



# GARDEN BUZZZZZZ



Volume 32 Issue 12 Central Alabama Master Gardener Association



## December 2023

### Message from Kelly Kelly Lafreniere CAMGA President



Hello Fellow Master Gardeners,

I hope everyone had a wonderful Thanksgiving and if you're like me, you're already hectically preparing for Christmas!

We will have our CAMGA Christmas party on **December 5<sup>th</sup>** at the **First Presbyterian Church at 10 a.m. in Wetumpka.**

Please sign up to attend and to bring food per our Sign-Up Genius that Robin sent out last week.

Our party is always so much fun and a good way to end our CAMGA 2023 year. We will also have a short business meeting where we will install our new 2024 officers and vote on incorporating CAMGA and becoming a 501c3.

Starting January 2024, we will have our CAMGA meetings back at the Extension office at 10 a.m. as usual, every third Tuesday of the month. We will continue to have Lunch and Learn, Intern classes, and our annual Christmas party at the First Presbyterian Church every year.

I look forward to seeing everyone and celebrating with good food and laughter at our Christmas party this year!!

I would also like to take this opportunity and thank Carol Pugh for her wonderful artwork and the designing of our Garden Buzz publication every month. She does a great job and it always looks fantastic.

I would also like to thank Rhona and Robin for organizing and presenting a memorial book and a tremendous day of celebration in honor of our Brick Memorial Garden. It turned out to be a beautiful day with many of our former Master Gardeners in attendance.

Thank you all.

*Warm regards,  
Kelly*

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*Carol Pugh – Editor  
Garden Buzzzzz  
Newsletter*



## Message from Mallory

Mallory Kelley

Regional Extension Agent — Home Grounds,

### 'Tis the Season for Citrus

Late Fall to early winter is when we are harvesting citrus in Central Alabama and growing it in your own backyard has been growing in popularity the last few years. Citrus has been grown in Central and South Alabama for years. The citrus belt spans from California along the Gulf Coast to Florida (USDA Zones 8-10). With their evergreen foliage, fragrant flowers and delicious fruit, citrus can be a great addition to every garden or patio. And as an added bonus, with the exception of a few tangerine varieties, all citrus is self-fruitful meaning you can have just one plant to produce fruit.

With very few insect and diseases, the only drawback to citrus is the occasional cold winter temperatures where they will require protection. It is best to plant citrus in a large container so it can be moved indoors or just in the garage overnight during cold spells. For central Alabama, I recommend the Semi-hardy to hardy varieties. Semi-Hardy refers to citrus varieties that are hardy to temps in the mid to upper teens or low 20's. Satsumas or mandarins, kumquats and Meyer lemons are all considered semi-hardy in central Alabama.

The highest degree of success and greatest satisfaction in growing citrus in Alabama is often seen with satsumas. They withstand colder temperatures than the other forms of edible sweet citrus, produce more consistent crops over a longer period of time, and require less cold protection.

Satsuma is a mandarin. It has excellent cold hardiness and ripens its fruit well ahead of most freeze problems (September to November). Owari is the most popular variety and is generally available at retail outlets. Brown's Select is a very recent introduction from Louisiana that is somewhat similar to Owari in tree and fruit characteristics, but ripens its fruit at least 2 to 3 weeks earlier. Armstrong Early (also called Early Armstrong) is an old variety that has been grown for many years and is planted to a small degree. Fruit of this variety ripen extremely early (beginning in September), but the quality is not as good as Owari. When grown under warmer climatic conditions (such as Florida), fruits often retain their peak quality for approximately 2 to 4 weeks, after which they may become puffy and rough in appearance and lose flavor and juice content. However, under the cooler climatic conditions of Central and South Alabama, fruits tend to remain in good condition on the tree, retaining their juice and flavor for 1 to 2 months after reaching full maturity.

There are a number of hardy acid-type fruits available for homeowner use. These plants make attractive ornamental specimens and provide delightful fruits as well. The kumquat tree (not the fruit) is the most cold hardy of the commonly grown acid citrus fruits (it can withstand temperatures of 15 to 17 degrees F). The kumquat is one of the most widely used citrus plants around the home; it develops into an attractive shrub like tree that bears small orange like fruit about 1 inch in diameter. Fruits can be eaten fresh, peel and all, or used in making jellies, marmalade, or candies. Several varieties are available, but only three are commonly propagated: Nagami, Marumi, and Meiwa. Meiwa, which produces round, sweet fruit, has become one of the most popular for home plantings.

Meyer is the most cold hardy variety of lemon. The fruit ripening period usually lasts for several months beginning in late summer. Good crops of large, practically seedless, juicy lemons are produced. Ponderosa, is another variety of lemon that is commonly grown in Florida that produces exceedingly large fruits and can also be grown as a container plant.

