



Great 2012 Garden Tour!



Photo by Jolly Roberts

Tour visitors at the Bottoms' garden check out the hydrangeas which were in peak bloom for the tour.

by Jolly Roberts (2003) & Sarah Fair (2010), Tour Coordinators

We had a wonderful 2012 tour weekend – with our best attendance ever! Thanks to our team effort, it was our most successful tour to date. The gardens offered a varied display of style, setting and design. Each garden showed beautifully! The two-day event was loaded with useful information and inspiring ideas. A few gardens were so compelling people had a hard time moving on. Feedback has been very positive. Visitors were especially complimentary about the friendliness, helpfulness and organization at each garden – Thanks to you, Lee County Master Gardeners and friends. With each tour, this being our fourth, we seem to strengthen our ties with the community. Thanks to the tour, many people are visiting our website, www.LeeMG.org, and finding out about our projects and programs.

Our garden coordinators did a fantastic job! Thanks to Beth Dorman & Lynn Bell (Householder Garden), Betsy Jordan & Team (Richland Elementary School), Diane Blue & Martha Shepherd (Stiles Garden), Jan Holt & Julia Freeman (Hughes Teaching Garden), Carol Womer & Maggie Lawrence (Bottoms Garden), Cecile Morgan & Barbara Whatley (Neville Garden), Linda Nowlin & Kelly Haynes (Smith Garden) and Shey Knight & Nancy Golson (Purves Garden).

We cannot thank Mary Ann Stiles enough for her supportive role in this year's tour. Not only did she introduce us to our sponsor, Linda Drummond at Charter Bank, she offered her garden and gorgeous house for the tour, provided an imaginative raffle donation, hosted an owner/sponsor/coordinator

post-tour celebration, and presented us with a \$1,000 donation.

Our new interns jumped right in and were excellent! We can't wait to see what they're going to do next. We see many of them playing a big role in the 2014 Tour. Interns, we want to introduce you to our membership and the community, so plan to be photographed at the June 20th meeting!

Some milestones for this tour: A new tour-inspired website for LCMGA (www.LeeMG.org), our first corporate sponsor, our first large private donation, nearly 100 percent Master Gardener participation, our most profitable tour to date, highest overall tour attendance, a significant improvement in publicity (including three major newspaper articles the week of the tour, along with two radio interviews), a money-making raffle at each garden, more ticket outlets and a two-person garden coordinator team to lead the tour.

Thanks to all who made 2012 such a great tour year!

2012 Tour Stats

- 355 tickets sold for a total of \$6,399 – advance tickets 273; tour day tickets 82
- Raffle tickets totaled \$568
- Sponsors & Donors \$1,500 – Charter Bank \$500; Mary Ann Stiles \$1,000
- After expenses, the tour netted \$7,235 for Master Gardener programs and projects – a significant increase over our last tour.

Congratulations to the Garden Tour Raffle Winners:

Elisa Lankford, Cheryl Dodds, Sarah Fair, Kathie Mangum, Emily Myers, Diane Blue, Susan Riddle, Anna Krista and Pam Harrison

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

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Up & Coming Events

- June - August, Thursdays 3-6pm, AU Ag Market, corner of Lem Morrison & S. Donahue. Tuesdays, 3-6pm Opelika Main Street Market, Courthouse Square.
- June 15, 3-6pm, Loachapoka, Poka Farmers Market premiere. For info call Jeff at 334-887-6614.
- June 16, 10-11:30am, Kiesel Park Pavilion, MG Workshop: Kids & Gardening with Worms, \$5 fee. For info contact Becky Large at large_becky@yahoo.com.
- June 16, 10-11:30am, Ecology Preserve, Nature Photography Class. \$10 fee. To register call 334-707-6512.
- July 10, 9am-3pm, Lee Co Extension office, Homegrown Tomato Workshop. Preregister & pay \$15 per person by July 3. Topics include, grafting varieties, uses, diseases, etc. Register at Extension office. 334-749-3353.
- July 14, 10-11:30am, Kiesel Park Pavilion, MG Workshop: Grow & Dry Herbs. For info contact Becky Large at large_becky@yahoo.com.
- June 20, 5:30pm, Kiesel Park Pavilion. MG Potluck Dinner. Bring a salad or dessert. Spouses or guests are invited too.
- June 30, 9am-5pm, Petals from the Past, Jemison, Annual Greenhouse Sale.
- Apr 15-17, 2013, Florence, "Jazz Up Your Garden," Master Gardener State Conference.

