

December 2009
Newsletter

The Garden Dirt

Athens Area Master Gardeners Association



The President's Perch

"It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas . . ." Well, maybe not! It certainly didn't this past weekend when I stood in a driving rain watching my granddaughters slog through the mud/quagmire on soccer fields in and around Douglasville, Georgia. It was sad to see that the area is still suffering from the floods there this past fall. Unfortunately, every inch of rain adds to the amount of time that it going to take them to fully recover.

Speaking of rain, we owe a huge thank you to B.J. Garrett and all the people who have worked to construct rain barrels over the past couple of years. Without that work we would not have the level of funding that we now have to use for our projects. As you might imagine, sales have slowed. Thyme after Thyme still has a dozen or so to sell (just in case you are looking for a Christmas present for someone who is really hard to buy for—good luck at trying to wrap it), but we are out of production mode. When demand increases, however, we have about 20 barrels in storage that can be reconfigured, and we can go back into production. We will, of course, need someone to head that up—B.J. has definitely served her sentence on that project—so keep that in mind if you are looking for a way to get more involved with AAMGA.

Special thanks also go out to Shirley Baker, Elizabeth Thurmond, and Jackie Williams for the work they are doing to revise our by-laws to make them into a more useful document. They are hoping to have something for our members to review early in 2010—yikes! That's the first time I've had to write that number, and it looks strange!

In just another week or so holiday lights will start to shine all over town, including at the State Botanical Garden. The Conservatory and the Café will be decorated for the season, and I'm hoping to see a record turnout at our holiday party in the Café on December 8 at 6 p.m. It's always a great time to get together and enjoy good food and good friends!

Till next time . . . Merry



Executive Board

April 1st, 2009 - March 31st, 2010

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Shirley Baker

Vice President

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Donna McPipkin, Secretary

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Brenda Beckham

Immediate Past President

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MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR OUR ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PARTY !

Our annual Christmas Party will be held at the State Botanical Garden this year in the newly reopened Café on December 8th. The party will start at 6:00pm with appetizers and socializing. Dinner will be served at 7:00pm.

As has been our custom for the past several years, we will have a gift exchange. Each person may bring an inexpensive garden related gift (\$10-15 limit). Everyone who brings a gift will take a number and when their number is called they may select a gift from the unclaimed gifts or take a gift from someone who has previously drawn a gift.

Each member may bring one guest. If you are going to attend, please **RSVP** to Shirley Baker at shirleybaker555@gmail.com or **706/546-0325** by **December 4th**. A food committee will handle the food and beverages. If you would like to bring a covered dish, please contact Shirley by email or phone.

2010 Winter Meetings

January 19th Meeting: Greenup Meeting for New Interns
February 16th Meeting: Tara Dillard on Creating Winter Interest
March 16th Meeting: Steve Pettis on Pest Management

Elizabeth Thurmond, Newsletter

Publisher and Listserv

AAMGAlistserv@gmail.com

COMMITTEE CHAIRS and OTHER LEADERSHIP

Anne Walker - AAMGA Plant Sale

706.342.9471 WAWalk@netzero.net

Bob Wolf - Keep ACC Beautiful

PAR Vegetable Garden (Fall & Winter)

706.613.1122 RobertWolf@charter.net

Carol Wolf - Flower Garden at PAR

706.613.1122 CarolWolf@charter.net

Elizabeth Thurmond - Membership, Publisher,
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Merry Anderson - PAR Vegetable Gardens
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Shirley Baker - Historian and Photographer

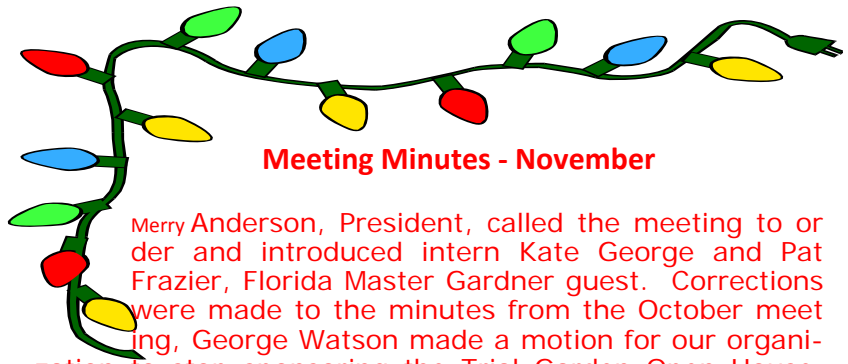
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Brenda Mathias - Project Co-Chair

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Kay Petroff - Project Co-Chair

