



## What's in the Trees?

by Charlot Ritenbaugh, MG Class of 2010

Alabama's short winters are the best time of year to observe three interesting members of the plant kingdom. It is easy to spot mistletoe, Spanish moss and the curious resurrection fern on the bare branches of our oaks and other hardwoods.

Mistletoe being evergreen does make its own chlorophyll but is considered hemi-parasitic to its host tree. The tip of the mistletoe's root, haustorium, penetrates the tissue of the tree to absorb water and mineral nutrients. Our local mistletoe is *Phoradendron leucarpum*, oak mistletoe. There are numerous species native to North America.

Bird-deposited seeds effectively propagate mistletoe. One derivation from the Old English, *mistiltan* is suggested to come from the Germanic, *mist* (dung) and *tang* (branch) or the etymological joke, "dung on a twig."

Laughter aside, mistletoe does provide an ecological benefit to environmental communities. Mistletoe is an important provider of shelter and food to many birds and animals. The wisdom of the Navaho name for mistletoe is evident in its translation, "basket on high."



A pecan tree on Reese Ave. in Auburn is cloaked in resurrection fern.

Spanish moss and resurrection fern use the host tree as the perfect location where moisture and nutrients from the air are secured to maintain its survival. Neither is considered parasitic. Spanish moss and resurrection fern are true epiphytes or "air plants." An epiphytic plant attaches to another living plant and collects water and nutrients on the surface surrounding its attachment.

Spanish moss grows in larger trees such as oaks and bald cypress but is not limited to those species. *Tillandsia usneoides* is native to the lower half of Alabama. It belongs to the bromeliad family that makes up the largest number of epiphytes in the world. Although Spanish moss is not considered parasitic, when it is prolific it can increase wind resistance causing damage to tree limbs during

strong storms and it does reduce the amount of light received by the leaves of its host tree.

Our native resurrection fern *Pleopeltis polypodioides* ssp. *michauxiana* (Weatherby) is found from Delaware to Florida and west to Texas. It is rare in the lower tips of Illinois, Indiana and Ohio. In addition to the limbs of hardwood trees, it may grow on shady fence posts or rocks but is short lived without seasonal exposure to sunlight. When you look closely at the numerous foot-like rhizomes holding the resurrection fern on a tree limb, its appearance on the hottest, driest days of an Alabama summer suits another common name, the little gray polypod. One other related subspecies, *P. polypodioides* ssp. *polypodioides*, is native to Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands where its status is currently endangered.



**Above:** Resurrection fern begins to curl up and dry without rain.

**Left:** Individual fern fronds are quite small.

Photos by Charlot Ritenbaugh

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### Up & Coming Events

- Feb 22, 8:45am-3:30pm, Nunn Winston House at Kiesel Park, Muscadine, Grape & Wine Production Workshop & Whippoorwill Vineyard Tour, \$5. Call 334-749-3353 to register.
- Feb 27, 11:30am-1pm, Loeb Center, Montgomery. Topics: Sustainable Living & Cypress Nature Park. \$15 fee. Register: 334-514-0860.
- Mar 6, 11:30am, Extension office, Monthly Meeting. Brown bag lunch. Speaker: Pat Dye on Japanese Maples (tentative).
- Mar 9, 10am, Davis Arboretum, MG Workshop: Different Soils for Different Plants, Free.
- Mar 14, 8:30am-12:30pm, Lee Co Extension office. Propagation Workshop. \$5 fee. To register call 334-749-3353.
- Mar 30, 9am-2pm, Dean Road Rec Center, Native Azalea Sale. Volunteers needed.
- Apr 3, 11:30am, Caroline Dean Wildflower Trail, Opelika. Monthly Meeting. Brown bag lunch. Walk, talk and picnic with Billie Oliver.
- Apr 10, 10am-12noon, EV Smith Research Center, Shorter, Pecan & Fruit Grafting Workshop. Call 334-749-3353 for more info.
- Apr 13, 10 am, Kiesel Park Nunn Winston House, MG Workshop: Terrariums. Free.
- Apr 15-17, Florence, "JAZZ Up Your Garden," 2013 AMGA Conference. Info: [www.amgaconference.org](http://www.amgaconference.org).

