

Diggin' Dirt

Lowcountry Master Gardener Association



Spring 2014

President's Corner

Laura Lee, Recording Secretary Debbie Miller and I attended the SC Master Gardener Jamboree in Columbia on May 2. It was a great day with informative sessions on a variety of subjects topped off by a wacky hat contest, which one of our gentlemen MG's won by a landslide. Numerous vendors tempted us with their flowers and related wares -- Debbie and I did a good job of filling up her truck for the ride home!

We had the opportunity to have lunch with Clemson's "new" (ten months in the job) MG Coordinator, Dr. James Blake, and Presidents of other Associations, each of whom gave a presentation on their Association's activities. It was fascinating to hear what other Associations (one with only ten members) are doing to share their gar-

dening knowledge with their neighbors and beautify their communities. With 200+ members, we are one of the largest associations in the state, and I believe the attendees were impressed with the number and diversity of LMGA projects. Kudos to all who organize or participate in these!

For his part, Dr. Blake shared with us initiatives he has undertaken, including:

- A new SC Master Gardener website (<http://www.clemson.edu/extension/mg/>) that contains information on all the Associations, a state-wide calendar of events and useful reference material;
- An SC MG Facebook page and Blog;
- A new SC MG logo

(palmetto and crescent moon, which you can see on the website);

- A redesigned MG certificate for graduates, as well as a redesigned badge and lapel pin (these will be available to all MGs);
- Direct e-mail communications from Dr. Blake to MGs;
- Changes to Clemson's website for easier reporting of volunteer hours (to be in place next year);
- A State MG Advisory Board which has under consideration establishment of a state-wide MG Association.

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Margot Rochester

I am sad that the late Margot Rochester lived only long enough to publish two books- "**Earthly Delights**" (2004) and "**Down to Earth**" (2009). Reading her books is like having

advice is based on her own personal experience in gardening in the South Carolina midlands and on the Carolina coast. She never apologizes for being frugal,-- having the latest and

of useful, practical information, delivered with a good helping of common sense.

The chapters are short and always upbeat. These are not books you need to read from cover to cover at one sitting. Each chapter is just enough to read over your morning coffee, or a quick read before you go to sleep. These are books you will read over and over again. I do.

An Educated Fireant

"When the garden becomes laborious instead of a labor of love...the gardener must change herself or the garden or both."

- Margot Rochester



a next door neighbor to talk across the fence with; one who dispenses gardening information with verve and humor. If you are a lazy gardener with a limited budget, these are the books for you.

I am ever grateful to Margot's friend and fellow Master Gardener, Alice Massey, for introducing me to her books.

Margot never tries to impress with Latin names or her knowledge of horticulture. An avid Master Gardener, her

best seems unimportant to her. What is important is making the very best of what she has... without a lot of fuss and bother.

In these books you'll find out how to have a weed free garden without ever weeding, how to make sandy soil into rich humus, how to avoid those costly landscape mistakes, and much more.

Her books are a compilation of gardening columns she wrote for a Columbia area newspaper. They're chock full

A Nominating Committee has been formed for officers for 2015/16 (to be elected at the September annual meeting). Anyone interested in being considered for a Board position should contact:

Janet Rivers,
rivs67@gmail.com

Kathy Rundquist,
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Laura Lee Rose,
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Nominating

President's Corner (continued)

Dr. Blake stressed the importance of MGs reporting their volunteer hours. This information enables him to demonstrate to Clemson's leadership and our State legislators the valuable contributions the MG program and the hundreds of MG volunteers make throughout the state. So please take a moment to enter your volunteer hours on the Clemson website.

Detailed instructions on how to do so are on the Members page of our website. LMGA's Debbie Miller (millerthymegirl@gmail.com) is happy to assist you if you have questions or problems. When the new, improved website is up and running, the process should be easier and quicker.

Finally, this year marks the 100th anniversary of

the Smith-Lever Act which formalized the Cooperative Extension Service throughout the country. The SC MG website has a link to an interesting article that discusses Clemson's role



Ooooh, What is that?

Gardeners are the worst (or maybe the best?) impulse buyers on earth. Sure, buying a \$20 plant isn't like buying that cute Mercedes Convertible calling out to you, but, hey, it adds up.

No one can call him/herself a true gardener unless there is at least one unplanted pot on the premises. I am truly dedicated. I have lots.

One of the new plants I ooo'ed and aah'ed over this year was Digiplexis. It is a hybrid of Digitalis and Isoplexis. So what's all the fuss about? Either of Digiplexis' parents is quite beautiful in its own right. Well, for one thing, it blooms all summer long,--not just a few weeks like Foxgloves. And another, it's hardier than Isoplexis (from which it gets its neon color).

So of course, I bought some.



Mama



Papa



The babies (mine, adopted)

All the returns aren't in yet. They suffer from mid-day droop, like so many big leafed plants in sun. And I haven't figured out how to propagate them. The seeds are sterile and the leaves don't look like good candidates for cuttings. After they have stopped blooming, I'll excavate a bit and take some root cuttings. Stay tuned.

