



Leaf



Notes



The Newsletter of Lee County Master Gardeners

Presidents Message

Each season brings its own beauty. As the days grow shorter and the air grows cooler, this is a time to pause and be thankful, a time to reflect on the past year and to look forward to the year ahead.

I am so thankful to all you-Master Gardeners and Friends of Master Gardeners who share your love of gardening with others. Thank you for volunteering to work at mulch sales, native azalea sales, and for hosting displays at Auburn Fest, Garden in the Park, the Home and Garden Show, and the Lee County Fair. Thank you for bringing refreshments, setting up chairs and tables and welcoming visitors to our regular meetings. Thank you for mentoring interns and tending our four demonstration gardens. Thank you for saying yes when asked to help in the upcoming 2020 Garden Tour.

Our program chairman, Linda Lee, organized some fantastic programs during 2019, such as celebrating Alabama's bicentennial and Creating a Water Garden in your back yard. My personal favorite was the Plant Swap. Steve Carter and Pat Giordano have worked tirelessly to refresh our membership rolls and update our membership directory. Cathy Shepherd helped organize trips to the Birmingham Botanical Gardens, Jim Scott's Garden and Hills and Dales. Lela Lofton applied for a grant through the Alabama Master Gardeners that enabled our LCMGA partner with Keep Opelika Beautiful to landscape an intersection along Frederick Road. A Master Gardener class met this fall. This group of interns has already brought lots of energy and enthusiasm to our group. We are looking forward to working with them as they fulfill their volunteer hours.

Our 2020 Garden Tour, *A Spring Stroll*, promises to be the best LCMGA Garden tour yet. Julia Freeman and Jan Holt have spent countless hours lining up a beautiful group of gardens. Charlot Ritenbaugh and Pat Giordano are serving as tour coordinators for the May 16 and 17 tour. They have organized all the different committees that make the tour run smoothly. This tour would be impossible to pull off without your help.

I wish all of you and your families a wonderful holiday season and I look forward to working with you next year.

Happy Gardening,
Linda Nowlin

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Quarterly Quote

"Do unto those downstream as you would have those upstream do unto you."

-Wendell Berry, farmer and author
(b. 5 Aug 1934)

-Submitted by Karmi Perez



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The Master Gardeners Program educates volunteers in science-based gardening and landscape practices and helps them effectively extend research-based information to the public as Master Gardeners. The Master Gardener's role is primarily that of “educator.”

There are many different ways our volunteers in Lee County help the Alabama Extension System (ACES) expand outreach to the community. We construct and maintain community demonstration gardens and help implement community projects. A variety of garden-related programs and workshops are offered to the public.

Quarterly Quiz

Editors Column



Can you identify this plant/flower?

Answer on page 7

Several things influenced this edition of Leaf Notes.

You will notice a new writer—Kat Privet-Duren who designed , set-up, and managed LCMG booth at the Lee County Fair this fall. Many thanks to Kat for all her hard work!

Pat Giordano continues her series “Sneak Peek”, a short introduction to two gardens on our 2020 Spring Stroll.

One of our interesting programs was a presentation by Jason Powell of Petals from the Past. He brought numerous plants (for sale) And discussed them lovingly. It was apparent to me how much he loved each and every one.

I found an interesting article on Recycling or Repurposing older items around your home. See it on page13.

And finally, Karmi Perez presents alternative gift giving ideas on page 14.



LCMG at Lee County Fair

Oct 1—5, 2019



Our Lee County Fair exhibit for 2019 was entitled "Backyard Pollinators." Kat Privett-Duren created the display with help from her husband, Todd, and Steve Carter. Its intent was to bring the critical nature of pollinators that may already be present in our backyards and included silk sunflowers, butterflies and dragonflies, and more! Creating the backdrop was a screen door with a tin roof and small porch built on site, setting the scene for a daily engagement with the pollinators in our own Alabama environment.

Included in the display was a proper bee house and beekeeper suit (loaned by Damon Wallace) and a natural/native bee habitat (on loan from Dani Carroll.) We also showcased colorful and informative posters that endeavored to educate our local community on the wonderful and helpful pollinators that share our backyards. See you next year!

Cartoon Time



—Submitted by Margaret Holler



Potpourri

-Charlot Ritenbaugh

A shout out to the LCMGA Demonstration Gardens leaders, Jan Holt, Billie Oliver, Kathy Hayward, Margaret Holler. I made it to a work day at Kiesel last week. There were only three of us there but the garden beds looked marvelous when we left. They always do. If you haven't worked in one of our four gardens recently, put it on your

to-do list for next spring. It's a good way to exercise a few muscles, spend time with other Master Gardeners and Friends and offer visual educational displays of good gardening to those that visit our gardens.

