

Sprigs and Sprouts



Limestone County Master Gardener Association

Volume 5, Issue 1 Sprigs & Sprouts

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Pam Gibbs, MG '03

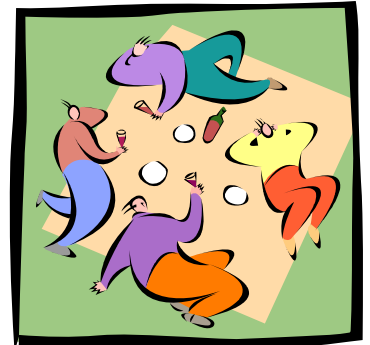
Wow! I feel a little dizzy, like I just got off a wild roller coaster ride. No, I haven't been to an amusement park lately. It's all this crazy spring weather we've been having. Do your gardens look like mine; half looks like spring and the other half like fall? I think the plants feel as topsy-turvy as I do. We all know we are really going to have to take care of our plants this summer to make sure they survive the stresses that they've been through. And our large trees are not immune either. Watch them closely and water, water, water.

I am really looking forward to our first annual tri-county picnic on June 16 in Mooresville. This will be a big step toward promoting unity and cooperation among Limestone, Madison and Morgan counties. I know there is so much we can learn from the MG's in other counties as they can also learn from us. There are many things we can do together that we wouldn't have the manpower or resources to do separately. I encourage everyone to try to get to know some MG's from the other counties during the picnic. Try to sit with someone you don't know and introduce yourself.



There will be great food (of course, it's a MG get-together) and beautiful gardens to tour in Mooresville. I've gotten a little sneak-peak preview tour and I'm sure everyone will have a wonderful time. I hope to see you there and see you at our next meeting. Happy Gardening,

Pamela Gibbs



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It was Jeanette Smith Hargrove's idyllic childhood, spent roaming freely over farmlands awash in cherry blossoms and rambling roses that spawned in her a lifelong love of gardening.

In 1947, Robert and Jewel Smith moved their family to Giles County, Tenn., onto the 2,800-acre Milky Way Farm, which had been established by Frank Mars, founder of the Mars Bar Company. While Robert carried out his duties as foreman of the dairy barn in the self-sufficient farm operation that had, after Frank Mars' death, become Albert Noe Farms, Jeanette and the farm's other children explored what Jeanette calls their "more than 2,000-acre playground."

The grounds surrounding the 21-bedroom, 14-bath Manor House were home to all sorts of animals – chickens; sheep; white-faced Herefords; race horses that lived in barns with chandeliers and mahogany walls... Jeanette recalls a childhood surrounded by the beauty of nature – creeks for wading, open fields for softball games, and an abundance of flower beds where "picking bouquets was not frowned upon." And in her own mother's flower garden, there were old-fashioned plants like peonies and irises – a theme reflected today in Jeanette's flower beds at her Pepper Road house and at the family's Elk River cabin.

Jeanette, the youngest of five children, graduated from high school at 16 and moved to Athens, where she lived with her sister, Eloise Massey, and Eloise's husband, Sam, while attending Athens College. After completing a two-year course in secretarial science, Jeanette took a job at Redstone Arsenal, where she became secretary to Dr. Walter Haeussermann, an original member of the Von Braun team of rocket scientists. In that capacity, she got to meet Dr. Wernher Von Braun many times. Jeanette left that job and spent 15 years with Bendix Corporation before deciding to return to Athens College for teacher certification. By that time, Jeanette was married and the mother of two. After a three-year courtship, she had married Paul Hargrove, whom she met as a teenager when he walked into the grocery store her sister and brother-in-law operated on North Jefferson

Street.

Jeanette graduated from Athens College in 1975 and took a job teaching junior high English at East Limestone High School, where she remained until retiring in 1993. After retirement, she and Paul built a cottage on the creek at their 4 ½-acre parcel in East Limestone. Their daughter, Deanna McNeill, bought their old house, and their son, Deon, built a house on the same land. Jeanette still enjoys the outdoors – weeding her beds of irises and day lilies or fussing over a family garden where she grows tomatoes, cucumbers, beans and squash. The extended family, including 12-year-old grandson Warren McNeill, gathers on summer weekends at the river cabin. Jeanette, who is vice president of the Limestone County Master Gardener Association, doesn't recall which year she completed the course, but says probably her greatest contribution to Master Gardeners was – for several years prior to the advent of e-mail – contacting members by phone before MG events spending untold hours rounding up volunteers for work projects.

