speaking, farms have adopted conservation practices that are more environmentally friendly and reduce the adverse effects from soil erosion, runoff, fertility loss and pesticide use. Development and population increases have/will continue to put pressure on agriculture and our infrastructure. Unfortunately, we have lost some very productive farmland in our area that we will never get back into production. It's happening all across the southeast because the profit margins in farming are so tight and it's easier to take the money from a developer and start

with a new clean slate. It's sad but I get that it's a simple matter of economics."

6. We always ask our new interns what their favorite flower/plant is. What is yours and why? "My favorite plant is the cotton plant. It is the first crop that I tended and harvested early in my career in agriculture. There are only 4 species in the world. We grow the species *hirsutum* in the United States. I find cotton interesting because it is a perennial tropical shrub that we grow as an annual. Therefore, the management of a cotton plant is quite challenging and very rewarding when grown successfully."

Please come and join us and welcome our next guest speaker!

Hummer nectar formula: 1 part sugar + 4 parts H₂O or 1 part sugar + 5 parts H₂O to resist bees and wasps. Check weekly for volume and cloudiness due to mold or bacteria.



Keeping Up With Crew 22

The Crew and other MGs are dedicated to Mulherin Home, the resident facility for developmental disabilities. Pictured are Earl Gochey, Lisa Davis, Patti Hicks, Kathy Deckbar, Carol Mackey, and Paul Barnes.



Carol and Earl moving shrub



Adding ground cover at MH



Succulent Savvy

Do you want a low maintenance houseplant or an



equally low maintenance plant to incorporate into your outdoor garden? In addition, do you want plants that highlight modern, mid-century modern, or vintage decor? Look no further. Succulents only ask for certain growth requirements, and if those are met, you will have interesting, appealing plants.

It is estimated that there are 10,000 + succulent varieties globally. Most, but not all, have the reputation for being the easy-peasy plant of choice, and they are, but a succulent cannot be put on a tabletop with no follow up.

What do succulents need?

- Containers with good drainage.
 - Enough but not too much water.
 - Enough light.
- Fertilizer applied at the correct time.
 - Good soil formulation.

Proper drainage is critical for succulents grown as a houseplants. always choose a pot that has a drainage hole even if you have to place that pot in another container to catch any drips. Drainage is also helped by soil appropriate for succulents and cacti which is a soil mix that drains quickly and has a pH around 5.5.

Watering should be minimal and only done when the soil is dry.

Succulents are dessert-like plants, and as such, need light for best results. Without adequate light, succulents become leggy, stretching out for light.

Fertilizer should be applied in early spring, diluting liquid fertilizer by half and adding once per month through summer.

Following the above growth requirements should give a beautiful echeveria, aloe, jade, kalanchoe, sedum, string-of-pearls or many more to be enjoyed for many years.

Compiled by Dirt Diva

Sources:

National Gardening Association, 3/2024

Photo courtesy of B. Boone

Master Gardener of the Month

by Bob Howard

Our Master Gardener of the Month for March is a member of the "70+ Year Old Club." She was born in Tuscaloosa and moved to Mobile when she was only four. She is the proud mother of two wonderful sons, two daughters-in-law, and a very special grandson. She attended public school in Mobile and graduated from Murphy High



School. She then attended the University of Southern Mississippi to earn her teaching degree in Elementary Education before coming home to the University of South Alabama to earn a degree in Guidance and Counselor Education. After completing her education, she taught school as a Reading Specialist and as a Guidance Counselor -- for 34 exciting and rewarding years.

After retiring in 2005, she began a new chapter by becoming involved in church activities, sought out new adventures, and traveled. Donna Kelly enjoys trying something new – and Master Gardening was one of those new adventures.

Donna's Gardening adventure stands out this past March. She worked the Spring Festival, MBG plant sale and prep work for that sale and had done several hours of CEUs. She also volunteered for the Festival of Flowers! She has 112 vol hours and 29 CEU hours.

Congratulations Donna Kelly Master Gardener of the Month!

