

Lauderdale County Master Gardener Helpline Tips



Pictured are Kenneth & Helen Austin, MG Class of 2009

Lauderdale County Master Gardener Helpline Tips

Graduating Master Gardeners are required to work a total of 25 Volunteer hours on the Helpline between March 1 and Sept 30

**Helpline Hours
March 1 - September 30
Monday - Friday
9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.**



Helpline Mission


The helpline training allows you to learn as you help others by researching landscape and garden questions

Master Gardeners answer the Helpline telephone and assist walk-in clients with Home Grounds related questions

Extension provides research tools such as:

- Extension Publications
- Extension Handbooks
- Key websites
- Extension Agents & experienced Master Gardeners


Helpline Tips




Frank and Pat Watson will manage the volunteer helpline work schedule calendar

Please sign up for work days through Pat or Frank at @ 901-491-2014 or Dot Burke 757-6737

It is your responsibility to contact PAT or FRANK if you cannot work your scheduled day & Pat & Frank will update the online work schedule calendar



Helpline Tips




- Wear your nametags
- Familiarize yourselves with where things are on your 1st day (publications files etc.)
- Bring your lunch or if two interns are working one can go out to pick up lunch
- Make yourself at home in the office (kitchen, fridge, etc.)

Helpline Tips

The helpline is for Home Grounds & Insect questions **only**


Please **do not attempt to answer** any **Farm related questions** where livestock is involved ...such as Pasture weeds



Also **"commercial "** questions from farmers, nurseries, & landscape companies must be redirected to a Commercial Regional Extension Agent. This includes commercial crops such as corn, soybeans, & wheat etc.

Put those callers on hold and ask the Secretary to redirect those then to an Extension Specialist

Helpline Tips



The Master Gardener's office has 2 telephones


1. The Local Extension phone (*Lauderdale and Colbert Co*)
2. The Toll Free Regional phone (*throughout North Alabama*)

The regional phone voice mail should be checked and responded to each day. Phone log-in instructions are provided

The local Extension line is transferred directly from the Secretary


If you are assisting a client & unable to answer the local phone the secretary can pull the call back after 3 rings and take a message for you

Helpline Tips



- As you represent Extension and the MG program, please be courteous and professional
- Answer the helpline "Master Gardener's office, may I help you" (or something similar) you can state your name if you want to
- Ask detailed questions to define the problem, noting this on the phone log
- Have client's bring in a sample whenever possible
- Do not offer a client a house call (due to limited travel budgets)

Helpline Phone Log



The phone log is provided for you to record details of client questions (see next slide)

MG Phone logs help Justify our FUNDING !

Fill out the phone log completely, gathering as much info as possible

Phone Logs are reviewed by the Regional Agent to determine if a client needs additional information

Phone logs are then filed in the Master Gardener office

Interns should review phone logs to see what other questions are coming in and the advice given to clients

SHOALS MASTER GARDENER HOTLINE PHONE LOG

Master Gardener: _____ Date: _____ Agent Initial: _____


Name: _____	Phone Number: _____
Street Address: _____	County: _____
City: _____ Zip Code: _____	Phone Call <input type="checkbox"/> Walk-in <input type="checkbox"/>
Question/Problem: _____	
Diagnosis/Response/Recommendation: (include publication name and number recommendation came from)	
Publications Mailed: (include ANR#)	

Helpline Tips

- You are not expected to be able to answer all questions
- You shouldn't feel pressured but don't give up to easy because researching is the best way to learn
- Gather information & tell the client you will need to do a bit of research and get back to them shortly
- When your research fails...consult with the Regional Extension Agent
- If the agent is not available, indicate on the log the client needs a follow up call from the REA
- Francine or Paula **CANNOT** answer client questions, but can assist you in finding publications

Research Tools

Research Tools




- You will quickly learn to navigate the tools in place for researching client questions
- Favorites will speed your results
- Please use the favorites

Auburn Publications link <http://www.aces.edu/pubs/>

Key favorites are:

- Clemson University Extension*
- Ohio State Extension*
- LSU Ag Center*
- Mississippi State*
- Virginia Tech Extension*
- University of Georgia Extension*
- University of Tennessee Extension*
- National Gardening Association*

