



## 2014 Garden Tour

Saturday, May 17, 10am - 5pm & Sunday, May 18, 1pm - 6pm



Photos by Jolly Roberts

**On the tour:** Sunset Farm (top) and the Doerstling house and gardens (bottom)

by Jolly Roberts, MG Class of 2003, & Sarah Fair, MG Class of 2010

It is very exciting to be approaching our 5th biennial LCMGA Tour. This year's tour will mark a decade of sharing garden ideas and inspiration with the community! And you are the people who make it happen. The 100-plus volunteers who work both in the spotlight and behind the scenes are the force that drives this very popular and much-anticipated event.

The continued success of the tour has increased community awareness and support. More people are nominating gardens and more garden owners are willing to share. Gardens are as unique as the people who make them, and we are again fortunate to have an exceptional group sharing their gardens, insights and experiences with us. Generous as always, many are looking forward to providing

special information and educational instruction on their interests, skills and histories.

This year we are celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, from which the MG program among others evolved. We are inviting the public to join us at the AU Ag Park's Red Barn for related displays and demonstrations and at Jule Collins Smith for a related art display, and to enjoy the museum's garden, outdoor sculptures and box-lunches-to-order.

The LCMGA Tour is undergoing a welcome metamorphosis thanks to some of our newest members. For the first time we have an official sponsorship committee. They have attracted enough sponsors to allow changing our brochure into a booklet, giving us the opportunity to provide more information about the gardens and our association.

Now is the time to choose your role in the tour. If you will be away during the tour we need your talents now. There are many pre-tour slots to fill. We have been very happy to find that MG Friends have been stepping up to help us too. If you are able to help, please call, and we can assist in finding something to match your interests.

Check the LCMGA website at [Leemg.com](http://Leemg.com) where we will be posting more detailed information on the tour and those who are making it happen. You might see yourself there!

### Tour Coordinators:

- Jolly Roberts, 334-524-0450, [jollyroberts@gmail.com](mailto:jollyroberts@gmail.com)
- Sarah Fair, 478-607-0805, [sfair100@yahoo.com](mailto:sfair100@yahoo.com)
- Susan Price, 703-725-0189, [Prcsmp@aol.com](mailto:Prcsmp@aol.com)

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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](http://www.leemg.org)

### Up & Coming Events

- Feb 15, 10am - 2pm, Denson Dr. Rec Ctr, Opelika, Potters Empty Bowls Fundraiser for Food Bank. Need MG volunteers to serve soup & buy tickets. Contact: Debbie Hartman: 334-826-3241.
- Feb 22, 8:30am - Noon, Davis Arboretum. Invasive Plant removal. Volunteers to work or supply and serve chili. Contact: Patrick Thompson, 334-844-5770.
- Mar 1, 9am-Noon, CDWT, Opelika, Clean-up day with KOB. Info: Billie Oliver, 334-749-2679.
- Mar 5, Extension office, 11:30 am, Monthly Meeting, Brown Bag Lunch. Speaker: Chip East on pruning & grafting.
- Mar 27-28, Pine Mtn, Ga, Callaway Gardening School with Andrea Wulf & Erica Glasener. Fee. For info: 706-663-5153 or [education@callawaygardens.com](mailto:education@callawaygardens.com).
- Apr 12, Arboretum Natives & Azalea Plant Sale. For info: Patrick Thompson, 844-5770.
- Apr 28-30, Daphne, AMGA Annual Conference, Alabama...A Gardener's JUBILEE. For Info: [amgaconference.org](http://amgaconference.org).
- May 15 & 16, Auburn, joint meeting of Ala & Ga Plant Conservation organizations. For info: Patrick Thompson, 844-5770.
- May 17, 10am-5pm & 18, 1pm-6pm, LCMGA Garden Tour. Info: [leemg.org](http://leemg.org)

## Notes from the President

*by MG President Dennis Pinkard, MG Class of 2007*

An old Japanese proverb states, "None of us is as smart, or as good, or as strong, or as productive as all of us." Since I believe that strongly, and much of my working history is based on the success of a team, today's column is focused on one of my favorite words – Teamwork.