Another shout out to Auburn City Parks and Recreation department for conducting a work Saturday at Town Creek Park. Those of us who visit there had noticed the crawl of privet and wisteria out of the woods and onto the pathways. The clean out Saturday not only pushed back on the invasive plants in that area but offered a learning opportunity for folks on what not to buy, even when its available locally.

Amaryllis bulbs are out in stores everywhere. Many of them are at reduced prices right now. They are dependable bloomers as houseplants this time of year. After the flowers fade the exhausted bulb can be added to your compost pile OR you can plant it outside in the spring. If the bulb has received moderate care and nutrients it will grow and bloom outside. Bulbs that have good quality soil and adequate moisture in their outdoor location can produce additional bulbs and continue to offer their blooms in April or May. This can repeat for several years if our winter temperatures stay above 10 degrees.

Our 2020 Garden Tour is focusing on how gardens can serve as an extension of our indoor space. They can offer a place to relax and contemplate the gifts of nature. You might consider adding a hammock or hanging chair to your garden next year. Floating on a hammock is a great way to catch up on your reading or take a little nap. A larger hammock offers room for two. At night, a swinging chair can be the perfect place for some star gazing. Being suspended allows one to blend into the natural environment. Birds, small animals and insects are fun to observe, especially when they don't know you are there. A Mary Poppins song shares the emotions of "your fist holding tight, to the end of your kite." Some of those lyrics also apply to lying in a hammock, "up where the air is clear, all at once you're lighter than air, you can dance on the breeze..."



Lane Sauser introduces David Hall, recipient of LCMG scholarship.

David is currently a student at AU.

Sneak Peek —2020 Spring Stroll

(Mark your calendars for May 16 and 17)

by Pat Giordano

Julia Freeman and Jan Holt announce a mini-walking tour within 2020 Spring Stroll: Three gardens in the historic district of Opelika. Park your car once and walk to three lovely gardens. All within a few blocks, you will enjoy three very different gardens.

At a craftsman-style home that has been in the owners' family for several generations, the garden is a charming mix of old and new. Just a few blocks from downtown Opelika, this backyard is a quiet oasis for the owners to sit in a swing and enjoy the antics of their beautiful chickens. Don't miss the hand-painted wooden "barn quilt block" on the side of the potting shed.

A historic home with a garden featuring lovely borders and lawns also has a charming backyard perfect for a young family to enjoy the outdoors. They love to garden and grow veggies with their little daughter as well as entertain on their outdoor kitchen and sitting area. The garden soil was hand-mixed by the former owner, a horticultural professional, to offer enhanced growing components. Another touch from a former owner is the local historical bricks which make up the patio.

And lastly, a stately home with landscaping to match the home's grandeur. The traditional front garden and creeping fig covered walls hide a back garden designed for family fun and relaxation, including covered porch, large sunny deck, swimming pool, and child's playhouse.

But wait-there's more! A fourth garden has been added that is just a short drive outside the historic district, and it has its own history. Similar to one of the gardens on the walking tour, this homeowner has returned to her childhood home. One highlight is a mature maple tree that she remembers her mother planting as a small seedling. The private backyard garden features large, mature native and traditional southern shrubs and trees, shady brick patio and garden art.



Photos by Pat Giordano



Jason Powell Speaks at the November 6th Meeting

—Linda Nowlin

Jason Powell, owner of Petals from the Past, presented our November 6 program: Gardening for Winter Interest. Jason suggested several plant selections that would work well in our Lee County area:

Hearts a bustin (also known as Strawberry Bush) *Euonymus americanus* is a native shrub which grows in this area. It has wonderful autumn color.

Fathergilla, another native has small honey stemmed white flowers and yellow/orange foliage in fall.

Edgeworthia or paper bush is a great specimen plant for the garden. Its fragrant yellow round clusters appear on bare stems in early spring.

Winter Honeysuckle (*Lonicera fragrantissima*) is a hardy old fashioned scrub that has a tiny cream colored scented flowers. It is an excellent winter nectar source for honey bees and effective for winter garden fragrance.



Photos by David Peterson



6 Extremely Poisonous Plants People Confuse for Food

By: Avishai Edenburg

Most of us know to exercise caution around mushrooms. We've all been taught about the dangers of fungi and are taught to stay away from toadstools unless we're a 100% sure we recognize the specific species and know for a fact it's safe for consumption. The same goes for mold, which we will only ever accept on our food if that food is blue cheese.