Research Tips



Do not send out unreliable information printed from any website on the internet such as "Joe's Gardening tips"



Extension websites provide reliable research based information (look for website addresses containing .edu & .org)

- .edu stands for education
- .org stands for organization
- .gov stands for government

Some clients will ask for website addresses to access online publications themselves. Feel free to give them Extension websites

If you need to email something to a client ask the secretary to show you the AU email program

Computer Access

- University policy requires a login password for the computer
- Turn the computer on (under the desk)
- Press Ctrl + Alt + Delete on the keyboard
- Then enter the password here (acesagmg)

Connect to ssl.acesag.auburn.edu

The server ssl.acesag.auburn.edu at ACESAG Secure Intranet requires a username and password.

User name:

Password:

Remember my password


OK Cancel

- Computer automatically logs off after 20 minutes of inactivity

Research Tools

The ACES shortcut is located on the desktop
This is where you start your research

Groupwise is the AU email program
Use the same login

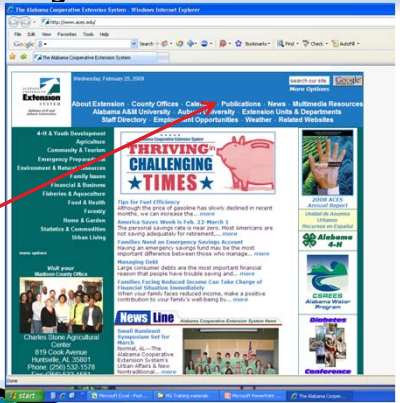


Please do not delete any icons or favorites

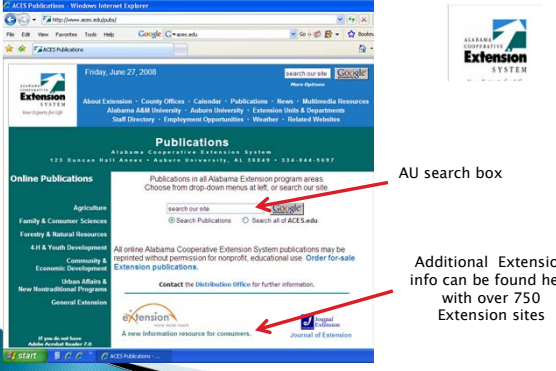
Accessing ACES Publications

Double clicking the ACES icon from the desktop will take you to the AU Extension website

From here you will select Publications




Accessing ACES Publications



AU search box

Additional Extension info can be found here with over 750 Extension sites

Printer/Copier





All office printouts are defaulted to go to the network printer located near the front desk

Be sure to get your prints only


Please ask the Secretary for assistance when making copies of books etc. A password is required to use the copier

Other Tips





Please **do not offer** the client a **“house call”** from an Extension Agent. Travel Funds are limited !


We do not mail out soil sample boxes. A client can go to any county Extension office & pick up materials or publications. All County Extension office addresses are easily accessible on the main ACES webpage



Mail Outs



When mailing clients printed materials, please attach the completed 3x5 mailer form and take it to the front desk for the Secretary to mail



802 Veterans Drive
Florence, Alabama 35630
Telephone: 256-766-6223 Cell: 256-248-5084
Fax: 256-719-2049
Email: em00214@aei.aces.edu

DATE: _____

TO: _____

Action checked:
 Attention
 Correction
 Information Requested
 Read & Return
 Recommendation
 Reply
 Signature
 Your Information
 Other

CB
Chris Becker
Regional Extension Agent
Home Grounds, Garden and Home Pest

ALABAMA A&M AND AUBURN UNIVERSITY, AND TENNESSEE UNIVERSITY, COUNTY GOVERNING BODIES AND LOCAL COOPERATING

Helpline Tips

Before you leave each day:

1. Contact next days workers for a reminder that he/she is scheduled to work. If they cannot work they need to contact Pat or Frank Watson (backup is Dot Burke) so a replacement can be lined up.
2. Leave the instruction sheets & phone log folder visible on top of the desk
3. Tidy up the office area