First, let's define teamwork. According to [dictionary.com](http://dictionary.com), the definition of teamwork is "cooperative or coordinated effort on the part of a group of persons acting together as a team or in the interests of a common cause." We are all on lots of different teams, whether it is with a spouse or partner, offspring, church, book club, Master Gardeners, etc. And of course we are all on smaller teams within Lee County Master Gardeners Association, such as Kiesel Park, Garden Tour, the board, Leaf Notes, etc. And responsibilities come with membership on any team, including showing up on time, achieving agreed upon results, supporting other team members and holding team goals above personal goals.

There are many lessons to be learned by being a team member, lessons such as participative decision-making and a commitment to common goals, continuous learning and openness to new ideas and an ability to adjust to unforeseen circumstance, opportunities for growth and expansion and exposure to new ideas.

We have accomplished great things over the past few years – mainly because we have worked effectively as a large team and on smaller teams in organizing our efforts, pulling together and caring for each other. With this edition of Leaf Notes, we note that we will be moving toward a busy gardening season, in spite of the colder than usual winter. Where we have struggled is with manpower to maintain our three gardens. Our small teams will be even more important to our success in the future. Where you can, dedicate yourself to the success of one or more of our teams and make this an even better year for all of us.

Think like geese in a formation, where the one ahead provides lift for those behind and those behind honk encouragement to those ahead. Through efficiency of effort, a formation of geese can extend its range about 70 percent over that of an individual flyer. When the one in front tires, another moves up to take the lead. When one is sick and has to land, two more follow it down to provide protection. Geese teach us to work as a team, to support each other and share the load.

We will see you in the garden!  
Dennis

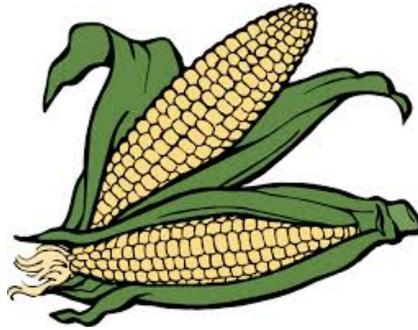
## Sweet Corn for Home Gardens

by Dr. Chip East  
Regional Extension Agent

Sweet corn is a great crop in a home garden and a very popular crop at the local farmers markets. This article discusses the different types of sweet corn and things to know before you grow them. The sweetness of corn is basically controlled by three different genes in the corn. The three types of corn discussed here are regular sweet corn (su), sugar enhanced (se) and supersweet (sh2).

The seed catalogs use the letters such as su, se and sh2 to describe the types of sweet corn. As an example you might see corn seed in a vegetable catalog listed as 'Double Standard' (su) or 'Xtra-Tender 3473' (sh2).

Normal sugary sweet corn (su) is commonly planted by home gardeners. It would be best if these types of corn were cooked the day of harvest. This corn quickly turns starchy after harvest even if stored in refrigeration. Some popular examples of normal sugary sweet corn are 'Silver Queen' and 'Merit.' Sugar-enhanced sweet corn (se) is sweeter than normal sugary corn. It also holds its sweetness longer than regular sweet corn. This gives it a longer shelf life. 'Silver King' is a popular type of sugar-enhanced corn. Supersweet corn (sh2) holds its sweetness longer than regular and sugar-enhanced sweet corn. It can be stored for days after harvest with little reduction in sugars. Supersweet corn has



a shrunken look to the seed. The more sugar in a kernel of corn, the more it draws up or shrinks. Think of field corn that shrinks very little when dried. The supersweet corn seed are smaller than regular sugary corn and therefore are not as hardy. These seeds are usually more expensive than normal sugary corn seed by the pound. But because the seeds are smaller, it does not take as many seeds to plant the same size area.

Planting time is very important in regard to supersweet corn. You may not get a good stand if the soil temperatures fall below 60 degrees F after planting. Many seed catalogs list temperatures for good seed germination. Many people plant too early trying to make an early crop. Different corn has different days to maturity. I would suggest not planting too early, but planting an earlier maturing corn. The seed catalogs and/or seed packet will list the days to maturity. You should avoid regular and sugar-enhanced corn cross-pollinating with supersweet corn. For this reason, supersweet corn should be planted 300 feet or more from regular sugar or sugar-enhanced corn. If you can not separate them by distance, find out the days to maturity for the

different corns and plant them so that they will silk two weeks apart. Corn begins to show silks at 18 to 22 days before it is mature and ready to harvest. The planting distance is not as important with the regular sugary and sugar-enhanced corn, but they should be separated if possible. You can find yellow, white or bicolor in the su, se and sh2 corn types.