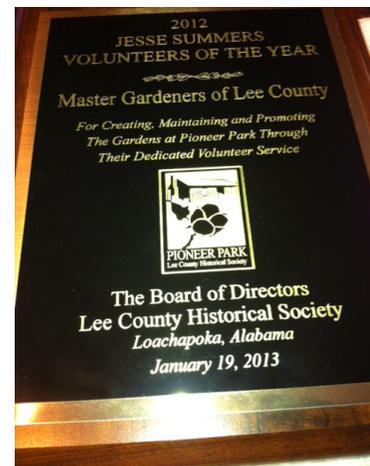
## Notes from the President

by MG President Dennis Pinkard, MG Class of 2007

While our winter has been mild, it still seems that we have suffered somewhat and are deserving of spring, a gardener's favorite season. Perhaps we have rested enough while our plants have been in a dormant state. Now we are getting anxious for a new season.

The LCMGAs have an award to celebrate. Hopefully you will see the award on the wall at the Extension office very soon.

To the right is a photo of the Lee County Historical Society award made to our team for work creating and maintaining Grandma's Garden. The award states: 2012 Jesse Summers Volunteers of the Year, Master Gardeners of Lee County, *For Creating, Maintaining and Promoting The Gardens at Pioneer Park Through Their Dedicated Volunteer Service*, The Board of Directors, Lee County Historical Society, *Loachapoka, Alabama, January 19, 2013*. Hearty Congratulations and Well Done to Debbie, Linda, Steve, Becky, Beth, Pixie, Jane, Ron, Pat and Judy, plus those who assisted on special workdays. And to all of LCMGA who recognized that this project was worth investing our time, talent and money.



Our Friends membership has grown to 21, and we have 71 members on the roster. We want our Friends to fully integrate into LCMGA and feel like a part of our team. Our thanks to Beth for her outstanding job as membership chairman.

We will have our native azalea sale at the Dean Road Recreation Center, 307 South Dean Road in Auburn, 9 a.m. – 2p.m., Saturday, 30 March. We will need volunteers who can be there early to set up and those who can sell the plants.

A new intern class started February 1 at the Lee County Extension office. We need mentors to sign up with Julia, who manages our mentors. Let's get this class off to a fast start and help them become a part of the family.

Let's grow together,  
Dennis

## February Activities to Prepare for Spring

by *Chuck Browne* *Chuck Browne*

The month of February, although technically still winter, sometimes offers us hints of the spring, which we as gardeners all look forward to each year. As I write this outdoors on an unusually warm January afternoon, I'm looking at daffodils in full bloom and a forsythia just beginning to show its yellow flowers.

It's a reminder that several activities need to be performed in the garden in February. Here are a few I hope to get to soon.

Prune fruit trees, shrubs and vines. As you all know from the sessions on fruit production, late February is the best time to prune fruit trees. This is because they are still dormant, and there is a relatively short time before they flower and begin growth in the spring. Pruning stimulates growth so timing is im-

portant. Pruning in the late fall and even sometimes in winter will result in cold damage in years where we have abnormally warm days in January such as we've had this year.

Take graft wood scions. There are numerous ways to graft things like fruit trees and pecans, but grafting dormant scions on actively growing root stocks seem to work best for me. Cut dormant scions now and store them in moist (not wet) bark, sawdust or wood chips in a labeled zip top bag in the bottom of your refrigerator. When grafting time comes in April, you will be ready. We have a grafting workshop to demonstrate this technique on the 10th of April at E.V. Smith Research Center in Shorter. Time and details TBA.

Start your early vegetable seeds indoors. Over the last few years, this has become one of the most reward-

ing late winter/early spring activities that I've done. There's something to be said for seeing little seedlings pop up when it's still freezing outdoors. Usually, people focus on smaller seeded, hard to start plants like eggplants, peppers, basil, tomatoes and impatiens. Avoid large seeded plants such as melons, corn, beans and other seeds that germinate readily and are best seeded directly in the garden when the soil warms.

The key to knowing when to sow your seeds is to count backwards. Determine when you want to plant outdoors, then count backwards to the designated time it takes for whatever crop you choose. For instance, tomatoes take six weeks under ideal conditions to go from seed to transplant. Peppers take eight weeks. This information is usually available on the seed packet or catalog. Certainly agriculture university websites have this listed as well.

