



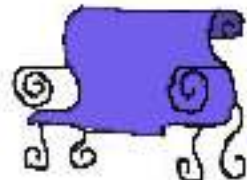
# THE PRAIRIE MUD

A Publication of Capital  
City Master Gardener  
Association  
Montgomery, Alabama

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August 2009

## FROM THE GARDEN

Hello Fellow Gardeners,



My mother taught me many things that I still remember and do: how to bake, plant, hoe, and when and how to harvest fruits and vegetables. I also learned how to preserve those things we grew: canning, freezing and drying.

Recently, I was flooded with memories of mama preserving figs, pears and peaches. I was, as I do most summers, preserving figs (this summer, from Suzanne Reaves' bountiful tree). Mama always picked a big dishpan of figs. She poured 4-5 pounds of sugar over them and let them stand until the sugar drew some juice from the figs. That is when she started the cooking. The figs cooked until they were a shiny brown and the juice a thick syrup. Yum! She never timed the cooking.

My being caught up in this age of instant gratification, I don't sugar and let my figs stand. I begin cooking them as soon as I pour the sugar over them. Mine don't taste as good as mama's, but with light fluffy biscuits, I don't notice too much. I don't time mine either. The color of the figs and thickness of the syrup determine the cooking time.

In this poor economy, more people are preserving and canning fruits and vegetables. Extension Services have offered more canning workshops this year. If you have an abundance of produce, preserving it for later use is a wonderful option. Sharing your abundance is a welcoming gesture as well.

Linda Carleton is an excellent example. She shared basketfuls of vegetables at several meetings this spring and summer. Thank you, Linda, for your generosity! We enjoyed your plentiful supply.

As summer slips on by, be aware of all the opportunities to learn (gain CEUs), and to help others learn (increase volunteer hours). Are you in the habit of recording your hours as you earn them? Remember, the mind is not automatic when you need it to recall. Mine is not even *on* most of the time. ***It is our continuous learning and volunteer time that keep the Master Gardener program alive.*** We should always want this valuable service to be a part of our community.

The NL has a variety of upcoming events. If you know of more, please send them to Lisa Lenox, newsletter editor or Kellie Sensintaffar, assistant editor. **Remember, your newsletter items are sorely needed and should be sent to either Lisa or Kellie, by the first Friday of each month. They are counting on your cooperation! Thank you, thank you!** You may send ancall.

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### Meeting Time and Place

August 25, 10 a.m. to 12p.m.  
Vaughn Park Church of Christ



I am looking forward to seeing each of you at our next meeting. We have an interesting topic and enjoyable chat time. If you were not at the last meeting we missed you!!

Happy Gardening and Waning Summer Heat!

“Alabama Yards and Neighborhoods” Amy Wright, Assistant Professor, Auburn School of Horticulture, will be the featured speaker at the August 25<sup>th</sup> CCMGA meeting at Vaughn Park Church of Christ. Ms. Wright is speaking about the current program introduced by Auburn this year, “Alabama Yards and Neighborhoods”. Please plan to attend.

#### Changes for Newsletter Deadlines

In order to get the newsletter completed in a more timely way, we are asking everyone to submit their articles and notices by the **FIRST FRIDAY OF THE MONTH**. This will help us to make the newsletter available to you sooner. This gives us about 10 days between the meeting and the due dates. If you have questions about this please contact Lisa or Kellie.



#### Master Gardener Progress

For a long time, committee members who have worked at Ordeman Shaw House Garden have talked about having a vegetable garden behind the house. This year it is becoming a reality. Plans are in place to have a fall garden. The garden is currently planted with cabbage, collards, tomatoes, and peppers. In the future we will be able to have a demonstration garden, incorporating gardening methods from 1850, and modern day methods. The beds are in-ground raised beds, designed to catch water as well as allow good drainage. The center is a knot which will feature herbs.





