

**January 2009
Newsletter**

The Garden Dirt
Athens Area Master Gardeners Association



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PRESIDENT'S PERCH

Pat Brown was the efficient organizer of the food committee for our annual Christmas party. Thanks to all of you who brought the delicious food and to Pat for her hard work.

The Junior Master Gardener Class is starting on January 12, 2009. Three classes need teachers:

+Monday, January 19, from 3:30-4:30 Carnivorous Plants

+Monday, January 26, from 3:30-4:30 Soil Samples,
Composting, Recycling

+Monday, March 16, Plant Needs

PLEASE remember to get the background check application from Amanda, atedrow@uga.edu. You must have it to participate!

A little information. My daughter-in-law volunteers a lot at her church. She had to get a background check. It is not UGA alone. I feel it is the times in which we live. We must keep our children as safe as possible.

Dates to remember: February 7, 2009, GMGA Winter Conference in Albany. These Master Gardeners have a great line up of speakers and good food for us. Please try to attend.
www.georgiamastergardeners.com

If you would like to serve on the AAMGA nominating committee, please let me know. We need the nominees by the March meeting.

Thanks to all who helped make 2008 a good year for Athens Area Master Gardener Association.

Brenda Beckham

REMINDER: WHEN YOU REPLY TO EMAILS & ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM OTHER MEMBERS, PLEASE REPLY TO THEIR PERSONAL EMAIL ADDRESSES - NOT TO AAMGALISTSERV@GMAIL.COM.

JANUARY MEETING

Andrew Saunders, the AAC Community Forestry Coordinator, will speak to us about his role and the care of trees. He will also tell us about the trees recommended for this area. The January 20th meeting will begin at 6:00 PM at the Callaway building at the State Botanical Garden.

FEBRUARY MEETING

Robert Tate from the UGA Organic Farm will be our speaker at our February 17th meeting.

Successful Stroud Elementary Work Day: A Progress Report

Following consultations by Frank Henning and Amanda Tedrow on the drainage problem in the Howard Stroud Elementary Courtyard Garden, Randy Elmore borrowed a transit from Bill Ross at Evergreen Nursery and identified low areas. John Quackenbush used his tractor to remove a hump and a pile of soil and dug a swale at the entrance to allow water to flow out of the garden. AAMG participants, including Randy, Rick Hafenbrack, Carole Holmes, Harold Neal, and Bob and Carole Wolf, along with Stroud's Garden leader, Dera Weaver, gathered for a work day on the morning of December 6th. Yarrow, purple coneflowers, and other plants were dug up and more than four yards of dirt, donated by AAMG, were hauled into the garden and raked smooth, sloping the surface toward storm drains outside the garden. A new sourwood tree was planted and purple coneflower, yarrow, and butterfly bushes replanted. Some of the garden's stepping stones, landscape fabric, sand, and plastic border were removed and reinstalled. All the work was supervised by Randy's retriever, Belle. Workers enjoyed coffee and donuts furnished by Dera and much was accomplished. Randy and Dera monitored the garden during the following week's heavy rain and good news - the water appeared to flow out of the garden. There is still a small, low area we think can be improved with fill dirt and French drain. A butterfly bush donated by Janice Browning needs to be planted. That work along with installation of raised, seed beds are scheduled for 2009. Many thanks to all who have assisted with the project.
(Photos on Last Page of Newsletter)

Randy Elmore

SHARED SUCCESSES

WILMA'S BALE GARDENING

Here are some pictures of an experiment I tried this summer. I used bales of wheat straw to grow cherry tomatoes and sweet potato vine and herbs. The bales are watered for 10 days to begin the internal rotting process. Then top soil is added on top of the bale. Then plants are planted with soil from their pots. I used slow release fertilizer in the plant hole and a general one (Miracle Gro prepared packets) monthly. Each bale can sustain two tomatoes, pepper, cucumber, zucchini, etc. I found that the sweet potato vine, variegated basil and thyme worked OK in the other bale. The marigolds and euphorbia are planted in the ground in front of the herb bale.

Wilma Harrington



SHARE YOUR SUCCESSES

A big thanks to Wilma for sharing her ideas on 'bale gardening'. Now let's hear from some more of you. If you have some pictures from your garden this summer or an area of your garden that looks great right now, just email the pictures & descriptions to Elizabeth at AAMGAlistserve@gmail.com or let me know and I'll take a picture for you.

That's the beauty of the Master Gardener program; it's a continuous learning and sharing experience.

Shirley Baker shirleybaker555@gmail.com

Hardy Ice Plant
Delosperma cooperi

This exotic-looking evergreen succulent plant is actually hardy to at least zone 5 or 6, even though it is native to the much warmer climate of South Africa.

It forms a mat of leaves that become blanketed with vivid purple or pink, daisy-like blooms in the summer. *Delosperma* is a good plant for the gritty soil and Mediterranean conditions of traditional rock gardens, or as a groundcover for a dry slope with full sun exposure. Too much moisture will result in root rot, so be sure the soil dries out completely between watering.



English botanist & explorer Thomas Cooper, collected plants in the Zulu territory and eastern South Africa in the mid 19th century. This species is named for him, as are several other plants he gathered in his travels.