### Don't Bug Me Webinars

A series of free webinars offered by the eXtension and the Alabama Cooperative Extension systems debuted in February. Each program is held on the first Friday of the month starting at 1 p.m. CT and will last 30-45 minutes. Like all webinars in the series, the inaugural program "Fire Ant Home Remedies – What Works, What Doesn't" will be archived and available for watching later from the website <https://learn.extension.org/events/826>. The same website also gives instructions for connecting to the live broadcasts. In the series, professionals from

the Alabama Cooperative Extension System will provide sound, research-based solutions for pests from some of the top experts in the nation.

Upcoming Webinars in the Spring Series:

**March 1:** Ants! Ants! Ants! Tawny crazy ants and Argentine ants don't sting, but their large colonies are definitely annoying. Learn how these ants live and how to control them. Hosted by ACES Regional Extension Agent Bethany O'Rear.

**April 5:** You Have Fire Ants Where? Targeted fire ant management in sensitive

and challenging areas including vegetable gardens, fish ponds, compost piles and electrical boxes. Hosted by ACES Regional Extension Agent Willie Datcher.

**May 3:** Protect Your Loved Ones From Fire Ants. Learn safe, effective, research-based methods to protect your family and pets from fire ants. Hosted by ACES Regional Extension Agent Charles Pinkston.

**June 7:** Get Rid of Those Bed Bugs. Learn how bed bugs live and get sound, research-based advice on how to get rid of them. Hosted by ACES Regional Extension Agent Chris Becker.

## Potpourri # 24

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

I received an email the other day asking MGs to come out to Kiesel and help prune the blueberries. Well, I know a little about pruning blueberries, so I put on my thinking cap and tried to recall just where to start on pruning neglected blueberry bushes.

Ideally, you need to take out one-third of blueberry canes a year. That is to say, take out the third biggest trunks a year, and you will never have a trunk more than three years old. Now, blueberries bear fruit on last year's wood, so you don't want to run out and prune off all of last year's wood, lest you will have wasted this year's crop. After you harvest this year's crop, trim the top back to a reachable height. The trimmed limbs will put out new growth and bear next year's fruit.

Why blueberries in your diet? Blueberries are rich in antioxidants and vitamins and minerals. So, you ask "What is an antioxidant?" An antioxidant is merely a molecule that prevents another molecule from oxidizing. The consumption of antioxidants is essential to counteract some of the negative results of the build-up of too many oxidized molecules in the body.



Dennis Pinkard incorporates some of our "black gold" compost into the soil around the blueberries.

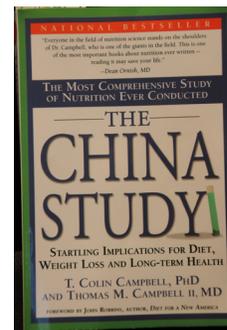
Free radicals (unfinished chemistry) are unstable molecules that are ravenously looking for missing electrons and wreaking havoc along the way. Antioxidants fill these electron needs. You consume blueberries raw to get maximum benefit.

You also get manganese from raw blueberries, which is a trace mineral crucial in the development of bones, as well as in metabolizing proteins, carbohydrates and fats. Blueberries are high in fiber, which helps keep cholesterol low, which in turn helps keep your heart healthy. A cup full provides about 25% of your daily requirement of vitamin C, an antioxidant that helps keep gums healthy, aids absorption of iron and strengthens the immune system.

I think I am going to spend more time trying to nurture the blueberries at Kiesel Park. And let me mention publication ANR 1078 from Extension. Excellent article about blueberries. One of my resources for this article was Jennifer Murray. She can be found on the web at <http://Vegeterian.about.com>.

I ran across "The China Study" by Colin Campbell and son. It has a statement on the cover that says reading the book might just save your life. It's the most researched book on nutrition that I have ever seen, and I strongly recommend that you get a copy.

Incredibly revealing! Read it and let's discuss it. It's not about weight loss per se but about quality living.