If you want to try some of these different types of corn, remember to plant a little at first to see if you like it before you plant your entire garden. Since there is not a huge demand for these seeds from homeowners, you may not be able to find them at your local seed stores. However, there are many mail-order catalogs homeowners can get that will have these supersweet corns in them.

Different types of sweet corn have different tastes, shelf life and require different management inputs. You need to pick which corn is best for your needs.

One of the first things that should be done in the garden is to have a soil test performed on the site. The soil test gives you an analysis of the nutrients that are in your soil and what you may or may not need to add. Sweet corn grows best at a pH between 6.0 and 6.5. Your soil test will tell you what your pH is and what other elements to apply and when to apply them. If you have not been testing your soil and you need more information about it, you should contact your local county Extension office.

## Potpourri # 27

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

If you read my last Potpourri for November 2013, you might recall that I mentioned that Suzette, my daughter, and I attended our yearly meeting of the Maple Society North American Branch held in Ashville, N.C., in October, 2013. I noted too that we attended a power point presentation by Nancy and Thomas Ash on how to prune and shape the Japanese maple (*Jm*). I also stated that we were so impressed with their technique that we decided that we would try to get them to visit our Japanese maple gardens here in Auburn. Well, we did, and they did.

They flew into Montgomery on Friday, January 24th, from Hampstead, N.C., picked up a rental car and arrived at Willow Creek a little after 4 p.m. We had time to grab a glass of wine and walk the place before dark and select the *Jms* that we wanted to start the demonstration with at about 9 o'clock Saturday morning. Also amongst our plans was to make a movie of their efforts, so we had in attendance Lee and Amanda Borden, who are quite competent in filming and editing. Prior to Friday, John and Kathy Haynie and I had constructed a backdrop from PVC pipes and a thin white fabric that we could place behind the *Jms* in order to get better pictures.

Our goal was not to prune all the *Jms* on my 5 acres but to try to convey the approach to pruning and to indicate the amount of patience and skills required, and of course, the tools needed. We had about 10 observers present over the two and a half days, and to a man, they were exuberant in their praise for Nancy and Thomas. Of real interest was how to approach the pruning of a *Jm* that might be 10 years old and had never been pruned and was growing all out of proportion.



**Top:** Lee Borden films while Thomas Ash prunes a Japanese maple.

**Bottom:** Nancy Ash contemplates where to make the first pruning cut.

We learned that it might take three, four, five or even more years to get a tree back under control and into the space for which it was originally intended. I had such a tree right beside my deck that had taken over the walk to the deck and another *Jm* that had been a nice companion plant 10 years ago but now had its space totally compromised. Nancy and Thomas removed about thirty percent of the tree, which is about the maximum amount you

dare remove in one year, and in about another two years, the tree will have been restored to its original glory.

During the pruning sessions, Lee and Amanda Borden were filming selected segments. These film shots will be edited by Lee and made into several five to 10 minute segments and placed on the Internet for viewing by all. I can hardly wait for this magic. Stay tuned!

## Tentative 2014 MG Course Schedule

Feb. 13	9-11	Orientation	Mallory Kelley
	12-2	Plant Physiology	Toby Hoover
Feb. 20	9-2	Soils & Plant Nutrition	Dr. Charles Mitchell
Feb. 27	9-10:30	Helpline Training & Site Registration	Mallory Kelley
	12-2	Entomology	Dr. Charles Ray
Mar. 6	9-2	Plant Propagation	Dr. Chip East
Mar. 13	9-1	Fruit Culture	Mallory Kelley
	1-2	Citrus	Andrew Gerachris
Mar. 20	9-1	Plant Diseases & Disorders	Dr. Jim Jacobi
	1-2	Pesticide Safety	Jim Smitherman
Mar. 27	9-11	Pruning of Plants	Linda, Jane & Mary
	12-2	Composting	Karin Carmichael
Apr. 3	9-2	Turf & Lawn Care	Dr. David Han
Apr. 10	9-2	(Optional) Tour to Chillton Co. Research Station & Petals from the Past	
Apr. 17	9-10	What is Organic	Tyler Weldon
	10-2	Vegetable Gardening	Mike Forester
Apr. 24	9-11	Container Gardening/ Annuals & Perennials	Phil Easter
	12-2	Herbs	Maggie Stringer
May 1	9-1:30	Landscape Design	Mallory Kelley
	1:30-2	Wrap-up – Master Gardener Class	