*Today's mighty oak is just
yesterday's nut that held its ground.*

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

- ***Anne Walker - AAMGA Plant Sale**
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- ***Bob Wolf - Keep ACC Beautiful**
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- ***Carol Wolf - Flower Garden at PAR**
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- ***Merry Anderson - PAR Spring/Summer Garden**
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- ***Pam Snyder - PAR Winter Garden & Membership**
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- ***Shirley Baker - Historian and Photographer**
706.546.0325 ShirleyBaker555@gmail.com



JANUARY GARDEN CHORES

- Prepare beds for bare-root roses that will soon arrive in nurseries. Dig an area four feet wide and twelve inches deep for each plant, adding plenty of soil conditioner to the soil.
- Water poinsettias only as needed - when the top inch of the soil becomes dry to the touch. Keep them in bright light but cool temperatures. Do not fertilize until March.
- Now is a great time to drain and replace the oil in your mower and to have the blade sharpened or to replace it completely.
- It is easy to see the limb structure of trees now. Tie ribbon around the ones you think should be removed then step back for another look before cutting them off.
- On a sunny day fertilize pansies and ornamental cabbage with a product that contains "nitrate nitrogen". This nutrient is best for plants growing in cold soil.
- Small, leafless shrubs and trees can be transplanted easily now. Wait for a warm day when the ground is not frozen.
- Chop unwanted kudzu, English ivy and bamboo to the ground. Follow with weed killer on the leaves in April.
- Water pansies and ornamental kale after a hard freeze so they can re-hydrate their wilted leaves. Remember to regularly water window boxes and other outside plant containers.
- Give houseplants a half turn every month so they don't lean too much in one direction.
- Check indoor plants for insects like spider mites, scale, and mealy bugs. Remember to spray insecticidal soap or indoor houseplant insecticide on the *undersides* of leaves to get good pest control.
- Amaryllis flower stems and their faded blooms can be removed now. Treat it like a houseplant for the rest of the winter then plant outdoors in a sunny bed in May.
- Use calcium chloride or potassium chloride instead of salt on icy sidewalks. Too much rock salt (sodium chloride) can burn nearby plant roots.
- If temperatures drop below 20 degrees after a week-long warm spell, cover gardenias and camellias nightly with black plastic anchored to the ground on all sides.
- Call or email for your yearly supply of garden plant and seed catalogs. Buy an issue of a gardening magazine for phone numbers or websites
- Plant pansies and English daisies in a sunny bed when the weather is mild. Use plants in three inch or larger pots to make an immediate impact in your landscape.
- Look out for poison ivy when working outdoors. Even the leafless vine and branches can cause a powerful skin reaction if touched.
- Watch for brown edges on houseplant foliage. Mist the leaves twice each day and move them from drafty areas.
- Check on the tender bulbs (canna, caladium, dahlia) you stored indoors for the winter. If they are beginning to shrink, mist each one with warm water.

Compiled by Elizabeth

It's Easy Being Green

Mulch Your Way to Great Soil and Happy Plants

We've looked at what kind of soil we're working with, how to improve and feed the soil, transplanting young seedlings and watering.

The next thing to consider is how to keep the water in the soil, right where the plants need it.

The best way to prevent moisture loss is to mulch. There are so many materials that we can use as mulch, because essentially any material placed over the soil can be called a mulch.

But because we are gardening organically, it's important to make sure that the mulching material we choose is organic and if possible that it has been produced organically.

Use a combination of a layer of compost on the soil, covered with a layer of pea straw.

Some of the benefits of using an organic mulch such as pea straw are:

- ✦ that it slows down evaporation from the soil
- ✦ need to water less often
- ✦ it prevents soil erosion
- ✦ as it breaks down, it feeds the soil
- ✦ it helps prevent weeds
- ✦ keeps your plants cleaner

So you can see it really is worth the effort of mulching. Without much effort. It kind of tidies up the vegetable garden as it's laid down.

Compiled by Elizabeth



Please think before you print.

AAMGA ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL
(Athens Area Master Gardener Association)
APRIL 1, 2009 - MARCH 31, 2010

Mark in the box on the left if your name, address, phone number or email has changed since your last renewal, or if you have found a typo in your info. Also mark in the box by the corrected information.

AAMGA (\$10): _____

or

Friend of AAMGA (\$15): _____

Address _____

City: _____ GA Zip: _____ - _____

Telephone Numbers:

Home: _____ Work: _____ Mobile: _____

Email: _____

(Be sure to put AAMGAlistserv@gmail.com in your safe list in your email program.)

Please make your check payable to AAMGA and mail it with this completed form to:

SUSAN DRINKARD, Treasurer
1081 GODFREY PLACE
ATHENS, GA 30605

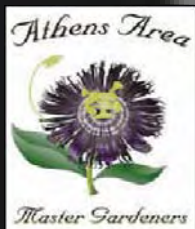
SHROUD ELEMENTARY WORK DAY

Standing between crepe myrtle and new gravel pile: from left to right: Rick Hafenbrack (green hat), Bob Wolf (black hat), Harold Neal (blue and white hat), Randy Elmore (braves cap), and Little Belle (golden lab retriever extraordinaire!!)



SHROUD ELEMENTARY WORK DAY

Two ladies sitting by new planting - a sourwood tree, I think. On left is Carole Wolf and on right is Dr. Dera Weaver, Stroud Elementary Media Specialist and Courtyard Garden Leader.



AAMGA: www.ugaextension.com/clarke/anr/aamga.html
GMG: www.georgiamastergardeners.com

