

GARDENERS' GAB



Shelby County Master Gardeners' Association

Meetings: Monthly, 2nd Friday at 10 a.m.
Shelby County Extension Office
Columbiana, Alabama

Alabama MGA: www.alabamamg.org
Alabama MG Program www.aces.edu/mg

Vol. 6, Issue 3

March 2013

Pointers from the President...

Happy March to all Shelby County Master Gardeners! Have you seen enough rain yet? The few sunny days we have had make me want to get out and clean up the winter mess. I've got a long way to go!

I hope everyone is finding places to volunteer with your Master Gardener skills. Carol Beard is looking for volunteers for the April Botanical Gardens Plant Sale. Please chat with your fellow gardeners and find a place to volunteer your skills.

Did you get to visit Montevallo for their Arbor Day celebration? Bill Legg greeted everyone and more of our own Master Gardeners worked at booths. I just learned this Arbor Day is the oldest in our whole country!

Hope you received your early notice that our March 8th meeting place has changed. We will be meeting at Living Hope Baptist Church in Pelham and be learning about "Aquaponics". Thanks, Mary K, for planning this interesting learning event. Everyone bring a sack lunch and hope to see you at 10:00.

Please call members you haven't seen in a while and encourage them to come back to our meetings. What great folks we have in our organization!

Happy Easter!
Your President,

Susan



THIS MONTH'S MEETING:

FRIDAY, MARCH 8th @ 10:00 AM—

LOCATION: Living Hope Baptist Church (directions on page 2)

Get ready to learn about growing fish and plants together:
"Aquaponics with Wayne Atchison"

Bring a sack lunch and beverage (I will provide cookies).

~Mary K. Tomas



***** MARCH MEETING CHANGE *****

Get ready to learn about growing fish and plants together at our March 8 meeting: "Aquaponics" with Wayne Atchison. Mr. Atchison will describe this unique and sustainable method of gardening and then give us a tour of his aquaponic operation in a geodesic dome!

Bring a sack lunch and a drink; Mary K. Tomas will provide the cookies.

We will meet at our usual time (10:00 a.m.) at Living Hope Baptist Church in Pelham.

Hope to see you all there!

Mary K. Tomas

DIRECTIONS:

Living Hope Baptist Church
419 Philippians Blvd.
Pelham, AL 35124
(205) 664-0491

- From I-65, take exit 242 (Pelham/Helena)
- Turn WEST onto Hwy 52
- Turn RIGHT (NORTH) onto US 31.
- At the third traffic light (Old Time Pottery is on your right) turn LEFT onto Industrial Park Drive.
- At the 4-way stop, turn RIGHT onto Bearden Road.
- Proceed 7/10 mile—Philippians Blvd and the church will be on your LEFT.

**Shelby County Master Gardeners' Association
Minutes – February 07, 2013**

Call to Order and Pledge – Susan Seng

Blessing – Bill Legg

Dinner

No committee reports tonight.

Minutes from last month were published in *The Gab*. A finance correction was emailed to members and approved.

Announcements:

Arbor Day: Bill Legg told us about the Arbor Day Celebration to be held in Montevallo on February 23.

AMG Convention: Susan reminded everyone the state convention would be held in April and the cost of the conference goes up after April 1st. She also mentioned that while you were free to stay wherever you choose, some of the costs of the conference are offset by the number of hotel rooms sold. She reminded us there was still time to find someone to room with you to help with expenses.

Sunshine: Please let Karen Kendall know if anyone needs a card due to illness or something else.

Hours: Jan Rogers will help anyone enter volunteer hours if they need assistance.

Potluck: If someone would like to be the designated "iced tea" supplier, instead of bringing a cooked dish, contact Susan or Michelle and let them know.

State Newsletter: Someone is needed to write a brief article about what Shelby County MG's are doing for the quarterly state newsletter. Let Susan know if you are interested.