## Message from Mallory (Continued)

Mallory Kelley

Regional Extension Agent — Home Grounds,

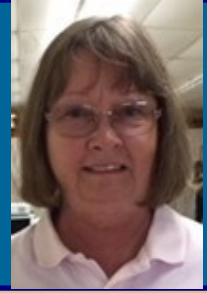
Limes are among the most cold-sensitive of the common acid-type citrus fruits. However, the Mexican (also called Key or West Indian) lime, famous for the Key lime pie, can be grown as a container plant when provided with inside protection during the winter.

As mentioned previously, citrus fruits can be grown successfully in the home grounds with little or no control of insects and diseases. Fruits produced without pesticide sprays may be very poor in external quality as a result of damage by several mites, insects, and fungal diseases. Although they may look unattractive on the outside, external damage usually has no detrimental effect on internal fruit quality. And the appearance of the tree may suffer, but seldom will trees be critically damaged by most citrus pests.

So, if you are looking for a low maintenance, conversation piece, think about adding citrus plants to your landscape or patio. Not only will you love their incredible fragrance when in bloom, but it's so much fun to watch them grow and share with your neighbors, friends and family.



**CAMGA Minutes**  
**November 21, 2023**  
**First Presbyterian Church, Wetumpka**  
**By: Sheila Radford, Secretary**



The featured speaker, Leonard Shannon was introduced by Sandy Rosamond. Leonard's topic was "Backyard Ponds". He concluded his talk at 11:15.

Kelly called the business meeting to order at 11:30. Twenty-one members signed the attendance sheet.

Kelly asked if there were corrections to last month's minutes. Rebecca made a motion to accept those minutes and the motion was seconded by Sherri.

CAMGA monthly meetings will be held at the Extension office again starting in January 2024. Rebecca will start putting upcoming CAMGA events on Facebook.

Sherri stated that there have been no treasury changes since last month's financial report.

Cindy attended the most recent advisory committee meeting. The mission statement has been updated.

Tracking mileage will no longer be counted toward hours accumulated with the Master Gardener program. There will now be three categories of membership: 1) active status 2) alumni status to include those who have paid their dues but haven't been able to accumulate the required hours 3) inactive status.

Members will be asked to sign an updated memorandum of understanding (MOU) after the first of the year. All members signed an MOU when they were interns, and the original is on file with the Extension office.

The next advisory council committee will be on the first Tuesday of February.

Robin reminded members that the CAMGA Christmas part will be December 5<sup>th</sup> at the First Presbyterian Church. There will be a brief business meeting, and the new officers will be installed.

Rhona talked about the Tribute Garden opening that was held on November 17<sup>th</sup>. There is a reel on Facebook for viewing this event. There are still volunteer slots available for Dickens Christmas in Wetumpka.

An exploratory committee appointed by the CAMGA President comprised of Chair Rhona Watson, Sherri Davidson, Anida Wishnietsky, Kelly LaFreniere, and Cindy Augustine has diligently researched the pros and cons of becoming incorporated and forming a nonprofit (501C3) entity.

This committee highly recommends that the CAMGA members vote to proceed with this plan at the December 5<sup>th</sup> business meeting.

Old Business: 0

New Business: 0

Meeting adjourned at 11:50

***Minutes respectfully submitted by,  
 Sheila Radford, Secretary***





## Learning Garden Report

### LATEST IN THE LEARNING GARDEN

By: Mary McCroan

It has been several months since I wrote an article on the Learning Garden and it is past time to provide the membership an update.

An unexpected project resulted when strong winds blew off the top of the pergola located next to the rain garden. The satellite dish that formed the roof was installed to illustrate thinking-outside-the-box with regard to repurposing materials. The dish had been used by the Extension Office many years ago before installation of cable to the building. Anybody remember those days? Rooftop antennas and rabbit ears for homes and satellite dishes for businesses. Anyway, since the wind conveniently moved the satellite dish to the ground, we took the opportunity to scrub the dirt off, paint it (green on top and haunt blue underneath), and then put it back in place. Looking good again!



While talking about hardscape, we finally built the first gate to the garden. I wanted it to match the rest of the construction. It is made from fencing material sandwiched between two layers of wood. A similar construction has worked well in my home garden for over 15 years so I have hopes this one will also hang without sagging over time.



