



Sarah's Garden Fair



Photo by Jolly Roberts

Sarah in her "garden fair" says, "I love to propagate plants I want more of, I love to share plants with people and I love to remember people by a certain plant they shared with me."

Sarah Fair (2010) had just started her Master Gardener course when she began work on the landscape of the newly built house in Auburn she and husband, Jonathan, moved into fall 2009. King Braswell had provided basic landscaping through the contractor giving her the bones of the garden in which to create her magic.

At her former home in Montgomery Sarah's passion was African violets — she grew hundreds in her home while showing and judging in competitions. Outdoors her gardening focus was annuals.

The MG course in Lee County introduced Sarah to the joy of perennials, and fellow

Master Gardeners sharing plants, expertise, interests and friendship gave her the reason for staying in the organization. "I found lots of people like me doing what I was doing and learning from each other."

"Everything in my garden is an experiment," Sarah says, adding that she watches the sun, adds amendments to improve soil condition and searches to find happy spots for each plant. If one does not work on the sunny side of the house, she moves it to the shady side. Her plants "pack their suitcases often" and even now she is ready to move her roses in front to another location.

Sarah's side yards flow with plants spilling over into each other with an exuberant energy. Both neighbors have encouraged her to cross the property line and continue the side gardens onto their property. To achieve the effect of a lush thick garden, she uses lots of groundcovers, ajuga and other toe ticklers that weave in and out of the borders blending the various areas into a whole with color and texture.

In the back is a small sloping area around the screened porch, then the yard drops precipitously. Sarah is trying to reclaim the steep slope by bringing in truckloads of dirt and rock to stabilize it while making an S curve that winds down the bank. Her plans are to create several flat living spaces of varying sizes in which to do more "experiments."

Many mornings you may find Sarah outside with coffee cup in hand staring at the yard while thinking of the space as a beautiful painting to create.

— Tomie Dugas, MG Class of 2004

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Master Gardeners are encouraged to submit articles, ideas, notices. Please send materials to:

Chuck Browne, County Extension Agent
Tel: 334-749-3353 Fax 334-749-1444
E-mail: cbrowne@aces.edu

Lee County Extension System
600 South 7th Street, Suite 4
Opelika, AL 36801

Tomie Dugas/Latha Bhavnani, Co-editors
Tel: 334-821-9347/334-826-7633
E-mail: dugastd@gmail.com
lathabhav@hotmail.com

Website: www.leemg.org

Up & Coming Events

- Dec 6, 6-9pm, Home of Mary Ann Stiles, 1655 Creekwood Trail, Auburn, LCMGA Christmas Party (takes place of Dec monthly meeting).
- Jan 7, 11, 21, 28 & Feb 4, 14, 18, 25, Beginner Basic Beekeeping course taught by Saugahatchee Beekeepers Club, \$45. Contact Damon Wallace 334-745-5312 or Linda Schotz, 205-299-0625 with questions.
- Jan 8, 2014, Extension office, 11:30 am, Monthly Meeting, Brown Bag Lunch. Speaker: Dr Kassie Conner on Plant Diseases.
- Jan 18, 2014, 10:30am, Petals from the Past, Jemison, Small Fruits in the Garden by Arlie Powell. For Info: 205-646-0069.
- Jan 24-26, 2014, Pine Mtn, GA, 2014 Callaway Gardening Symposium. Fee, Registration Deadline Jan 17. For Info: 706-663-5153 or education@callawaygardens.com.
- Mar 27-28, 2014, Pine Mtn, GA, Callaway Gardening School with Andrea Wulf & Erica Glasener. Fee. For Info: 706-663-5153 or education@callawaygardens.com.
- Apr 28-30, 2014, Daphne, AMGA Annual Conference, Alabama...A Gardener's JUBILEE. For Info: amgaconference.org.
- May 17, 2014, 10am-4pm & 18, 1-4pm, LCMGA Garden Tour.

Notes from the President

by MG President Dennis Pinkard, MG Class of 2007

At our November meeting we approved the purchase of a laptop, projector and accessories. Jolly, Sarah and I have been working on getting the equipment in-house, registering it and setting it up for our use for presentations. We have needed it for a while now, and although Jolly suggested it two years back, we waited until we were in better financial condition and ready to step forward and familiarize more of the public on the great work you all do for our communities. So if any of you have a group that would be interested in learning about our work, please call me, and we can discuss a date for a presentation with our new equipment.

