

# Sprigs and Sprouts

Limestone County Master Gardener Association

Volume 3, Issue 1

## LIMESTONE COUNTY MASTER GARDENER CLASS OF '05 UNDERWAY

The Class of 2005 Interns will complete their 12 weeks of instruction April 12th. The class consists of 22 interns and their enthusiasm is most welcome. The interns have set precedence for our Association by being the first class organized and facilitated by members of our Association. It has been a fabulous learning experience for those involved.

Classes began January 18th with a Soils and Fertilizer lecture by Dr. Charles Mitchell, of Auburn University. Normally the

*(Continued on page 2)*



### FROM THE PRESIDENT

Kathryn Davis, MG '98

The State Master Gardener conference in Gadsden was a resounding success. The Etowah County group did an outstanding job: They found interesting and informative speakers, they were beautifully organized, their facility was excellent, and they made everyone feel welcome, not the least by feeding us endlessly. Every attendee received a good-sized Pack's Weeping Foster holly (*Ilex x attenuata* 'Pack's Weeping'). I am now hunting for the perfect location in my yard.

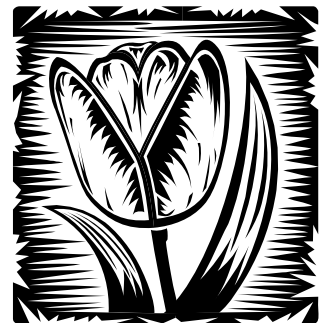
This is a busy time of year with lots of gardening and non-gardening events taking place. I hope you are keeping our Master Gardener Plant Sale in mind while you are cleaning up your garden for spring. This is a great time to divide perennials and thereby share great plants with others. Remember to label your plants!

The 2005 class is progressing well. I hope everyone gets a chance to meet the new people. Mary Gayle Ermert and her committee have worked their fingers to the bone to provide an excellent class experience for the interns. I'm looking forward to working with them throughout the coming year.

Kathryn

### Inside this issue:

<i>Class of 2005</i>	2
<i>What A Master Gardener</i>	3
<i>Meet Jim Markestad</i>	4
<i>What A Master Gardener</i>	5
<i>Community Garden</i>	6
<i>Meetings</i>	7
<i>Pineapples</i>	8
<i>MG Class of 2005</i>	9



## CLASS OF 2005

*(Continued from page 1)*

first meeting is reserved for Orientation however, scheduling conflicts immediately surfaced and Orientation as a second meeting was deemed a success. After the 2<sup>nd</sup> class, Lawns & Entomology, it was clear this class was not afraid of anything. It seems the phorid fly, an imported Central American insect whose reproduction cycle includes laying its eggs inside the head of fire ants, captivated several students' interest. Once Ken Creel explained how the larvae feed on the ant's head until it pops off, a childlike curiosity filled the room. The next class had Ken teaching Fruits followed by Kerry Smith of Auburn teaching Landscape Design at Class 4. Ken taught Class 5 on Weed Science and that is when Ken also informed the class of his soda bottle Round-Up trick. The idea is to cut the top off of a soda bottle and place the bottom of the bottle at the end of the sprayer nozzle. Then just place the bottle over the undesired weed and poison away with complete weed soaking pleasure. Again, the Class of 2005 soaked it up. The next week brought in Jim Jacobi for a lecture in Plant Pathology and our own Doug Chapman for vegetables. The March 7<sup>th</sup> class traveled to the Huntsville Botanical Gardens for Harvey Cotton's plant se-

lection and care presentation. Although it was a cool afternoon to tour the gardens, having Harvey as a guide made it worth the winter walk. The following class was on Physiology and Care taught by Doug and Ken respectively. Barbara East taught a class on annuals and Intern Wes Harris gave a great Bonsai demonstration at another. Only one class remains.

This is the first class to be worked by volunteers because of a restructuring of the Alabama Extension System. Mary Gayle Ermert has led the charge in making sure the class happened and was most instrumental for its success. Several weeks found Mary Gayle up at 3:00 in the morning preparing for the next class. She has done a superb job and is to be commended for her precise diligence. Her idea of interns bringing in a potluck supper for each meeting meant more time could be spent in the class getting to know others, as well as topical discussion. This was also a nice perk for most of the volunteers who always wanted to help set the kitchen table and make sure the food was "taste-tested" for quality purposes!