And yet, when it comes to true plants, many people drop their guard down for inexplicable reasons. Maybe they are under the misguided impression that because plants are "natural" that necessarily means they're good for us. While far from the most common cause of poisoning (that dubious honor belongs to carbon monoxide and household items such as pesticide), hospitalization due to ingestion of poisonous plants is entirely preventable.

The first rule of thumb is to **NEVER INGEST ANY PLANT YOU UNLESS YOU'RE ABSOLUTELY CERTAIN IT'S SAFE**. But knowing about particular plants which pose more threat can also help mitigate the odds of poisoning from occurring.

1. Nerium Oleander



This decorative shrub is native to the subtropical regions of Africa, Europe, and Asia, but has been introduced to America, where it thrives, particularly along coastal areas. They are prized for their beautiful flowers, which commonly range from rosy-white to red, though yellow oleanders can also be found. Oleanders are easy to recognize by their leaves, which are tough, long and sharp.

It is also among the most poisonous plants that can grow in your garden.

All parts of the plant are incredibly toxic, with the poison directly targeting the heart, causing cardiac arrest, coma or even death when ingested. Stories abound of people brewing oleander tea and being rushed to the hospital. And humans aren't the only mammals susceptible to oleander poisoning, a fact that can be deduced by one of the shrub's nicknames: dogbane. Needless to say, keep your canine friends away from this bush.

Answer to Quiz on page 2 ——— KUDZU



6 Extremely Poisonous Plants People Confuse for Food

- Continued

2. Belladonna



This plump and inviting fruit may look like a cherry or blueberry, and is actually sweet if bitten, but it's one of the most toxic plants known to man, with two to four berries being enough to kill a child. Also known as deadly nightshade, the use of this plant as poison was so ubiquitous in ancient times that when Europeans first saw its American cousin, the tomato, they suspected it of being toxic, a rumor that was exacerbated by the reaction of the tomato's acids with toxic lead in their pewter dining plates.

Regardless, the dangers of belladonna are very real, and curious children especially should be warned about this plant.

3. Buckeye and Horse Chestnut



Source: Bob Richmond

These nuts may not be lethal, but they are toxic and easily confused with the unrelated and edible chestnut, as they have the same shape, alluring sheen and are housed within an accessory fruit. The fruit of the true chestnut is covered by a multitude of dense, sharp spines that look like that of a hedgehog, while the fruit of the poisonous horse chestnut is only mildly prickly and the buckeye has no spines, at all.

4. Rhododendrons and Azaleas



Rhododendrons, of which azaleas are subspecies, are beautiful flowering plants, a great addition to any garden, but their sweet nectar houses dangerous mind-altering toxins. There is an ancient tradition in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey), dating back more than two thousand years ago of deliberately feeding this poisonous nectar to bees, who go on to produce hallucinogenic honey. According to a legend, Roman legionnaires in the 1st century BC fell to a literal honeypot trap, when their opponents left this "mad honey" for the Romans to find.



6 Extremely Poisonous Plants People Confuse for Food

- Continued

5. Horsenettle



Not actually a true nettle despite its name, this American plant is another deadly member of the nightshade family, and is sometimes known as the devil's tomato or wild tomato. Ingesting the horsenettle's tomato-like fruit can cause hypoventilation and sometimes death.

6. Pokeweed



These beautiful berries are commonly eaten by birds, but for humans, they're potentially-lethal poison. All parts of this plant are poisonous, a fact that is somewhat confused by one of this plant's alternative names, poke salad (not to be confused with the Hawaiian poke bowl). Why a salad? Because the shoots and leaves (never the berries!) *can* be prepared in such a way that they are edible, but unless you know how, you should probably not make the effort. Ingestion can cause all sorts of gastrointestinal problems such as vomiting, cramps and bloody stool, as well as convulsions and deadly respiratory failure.

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A Hidden Gem

by Betsy Akins

A Hidden Gem Surprises always spark joy. The good ones do at least, like the new garden changes and new director we discovered just down the road. In mid-September, the 2019 Master Gardener Intern class was past the halfway mark for classwork. Everyone was studiously keeping up with weekly classes and exams, while enduring the prolonged hot, dry weather.

One Thursday morning there was a welcome coolness in the air. It happened to be the day Dani Carroll had arranged a field trip. Some of us piled into her car and others joined us there. After a 45-minute drive we landed in a garden wonderland! You may not be aware of this shimmering gem surrounded by a busy city. Exciting things are happening in that special place--the Columbus Botanical Gardens. Since my last visit two years ago at Christmas to view the extensive camellia area in full bloom, a lot had changed. My

classmates and I strolled down paths of trellis-filled blooms within imaginative landscape designs.