Notes from the President

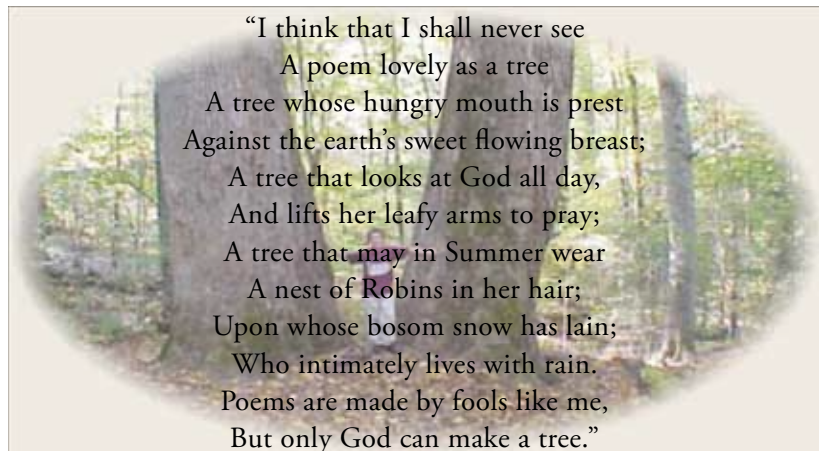
by MG President Dennis Pinkard, MG Class of 2007

"I think I shall never see a poem as lovely as a tree..." Joyce Kilmer

If you have been recipients of my emails, you may be familiar with the above quote. It appears at the bottom of most of my emails. When I rushed out of our last monthly meeting in May, I was on my way to the Smokies for a motorcycle ride with friends. While there I stopped and walked through the Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest. The forest is dedicated to the memory of the soldier and poet, Joyce Kilmer, who was killed during WWI.

The entire poem is quoted below:

Trees



"I think that I shall never see
A poem lovely as a tree
A tree whose hungry mouth is prest
Against the earth's sweet flowing breast;
A tree that looks at God all day,
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;
A tree that may in Summer wear
A nest of Robins in her hair;
Upon whose bosom snow has lain;
Who intimately lives with rain.
Poems are made by fools like me,
But only God can make a tree."

Joyce Kilmer.

December 6, 1886-July 30, 1918.

After taking the walk among trees more than 20 feet around and hundreds of years old, I was re-energized about being a Master Gardener and our Association in particular.

We are fast approaching the end of our fiscal year (FY) of operations, 30 September. And, what a great year it has been! We have funded and managed several projects – Kiesel Park Demonstration Garden, Grandma's Garden, Caroline Dean Wildflower Trail and tree plantings celebrating 30 years of Master Gardeners in Alabama. We are teaching the public directly by our programs at Kiesel Park, Forest Ecology Preserve and Davis Arboretum. We have reached a new height in number of members; we graduated a new class of Master Gardeners who are highly motivated; we improved our working relationship with the Extension System; we are financially more sound than

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Garden Soils in the South

By Chuck Browne *Chuck Browne*

Over the years, I've come to realize that a great majority of problems that cause plants to be stunted, diseased, infested with insects and maybe even die can be traced back to poor soil conditions. Creating a suitable root-growing environment for plants, whether it be sod, trees, vegetables or flowers, is easiest done before planting. Often times, correcting poor soil conditions is next to impossible after plants are established.

Here in the South, our soils are notoriously low in organic matter. To compound this problem, we often find ourselves trying to grow plants in this rocky, red clay subsoil, which is almost always found around new construction. We get calls at the Extension office from new homeowners whose house is three to five years old, and the plants are not thriving, some even dying.

Poor soil conditions can be corrected by adding lots of good decomposed organic matter. This often is easier said than done. It also usually takes several years to build up a really nice garden soil. Incorporation into the existing soil is labor intensive. Tilling or disking it in works well but be careful. Over tilling destroys soil structure. I like mulching heavily with newspaper and wheat straw. This provides a constant addition to the garden soil. After the soil texture and conditions get right, the process is not over. Mild temperatures and



Raised beds utilizing the Lee County Master Gardener compost.

Photo by Chuck Browne

humid conditions cause organic matter decomposition literally year round in the South. Therefore, some sort of organic matter addition needs to be done each year, or at least every other year.

Some people find it easier to create their own "soil" either in containers, or raised beds. This works well but comes with its own set of limitations. Products such as our composted mulch that we just finished selling as a fundraiser are excellent, and I've had fantastic experience with this type product. Be aware that they can dry out quickly, be deficient in the micro nutrients that are normally present in even the poorest subsoil here in Alabama and possibly require pH adjustment with lime.