Another shining example of the class can be found on our website. Jim Markestad created a page to showcase the

class as well as help the interns and volunteers follow the syllabus. Reading assignments along with menus for the upcoming class were posted. Pictures of the classes were posted as well as most of the supper items recipes.

Mark Morgan MG '03

The following was written by Mary Gayle Ermert – Class Committee Coordinator:

It has been an honor and privilege to help develop the LC Extension System Master Gardener Classes this year. Our committee has put in and continues to put in many hours of planning and executing the program. It all began with the interest and the tireless work of Jim Ladner, Mark Morgan and Jim Markestad with the review of the Master Gardener Administration Manual provided by Doug Chapman, Regional Extension Agent, Commercial Horticulture. Since I was personally searching for something worthwhile to keep myself occupied and stimulated following the death of my Master Gardener Father, "Flick" Hargroder, I agreed to help. (A significant donation of monies to purchase initial supplies for the classes was provided in memory of my Dad.)

When my husband suggested that we sign up for the 2005 Master Gardener class, I agreed without reservation. We had always said it was something we'd do in retirement. Bruce had retired in September, so at least we were halfway there.

I have to admit I was daunted to find out that the class was five hours long; flabbergasted when we got our four-inch-thick Master Gardener notebooks; and downright alarmed when I peeked inside and saw text that included chemical formulas.

What had I gotten myself into?

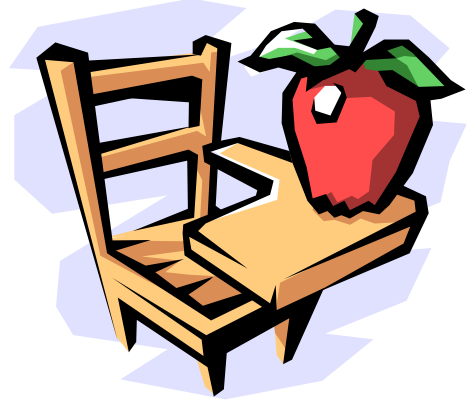
As it turned out, Master Gardeners was not the bed of thorns I had feared it to be on that first night. It turned out to be more like a support group for people who share the same obsession: Every time we find a piece of bare earth we have to dig it up and plant something there.

I remember once writing an essay on trees – waxing poetic on the poplar, the persimmon, the mimosa....In that essay, I quoted a since-forgotten author who wrote, “He who plants trees loves people.” Back then, I scarcely knew the truth to

that statement. Now, I recognize tree-planters and gardeners of all sorts as a special breed of humanity.

Here are some things I've observed about the sowers and planters and tenders-of-the-garden that we've met during our Master Gardener experience, and I believe those characteristics most likely are shared by gardeners everywhere:

- Gardeners are a friendly lot. Say the word “bonsai” to Wes Harris, for instance, and you've got a friend for life. Reveal any expertise in pruning, and my husband will pick your brain for hours. But we do more than “plant talk.” Classmates exchange information on lots of subjects and show a genuine concern for each other.
- Those who sow well cook well – and eat well. Perhaps it's just an extension of our fascination with gardening that makes us talented at turning plants into food – even plants that your run-of-the-mill cook might not recognize as edible. Witness Kathryn Davis' geranium-flavored cake. And I'm still waiting for – and fully expecting – someone to bring in a pot of kudzu tea



or a salad sprinkled with nasturtiums.

- Gardeners appreciate humor. It might be just a teaching technique that causes lecturers to insert a little humor just to keep us alert – like Ken Creel's reference to our 10 moisture meters (our fingers) or Doug Chapman's quoting Lewis Grizzard as saying something like this: “A tomato ain't no good unless it's growed in the same ground you walk on.”
- Gardeners are a hardy bunch. Week after week they leave work early and tote their gardening tomes to the Extension office from places as far away as Hartselle and the Shoals; and they didn't complain – not much, anyway – when the cold wind

*(Continued on page 5)*

## MEET JIM MARKESTAD by Doug Chapman, Regional Extension Agent-Commercial Horticulture

It has often been said that still waters run deep. Such is the case with Master Gardener Jim Markestad. I met Jim when the 2003 class began and noticed that he was a very quiet person. However, I could tell that he was really paying attention to what was going on. Since then, he has become a valuable asset to the Limestone County Master Gardener program and to the Limestone County office of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System.