Photos by William Shell

**Above:** Anne Morgan finds old canes to remove, while Railene Sillman trims cross-over branches.

**Left:** Sam and Billie Oliver work as a team on the blueberry bushes.

# Muscadine/Grape/Wine Production Workshop

Hosted by the  
Alabama Cooperative Extension System

Friday, February 22, 2013

Kiesel Park (Nunn-Winston House)  
520 Chadwick Lane  
Auburn, Alabama

8:45 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

**TOPICS TO BE DISCUSSED:**

Muscadine Cultivars, Pierces Disease Resistant Bunch Grape Cultivars, Seedless Table Grape Cultivars, and Pierces Disease Resistant Vinifera selections, Planting, Trellising, Training, Pruning Muscadines, the basics of Wine Making and tour of Whippoorwill Vineyard.



To sign-up or for more information, contact the Lee County Extension office at (334) 749-3353. Cost is \$5.00 per person. Pre-Registration and Payment is required by **Monday, February 18<sup>th</sup>**

PRE-REGISTRATION FORM

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_ County: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_  
# of Participants X \$5 = Total Amount Enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_



Return Pre-Registration Form and Payment by Monday, February 18, 2013 to: **Lee County Extension Office**  
600 S 7<sup>th</sup> Street  
Opelika, AL 36801  
Make check payable to: **Alabama Cooperative Extension System**

**Seating is limited; you are encouraged to register early!**

# Our State Flower



by *Mallory Kelley*  
Regional Extension Agent  
Home Grounds, Gardens,  
Home Pests

Did you know that the camellia is the state flower of Alabama? I find this most fitting as we can grow this evergreen flowering shrub quite easily, and there are varieties that bloom three out of the four seasons (except summer) in our Alabama climate. Not only are they easy to grow in Alabama, but did you know that the sweet tea we Southerners love to drink comes from the camellia genus, a relative of the camellias we have growing in our landscapes?

Each year you may notice there are more and more varieties of flower forms, new hybrids, seedlings and hardier species. Even though we can have camellias flowering in Alabama September through March, not

every variety of camellia is suitable to our climate (Zone 7-8) in central Alabama, so do your research on varieties before purchasing.

Some camellias can be grown in full sun, although most grow and produce better flowers in partial shade where the blooms and foliage are protected from sunburn. A site under pine trees is ideal, as they provide filtered light year-round for growth, winter protection and natural mulch from the pine needles.

Camellias do best in soils that are acidic (pH 5.0 to 6.5) and do poorly in alkaline conditions (pH above 7.0). Camellias require only light pruning, if any, to remove dead wood and to thin inside limbs to increase air movement. The best time to prune is after blooming and before new flower and vegetative buds form.

As for problems on camellias, the most common is flower blight (also called petal blight) and tea scale.

The flower blight is caused by a fungus that infects only the flower tissue of camellias and does not spread from flower to flower. It is characterized by brown spots on the petals that spread rapidly to engulf the whole bloom. Infected blooms fall to the ground where the fungus will overwinter until the following year. This fungus can lie dormant in the soil up to four years. When warm and humid conditions occur, small, dime-sized, brownish-gray mushrooms form and produce the fungal spores that will infect the blooms. A community effort is needed to collect these mushrooms as the spores can be carried by wind for half a mile or more. It is prevalent and most active in humid areas with temperatures that range between 45 degrees F and 70 degrees F when the camellias are in bloom.

Tea Scale insects are the most significant pests of camellias. They pierce the leaves and twigs and suck out the plant juices. This stunts and weakens the camellia and hurts the appearance of the foliage. Yellow splotches appear on the upper side of the leaves, while the underside is covered with a cottony mass. For control of scales you can use horticultural oil sprays, which should be reapplied often and must make direct contact with the scales, or you can use systemic insecticides, such as imidacloprid, which is an insecticide drench that is taken up by the roots and ingested when the scales feed on the leaves.

If you live in Alabama and do not already have a camellia growing in your yard, I encourage you to add one to your landscape. They can add beautiful color almost any time of the year.