One of the other benefits of raised-bed gardening is that the growing surface is a little closer, and we don't have to bend over so far to reach the ground. Fancy raised beds are

constructed at chair height with a 2x6 cap that can double as a seat to work from. Keeping the beds narrow enough to reach the center allows more plants per square foot and no need to have access rows.

2012 Mulch Sales

LCMGA brought in total sales revenue of \$4,726 from the sale of mulch. After expenses, we have a net gain of \$3,445.91. We still have about 25% of our mulch left, so I will be recommending that we have four Saturday sales in the fall.

Special thanks go to Chuck Browne, Steve Crannell and Wayne Smith who drove the loader and all the MGs and interns who helped with the sales.
—Toby Hoover

Potpourri # 21

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

Two years ago I was about to invite a couple of friends from out of town to my place to do some February Japanese maple grafting. I mentioned this to Coach Pat Dye, and he said, "Let's invite them out to my place, and I can put them up at my hunting lodge and feed them, and we can have a great weekend of grafting. Invite as many as you want," he added.

We had people in from Oregon, Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida and, of course, Alabama. Must have totaled 25, and a grand weekend it was. You can imagine having that many people concentrating on just grafting the maple. The group included nationally known people most willing to share their vast knowledge. Carl Munn from his nursery in Oregon averages about 60,000 grafts a year, and Brian Upchurch grafts about 15,000 a year and the rest of us in the high hundreds or low thousands.

Now move forward a year, and we did essentially the same thing. We called the second effort "The Second Annual Japanese Maple Grafting Party" and lo, it went as well as the first. Now you know that trying it for the third year in a row really would be pushing your luck, but this past February we held "the Third Annual Japanese Maple Grafting Party" out at Pat's nursery. Essentially the same group came with some wives added who wanted to try their hand at grafting. Once again the get-together was a huge success. Instead of ending at noon on Sunday, our grafting efforts and knowledge exchange continued until late into Sunday evening. I am blessed.

Little change of pace here. This fall the North American branch of the Maple Society will meet in Seattle for its annual meeting with a great slate of speakers and several visits planned to outstanding gardens. A three-day tour after the

symposium is planned to several gardens and nurseries in Washington and Oregon. These two states are really the Mecca for growing Japanese maples in the United States. I spent several days there two years ago and can't wait to get back. If you are interested, google "The Maple Society," and look at our agenda. You are all most welcome!

I would be remiss if I didn't mention our May Camellia Club meeting at Dr. Thomas Chase's house, where he has on display his extensive bonsai collection. Nowhere on the planet have I seen a more beautiful collection, and Tommy topped it off with a professionally prepared DVD presentation of his bonsai. Truly a memorable visit, and we thank him for it. I just don't see how things can get any better for me...to be around such great friends and such natural beauty in this world. I am truly, truly blessed!!



Top & Middle: Bonsai by Dr. Tommy Chase.

Bottom: Dr. Chase addresses members of the Camellia Club.

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ever; we are highly effective in our Helpline performance; we worked together twice to move and sell mulch to the public; and we elected a board that is all about serving our members while reaching out to the public. And, we completed the most successful garden tour in our history!

We have a lot to be proud of as LCMGA is having a positive effect on our community. But, this is no time to relax. We are in a better position to do more for our community, more than at any time in our history. But, we need to be thoughtful and forward looking, while supporting our mission statement, "... an educational program provided and administered by the County offices of ACES. It is a program to train and certify individuals who, in turn, volunteer their expertise and services in support of the Cooperative Extension effort related to the horticultural sciences."

Below are a few challenges for us:

- Wrap up this FY 30 September and return unused project monies to the general fund.
- Plan our next year expenditures for projects. Budget requests will be heard by members at our August and September meetings. New potential projects need to be screened by our project committee lead by our vice president, Charlot.
- Planning the right mix of monthly meetings, social events, projects, traditions, public education and meeting venues.
- Maintain the right level of communications; opening our newsletter

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to any member who wants to write and submit an article.

- Recognition of the efforts of members and teams.
- Retain members by making LCMGA a valuable and meaningful experience.
- Providing timely reports and responses to AMGA.
- Continue to publish information about our events to the public.
- Provide better support to the Extension System and their missions.

We have lots to look forward to, and we are organized and ready to continue on our path of success. Let's get started.

See you in the garden,
Dennis

Caroline Dean Wildflower Trail

by Billie Oliver, Class of 2012

A major effort on the trail is invasive plant control. Caroline's son Bobby and Spencer Roy attacked the Chinese privet in the mid-section. Marshall Norrell and his Cub Scout Troup 858 came in the following Saturday and cleared away all the cut material and other trash. Scout dads limbed up trees in that area so the park is more open. Then we removed some bad trees and assaulted the privet again. Ben White from Opelika Parks and Rec Department had two permanent benches placed along the mid-section of the trail. We have started mulching the lowest section.

