



## A Garden in the Clearing



Photo by Jolly Roberts

Rick (MG Class of 2012) and Karen Himmer have spent the last seven years living in the midst of a former Christmas tree farm in western Auburn. A drive through a dark forest of close and evenly spaced mature Virginia pines leads to a clearing where their log home stands. The front yard was professionally landscaped with trees after the house was completed, but the rest of the open landscape was created by the couple.

To help increase his knowledge, Rick joined the Auburn-Opelika Men's Camellia Club, where he learned to grow camellias, rhododendrons and azaleas. He added Japanese maples, camellias and dogwoods the second year to the slash pine understory surrounding his back deck. The third

year he turned his attention to propagating hydrangeas and added a number of those as well as ferns. Rick also installed drip lines to streamline watering and help establish his new plantings.

Nearby, a garden fronting the pottery studio (Karen is an accomplished potter) contains fruit trees, herbs and roses. Inside the three-railed fence the couple planted apple trees, a peach and, recently, an olive tree. Rocks encircle herb beds near the center, while Knockout and heirloom roses perfume the area in summer. The entrance flanked by conical-shaped hollies features a walkway through the garden made of bricks recycled from old slave quarters on the property. The magnolia was a hospitality gift.

A vegetable garden protected from wildlife by a rail fence lined with wire rabbit fencing encloses healthy stands of tomatoes, squash and peppers further back in the clearing.

The Himmers launched their latest landscape project after removing 100 more Virginia pines and populating the area between the studio garden and Rick's workshop with redbuds, dogwoods, blueberries and Japanese maples.

These and other plantings around their log home enhance the serene tone set by the drive into the property and contribute to what is a charming retreat in the clearing.

— Tomie Dugas, MG Class of 2004

Leaf Notes, newsletter of the Lee County Master Gardeners, is published by the Lee County Extension System and the Lee County Master Gardeners.

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

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### Up & Coming Events

- Sept 10, Fall MG Seminar, Taylor Rd Baptist Church, Montgomery, "The Giving Garden." \$20. For info: Carol Rattan at 334-478-3221.
- Sept 17, Field Trip to Hills & Dales, \$15. Contact Becky Large at 334-745-5312.
- Sept 21, 9am-12 noon, CDWT. "Plant Wars." To volunteer contact Billie Oliver, [billieoliver@gmail.com](mailto:billieoliver@gmail.com) or call 334-749-2679.
- Sept 29, 2pm, Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts, "Slow Plants" by Felder Rushing, Capital City & Autauga Co MGAs. Fee. For info call 334-270-4133.
- Sept 29, 2-4pm, AU's Davis Arboretum pavilion. 50th birthday celebration.
- Oct 2, Extension office, Plant Swap, set up 9am, swapping from 9:30am -11 am.
- Oct 15, Field trip to Atlanta Botanical Gardens. \$18.95. Contact Becky Large at 334-745-5312.
- Oct 17, 1-4pm, Chilton Research & Extension Center, Clanton. Fall Fruit Harvest Workshop. Fee. Contact Gary Gray, 334-539-2128.
- Nov 6, 11:30am, Extension office, Monthly Meeting. Brown bag lunch. Speaker: Nancie Gallagher on Flower Arranging.
- Nov 15-16, Clanton, SE Citrus Expo. Free. Contact: Jason Powell, 205-646-0069.

## Notes from the President

*by MG President Dennis Pinkard, Class of 2007*

Hard to believe that summer 2013 is almost gone. And, we have not had our usual battle of keeping our gardens watered during yet another drought. The surprise is that the OA News reports that our normal annual rainfall, as of 27 August, is 35.37" and our year-to-date rainfall is 36.26." So, we are less than an inch over our normal! We have barely seen the sun this summer. The collection site is the Auburn-Opelika Airport. Think they need a new collection instrument?

The end of summer means we are wrapping up and counting our expenses for the fiscal year (FY), October 1, 2012 – September 30, 2013, and have begun to plan our next year of operations. During August we approved the next year budgets for our three sponsored gardens. In September we will wrap up our FY13 accounting, and unspent budgeted monies will go back into our general fund. While we spent a considerable sum in FY13, about \$9,000 (the most ever), we end FY13 in a strong financial position, about \$18,000 in the bank (the most ever). This is a real tribute to the hard work of the association and the diligent bookkeeping and financial management by our treasurer, Sarah. While having a strong financial statement is desirable, we want to use our money to improve our community. Just think how much we could have if we were not generous with our resources!