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Meeting Minutes - November

Merry Anderson, President, called the meeting to order and introduced intern Kate George and Pat Frazier, Florida Master Gardener guest. Corrections were made to the minutes from the October meeting, George Watson made a motion for our organization to stop sponsoring the Trial Garden Open House, but not the Trial Garden. Treasury report was presented by Susan Drinkard. Cash on hand as of October 20th was \$17,451.81. Income was \$314.00 and expenses were \$423.13. Cash on hand as of November 17th, 2009 is \$17,342.68 Shirley Baker VP, announced the Christmas party will be held at the SBG Café on the second Tuesday, December 8th, 2009 at 6:00 pm. Ham & turkey will be provided, members are asked to bring a side dish. Please respond to Shirley Baker by December 4th, telephone 706-546-0325 or by email at shirleybaker555@gmail.com. If you plan to participate in the gift exchange please bring a garden related gift (\$10-15 limit), each member is welcome to bring one guest.

Project reports; Ann Walker plant sale, if you have a smaller garden and are unable to propagate, you may want to assist another member in plant propagation for the sale. Randy Elmore, Stroud Elementary School, four new beds are ready to plant, Jim Sloan & John Quackenbush assisted with the beds. Carole Holmes, Chase St School Butterfly Garden is a great success, the children were able to view caterpillars Art Garden was planted three weeks ago and the third graders are working on the Bog Garden. New Business, Travis McCutcheon on the upcoming Jr. Master Gardener program at J.J. Harris Elementary School in Danielsville Ga. The class will consist of 12 students with 12 lectures. For more information email Travis at potential2010@jjharris elementary.

Announcements; Ruth Smith reported that Brenda Beckham received honorable mention for an article submitted to a gardening magazine in the education category. Merry Anderson announced a Senior Leadership Academy program lasting 9 weeks sponsored by the Athens Area Counsel on Aging. Amanda Tedrow, 40 acceptance letters have been mailed for the upcoming MG class, mentors needed. Andrea Fisher, SBG is in need of volunteers for the Privet pull. Shirley Baker VP introduced guest speaker Stephanie Hudak owner of Creative Gardens. She presented an amazing program titled "Using Natural and Organic Material in Container Design". Refreshments were provided by Brenda Beckham, Heather Gray-Jordan and her friend Denise Matthews and Teddy Lapaquette. Please remember Janice Browning in your thoughts and prayers who is recovering from recent surgery. Cards can be sent to; 120 Winterset Place, Winterville GA 30683. The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Yates McPipkin, Secretary



Meet Your Leadership
Anne & Bill Walker

After moving to the Athens area in 1987, Anne and Bill became increasingly active in their common passion - gardening. Anne and Bill have both been members of Boxwood Garden Club in Madison, GA, one of the few "couples" garden clubs in The Garden Clubs of Georgia since 1993. The Walkers even have a small nursery on their property complete with leylands green giant, osmanthus and a greenhouse for the small, more delicate plants.



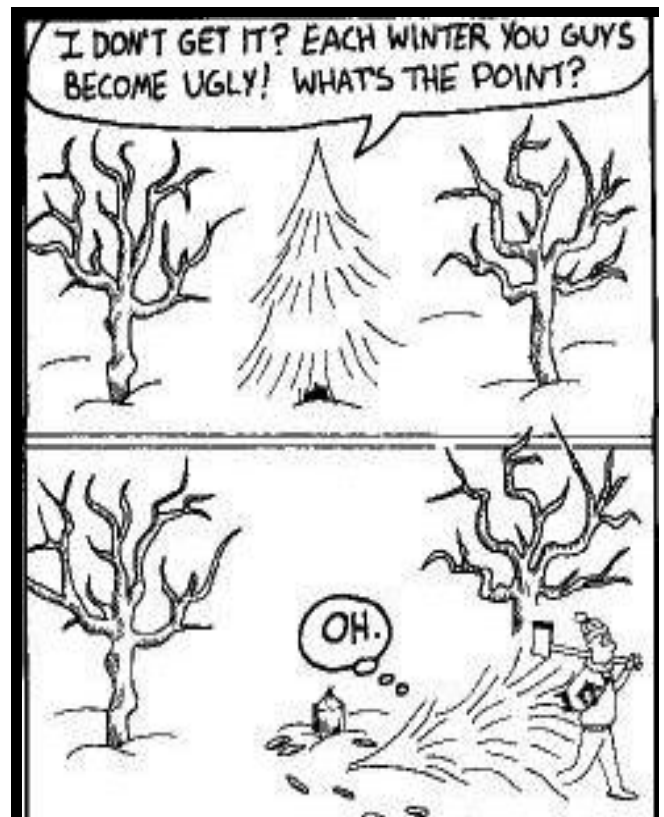
Both Anne and Bill are very active members of AAMGA. They will be chairing our spring plant sale for the second consecutive year and they are always available to volunteer on any and all projects. Individually they are great. As a team, they are the best!