## All Quiet on the Caroline Dean Wildflower Trail

*by Billie Oliver, MG Class of 2012*

Cold, wet weather in late November brought an abrupt end to planting on the Caroline Dean Wildflower Trail. We had placed a sprinkle of green and gold groundcover near the entry, small agarista and Florida wood fern on the lower left and purple-eyed grass uphill across from the bench. The illicium grown by the Hunters awaits our first planting day in February.

Carol Womar submitted a grant request to AMGA in January for \$1,000. If awarded, the funds will be used to purchase plants, plant labels and amendments that will assist our project in adding desirable native plants for the bench area and to further our educational goals.

In February we will resume tending the trail on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays, starting at 9 a.m., weather permitting. Please join the group as your time permits. Saturday, March 1, is Keep Opelika Beautiful (KOB) city-wide clean-up day. Volunteers will be invited to join Master Gardeners that morning from 9 a.m.-12 p.m. on the trail and surrounding edges. We will also apply for AU student volunteer assistance for Saturday, March 22, for the surrounding area. We'll be ready for spring and Garden in the Park.

Native azaleas on the trail usually start their bloom season in late March and delicate wildflowers peep through the leaf cover. Come enjoy their awakening in the peaceful woodland.

**Don't Forget  
Empty Bowls  
Fundraiser  
February 15, 10am-2pm**



Dear Fellow Master Gardeners and Friends,

Spring is just around the corner and I hope everyone is as excited as I am in anticipation of another season of outdoor gardening fun. And, as an extra bonus, this year we have the Home Garden Tour. Often this time of year is very busy for us and we don't always have the time to take part in every activity that comes our way. When you do have a chance to participate, I would like to invite you to share what you do with our fellow members and friends. If you take part in an event that would be of interest to other MGs and Friends or go on a garden related field trip, take a moment to jot down some notes, record names, take pictures. Let us see and hear about your activities working in your own garden or in the gardens we support. LCMGs are a great group of people and I would like the opportunity to share with others what we do.

You can submit your information directly to me at meetings or reach me by email at [raleinemg2012@gmail.com](mailto:raleinemg2012@gmail.com)

Looking forward to an exciting 2014, Raleine (PAO)



Alabama Master Gardeners are encouraged to attend this year's state conference on the Eastern Shore in Daphne. The Baldwin Co. Master Gardener Association has planned a jubilee of great workshops and speakers at the Daphne Civic Center. Banquet keynote speaker Dr. Bill Welch is a specialist in antique roses and heirloom gardening in the south and regular contributor to *Southern Living* magazine. Keynote speaker at the plenary session is Greg Grant, a writer for *Texas Garden* magazine and a plant developer. Other speakers include storyteller extraordinaire Betty Ann Wylie, photographer, writer and field botanist Fred Nation and ACEs regional extension agents James Miles and Ellen Huckabay. The Monday before and during the sessions, a number of optional field trips and tours are scheduled including to Splinter Hill Pitcher Plant Bog, Perdido Vineyards Winery, Baldwin Co. Bicentennial Park and Crenshaw Farms Daylily Garden. During the conference educational session, roundtables and vendor sales will be offered.