Jolly and I will be administrators of the audio/visual equipment and can make changes and updates. Anyone needing it for Master Gardener-related activities can check it out from one of us. Jolly is working on a usage guide and custody log.

Just recently we talked to the Auburn Lions Club using a borrowed laptop and projector about LCMGA. Following that talk one of the Lions advised us that we may be eligible for a Turner Foundation grant. It was past the deadline for applying this year, but it looks favorable that our group will be on target for a grant from them next year.

I am sure you all know by now that we elected new officers for CY 2014-15 at our November meeting. We are so grateful for those who served as officers the past two years (Charlot, Julia, Beth, Becky, Raleine, Kelly and Sarah), as well as those who have stepped forward to serve. Jim Disque is becoming treasurer; MC McCarthy is our new training officer and Anne Morgan is our new membership chair. All the other officers along with our Advisory Committee representative, Patti Householder, will retain their previous positions. We had a board meeting recently and welcomed the three new officers. Beth, Sarah and Becky will continue to serve LCMGA in other capacities.

In the past we have had discussions about good governance, project management, budget and our culture – the values and practices of our group. We need to refresh ourselves occasionally on our culture and how we do business. Should you have questions about spending association money, committing our organization, publically presenting information to a group about the association or representing us in some other way, please call me, 334-332-8773. Together we will come up with the right answer and move forward.

Thank you for all you do for LCMGA,
Dennis

Master Gardeners We Will Miss

by Chuck Browne *Chuck Browne*

Within a two-week period in October, we lost three Lee County Master Gardener alumni. All three of these Master Gardeners took classes back in the 1990s, so there's a chance most of you may not have known them.

SUE BANKSTON

Sue Bankston, like so many people who take this course, was a transplant to this area. She was married to a military officer and had lived all over the place. Sue possessed a tremendous amount of personal energy and had one of the most outgoing personalities of anyone I've ever met. There was never any doubt as to when Sue entered the room – there was almost an aura of energy that surrounded her wherever she was. Right after Sue completed the course, she took the lead on several Master Gardener projects. If my memory serves correctly, she taught several classes on flower arranging and herbs. She was instrumental in planning the Master Garden Annual State Conference when it was hosted by Lee Co.

WILLIS GOOLSBY

Willis Goolsby was an agriculture major from Auburn University, who taught vocational education to high school students. Willis, Milton Alexander and William B. Shell among others were the pioneers who began the Kiesel Park garden. Willis was the quiet guy who just knew how to make things happen. It was his tractor and equipment that was used to prepare the area that is now the Master Gardener Demonstration Garden. Ask William B. about the day they all got his big tractor stuck in the mud out there.

Willis Goolsby reminded me of the cool uncle who could fix anything. He had a shop full of tools and equipment that just would not quit. He and I were talking one day about our mowers (both Snappers), and I was fussing about the mower deck. It had some pulley problems and kept eating up \$25 belts. "Bring it by the house," he said, "I can fix it." About a week later, he called me to come get it. It lasted until I sold the mower.

BILL CARPENTER

Bill Carpenter was literally "MY" first Master Gardener. Larry Quick was the horticulture extension agent at the Lee County office before me, and he taught a class in 1987 or '88. I came in 1989 and received a call from Bill shortly thereafter. He was interested in taking a Master Gardener class.

I told Bill that if we could get 10 people, I would teach the class. With his help we had 12 in my first class. In 1990 I learned as much or more than the students while teaching that first class. What's more, I became good friends with Bill Carpenter.

After the course, the state horticulture specialist who directed the Master Gardener course called me one day. Some folks wanted to look at forming a state Master Gardener association. He asked me to attend the meeting and bring a "good, sharp Master Gardener" with me. I naturally thought about Bill.

Bill Carpenter took a vacation day from his job (as engineer at the old Ampex plant in Opelika) to travel to the botanical gardens with me on a weekday. It was evident shortly after

the meeting began who the leader and mastermind would be to eventually direct the group and begin what we now know as the Alabama Master Gardener Association. That person was Bill Carpenter. He served as the organization's first president.

Bill had a degree in math or chemistry, maybe both; no matter, he was one of the most brilliant people I've ever known. He wasn't some egg-headed intellectual always trying to show how smart he was. Instead, he would utilize his intellect to wrap around whatever subject du jour that he was interested in...and master it. He did it with Master Gardeners. He did it with computers, and he did it with cooking. He could sit down with scientists and engineers or regular folks like us and communicate on their level.

