



Master Gardener Thymes

www.lakelandsmastergardener.org

March 2008

ALL MEETINGS ARE HELD ON THE SECOND THURSDAY OF EACH MONTH, unless otherwise noted. PLEASE MARK YOUR CALENDARS!!!!!!

Dues may be paid to:

Louise Powell
107 Crestview Drive
Greenwood, SC 29649

Mall Report

Submitted by Betty Reece

Eleven volunteers at the Mall Office worked 125 hours in January. Lots of soil samples were processed and questions about lawns and weed prevention.

Hours and Miles

Submitted by Linda Halsey

"The mission of the Clemson Extension Master Gardener Program is to select, train, and utilize knowledgeable volunteers to facilitate the educational work of the local Consumer Horticulture Agent, by delivering researched-based information to citizens of the state."

You may have, as have I, experienced the delight on the faces of new acquaintances once they realize that the person they are speaking to is actually an authentic Master Gardener. Questions ensue and we take great pleasure in answering from our store of gardening knowledge, otherwise research begins to be able to give a useful answer. When we utilize the knowledge that has been taught and demonstrated to us, we are fulfilling the mission set before us.

Hours and miles are accumulated in many different ways. Often we do not think they count, but they do. To continue the support of our agents and the Lakeland's Master Gardeners let us turn in our hours that truly reflect what we are giving back to our communities, whether earned through community projects, researching, writing articles, or helping a neighbor, etc....



Join us at the
Greenwood Farmer's Market
April 11th - 13th

PLANT & FLOWER FESTIVAL

FRIDAY 1:00PM - 6:00PM
SATURDAY 8:00AM - 6:00PM
SUNDAY 1:00PM - 4:00PM
FLOWERS, VEGETABLE PLANTS &
GARDEN CRAFTS
MASTER GARDENER Plant Clinic
SATURDAY 9:00AM - 1:00PM



This quarter's hours need to be turned in by March 6, 2008 because I will be in Columbia for a debate tournament with my daughters, Grace and Laura, in the mid part of March. James's report is due at the end of

March. In order for me to report the hours/miles in a timely manner, please send the hours/miles by March 6. All hours/miles totaled at the end of March will be added to the next quarter.

Linda Halsey
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PLANT SALE AND DRAWING

The Fundraiser Committee is busy getting ready for our **Annual Plant Sale** coming up April 11 - 13. REMEMBER TO POT UP SOME PLANTS TO DONATE TO THIS EVENT!! **Joe Upchurch** (992-2873 or joeupch@nctv.com) and **Jim Ridgeway** (388-9200 or jimsanway@embarqmail.com) will be glad to hear from you as to what plants you can bring. Shade plants such as hosta and heleboris are good items; perennials, bulbs, iris, annuals, shrubs and trees are all good sellers as well. If you have handmade yard art you'd like to donate that would be great, too. Joe Upchurch is getting some more birdhouses for us to paint to sell again this year. If anyone knows how to macramé, Ann Mendelson (229-6528, AnnMendelson@Hotmail.com) has a book with some simple patterns for pot hangers that she'd be glad to share.

In addition to our Plant Sale, the Fundraiser Committee will have a **DRAWING** for two prizes. We are VERY excited about these prizes!! Two of our own Master Gardeners are donating their time and talent!! Chris Mofitt has made a Heart in the Garden **quilt**. This will be our First Prize item. Kathleen Kapsalis has also volunteered her talent and will provide a **watercolor painting** with a garden theme for our second prize!! We are having 500 tickets printed and will sell them for \$3 for one ticket and \$5 for two. These tickets will be available at the Regular Monthly Meetings as well as from **Paul Drew** (223-3945 or 229-7495, or pdrew@sshhouse.com) OR **Gail Gregory** (543-3061 or gailgregory217@yahoo.com). Make sure you sign out for a packet of tickets to buy and sell. The drawing will be Saturday, June 21st at the Festival of Flowers. Until then the quilt and the painting will be on display at the Mall Office where tickets will also be available for purchase. Let's show Chris and Kathleen our appreciation by selling all 500!!

