

The Leaflet



January 2015

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Santa's Got the Dirt Christmas Memories

By Tim Best

'Twas the night before Christmas, in my bed I did dream of all the new garden tools, Santa would bring. A pick axe, a shovel, a shiny new maul. No worries, Santa, I'll use them all. A galvanized bucket to water the trees, or a brand new smoker to work with the bees. Perhaps some pruning shears, the last pair I lost. It's Christmas time, Santa, so let's forget cost.



When all of a sudden on my roof was a thump. With no socks on my feet, I made a yelp and a jump; to my window to open I made a fast strut only to discover I'd painted it shut. So grabbing my robe I flew down the stairs hoping to see him doling out my fair share. I felt a bit guilty like some selfish little fool, but after all, I'm Master Gardener, I gotta have tools!



Then I remembered his rule about staying up late, Back to bed I crept quickly: I wouldn't tempt fate. I fell asleep in minutes my dreams fully fed, with visions of new power tools whirling in my head. Soon it was morning and down the staircase I did spring. Ready and eager to see what the jolly old elf would bring.

Despite frantic searching; no presents, all my hopes were in vain, My tree was totally empty. Can someone explain?



Then I remembered my stocking hanging with care. To the fireplace I ran to see what it was there. A big lump of coal is all that I found. In my heart and my face, I wore a big frown. But inside was tucked a note from Santa himself. Could he explain why my gifts were left on the shelf? What I read next I could not believe. But listen with care and you will perceive



"HO, HO, HO this is Santa, the jolly old elf. Don't be mad at me, Tim, be mad at yourself. That big lump of coal won't last forever, just think of last year and try to remember. Santa Claus's a Master Gardener too and aware of the rules: to succeed and to prosper we got to pay dues. Yes, Santa's watching and knowing and from him take your cue, In 2015 pay your membership dues!



**Good Gardening.
December 24, 2014**



Winter School Scheduled For February

Winter School combines leadership and education tracks in a two day program to provide organization support and information to sustain the mission of the Master Gardener program. Technical sessions include Plant Scouting and Basic Diagnostic; Plant Fertilization Strategies; Hands on Grafting of Apples and Tomatoes; and "Are Hydrangeas Wimps for Diseases and Insects?" Network areas include Social Media, Improving Meeting Attendance, Improving Membership Recruitment and Retention. Associations who are winners of Search For Excellence Award describe their winning projects. Winter School is an excellent opportunity for meeting and exchanging ideas with Tennessee Master Gardener members and state leaders. You can view a complete agenda at mastergardener.tennessee.edu.

NEXT MEETING January 22

Program:
Organic Gardening
by
Catey Henning

MEETING INFORMATION

The Robertson County Master Gardener Association meets on the fourth Thursday of every month.

Meetings are at 6:30 pm at the UT Extension Office, 408 North Main Street, Springfield, TN

Antiques and Garden Show Offers Garden Ideas Early

The 2015 Antiques and Garden Show of Nashville January 30th–February 1st benefits the botanical gardens and mansion at Cheekwood. Celebrating the 25th anniversary, the show includes exhibitors, experts, and gardens for pre-season inspiration and ideas. Of special interest to traveling

gardeners is the presentation at 1pm January 30th: “A Southern Garden Tour”. Presented by the Garden and Gun magazine, the presentation is a retrospective tour of the diverse gardens photographed for the magazine over the past seven years, from a Hill County oasis in Texas to the

revival of a Charles Gillette gem in the Virginia countryside. The Show is an opportunity to visit the new Music City Center. Further details including times, cost, agenda are at antiquesandgardenshow.com

Backyard Pests/Backyard Pals

By Ursula Otto

Insects and mites are among the oldest, most numerous and most successful creatures on earth. An estimated 100,000 or more different species live in North America. In a typical backyard, there are probably 1,000 insects at any given time. While insects that cause problems for humans are heard about most often, the vast majority are either beneficial or harmless.