After Ampex closed in the mid-'90s, Bill worked in a variety of settings from running a restaurant, catering and working in computer sales to cell phone service distribution. I (and my three sons) remember MOST VIVIDLY his catering adventures. Bill would cook all manner of things for his catering jobs. Sometimes I think he was using us as his test kitchen guinea pigs. He would constantly send us bags of biscotti and his famous cheese straws that his granddaughter Lauren mentioned to me at his memorial service.

Those bags of goodies came to us via my co-worker Anne, who at the time was the home demonstration agent at the Lee County Extension office. Anne gives me credit (or blame) for introducing them to each other way back when. I had scheduled a workshop with Anne that we were teaching together

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“Growing and Cooking with Herbs.” I had a death in the family the day we were supposed to teach the course and couldn't fulfill my obligation, so I called Bill. After all, here's a guy who's grown way more herbs than I have and probably has forgotten more about herbs than I'll ever know. Anne had just lost her husband to a heart attack. Bill was recently divorced. They soon were married at my church in Auburn. That was 21 years ago, and Anne told me there never was a day where they both didn't say how much they loved each other.

I spoke to Bill about a week before his death. He was concerned about the big leaning oak tree on the corner of his property in north Opelika. He tried to disguise his voice and give me a hard time, but that deep baritone voice of his was one of a kind, and I flushed him out quickly. He told me, “A good county agent would come out here and look at this tree,” and I told him that “I didn't know any good county agents.” We both laughed, and I told him I would drive by very soon to assess the health of the oak tree. I also said, “We should go to lunch.” Unfortunately, we never did. I lost a friend of almost 25 years.

Since I've been an extension agent, I've observed one thing: If folks complete the Master Gardener course, that is usually one of the things listed in their obituary when they die. I've seen it everywhere, not just Lee Co. or in Alabama. This is an achievement akin to master's and doctoral degrees. It has made me contemplate my priorities and values on my extension program-

“The Giving Garden” Seminar

Members of the Lee County Master Gardeners Association attended the Alabama Master Gardener Association's Fall Seminar, “The Giving Garden,” September 10th at Taylor Road Baptist Church in Montgomery. The program was a joint effort by the Central Alabama MGs and the Autauga Co. MGs, while the Capital City MGs provided delicious snacks and drinks. We were quite impressed with the educational opportunity (4 CEUs) provided and the speakers' entertaining presentations. Attendees were from all over the state.

Speakers included Catherine Doe of the Hampstead Farm project in the Montgomery area, who hopes to make Montgomery the capital of sustainable agriculture; William Cureton II, popularly known as Captain Compost, who developed his own blend of compost and sells it from his compost farm in St. Clair Co.; Hayes Jackson, an Alabama Extension agent who has explored native plants in their native lands and spoke on The Gifted Garden; and Joel Glover, a wildlife biologist representing the Alabama Treasure Forest Program. The seminar's goals were to teach us about urban gardening in our communities, how to garden organically, how to create an extraordinary garden and about protecting our TREASURE forests. — Sarah Fair, MG Class of 2010



Fall Seminar participants from Lee Co. are (l to r): Mallory Kelly (regional extension agent), Adrian Boone, Sarah Fair, Kelly Haynes, Beth Dorman, Pixie Dillard, Lane Sauser, Steve Cranell and Charlot Ritenbaugh.

ing efforts and the effects it has on citizens of the great state of Alabama and the services we provide.

Three Master Gardener deaths in two weeks shook me up. Let me take this opportunity to say how much I enjoy this part of my profession, teaching Master Gardener classes. I can't begin to tell you how much knowledge I've gained from all of you. Thank you for your enthusiasm, dedication and commitment to being a ... MASTER GARDENER.

**Don't Forget
to Pay Your
2014 Dues
before Dec. 15th**

**Contact Anne Morgan with
any questions:
205-566-1068**

Potpourri # 26

by Dr. William B. Shell, MG Class of 1998

In 2002 I was looking for a Japanese maple society to join and couldn't find one, but I did locate a maple society in the United Kingdom. My first inclination was to initiate a Japanese maple society, but after further thought I knew it would become all-consuming, and I would have no time to enjoy collecting and raising my maples, so I opted to join the Maple Society headed by Peter Gregory in Cirencester, England. Interestingly, I joined for 15 pounds and received a two-page handwritten note thanking me for joining. I still have the note and go back and read it on occasion for inspiration.