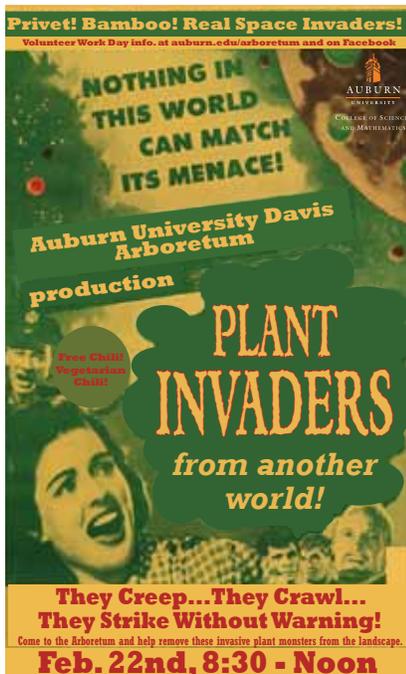
### Tuesday, Apr. 29, Highlights

- 8:45 Conference Welcome
- 9:10 Alabama...A Gardener's Jubilee, Fred Nations
- 10:30 AMGA Business Meeting
- 12:15 The Genesis of Community Gardening in the Fairhope Area, Marilyn Mannhard
- 1:15 Something Old...Something New...Plant Choices for Today's Landscape, Dr. William Welch
- 2:30 Gardening for the Birds and the Bees: Saving the World One Garden at a Time, Greg Grant
- 3:30 Silent Auction
- 5:30 AMGA Awards Banquet
- 8:15 Time-Tested Plants and Design Ideas for Alabama Gardens," Dr. William Welch

### Wednesday, Apr. 30, Highlights

- 8:00 Gardening for Love: An Arcadian Dogtrot, Greg Grant
- 9:15 Gardening Tools & Gadgets—James Miles/ Working Smarter, Not Harder—Liz Mundine/ Soils—Ellen Huckabay
- 10:30 Weatherproofing Your Landscape—James Miles/ Pot & Repot, Laurie Reddinger/Making Bee Boxes—Ellen Huckabay
- 11:45 Jubilee Catch, Freida Romanchuck/ Conference Wrap-up

Registration for the conference is \$100 before Apr.1 and \$145 after. A check can be made out to AMGA and mailed to Pat Greer, 24016 Raynagua Blvd., Loxley, AL 36551. For questions call Pat at 251-964-2746 or email her at [conf2014pat@gmail.com](mailto:conf2014pat@gmail.com). Hotel Reservations can be made with the Hampton Inn or the Fairfield Inn & Suites and Courtyard Marriot Hotels in Daphne. Special Room rates are available till Mar. 31 or until the ticket block is sold out.



**Please join us for  
 “Plant Invaders from  
 Another World!”  
 Saturday, February 22, 2014**

Join forces with fellow nature lovers and environmental stewards on Saturday, Feb. 22, for an invasive-plant cleanup event taking place at the Davis Arboretum. The event is designed for those who are concerned about the impact of invasive plants on local habitats or would like to learn more about how to manage invasive plants.

Participants should wear close-toed shoes or boots and bring work gloves. Tools will be provided, but participants may bring their own pruners. In the event inclement weather, the alternate date is March 1st.

“Plant Invaders from Another World” will start at 8:30 a.m. and go until noon. Meet at the pavilion off Garden Drive. All participants will be treated

## All Bugs Good and Bad 2014 Webinar Series

Please join us for this webinar series for information you can use about good and bad insects. Webinars will be on the first Friday of each month at 2 p.m. Eastern.

- February 7** If Flowers are Restaurants to Bees, Then What Are Bees to Flowers?  
*Dr. John Sklarner*
- March 7** Straight Talk About Termites  
*Dr. Xing Ping Hu*
- April 4** Get TickSmart: 10 Things to Know, 5 Things to Do  
*Dr. Thomas Mather*
- May 2** Are Those Itsy Bitsy Spiders Good or Bad?  
*Dr. Nancy Eitzinger*
- June 6** Fire Ant Management  
*Elizabeth Brown*
- August 1** Minimize Mosquito Problems  
*Molly Keck*
- September 5** Kudzu Bug Takes Over the Southeastern U.S./Brown Marmorated Stinkbug—All Bad  
*Dr. Michael Thew/Dr. Tracy Laney*
- October 3** Alien Invasions, Zombies Under Foot, and Billions of Decapitated Fire Ants  
*Dr. Sanford Porter*
- November 7** Where Have All the Honey Bees Gone? Hope for the Future  
*Dr. John Sklarner*

**For more information on the series and how to connect to the webinars, visit: <http://www.extension.org/pages/70120>.**

Alabama A&M and Auburn Universities

Brought to you by these extension Communities of Practice: Imported Fire Ants, Urban IPM, Tree Health, Invasive Species, B. Gardens and Landscapes.