## PLANT OF THE MONTH

*Strobilanthes Dyerianus*

Common Name: Persian Shield

The Persian Shield, a plant native to Burma, has been around for a long time, actually dating back to Victorian times. Since the University of Georgia named it an "Athens Select Plant" in the last few years, it has regained popularity. Our own master gardener, Clinton Carter, won first place in one of the CCMGA's recent flower shows with a Persian Shield leaf specimen from his garden. I remember walking into the meeting with Clinton, asking him what kind of plant he held in his hand. The iridescent shades of purple, lilac, and deep fuchsia, with what looked like a light coat of silver electroplated to it, drew my eye immediately.

The Persian Shield is actually an annual, but it can make it through mild winters in zones 8 and above with a good mulching. For that reason, some consider it to be a perennial. It's great for containers or for planting in the garden as a landscaping flower. If you don't want to leave it outside for the winter, you may plant some in a

container and grow as a houseplant until the next summer season.

The Persian Shield likes full morning sun and some afternoon shade. Too much sun may fade the color of the foliage a little. It also thrives best in well-drained, organic rich soil. A light, monthly application of a slow-release fertilizer is recommended to keep it growing vigorously. Another plus for the Persian Shield is that it propagates easily from cuttings.

The Persian Shield is one of the most beautiful and unusual plants that I have ever seen. If you haven't planted any in your garden, I highly recommend that you do so. If you prefer container gardening, it makes an ideal center plant in a large container with companion plants.

Judy Crockett

### CCMGA Officers

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# MALLORY KELLEY - OUR NEW EXTENSION AGENT

I am truly enjoying my new position as a regional extension agent for the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, and have had the great opportunity to meet many of you here in Montgomery County. I am a native of Selma, Alabama and attended Auburn University where I received my bachelor's and master's degrees in Landscape Horticulture. In working on my thesis I studied the effects of color in deterring thrips to help reduce the incidence of tomato spotted wilt virus in tomatoes. I have always enjoyed being outside and using creativity in the landscape, so when I enrolled in Auburn University, the school of Horticulture was a perfect fit.

Now as a regional agent for home horticulture I currently live in Opelika and my home office for extension is in Wetumpka, but I cover five counties also including Autauga, Coosa, Macon and Elmore. I am excited to work with the public in all landscape areas and home gardening and hopefully encourage more and more people to work outside in their yards and create gardens. Gardening is shown to help strengthen not only your physical well being, but also your emotional and spiritual well being. As an extension agent I will coordinate workshops on new and current topics and problems that are occurring in the area to help educate the public, and I will also help coordinate the Master Gardener programs here in Montgomery county as well as in Autauga and Elmore counties.

Another goal I have as a new agent for extension is in advertising. Many people are not aware of the resources available to them through extension. I believe when people know there is a free service that is here to help them, they are more likely to try things for themselves, such as starting a home garden for the first time or working in their lawn to get rid of those weeds that year after year are taking over. The lagging economy has more Alabamians thinking about becoming self-sufficient in many areas, including home gardening, and I want to be there to help. With the current state of the economy and health considerations, there is more and more interest daily in home gardening and growing your own vegetables where you personally know what chemicals were used. All of that gets back to getting people back into their yards.

As the new agent, I hope to offer that bit of advice and encouragement that will bring people outside and help them to explore things they have never done before and also assist those who have many years experience in any way I can.

So if you know of extension and the great resource that is available to you, tell your neighbor, we are here to help them too!



# CARING FOR YOUR FIGS

Now that summer is slowly coming to an end and the season for figs is coming to an end, there have been many calls lately about what do in taking care of fig trees to prepare them for a large harvest next summer. For the best fruit production next year, water your figs regularly during the growing season unless rainfall is adequate and make sure the soil is not constantly soggy or waterlogged. When fall arrives, stop watering and allow your plants to harden off.