Jim is a busy man. He approached me after the end of the 2003 course and asked about anything specific he could do for his project. At the time, Curtis Grissom was the County Coordinator

here in the office and he had been wanting to improve our County website. Jim has a particular talent in that area so I suggested to Curt that we let Jim design the website and he agreed. After consulting with the folks in Auburn who run our computer network, we got Jim special permission to access the site and go to work.

It was only natural that Jim design the Master Gardener website as well. Now, the Limestone County Master Gardeners have one of the finest official websites in the State and we owe it to Jim Markestad. Jim is much too humble to toot his own horn, but he has done a fabulous job with the website.

Many thanks Jim!



### *MY WIFE THE GARDENER*

*She dug the plot on Monday  
The soil was rich and fine,  
She forgot to thaw out dinner  
So we went out to dine*

*She planted roses Tuesday  
She says they are a must,  
They really were quite lovely,  
But she forgot to dust.*

*On Wednesday, it was daisies  
They opened with the sun,  
All whites, pinks and yellows,  
But laundry wasn't done!*

*The poppies came on Thursday,  
A bright and cheery red,  
I guess she really was engrossed,  
She never made the bed.*

*It was dahlias on Friday  
In colors she adores,  
It never bother her at all,  
All the crumbs upon the floor.*

*I hired a maid on Saturday,  
My week is now complete.  
My wife can garden all she wants,  
The house will still be neat.*

*Its nearly lunch on Sunday  
And I can't find the maid.  
Oh no! Oh no! I don't believe it,  
She out there with a spade!!*

## WHAT A MASTER GARDENER IS-AND IS NOT

*(Continued from page 3)*

pierced their thin jackets during the Huntsville Botanical Gardens tour.

- Gardeners are a generous people. They plant as much for others' enjoyment as for their own, and their volunteer projects range in nature from the humaneness of a community garden to the esthetics of a roadside planting where motorists they may never meet can experience the pleasure of daffodils nodding in a spring breeze.
- Gardeners are spiritual beings. One can hardly be a daily witness to the marvels of nature – the unfolding of new leaves, the germination of a seed, the regeneration of a dormant tree – without being mindful of the Creator.

On a recent Tuesday as Bruce and I left class and walked out into an icy sprinkle, our arms full of textbooks and the shamrock he had won that night in a drawing, our minds were full of new ideas about plants and their care. Our hearts were full as well, just knowing there are such people in the world as the ones in our Master Gardener class.

We'll never know all there is to know about plants. That's not even the goal. Our aim is to nurture in ourselves and others the appreciation we have for the green things of the earth.



## A FAVORITE MASTER GARDENER RECIPE

### DREAM COOKIES

- 1-cup sugar
- 2 sticks of margarine, softened
- 1-cup oil
- 2 eggs
- 2 tsp. vanilla
- 4 1/2 cups plain flour
- 1 tsp. soda
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. cream of tartar
- Powdered sugar

Combine first five ingredients and beat well.

Sift together dry ingredients (except powdered sugar) and slowly add to creamed mixture.

Drop by scant teaspoons onto non-greased cookie sheet.

Bake at 325 degrees for about 15 minutes.

Sprinkle with powdered sugar while still warm.

Yield: approximately 12 1/2 dozen.

Last year the primary challenge (besides having a rookie administrator) was a concern about available laborers since there were no MG Interns eager to earn service hours. This was a challenge answered by 17 volunteers from our association ranks. Thanks for a job well done.

One of this year's challenges is to continue to expand interest in community service through vegetable gardening. We hope to enlist new workers and ideas regarding improving this project. If new workers from the 2005 class are available, consideration could be given to expanding the harvest time or crop list. Whenever I tell anyone about the Community Garden, they all seem to ask the same question: Do you have (fill in the blank)? It is my desire that we can say more than corn/beans/tomatoes. Last year we expanded to peas and squash and would hope to keep them this year.

Another option that has been offered and not exercised in recent years is the availability of space for our members to plant their own "rows." Last year I tried butter peas to only very limited success. Who wants to give it a try this year?