Before we know it, we will be voting new officers into positions for the next two years (November meeting). This board has performed as a smooth, hard-working team. I am so proud of all of them for their servant leadership, dedication and commitment. We will miss those who leave the board, and we thank them from the bottom of our hearts for the extraordinary job that they have done! They have handled Garden Tour 2012, established the Friends program, contributed help to our gardens and encouraged large growth of our membership. Among their other accomplishments are website development, financial management progress, project management establishment, detailed record keeping, expanded training opportunities, meaningful social events, refinement of our bylaws and improved public awareness. We cannot thank them enough for their service and countless volunteer hours. I know that more hours are dedicated than reported by our board members.

Our next board has big shoes to fill, but we plan to move forward with purpose and a mission, and we know that the next board will accelerate the progress that has been made. After all, our next board will have learned from the outstanding work of the present board. And we do not plan to lose our outgoing board but have them helping in other ways. Thank you

*(Continued on page 3)*

## Late Summer Gardening

by Chuck Browne *Chuck Browne*

As the summer rolls on, I've talked to many people who are somewhat frustrated with this year's growing season. I will admit it has not been without its challenges. First of all, we had one of the coolest springs on record.

Any "Good Friday" vegetable gardens shivered throughout April and endured "high" temperatures of 48° on May 5th. I remember this fact because it was Sunday, and my sister Jennifer brought her three daughters and my niece Marie over to our lake house for a little Cinco de Mayo fiesta. Usually we would be swimming and barbecuing outside. That day we cooked a big pot of chili and built a fire in the wood stove. My tomato transplants and little squash seedlings were not happy outside that day.

Then the rain came. Lots of water, cloudy days and high humidity usually mean increased disease pressure. That has been the case so far this summer. Lawns, trees, shrubs and veg-

etable gardens all have shown signs of diseases such as powdery mildew, rose black spot, brown patches in lawns and early blight on tomatoes and peppers. The list goes on....

The good news is that there still is plenty of time left to start over with some plants such as bush beans, fall tomatoes, squash, even okra. The weather in August and September is typically dry with October usually being mild and, statistically, our driest month.

I feel like the clock is ticking fast on this summer's growing season, but I am excited about the time we have left. My peppers have been in the ground since July 1st and are just starting to set fruit. They have always proved to do best late summer/early fall.

The early squash is coming out of the garden this weekend, and I think I'm going to sow some "Top Pick" southern peas behind them. I've been diligently spraying fungicides on my tomatoes, so they are producing like mad and probably will make it until it frosts.

I've always grown vegetables since I was about 14 or 15 years old. However, lately, the past few seasons, I've been rejuvenated and really begun to enjoy watching nature's magic and how fruitful the earth can be with a little TLC.

*(Continued from page 2)*

to Julia, Becky, Kelly, Beth, Raline, Jolly (former PAO and now ex officio board member), Charlot (former VP), and Sarah! This has been a super team, and it has been my honor to work with you!

Finally, a tremendous thank you to Spencer. He just keeps on giving. His most recent gift is a tool shed he built for the Caroline Dean Wildflower Trail. It began when he cut down the tree on his property, designed the shed, sawed the lumber, built it in pieces and assembled it on site. It is something to see! Plan to attend a work day at the trail, and you can see his handiwork. Thank you Spencer!

See you in the garden,  
Dennis

You are invited to the Davis Arboretum's  
**50th Birthday Party!**

September 29th  
2-4 pm  
at the pavilion



Enjoy cake &  
ice cream  
Dress is casual



Spencer Roy with his tool shed built for the CDWT.

Photo by Dennis Pinkard

## Grandma's Garden Tropical Surprise



Photo by Beth Dorman

**Front row:** Becky Large, Linda Nowlin, Steve Crannell & Jane Sepanski.

**Back row:** Rick Himmer, Pat Conover, Pixie Dillard & Debbie Hartman.

*by Linda Nowlin, MG Class of 2010*

Gardeners in Lee County will fondly remember the summer of 2013 as the summer of abundant rain and moderate temperatures. The Lee County Master Gardeners who tend Grandma's Garden will remember the summer of 2013 as the summer of the Jack and the Beanstalk-sized banana plant.

When the initial plantings for the garden were done in the spring and summer of 2010, the Master Gardeners decided to plant a banana tree near the water feature at the back of the garden. The plant was a gift from a historical society member, Deborah McCord. An angel trumpet plant and ginger lilies were added later. These plantings were intended to add interest and screen a utility area.