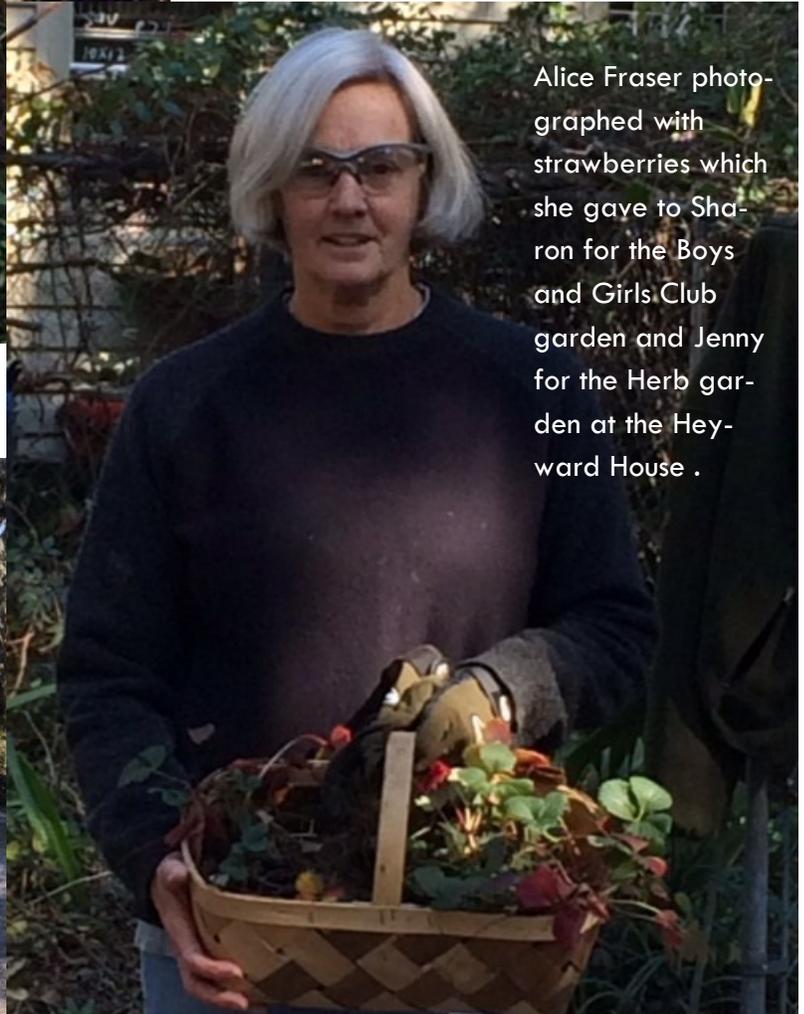
Teel House, Bluffton

On Feb. 6th, five master gardeners worked at the Teel House in Bluffton. It is one of the two houses owned by the Bluffton Historical Preservation Society. We work the first Thursday of each month.

The bottom left photo shows a portion of the debris that was collected, mostly dead azalea branches, vines and small trees in the wrong places



L to R Irene Randall, Jenny Kingery, Barb Kelly and Sharon Butler



Alice Fraser photographed with strawberries which she gave to Sharon for the Boys and Girls Club garden and Jenny for the Herb garden at the Heyward House .





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The Beautiful Reason You Should Plant Milkweed

By TOM ODER
Mother Nature Network

Want to do your part to help reverse the dramatic decline in monarch butterflies? Now's your chance: Plant milkweed.

Monarchs are dependent on milkweed, especially milkweeds in the genus *Asclepias*. Milkweed is the only plant on which monarchs will lay their eggs and on which monarch caterpillars will feed. The spring migration begins in mid-March and extends from the monarch's winter home in central Mexico as far as 2,500 miles north to breeding grounds in the eastern United States and Canada. The butterflies, which cannot survive freezing temperatures, return to the high-elevation Mexican forests in the fall.

Choosing which *Asclepias* to grow depends on whether you live east or west of the Rocky Mountains. Good choices for *Asclepias* east of the Rockies include common milkweed (*A. syriaca*), swamp milkweed (*A. incarnata*), and butterfly weed (*A. tuberosa*). Green antelope horn (*Asclepias viridis*) is recommended for the South Central region.

"Adult Monarchs are generalized flower visitors and will feed on a variety of nectar-producing plants," Taylor said. East of the Rockies these include such nectar-producing plants as Indian blanket (*Gaillardia pulchella*), purple coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*), Joe Pye weed (*Eupatorium purpureum*), scarlet sage (*Salvia coccinea*), Tithonia Torch, Mexican sunflower (*Tithonia*), and a zinnia-dahlia mix (*Zinnia elegans*).

For more detailed information about how to grow milkweed or to learn more about the plight of monarchs, visit MonarchWatch.org.

Read more here: <http://www.sacbee.com/2014/05/27/6436145/the-beautiful-reason-you-should.html#storylink=cpy>