## Learning Garden Report (Continued)

### LATEST IN THE LEARNING GARDEN

By: Mary McCroan

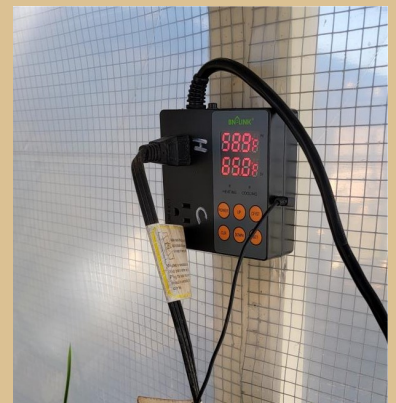
Most of the color has gone from the garden now, but through the end of October and early November we (and the pollinators) continued to enjoy flowering perennials. The Roselle Hibiscus is a particular favorite since we can take the fruit, dry it, and use it for homemade Red Zinger Tea on cold winter days.



The Greenhouse is in use again this winter. Currently it is hosting Elderberry Cuttings, Confederate Rose cuttings, Toothache Plant (*Spilanthes oleracea*), Cuban oregano cuttings, Coleus cuttings, divided Lemon Grass, and others. These have all been propagated by Learning Garden volunteers from plants grown in the Learning Gardens.

An addition to the green house this years is a controller that sets the high and low temps. Our current heater did not have a thermostat and sometimes it would be 85 degrees in the greenhouse with the heater still running. Our new controller turns off current to the heater at 65 degrees and turns it back on at 55 degrees. With these settings, the temps in the greenhouse still went down to 50 degrees with our recent cold weather. Once those temps start down, they continue down for a bit after the heater kicks starts back up. So lesson learned: if you want to keep your minimum temp at 50 degrees, you might need to set your thermostat for 55.

Sweet potatoes are a great favorite in the veggie garden and we grew it in two beds this summer. One we harvested in early October and the other in mid November. Both turned out well.





## Learning Garden Report (Continued)

### LATEST IN THE LEARNING GARDEN

By: Mary McCroan

Sweet potatoes are easy to grow. Bugs do like the foliage, but there is so much foliage the tubers don't care. They are an attractive plant either as a ground cover or trellised on a fence, and they taste great! You might be discouraged if you read about requirements to correctly cure your sweet potatoes: after harvest, the "experts" want you to put them in an 85 degree room with 85% humidity for ten days. Well, for those of us that like to keep things simple, just put them in your garage or basement where they will be protected against temperatures below 50 degrees. They will taste great and last until about March. I'm including two recipes: the first is for the Sweet Potato Salad that was enjoyed at our meeting a couple of months ago; the second is for the Sweet Potato Casserole I'm bringing to our Christmas meeting. Even people that don't like sweet potatoes, like this casserole!



#### The Best Sweet Potato Salad

##### Ingredients:

- 1/4 cup chopped cornichons, baby dill pickles or dill relish
- 2 tablespoons whole-grain mustard
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 2 ribs celery, diced
- Zest and juice from 1 lemon
- 1/2 small red onion, minced
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 2 pounds sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into 1-inch cubes
- 1/4 cup white vinegar

In a bowl, mix together the cornichons or relish, mustard, honey, celery, lemon zest and juice and red onion. Season with salt and pepper and let sit while the potatoes cook. Put the potatoes in a large saucepan and add enough cold water to cover by 1 inch. Season the water generously with salt. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce the heat to a simmer and cook until the potatoes are tender, about 10 minutes. Drain the potatoes in a colander, put back in the saucepan, add the vinegar and, using a rubber spatula, toss gently to combine. Add the mayonnaise, chives and parsley to the celery-onion mixture and stir to combine. Add the warm potatoes to the dressing and toss. Season to taste. Garnish with extra chives and parsley.

Notes: you can take leftover salad and freeze serving sized mounts on a cookie tray and then pop them in a ziplock bag. 30 seconds in the microwave will defrost and slightly warm the salad to be a perfect contribution to your lunch.

# Learning Garden Report (Continued)

## LATEST IN THE LEARNING GARDEN

By: Mary McCroan

### Sweet Potato Casserole Recipe

#### Ingredients

3 cups cooked sweet potatoes mashed (assume about 1lb per potato)  
1/3 cup butter softened  
1 tsp vanilla extract  
2 eggs  
1 cup granulated sugar  
1/2 tsp salt  
2 Tbsp flour

#### For the Streusel Topping:

1 cup brown sugar packed  
1/3 cup all-purpose flour  
1 cup chopped pecans  
1/3 cup butter softened

#### Instructions

Bake or boil potatoes until tender  
Cool, peel and mash the sweet potatoes.  
Add butter to potatoes and mix. Mix vanilla and eggs and then add.  
Mix the flour, salt and sugar  
Stir dry ingredients into sweet potato mix, just half at first, then taste for sweetness. Half was more than sweet enough for me.  
Pour mixture into a 1 1/2 quart casserole dish or individual dishes for serving.