Fig trees can grow very well in our climate with little disease problems and your main concern in the form of pests will be the birds. Mature fig trees can reach 15 to 30 feet tall and are fully cold hardy to 15 or 20 degrees F, but if the tree is not well established, a cold drop in temperatures could cause damage and dieback to the fig tree. Protecting the plant from winter freezes can be done by applying mulch around the base of the tree to keep in the warmth from the soil and also watering well before a hard freeze will help protect the roots. If the tree is very tall there is not much else that can be done to protect it from freezing temperatures.

If you are thinking about planting a new fig tree, plant when the tree is dormant, early spring would be best once the threat of winter freezes has passed. Ideally, fig plants should be planted in a well-drained loam with plenty of organic matter, but they will tolerate average to poor soil. Once they are established, they are somewhat drought tolerant. Figs tolerate soil with a pH ranging from 5.5 to 8.0. Growers who have acidic soils should apply lime to bring the soil pH up to the fig's preferred pH of 6.0 to 6.5. Fig plants need at least 8 hours of sun and heat, which helps ripen the fruit. Figs respond very well (better than most fruit trees) to heavy applications of manure and compost. Be sure not to apply fertilizers too late in the growing season, this encourages new growth that cannot harden off before winter and can cause winter damage to the tree. Apply 2 to 3 cups of a balanced fertilizer such as 6-6-6 or 8-

8-8 with micronutrients three times a year to mature trees. If you grow figs in containers, a complete slow-release fertilizer such as Osmocote plus micronutrients is a good choice. Growers who want to grow figs organically should apply generous amounts of compost and a high-nitrogen fertilizer such as cottonseed, soybean, or alfalfa meal. Fig tree roots will not damage masonry foundations of buildings or steel pipe, but if you plant fig trees in a lawn, keep a 2- to 3-foot area around each tree free of grass for a year or two until the tree becomes established, the grass will compete with the figs roots for nutrients.

Do not begin pruning until the danger of frost has passed, but before new growth has started. Do this by removing about one-third to one-half the length of the annual growth. Also, prune out all dead wood and remove branches that interfere with growth of the leaders. Cut off low-growing lateral branches and all sucker growth that is not needed for replacement of broken larger limbs. Do not leave bare, unproductive stubs when you prune. These stubs are entry points for wood-decaying organisms. Make all pruning cuts back to a bud or branch.

If you are thinking about propagating from your fig trees **Late Winter or Early Spring** is the time. Figs are easy to propagate because they root very easily. There are several ways to propagate them. The most common method is to root leafless cuttings taken in late winter or early spring. For more information on propagating and pruning and for more general information on fig trees please visit our website articles at: <http://www.aces.edu/counties/StClair/files/NRFigPropagationGlover.pdf>

<http://www.aces.edu/pubs/docs/A/ANR-1145/>

**Mallory Kelly**

# WHAT HAPPENED TO MY BEAUTIFUL PLANT?

How many times have you purchased a beautiful plant, had it flourishing in your garden, and then suddenly it developed problems. You are probably saying, "I did everything I know how to do, and it died anyway." Do not neglect the fact that YOU may be doing something that is causing the problem. When it comes to finding out what happened to your prize piece of horticulture, you have to be a good detective.

Do you know exactly what plant you have? In order to determine what is normal for the plant you need to know the genus and species. Once you know what is normal, it is good to know what the common problems of the plant are. More than likely, the problem will be one of them. Be sure and check product labels, reference books, garden centers the County Extension Service for information that will be beneficial, do not be afraid to ask for help. Instead of trying this and trying that, try a little research and save yourself time and money.

To begin, remember the basic processes of field observation, sample collection and packaging, lab examination and soil testing. You can review these processes by going to the County Extension Service, either

online or to the office.

Study the whole plant(s), including the foliage, stem, and roots, if possible. Look at the other plants in the area, do they appear to have problems? Are other plants that have the same requirements being affected? How severe is the problem? How is the problem distributed among the plants in the area? What are the site conditions? What is the soil like? What is the drainage like?