Going Viral, Shaking My Head...

These days whatever is a hot topic and goes viral many times originates on the internet. Seen recently, Diva shook her head over adding beads to a plant like Pothos. **This is adding a friendship bracelet to a stem of the plant!** I guess there is a positive outcome to beading your plants. Maybe paying more attention to watering and fertilizing? I wonder if Taylor Swift is beading her houseplants...



All About Seed Buying Online

Seeds are always available at local retailers, but Online purchases have certain advantages as long as purchasers adhere to the familiar "caveat emptor" philosophy. Things to consider:

- Shipping cost-look for shipping discounts.
- Selection-some seed vendors specialize in certain plants such as bulbs, shrubs, trees, unusual specimens, heirloom varieties, etc.
- Germination rates-should be listed on seed packet as well as days to maturity.
- Return policy.
- Customer service.

Compiled by Dirt Diva

Source:
BH&G, 3/2024

AMGA 2024



The annual AMGA conference held in picturesque Daphne, Alabama was well attended by Mobile County Master Gardeners who made the trek across the Bay. The theme of "Paradise Found" with many topical sessions covered numerous aspects of gardening as well as learning opportunities with field trips for MCMG attendees.



Dirt Under Your Nails

Growing Cucumbers

Editor's Note: This newsletter focuses on another iconic vegetable which is a supporting vegetable in the summer garden. Let cucumbers have a moment, Tomato!

Who doesn't like a crispy, crunchy cucumber added to a summer salad or pickles enjoyed at any time? The following is a rundown on growing cucumbers in a bed or container.

Cucumbers can be propagated either as transplant seedlings or directly sown as seed. There are advantages to each method.

Seedling transplant advantage is that the seedlings can be directly placed in the garden or container, assuming temperature is not too low or frosty. Hardening off is called for.

The second method is direct sowing into the garden or container in mounds. This method is better for root establishment. Place 4-5 seeds per mound, and if the vining variety, about 3 in. apart. If a trellis is to be used, plant mounds about 18 in. apart.

Compost each planting method with quality compost. About a week later, fertilize with 10-10-10 and thereafter about every 3-4 weeks. Water in the plants routinely. Mulch each plant.

Cucumbers (family Cucurbitaceae) are subject to pests. The following are some organic controls:

1. Squash bugs-remove insects by hand, add neem oil and/or insecticidal soap.

2. Spider mites-use neem oil and/or insecticidal soap.
3. Powdery mildew-use neem oil and/or insecticidal soap.

The next newsletter will focus on eggplant, so get out your eggplant parm recipe for a classic meal!

Compiled by Dirt Diva

Sources:

aces.edu/resources

Maryland Extension, 2018

Garden Know How, 3/2024

National Gardening Association, 2/2024



Earth Day 2024

Earth Day is a day of celebration and remembrance of the environmental movement and awareness of the need to protect the Earth's natural resources. This day was shared by Master Gardeners manning the Mobile Urban Growers tent: **Carol Dorsey, Lydia Criswell, Paul Barnes, Neil Milligan, Theresa Davidson, Cindy Findlay, Barbara Boone, and Todd Golomb.**

What is "Damping Off?"

Damping off occurs when seedlings become stressed due to overcrowding and lack of air circulation due to fungus or mold in wet, moist conditions. Typical fungi causing damping off are *Pythium spp.*, *Fusarium*, and *Phytophthora spp.* Signs and symptoms are rotting of stems at the soil line and root decay.

Thinning out seedlings will decrease the opportunity for this condition to occur, but if further mitigation is required there are ways to counteract damping off.

1. Proper sanitation on trays and implements.
2. Use treated seeds.

If above actions are not enough to control damping off, try OMRI-approved organic controls with bacterial strains suitable for fungus. Examples are *Bacillus subtilis*, and some *Streptococcus species*.

Compiled by Dirt Diva

Sources:

aces.edu/resources, Kerry Smith, 2019.

NC State Extension, Meadows, Sharpe, Henson, 2017.