## Community Garden Work opportunities for 2005:

- Test/repair/mark existing soaker hoses (March)
- Test/service existing tillers (early April)
- Paint work-shed
- Learn to drive tillers and till (April/May/June)
- Plant beans/corn using our planter (April)
- Plant tomatoes/put down weed cloth/put in soakers (mid April)
- Install tomato cages (mid to late April) and bean panels (mid May)
- Harvest (periodic in June, July, August)



## 2005 LCMG INTERNS

- |                    |                    |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| ✓ Carroll Adams    | ✓ Deana Lee        |
| ✓ Debra Bradford   | ✓ Lawson Lee       |
| ✓ Evelyn Bruce     | ✓ James Pitman     |
| ✓ Naomi Dubois     | ✓ Patricia Pitman  |
| ✓ Bruce Fulton     | ✓ Joe Rogers       |
| ✓ Charlotte Fulton | ✓ Leah Rogers      |
| ✓ Charlene Harris  | ✓ Margaret Tomlin  |
| ✓ Wes Harris       | ✓ Faye Tribble     |
| ✓ Delyn Helton     | ✓ Ronnie Tribble   |
| ✓ Janice Hutton    | ✓ Cherry Anne Ward |
| ✓ Diane Keyes      | ✓ Melanie Williams |

## MEETINGS

by Nancy Robinette MG'93

Our October meeting was held at noon at the Limestone County Water & Sewer Authority's conference room. In lieu of a program, members participated in a seed exchange following the meeting. The educational aspects of this quasi-program won't be evident until we see what, if anything, comes up!

Our November meeting was at noon at the Limestone County Extension Office. The subject of the program presented by Mary Gayle Ermermert was "Growing Master Gardeners." She explained the methods that will be used in conducting the 2005 class of Master Gardener interns. (This will be the first class

since the Limestone County's inaugural class of 1992 that has not been coordinated by the County Agent.) Lunch was served by the steering committee and shared with the meeting attendees, just as the 2005 class Interns will share an evening meal during training sessions.

(following paragraph not entirely by Nancy)

The December meeting was a potluck Christmas party, our very first Christmas Party, at Nancy Robinette's beautiful Tennessee River home. Nancy prepared a delicious brisket and the tables overflowed with dishes from Master Gardener chefs. The business meeting was conducted in record time so that we could move on to the feast, followed by music, and the doling out of door prizes. Live music was provided by Doug Chapman on the banjo, Ed McCracken on the fiddle, Chuck Gibbs on the banjo and James Craig on the guitar and harmonica. Tula Craig completed the ensemble with vocals and a lovely smile. It was a fantastic meeting/party and one worth attempting to repeat.

For the January meeting we were back at the Water Authority, this time at night. Mr. Harvey Cotton, C.O.O.

of the Huntsville Botanical Gardens, gave us a slide show of the Gardens of Brandywine Valley. Although Brandywine Valley is located in South Chester County, Pennsylvania, Mr. Cotton identified the plants and related them and the structures as to what we could do here.

The February meeting was held at the County Extension office at noon. Dr. Ewin Jenkins presented a slide show program on native azaleas. Although the lighting in the meeting room did not give the color slides their full justice, enthusiasm for soon-to-be blooming azaleas overcame our shortcomings. Dr. Jenkins was most knowledgeable and instilled in many of us a desire to grow this handsome, and often fragrant, native plant.

At the March night meeting at the Water Authority, we were treated to a slide show presentation on annuals by George Bennett of Bennett's Nursery in Huntsville. These were not ho-hum annuals but the newer cultivars, some of which bloom later in the season. At the end of 45 minutes he was still going strong, and few wanted him to end the show. He brought with him some

*Training is everything. The peach was once a bitter almond; cauliflower is nothing but cabbage with a college education.*

*Mark Twain*

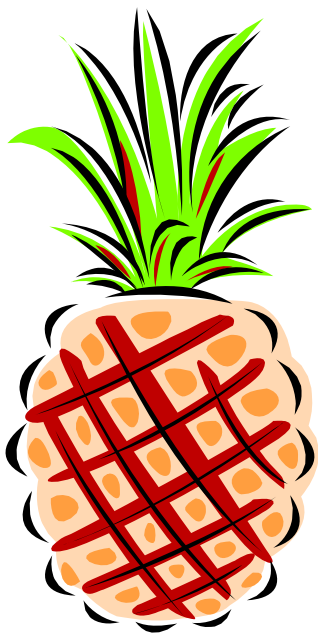
## Does a pineapple grow on a bush or a tree?