Community Projects 2008

Submitted by Chris Snipes

Work is continuing on the topiary project for the Festival of Flowers. All of the topiaries that have arrived have been irrigated. The remaining topiaries should arrive sometime during the last week of February.

We need everyone's help to make this project a success. We need instructors and volunteers at the various schools in Greenwood County that will be participating. We need volunteers for the irrigating, stuffing, plugging, assembly, and transporting. We need help building platforms for the larger topiaries. This will be necessary in order to move it to the display. We need volunteers to check and water the topiaries while at the greenhouse and during display at the Festival. We need volunteers for the dismantling when the Festival is over.

There is much work to be done and you can pick up many volunteer hours. Another plus is what you learn while working with others. We have picked up some excellent ideas just by sharing with each other.

There is always work to do at the Railroad Museum. Sandra Johnson will be notifying us of the work schedule soon.

Opportunity

Advanced Master Gardener Training in Urban Trees

There are still a few openings for this class, which is tentatively scheduled for Thursday afternoons beginning April 17. The cost is expected to be approximately \$50, which includes a notebook and course material. If you think you may be interested or for more information, contact James Hodges, or e-mail Jean at jebiand@yahoo.com for a copy of the information sheet.

Extension Annual Meeting

Each year our local Clemson University Greenwood Extension office conducts an annual meeting for county residents. At this meeting we highlight current educational programs specific to Greenwood County and use the occasion to honor many outstanding residents who are fine examples of Farm, Forestry, Animal, Horticulture, Youth Development and Community Volunteers that work to make Greenwood County a great place to live.

This year's speaker is Cal Sawyer, Research Associate with Clemson University who has worked across South Carolina on Water Quality research and improvement issues for more than 10 years. He will update us on much of the work going on across South Carolina and give us a perspective of what counties such as Greenwood should be working on over the next few years.

This year's Annual Meeting will be held Monday, March 31st at Immanuel Lutheran Church at 501 Creswell Street at 6:30 PM. Tickets are \$12.00 and available at the Extension office (942-8590) or from Advisory Council members through Monday, March 17th.

Meet a Master Gardener

Submitted by Lauren Boylston

Gail Murph

Many of the Lakelands Master Gardeners who have been around for awhile know **Gail Murph**, but I am sure some of the members of the newer classes have not had the chance to get to know her nor do they know what an incredible contribution she has made to our organization. Let's take a moment to "Meet Gail Murph".

Gail is originally from the lovely Oconee area of South Carolina but she and her husband of 37 years, Lee, moved to the Greenwood area over 28 years ago. While Gail is a South Carolinian, she did attend the prestigious Auburn University and majored in Speech Language Pathology. She has been a practicing Speech Language Pathologist in the Greenwood school system since she moved here. She also works with adult patients in nursing homes, rehabilitation facilities and elsewhere.

Continued on next page

Her profession keeps her very busy. But not so busy that that she didn't have time to raise two boys to adulthood, see them educated, married and now raising families of their own. She enjoys three grandchildren and has another one on the way.

Gail is an avid gardener and her pride and joy is her asparagus bed. Gail says she put this bed in several years ago and it is such a treat when early spring arrives with its bountiful harvest. She also looks forward to planning and planting an extensive vegetable garden each year. She does, however, enjoy all of her perennials. Her special darlings are her hardy ferns which are not on the deer's list of preferred meals and the insects usually don't feast on them either! When asked what her worst gardening mistake ever was, Gail did not hesitate in saying "Roses". Amen to that.

An Old Favorite Flower of Spring

Submitted by James Hodges

One of my favorite landscape flowers of spring is also one of the smallest. Though not very impressive as single plants, Johnny-Jump-Ups (violas) in mass are very colorful in the spring landscape or containers. Johnny-Jump-Ups flower heavily and are more heat resistant than their larger cousins, the pansies. Jumps-Ups look like they are smiling at you from the garden with their small white and yellow whiskered faces with purple mouse ears. They are excellent in patio containers, mixed with bulbs or in front of perennial bedded plants. Plant them close together (4-6 inches apart) in pots or the garden. The larger containers (5 gallons or more) make care and watering easier. When the Jump-Ups begin to fade in May or June replace them with lantanas or other summer plants. Jumps-Ups re-seed heavily, so you may find a crop of plants reappearing each spring in your containers or your garden flower bed site. They usually come back true to color, so thin the plants, remove any winter weeds and enjoy them again the second year.