A History of Your Favorite Rice Cereal

Snap! Crackle! Pop! That sound you hear is the sound of milk hitting the bowl filled with your favorite rice cereal. What did it take to get that sound to the table? It's a long journey, one that began thousands of years ago. Grab your bag, your passport, and let's search for the origin of the most consumed grain in the world, rice.

There are no dates to actually pinpoint the grain rice, *Oryza sativa* and family Poaceae (in the grass family), as a cultivated food source, but an estimate is around 5,000 years BC. Evidence of rice was excavated around 4,500 years BC in India, but *documented* rice as a grain was about 2,800 BC in China in the Yangtze River basin. So, rice was presumed first cultivated and consumed in Asia. Later rice was transported to other parts of the world, but *only* in places with vast amounts of water for initial cultivation, then followed by periods of hot, dry weather. Ability to flood fields and drain them is crucial to growth, Asia being a prime location for the drainage step, eliminating other geographic locations.

In most Asian countries where rice is cultivated and harvested, ancient methods are still employed. Visualize people standing in the water in rice paddies bent over tending their crops. Rice is attended to in the following steps:

- Ploughing fields by water buffalo.
- Fertilizing fields with natural fertilizer.
- Smoothing where a log is dragged over the field to smooth the earth, readying the paddy for the rice seedlings.
- Even though rice is not a water plant per se, seedlings are then started in beds and then transplanted in a terraced paddy which has been flooded.
- Later the paddies are drained before cutting the crop.

Botanically, there are three growth phases: vegetative, reproductive, and ripening which covers germination to grain maturity.

Cultivated rice does have pests and pathogens that require control, in particular plant hoppers and stem borers. Chemicals are used, but often rice fields are considered ecosystems where biological or non-chemical controls can be employed. This is another example of using beneficial insects and parasitoids such as dragonflies, certain flies, and wasps. Bats and birds are very important in rice pest control, offering round-the-clock pest surveillance.

Asia is the epicenter of rice propagation. Today rice is grown only in certain areas in Europe like Italy along the Mediterranean. In the U.S. rice is grown in what is called the Rice Belt with Arkansas in the lead, followed by Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas, Missouri, and California.

Rice is important culturally because it is associated with prosperity and certain religious beliefs. Rice is also linked to fertility which is the reason rice is thrown at weddings.

The grain known as wild rice is not technically cultivated rice like *Oryza sativa*, but rather is the seed of four aquatic grasses, *Zizania spp.* in natural bodies of lakes and rivers, largely in the Great Lakes region of the U.S.

So, the next time you hear those ubiquitous sounds in your cereal bowl, or enjoy rice as a side dish, or in Chinese take-out, remember the journey it required to arrive.

Compiled by Dirt Diva

Sources:

The Complex History of the Domestication of Rice, Sweeney & McCouch, 2009.
extension.utexas.edu

Bugs and Hisses

Oleander Pests

Oleander is a common sun-loving, sandy-soil loving shrub seen in the southern region. Often the thin-leaved shrub has white, pink, or red flowers which are long lasting. The problem is that many times the leaves harbor scale and other insects. Note the



leaves at the left.

The scale insects include armored scales or soft scales which resemble mealy bugs. Armored scales are small, sucking insects, while the softer insects are covered by a larger rounded cover. In addition, aphids and true mealy bugs are common oleander pests, all of which suck fluids from the leaves. The above pests don't often kill an oleander, but they can stunt its growth and cause leaves to drop prematurely.

Using chemical treatments is NOT recommended to rid the plant of the above pests, but beneficial insects such as parasitic wasps, lady bugs, and lacewings can help keep the pests in check. Horticultural oil used in the dormant season or when the pests are first detected are also helpful. Neem oil applied until pests are no longer detected may be required.

Compiled by Dirt Diva

Source: Gardening Know How, 3/2024
Photo: courtesy of B. Boone

Perlite vs Vermiculite

Confused about these soil additives? Both perlite and vermiculite are soil additives, however there are differences between the two.