Street.

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Introducing the Spring 2007

LC Interns:

Linda Burns – Linda lives in Limestone County - technically. She actually lives in Huntsville, right next to Madison, in the corner known as Rockhouse Landing. Linda “wanted landscape design help” since she now has lots of land and new construction. Linda is fascinated by the Botanical Gardens and will likely join MGNA.

Linda Gabe – Linda retired from University of Alabama at Birmingham and moved a few miles north of the High School in Athens with her 17 year old daughter about 2 years ago. Linda “wanted to know more about gardening” for her retirement and also “for volunteering purposes”. She is particularly interested in the LCMGA Community Garden. Linda is already attending the LCMGA meetings – see you next month.

Linda McCormick – Linda knew about MG’s years ago, so when she saw the class mentioned in the newspaper, she decided it was time to take the class and is truly en-

joying the camaraderie. Linda will join LCMGA so we’ll be seeing Linda at future meetings. Linda learned how to garden from her mother, but she says, “You just hate to pull weeds”. Then, one day it hits you, “there is more to it than this ‘n that” work. Linda is interested in full-scope gardening and how it is “put together”, from soils to planting to pests, pruning, fertilizing and more.

Anita Munn – Anita will likely join MGNA and we’ll be able to see her at one the MG events or the Botanical Gardens.

Mary Simmons – Mary met Edward, her husband, “in At-

lanta while she was in nursing school” and he was getting his degree. They moved to Florida where he worked in the space program and raised their children. Now that they have moved here, between Nashville and Birmingham, their childhood homes, she “needed to learn more about the area and the local landscaping” secrets, as well as the MG program. Since they are both retired, joining LCMGA sounds like a good idea and we’ve already seen Mary at a few meetings. Mary believes the MG class is the best way to learn about the good things in life they were too busy to do before – gardening.



This issue introduces what we expect to be a regular feature and reader favorite of the newsletter – MVP (Most Valuable Plant). Any LCMGA member who would like to feature a favorite plant may do so either by submitting a brief article (200 words or less) by e-mailing Joni Gruber, joni.gruber@charter.net, or phone Joni at 256-232-8732 or Charlotte Fulton at 232-5671 for a short telephone interview.

Carl Witty wasn't familiar with the Lenten Rose (genus *Helleborus*) when a landscape architect recommended it as one of several native plants for his newly landscaped backyard, but in the eight seasons since he planted the shade-loving perennial, he's been impressed by the show that begins in early February and continues for the next 8-10 weeks.

"It took two or three years

for them to get established," says Carl, "but now they put on such a show. Mine are off-white to greenish-white and mauve, but they come in various hues. They get bigger each year, and the thick, leathery leaves are attractive even after the bloom is gone."

Carl gives the Lenten Rose (so named because its blooming season leads up to Lent) high points for easy care.

"It's hardy; I've had no problems with bugs or diseases," he says. "I mulch it once a year, and that's about it. It doesn't require a lot of water if it's planted in rich, woody soil. It's well-adapted to this area."

Carl offers two tips to anyone planting Lenten Rose:

Allow sufficient space. A single mature plant is 2 ½ feet in diameter.

Choose your planting spot carefully. The Lenten Rose doesn't like to be moved.



Editor's Note: The plant is poisonous. *Propagation:* Lenten Rose may be divided or

started from seed. Division is done in spring or fall but the roots are brittle and easily injured. Starting plants from seed is difficult and slow. The seeds are planted as soon as they are ripe. Six weeks of moist chilling is recommended. It may take 3-5 years from seed to flowering. (*Propagation information from the Penn State Cooperative Extension*) Most nurseries in North Alabama carry the Lenten Rose in stock.



LCMGA Calendar

June 11, 2007

Dave Flanigan, 14937 Capstone Lane, Athens, will again host the annual Day Lily Tour. This stunning tour is always a big hit with MG's. Bring a chair, and lunch if you wish. Refreshments served. There will be a brief meeting before the tour.

June 16, 2007

Tri-County Master Gardener Picnic will be held on Saturday in Mooresville. Food is served promptly at 5 PM. After supper there will be a tour of some of the Mooresville gardens. Master Gardeners in Limestone, Madison & Morgan counties are invited to bring their fami-

lies, with a covered dish (entrée, appetizer, vegetable, or dessert) and lawn chairs. BBQ chicken, drinks, and tableware will be provided. This is a great opportunity to meet fellow Master Gardeners and their families. RSVP to Kathryn Davis at 256-350-2431.