## Spring 2013 Lee County MG Class Schedule

Note: Topics are subject to change.

|        |       |  |                         |
|--------|-------|--|-------------------------|
| Feb 1  | 10-11 | Orientation  | Chuck Browne            |
|        | 11-3  | Plant Physiology   | Toby Hoover             |
| Feb 8  | 10-3  | Soils & Plant Nutrition  | Dr. Charles Mitchell    |
| Feb 15 | 10-12 | Care & Maintenance of Ornamentals                                | Chuck Browne            |
|        | 1-3   | MG Website/Helpline Training                                     | Mallory Kelly           |
| Feb 22 | 10-3  | (opt) Wine/Grape Workshop/Field Trip                             |                         |
| Mar 1  | 10-3  | Vegetable Gardening  | Dani Carroll-Alexander  |
| Mar 8  | 10-3  | Plant Diseases & Disorders                                       | Dr. Jim Jacobi          |
| Mar 15 | 10-3  | Turf & Lawn Care   | Dr. David Han           |
| Mar 22 | 10-12 | Entomology   | Dr. Charles Ray         |
|        | 1-3   | Composting & Vermiculture  | Maggie Lawrence         |
| Mar 29 | 10-3  | Landscape Design   | Leah Rogers             |
| Apr 5  | 10-3  | Fruit Culture  | Mallory Kelly/Chip East |
| Apr 12 | 10-2  | (opt) Trip to Chilton Co Research Station & Petals from the Past |                         |
| Apr 19 | 10-12 | Weed Science   | Shane Harris            |
|        | 1-3   | Container Gardening or Herbs                                     | MG                      |

## MGs Win Volunteer Award

by Linda Nowlin, MG Class of 2010

The Lee County Historical Society recently presented the Jessie Summers Volunteer of the Year Award to the Lee County Master Gardeners who created and maintain the gardens at Pioneer Park in Loachapoka. Pioneer Park is sponsored by the Lee County Historical Society and consists of nine structures including a museum, restored log cabin, blacksmith shop, doctor's office and cotton gin office. The park hosts events throughout the year.

Many volunteers assist with the activities at Pioneer Park. They help with the second Saturday events each month, educational workshops and the October Historical Fair. Lee County Master Gardeners were honored to accept this award for their three gardens at Pioneer Park.

The McClain Garden is the oldest of the three gardens. It features a collection of culinary and medicinal herbs. The garden is surrounded by a split-rail fence and has raised square beds. Walking through the garden is a sensory delight. Blueberries, muscadines and fig trees are planted around its outside borders.

Grandma's Garden began two-and-a-half years ago as a grass-filled area between the McClain Garden and the historic building known as Dr. McClain's office. It is now a lovely cottage garden with curving paths edged with antique bricks that were donated by local residents. A bottle tree, millstone fountain and benches placed among the garden's colorful flowers make it an ideal spot for visitors to walk and relax.

The latest addition to the garden area is the Pioneer Kitchen Garden, which is planted in raised beds and located behind the McClain Garden. Luscious heirloom tomatoes, okra and squash grow there in the summer. In the fall, the beds look like a salad bowl with turnips, cabbages and lettuce.



Accepting the volunteer award are (l to r): Becky Large, Beth Dorman, Dennis Pinkard, Debbie Hartman, Steve Carrell, Peggy Mitchell and Pat McNeal.

## MGs Plant Carolina Silverbell

by Billie Oliver, MG Class of 2011

On November 30, Caroline Dean joined MGs on the wildflower trail for planting a lovely Carolina silverbell purchased in celebration of her 94th birthday last summer. Also in November, Vernon Best of Huntsville Botanical Gardens expressed his appreciation of Mrs. Dean's past contributions to HBG through his donations of plants to the wildflower trail, which included *Rhododendron canescens*, *itea*, a winterberry and big leaf magnolia.

Thanks to Master Gardener support, leucothoe plants were purchased for future screening and erosion control; an American snowbell and more bottlebrush buckeye will welcome spring; a fothergilla major and a winter honeysuckle will add to visitor enjoyment in fall and winter.

Opelika Parks Department is purchasing more split-cedar fencing to protect plantings in the mid-section of the trail. MGs will soon be hard at work installing the fencing. The city-wide clean-up is scheduled for Saturday, March 2. Please join us on the trail from 9 a.m.-12 p.m. to clean out privet. We greatly appreciate your support!



Planting the Carolina silverbell are (l to r): Bobby Dean, Caroline Dean, Billie Oliver, Spencer Roy (kneeling), Sankela Dowdell (volunteer), Pat Conover (Friend of MGs) and Beth Dorman.

