

Sprigs and Sprouts



Limestone County Master Gardener Association

Volume 3, Issue 2 Sprigs & Sprouts

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Kathryn Davis, MG '98



Welcome to the class of winter 2005. Every member graduated in August! I am so proud of all of you, and I look forward to continuing to work with you on all kinds of master gardener projects.

The autumn class got underway at the Belle Mina Research Station in August on Thursdays at 4 p.m. There were five Limestone Countians in the class and this was the first tri-county class we have had. Everything went well, with lots of helpers from all three counties. Jim Markestad has developed a web site for the class members. Check out www.aces.edu/limestone/tricounty for class schedules. You can audit a class if you need a refresher!

I hope everyone has had a good summer. Fall is a great time to assess what did and did not work this year in our personal gardens and begin making plans for next year's improvements. Bring those good ideas to our meetings to share with the rest of us.

Kathryn

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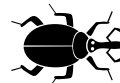
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ENTOMOLOGY

Bhupendra Shah, MG '02

As students in Entomology, we had collected some bugs (dead ones) for identification. We thought, let's make something new. So we glued legs of male crickets to the bodies of water beetles. Then we glued antennae of dragonfly, eyes of housefly and wings of Monarch butterfly. We showed to the faculty and asked if he could help us to identify.

Yes, he said, it is a new bug called a "Humbug!"



GREEN THUMBS

At the beginning of the summer, Delynn Helton and I, along with the help of Ken Creel, had the wonderful opportunity to launch a Junior Master Gardener program at the Boys and Girls Club in Athens. This project so far has been very rewarding, and we are currently working on a winter schedule.

We had 20 children in the class ranging in ages from 9 to 11. On the first day of class, we let them nominate and vote on names for their group. The winner was "Green Thumbs," which we all thought was very genuine and fitting. They were a very enthusiastic group, and we spent several class periods outside discussing various topics.

Of particular interest to them were snakes and skinks. On one occasion they spent 15 or 20 minutes foraging around a woodpile to catch a skink. A skink is what we commonly refer to as a blue tail lizard; Ken set us straight on that one. Now we all know what a skink is. They also really wanted to see or catch a snake, although I think they might not have gotten too close had it really happened. The talk

about snakes was so intense, Charlotte Fulton suggested we start a snake club.

One time we talked about plant identification. I remember one of us pulled up a maple sapling, and a little girl asked if she could take it home. She carried that sapling around the whole hour. She told us the next week that she had planted it at her home. It only takes a little effort to plant a seed in a child's mind.

Another time we discussed bugs and plant diseases. We saw spittlebugs on the leaves of trees and caught a praying mantis. They had a good grasp of what makes a bug beneficial or not. Lots of questions were asked concerning ladybugs, and most had stories to tell about having ladybugs in their homes.

Ken spoke to them about career opportunities: How you cultivate a love of plants or gardening or some other horticulture interest into a career that you enjoy. They were very interested in his job and duties. Oh, and let's not forget to mention, they were also very interested in his hat.

The day we started to prepare our garden spot by adding

Melanie Williams, MG '05

soil, everyone chipping in and unloading bags of soil and emptying them. They really gave it a team effort. At one point I called the soil dirt. Boy, did they correct me in a hurry. They informed me in two seconds flat that dirt is a four-letter word.

It is always a joy to work with children. They have such inquisitive minds and remind us that there is a lot of kid left in all of us. It is our hope that this project continues for years to come and maybe just by touching even one child we have made all the difference.



Life is like a box of chocolates, you never know what you're gonna get.
Forrest Gump

SHARKS IN THE GARDEN

Remember the movie *Jaws*? Did it keep you out of the water or just make you uneasy – eyes searching for that ominous fin or a sudden swirl of a white slashing toward you? Well, the ocean is not the only place where danger lurks – there is that benign, peaceful, beautiful spot just outside your door – the garden.

In the garden, hazards are waiting for the unsuspecting, the unprepared. My bigger scars are from surgery, but the smaller scars, cuts, abrasions, knots, sprains, blisters, etc., are largely garden-related. What follows is a partial list of danger areas.

Physical conditioning: Gardening is exercise and requires appropriate conditioning. Warm up the muscles. Strains develop most often from repetitive overuse of hands and arms and from poor lifting posture from under-estimating weight. Learning to pace yourself helps to avoid problems. It helps to take frequent breaks and to keep hydrated and refreshed.