Vermiculite-

Vermiculite, a mined mica-like mineral, retains more H₂O for a longer time than perlite and provides slightly less aeration than perlite. For plants thriving in a moister soil, vermiculite would be a good addition. Vermiculite, for example, is suitable for seed starting as well as hydrangeas and ferns.

Perlite-

Perlite, made from vulcanized obsidian, only traps water on large surfaces and releases H₂O quickly. Perlite is suitable for root cuttings as well as plants not requiring much water such as cacti and succulents, epiphytes such as orchids, and bromeliads.

Compiled by Dirt Diva

Source:
National Gardening Association, 3/2024.

From the Greenhouse:



Editor's Note: This month "From the Greenhouse" features our resident book reviewer, Jes Gearing. Read on...

Braiding Sweetgrass

This is going to be an unconventional book review because, dear gardeners, I didn't finish the book. When Barbara assigned it to me a few months ago, I was excited – *Braiding Sweetgrass!* Robin Wall Kimmerer! I loved her interview on the podcast, Ologies, about Bryology (the study of moss – listen or read the transcript here: <https://www.alieward.com/ologies/bryology>) and I was excited to read her words and learn from her insights into ecology, tribal traditions, and nature.

But here's the rub: *Braiding Sweetgrass* is beautiful. It's meditative. It asks

for you, the reader, to slow down and savor Kimmerer's words, to see the world the way she does. And it turns out that I'm not in a period of life that allows me to slow down and read an almost 400-page book. Confession aside, let me shine light on a bit of the book that spoke to me and urge you to read the book because, truly, it's wonderful. The chapter, "A Mother's Work," examines Kimmerer's attempts to ecologically restore a pond on her property in upstate New York. Her daughters' dream was to swim in the pond and Kimmerer was determined to make that happen, even though the spring-fed pond was overgrown with weeds and algae.

Over the years, Kimmerer tries different methods to reduce the algae without using chemicals, something I'm sure we've all attempted if we have standing water on our properties. For me the crux of the story rested in her resolve to do it right. She examines the algae and learns about what makes it grow and spread. She gently removes tadpoles from raked out muck and releases them back to the pond. Shoreside willows are trimmed to reduce water loss.

Through it all she realizes that she is restoring not just her landscape, but also her connection it: "So it is my grandchildren who will swim in this pond, and others who m the years will bring. The circle of care grows larger and caregiving for my little pond spills over to caregiving for other waters... There are grandchildren to nurture, and frog children, nestlings, goslings, seedlings, and spores, and I still want to be a good mother." This book is certainly a book about connection – connecting to oneself and to others through better understanding our natural world.

Over the next few months, I do plan to finish the book and use it as an inspiration while I work on my own garden – the overgrown, mess of a jungle that it may be. But instead of blindly digging and hacking away at the plants I don't want, *Braiding Sweetgrass* is reminding me to slow down and learn how to be a "good mother," to open my eyes (and my heart) to learn my land and speak its language.

Reviewed by Jes Gearing

Buds2Blooms

Features Master Gardeners sharing their Spring blooms.



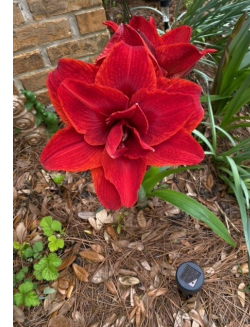
Candy Cane Amaryllis
Barbara Boone



Nun's Hood Orchid
Cindy Findlay



Gerber Daisy
Lisa Davis



Cherry Lollipop Amaryllis
Lisa Davis



Flowering Maple
Alice Marty



Roses
Mary Townsley



Aloe-Safari Sunrise
Mary Townsley

In The Loop

by Theresa Davidson

Upcoming Volunteer Opportunities:



May Board of Directors Meeting

Jon Archer Center

Wednesday, May 1, 10:00 am

Carol Williams, 251.367.0473

readingweeder72@hotmail.com

EMG Program Support/Local MGA or AMGA Admin

May General Meeting

JOINT MEETING with BALDWIN COUNTY MG's

6620 Spanish Fort Blvd, Spanish Fort, AL 36527

Speaker: Jarrod Jones-

Gulf Coast Research & Extension Center



May 8- 9:30 am Social time, 10:00 am Meeting
Carol Williams, 251.367.0473
readingweeder72@hotmail.com
EMG Program Support/Local MGA or AMGA Meeting



First Friday at the Gardens

CANCELLED THIS MONTH



Market in the Park

Cathedral Square, Downtown Mobile, 300 Conti St.
Man the Master Gardener Tent
Saturdays: 5/4, 5/11, 5/18, 5/25, 6/1, 6/8, 6/15, 6/22,
6/29, 7/6

Needed! Coordinators to share responsibilities for Set Up
Community Event/Market in the Park



Marketplace at Mobile Botanical Gardens

Marketplace = Shopping Great Plants for our Gulf Coast Gardens
Checkers, Sales, Wagon Pullers
Saturday mornings through May, 9:00-11:00
Theresa Davidson, 251-510-4961
theresadavidson80@gmail.com
Community Partner Event/MBG

Ongoing Volunteer Opportunities:



Monthly Garden Zoom Class

Jack LeCroy
3rd Thursday of the month, 6-7 pm
Diane Anthony, jda0002@aces.edu, 251.574.8445 or
www.aces.edu/go/gardenzoom to register
CEU



Master Gardener Helpline Tuesday - Friday.

Please call Diane Anthony to schedule these shifts.
Morning shift 8:30 - 12:00
Afternoon shift 12:00 - 3:30
Cindy Findlay, 251.786.4245, cndyfindly@att.net
Create & Share Info w/Public/Helpline

Dec	AM Counties	AM York
Sat Dec 02		
Sun Dec 03		
Mon Dec 04	Lydia Criswell	Volunteer All
Sat Dec 09		
Sun Dec 10		
Mon Dec 11	Lydia Criswell	Volunteer All

Master Gardener Statewide Helpline Mondays

Please commit to Mondays on the Statewide Helpline.

Sign up online under '**Helpline Calendar**'.

Morning Shift: 8:30 -12:00

Afternoon Shift - 12:00- 3:30.

Cindy Findlay, 251.786.4245, cndyfindly@att.net

Create & Share Info w/ Public/Helpline



Prepare Snacks for MG General Meetings:

Jon Archer Center

Lydia Criswell, 251.610.5543, criswells2@mchsi.com

EMG Program Support/Local MGA or AMGA Meeting

(Add your round trip drive time to the meeting time.)



Mobile Japanese Garden

700 Forest Hill Drive

Volunteer your MG skills any morning/afternoon.

Text Don to coordinate!

Don Fry, 251.422.8466, don.fry@comcast.net,

mobilejapanesegarden.com

Growing Ornamental Plants/Garden



Community Gardens:

Grow More Give More with Mobile Urban Growers:

mobileurbangrowers.org

Community gardens in Midtown, Downtown, + other neighborhoods, school sites. Search FB "Mobile Urban Growers" and Community Gardens

Carol Dorsey, 251.209.3483, bcdorsey63@gmail.com

mobileurbangrowers@gmail.com

Growing Food Plants/Garden



Mobile Medical Museum

Robert Thrower Medicinal Garden

Curating and maintaining everchanging collection + gardening with Full Life Ahead, serving adults with intellectual disabilities, usually on Wednesdays

1664 Springhill Avenue

Carol Dorsey, 251.209.3483, bcdorsey63@gmail.com

Growing Food Plants/Therapeutic Horticulture

Grow More Give More

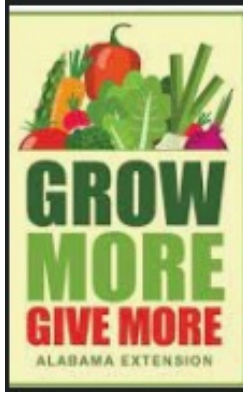
Statewide Master Gardeners initiative to encourage food gardening and sharing produce

2 Ambassadors needed: attend meetings, target areas

for grant development/grant funds fulfillment

Carol Dorsey, 251.209.3483, bcdorsey63@gmail.com

Growing Food Plants/Garden



Speakers Bureau

*Alice Marty, 251-709-1125, amarty@comcast.net
 *Barbara Boone, 251-680-8263, boonebama@live.com

Create & Share Info w/ Public/ Creating Educ. Materials

(See the table below for a list of upcoming Bureau opportunities and the speaker for each. **Speakers are needed!** If no speaker is listed, please contact Alice or Barbara, if you'd like to volunteer.)

