

# The Garden Plot

January 2012

In Honor of Evelyn Isbell

Wiregrass Master Gardeners  
Association  
wishes you all "Happy Gardening" in  
2012



"From December to March, there are for many of us three gardens - the garden outdoors, the garden of pots and bowls in the house, and the garden of the mind's eye."

- Katherine S. White



## ***MARK YOUR CALENDARS!***

### **AMGA 22ND ANNUAL MASTER GARDENERS CONFERENCE**

March 22 – 24, 2012

Birmingham, AL

We are looking forward to welcoming our fellow Master Gardeners to “The Magic City” for the 22nd Annual Conference. Conference activities will be centered at the Birmingham Marriott, located on Highway 280 near shopping and a variety of attractions, including the Birmingham Botanical Gardens and Aldridge Gardens.

See the “Garden Pathways” December issue for more information. Go to [www.alabamamg.org](http://www.alabamamg.org)



**The**  
**MAGIC**  
**of Gardening**  
Jefferson County, 2012

# HUMMINGBIRDS!



Our local hummingbird expert and bird bander, Fred Bassett, says this winter is proving to be better than ever for drawing winter hummers to your home. Just put up and maintain a feeder to draw varieties not usually seen in our area during the warm months.

These two hummers shown above were recently caught and banded at the home of Jim and Cat Thomas. The one on the left is an immature male Rufous hummingbird that populates the Pacific Northwest. It is an important pollinator in the region where insect pollinators are at a disadvantage.

The hummer on the right is an immature female Black-chinned hummingbird. She summers in northwest Canada, the western United States and central Mexico. When in flight, this species pumps and wags its tail almost constantly.

Article and photos submitted by Cat Thomas

*Below are two of the many websites available for researching more information on the hummingbird:*

[www.allaboutbirds.org](http://www.allaboutbirds.org) or [www.hummingbirds.net](http://www.hummingbirds.net)

Have you ever observed a hummingbird moving about in an aerial dance among the flowers - a living prismatic gem.... it is a creature of such fairy-like loveliness as to mock all description.

~W.H. Hudson, *Green Mansions*

# THE GARDEN CALENDAR

## January's Garden....

*OK, we're into January and pretty much exhausted after the Christmas holiday rush. So maybe we should just kick back and do some thinking about our gardens. Curling up in a favorite spot with a lap full of plant catalogs and magazines makes it easy to dream of our spring and summer gardens. But...look out the window, see the bare bones of your garden, evaluate the landscape. What kind of changes do you want to make? How will your garden better serve your family's needs? Do you want to scale back on the work you put in the garden? Or do you want to bust open the seams and let it all explode in a new tapestry of color and shape and texture? January is the perfect time to ask these questions and find some answers. Look below for some tips that may help you make those decisions.*

### Some rules of thumb...

- Before buying new plants (especially trees), be aware of the **mature** plant size.
- Don't overcrowd. Give plants time to mature to fill the space.
- Too much variety of major shrubs can be somewhat distracting, especially on a small property.
- Group plants in odd numbers, 3, 5, 7, 9 in beds with curved borders.
- Be aware of the plant's needs: water, sunlight or shade conditions, soil texture, and drainage.
- Remember...rules of thumb can be broken! Gardening expert Tony Avent loves to garden in "drifts of one"!

"Bare branches of each tree  
on this chilly January morn  
look so cold, so forlorn.  
Gray skies dip ever so low,  
left from yesterday's dusting of snow.  
Yet in the heart of each tree  
waiting for each who wait to see,  
new life as warm sun and breeze will blow,  
like magic, unlock springs sap to flow,  
buds, new leaves, then blooms will grow."

- Nelda Hartmann, *January Morn*

### Some Things to Plant

**Annuals:** Pansy, Viola, Ornamental Kale, Snapdragon

**Perennials:** Dianthus, Foxglove, Hollyhock, Phlox

**Bulbs:** Agapanthus, Dutch Iris, Amaryllis, Calla, Crinum Lilies

**Vegetables:** Broccoli, Beet, Cabbage, Carrot, Kale, Cauliflower, Radish, English peas, Turnip

### Some Things to Do

- Have your soil tested, if necessary.
- Start pruning some hardy trees and shrubs that do not flower in Spring. Crape Myrtles should be pruned to open up the center to improve air circulation.
- Draw up your plan for your veggie garden. Decide what you want to grow and where. Plan to rotate some of your crops to reduce the possibility of soil-borne diseases and nematodes.
- Check the exterior of your house and outdoor structures for needed maintenance. They may be more visible or more easily accessible now because of dormant or deciduous plants.
- Clean up and sharpen tools. After cleaning, apply a thin coat of oil to metal to prevent rust.