Credits for photos: Ben Ciel, Ingrid, Ingrid Long Jerry A. Hayes, USDA-ARS, Ingrid Long, Michael Thew, USDA Forest Service, USDA, L&E Photo Bank, USDA-ARS, Ingrid Long, David Crippen, Michigan State University, Ingrid Long, Douglas McEwen, Georgia Southern University, Ingrid Long.

to a chili lunch. There is no cost to attend, but registration is requested. To register, send an email to Dee Smith at [drs0001@auburn.edu](mailto:drs0001@auburn.edu).

The event is sponsored by Facilities Management, Donald E. Davis Arboretum, Parkerson Mill Creek Project, Office of Sustainability, Alabama Invasive Plant Council, Department of Horticulture and the Alabama Cooperative Extension System.

For more information, visit [www.auburn.edu/arboretum](http://www.auburn.edu/arboretum) – *Dee Smith*

**LEE COUNTY  
Master  
Gardeners**

**Lee County  
Master Gardener  
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**Soon to be available with  
our new logo. Come to the  
March meeting to order  
your shirt!**



Two large above-ground cisterns collect rainwater falling on the doctor's office roof at Pioneer Park.

Photo by Beth Dorman

## Grandma's Garden

by Beth Dorman, MG Class of 2010

According to precipitation records, Lee County had more rainfall in half the time in 2013 compared to all of 2012, so Grandma's Garden should have plenty of water available for irrigation this year. Why is this so?

Rainwater is funneled from the roof of the doctor's office into two large above-ground cisterns located near the garden. The water collected then is pumped through an irrigation system into the garden as needed. Most assuredly with all the recent large amounts of rain, the cisterns must be filled to capacity. The captured water will certainly help keep the garden irrigated and less stressed when the dry hot days of summer return.

Have you ever wondered how much water you could catch for your

garden? Information received from a recent rainwater harvesting workshop included the following data:

One inch of rain collected from a 1-square-foot roof would equal .62 gallons of water, so 1 inch of rain from a 1,000-square-foot roof would equal 620 gallons. With an average yearly rainfall that equals 52 inches per year, 2,000 square feet would yield 64,480 gallons in one year. Even in August, when the average rainfall is only 3.04 inches, that roof would yield 3,720 gallons of rainwater.

Maybe we should all consider conserving water by irrigating with rainwater captured naturally. Growing healthier plants, grasses and trees that would thrive on rainwater free of chlorine and other harmful chemicals would definitely be worth it.

## 2013 Star & Badge Awards

by Patti Householder, MG Class of 2004

Thanks to all who logged hours in the Master Gardener Service Report. Again, it's so important to log our hours because this shows how much volunteer time (which translates into dollars) Master Gardeners provide those in our state and communities. Kerry Smith, the MG program coordinator, uses these hours to show the "powers that be" the importance and value of our service to the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, and in turn this provides programs and monies to continue the MG program.

Drum roll please... I'd like to recognize those receiving awards from our association:

**Gold Badge** – 1,000-1,999 lifetime hours

*Tomie Dugas* has over 1,000 hours since her certification in 2004, and she will receive a gold badge at the State Master Gardening Conference in Baldwin County, April 28-30, 2014.

**Gold Star** – 500-999 lifetime hours

*Kelly Haynes*  
*Billie Oliver*

**Silver Star** – 300-499 lifetime hours

*Steve Crannell*

**Bronze Star** – 100-299 lifetime hours

*Mary-Clair McCarthy*  
*Anne Morgan*  
*Susan Price*  
*Jane Sepanski*  
*Raleine Sillman*

## Three A's and a V

by Charlot Ritenbaugh, MG Class of 2010

January 2014 has been a restful time for the beds at the LCMGA Demonstration Garden at Kiesel Park. What follows is a description of three new native shrubs and a vine that will soon begin their spring seasonal growth. The addition of these natives expands the garden's ability to demonstrate a natural habitat for pollinators, butterflies and birds.

*Aesculus parviflora*, bottlebrush buckeye is one of the best summer-flowering shrubs for shady areas, provided it is adequately watered. It is deciduous, multi-stemmed and can be pruned to less than its natural 6- to 12-foot height. In mid-summer it produces long white tubular panicles. These flowers also have showy red anthers, which attract hummingbirds. In the fall, the palmate leaves turn yellow.