Container Veggies for Spring

Submitted by James Hodges

I seem to have good luck with cool season vegetables in containers this time of year. Two of the easier cool season plants for containers are the head lettuce types and broccoli. In Greenwood they seem to be easier to get as transplants. Getting lazy as I get older, I don't always start my own seeds as often. They require more attention and looking after than my busy schedule sometimes permits.

I tend to use large containers so that several plants can be grown in each container. I only fill the container 2/3 full, leaving 4-6 inches clear on top. This allowed me to use a version of a cold frame when plants needed covering. Transplants of lettuce and broccoli are currently available and I have planted a number of containers already. Recent night time temperatures in the 20's can damage tender plants so I covered my new plants overnight with a sheet without damaging them.

There is nothing better than truly fresh green vegetables from that little deck garden. The bunch or head lettuce is great because at home you can continue to harvest

outer leaves for a very long time over a longer season as contrasted with the single bunch plant that is harvested when most of the plant is ready. Lettuce production can be extended as days get hot by moving the containers into partially shaded areas during the afternoon. Most spring broccoli is typically a one shot deal which is quick to bolt with warm temperatures.

I use compost to fill my containers and fertilize lightly with liquid fertilizer every few weeks. During cool weather I water judiciously, avoiding the tendency to water too frequently.

Testing Stored Seeds for Germination

Submitted by Bibbi Lee

Did you save some seed from last year's garden? Some seeds remain viable longer than others. Test your seed for germination now before this year's planting season begins. It's easy and can save you time later on when planting gets underway.

To find out whether saved seed will germinate and grow, place ten seeds an even distance apart on a damp paper towel. Roll up the towel, place it in a plastic bag and leave in a warm spot for two or three days. Light doesn't matter. Check the paper towel to see if any have germinated. The percentage of seed germinating in the towel will give you a fairly good idea how the same seed will do in the garden. If half the seed did well in the towel, then half of the same batch of seed will probably do well in the garden.

Seed is best stored through the winter at about 50 degrees F with 50 percent humidity. Another good way to store unused seed packets is to place seeds in a sealed jar with a desiccant or powdered milk at the bottom to absorb moisture. Store the jar in a cool room or refrigerator over the winter.



Blue Savory Cheesecake Recipe

Submitted by Sandy Stachurski

I prepared this recipe for a recent herb club meeting and it was a hit. I can't give credit where credit is due for this recipe since I found it on the internet and have no clue how to find it again. It is one of the very best appetizers I've come upon lately. Hope you enjoy as much as my family did.

2 tablespoons butter
½ cup dry bread crumbs
2 teaspoons fresh mint chopped
1 ½ pounds cream cheese at room temp
12 ounces blue cheese at room temp
1 ½ cups sour cream
4 eggs
½ cup finely chopped yellow onion
2 cloves garlic minced
1/8 teaspoon freshly ground white pepper
½ teaspoon dry mustard
2 tablespoons fresh oregano chopped
2 tablespoons fresh rosemary chopped
2 cups sour cream
2 tablespoons fresh chopped parsley
2 tablespoons fresh chopped chives

Directions – use 9 inch spring form pan

Preheat oven to 300. Rub generously with butter the sides and bottom of a spring-form pan. Combine bread crumbs and mint, then evenly coat buttered surfaces with this mixture then set aside. Beat cheese at low speed with electric mixer until well blended about 2 minutes. Scrape sides

Add eggs one at a time beating well after each addition. Beat in the onion, garlic, pepper, mustard and herbs. Pour batter into prepared pan and bake for 1 ½ hours. Combine sour cream parsley and chives. When cake is almost set remove from oven and let stand 50 minutes. Spread sour cream mixture over cake then return to the oven for 5 minutes. Cool on wire rack for 2 hours before removing from pan. Chill thoroughly preferable overnight. Remove from refrigerator 30 minutes before serving.