In 2002 the Maple Society had its first International Symposium. It was held at Westinbirt Arboretum in Tetbury, England, and Dee and I attended. The garden tours were exquisite, but the in-house presentations were pretty much for academics, not for fledging amateurs like me.

About this same time, several people in the U.S. met with Peter Gregory and formed a branch of the Maple Society in America. It was called the Maple Society North American Branch, MSNAB. It was decided to have an annual meeting in the U.S. for two years and then have an international meeting with the Maple Society every third year and so we have.

Our last in-the-States meeting was just held in Asheville, N.C., this fall. Suzette, my daughter, and I attended and were much impressed with the presentations and visits to area gardens and nurseries.

One presentation I want to mention was by Nancy and Thomas Ash. It was a Power Point on shaping (pruning) the Japanese maple: a unique approach to pruning and

wiring the maple to really make it appear to be a large bonsai. Suzette and I were so impressed that we are trying to get Nancy and Thomas, who live on the coast in North Carolina, down to Auburn for a two-day exhibition. They only touch a tree after it has lost its leaves, so we are shooting for late January.

During one of our tours in Asheville, we visited a beautiful home and gardens. After a great visit and a Bloody Mary, we walked up and over a hill and saw probably the largest Japanese maple in the U.S. No one knew its name and opined

that it was probably planted about 1900 (see photo below). Viewing this tree was worth the whole trip.

So, I have been blessed to have attended maple meetings all over the U.S. and Canada and literally all over Europe and even Japan. I've met some of the top experts in the world and have grown a bunch. If you would like to see more pictures of the Asheville tour and hear about some of the tours, drop by and we will go down and sit by the Koi pond with a glass of wine in tow and listen to my tall tales.



LCMGA Christmas Party

December 6, 6-9pm
Home of Mary Ann Stiles
1655 Creekwood Trail, Auburn
Dress: Holiday Casual

Sarah's Garden Album



Top left: In designing her home's landscape, Sarah wanted to make the garden complement the natural materials of the house. As her cottagey garden beds mature, they do just that.

Bottom left: Purple homestead verbena encircles the mailbox and stretches back down the side yard in a striking display. Tall Italian cypress flank the house.

Top right: Sarah has placed her shade garden where hostas, ajuga and hydrangeas flourish by a stone wall.

Middle right: The front garden in summer spills over with drift Knockout roses and white lantana, much to the delight of Sarah's cat, Daisy.

Bottom right: Some of Sarah's toe ticklers fill in between the rocks used as stepping stones in the back garden. In summer the blue star creeper sport tiny star-like white flowers with a tinge of blue.



Photos by Sarah Fair and Jolly Roberts



Top left: The upper backyard provides a nice place to sit and view the surrounding woods in fall. Beyond this space the yard slopes steeply downward.

Top right: The summer shade garden offers impatiens, aspidistra, black & blue salvia, palms and silver falls dichondra.

Bottom left: A Mothers' Day glass bowl gift from Sarah's sons brightens up a corner of the garden surrounded by ginger lilies and coleus.

Bottom right: Boxwoods mark the property line as homestead verbena glows with purply brilliance on the sunny side of the house along the stone wall Sarah built. (It also graces the shady side too.) Lambs ear, iris and yellow pansies anchor the lower bed.



An Auburn stop on the tour features varied leaf textures in a courtyard garden with koi pond.

2014 Garden Tour

by Sarah Fair, MG Class of 2010

The 2014 garden tour line-up offers an exciting, diverse and unique group sure to please all garden lovers! From large to small, rustic to formal, just planted to fully established, we have something for most everyone. Imagine a farm-like setting with a real log cabin, a white garden perfect for a wedding, a private Italian-inspired green landscape, a sweet Opelika “Garden of the Year” winner, an indoor/outdoor contemporary garden, a sophisticated wine-tasting courtyard and a plant collector’s dream garden with colorful koi.

This tour year coincides with the 100th anniversary of the creation of the Cooperative Extension System from which the Master Gardener program evolved. We will celebrate this occasion in conjunction with Jule Collins

Smith Museum and the Auburn University Heritage Park – creating a perfect opportunity to inform the public about us and our role of assisting ACES in educating the public with science-based horticultural information.

In response to requests from past tour goers, we have done our best to arrange the tour for easy transition from garden to garden. Visitors now will be able to spend more time enjoying the gardens and less time traveling. Another happy change is more Opelika gardens are included in this tour than in previous years. In an effort to integrate our new MGs into our biennial tour and LCMGA activities, we seek to pair them with experienced MGs in leadership roles.