Our resident banana plant has required little maintenance. It is cut back and mulched after fall frosts and slowly rouses

up each spring, a true sleeping giant of the garden. This year the growth has truly been remarkable. Our volunteers could scarcely believe their eyes when they saw it soaring above a low building, and they just had to share this picture.

Although plants this large almost demand the tree label, bananas are actually tropical herbaceous plants. They consist of an underground corm and trunk (pseudostem) comprised of concentric layers of leaf sheaths. Banana plants may be propagated by cutting suckers from the base of the mother plant. In our area banana plants are grown as ornamentals. They need lots of sun and prefer acidic soil.

Banana plants obviously will not fit into every landscape design, but if you are looking for a showy thriller and have lots of space, they may be the plant for you. Come out and visit Grandma's Garden and enjoy our giant banana plant and our late blooming summer flowers.

## Potpourri # 26

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

Now is a good time to graft Japanese maples. We call it summer grafting. I have neglected to do much grafting in the summertime because of the heat and of really not believing the scions were dormant. I have come to find out by giving it a try that you can have as much success grafting in summer as you can in late winter.

As you might remember, it is imperative that the scions be dormant or nearly so to cause a successful graft. The reason being that if the scion isn't in active growth, it will die before it can be nurtured by the rootstock. That is to say, the cambium layers will not have joined properly before the scion dries out.

So here's the deal for summer grafting. Select your rootstock and don't water them for about three weeks or just before the leaves begin to shrivel. Then check the new growth on the Japanese maples that you want to graft onto the rootstock. Be sure that the new growth has essentially stopped growing and is pretty stiff. Then graft in the usual manner.

After about a week to 10 days, water the rootstock a little. Set the grafts in some shade, and you are good to go. I graft through the middle of September. The grafts that were done in early July will usually leaf out before fall, but some will not leaf out until spring, so be patient.

In most every group that have toured my maples, someone will ask why graft. Why not let the rootstock that grows from seed just grow into a full-sized maple? That is fine if you want a nice tall upright tree. But suppose you want a nice spreading red laceleaf or an orange and yellow

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*(Continued from page 4)*

Beni kawa. Then you have to get a scion of a Beni kawa and graft to a matching rootstock. The species have to match to wit: *Palmatum* to *Palmatum*.

Check out my website to view a multi-step plan on how to graft or Google Youtube and view several videos on grafting. And remember, I am always available to assist you.

## Don't forget the Plant Swap!



**October 2nd**

Setup 9am, Swapping 9:30-11am

Please bring any seeds in a medicine bottle or envelope and include information with any plants or seeds.

## Natives, Nematodes and Gomphrena

*by Charlot Ritenbaugh, MG Class of 2011*

As we move through August, the native garden within the LCMGA's Demonstration Garden at Kiesel Park shows off plants that are more tolerant of our local climate, rainfall extremes, soils, insects and diseases. These naturally adapted plants combine environmental friendliness with good looks.

Earlier this month the sumac tree at the gardens was full of yellow-green flower spikes. This small native tree will continue its fall colors for several more weeks. Smooth sumac, *Rhus glabra*, and winged sumac, *Rhus copallina*, are two smaller native sumacs for the southeast. The larger staghorn sumac, *Rhus typhina*, is more often found in "upland sites." The poisonous sumac is *Toxicodendron vernix*.

Our vegetable production was decimated this year by the Southern root-knot nematode in several of the raised beds. The leaves on an infected plant turn yellow and look wilted and stunted. Lumpy nodules on the roots identified the problem. These microscopic worms live in the soil and siphon off nutrients and water from the plants. Our best defense is soil sterilization and crop rotation next year. We'll also make sure to select nematode-resistant plants next spring.

The award for longest lasting "grab-you color" goes to the *Gomphrena globosa* in the cutting garden. These annual plants are easily grown from seed, grow in clay or dry soil, have few pests and bloom until frost. The purple globes brighten a floral arrangement and dry well for other uses.

Thanks to our association for continued financial support of the MG Demonstration Garden at Kiesel Park. There are several great improvements on the books for 2014.



**Above:** Small sumac tree in bloom.

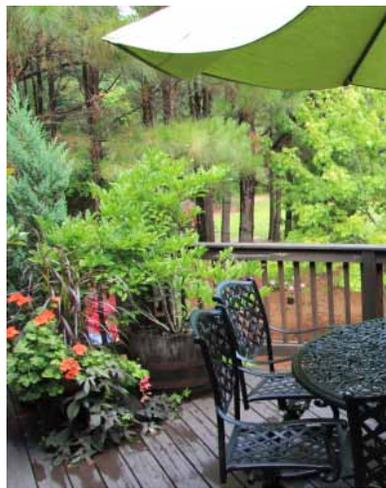
**Right:** Gomphrena with the purple blossoms.