Exceptional Fishing Event: This will be held May 7—9 at Oak Mountain State Park and will involve special needs children from Jefferson and Shelby counties. Volunteers are needed. Please contact Diane McKinnon if you are interested.

State Membership Cards are available if you have paid your state dues. See Cathy Canant.

Thanks: Susan thanked many who planned and decorated for the Groundhog Day celebration, including Michelle Hill and Rhonda Cowan. She also thanked Heidee for her work on *The Gab* and the board for their work.

Mary K. Tomas introduced our guest speaker, Jamie Nobles, the Alabama Wilds Zoological Manager at the Birmingham Zoo. He spoke on Groundhogs and the challenges they create for gardeners.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth Heerten, Secretary



Gardeners! Play, Stay and "Jazz up Your Garden" at the 2013 AMGA Annual Conference in Florence, Alabama!

"Jazz Up Your Garden" is the theme for the 23rd Master Gardener State Conference to be held April 15-17, 2013, hosted by The Shoals Master Gardeners.

Our speakers are ready to jazz you up with new garden plans and ideas that will have you excited and ready to return home to work in your garden.

Hospitality at the Marriott Spa and Hotel Conference Center will have the red carpet rolled out and ready to welcome everyone from Gulf Shores to our master gardeners in the northern part of our state. We are also thrilled to offer a self-guided garden tour on Sunday the 14th of April. Maps to local gardens allow you to drive and view gardens at your leisure.

To learn more, go to: <http://www.amgaconference.org/>



MARCH BIRTHDAYS

- 1—David Thomas
- 7—Charlie Woodrow
- 9—Murry Williamson
- 14—Phyllis Love
- 25—Trisha Williams
- 28—Jerry Raley

ALABAMA GARDENER'S CALENDAR FOR MARCH

FRUITS & NUTS - Continue strawberry and grape plantings. Bud apples and peaches. Start planting blackberries. Remember, if weather conditions prevent prompt planting, heel the plants in by placing the root system in a trench and covering the soil.

SHRUBS - Fertilize shrubs (except azaleas and camellias) according to a soil test. Late plantings may be made, particularly if they are container-grown. Watch shrubs for harmful insects.

LAWNS - Plant Bermuda, Zoysia, and Centipede in South Alabama. Seed bluegrass and grass mixtures in North Alabama. Fertilize established lawns.

ROSES - Watch new growth for aphids. Begin a spray or dust program. Begin fertilizing.

ANNUALS AND PERENNIALS - Tender annuals may be planted in South Alabama. Check garden centers for bedding plants.

BULBS - Plant gladiolus every two or three weeks if a long Blooming season is desired. Plant tuberous begonias in pots. Plant dahlias.

MISCELLANEOUS - Check and repair sprayers, dusters, and lawn mowers. Control lawn weeds with chemicals. Delay pruning of fruiting shrubs such as cotoneasters, pyracanthas, and hollies until after flowering.

VEGETABLE SEEDS - Plant hardy crops recommended for January and February. After danger of frost is past, plant tender vegetables.

VEGETABLE PLANTS - Plant cabbage, onions, lettuce, broccoli, and Brussels sprouts in North Alabama; plant tomatoes and peppers in lower South Alabama.



Thinking of keeping and raising honeybees? Having your own backyard hive is becoming increasingly inviting for those of us who want to ensure that our vegetable gardens, flowers, and fruit trees will be better pollinated. Your decision to keep bees will also promote bee health in the face of the widespread use of chemical weed killers and pesticides now taking its toll on the bee population here in Alabama. In the hopes of giving you a nudge in the right direction, this article is intended to help you find the resources you will need to get started in backyard beekeeping.