In March and April, we added four *R. canescens*: two that Spencer Roy

and Bobby Dean rescued from a development site and two given us by Davis Arboretum last November. We planted spiderwort (*tradescantia ohiensis*) and columbine from Chuck Browne. Spencer brought and planted trillium, Atamasco lilies, three varieties of ferns, bloodroot, coreopsis, narrow leaf sunflower and an American beautyberry. Obviously, control of invasive plants is key, and we can always use volunteers. If anyone has native wildflowers or ferns that insist on growing in the wrong place in your garden, we'll try them in ours...we have lots of open space.

Two disappointments: Ben White entered a budget request for a water faucet uphill, but it was not approved for now. Someone again is removing plants from the park. Another of Mrs. Dean's azaleas was taken recently.

Overall the trail is a lot more open to light, which gives us more planting options. We'll continue invasive plant control and concentrate on maintaining and filling the areas that we have started on the lower half of the trail.

Azalea Society, Alabama Chapter

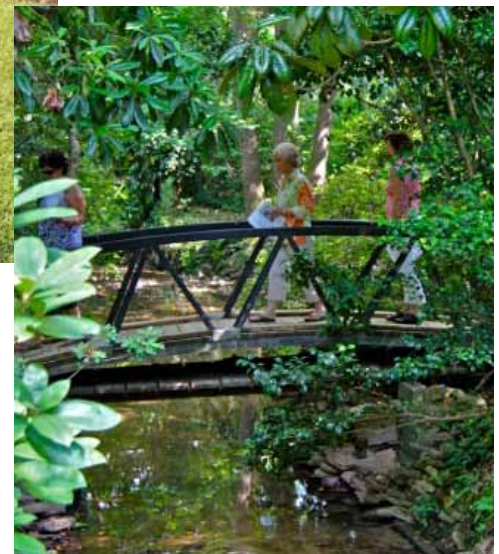
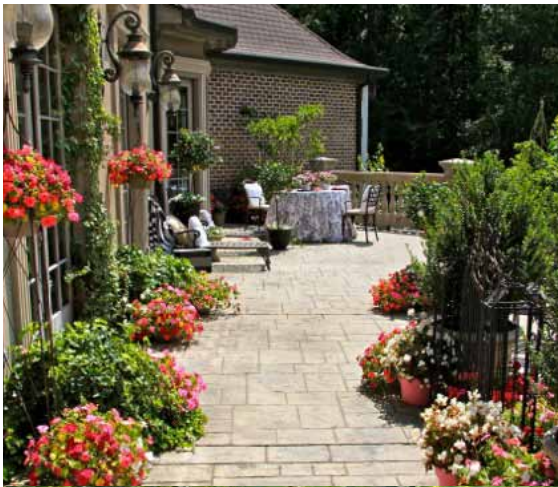
by Billie Oliver, Class of 2012

The April meeting of the Alabamense Chapter of the American Azalea Society was held at Davis Arboretum recently. Patrick Thompson, Arboretum Gardener, honorary MG and our chapter president, gave a presentation on American azaleas highlighting *R. colemanii* and the Auburn series, which includes plants from the large Smitherman collection. Then the group enjoyed a walking tour of these azaleas that were planted in a collection of more than 350 specimens, as well as other rhododendrons, wildflowers and the bog plant classroom. The ASA is a nonprofit organization that promotes the sharing of knowledge and the enjoyment of all azaleas. Our chapter has a strong focus on the 15 native species found in our area that are often threatened by development. There are species that can offer us blooms from March until October and vary from low growing to 20 feet. Some grow in shade, and some are more heat and sun tolerant. All are fascinating.

If you are interested in learning more about azaleas, especially our natives, we encourage you to join us. For more information, visit www.azaleas.org or call Patrick at 332-0283 or Billie at 748-2679. You can join online. Dues of \$25 are sent to the national ASA which returns \$5 to our state chapter, Alabamense, named for the Alabama azalea, which usually has white blooms with a yellow blotch and a lovely lemon fragrance.



Variations of Satsuki azalea blooms that are available for rescue from the Piedmont substation test plots in Camp Hill. On June 5th Patrick Thompson took a group, which included some Master Gardeners, to the site and is planning another trip in the fall. A sampling of the varieties is posted at: www.ag.auburn.edu/hort/landscape/CampHillAzaleas.html.



Scenes from the 2012 Lee County Master Gardeners Garden Tour photographed by Jolly Roberts.