(Continued on page 6)

A roomful of gardening aficionados learned some helpful tips on container gardening when LCMGA President Pamela Gibbs teamed with Karin McAndrews to present a program for Athens Garden Club. Both Pamela and Karin are members of the garden club.

Here are some of the highlights of that presentation:

When choosing a container, take its weight into consideration. Clay and concrete containers are heavy. Pots made of composite are lightweight. They do tend to erode around the edges, but trailing plants can conceal the erosion. If large containers are too heavy when filled with soil, consider reducing their weight by filling the bottom with Styrofoam packing peanuts, wrapped in a bag for easier disposal later on.

To prevent loss of soil through the drainage hole, line the planter bottom with clay shards, small rocks, coffee filters, or landscape cloth.

Lightweight soil-less potting mixes should be pre-moistened at an 8-1 ratio (eight parts soil to one part water) before plants are added. Even though such mixes include fertilizer, it

will not last through the growing season. Add a time-release fertilizer like Osmocote before planting. A feed-ing with a good water-soluble fertilizer will help plants recover from transplant shock.

To help potting soil retain moisture, use a product like Schultz Soil Moist Watering Crystals. The crystals absorb water and disperse it into the soil gradually. Mix the crystals into the layer of soil that the roots will inhabit, and use no more than what is recommended by the manufacturer.

Opposite hues on the color wheel make a pleasing combination, as do hues that are adjacent on the wheel. But don't be bound by rules. If a plant combination pleases you, advises Pam, it works. It's a good thing.

For dramatic effect, combine plants of varied heights, textures and growth patterns. Use a thriller, a filler and a spiller. Thrillers are tall plants like hydrangea or dwarf Alberta spruce; mounding plants make good fillers; and good spillers, or trailing plants, include ivy, petunias, creeping phlox, and vinca.

When combining plants in a single arrangement, consider factors such as growth rate

and mature plant size; sun/shade and water requirements; and bloom time. Staggered blooming times lengthen the period of interest, but plants that bloom at the same time will have more impact.

When deciding where to place the completed arrangement, consider the background. White flowers against a white wall make little impact; red or rust-colored flowers against brick will blend into the background, barely noticed. If placing a planter in a garden, visually anchor the pot by tucking plants around the base of the pot, repeating an element from the arrangement.



Some people are making such thorough plans for rainy days that they aren't enjoying today's sunshine.

William Feather

December 11, 2006 – A sumptuous meal with everyone's favorite dishes, beautiful poinsettias at every table for 6 lucky MG's to take home, and of course the gift exchange highlighted the December meeting, making it very festive for all.

January 8, 2007 - The LCMGA board held a focus meeting.

February 12, 2007 - It was cold outside, but warm inside with Betty Ann Broman, our new Limestone County Extension Coordinator. Betty Ann is a wealth of knowledge about the Extension's history, services and people. She also gave us the latest scoop on the availability of MG space with a phone, computer, and resource material to support a "hot line" in Limestone

County. You can visit Betty Ann Broman at the Extension Center, or call her at 256-232-5510.

March 12, 2007 – Debbie Bradley of Blackbird Design showed us how visually stimulating an artistic landscape plan can be, as well as giving a client an illustrated preview of the landscape - before the work begins. Debbie uses her sketches to reveal the future color and texture of the trees and plants she plans in her designs, along with hardscape. Debbie surprised a few lucky MG's with a drawing for gifts related to gardening. Debbie Bradley can be reached at 256-729-6199 in Athens.

April 9, 2007 - Limestone County Master Gardeners have been asked by Habitat

for Humanity in our county to assist in landscape planning for the one of their projects. Some of our MG's already do volunteer work with Habitat for Humanity. Kathie Bass, who volunteers numerous hours every year for Habitat, is a Master Gardener, and a member of Madison, & Limestone County Master Gardener Associations, was asked to give us a better understanding of the partnership between Master Gardeners of North Alabama (MGNA) and Habitat for Humanity. Kathie's phone is 256-457-6530 for more information.

NOTE: The most current complete program article will be on the website.

See back page for web address.



LCMGA Calendar

(Continued from page 4)

June 16, 2007

Photographs for the Tri-County calendar are due. See back page.

July 9, 2007

LCMGA Meeting at the Extension Bldg. Our speaker will be Sara Chadwell from the "Spirit of Athens". This

newly formed group cultivates interest in our heritage, helps to grow civic pride, and nurtures the continuation of historical renovation. Sara will also give us an update on the new businesses moving into and around Athens.

