

The Prairie Mud

Volume 11, Number 3
March 2010



**Capital City
Master
Gardener
Association**
Montgomery, Alabama

Sowing Seeds

The conference will hold group challenges as well as opportunities for personal growth. Challenges will be met successfully if we work together. Personal growth will thrive when we nurture seeds of kindness, maintain a positive attitude, and offer a helpful hand. In all situations be kind. The kindness you give will benefit you the most. A positive attitude will be calming and dispel impulsive words that are counterproductive. Be alert and attentive to the needs of others.

We have all benefited from the time and talents of CCMGA members. Make every effort to show your appreciation by working together, showing kindness, being positive, and lending a helping hand.

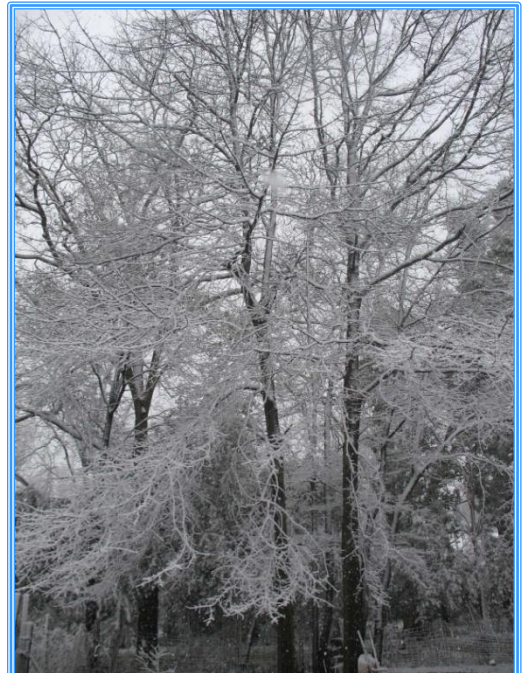
Each of you are special and I appreciate you. Cecelia

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**CCMGA Meeting
March 30, 10-12
Jasmine Hill
Garden
see you there, for some R & R**



My Grandfather's Garden

by Jerry Belcher

I remember my Grandpa as if he was still here and not gone these 45 years; my loving memory of him is one that I will take to my grave. A few months ago I was in my garden and my mind was wandering as it is prone to do in the garden. I thought about my Grandfather and a memory long placed in that unconscious section of my brain opened up like a fog lifting from the water surface on a cool autumn morning. I remembered something that I had not thought of in a very long time. I remembered that I use to garden with my grandpa. I was Grandpa's assistant.

I had completely suppressed those memories of Walnut Street and as a five year old, helping him plant the seeds that grew into such beautiful pansies, violets and morning glories. I would get down on my knees right beside him as he tended to his irises and watched in amazement as he would cut the three rose bushes down and thinking he had killed them only to watch them bloom in all their glory later that spring and summer. He had a number of peony and lilac bushes that bloomed into such magnificent eye candy. I used to watch the ants that crawled in the peonies and wondered why they were always on the bulbs. Grandpa said that they liked the 'juice' that the flowers gave off and that was a good enough explanation for me. As far as I was concerned; my Grandpa knew everything there was to know about gardening.

Grandpa had not always been the gardener in the family that job had been my grandmothers and these were really her flowers. He took over the gardening when she died and I guess by keeping her flowers growing it was his way to keep something of her alive and with him. He nurtured his/her garden for many years even without his assistant who was busy with teenaged endeavors and too busy to help him. When age finally caught up with him, he reluctantly accepted the fact that the flowers would now only grow in his memories and somehow I think he was content with that. His flowers, my grandmother and soon he, himself, were all together again and maybe that was how it was meant to be all along.

There is no better or loving gift a we can give to our children or grandchildren than to introduce them to gardening. They will remember you and the garden forever and be very thankful that you included them in your gardening long after we are only a loving memory in their hearts.

Jerry Belcher is an 2010 Intern.



What's Comin' Up?

CCMGA Calendar for March and April 2010

Friday and Saturday, March 26 and 27, 9AM - 4PM Sunday, March 28th 11AM -4Pm, Mobile Botanical

Gardens, PLANTASIA, presented by "Come Here To Grow" The largest plant sale on the Gulf Coast, Mobile, AL. Admission Free. For more information go to www.mobilebotanicalgardens.org.

Saturday, March 27, 2010 Managing Citrus in the Home Garden and Patio - Dr. Arlie Powell,

Petals from the Past 10:30am - 12:00 Dr. Powell will discuss variety selection, care and maintenance of a wide array of citrus plants for home gardeners such as Satsuma, Meyer Lemon, Navel oranges, Limes, Kumquats and calamondin.