# GCA Horticulture Day

The Garden Club of Alabama's 2013 Horticulture Day offers a CEU opportunity for Master Gardeners. It will be held on February 27th at the Loeb Center in Landmark (Old Alabama Town), 301 Columbus St., Montgomery. This is the same location as other years. Registration is at 8 a.m. with the program starting at 8:30a.m. The cost is \$15 and will include registration, lunch catered by White Wings for a full-course hot meal and door prizes. Make checks payable to GCA (Garden Clubs of Alabama) and send to Mary Long, Registrar, 858 Jackson St., Elmore Ala. 36025.

For questions call 334-514-0860 or email [plantlady@elmore.rr.com](mailto:plantlady@elmore.rr.com). Registration deadline is February 20.

The first session will feature Lee and Amanda Borden who live in a sustainable environment in Tallassee, Ala. This will be a power point presentation, very relaxed and informative about how they have fulfilled their dream of being fully capable of living a comfortable existence regardless of environmental disasters.

After break, the second session will be given by Bill Campbell and/or Robert Cope discussing Cypress Nature Park located in Downtown Montgomery on the Alabama River. This is truly a dream coming true. Once completed, this 260-acre area will provide respite for innumerable species of flora and fauna and for the families of Central Alabama.

## GCA Horticulture Day Registration Form

Mail to Mary Long, 858 Jackson St., Elmore, AL 36025

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Club \_\_\_\_\_ District \_\_\_\_\_

### LCMGA Garden Work Days

**Caroline Dean Wildflower Trail**  
Saturday, March 2, 9am-12noon

**Pioneer Park Gardens**  
Tuesdays, Feb 19 & March 5, 8am

**Kiesel Demo Garden**  
Mondays at 8:30am  
unless bad weather



### Mark Your Calendar 2013 Alabama Master Gardener Conference

April 15-17, 2013 in Florence, AL  
hosted by The Shoals Master Gardeners  
at the Marriott Spa & Hotel

"Jazz" Up Your Garden is the theme for the 23rd state conference. Our speakers will jazz you up with new garden plans and ideas to take home to your garden. Scheduled are James Farmer, Erica Glasener, Walter Reeves, Troy Marden, Daniel Spaulding, Hayes Jackson, David Tomblin and Don Shadow.

Pre-conference events on Sunday, April 14th include a Garden Tour with transportation available to local gardens. Or you may visit Ivy Green, birthplace of Helen Keller and the Buffler Home and see how this community was founded by Germans.

Herb workshops in the early afternoon or maybe a round table discussion with our state leaders and then back to your hotel to relax before we meet you with a local jazz band. Hope to see you April 2013!



Photo by Charlot Ritenbaugh

by Charlot Ritenbaugh, MG Class of 2010

Before I visited the demonstration gardens at Kiesel Park this week, I had been told the daffodils in the cutting garden were in full bloom. I took the walking trail loop before approaching the gardens from the dog park area. Seeing those bright yellow flowers I could hear the refrain from The Who, "... can see for miles and miles and miles and miles..." to be performed in the garden in February.

Attached to this note are a few photos of things that deserve as much awe as the blooms of the daffodils. It just takes a quieter moment to note the beauty in the shades of green and other more subtle colors. The variety of the shapes in leaves and the distinct patterns they make as they grow on different species.

In the next few weeks, several of you will assist with a spring thinning of the blueberry bushes and a shape restoration of the two large fig trees. I hope your soul finds a few visual joys while supporting our association's endeavors within Auburn City's Kiesel Park.

PS: If you enjoy these photos you might also appreciate this quote. I would describe Mr. Stansfield as a fern "elitist" who



thought way too much of himself. Read with a grain of salt, I think it applies to our visual enjoyment during this time of year.

*"The bright colours of flowers are admired by the least intellectual but the beauty of form and texture ... requires a higher degree of mental perception and a more cultivated intellect for its proper appreciation."*

— Abraham Stansfield 1858



## MG Spring Workshops

The following workshops taught by Lee Co. MGs will be offered this spring:

**Different Soils for Different Plants:** Davis Arboretum on March 9th, 10 a.m. Dennis Pinkard, Jolly Roberts, Patrick Thompson will discuss how to determine the elements of soil needed for any particular plant and how to make adjustments to the soil and maintain the right element mix throughout the year.