First and foremost: beekeeping is **fun!** Many find that it is a relaxing hobby which has a multitude of benefits. Keeping a couple of hives of bees not only helps my vegetable and flower gardens be more productive, but it definitely gets me outside more (which my middle-aged body needs), focuses my contemplations on nature's interconnectedness (which my middle-aged spirit needs), and gets me off the Internet for a while (sorry, Facebook!). Backyard beekeeping is not prohibitively expensive. An average cost of a packaged colony of bees (including a queen) is about \$80. Several hive boxes with frames will set you back about \$150-\$200. Some of the basic equipment (gloves, veil, smoker, etc.) will be about \$100-\$150. So, at the very least, you will have about \$500 invested in your new hobby. A quick visit to your local Bee Association will very likely score you a number of these items at a bargain rate – maybe even free!

How much space is needed to keep a hive of bees? Not much: whether you have acreage, a lot in a subdivision or even an apartment building roof top, bees can be kept just about any place. Honeybees usually forage in a radial range of 1-3 miles from their home hive, so you really only need enough space to set up your hives. Usually there are no local ordinances against keeping bees (there are none in Shelby County, for example), but if you live within city limits it would be wise to check if there are any "nuisance" regulations. The same holds true for subdivisions with homeowners' compacts and, out of respect, with any near neighbors: check first – there will probably be no issue with your hobby (especially if you offer your neighbor some honey), but "better safe than sorry".

Hive boxes come in different sizes, usually 8 frame or 10 frame. An 8 frame hive is more compact and can be more easily moved, especially when it is full of honey (a single box, or "super" of honey can weigh as much as 60 pounds). I own several eight frame hives purchased from a commercial supplier which came as a complete sets and cost about 125.00 each. After some minor preparation – mainly applying several coats of Min-Wax stain – the hives were put into my backyard flower bed and were fully functional within two hours of start-up. Anyone can set up a beehive – it is easier to do than it might seem.

The amount of honey you can anticipate in your first season depends on several factors: how large is your colony (a healthy colony can have an average of 30,000 bees in it)? What is their access to pollen and nectar-bearing plants and to a water source (remember – this is within a 1-3 mile radius)? What has the weather been like during the nectar flow (mid-Spring through early Summer)? – extreme heat and drought will reduce honey production. Bees in our region need approximately 40+ pounds of honey (approximately the amount in a single box, or "super") to make it through our relatively mild winter months. Anything over that is surplus and can be harvested, or "robbed", for home use. It is not unheard of to get 20-30 pounds of honey surplus from a healthy first-year hive.

There are many excellent resources available to help you understand the techniques necessary to be successful at keeping honeybees. I would strongly recommend that your first step be to contact your local beekeeping association – ours is the Shelby County Beekeepers Association and has both a website and a Facebook page for your convenience. There are a number of other organizations in Alabama that bring together novice to master-level beekeepers: Auburn University hosts an annual Symposium in February of each year, the Alabama Beekeepers Association state meeting is held in October, and a course leading to certification as a Master Beekeeper is held in September of each year (20% of the first graduating class of Alabama Master Beekeepers are members of our Shelby County association!); other gatherings, such as the annual ABA picnic and regional Symposiums are also available. Our local Association offers introductory classes that can take a beginner through the step-by-step process of raising bees - from ordering bees and equipment, locating your hives in your backyard, to harvesting surplus honey: you would do well in taking such a class. Our Association also assigns mentors who will be available to you throughout your first season of beekeeping.

Beekeeping is a worthwhile endeavor on so many different levels - it is a skill, an opportunity to practice environmental stewardship, an interesting hobby and a personal decision that literally affects the quality of life for ourselves and the world we live in. If you love gardens – and you must, since you are Master Gardeners – then beekeeping is a natural and easily accomplished extension of that passion. Why not get a hive or two and give it a try?



First "Don't Bug Me" Webinar Slated for Early February

The inaugural *Don't Bug Me* webinar will provide answers on what works and what doesn't work to control fire ants. Dani Carroll, a regional home grounds agent with the Alabama Cooperative Extension System will host the free webinar on Friday, Feb. 1 at 1:00 pm Central time.