So how are insect beneficial you ask? Insects pollinate most fruits and vegetables. They provide food for birds, fish and animals. Some produce useful products as honey, wax, shellac, and silk. They also feed on other insects. Parasitic insects destroy harmful insects; predatory insects’ food sources include or may consist solely of harmful insects. There is no doubt that the greatest single factor in keeping plant feeding insects from overwhelming the rest of the world is that they are fed upon by other insects. Insects destroy various weeds in the same ways that they injure crop plants. Insects improve the physical condition of the soil and promote its fertility. Only 3% of all insects are classified as pests.



"Let us prey! Praying Mantis at work"

To be continued: We will address control of Backyard Pests in February Leaflet.

Seed Starting Workshop at Metro Nashville Library

Saturday, February 14, 2015
10:30 AM - 12:00 PM
Green Hills Library

University of Tennessee Davidson County Extension Agent David Cook presents a seed starting program for all gardeners. David will demonstrate the various seed starting methods, mixes, and lighting systems. He will also talk about starting and growing tomatoes and peppers indoors so they will



be ready to transplant in May. This program is brought to you by the Nashville Public Library Seed Exchange. Borrow seeds, grow plants, return seeds. Contact: Green Hills (615) 862–5863 or visit <http://events.library.nashville.org/cal/event/>.

Coming Next Month in *The Leaflet*:

My Favorite Sites and Sources

Let’s share our favorite web sites, books, magazines, catalogs for gardening information or events. Send YOUR favorites to lcsgrts@hughes.net by February 19th, *The Leaflet* deadline. Please include a brief description of why you use that source, i.e. local events, great plants, nifty photos, etc.

Prepare for 'No Vacancy' Season at the Purple Martin House By Chris Bowman, Home, Lawn, Specialty product specialist

Printed with permission of Co-op Magazine;
Submitted by Dorothy Briggs

It's nesting season for purple martins, North American swallows that rely on bird enthusiasts for their homes. Soon, many bird enthusiasts in our area will be scurrying out to the backyard to clean out purple martin houses. More than a million people in the U.S. and Canada are purple martin "landlords" who put up nest boxes or gourds for the birds on their property. These handsome swallows have adapted well to living close to humans and will be scanning for nesting homes in the upcoming weeks, so it's important to make the real estate look as attractive as possible for them.

Purple martins are the only bird species in the eastern half of North America entirely dependent upon human-supplied nesting. It can be a challenge to establish a colony, so be patient. And educate yourself as much as possible to learn more about these fascinating flyers. Creating a bird-friendly habitat for purple martins can make attracting them much easier.

Because purple martins eat thousands of insects each day, they do not

require bird feeders and can nest in compact colonies, birders only have to take a few steps to make a suitable backyard habitat:

Avoid spraying insecticides or pesticides on lawns, trees or shrubs, since doing so will eliminate the single food source these birds require. Instead, by attracting purple martins you can take advantage of their natural insect control and voracious appetites.

On rare occasions, purple martins will eat fine gravel to use as grit to aid their digestion. Having a secluded source of this gravel nearby can help attract the birds. Furthermore, they will also eat crushed eggshells as a calcium supplement during the nesting season, and providing the eggshells (dried and briefly toasted to be sterile and brittle) can encourage nesting purple martins to linger nearby.

Location of the nest box is very important. The house should be at least 50 feet from trees and between 12 and 20 feet off the ground. Be sure to remove vines and shrubs from the area directly underneath the nest box



and keep sparrows and starlings from nesting in martin houses. Sparrows destroy martin eggs, and starlings will kill the young.

It's also critical to protect martins from predators such as squirrels, snakes, cats, and raccoons. Keep some type of predator guard on the ground or on the pole leading up to the martin house and remove any vines, shrubs, or bushes around the base of the pole. Unoccupied martin houses that are unkempt at ground level will rarely, if ever, attract these birds.