Date	Location	Time	Topic	Speaker
5-10-24	MPL West	3:00	Container Gardens	Emily Arellano
5-14-24	MPL West	TBD	Ask a Master Gardener	MG Panel



Office Manager/Phone Lines/MG Helpline

Cindy Findlay, 251.786.4245, cndyfindly@att.net



DREAM GARDEN: Join a Garden Room (**See below**)

Jon Archer Center
 Marsha Stolz, 251.689.5993, marshastolz@msn.com
 Contact Marsha **or** a Garden Leader to volunteer and work as needed.

Growing Ornamental Plants/Garden OR Growing Food Plants/Garden

The Gardens:

Grandma's Pass Along Garden

Catherine Moates, 251.366.6163, memo366@att.net
 Olivia Reinhaus, 251.458.7383, omcvea@gmail.com

Native Garden

Open

Shade Garden

Bob Howard, 251.423.3108, rwhoward51@gmail.com

Vegetable Garden

Marsha Stolz, 251.689.5993, marshastolz@msn.com
Mary Ann Days, 251.391.5806, masdays@comcast.net

Herb Garden

Mary Ann Days, 251.391.5806, masdays@comcast.net

Cottage Garden & Formal Garden

Glenda Eady, 251.342.4248, jerryeady2@comcast.net

Building Garden

Marsha Stolz, 251.689.5993, marshastolz@msn.com

You may like these organizations:



Orchid Society Meeting

Mobile Japanese Garden meeting room, 700 Forest Hill
4th Sunday of the month (except June & Dec), 2:00

NEXT MEETING: May 26

Lynn Coleman, 251.622.3939, lynncolman411@gmail

CEU for the presentation



Gulf Coast Herb Society

Mobile Botanical Gardens 4th Tues. of the month,
(except July and Nov.), 5:30 pm

NEXT MEETING: May 28

Beth Poates, 251.342.6508, poates57@hotmail.com

CEU for presentation



K Sawada Camellia Club

Most meetings at Mobile Botanical Gardens

1st Sunday of month: Nov-March, 2:00 pm

Kenny Helton, 251.459.5555, kehelton@comcast.net

CEU for presentation



Camellia Club of Mobile

Jon Archer Center

2nd Sun of the month: Sept. 2023- April 2024, 2:00 pm

mobilecamellia.org, Camellia Club of Mobile FB Group

CEU for presentation

Clarke & Root Gardens
~2,000 Waterfront Camellias in Mobile, AL~



Becky Root
Owner/Camellia Enthusiast

251-753-0348
byroot@yahoo.com

RSVP for free tours on most Sundays
in January, February & March at 2pm



**Azalea City Bonsai Society in Mobile,
AL**



**Ikebana Mobile, Al - Friendship
through Flowers**

1.2K likes • 1.3K followers

MOBILE BOTANICAL GARDENS
Come Here To Grow!



Theresa's top reasons to join the Gardens:

1. **DISCOUNTS** on events, classes, plants, and the Artful Gift Shop!
2. First Friday Lectures--**free** (Senior rate is \$45 per year. Senior nonmembers pay the daily admission rate of \$6 to attend the First Friday lectures. Join and save \$27 a year! And, get all the benefits of membership!)

3. The **BEST** weekly newsletter-know **EVERYTHING** that's happening at the Gardens
4. Access to the Gate Code to visit the Gardens *before* and *after* regular hours
5. Reciprocal special admission at 360+ gardens in the US- I've used it in Atlanta and New York City.