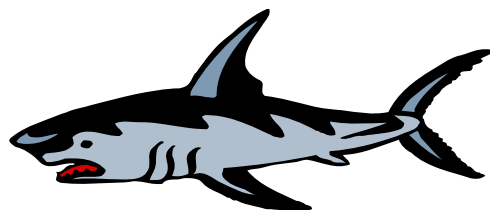
Clothing: Wear clothes suited to the work. Wide brimmed hats, gloves, sturdy shoes or boots, denim-type

pants, padded knees. The market has clothes especially treated to block harmful rays. Sunglasses and safety glasses help avoid sun damage and foreign particles in the eyes.

Tools: Power tools need special handling and regard for safety. Emergency rooms see plenty of damage from chain saws, lawn mowers, and hedge clippers, etc. Some tools are just too dangerous for the ordinary person and should be left to the professional. Tool rental is attractive, but a large tree chipper is asking for trouble – too big, too complicated, and too heavy. Manually operated cutting and digging implements inflict damage as well. Dull tools can cause you to over-do.

Falls and tripping: Causes range from holes to roots to over-extending your reach to ladders that tip or collapse. Other influences include poor balance and limited vision, such as carrying a bulky object with the ground obscured.

Weather: The most obvious factor is the sun and resulting sunburn, even sunstroke.



Jerry Davis, MG '94

Rain-slick grass and mud will have you on the ground looking up, perhaps with injury.

Wounds: All wounds need some attention, such as cleaning and bandaging. Wounds range from cuts, punctures, abrasions, and blisters, to sprains, even bone breaks or fractures.

Allergies and reactions: Everyone knows about poison ivy and poison oak. Other plant-related rashes can come from rue or almost anything at certain times of the year that affects those with sensitive skin. Know that sensitive skin also includes internal surfaces, such as lungs and throat. Breathing burning poison ivy clinging to firewood can ruin your enjoyment by the fireside. For many, plant-spawned pollen is a seasonal nightmare.

There are insect-related problems with some spiders, fire ants, stinging honeybees, hornets, yellow jackets, bumble bees, ticks, flies, etc. Minimize your risk with appropriate clothing, insect repellent, body inspection, and elimination of hideouts and nesting sites. Avoid eating unwashed

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CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF A TAXUS

After three years of denial that the taxus by our back door was dying, my husband Bruce and I finally reached acceptance and are ready to move on with our lives – even consider a replacement plant.

Having reached acceptance, we are ready to celebrate the 15 years we shared with our taxus. Part of that celebration is mulling over what we had; ergo, what we've lost.

For its former owner, the taxus (She always bristled when we called it a yew.) was a source of greenery for Athens Garden Club's annual wreath-making session. Before it succumbed to a combination of problems (loss of root area due to sidewalk construction; a drier and hotter than average growing season, and a case of blight), that taxus was a source of much satisfaction.

It was the umbrella that kept us dry while we fumbled for the door key on rainy evenings; a wildlife refuge where from our bedroom window we watched doves warm their eggs in flat, twiggy nests they balanced on its branches; and a

place where a beautiful stray cat we named Patches retreated from domestic violence inflicted on him by another tomcat. It was a landing pad where jays and thrushes and wrens and mockingbirds could glance about for natural predators before dashing down for a dip in the birdbath, later moving to higher branches to preen while their feathers dried in the sun. It was a kaleidoscope, fluttering its limbs so that illumination from a nearby streetlight turned our bedroom wall into a private light show.

It was the source of late-night and early-morning weather reports. One had only to glance outside to see whether its fronds were shimmering with wetness, weighted with snow, coated with ice, flailing with each gust of wind, or eerily still before a storm burst.

It was a receptacle for hummingbird feeders, birdhouses, and the nozzle of our garden hose.

Once, not long after our family moved to Pryor Street, the boys and I locked ourselves out of the house and faced the prospect of waiting outside until Bruce

Charlotte Fulton, MG '05

got home from work. That is, until our youngest son Benjamin shinnied up the taxus, edged along the roofline, found an unlocked window, and gave our frustrating experience a happy ending.

That taxus was a fine specimen, and whatever plant replaces it will have some big shoes – uhm, root holes – to fill.



Sharks (Continued from page 3)

fruit and vegetables. Poison residue may exist even if you did not apply it: Many of us live near fields that are treated by crop dusters.

Wildlife: Those insects already mentioned may qualify as wildlife, but the cold-blooded and warm-blooded is the subject. Snakes may harm you or scare you into harm. Watch your step in woods, shrubs and grass. Woodchucks can be most ferocious when cornered and most anything with teeth can bite. On our small town patch we have had deer, foxes, skunks, opossums, rabbits, squirrels, rats, snakes, voles, woodchucks, raccoon, and numerous dropped-off dogs and cats.