**Terrariums:** Kiesel Park's Nunn Winston House on April 13 @ 10 a.m. (rain date April 14, 1 p.m.) presented by Debbie Hartman. Learn to make your own terrariums, dish gardens and fairy gardens. Bring a wide-mouth, gallon-size jar that you can easily put your hand inside for plant placement. You may want to bring a small ceramic reptile to add interest. We will furnish mosses, plants and small rocks. There will be terrariums, dish gardens and fairy gardens for you to view. Free to the public. Adults only.

**Photography in the Garden:** Kiesel Park Demonstration Garden, May 19, 1 p.m. (rain date May 26, 1 p.m.) Enjoy learning a few simple guidelines for taking better garden photographs. Bring a camera and wear comfortable clothing and shoes. After a short presentation, we will practice what we've learned as we photograph the demonstration garden at Kiesel Park. Free to the public. Adults only.

**Hypertufas:** June 15, 9 a.m. & June 16, 1 p.m. (rain dates July 13, 9 a.m. & July 14, 1 p.m.) Learn how to make porous concrete containers or garden troughs called hypertufas. These containers are great for use with succulent plants. Saturday we will mix the ingredients and put in the molds, and Sunday we will unmold and refine them. The class is limited to 12 people, so please email Becky Large at [large\\_becky@yahoo.com](mailto:large_becky@yahoo.com) to register. Wear old clothes and comfortable shoes. We will provide ingredients and supplies for a nominal fee of \$20. Each person will make a container ready for planting. Adults only.

## Eremerus 101

by Gita Smith, MG Class of 2002

The new kid on the block in my garden this year is eremerus, also called foxtail lily or desert candle, depending on how erudite I want to sound. (Erudition isn't my strong suit, so I grab a little Latin when I can.) And in the interest of full disclosure, I must confess that this plant has gotten the better of me in the past. Twice. At considerable expense. Basically, all my attempts to grow it have been failures.

The first time a grower told me, "Eremerus doesn't like wet feet," I thought he was using a quaint expression. I wasn't a Master Gardener yet, and I didn't realize that professional growers don't make idle chit-chat when selling us their good nursery stock.

It was fall, and I took the eremerus roots home and stuck them in a low place in the garden.

Why? Because they were tall plants, so I figured I could afford to plant them low and they'd still show well. I was wrong. They never showed at all. The water from the rest of the garden ran downhill and collected at their feet.

A couple of years later, I happened to mention to a good friend that I admired foxtail lilies and wished I had some in my yard. She ordered a 25-root bag for my autumn birthday, and I was delighted when UPS dropped them on my doorstep.

But I got lazy; time passed; when I finally got around to digging a garden spot for the pinkish-beige, spidery-looking roots, they had dried out and gone brittle. As I handled them, many of the spidery "legs" broke off in my hands. I planted them anyway, but they never put up shoots. I had ignored the grower's instructions that stated, "Plant immediately upon arrival."



Four months ago I tried again to see whether I'd finally passed Eremerus 101. Create an uphill, sunny space with excellent drainage? Check. Open box immediately upon arrival? Check. Take care not to break the root stock? Check.

I even amended the soil with plenty of bone meal, said novenas, lit candles and swung the neighbor's cat above my head counter clockwise.

Now I wait.

In its first two years of growth, eremerus will send up one or two flower stalks. The strappy long leaves emerge in spring earlier than the flowers and are identical to those of eremerus' cousin, kniphofia — red hot poker.

But when the root system gets well established, a colony develops, and you will have a dozen or more of the tall, glowing flowers. At some point, these may need to be divided and here, again, the roots are the issue. Lifting a clump will require finesse so as not to damage the plant's "legs" and water-averse "feet."

The internet is full of helpful articles (none of which I read the first two times I tried this). One of the best is Dan Pearson's "Reaching for the Sky" <http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2006/jul/02/gardens>.

Finally, here's a short video on planting eremerus. (The gardener has a lovely British accent.) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kXuHRkGRFeM>.

