

Winter 2011 Class Helps Fellow Intern Hit by Tornado in Limestone County

By Shelly Miller, TriCounty Master Gardener Web site, www.aces.edu/counties/Limestone/TriCounty/



Winter 2011 Interns helping Laura Schubring with a vegetable garden are, from left, John Youngs, Shelly Miller, Lydia Diener, Sherry Miller, Suzanne Lal, Margaret Moring, Master Gardener Bill Fuller, and Interns Deborah Youngs with Susan Pope, and Jill Nohrstedt. All photos by Laura Schubring.



You can see the tornado damage in the background. Barbara Locke is putting on green gloves. Max Campbell and Lydia Diener are on the ground. Shelly Miller is at right.

It had been two weeks since the tornadoes swept through Harvest and East Limestone on April 27, 2011. The home of **Laura Schubring**, a fellow Master Gardener intern, was among those in the tornado's path. As I listened to tree experts, **Bill Fuller and Regional Extension Agent Ken Creel**, give Laura advice about her downed trees, I was in awe. Obviously those hundred or more trees that were piled up three stories high were lost, and so were the ones that were beheaded with that ugly snap that only a tornado could accomplish. Actually, Ken said that those might live, but they would be "embarrassed" if they did. Even the trees that were left standing had to go. The pressure of the tornado blew apart the bark and there was no hope for their future.

I'm no tree expert, but I came along as a representative from our Winter

2011 Master Gardener class – we were willing to help if someone would just tell us what needed to be done. Laura's home had structural damage, the neighborhood across from her was leveled, and there was that missing Doppler radar ball lying in a field nearby. It was hard not to stare at the debris, maybe because I was avoiding Laura's eyes to keep her from seeing my look of, "I wish we could help, but I don't think there's anything we can do."

"The garden is coming along nicely! We greatly appreciate my fellow MG interns for their time and energy. It was and is a wonderful gift and a huge help!"

– Laura Schubring

It was then that Laura called my attention to her windowsill. On the ledge, there was a Styrofoam cup with a small tomato plant from our Propagation Class. While the mighty oaks fell, it had survived the storm! We laughed at its tenacity. Laura mentioned that she had looked forward to her first vegetable garden, but oh well. Suddenly, the spirit of the gardener welled up inside of me and I knew what

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had to be done; that Styrofoam tomato deserved a good home!

Our class decided to plant a garden for Laura that following week. We dug plants and herbs from our own garden to share, Master Gardener **Joe White** donated leftover vegetables from the Master Gardener tent at the Huntsville Botanical Garden April Plant Sale, and new seedlings were purchased. As a bonus, we also divided our flowers and planned to set up a little nursery area for Laura until she was ready to make a bed for sun-loving plants now that her shade was gone.

Well, planting day – May 27 – had finally come ... and so did the storms. I drove my truck full of plants and mulch to Laura's that day anyway because I figured that I have gardened in worse. However, I didn't expect anyone else to show up. Would you believe that in between lightning strikes, folks came from **Rogersville, Priceville, Decatur, South Huntsville and Madison** to plant a garden for Laura? Helping Laura on May 27 were Interns **Lydia Diener, Suzanne Lai,**

Barbara Locke, Shelly Miller, Sherry Miller, Margaret Moring, Susan Pope, Jill Nohrstedt, and John and Deborah Youngs.

Master Gardeners **Bill Fuller** and **Max Campbell** were my heroes that day with their giant tiller that destroyed public enemy No. 2 – Bermuda grass (No. 1 being Kudzu). After tilling, we hand-tossed everything that was green out of the garden, then we dug more than 100 holes, filled with donated fertilizer, planted every single plant according to Bill and Max's layout, then topped with free mulch from the Huntsville Botanical Garden. The Styrofoam tomato took center stage, for sure. It took 12 people four hours to complete what would have taken one person at least four days.

Laura was so thankful. When I surveyed the finished product, I felt proud, pleased, and satisfied for the cooperative effort and a job well done, and maybe some jealousy too – I wanted one now! The garden was like an oasis in the middle of the blue tarps.



Lydia Diener is on the ground doing exactly what Master Gardener Max Campbell is telling her to do! Lydia is a Master Gardener certified in Michigan who was auditing our class.



Susan Pope has the shovel, Suzanne Lai & Lydia Diener are planting and that's Shelly Miller's head at the bottom corner.



From left: Master Gardener Max Campbell and Interns Barbara Locke, Shelly Miller, John Youngs, Lydia Diener and Sherry Miller give Laura's new vegetables a great start.