Enjoy

Hellebores, the Winter Bloomer

Submitted by Jane Price

I looked out my kitchen window in late January and saw something bright white near my pet cemetery. Wondering what it could be, I walked down to the spot and found a hellebores blooming. I have to admit, I was really surprised to find it alive. I had planted it and a purple one last summer during the middle of the drought and at times would forget to water them. The purple one appeared to be dead.

I decided since that one was blooming, I needed to get the leaves from around the one in the front garden. I did that in early February, and right now I have twenty-five blooms and buds on one plant alone and lots of baby plants.

About six years ago, I purchased five hellebores after seeing them in a shade garden Wesley Commons. I planted them under a beech tree and watched them just sit there. I was not pleased, as every year I waited for growth and saw none. I had maybe one or two blooms during the entire time. I was about to dump them, but decided maybe a move to a different spot might be just what they needed. I had already tried several other plants under the beech trees and discovered practically nothing would grow there because of the spider-like network of roots close to the surface.

Last summer, I built up a bed around an oak tree and planted the hellebores, along with fern, purple heuchera, green hosta, and purple oxalis. It turned out to be a lovely combination of plants with different colors and textures. On inspection of the bed this month, I found the purple hellebores blooming in profusion and lots more baby plants, too. Also, the one near the pet cemetery is not only alive but also blooming well.

Hellebores have a long history in cultivation, particularly in Europe. They can be found naturalized around ruins of old monasteries and other structures. In North America, hellebore popularity has grown markedly during the past decade. Now it is possible to find a variety of species and hybrids in nurseries and garden centers. In fact, *Helleborus x hybridus* was named the 2005 'Perennial Plant of the Year' by the Perennial Plant Association.

Sometimes referred to as 'Christmas Rose' or 'Lenten Rose', hellebores are the stars of the winter/early spring garden. Plants generally bloom between December and March in cultivation. Nearly every garden has a spot for hellebores, and the plants will thrive in many different environs. Despite the fact hellebores are almost invariably sold as shade plants, in most gardens they will perform their best if given some sun. Still, they remain unknown to many gardeners despite their toughness, beauty, hardiness, and wonderful habit of blooming in winter when most other plants remain dormant.

For a plant that I once considered getting rid of, I now love them since I have found a place where they can thrive. I am on the lookout now for other varieties, particularly the lime green with the smaller bloom and the one that holds its head up. Hopefully, I will have some to sell at some future plant sale, maybe even this year.

Do You Have a Christmas Cactus? Are You Sure???

Contributed by Jean Anderson

According to the Iowa State University, there are three different forms of holiday cactus which are commonly called "Christmas cactus", but which have different characteristics. The most familiar and widely grown species is *Schlumbergera truncatus* (formerly classified as *Zygocactus truncatus*) which is known as a Thanksgiving cactus. It is also sometimes called a crab or yoke cactus and come in colors such as white through red, lavender and

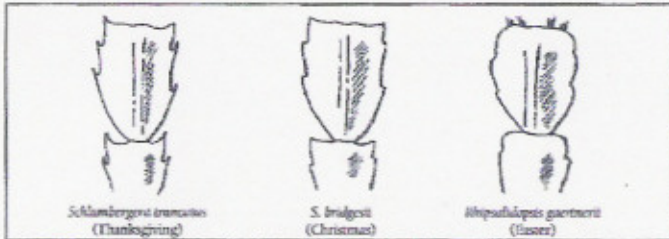
salmon-orange. These usually bloom from about Thanksgiving through the Christmas season. The leaf (actually flattened stem segments) margins of this cactus have two to four sawtoothed projections on the sides of the stems.

The true Christmas cactus, *Schlumbergera bridgesii*, produces 3 inch long rosy-red flowers from late December through March. These leaf margins are scalloped along the edges.