We were delighted by the variety of plants in the cottage garden. Dani pointed out many details we may not have otherwise noticed. Roses and hibiscus graced us with their eye-popping beauty. Handsome stonework terraces overflowed with ripening watermelons, their vines strewn down the slopes. Tomatoes and peppers still produced their bounty. Strawberry plants grew happily in their unusual containers--livestock watering tanks. Nearby beehives reminded us of the importance of pollinating insects. The striking Zebra Longwing butterflies feeding on the lantanas turned heads.

We lunched casually on benches under the trees while admiring the views. Later we walked the tranquil winding trails under the pines noting the many varieties of camellias. I remembered that path had been lit with color on my previous visit, with scattered carpets of camellia petals. The quiet and stillness there belied the presence of nearby shopping and restaurants. Stefan Bloodworth, the dynamic new director, energized us with an afternoon talk describing future plans for the Gardens. He recently took the helm in order to design and grow the area, having

been recruited from Duke University where he was curator at their Native Plant Gardens. He outlined the blueprint for acquiring additional surrounding land. Planning and horticulture experts in Dallas and Columbus, Ohio Botanical Gardens have collaborated with him. He hopes to emphasize the natural heritage of the area, believing that it can be a unique reflection of the area's development.





A Hidden Gem

—continued

In order to help connect the setting to natural history, UGA Landscape Architecture graduate students are growing some of the native wildflowers that were discovered by William Bartram on his travels there in the 1700s. The design for a new children's garden will help address the increasing problem of children growing up with limited exposure to nature.



The new director is also an educator and public speaker who teaches community education horticulture classes at Columbus State University. He leads guided walks at the Gardens the first Thursday of every month. It's an easy drive, and you can treat yourself with your own field trip to Columbus Botanical Gardens, 3603 Weems Road, Columbus, GA 31909, 706-327-8400.



Photos by Betsy Akins



What is the difference between a tree and a shrub?

Choose your fighter: tree or shrub.

By Eleanor Cummins June 7, 2019

It's a deceptively simple question: What's the difference between a tree and a shrub?

At first, the answer seems intuitive. Faced with a woody plant, the average person could swiftly categorize each as either tree or shrub, likely based on a set of inarticulable parameters specific and unknown even to them.

But think about the prompt for too long and the easy answer sours. Instead, the individual in question might turn to something they've read or heard from a more reliable source, say ornithologist David Allen Sibley's pithy bifurcation: "If you can walk under it, it's a tree; if you have to walk around it, it's a shrub."

It only takes a moment more for this explanation to crumble. Sibley's simplification can't account for many popular plants. *Kolkwitzia amabilis* (alias "beauty bush") supports splendid pink blossoms on dozens of stems like the shrub it is, but can soar a perplexing 12 feet. *Viburnum sieboldii*, a red berried-bush, can be forcibly pruned by horticulturalists into the shape of an imposing arbor. And while *Magnolia virginiana* may look like a bush when it's young, it eventually matures into a bona fide tree.

Sooner or later, you realize you're lost in the brambles of your own mind. Because that's the thing about trees and shrubs: The distinction is less a botanical fact than a feeling, a linguistic quirk, an issue of philosophy. Even botanists can't agree a definition—or if the difference really matters.

Deanna Curtis is the senior curator of woody Plants at the New York Botanical Garden. She says woody plants, which include shrubs, trees, and lianas (a vine that has its own roots in the soil but climbs up other trees to access the canopy above), exist on a spectrum. On one end, you have species that are so dense and low to the ground they can't be mistaken for anything but a bush. On the other, you have classically charismatic trees: coast redwoods like Hyperion, which is mostly wood and soars 380 feet, or New Zealand kauris like Tāne Mahuta, which is 50.7 feet around the middle. In the center of this continuum is every woody plant that makes you go, "Huh."

While plenty of species would prompt the "large shrub, small tree problem" in their natural state, selective breeding at the hands of humans has blurred the boundaries even further. Now, we can make serviceberry bushes (specifically the hybridized *Amelanchier x grandiflora* variety) grow with a single stem so that it can masquerade as a tree. Or we can create pleasure garden Franken-plants like *Syringa palibin*, which Curtis describes, quite literally, as "just a shrub on a stick."

And the magnolia problem comes back to haunt us, too. Unlike ponies, which are breeds unto themselves and therefore distinct from baby horses, shrubs can very well become trees, through maturation or pruning. And if bonsai artists can tame the same genes that launched Hyperion skyward into a miniature redwood houseplant, one could imagine we've made a few trees look like shrubs.