Photos by Charlot Ritenbaugh

# Rick's Garden Album





Photos by Jolly Roberts

**Page 6:** (top, clockwise) The Himmers' garden supplies healthy summer vegetables. Herbs and roses dominate the studio garden. Their drive into the house is long and peaceful. The two-story log home has generous glass windows to bring the outside in.

**Page 7:** (top, clockwise) The studio garden also contains fruit trees, potted containers and roses. Colorful hydrangeas punctuate the landscape under the pine canopy. Bright container plantings enliven the deck overlooking the backyard. Karen approaches the entrance to the studio garden through cone-shaped hollies flanking the path made from old slave-quarter bricks.

*Nominations for future gardens and writers in this Master Gardeners' Gardens Series are encouraged.*

## 2014 Garden Tour

by Sarah Fair, MG Class of 2010

The 2014 Garden Tour is gearing up – coming the weekend of May 17th and 18th, 2014. Thanks to recent growth in Lee County and the familiarity of our Garden Tour, we are finding more gardens available and more interest from garden owners to participate in the tour. Once again we're expecting a great line-up of gardens showcasing garden know-how and design ideas.

Our tour happily coincides with the official 100th year of ACES, our parent organization. We are looking at ways to highlight this significant anniversary and our role as Master Gardeners extending garden education to the public.

We'd like to announce that Susan Price, new 2013 intern, has joined the tour coordinator team alongside Jolly Roberts (2003) and Sarah Fair (2010). She brings a wealth of fresh ideas and energy from her experience organizing garden tours in Virginia. We are lucky to have her join us.

All LCMGA members will be contacted within the next few months to take a role. As before we will need volunteers to help with the usual tasks – garden coordinator, ticket table, garden guide, sign placement, raffle items and more. Our LCMGA Friends are more than welcome to take part. If you have a particular preference, please let us know.

### The Giving Garden




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2. How to garden "organically"
3. How to create an extraordinary garden
4. About protecting our TREASURE Forests

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Gardens offer many gifts – they have the capacity to impact our communities, foster healthy lifestyles, provide enjoyment, and sustain Alabama's natural eco-systems.

**AMGA Fall Seminar**

9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.  
September 10, 2013  
Taylor Rd Baptist Church  
Montgomery

*Contact Information:*  
Carol Rattan  
(general info)  
334-478-3221

Bocky Ashurst  
(registration)  
34-514-1576

*Registration:*  
\$20

*Send registration & check to:*  
Bocky Ashurst  
PO Box 381  
Wetumpka AL 36092

*Payable to:*  
Central Alabama MGA

You should know we continue to hear compliments from both visitors and garden owners about the exceptional staffing and organization of our tour. This popular community event is the most effective way we have of letting the public know who we are and what we do. Thanks to all of you for being a part of our successful Garden Tour team.

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.

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**Sunday, September 29, 2013 at 2:00 pm**  
**Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts**

Tickets: \$15 before September 24, \$20 at door

For more information: [www.capcitymga.org](http://www.capcitymga.org) or 334/270-4133.

Make checks to CCMGA. Mail check, name, mailing address and email address to CCMGA, 49 Okfuski Trail, Pike Road, AL 36064



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Capital City Master Gardener Association  
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## Southeastern Citrus Expo

The 2013 Southeastern Citrus Expo will take place on Friday and Saturday, Nov. 15-16, 2013, in Chilton County.

On Friday, preconference tours will be provided at several Central Alabama farms from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. followed by the evening banquet at Peach Park in Clanton. Farms hosting preconference tours include John Neighbors' Fruit Farm near Alexander City, Petals from the Past in Jemison and Chilton Research and Extension Center in Clanton. Saturday's program consists of educational presentations, trade show and fruit contests at the Jefferson State Community College auditorium in Clanton from 9 a.m.-3 p.m., with registration starting at 8 a.m.

Speakers and presentations include: John Neighbors, "Growing and Marketing Satsuma Mandarins in Central Alabama," Hayes Jackson, "Unusual and Cold-Hardy Citrus for the Backyard Hobbyist" and Dallas Hartzog, "Developing a Citrus Industry in the Wiregrass Region of Alabama." Updates on the citrus quarantine, citrus greening and Asian citrus psyllid will be provided and a grower panel discussion/question-and-answer session will be held.