# THE MESSAGE BOARD

## **FUN THINGS HAPPENING!**

### **26<sup>th</sup> Annual Gardening Symposium**

**Callaway Gardens  
January 27, 28 and 29, 2012**

Experience this three-day symposium devoted to gardening in the South! Program includes: in-depth optional pre-conference workshops; optional pre-conference garden tour; a silent auction; a live auction; and garden marketplace, and various topics.

Some award-winning speakers include:

Jason Powell – *Small Fruit Trees for the Home Gardener*

Charlie Thigpen – *Have Fun Gardening*

Tovah Martin – *Infusing the Garden with Personality*

Mike Francis – *The Best Maples for the South*

**Fee: \$245** - includes Friday evening reception, two continental breakfasts, Saturday box lunch, Saturday Banquet, Saturday and Sunday programs and materials. Deadline for registration is Friday, January 20, 2012.

To register for the Symposium or for more information, please contact the Callaway Gardens' Education Department at [education@callawaygardens.com](mailto:education@callawaygardens.com) or 1-800-CALLAWAY (225-5292), option 5, option 2 or 706-663-5153.

A special room rate is available for Southern Gardening Symposium Registrants, starting at \$79 per room per night at the Mountain Creek Inn.

## ***Seeding, seeding, seeding...we've begun seeding!!!***

It's that time again, folks! Seeding has begun for our annual Spring Plant Sale.

Helen-Sue Kemp is the Veggie Plant Parent again this year and will be seeding on **Saturday mornings** at about **10:00 AM**.

If you want to get involved and have fun, meet at the WMGA Greenhouse on the grounds of DABG on Saturday mornings.

## **WANTED!!!**

WMGA is in need of another parent...plant parent, that is!

We are looking for someone to care for our **"Vines, Ground Covers, Grasses and Ivy"** plants. If you're interested, email newsletter Editor, Patti Harvey at [harveyhps@graceba.net](mailto:harveyhps@graceba.net)

**"If there were no tribulations, there would be no rest;  
if there were no winter, there would be no summer."**

**- St. John Chrysostom**

# WMGA CHRISTMAS PARTY 2011



## WMGA 2012 Officers:

Left to right: Outgoing President Glen Swicegood  
Sally Tate (Secretary)  
Wayne VanLandingham (Vice President/Acting  
President)  
Walter Dodson (Treasurer)



Our entertainment for the evening was Jim Dees singing some of his own songs. And "The Sisters in Song" led by Lisa Spencer.



Some attending members gathered around the beautiful Christmas tree while playing the gift-swap game. "Left, right, right, left...!"

# MASTER GARDENERS AT WORK!

Anyone who is a Master Gardener knows where the Houston County Extension Office is located. Most of us received our MG training in that building. We've held our plant sales out there for many years too. We've probably all walked into that building numerous times without really seeing what the outside landscape looks like. Did we ever notice the empty plots of "dirt" where plants used to be? Has the building become such a comfortable place to go to that we forgot the outside look of it?

Well, newly certified Master Gardeners Cheryl Hatcher and Sally Tate DID actually notice the "look" of the building. Or should I say, the "lack of the look" of the building! They realized that this building that is used to train people in all aspects of gardening didn't really say much about gardeners. So they took on the project of remodeling, reconstructing the front bed of the building.

Tackling the project seemed simple enough until they actually got into it. Isn't that just how remodeling projects are? With a little input from MG President Sandy Firestone and the approval of Extension Coordinator, Willie Durr, the project grew to include the removal of large slabs of concrete sidewalk and the installation of an irrigation system. Assisted by Sandy and Extension Agent Phillip Carter (with a front end loader), Cheryl and Sally removed depleted soil and added over 200 bags of top soil, potting soil, decomposed bark and manure. Once the bed was prepared, Cheryl and Sally planted a host of plants including Ilex sky pencils, Texas sage, cleyera, dwarf lorapetalum, dwarf crape myrtle and some annuals for color.