The Easter cactus, *Rhipsalidopsis gaertnerii*, blooms from March through May with pink or red flowers. It may also rebloom in early fall. The leaf margins here are smoother than the others with 4 to 6 slight ripples along the edges, and brownish hair-like bristles at the tips.

To see the entire pamphlet, go to this site:

www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/RG308.pdf



The Best Garden I Ever Saw

Many of us enjoy visits to other gardens of all types. They may be personal, historical, commercial, or botanical gardens. Some gardens are large and elaborate displays of plants, water features and hardscape materials of all architectural types. How would you define the best garden you ever saw?

As I ponder this question; I recall many wonderful displays of plants, organized as gardens of all the types mentioned above. Anytime I travel, it is a favorite hobby of mine to take in local plant gardens from backyards, streetscapes to large botanical types. It is part of my desire to constantly learn more about plant types, their necessary management requirements and glean useful ideas for professional and personal usage.

Having grown up more in the woods than most, I gravitate to the natural woodland gardens more than to urban landscapes. My favorite season is spring and I would have traded North Carolina Mountain Februarys for an extra May growing up. Because winters were long and cold, the warm sunshine of early May led me to be out among the newly emerging woodland plants.

With this history you might guess that the most beautiful garden I have ever seen would be a natural garden in the North Carolina Mountains.

I was working in forestry at the time and made a trip from Greenwood to near Waynesville, North Carolina in search of hardwood stands to use in Growth and Yield research. I visited a tract of land long since sold for development. Much of it now grows houses, rather than trilliums by the

thousands.

The property covered a large area from the valley floor to ridge tops. I arrived at the locked gate about noon so I pulled my truck off on a small dead end side road to eat my field forester's lunch (a can of Beanie Weenies, a pack of naps and a Dr. Pepper). I was parked near a small stream that emerged from the mountain, so after my nutritious lunch I took a stroll up the holler into the rich woods ahead. As I topped a small knoll, I was engulfed by thousands of trilliums. Standing in a ½ acre of white trilliums in full bloom is forever imprinted into my brain. Many wildflowers are not individually large or present a dramatic floral display, but en-mass they can be breathtaking. I must confess that my forestry work for that day and the next was compromised after this walk. Even though the trilliums were the main show I began to spot many other wildflowers among them, many so tiny that they were easy to miss. After this experience, I became much more aware of what was at my feet as well as the trees I was there to evaluate.

I did not find an area that would be suitable for my growth and yield plot that day, but I started to study the small plants beneath with an increased interest. What I have confirmed in the years since this event is that forest stand type and wildflower types are often strongly correlated. Soil richness, moisture availability and sun exposure as related to tree cover are the major growth determining factors for the presence of woodland wild flowers too.

As you move through a forest stand, when tree cover changes because of lower soil quality, aspect and moisture wildflower populations change to those species more adapted to the changing conditions. There is no place better for observing micro-site conditions than the mountains.

Widespread distribution usually indicates wildflower species that are more adaptive to a wider range of conditions, but because the growing conditions are so diverse in the mountains I know of no wildflower species that will grow everywhere. Rarely will you every find a trillium or the large leafed May apple on a dry ridge because they require rich, cool and moist soil conditions. But you may find a wild ginger or wild iris or the native shrub, mountain laurel in drier conditions.

As most plant enthusiasts, I have collected wild flowers on my father's property many times to plant in my own garden in South Carolina. Creating growing conditions to meet the needs of tender trilliums has met with little success, but I have less demanding wild iris and ginger surviving for many years.

The take home lesson for any of us when we make a plant selection choice is: Do we have or can we create growing conditions necessary for a plant to thrive? I don't imagine many of you want to trek to the woods to find where your plant would best grow, but you have many opportunities to visit botanical, city, display and local gardens to observe plants of all types. The next time you are on a plant excursion see if you can list what growing conditions a species of plant needs to thrive. Do different cultivars of this plant perform the same?

With a little practice you may be able to avoid many plant headaches and heartaches this way.

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