Tuesday, March 30, CCMGA Monthly

Meeting, Jasmine Hill Gardens. 10:00 to 12:00.

Please come and enjoy a tour of Jasmine Hill and light lunch for a little post-Conference AHHHH.

Birmingham Botanical Garden, April 15-April 18, Spring Plant Sale. Spring Plant Sale Schedule of Events, **Thursday, April 15** Brio Preview Party 5 – 6:30 p.m. \$45 in advance / \$50 at the door. Member Sale 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. **Public Sale Hours**, Friday, April 16, 9 a.m. – 7p.m, Saturday, April 17 9 a.m. – 5 p.m., Sunday, April 18, 11 a.m. – 3 p.m. The Spring Plant Sale is The Gardens' biggest botanical event of the year, with more than 85,000 plants for sale and 7,000+ shoppers searching for the perfect plant for their home or garden! The 2009 Spring Plant Sale helped us raise over \$265,000 to support our **educational mission** to promote public knowledge and appreciation of plants, gardens and the environment.

For more information about the Spring Plant Sale, contact Special Events Coordinator, Shelly McCarty at 205.414.3965 or smccarty@bbgardens.org. **[Click here to learn about Spring Plant Sale sponsorship opportunities](#)**



Sara Brown, Wayne Henderson, and Sarah Stringer at the Southern Homes and Gardens Spring Rose and Flower Show. Thanks to everyone who helped with this event!

PLANT SALE 2010

As days get warmer and we step outside to check the progress of our gardens, let us also think about what we can donate to our main fund raiser which will take place Saturday, May 8, at Old Alabama Town. You provide the products that will make our *2010 Plant Sale* a success. It takes the effort of every member we have to put on a successful fund raiser like this one.

Plants that appeal to attendees include, but are not limited to, herbs (any and all), vegetable plants, ferns, hostas, bulbs, cannas, ivy, flats of annuals or biennials, angel trumpets, moonflowers, hydrangea, lambs ear, petunias, salvia, vinca, hibiscus, daisies and sun hardy plants, house plants, begonias, coleus, ornamental grasses, geraniums, anything blooming, heirlooms, gardenias, azaleas, hanging baskets, and flowering shrubs. Don't forget, we also take donations of any garden statuary, decorator pots, trellises, birdhouses, or gently used garden items.

We would love to see the bounty we had last year that resulted in our record profit. If you cannot provide something from your garden, consider making a donation of plants from a local nursery or planting a container or two for the sale. The flats we had last year were some of the first things to sell.

Popsicle sticks make great tags for plants.

Adding *sun* or *shade* is always appreciated by novice gardeners. Pictures attached from your garden or from a catalog really help us close the sale. Please write the name of the plant in permanent black marker.

We will have trucks at the **April** (next month) monthly meeting to pick up donations. With the winter we have had, we need everyone to step-up and make this a good year!

Suzanne Brookhart and Gail Cotney

CCMGA Officers
President-Cecelia Terrell
Vice president-Kellie Sensintaffar
Secretary- Anna Owen
Treasurer-Suzanne Brookhart

Alabama Master Gardener Conference Vendors

I want to encourage everyone to purchase items from our conference vendors. In these tough economic times, the fact that these vendors committed to our conference was a sacrifice for some. Several are coming some distance to be with us and there are local people we want to thank, also. CCMGA should really want to support the vendors who have supported our conference by their attendance

Suzanne Brookhart, Vendor Chairperson



2-12-10 Snow in the Garden

The Eufaula bus trip has been filled. If anyone wants to be on standby in case someone can't make the trip please contact Lynne Kuhlman or Anna Owen. Please be at the Perry Hill Shopping center by 6:45am. The bus will leave for Eufaula promptly at 7:00am. Please park close to the old Bruno's store, do not park in the

SNOW IN OUR GARDENS



Pictures submitted by Jan Gill, Jan Scott, Melinda Merijanian, Sheila Robertson and Lisa Lenox (front page)

Once in a blue moon...winter, Montgomery, Alabama 2-12-10

Tomato Workshop

April 6th, 2010

Montgomery County Grace Episcopal Church



The tomato is by far the most popular plant in the vegetable garden, but it can also be the most problematic. There are so many things to watch for when growing tomatoes to insure you have a healthy crop. This year the Alabama Cooperative Extension System is again offering a “Home Grown” workshop on “All Things Tomatoes.”