Spearheaded by Cheryl Hatcher and Sally Tate, and with the help of other MGs, the Houston County Extension Office got quite a face-lift. As Cheryl said, "Now at last, the place where master gardeners are trained shows the effect of master gardeners at work!" Next time you go by the Extension Office, be sure to see the beautiful bed in front of the building. Way to go Master Gardeners!



Cheryl Hatcher working on the newly reconstructed bed in front of the Houston County Extension Office.



MGs Sandy Firestone, Sally Tate and Extension Agent Phillip Carter adding amendments to the bed.

Here's the finished bed with the new structure, new plants, mulch and an irrigation system. Pretty nice!



# HOW TO MAKE SEED TAPES



This project is fun and practical, kids will love gluing seeds to paper and you'll love how seed tapes take the mess out of seed planting. The sheet of paper helps little hands line tiny seeds up in perfectly spaced rows that will grow into perfectly spaced plants. Save time and seeds by sowing seeds right where you want them. Materials Needed:

- Toilet paper (paper towels and napkins also work)
- Ruler
- Marker
- All-purpose glue
- Seeds
- Toilet paper or paper towel tube

## Get the Tape Ready for Seeding

Measure out a length of toilet paper. If the planting row will be narrow and straight, cut the toilet paper in half lengthwise.



## Mark Seed Spacing

Consult the packet of seeds to find out how far apart the seeds should be planted. Using a marker put a mark at each spot on the paper where a seed will go.

## Add the Glue

Dab a bit of water-soluble glue on each mark. Using tweezers, pick up a seed and place it on one of the drops of glue. Continue placing seeds on all the drops of glue.



## Storage Tips

Once all the seeds are placed and the glue has dried, you can roll the seed tape onto a toilet paper roll and store in a cool, dry place until you're ready to plant. Be sure to label each roll.



To plant, lay the seed tape on the soil surface, weighting it here and there to keep the wind from moving it. Cover with garden soil or compost to the depth recommended on the seed packet. Firm the soil to make sure there's good soil-seed contact. Water with a fine nozzle to avoid washing the soil away. Keep moist.

This article is the courtesy of Ona Garwood and the "Coffee County Cultivator".

**FINAL NOTICE!!!**  
**WMGA DUES ARE PAST DUE!**  
If you have not sent in your WMGA  
Dues, please remit your check in the  
amount of \$15 to the WMGA,  
P.O. Box 9376,  
Dothan, AL 36304

**WIREGRASS MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION**

***P.O. Box 9376  
Dothan, AL 36304***



**Officers:**

President: (Interim)	Glen Swicegood	403-8284	<a href="mailto:gswice36303@gmail.com">gswice36303@gmail.com</a>
Vice President:	Wayne VanLandingham	793-9143	<a href="mailto:waynepatty100@yahoo.com">waynepatty100@yahoo.com</a>
Secretary:	Sally Tate	793-3472	<a href="mailto:state24@comcast.net">state24@comcast.net</a>
Treasurer:	Walter Dodson	899-3253	<a href="mailto:jamesd@graceba.net">jamesd@graceba.net</a>

**Board Members:**

Board Member at Large:	Bill Went	696-8371	<a href="mailto:pjwwaw@hughes.net">pjwwaw@hughes.net</a>
Membership Chair:	Vickie Avery	588-3976	<a href="mailto:vickie-avery@hotmail.com">vickie-avery@hotmail.com</a>
Ways & Means Chair:			
Communications Chair:	Patti Harvey	702-0094	<a href="mailto:harveyhps@graceba.net">harveyhps@graceba.net</a>
Programs Chair:	Linda Westphal	299-0388	<a href="mailto:red11cat@aol.com">red11cat@aol.com</a>
Projects Chair:	Lisa Enfinger	792-8018	<a href="mailto:theenfingers@graceba.net">theenfingers@graceba.net</a>
Immediate Past President:	Sandy Firestone	899-8476	<a href="mailto:sjfire@graceba.net">sjfire@graceba.net</a>