No wonder Sibley gave up on the question; after crystallizing walk around/walk under dichotomy, he ultimately concluded in his own guide book to dendrology that "developing a precise definition of a tree is difficult and unrewarding."

Still, people still try, each of us in our own way. For me, height continues to be an important if imperfect point of demarcation. Curtis, meanwhile, thinks of it in terms of faunal density. "I think when you can see the architecture of the tree"—a sturdy base, with a few distinct and sizable branches—"you'd call it a tree." If it's so dense with leaves or flowers you can't even tell if there's a trunk, odds are it's a bush. The National Park Service's definition draws on both traits, concluding "Generally, trees are over 20 feet tall and have trunks more than 2 inches in diameter at 4.5 feet about the ground. Shrubs are smaller than trees and often have many small, woody, bark covered stems rising from the base."

Ultimately, bush vs. tree "is not a scientific classification," Curtis says. But it's a popular one, useful in everyday life... provided you don't look too closely.



Recycling or Repurposing?

From Ba-Ba Mail

Sometimes the most innovative looks are repurposed. Recycling is satisfying, but reusing is more exciting. The trend of making trash into new products is called upcycling. You can find new uses for beloved objects that have given up the ghost. Marvel at people's creativity or get a thrifty inspiration for a DIY project.

Fashion a Medicine Cabinet out of a Vintage Suitcase



Create an Aquarium from an Upright Piano



Revive Your Old Piano into a Fountain and Flower Bed



Perk Up Your Bathroom with a Bicycle Sink Stand





NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS: ALTERNATIVE GIFT-GIVING

—Karmi Perez

For those who have everything, why not give “virtual gifts” with a smaller ecological footprint? Donate in their honor to a non-profit organization of your choice. Charity Navigator (www.charitynavigator.org) offers guidance for smart giving by rating organizations. The following environmental organizations rated 95% or higher can provide for earth-friendly gifts to give in honor of those people who have “everything.”

CENTER FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

<https://www.biologicaldiversity.org>

The Center for Biological Diversity believes that the welfare of human beings is deeply linked to nature. Because diversity has intrinsic value and its loss impoverishes society, we work to secure a future for all species hovering on the brink of extinction, focusing on protecting the lands, waters, and climate that species need to survive.

CHATTAHOOCHEE RIVERKEEPER

<https://www.chattahoochee.org>

The Chattahoochee Riverkeeper's (CRK) works to advocate and secure the protection and stewardship of the Chattahoochee River, its tributaries and watershed, in order to restore and preserve their ecological health for the people, fish and wildlife that depend on the River system.

CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL

<https://www.conservation.org>

Conservation International (CI) applies innovations in science, economics, policy and community participation to protect the Earth's richest regions of plant and animal diversity and to demonstrate that human societies can live harmoniously with nature. CI helps people find economic alternatives without harming their natural environments.

GLOBAL WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

<https://www.globalwildlife.org>

Global Wildlife Conservation protects endangered species and habitats through science-based field action. GWC has built its success upon a foundation of excellence in exploration, research and conservation.

WILD FOUNDATION

<https://www.wild.org>

WILD works to create and strengthen leadership and communities that respect and protect wilderness for the benefit of all life on Earth.

RAINFOREST TRUST

<https://www.rainforesttrust.org>

Rainforest Trust works to strategically purchase and protect lands vital for endangered species and indigenous communities. It specifically targets the most threatened tropical habitats that are critical for preventing species extinctions and that are exceptionally rich in biological diversity.

SEA TURTLE CONSERVANCY

<https://www.conserveturtles.org>

The mission of the Sea Turtle Conservancy is to ensure the survival of sea turtles within the Wider Caribbean basin and Atlantic through research, education, training, advocacy and the protection of the natural habitats upon which they depend.

SOLAR COOKERS INTERNATIONAL

<https://www.solarcookers.org>

Solar Cookers International (SCI) spreads solar cooking awareness and skills worldwide, particularly in areas with plentiful sunshine and diminishing sources of cooking fuel.

SOUTHERN ENVIRONMENTAL LAW CENTER

<https://www.southernenvironment.org>

The Southern Environmental Law Center uses the power of law and policy to protect the environment in six states: Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia. SELC's attorneys work in all branches and at all levels of government to defend healthy air and clean water; to protect the region's forests, coasts, wetlands, and other native landscapes; and to promote vibrant and livable communities across the Southeast.

WILDAID

<https://www.wildaid.org>

WildAid's mission is to end the illegal wildlife trade in our lifetimes. WildAid works to reduce the demand for illegal wildlife products, and to promote energy conservation via global public awareness campaigns.