

## HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

*By Joanne Clark*

On a chilly, but sunny, February 5, eight members of the Lee County Master Gardeners met at the nearly completed Habitat for Humanity home for the family of Mattie and Connie Tolbert on Chewacla Parkway in Auburn.

Gita Smith coordinated the MG partnership with Habitat and Kit Conner was our forewoman on this job. We started by planting the 60 donated plants, shrubs and trees from Green Hill Nursery (Waverly) around the new house. New homeowner Mattie Tolbert was on hand (and helped with planting) to show us where she would like these plants to go. She had given a lot of thought to what should go where. Volunteers graded the property, and when that was finished, MGs sowed rye grass seed and laid wheat straw at the back and sides of the house.

We finished by mulching the new plantings with pine straw, which really made quite a difference aesthetically. I was very proud to be a part of this volunteer project. I would love to see how the plantings are coming along later in the year.

On this particular morning, a class of students from the Auburn University School of Architecture were also volunteering their time and expertise to finish the roof. We invited some of the brawny young men to dig holes in the hard soil so we could plant shrubs. Their assistance sure made the

planting work go much more quickly!

Just in case you're wondering how someone becomes eligible for a Habitat for Humanity home, here are a few of the facts.

People who have homes built by Habitat for Humanity volunteers usually get on a waiting list several years before they actually get a house. They must first put in 500 hours of sweat equity on other people's homes before they move up the list. They must be employed and able to pay the mortgage on the house.

What they get is a house built by volunteers with some donated materials, which makes the final cost of the house much lower than one built by a commercial contractor.

The Lion's Club was one of several non-profit organizations that volunteered their time; and Spencer Lumber Co. donated some of the materials. Master Gardeners helped turn the bare yard into a place with real curb appeal.



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at the State Convention for her volunteer hours with the Top Hours of the Year Award. **Carolyn McConnell** (class of '04) received the Opelika Civitan Club Honor Key, which is the highest award that can be given for dedicated and outstanding service. Way to go Lee County MGs!!



*Leaf Notes, Newsletter of the Lee County Master Gardeners*, is published by the Lee County Extension System and the Lee County Master Gardeners.

Published four times a year: Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter.

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## FALL MASTER GARDENER CLASS PLANNED

*By Chuck Browne*



Greetings Master Gardeners. This has been the first spring in I don't know how long that the Lee County Extension Office did not have a spring Master Gardener Class. New state guidelines require a minimum of 15 to teach a master gardener class. One week before the beginning date we only had three registered; therefore, there was but one choice to make.

However, mostly through your efforts and other promotions, it looks as if we will probably have a fall class. Dani Carroll, agent assistant here in Lee County, already has the dates and lineup of speakers. Please continue to spread the word and contact Dani at carrod1@aces.edu for more information.

## WRENS BACK AND NOW GONE

As I write this column, I am sitting in the kitchen looking out into the garage. The two

wrens that have been flying in and out of the garage for the past few weeks are coaxing their babies out of the nest. My boys informed me that there were two dead babies near the door this morning. The remaining two were hopping and flying from bush to bush at the coaxing of the parents. Sneaking up into some junipers and hollies, the little ones disappeared as they sought shelter from the many predators in the outdoor world.

We had wrens last year in the garage. Cathy and I wondered if they were the same ones as last year or if they were the babies of last year's adults. Perhaps Jayne Rushin, former editor of this newsletter and bird watcher extraordinaire, could enlighten us on this topic.

## COUSIN KOUSA AND RHODIES

Dogwood blooms have been gone for several weeks now. Yesterday, I was driving through a neighborhood and saw one in bloom. As I neared and saw its beautiful flowers backed by light green leaves, I realized it was Cornus kousa. "Kousa" dogwoods bloom 2-3 weeks after regular dogwoods. They are well adapted to this climate and are a great way to extend spring in your garden.

The big 'Roseum elegans' purple Rhododendrons came into full bloom in my yard today (May 6). These were ones Betsy Jordan took as cuttings from Dean Dennis Rouse's yard five or six years ago.

The late Dr. Rouse was a great leader in Agricultural Research at Auburn University. I only knew him during his retirement. He was a wealth of knowledge and always willing to help others. There was never a time that I called him for help or advice that he was not more than willing to assist.