Have you ever wondered why one year your tomato crop is excellent and then the next year you have no luck at all? Or why the flower blooms and immature fruit suddenly drop from the plant to the ground? Also we will cover insects in the garden and how to control them and the best management practices to lessen the likelihood and spread of diseases on your tomatoes. We will cover these topics and questions along with many more and give you tons of information that you can take home and apply to this year's tomato crop and hopefully help you have more success with your tomatoes year after year.

The Alabama Cooperative Extension System will offer its public
‘Home Grown’ Workshop in Montgomery County
Covering “All things Tomatoes”
April 6th, 2010 from 9:00-3:00 p.m.
Grace Episcopal Church
906 Pike Road

Topics to be discussed at this Tomato Workshop include: Weather Challenges, Garden Insects, Viral, Fungal and Bacterial problems, and Disorders such as: Blossom end rot, deformed fruit shape, odd color splotches, cracking of the fruit, and reasons for early aborting of flower and fruit. Also we will have a Homemade Salsa Making demonstration.

New and Experienced gardeners are encouraged to attend!!

Mallory Kelley is a Regional Extension Agent for the Alabama Cooperative Extension System serving Central Alabama.

**CCMGA Treasurer's Report
February 5, 2010**

Beginning Balance **\$5200.29**

Deposits	Fieldtrip	\$1734.00	
	Raffle/Badges	46.00	
	Membership dues	65.00	
	Ck # 1708	2.00	<u>\$1847.00</u>
			\$7047.29

Checks

Ck # 1297	Anna Owen	\$ 21.41	
Ck # 1298	Directory	135.00	
Ch # 1299	OATHS (second booth)	50.00	
Ch # 1300	Bus	646.00	<u>\$852.41</u>

Ending Balance **\$6194.88**

CCMGA Meeting February 23, 2010

The meeting was called to order by President Cecelia Terrell and the devotion was given by Boots Diamond. Refreshments were provided by Anita Ward, Audrey Shelnut, Melinda Merijanian, Carol Gietl, Elaine Galt and Emily Frye. We had six interns present at the meeting. Last month's minutes were approved and The Treasurer, Suzanne Bookhart, reported that the ending balance this month is \$5,200.29.

Mary Eleanor Hines, Chairperson of Reach for the Stars and Awards Program, presented stars to those volunteers having earned their required hours. Bronze star recipients with 100-199 hours were Elizabeth Littleton, Jane Martin, Melinda Merijanian, Randy Merijanian, Barbara Samuels, Cecelia Terrell and Tom McLemore, Silver star recipients with 300-499 hours were Jane Shallop, Kellie Sensintaffar, Jean Symth, Jackie Buck, Linda Carlton, Nell Copeland, Gail Cotney and Anita Ward. Gold Star recipients with 500-999 hours were Marie Tomlin, Lisa Lenox, Cookie Ruth and Nancy Goins. Gold badge recipients with 1000- 1999 hours were Susanne Reaves, Karin Carmicheal and Maggie Stringer. We were proud to present a first time winner of the Platinum Badge with 2000 plus hours to Cathy Maddox. These four badges will be presented at the 2010 Conference next month here in Montgomery.

This is extraordinary volunteering. Cathy Maddox talked about the conference and Mary Jane McCracken gave a report for the Sunshine committee.

Kellie Sensinstaffar told everyone how to put their hours on line and Melinda Merijanian volunteered to tutor at the ACES office to those that needed help. If someone brings a laptop to the meeting you can be shown then. A print out was provided at the sign up table. Cecelia Terrell sent a thank you note to St. John's for letting us have our meeting there last month and thanked Elaine Galt for helping secure the Church for us. Cecelia also thanked Chris Shoup and her Telephone Committee for contacting everyone in such a short time. Everyone that worked at Southern Homes and Gardens open house was also thanked.

Anna Owen talked about the bus trip to Eufaula for the Pilgrimage on April 9, 2010. The cost of a ticket is \$51.00. A motion was made and carried that the bus for this year's trip would be paid for by the Association. Members were asked to fill out the forms and sign up for the Speakers Bureau. Dianne Bush named the sponsors that have donated money and other items to the conference. Sign-up sheets are on the table for you to volunteer your time and the work won't start until after the convention.

The plant sale is Mother's day weekend May 8,2010. Suzanne Bookhart and Gail Cotney are the chair people for the sale and they need help in setting up Saturday morning, transporting the plants and selling the plants. They also need you to donate plants you have rooted or potted. Take a picture of the plant so people will know what the bloom looks like and use a water proof marker to write the name of the plant. An email was sent to everyone about the rain barrels the school children were painting. Anna Williams brought one to the meeting to show and one will be raffled off at the plant sale.