ON BECOMING A MASTER GARDENER

Melanie Williams, MG '05

On August 12, 2005, I along with nineteen of my classmates officially made the transition from Master Gardener Intern to *bona fide* Master Gardener. Isn't it amazing how folks who love to dig in the "dirt," oops, sorry, the proper word is "soil," have so much in common. Yahoo!!!! We made it and are proud of our accomplishments, but more excited and proud of each other's accomplishments. We endured 12 weeks of instruction, and sometimes (I think I'm speaking for all of us) felt as if we were back in college. Especially when glancing through the MG Handbook we encountered... **Heavens to Betsy**, chemical equations! Let me tell you, I was not good at chemical equations in high school and certainly felt intimidated by them twenty-two years later.

Let us not forget the forty plus volunteer hours each of us has performed. Trying to squeeze in an hour here and there into an already busy schedule was sometimes a daunting task. But gardeners are a dedicated bunch, often getting up in the wee hours of the morning to weed and gather produce, or braving the heat of the day to

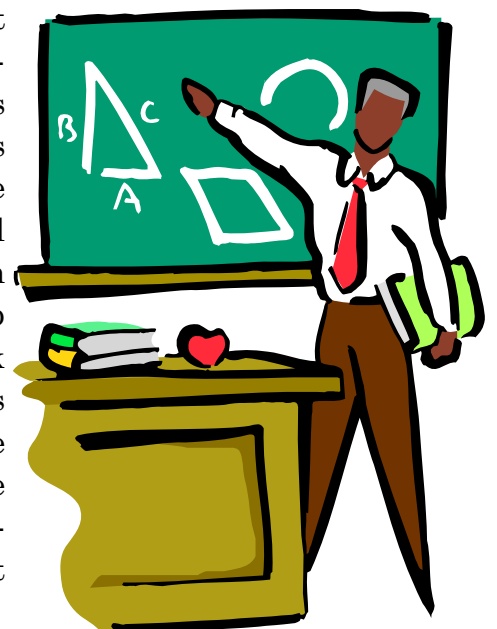
work outside with children. Nevertheless, we persevered and proudly donned those official Master Gardener name-tags we had coveted for so long.

Master Gardeners are talented. That's it in a nutshell, **WE ARE TALENTED**. (Well, y'all are talented, I'm still learning.) We each have strengths that compliment others' weaknesses. From vegetables to designing websites, every one of us has a little different interest and talent that together form a complete garden. Isn't it a shame that our national political parties haven't figured this out yet, but we Master Gardener peons have that problem solved, no ifs, ands or buts about it.

Did I mention that Master Gardeners are a hardy lot blessed with a sense of humor? In our gardener's world, ninety percent seems to be left to Mother Nature (we all know not to fool Mother Nature) and our ten percent input is either a help or a hindrance to her. Thank goodness, Mother Nature is forgiving or she would have condemned us a long time ago for a multitude of mistakes. More often than not

we have to draw on our sense of humor. After all, we are dealing with finicky, botanical specimens that seem to have minds of their own. That angel wing begonia tells us she needs water and, low and behold, before we can turn around she's telling us we are watering too much. Plants just cannot seem to make up their minds. So we just roll with the flow, laugh it off and make adjustments.

I am honored and humbled to be associated with such a wonderful, albeit, sometimes a bit nutty, group of gardening gurus. Let's all keep up the wonderful work of giving so much of ourselves back to this great community we live in.



MEETINGS

Melanie Williams, MG '05

Our **April** meeting was held at Jimmy's Greenhouse located off of East Limestone Road. Jimmy gave us some insight on how seeds are sown for the plants he sells at the greenhouse. He also gave us some propagation tips on how to root certain plants and we finished up with a tour of the greenhouses. The annual plant sale was held on **April 23** at the Farmer's Market on Green Street. Everyone really pitched in and helped. There were several new interns who helped out to get in some volunteer hours. The weather was a bit of a deterrent due to cold and wind, but everyone's spirits were warm. Because of the weather we decided to hold a second plant sale on Mother's Day weekend. For the second plant sale date, the weather was wonderful and the sale was a huge success. We had a wonderful turnout of Master Gardener's, interns and shoppers. For the **May** meeting we met at Pat Hamilton's home where she gave us a wonderful talk on lasagna gardening. She has raised beds that are terraced which she fills with

compost materials and then plants in them. She gave us some information on several books that are available on lasagna gardening.

The **June** meeting's topic was Daylilies. It was held at the home of Dave Flannigan off Capstone Lane. He has numerous varieties of daylilies, which he grows, and this was a treat for all who attended.