Mark your calendars for these **SPECIAL EVENTS**:

APRIL 27, 2024

HERB EDUCATION DAY

The Gulf Coast Herb Society invites you to come and hear Gena Todia speak on the importance of planting native plants to help preserve our ecosystem. Gena will also talk about the invasive plants found in our area. This will be a very informative talk for all gardeners in the Gulf Coast area. Gena has a wealth of knowledge on both of these topics.

Gena Todia is a botanist, wildlife biologist, and an avid native plant gardener. Gena and her husband Jay live and garden on over 10 acres in Fairhope. Gena is very familiar with weather conditions on the Gulf Coast and how to "garden" successfully on the Gulf Coast. Gena is also the owner of Wetland Resources and Environmental Consulting.

This talk is designed for anyone who is interested in gardening and in the process, making a difference for ecosystems.

The Herb Education Day talk will be at the Mobile Botanical Gardens Larkins Center. Members of the Mobile Botanical Gardens get in free and GCHS will cover admission for up to 50 people. The gates open at 9:00am and the talk starts at 10:am. The public is invited to visit the herb garden and ask questions before and after the presentation. Also, cookies and refreshments will be available .

Disclaimer: It is the policy of the Gulf Coast Herb Society not to advise or recommend herbs for medicinal use or health use. This information is intended for education purposes only and should not be considered as a recommendation or an endorsement of any particular medicinal or health treatment. Mention of commercial products does not indicate an endorsement by the Gulf Coast Herb Society.



Registration

9am

Presentation

10am - 12pm

**Free
admission to
first 50
people**

**Drinks and
refreshments
available!**

Mobile Botanical
Gardens – Larkins
Room
5151 Museum Dr.
Mobile, AL 36608

Questions contact
251-610-8268



ointing on Wednesday, May 8 at 6620 Spanish Fort Blvd. (about 35 min from JAC 9:30 am).

REGISTRATION FEE \$10

THE SCIENCE BEHIND MONARCH BUTTERFLY

The Science of Migration and Migratory Garden.

May 31, 9:00am - 11:00am
Jon Archer Agricultural Center
1070 Schillinger Road North, Mobile, 36608

This workshop participants will learn the different research involving Monarch migration, the influence of milkweed in their development and how to build migratory gardens.

REGISTER ONLINE

<https://aub.ie/Monarch>
Cost: \$10

For more information, please contact 251-574-8445.

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ACES.EDU

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Marion Drummond Lecture Series at MBG

What: A lecture series honoring Marion Drummond (former Director of MBG) and Celebrating the 50th Anniversary year of Mobile Botanical Gardens

Cost: \$35 per event (MBG Members receive discount) or

Season Tickets: \$150 for the series include preferred seating and invitation to Coffee & Pastries with the Presenter.

Carol Reese, Horticulturist and nationally-known speaker *Native Plants: Facts, Fabrications and Foibles*

Saturday, May 4, 2024

9:00am – 3:00pm

Carol's program celebrates the many native and non-native plants that provide great beauty, durability and excellent nutrition for our beloved wildlife. The day includes the morning seminar, lunch, and an after-lunch interactive session: Why Did My Plant Die??

Marianne Willburn, opinion columnist for the American Horticultural Society's The American Gardener

Keep Calm and Garden On: Gardening in the Midst of Climate Change

Saturday, June 22, 2024

9:00am – 2:00pm

How can we best adapt to what is, right now, and make our gardens more resilient throughout the seasons? The day includes seminar and lunch.

Did You Know?

When you shop The Artful Gift Shop at Mobile Botanical Gardens, look for the work of two of our Master Gardeners: Susan Hilton, Potter, and Sharon Claseman, Jewelry Designer.



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

The Alabama Cooperative Extension System (Alabama A & M University and Auburn University) is an equal opportunity and employer. www.aces.edu



Mobile County Master Gardeners | 1070 Schillinger Rd. N., Mobile, AL 36608 251.574.8445

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