If you have the proper habitat to attract purple martins and are willing to commit to being a faithful manager, you'll certainly be rewarded by the winged wonders that take up residency and return year after year. These won't just be birds to you; they'll be like *extended family*

The Leaflet 2nd Annual Contest Announced

Leaflet Staff proudly announces our 2015 RCMGA contest. Submit your favorite garden picture, be it flora or fauna, for publication in the Leaflet. You may send photos digitally to Leaflet Staff (see Contacts list) or bring your photos to a Robertson County Master Gardener Meeting. All photos should be accompanied with a brief description; accompanying gardening-related hints will receive extra credit. Entries will be accepted until December 1, 2015, published in the Leaflet each month, and judged by our impartial committee of Leaflet Staffers and others. Photographs must be work of RCMGA members, must be garden or wildlife related; a Robertson County venue or RCMGA event is preferred, though not required. Prizes will be awarded to winners and runners-up at our December Christmas party. Sample entry at right submitted by Lynn Stenglein.



Winter is not so gloomy when the Bluebirds, Cedar Wax Wings, Finches, Cardinals visit. An available, unfrozen water source is all it takes!

Profiles in Gardening:

Nicole Adams



I became a Master Gardener in 2014. During my intern year I helped Dorothy Briggs with the Traughber-Mefford Cemetery; worked in the Grassmere historic gardens at the Nashville Zoo; taught a gardening class, and planted flower beds with the Philanthropy Students at East Robertson Middle School. I also attended one day of Winter School in Murfreesboro.

Having always been interested in working with plants (and especially flowers), I joined the Master Gardeners to learn more about plants. I have had vegetable gardens the last three summers; however, my biggest interest is flowers. I am also interested in conservation; so I feel my path will include learning more about plants that are native to this area. I am interested in natural medicine, including herbs and essential oils, which come directly from plants and flowers.

My favorite plants include boxwood and phlox. I purchased an English Boxwood from the Hermitage last fall. I like the “down to earth” quality of Master Gardeners; I truly think that those who are in touch with the nuances and secrets of nature are more attuned to the needs of those around them. They have a gift for noticing nuances and needs in those around them.

I grew up in Bartlett, TN, a suburb of Memphis, and ended up in Robertson County as a teacher. My grandfather, who lived in Henderson, TN, always had a large vegetable garden; we ate from that garden for my whole childhood. I think that looking at pictures in magazines and taking vacations to historical and educational with gardens drew me to becoming a gardener.

Along with gardening I enjoy playing the piano, my cats, teaching, blogging and being highly introverted. I have a Master’s Degree in Literature. I teach at Clarksville Christian school, but my “dream” is to be a stay-at-home wife and mother, working as a homesteader.

RCMGA STATS for 2014

Master gardeners certified: 21

Total volunteer hours : 1327.5

- Administrative -425
- Community - 861
- Teaching - 41.5

Continuing Education Hours: 230.5

Upcoming Garden Events

Jan 22	RCMGA Meeting	UT Ext. Office Springfield, TN
Jan 30 - Feb 1	Antique & Garden Show	Nashville University School
Feb 5 6 -7:30pm	Winter Blooming Flowers	Nashville University School
Feb 14	Seed Starting Workshop	Green Hills Library
Feb 24 6- 7:30pm	Grow, Eat Love: Gardening and Home Food Production	Nashville University School
Mar 5-8	Nashville Lawn & Garden	Nashville, Fairgrounds
Mar 12	Arbor Day Celebration	Centennial Park, Nashville
Mar 14	Soil and Composting	Inglewood Library

THINK! Have a garden topic that you really would like to learn about this year? Know an interesting speaker? Where do you want to go on our Master Gardener field trips this year? Lynn Stenglein, RCMGA vice president and program chairperson, asks that you bring your suggestions to our January meeting. You can also email suggestions to Lynn at lcsgts@hughes.net.

CONTACT LIST

President: Doug Buck
(615) 766-2402
historybug52@yahoo.com

Vice President: Lynn Stenglein
(615) 859-9659
lcsgts@hughes.net

Secretary: Wanda Cohea
(615) 384-5071
wccohea@gmail.com

Treasurer: Janice Derby
(615) 696-0392
janicedrby@bellsouth.net

Robertson Co. Ext. Agent: Paul Hart
(615) 384-7936
pehart@utk.edu

The Leaflet: Lynn Stenglein, Editor
(615) 859-9659
lcsgts@hughes.net

The Leaflet: Trina Fulton, Production
(615) 382-6822
trinaf@charter.net