Originally, our **July** meeting was set for the 11th, but because of a hurricane and predicted inclement weather the meeting was canceled and rescheduled for the 18th. This was a night meeting held at Edd Hall's home, where I understand the hamburgers were wonderful.

Our **August** meeting was held at Water Authority building with Peggy Davis from Lotsa Hostas. We were treated to a wonderful slide show featuring lots of varieties of Hostas. For the hosta lovers in the group this was a very enjoyable program.

The **September** meeting was at S&S Nurseries with Roy McCorkle as the speaker. He is the person in charge of

propagation at the nursery. Everyone present found him very knowledgeable and interesting. He spoke about the different ways they propagate plants at the nursery and the vast number of plants they propagate every year. He also treated us to a tour of the nursery and allowed us to see a new variety of magnolia he cultivated that he expects to do very well.

In **October** we met at Pam Gibbs' home and Wes Isom of Isom's Orchards was the guest speaker on fruit trees.

The **November** meeting brought us a tree specialist to the Extension office. Dorie Redman, who owns the Green Industry Resource company of Huntsville, informed us how to care for our trees as well as many ways not to care for our trees.

Our **2005 Christmas Party** was such an enjoyable evening. This year Pam Gibbs opened her beautiful home to us to share a wonderful meal, great music, and dear friends. We enjoyed a varied menu of dishes brought in by the MGs. As usual with our get-

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COMMUNITY GARDEN

Jim Ladner, MG '03



This was the year for CORN! Our “peaches n cream” (Sweet G 90) yielded 203 dozen ears mostly harvested on July 21 by 14 workers. This year we did harvest some “second ears” and got them to our clients along with other vegetables on occasion. The tomato crop from this year's experimental heritage variety was more a learning experience than a source of top production. The total five varieties produced 106 gallons over the season. The Black Krim tomato was a good conversation piece and a very unique taste treat but not suited for distribution to our non-profit partners. The change in bean variety this year resulted in fewer yields than last year, topping out at 80 gallons. Peas output was down to 32 gallons and squash was up at 40 gallons.

The garden team was encouraged to have new workers from the spring 2005 class: Bruce and Charlotte Fulton, Janice Hutton, Melanie Williams, Naomi Dubois and Delynn Helton.

Faithful alumni include: Tommy H., John O., Nancy M., Martha Mc., Jerry F.,

Mary Gayle E., Gene E., Jim M. Carole B., Jim L., Liz L., and Marylou Beck. Again this year, Marylou brought volunteer harvesters including her two children and her father all the way from England! Hope I didn't leave anyone out.

Special thanks to Gene Ermerert for distribution again, to John O'Neill for being my sub in June and Edd Hall as our garden host.



*Gardens are not made
by sitting in the shade"*

Rudyard Kipling

Meetings (Continued from page 6)

together there was an abundance of food and we all ate too much. Why is it so difficult to push away from the table at LCMG dinners?

After the abbreviated meeting, we exchanged gifts amid lots of o-o-oooh's, a-a-aaaah's and laughter. Like the children we no longer are, we eagerly tore open those brown-paper bags to find the goodies inside. It was so heartwarming to see the thought that went into selecting

things for each other and the joy on everyone's face as each new gift was revealed. Live music by the "Band with no Name" really capped off the evening. They had us all singing along to Christmas carols and favorites from days when we were younger than we are now. We enjoyed their music at the MG graduation last August and once again they proved most entertaining. (Of course, who could forget the soft, lilting melody of Melanie's mandolin solo?)

Thanks to all who brought such an incredible spread of food to fill the table, for the thoughtful gifts we exchanged and enjoyed, and for the beautiful musical memories. A special **THANK-YOU** to Pam for her hospitality and gracious patience with a house full of people.



Limestone County Master Gardener Association
P.O. Box 1304
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Visit us on the web:
www.aces.edu/Limestone/MastGard

Email us any comments or suggestions:
limestonemg@yahoo.com

knowing to grow is going to grow....



NEW LCMGA OFFICERS

President:

Pam Gibbs

Vice President:

Melanie Williams

Secretary: *Janice Hutton*

Treasurer: *John O'Neill*

The association would like to thank our past officers:

Kathryn Davis,

*Marylou Beck, Carole Barron
& John O'Neill*

NEW INTERNS: FALL 2005

From Limestone County:

Jane Barran

Barry Davis

Leigh Panetta

Lyla Peebles

Glenda Stinchcomb

In Memory

Mack Arthur Pugh

Limestone County Extension
Agent Coordinator

Mack came to Limestone County a short two years ago. We offer our prayers and condolences to his family and the staff of the Extension center.