Consider the cultural problems that might be occurring: What care is the plant getting? Check the planting records for this plant. What fertilizers and chemicals have been used, at what rates, dates of application, what watering methods have been used, what has the weather been like? When was the last soil test done?

If any of this seems familiar, it is the same processes that are laid out in the questionnaire that you fill out every time you take a phone call on the Master Gardener Help Line! I don't know about you, but I'm going to get me one of those forms and keep it for a reference in tackling my own back yard problems.

Kellie Sensintaffar, MG 2007

# WHAT'S COMING UP?



Events for August and September

## Home Grown Gardening Workshops - September 2009

The Home Grown Series of Workshops continues... The Alabama Cooperative Extension System will be offering its fall workshops coming up in September. Topics to be discussed for the fall workshops include: **COOL SEASON VEGETABLES ● GARDENING WITH HERBS ● FALL GARDEN MAINTENANCE ● BACKYARD COMPOSTING DEMONSTRATION and FIRE ANT CONTROL PRODUCTS DEMONSTRATION**

Locations for East Central Alabama are:

**Friday, September 11, 2009 - Lee County - Loachapoka**

**Friday, September 18, 2009 - Elmore County - Wetumpka**

**Wednesday, September 23, 2009 - Calhoun County - Anniston**

**A complete list of dates, times, locations, as well as registration information for the 2009 'Home Grown' Workshops can be found at [www.aces.ed/homegarden](http://www.aces.ed/homegarden) or by calling your local county Extension office.**

Friday, September 18, 'Home Grown' Gardening Workshop. Elmore County Extension Office 340 Queen Ann Road Wetumpka, AL 36092. 9:00am to 3:00 pm. \$10 fee per person. Fee includes lunch. Pre-registration and payment is required by Friday, September 11<sup>th</sup>.

The registration form is included in the newsletter.

Are you ready for the Alabama National Fair. If you would like to participate in the Fire Ant booth this year contact Mallory Kelley at 334-567-6301, or e-mail [jones57@auburn.edu](mailto:jones57@auburn.edu).

Tuesday, August 25, CCMGA Monthly Meeting, 10:00am-12:00am

Vaughn Park Church of Christ. Featured speaker will be Amy Wright, Associate Professor, Horticulture Department, Auburn University.

Events at Petals from the Past:

Saturday August 22, 10:30am, Walking Tour of the Apples and Pears -Dr. Arlie Powell

Sunday, September 13, 2:00pm Walking Tour of the Kiwi and Muscadines - Dr. Arlie Powell. Join Dr. Arlie Powell as he walks through the kiwi and Muscadines. He will give tips on what varieties to grow and how to care for these easy to grown fruits.

Sunday, September 27, 2:00pm Fall is for Gardening - Jason Powell Why? What? And How? Jason will discuss the advantages of planting roses, fruit, perennials, and shrubs in the fall. Care and maintenance will also be addressed.

## CAPITAL CITY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION

July 28, 2009 Meeting Minutes

President Maggie Stringer called the July meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. at Vaughn Park Church of Christ.

Refreshments were provided Nell Copeland, Mary Bullard, Emily Frye, Sara Brown, and Nancy Bowden.

Anne Waldo gave an inspirational devotion. She read witty, memorable sayings from her book, *In My Garden*.

Our interesting and informative program was presented by a Wisconsin native who moved to Alabama, Shirley Fifield, who is an expert in the area of wildflowers.

The following guests were introduced: Debra Wright, Chris Henderson, Bob and Marianne Cargo, and Bailey Malone.

The minutes for the last meeting were approved as written in the newsletter, *The Prairie Mud*. There were no additions or corrections.

### Committees

**Sunshine/Marilyn Harper:** Barbara Samuels is recovering from

surgery; Frank McCorkle is better and has returned today; Evonne Evans has had shoulder surgery; Chris Wooley hasn't been able to attend and has been inactive due to an illness; Anita Ward has fallen and broken her foot, but nothing can keep her down. She is in attendance today.