Training is everything. The peach was once a bitter almond; cauliflower is nothing but cabbage with a college education. -- Mark Twain (Samuel Clemens), American author



Helleborus x hybridus Royal Heritage™

The Lenten Rose is one of the earliest perennials to bloom, and extremely easy to grow. Plants produce a bushy clump of thick, leathery evergreen leaves. Flower stalks burst from the ground in late winter. This terrific strain produces blooms in shades from white through to pink, red, maroon and near black. Site these where they will stay for many years, since the plants resent being disturbed. Trimming the old leaves to the ground in late winter will make the show of flowers more easily seen.



December Gardening Chores

Rake the last of the fall leaves from your lawn. If you leave a pile of wet, matted leaves now you'll have big dead spots next spring.

Fertilize pansies, snapdragons and ornamental kale and cabbage with a fertilizer that contains ^nitrate nitrogen^, which helps your plants grow and bloom in cold soil.

Keep holiday plants in the coolest indoor spot possible. Otherwise the flowers and leaves will drop prematurely.

Sprinkle pine straw over bulb foliage that has emerged too soon. The green leaves won't be hurt by the cold but the straw will help hide them.

Prune your evergreen shrubbery and bring the cuttings indoors. Juniper, holly and magnolia foliage is quite decorative. Use holly and nandina berries for a red accent in table centerpieces.

Poinsettias do not need fertilizing now but they do need watering. Check the dryness of the soil daily to keep them looking their brilliant best.

Prune short stubs and dead limbs from trees now that all the leaves are gone.

Ficus plants that lose leaves are reacting to insufficient light or a drafty site. Can you move yours to a better place in your house?

Poke holes in the foil wrapping on pots of holiday plants and set them in individual saucers. Otherwise accumulated water will cause root rot.

Bird feeders bring lots of colorful activity to a yard in cold weather. Most bird experts recommend black oil sunflower seed for general feeding. Thistle seed and suet cakes attracts birds you might not have seen before.

Rather than a bottle of wine, bring a houseplant as a gift to holiday parties. Amaryllis, ornamental pepper, Christmas cactus or kalanchoe will be appreciated for weeks to come. Water trees and shrubs you planted this fall. Evergreen plants in particular need regular watering, even in cold weather. Apply 1 gallon per foot of height.

Purchase pots of paperwhite narcissus, African violet or gloxinia for your office and home to bring color and a touch of perfume to the air.

Plant woody vines like Carolina jessamine, wisteria and cross vine now. Make sure to place them next to a sturdy arbor and loosely tie the young vine to it with twine.

Houseplants don't need many nutrients in the winter. Use houseplant fertilizer at half strength. Don't water them unless the soil feels dry one inch deep.

Pull mulch at least six inches away from tree trunks. Some professional landscapers pile it high and don't pull it back - setting a bad example for all of us.

Remove the faded blooms and bloom stalks from amaryllis but allow the leaves to remain. Water only when the soil feels dry.

Fireplace ashes can be scattered over your lawn. They will provide a bit of phosphorus and potassium plus counteract acidity. Spread no more than ten lb. per 1000 square feet per month.

Compiled by Elizabeth

It's Easy Being Green

Recycle Your Christmas Trees



You can recycle your Christmas tree and keep it from going to overflowing landfills. Here's how:

Make mulch

Cut off the boughs and place them on the ground like a blanket to protect plants that are susceptible to windburn, plants that are marginally hardy in your area, and plants that might come up early and be nipped by a late spring frost, such as fall-planted pansies or early emerging perennials. (Keep reading for ideas on what to do with the trunk.)

Give it to the birds

Move the tree in its stand outdoors for the winter, where it can provide food and shelter for wild birds. Even better, put the tree near a bird feeder or hang bird treats from the tree—like bags of suet (animal fat you can get at most grocery stores) or a small piece of wood or thick cardboard smeared with a mix of bird seed and peanut butter—and it will not only attract birds but feed them, too.

Give it to the fish

Sink your tree in a pond with permission, of course. In deep water, old trees become habitats for fish and aquatic insects. In shallow wetlands, trees can act as barriers to sand and soil erosion though currently only the State of Louisiana has a tree-based restoration project in place. For more information, go to savelawetlands.org.

Compost or chip it

Call your municipality's administrative office to find out if your town has a special day for picking up Christmas trees or a place where you can take them after the holidays where they will be ground into wood chips and/or composted. Often you can go to the municipal compost site in the spring and get free compost and/or wood chip mulch for your garden. Of course, you probably won't recognize the chips/compost from your tree, but you can feel good knowing that it's helping other gardeners have healthier landscapes and you have kept perfectly good organic matter from clogging a landfill.

Compiled by Elizabeth