Tom McLemore and Melinda Merijanian were omitted from the minutes last month on the Help Line awards. They were both given gold pins for their outstanding help.

The meeting next month is at Jasmine Hill on March 30,2010

Attendance at meeting : 67

Respectfully submitted by Anna Owen



By Mallory Kelley
Regional Extension Agent
Home Grounds, Gardens, Home
Pests

Spring Tips for the Gardener

With the 70 degree temperatures like we had last weekend many people thought Spring had arrived and those warm spring days make me want to get outside and work in the garden and buy new plants. However, according to the weather man and (the Ground Hog) we still have more winter days ahead and with winter still hanging around this means it is time to start planning and preparing for spring planting so you will be ready once those warm, sunny, spring days really do arrive and decide to stay!

First of all let's talk about planting and pruning. The best time of year to plant trees and shrubs is in the late fall and winter, this is because the plant leaves and stems go dormant, but its root continue to grow. This allows time for the roots of the plant to get established so when Spring does arrive the roots are strong and healthy and ready to send all the energy up into the leaves, stems and flowers. But if you run out of time, do not worry, planting can continue on into the spring. It is just best for the plants establishment that it be planted in the winter so those roots can start to grow. If you have not pruned those shrubs yet, remember the "May Rule" or you may be removing this year's buds resulting in a garden with no beautiful colorful blooms. The "May Rule" is "If it blooms before May, prune it right after it blooms, if it blooms after May, it can be pruned when it is dormant in the fall or winter." But some plants are exceptions to this rule so always check before pruning to make sure. It is also a great time of year to get your soil tested. Soil tests are available through the Alabama Cooperative Extension System and cost seven dollars. It is a good idea every few years to test the soil in your lawn to see what additional nutrients might be needed to improve the growth of your turf grass, but it is also a good idea to get a soil test if you are planting new shrubs. Plants like blueberries, camellias, and azaleas require a low pH as they need acidic soil to grow healthy. Testing if

planting new shrubs, but also existing shrubs can help you improve the growth and health of your shrubs and trees.

March is a great time to plant a new lawn or to fertilize established lawns. Wait until May to plant lawns from seed. In May water new lawns as needed to prevent drying. Keep established lawns actively growing by watering, fertilizing, and mowing and spray weeds in lawns with the proper herbicide. Begin fertilizing in April at 3-6 week intervals.

As for Vegetable Gardening, it is time to plant those seeds and transplants once the threat of a late season frost has passed, this is usually mid April but can vary from year to year. Some seeds can be started now if you have them inside in a sunny place or if you have a green house, but if you plant them outside too early you will only be wasting your time and money, because the soil temperature is not warm enough for the seeds to germinate. Tomato plants can be transplanted at 55 degrees F, but growth will be slow. Use a rule of thumb of a night air temperature minimum of 55 degrees F. By then, the days are a lot warmer and the soil is warmer than the coolest night air. If you plant bean and marigold seeds when the soil is less than 60 degrees F, the seed will just sit. Some people wait until the temperature is 68 to 70 degrees F. Pepper and eggplant transplants should go in at this higher temperature.

Applying new mulch in March and April around existing shrubs, a perennial or annual bed, a large planting of new shrubs, or your vegetable garden each year is always a good idea. This will help prepare your plants for the hot summer temperatures that are quickly approaching along with many other benefits. Mulch helps conserve moisture so less watering is needed, this can save you a lot of time, but also help you save on your water bill. Mulching will also drastically reduce the amount of weeds in your beds or your vegetable

Spring Gardening Tips Continued

garden saving you time to do other things than pulling weeds. It will also save you money since as you will not need to buy herbicides. And lastly, mulching will add nutrients to the soil as it breaks down over time. However, you do not want mulch to become too thick around the base of trees as this can invite insects that can damage the tree and cause rotting. Make sure that the flare of the tree where it meets the ground is still visible!

Those are just a few tips on things you can be doing now in the garden, but also things you can prepare

for in the next few months to help improve the success and beauty of your garden or landscape. For More Information on Gardening from April through September you can call the Alabama Cooperative Extension, Master Gardener Helpline at: 1-877-ALA-GROW

"THE MOST HUMBLE OF PLANTS HAVE THEIR OWN STORIES.
AT THE SIGHT OF A CLUMP OF GRASS MY HEART LEANS CLOSE
TO LISTEN."



More snow pictures.... 2-12-10
Montgomery, Alabama

This newsletter is produced by Kellie Sensintaffar, MG2007 and other contributors. If you would like to contribute, please submit your information to kelliegardens@yahoo.com by the first Friday of each month. This newsletter will be emailed and US mailed on the second Friday of each month..