People say that if you give a plant to someone, especially a "plant person" that they will never forget where it came from. Every time I look at those Rhododendrons I see Betsy Jordan taking cuttings at Dr. Rouse's yard in South Auburn. Ya'll have a nice spring.



### This and That

By William B. Shell

I visited Bellingrath Gardens in Mobile the weekend of March 28 just as she was reaching her peak of loveliness. Remarkable!! I also popped over to the Mobile Botanical Gardens the evening before and found nice gardens with great potential run by just one full time manager. Volunteers are their main source of labor, and as we all know, unless you are a Margaret Holler that only goes so far. While I was there, I visited their herb garden and found a handout, *Companiate Herbals for the Organic Garden*, which they said I could share with you. It is located on page 4 of the newsletter.

The azaleas at Bellingrath flank the trails for what seems like miles and miles. All are gorgeous and most are 15 feet tall; most of them were of the Indica variety. The azaleas are very old and all well kempt, as was the rest of the gardens. A gift shop was present as well as a quiet, peaceful chapel, which I entered, knelt, and thanked the good Father for such beauty and for friends like you! We toured the Oriental gardens which were very nice with one exception. There was only one Japanese maple in the entire garden! We were in the gardens for four hours and still didn't have enough time (and energy) to visit their greenhouses. If they are like the rest of the gardens, they are superb! There is lots of water at the gardens; all well utilized. I was extremely pleased and heartily recommend a visit. Of course I plan to return.

While we were in Mobile we stayed with Peggy and Ted DeArmon, he, a retired astrophysicist and she, a registered nurse on the verge of retiring. Peggy had attended my

JM grafting workshop at the Gulf States Horticultural Expo held in Mobile in February. They then came to Auburn for further insight in JM propagation as our houseguests. Fortunately, our camellia show was at the mall that weekend and Peggy is big in camellias. Tom Corley even met us at his cabin that Saturday morning to give Peg and Ted a private tour. They will be back up for the rhodie tour of gardens. How lucky am I to meet such interesting people and share in our mutual love for growing things. What paradise, anon!



### Notes from the President/Secretary

Our Spring quarterly meeting on April 16 was a blast. We had a plant swap in conjunction with a terrific covered dish luncheon. On our agenda for 2006 is a Garden Tour of Homes in the Auburn/Opelika area. We'll be contacting you soon for help. We have started our spring demonstration garden and all is looking great! The garden is laid out, new potatoes and early corn and herbs are in, and we hope to be the recipients of a Mantis roto-tiller very soon. Our MGS have been busy. Keeping in mind that gardening education is the main focus of our organization, Barbara Whatley made a presentation at the Union Springs Garden Club, discussing composting and other gardening issues. Keep up the good work, Barbara.

One of our own MGS, **Sam T. Coker** (class of '94), was named a 2005 Community Hero by the Lee County Red Cross! Congratulations, Sam!! Another of our own, **Margaret Holler** (class of '98), was honored

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## Companionate Herbals for the Organic Garden

**Basil:** Companion to tomatoes; improves growth & flavor. Repels flies and mosquitoes.

**Beebalm:** Companion to tomatoes; improves growth & flavor.

**Borage:** Companion to tomatoes, squash & strawberries; deters tomato worm; improves growth & flavor.

**Catnip:** Plant in borders; deters flea beetles.

**Chamomile:** Companion to cabbage & onions; improves growth & flavor.

**Chives:** Companion to carrots; improves growth & flavor.

**Dill:** Companion to cabbage; dislikes carrots; improves growth & health of cabbage.

**Fennel:** Plant away from gardens. Most plants dislike it.

**Garlic:** Plant near roses; deters Japanese beetles; improves growth & health.

**Horseradish:** Plant at corners of potato patch to deter potato beetle.

**Marigold:** The workhorse of the pest deterrents. Plant throughout the garden; it discourages Mexican beetle, nematodes & other insects.

**Mint:** Companion to cabbage & tomatoes; improves health & flavor; deters white cabbage moth.

**Marjoram:** Here & there in garden; improves flavor.

**Nasturium:** Companion to radishes, cabbage & cucurbits (pumpkin, squash, cucumbers, zucchini, watermelon); plant under fruit trees. Deters aphids, squash bugs, striped pumpkin beetles.