Petals from the Past Nursery will host the post-conference tour and fruit tasting at the nursery with an array of their citrus, golden kiwifruit and more for participants to enjoy.

There will be a fee for registration and meals to be determined and available online soon.

For information on the Expo, contact Arlie or Jason Powell at Petals from the Past, at [info@petalsfromthepast.com](mailto:info@petalsfromthepast.com) or (205) 646-0069, or Gary Gray at [graygar@aces.edu](mailto:graygar@aces.edu). (334) 539-2128.

## Fall Fruit Harvest Workshop

The workshop will be held at the Chilton Research and Extension Center (CREC) in Clanton on Thursday, October 17th, from 1 - 4 p.m. Educational presentations will include grapes, muscadines, kiwifruit, chestnuts, satsumas, pomegranates, fall fruiting primocane blackberries, oriental persimmons, apples and pears. Research plots will be visited and fruit production with high tunnels will also be featured.

A wide variety of fruits will be available for tasting including: AU Golden Dragon and AU Golden Sunshine gold kiwifruit, satsumas, persimmons, blackberries, muscadines, apples, peaches, tomatoes, pomegranates, pears, arguta kiwi, grapes and peaches. We should also be harvesting chestnuts, Virginia peanuts and maybe some sweet sorghum at that time as well.

The meeting is free and open to anyone interested in growing or marketing fruit crops for commercial or home use. For more information, contact Gary Gray, [graygar@aces.edu](mailto:graygar@aces.edu), (334) 539-2128 or Elina Coneva, [edc0001@aces.edu](mailto:edc0001@aces.edu), (334) 844-7230.

## Zero, Zip, Nada

If someone were to make a movie about my garden this summer, it would be "Night of the Living Dead."

For those of you too young to remember this movie (or those of you too old to remember anything), aliens take over a town and create a race of empty, zombie-like people who look like themselves but are not.

Which brings me to a follow-up report on my attempt to grow eremerus (Spring Leaf Notes). Has anyone else noticed that the word eremerus is an anagram for "mere ruse?"

I am not pointing fingers. The grower from whom I ordered the root stock never made any promises. In fact, I was told that eremerus are fussy. But I suspect that the whole idea of growing eremerus outside a desert microclimate is a TOTAL RUSE. And that the growers took my money knowing FULL WELL that eremerus will not now, nor will they ever, grow for me.

Forty percent of the roots I planted put up some leaves, none of which grew taller than 3 inches. The other 60 percent did nothing at all. Nothing, zero, zip, nada, nisht and goose egg. Just like all the previous times I have tried to grow that plant.

Okay. Fine. I do not want your pity. I've moved on.

I've heard of other gardeners who say they can't for the life of them grow grandiflora roses, and I've heard there's a 12-step group out there for people who just can't grow orchids. If anyone wants to start a 12-stepper for eremerus failures, please contact me in care of this newsletter.

— Gita Smith, MG Class of 2002

## Opelika Plant Wars

*September 21st Program Targets Invasive Plant Control and Education  
at Caroline Dean Wildflower Trail*

Plant Wars, a program designed to engage and educate local residents in the identification and control of invasive plants, will be held Sept. 21 from 8 a.m. to noon at the Caroline Dean Wildflower Trail and other parts of Opelika Municipal Park.

This free event is a collaboration among the Lee County Master Gardeners, Keep Opelika Beautiful, the City of Opelika and the Alabama Invasive Plant Council to provide an opportunity for local residents to learn about invasive plant identification and control while also helping reduce the invasive plant population in public spaces around Municipal Park.

According to the U.S. Forest Service, a species is invasive when it is both non-native to ecosystems in which it is found and capable of causing environmental, economic or human harm. Invasive species often displace native species, reduce native wildlife habitat, disrupt important ecosystem processes and degrade recreation areas.

Plant Wars participants can learn more about invasive plants and also volunteer their time that morning helping remove such invasive species as Chinese privet and thorny olive (*Elaeagnus*) from areas of the park so that native plant species can regain a foothold, which will help restore the park's natural ecosystem.

The event will start at the park pavilion where the MGs held their April meeting. There will be a brief educational session with seating available before breaking into small work groups. MGs will work the edges closest to the plantings, and some may be needed to instruct volunteers.

Further details of the event will be available soon, but to learn more about the event or to become a volunteer, contact Billie Oliver at [billieoliver@gmail.com](mailto:billieoliver@gmail.com) or 334-745-2679.

— Billie Oliver, MG Class of 2012



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