The newly formed Sponsorship Committee, consisting of Jim Disque, Jeanne Estrade and Gene Galloway (all from the 2012 grad-

uating class!), is doing a terrific job signing up sponsors. These extra resources will help us reach many more garden enthusiasts and result in increased Garden Tour income, which directly funds our community projects and programs.

For those MGs who have not yet assumed a role with the upcoming tour, many opportunities are still available. Please call or plan to hear from us. We need you to be a part of LCMGA’s most popular community event and will attempt to find the job that interests you most.

If you have any questions on the garden tour or ideas to contribute, please contact us.

• **Jolly Roberts** (334-524-0540)
jollyroberts@gmail.com

• **Sarah Fair** (478-607-0805)
sfair100@yahoo.com

• **Susan Price** (703-725-0189)
prcsmp@aol.com.



Planted pots bring a touch of green and color to an Opelika cabin on the tour.

Photos by Jolly Roberts

New Walkway for Keisel Demo Garden

by Charlot Ritenbaugh, MG Class of 2011

The LCMGA Demonstration Gardens at Kiesel Park are sporting a new walkway. Many thanks to Ralph and Carol Womer for their expertise and labor. The south end of the gardens now has an extended pathway from the native and vegetable gardens into the meadow. This addition adds to the welcoming atmosphere of the garden.

Carol Griffin cultivated new butterfly enthusiasts with a well-received program on butterflies to 20 4-H members earlier this month. There were numerous butterflies visiting the garden that afternoon and at least a dozen caterpillars feeding on the rue.

As we move into the slow season for outdoor gardening, the plans for 2014 are exciting. We will be adding more native shrubs and trees, as an expanding natural habitat for pollinators, butterflies and birds. The generous funds allotted by the LCMGA allow us to purchase these new permanent plantings. Improved signage remains a priority for our educational venue.

As most of you know the demonstration garden is seven smaller gardens and a blueberry border, each with a unique function. Traditionally one person has the oversight responsibility for each area. For the past few growing seasons only five MGs faithfully committed to regular maintenance for all of the gardens including the irrigation system and the shed/pergola area. If during 2013 you helped with the blueberry pruning and clean up or my irrigation woes, I do remember you and thank you for your help and companionship.

Please let me know how I can facilitate your involvement with maintaining these gardens. Your ideas, comments, criticism are important. I guarantee our conversations will remain anonymous. You can reach me at cdritenbaugh@gmail.com or call me at 334-750-1984.



Photo by Tomie Dugas

Above: Docents and guests listen to Patrick Thompson give a tour and discuss native hollies of the arboretum. The sessions held in fall and spring on Mondays from 10am-12pm are wonderful talks on native plants and trees in our state. This fall the topics were native fall wildflowers, grasses, ferns and hollies. MGs receive CEUs for the classes but anyone is welcome to attend.

Below left: The new entrance walkway to the Kiesel Park Demo Garden.

Below right: Carol Griffin points out butterflies to Lee County 4-Hers at a workshop sharing her knowledge and love of butterflies in the demo garden.



Photos by Charlot Ritenbaugh

Grandma Would Be Proud

by Beth Dorman, MG Class of 2010



The garden is open from 10am - 2pm for the second Saturday each month at Loachapoka's Pioneer Park.

Grandma's Garden looks beautiful this fall. Bright orange mums, kale and pansies welcome visitors as they approach the garden pathway. Three concrete benches beckon Grandma's guests to sit and enjoy all the colorful fall plantings. The birds are even inspired to sit a while in the artistic birdhouse created by our talented Debbie Hartman. A new Grandma's Garden sign, installed by Steve Crannell, also enhances the front flower garden. A scarecrow, corn stalks and cotton branches attached to the post on the sign compliment the seasonal plantings.

The garden will be open for all visitors on the second Saturday in December. Plan to stop by and take a look. I expect you too, like Grandma, will be very proud.



Patrick Thompson of the arboretum directed invasive plant removal on the front and creek edge at the Caroline Dean Wildflower Trail in October. Billie Oliver, Dee Smith, Gene Hunter, Steve Crannell, Dennis Pinkard, 10 Alpha Phi Omega volunteers and others created big piles of trash on the front and back of the park for pickup. The trash pile went on around the curve almost to the bridge.



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