*Aristolochia macrophylla*, pipevine, is a fast-growing deciduous vine, which might have covered your grandmother's porch with its large heart-shaped leaves. It can climb 20-35 feet by means of twining stems. The pipe-shaped flowers are green/burgundy with a yellow tube. This plant can be seen in our southern Appalachian hardwood forests. It is the host plant for the Pipevine Swallowtail.

*Asimina triloba*, pawpaw tree or common pawpaw, is a short-trunked understory tree or a large, multi-stemmed shrub, 10 to 40 feet tall. Its leaves are large and look tropical. By planting just one tree and limiting cross-pollination, the troublesome fruit should be minimal. This native is the only host plant for the Zebra Swallowtail and also attracts the Pawpaw Sphinx moth.

*Viburnum obovatum*, 'Best Densa,' is a dwarf cultivar of this semi-evergreen species of the honeysuckle family. The tightly packed small leaves provide a dense cover for songbirds. They also turn a pretty red in the winter. The small white flowers cover the plant in spring and provide berries, which start out red, but turn a shiny black and supply food for those same birds later in the season.

As gardeners know, no matter how cold and dark the winter may be, spring will come. Stay warm and I'll see you in the garden!



**Top left:** Sphinx Moth

**Bottom left:** Pipevine Swallowtail

**Right:** Zebra Swallowtail

## Thoughts of a Distracted Viewer

by Gita Smith, MG Class of 2002

It was a bustling scene, halfway through Downton Abbey's season premiere. The main characters were struggling to resolve their conflicts, and servants were plotting against each other. For a few seconds, however, none of that mattered because huge bouquets of gorgeous fresh flowers were being delivered to the manse.

"Oh, look, fresh cut flowers!" I exclaimed. "They must have a cutting garden!" My husband glared and shushed me. "I want a cutting garden," I whispered.

This type of distraction happens all the time. In a recent movie during a pivotal scene set in late autumn, I wanted to yell out in the theater, "Hey! No, you've got it all wrong!" For there amid the falling golden leaves were – blooming rhododendrons? What dufus of a set designer had placed potted, flowering rhododendrons – joy of springtime – in a late October setting? I elbowed my husband next to me. "Puh-leez, will you look at those flowers?" I groaned in a loud stage whisper. He was not amused.

Lately, I've been noticing more and more of these anomalies.

The worst offenders are those purportedly filmed in the South, but actually filmed in Canada or California. The set designers seem to think that every Southern tree is draped in Spanish moss, that every yard has magnolias (with no dead leaves beneath them).

Good directors spend a lot of research time and dollars getting the small architectural, automotive and clothing details right. So why don't they consult a Master Gardener when the time comes to landscape a scene? Earth to Hollywood: Dogwoods don't bloom in July in the South.

I also notice those moments in movies where gardening becomes a part of the script. There's a tender scene in "Pollock" when the artist, played by Ed Harris, tries to start a new life away from New York City. He plants bean seeds, two to a hole, in rows he's hoed. It was such a simple, life-giving oasis in his otherwise self-destructive existence.

Sometimes I want to pause the movies in their tracks and drink in the sight of a particular copper beech or stand of prairie grass

before the camera pans away. The plots move on, but my attention has halted on a fabulous garden as if it were a character in the movie, too.

One of the reasons I think I dislike the new brand of films like "I, Robot" and "Spiderman 4" with their super-computer animation is that there are no plants in them. Twelve-year-old boys, for whom so many digitized action movies are made, do not care about gardens. If you, like me, are prone to get distracted by garden scenes and landscapes on screen, you might like to spend some time with a few of the following films: Days of Heaven (1978); A Room With a View (1985); The Last Emperor (1987) and It's Complicated (2009).

When Marlon Brando died, several tributes to the actor showed scenes of his work in "A Streetcar Named Desire" and "The Wild One." But the scene I will always hold dearest is one from "The Godfather." For me, Brando will always be Vito Corleone as an old man, lumbering through the tomato vines on a summer afternoon. He is playing a game with his grandson, and the simple staked tomatoes – a holdover from his roots in Sicily – come crashing down when the huge man falls to his death. Mafia chieftain he may have been, but a gardener he remained to the end.



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