Aug 13, & Sept 10, 2007

Meeting at the Athens Cooperative Extension Bldg.

Upcoming Presentations

Melissa Kirkendall, wife of the mayor of Madison will give a talk on Hummingbirds.

Pat Hamilton will give a horticultural presentation and discussion of new products and plants in the marketplace, and she has gifts to give out.



LCMGA Projects - What's Happening!

Annual Plant Sale

John O'Neill, e-mail: llieno@gmx.net, phone: 256-232-0575

A reminder to all MG's, you can start potting and setting aside plants, trees, and perennial flowers for the sale throughout the year. Just remember to water and fertilize them. If you bury the pot in the ground several inches, watering will not have to be done quite as often since the roots will grow out of the pot into the ground. When removing the pots from the ground, be extra careful with those tender roots.

Hwy 31 Triangles

Pamela Gibbs, e-mail: pamelagibbs@bellsouth.net, phone 256-232-2048

We will be planting flowers and mulching around the second or third week in May, call if you can help. After that, occasional weeding assistance is needed throughout the summer until we do the fall cleanup and planting.

*When the well is dry,
we know the worth of water.
Benjamin Franklin*

Community Garden

Jim Ladner, e-mail: jladner@aol.com, phone: 256-729-8292

The 2007 garden project has accomplished soil testing and applied recommended soil amendments. This year the bean seed (Kwintus) and corn seed (Peaches n Cream) were mail ordered. The tomato plants are being provided by Rodell Thacker and Jerry Frank's green houses again this year. May and June are mostly cultivating months with tiller work and additional fertilizing. Harvesting of beans will start soon. If you wish to be added to our call list, please send your e-mail or phone me. Thanks in advance.

Newsletter

Nancy Robinette, phone 256-232-8232

Mark Morgan, e-mail mailto: lcmg@bamorgan.com, phone 256-230-9295

We are always looking for energetic, motivated gardeners with a passion to pen stories when it is too wet, dry, hot, or cold to work in the garden. This is an all-volunteer newsletter and is made possible only by the generous contributions of readers like you. If



you like what you read, thank a writer. If you do not like what you read, start writing.

Website

Jim Markestad, e-mail limestonemg@yahoo.com, phone 256-232-0540

Both the Newsletter and the Website are in need of individuals with time for writing, photography and ideas, ideas, ideas!

Veterans Museum

Jim Markestad

This project required a plan for planting and maintenance and Jim recently delivered the landscape plan. Thanks to Jim & Barb Markestad for a job done well.



Limestone County Master Gardener Association
P.O. Box 1304
Athens, Alabama 35612

Visit us on the web:

<http://www.aces.edu/counties/Limestone/MastGard/index.html>

Email us any comments or suggestions:

limestonemg@yahoo.com

knowing to grow is going to grow....



TAKE YOUR BEST SHOT – Photo Contest

That's right! We're looking for your best photographs of seasonal horticultural interest for the TRI-COUNTY 2008 MG CALENDAR!

Every Master Gardener and Intern (and their immediate family) in Limestone County is eligible to enter 4 color photos for each season up to a maximum of 16 entries.

Important: Entries must include the photographer's full name, address and phone on the back (not the front) of each photo. Clearly mark on the back of these photos whether the entry is to apply to spring, summer, winter or fall. Entries must be received by 6/15/07.

Voting will take place during the July & August meetings – be sure to come and vote. Votes will be fifty cents apiece – **ballot box stuffing is encouraged**. Winners will be requested to send their winning entry via e-mail in at least a 300 DPI format or better, so the use of a digital camera is suggested. Before you submit pictures, you might want to see it in an 8 x 10 size for clarity reasons. Call Joni Gruber, phone 232-8732 or 256-503-9326 w/questions. So far we have terrific choices for all seasons but we could use more fall and winter photos especially, and couple extra spring & summer wouldn't hurt!

Send your color photo entries in 3 X 5 to 8x 10 size to:
Joanne Gruber, 25235 Newby Road, Madison, AL 35756
Or Patricia Hatchett, 2422 Monterey Dr., Athens, AL 35613
ATTN: MG CALENDAR CONTEST

Note: In an effort to curb ever increasing postal expenses, we will soon be instituting an electronic mailing list for our future Association mailings. Please contact us with your preference and or current email address to assist us in this endeavor. We appreciate your cooperation and understanding regarding this matter.