"Do a web search, and you will find lots of sites with home remedies for fire ant control," says Carroll. "They are all over the internet. This webinar will help ordinary people learn what works and what doesn't."

Carroll says that the webinar's expert is Wizzie Brown, a Texas A&M AgriLife Extension specialist working in integrated pest management who will debunk some myths about dealing with fire ants.

Brown says she will begin by explaining basic fire ant biology.

"I plan to talk about "organic" and how it means different things to different people," she says. "Then I will discuss what treatments work and those that do not work. People will learn about less toxic but effective techniques for fire ant management for home landscapes."

Carroll explains that this webinar and all of the *Don't Bug Me* Series webinars are specifically for average people who need answers they can use.

"This first webinar and the rest of the series will give people sound, research-based solutions for pests from some of the top experts in the nation," she says.

More information can be found at the [Fire Ant Home Remedies event page](#) including how to connect to the webinar. On February 1, participants can use [this link](#) to connect to the webinar.

The webinars are sponsored by [eXtension](#) and the [Alabama Cooperative Extension System](#). They are coordinated by the [Imported Fire Ant eXtension Community of Practice](#).

As upcoming webinars approach, watch eXtension's [Don't be Bugged Webinar Series page](#) for more information on that particular webinar.

Upcoming Webinars in the First Friday of the Month Spring Series:

March 1: [Ants! Ants! Ants!](#) Tawny crazy ants and Argentine ants don't sting, but their large colonies are definitely annoying. Learn how these ants live and how to control them. Hosted by ACES Regional Extension Agent Bethany O'Rear.

April 5: [You Have Fire Ants Where?](#) Targeted fire ant management in sensitive and challenging areas including vegetable gardens, fish ponds, compost piles and electrical boxes. Hosted by ACES Regional Extension Agent Willie Datcher.

May 3: [Protect Your Loved Ones From Fire Ants](#) Learn safe, effective, research-based methods to protect your family and pets from fire ants. Hosted by ACES Regional Extension Agent Charles Pinkston.

June 7: [Get Rid of Those Bed Bugs](#) Learn how bed bugs live and get sound, research-based advice on how to get rid of them. Hosted by ACES Regional Extension Agent Chris Becker.

\$\$\$\$\$ Treasurer's Report as of 2-28-2013 ~ by Angie Ballew \$\$\$\$\$

BALANCE SHEET		INCOME STATEMENT		
Assets		Receipts	Feb	Year to Date
Checking Account	2,312.45	Memberships	66.00	352.00
MG Clothing	<u>447.00</u> ***	Ground Hog Day Dinner	0.00	0.00
Total Assets	2,759.45	Round-Up Dinner	0.00	0.00
Liabilities		Field Trip	0.00	0.00
Clothing Deposits	0.00	Shelby Co. Fair	0.00	0.00
State Dues Payable	<u>0.00</u>	Donations	<u>0.00</u>	<u>19.00</u>
Total Liabilities	0.00	Total receipts	66.00	371.00
Capital		Expenses		
Begin of Year	3,658.47	State dues	30.00	160.00
Net receipts YTD	<u>-899.02</u>	Ground Hog Dinner	0.00	0.00
Total Capital	2,775.51	Round-Up Dinner	0.00	0.00
Total Liabilities & Capital		Stamps, Cards		
	2,759.45	& Admin Supplies	61.61	80.02
		Honorarium & Gifts	0.00	0.00
		Decorations	0.00	0.00
		Field Trip	0.00	0.00
		AMGA Scholarship	0.00	1,000.00
		Badges & Stars	<u>30.00</u>	<u>30.00</u>
		Total Expenses	121.61	1,270.02
		Net Receipts	-55.61	-899.02

*** MG apparel on hand had not been accounted for and should be shown as an asset. Therefore, a one-time adjustment to capital was made, since it was purchased in previous years.



**Shelby County Master Gardeners' Association
Board of Directors and Committee Chairs 2012–2013**



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