**Sage:** Plant with rosemary, cabbage & carrots; keep away from cucumbers. Deters cabbage moth & carrot fly.

**Thyme:** Here and there in garden to deter cabbage worm.

## Master Gardener Entrepreneurs

### *Out in the Garden*

Two Master Gardener graduates (2004), Helen Arnold and Kitt Conner, have established a new nursery and garden boutique, ***Out in the Garden***, located at Moores Mill Road and Society Hill Road. ***Out in the Garden*** offers a 10% discount to all Master Gardeners.

Helen, husband Robby, and Kitt have been active in design, installation, and donation of plants for three local "Habitat Houses" in 2004 and 2005. They have decorated for several Lee County School banquets in 2004 and 2005. They have also provided decorative plants and floral materials for the annual, Auburn Heritage Association Membership Tea and the PTA plant sale at Ogletree Elementary School. They have planted and maintain a butterfly garden at the Indian Pines Country Day School. ***Out in the Garden*** also hosts local garden club meetings at the store.

***Out in the Garden*** is dedicated to providing garden art, garden furniture, trees, shrubs, bedding plants, ferns and shade plants, hanging baskets, etc. and accessories not previously available in the area. Fountains, concrete urns, pedestals, benches, statuary, cast iron urns, arches, benches, and trellises are just the beginning of an exciting visit to the boutique.

***Out in the Garden*** is a bloom of ***R & R Landscaping and Lawn Care, LLC.***, a full service landscape design service, specializing in the installation of water features, low voltage landscape lighting, retaining walls just to name a few of the wonderful vignettes for the home botanical outdoor conservatory. The shop offers gardening boutique collections, for all seasons.



Margaret Holler, center, receives her award from Angie Conway, left, and Kerry Smith.

## Up and Coming Events

**Alabama Master Gardener Hats for Sale.** Price is \$8.00. Call Diane if you are interested in purchasing . (334-745-5529)

**May 27: Growing Backyard Tomatoes Seminar.** Contact Chambers County Extension Service at 334-864-9373 for directions or questions.

**June 4: 10:00 AM: Propagating Hydrangeas with Eddie Aldridge. Aldridge Botanical Gardens, B'ham.** Contact [aldridgevr@bellsouth.net](mailto:aldridgevr@bellsouth.net) or call 205-682-8019 ext 11 for more details

**June 18: 9:00 AM: Hydrangea Garden Tour— Aldridge Botanical Gardens - B'ham.** Contact [aldridgevr@bellsouth.net](mailto:aldridgevr@bellsouth.net) or call 205-682-8019 ext 11 for more details

**July 13: 5:30 PM Quarterly meeting and pot luck supper at Tom Corley's cabin.** Call Jaya or Diane if you need directions.

**July 24 –27: International Master Gardener Conference: Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada.** For more information visit: <http://www.mastergardener2005usask.ca>

**August 11: 10:00 AM—3:30 PM Advanced MG Training Conference: Callaway Mini-conference.** See State MG website for details. (<http://www.alabamamg.org>)

## Discounts to Master Gardeners!!!

Two of the local Gardening Shops are now offering discounts to Active Master Gardeners. *Out in The Garden* offers a 10% discount. *Blooming Colors* discounts are: 5% on fertilizer and bagged materials; 10% on soil conditioners; 15% on annuals and perennials; and 20% on trees, and shrubs. You must personally register at each individual shop in order to receive the discount and/or their mailings.

## 2006 Opelika/Auburn Garden Tour

We are working diligently to plan our first (hopefully annual) garden tour. Your help and input will be greatly appreciated.

## Tom Corley's Poppies Get Rave Reviews

At the conclusion of our winter MG meeting, I left Kiesel Park with a small six-pack of baby poppy seedlings germinated by Tom Corley. He had labeled them only as pink poppies. I brought them along for the next few weeks. They grew to about three inches in height. Then, out into the garden they went, as the nights were cool.

Little did I know what splendid poppies they would be. They are now close to three feet high and topped with quadruple- and quintuple-layered petals of the richest red. These poppies are Disney poppies — a Fantasia display. The sharing of seeds and plants is part of the bounty of being a Master Gardener. Therefore, I pledge to share with all the seeds from my Tom Corley poppies next spring. — *Gita Smith*



Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work in agriculture and home economics, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, and other related acts, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The Alabama Cooperative Extension System (Alabama A&M University and Auburn University) offers educational programs, materials, and equal opportunity employment to all people without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, veteran status, or disability.