By Marylou Beck MG'03

Does a pineapple grow on a bush or a tree?

Christopher Columbus discovered the pineapple in Guadeloupe in 1493. No one is sure when the first pineapple was brought to the Hawaiian Islands arriving by ship. The fruit can last for long periods of time once picked and stored at a cool temperature. Hawaii now supplies 75% of the world with pineapples, followed by South and Central America. Florida is the only other state in the USA to produce the fruit.

The decline of the whaling industry had locals turn to other sources of income. Dole planted the first pineapple on Oahu in 1901 leading to



the purchase of the island of Lanai. The entire island was a pineapple plantation.

Pineapples grow on bushes low to the ground. They are easy to grow and just need a little patience as it takes two years to see the first fruit. Cut the top of a pineapple and stick it in moist soil. The top will put out roots and start to sprout new pointed leaves. Two years later you will have just one fruit. Pick it and wait again. This time the plant will produce up to eight pineapples at a time.

There are now many different varieties of pineapples. Maui Pineapple Company is growing hybrids with less acid and whiter meat. My neighbor worked for them, and he did not bring one home that we thought was better than the original. A variety grown in Puerto Rico can reach 30 lbs.

Most of the pineapples on Maui are grown at around 2,000 feet. The air there is a constant 80 degrees all year, and the rain fall is more expectant than at lower elevations where the sugar cane is grown and has to be irrigated.

Pineapples are fully ripe

when picked. Some varieties are green so don't buy one that is going brown and soft. It is probably rotting. Buy the ones that are yellowing at the bottom. This shows the sugar has formed.

Pineapples are a great source of fiber, vitamins and low in sodium; of course, no cholesterol or fat. However they do not deter scurvy. Sailors eating a lot of pineapple to prevent scurvy rotted their teeth instead.

*"Though but an old man, I am  
but a young gardener"*  
Thomas Jefferson

## LCMGA OFFICERS

President: Kathryn Davis  
Vice President: Marylou Beck  
Secretary: Carole Barron  
Treasurer: John O'Neill

*The nominating committee's recommendation was unanimously approved.*

## 2005 Limestone County Master Gardeners

Date	Time	Topic	Speaker	Place	Notes
April 9th	8 am	Digging Hostas		15245 Pepper	Bring bag of soil
April 11th	11am	Greenhouse	Jimmy	Jimmy's	Bring a chair.
April 23rd	8 am	Plant Sale		Athens Farmers	Bring your plants
April 16th	8 am	Community	Ed Hall	Easter Ferry Rd	Bring a chair.
May 9th	10 am	Lasagna Gardening	Pat Hamilton	15519 Pepper Creek Rd	Bring a chair. Brown bag lunch.
June 13th	11am	Daylilies	Dave	14937 Capstone Ln	Bring a chair.
July 11th	6 pm	Community Garden	Ed Hall	Easter Ferry Rd	Bring a chair.
Aug. 8th	noon	Hostas	Peggy	Extension Office	Brown bag lunch.
Sept. 12th	11am	Wholesale Plant	Tom Strain	S&S Nurseries,	Bring a chair.



# Plant Sale

*Date: Sat. April 23, 2005*

Athens Farmers Market on  
Green Street, Athens

*Time: 08:00 am*

Contact person: 256-232-5510

Visit us on the web:

[www.aces.edu/Limestone/MastGard](http://www.aces.edu/Limestone/MastGard)

Limestone County Master Gardener Association

P.O. Box 1304  
Athens, AL 35612

Visit us on the web.  
[www.aces.edu/Limestone/MastGard](http://www.aces.edu/Limestone/MastGard)

Email us any comments or suggestions.  
[limestonemg@yahoo.com](mailto:limestonemg@yahoo.com)

knowing to grow is going to grow...



## Tax Deductions

by John O'Neill, MG '01

The miles you drive to and from Master Gardener activities, including regular meetings, can be a tax deduction if you file Schedule A, on Form 1040.

The rate is 0.14 cents per reported mile, and the recipient is Auburn Extension Service.

According to the Alabama Master Gardener Association Treasurer, Harold Phillips, all annual reported mile qualify for the deduction under the category charitable deductions.

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*(Rumor has it that the John's pink flamingos have a hearty deduction this year from their garden travels out west.)*