Starbucks Black Gold

by Gita Smith, MG Class of 2002

I stopped by the Starbucks in Montgomery's East Chase shopping complex the other day and picked up about 30 pounds of used coffee grounds. They come nicely wrapped with a label saying "Grounds for your Garden." Starbucks gives them away nationwide, for free, just for the asking. I had been incorporating them into the soil around my roses, but after some research on a few reliable gardening websites, I found there are other uses.

- In compost jargon, coffee grounds count as "green," meaning an item that is rich in nitrogen. (Yes, I know coffee grounds are brown. In your compost, they're green.) Coffee grounds are approximately 2:1 nitrogen to carbon ratio. They also contain magnesium, calcium, potassium and other trace minerals. One website suggests alternating layers of grounds with leaves, twigs, corn husks or straw in your compost pile.
- Add grounds directly to the soil in your garden. You can scratch it into the top couple inches of soil, or just sprinkle the grounds on top and leave it alone. Grounds are slightly acidic, but they break down quickly and act more like a pH-neutral soil component.
- Create a slug and snail barrier. Coffee grounds are abrasive, so a barrier of grounds placed near slug-prone plants may just save them from these garden pests.
- Make coffee ground "tea." (I have not tried it, but one website suggests it.) Add two cups of used coffee grounds to a five-gallon bucket of water. Let the "tea" steep

for a few hours or overnight. You can use this concoction as a liquid fertilizer for garden and container plants.

- Add coffee grounds to your worm bin. Worms love coffee grounds! Add some to your worm bin every week or so. A cup or so of grounds per week for a small worm bin is perfect.
- Increase your carrot and radish harvest by mixing seeds with dry coffee grounds before planting the seeds.

Some of the bags of used grounds from coffee shops have paper filters in them. I don't worry about separating the filters from the coffee because that paper will break down in no time.

Finally, since I am a big fan of heavy mulch to suppress weed growth, I have no qualms about dumping several pounds of coffee and filters between plants, along with my usual dead leaves and pine straw.

Oh, and one last thing. Our evil nemesis, the fire ant, dislikes coffee grounds. I would drink coffee all day long just to annoy one single fire ant.

Top: Lady scarecrow fashioned by Barbara Whatley overlooks the veggie garden wearing a bean vine skirt.
Middle: The native garden has "sprouted" a bottle tree donated and installed by J.O. and Angie Conway.
Bottom: Our arbor sports a shade cloth from Patti Householder and a bench refurbished by Walt Hermes.

New at Kiesel Park Garden



Photo by Cheryl Van Meter



Photo by Jolly Roberts



Photo by Jolly Roberts

Davis Arboretum Carnivorous Bog Exhibit

by Patrick Thompson, Arboretum Specialist

Davis Arboretum has seen years of effort take root in its new Carnivorous Bog Exhibit. The display showcases the fantastic diversity of carnivorous plants that occur in the Southeastern United States. In the sandy soils of South Alabama you can find the world's most diverse community of plants that eat animals for a little extra nutrition. Now growing at the arboretum you can find five native genera of these plants: pitcher plants, butterworts, bladderworts, sundews and venus fly traps.

This installation is the third pitcher plant bog that has graced the arboretum's grounds. Earlier bogs were great teaching tools, but lacked the grandeur of nature, and also had some issues with adequate water. Both of these issues were addressed head on during the collaboration that occurred in this bog's planning. Students from biosystems engineering, biological sciences and landscape architecture helped design the space. The arboretum staff was fortunate to have consultation and a massive plant donation from Atlanta Botanical Gardens that made this project possible.

Stormwater management at the exhibit starts with the new metal roof that sends clean rainwater to more than 3,000 gallons of storage tanks; these feed water to a large coastal bog, a mountain bog and a hillside bog. The Alabama Plant Conservation Alliance is currently

working with the Arboretum on two federally endangered species on display in the upland bogs; the mountain bog supports the green pitcher plant, *Sarracenia oreophylla*, while the Alabama pitcher plant, *S. alabamensis*, is showcased in the hillside bog.



Photo by Jolly Roberts

Top: The Davis Arboretum Carnivorous Bog Exhibit features five genera of native carnivorous plants that can be viewed from the teaching pavilion and marked paths that wander through the bog environments.

Bottom right: The hillside bog features various species of pitcher plants, some shown here amid sedges and wildflow-



Lee Co. MGs attending the state conference in Birmingham were (l. to r.) Jan Holt, Carol Womer, Patti Householder and Ralph Womer.



Patti Householder received her gold badge at the state conference.



Photo by Jolly Roberts



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