**Newsletter/ Lisa Lenox /Kellie Sensintaffar:** The membership was asked to contribute information to the newsletter, since it is an opportunity to keep everyone informed about the many great things that are going on and of the many wonderful things that we do to help make our city a much more beautiful place to live. The newsletter helps to represent us as the Capital City Master Gardeners. Our President, Maggie Stringer, suggested that each committee chairperson send in a status report each month to be printed in the newsletter, so we all can be aware of what's happening with each individual committee. Kellie stressed that **your input is desperately needed**. E-mail pictures of projects, etc. to Kellie ..

**Ordeman Shaw House Gardens/ Kellie Sensintaffar:** Reggie Gipson worked with Kellie, using the soil and compost brought in by Kellie's husband, to produce a beautiful vegetable garden in the garden portion on the Ordeman Shaw grounds. Kudos to the three of you

for such hard work!

**AMGA 2010/Cathy Maddox:** The Steering Committee is working on finding sponsorships for the upcoming conference. All planning for the conference appears to on schedule.

**Old Business:**

Workshops will be given by the County Extension Service on August 4-5, 2009, which will benefit both interns and master gardeners and will count toward continuing educational units/volunteer hours.

Maggie asked for a show of hands from those who participated in the canning classes.

We were reminded that **Mallory Kelley** is our County Extension Agent, replacing Shane Harris. She works 2 days at the Montgomery office and 3 days at the Elmore County office.

**New Business:**

Mary Eleanor Hines suggested that our association needs a banner to advertise our membership. The banner could be used at the AMGA State Conference 2010 and any other times when we are participating in events in which we need to be identified as Master Gardeners. (CCMGA) The banner should be "free-standing" and display pictures of some of our projects. A group of members

could meet to take pictures of some of on-going projects, which could be printed on the banner. The members voted to purchase a banner of this type as soon as the pictures are ready for selection.

A printed survey pertaining to Deer Repellants was given to each person at the meeting who is an active member of CCMGA.

Door prizes were won by several members. The meeting was adjourned by our President, Maggie Stringer.

Respectfully submitted by Judy Crockett, secretary

|  |                 |
|--|-----------------|
| <b>CCMGA Treasurer's Report-August</b> |                 |
| Beginning Balance 7-6-09:              | \$6,412.21      |
| Deposits:                              | 58.00           |
|  | \$6,470.21      |
| <b>Checks:</b>                         |                 |
| Cecelia Terrell                        | \$ 75.00        |
| Suzanne Bruckheart                     | 81.93           |
| Cecelia Terrell                        | 24.24 \$ 181.17 |
| Ending Balance 8-10-09:                | \$6,289.04      |

# 'Home Grown'

## Gardening Workshop

*"Fall for Gardening"*

Hosted by the  
Alabama Cooperative Extension System

**Friday, September 18, 2009**  
Elmore County Extension Office  
340 Queen Ann Road  
Wetumpka, Alabama 36092  
**9 a.m. to 3 p.m.**



Topics to be discussed:

**COOL SEASON VEGETABLES**  
**GARDENING WITH HERBS • FALL GARDEN MAINTENANCE**  
**BACKYARD COMPOSTING DEMONSTRATION**  
**FIRE ANT CONTROL PRODUCTS & DEMONSTRATION**



To sign-up or for more information, contact the Elmore County Extension office at 334-567-6301 or visit us online at [www.aces.edu](http://www.aces.edu). Cost is \$10 per person; Fee includes lunch. Pre-Registration and Payment is required by Friday, September 11<sup>th</sup>.

PRE-REGISTRATION FORM

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_ County: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_  
# of Participants X \$10 = Total Amount Enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_



Return Pre-Registration Form and Payment by September 11, 2009 to:

Elmore County Extension Office  
340 Queen Ann Road  
Wetumpka, AL 36092

Make check payable to: Alabama Cooperative Extension System