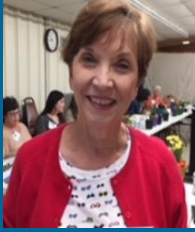
#### For the topping:

1. Mix brown sugar, flour, nuts and butter together and spread evenly over sweet potato mixture. I only used about 2/3s of the topping--still plenty sweet!  
Cook for 30 minutes until topping has browned. Remove from oven and serve.

#### Notes

Can make ahead and store in fridge for 3 days or freezer for 3 months. Add topping just before baking.  
Leftover casserole also freezes well.





## CAMGA Library News

### December 2023

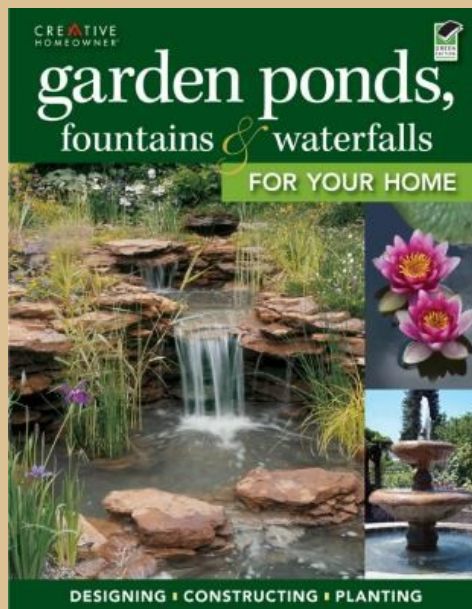
By: Dee Turberville

### Garden Ponds, Fountains & Waterfalls for Your Home

By Kathleen Fisher

Illustrated with over 490 colorful photographs, *Garden Ponds, Fountains & Waterfalls for Your Home* provides essential information on designing and installing all types of home water gardens, from naturalistic to formal, plus fountains, waterfalls, streams, and bog gardens. Readers will learn how to construct these structures and how to design bridges and stepping-stones.

This is a good pond book, detailed and informative, especially for beginners; it contains many different ideas for inspiration. It has good coverage of water chemistry, monitoring and care. It is best utilized by those who want to create a man-made pond-like garden but not for those who already have a natural pond. Part 5, Chapter 12, "Selecting Your Plants," the heart of the book, is my favorite section, ending with a glossary and a good index.



Of all the things you can add to your landscape, a water feature is one of the most dramatic. You can bring sound, movement, reflections, and unique plants to your garden, attracting visitors --(think of animals, birds and insects).If you have a naturally wet area in your landscape, you'll enjoy reading this title. Water gardening does require maintenance, time and some expenses, but for many, the water features bring pleasure that out-weigh the work entailed.



## Governor's Mansion Report For November 2023

By: Amanda Borden



The Governor's Mansion volunteers were very busy weeding, watering, trimming, and planting on the Mansion grounds in this very dry fall.



Jane McCarthy, Darwin Prewitt, Ann Colvin, Robin Snyder, Alicia Richardson, Amanda Borden, Kathy Quinn, Cheryl McKiernan, Dawn Mitchell, Anne Carr, Sue Berry





## Governor's Mansion Report For November 2023 (Continued)

We introduced the 2023 Master Gardener interns from Elmore and Autauga Counties to the Governor's Mansion.



**Standing:** Linda Cater, Robin Snyder, Consuelo Bradley, Darlene Blumentritt, Lori Terrell, Deborah Brooks. **Sitting:** Lidia Mitchum, Leslie Wilkinson, Rhona Watson, David Heffelfinger, Jane McCarthy, Cheri Cook, Casie McGinn





## **CAMGA Projects Minutes – November 14, 2023**

**By: Terry Chambliss**

Those present were Michelle Sharpton, Sheila Radford, Kelly LaFreniere, Jason Mattox, Rebecca Ridley and Rhona Watson. Details about the Dickens's Christmas Event were finalized. A signup sheet will be available at the next meeting. Participants will meet at the Market Shops in Wetumpka at 4:00 pm on December 1<sup>st</sup>, for distribution of the sachet bags.

The majority of the meeting was spent discussing the budget for next year. Rhona kept a copy of the receipts from the purchases throughout the year and used those to tweak the numbers. Rebecca will get with Sherri Davidson to adjust the numbers and categories where necessary.

### **CAMGA Projects Report for October and November 2023**

**By: Terry Chambliss and Michelle Sharpton**

CAMGA members gathered on October 20<sup>th</sup> at the Senior Center that is located in the Cedarwood Community Church in Wetumpka, AL. Fifteen participants signed up to make fairy wreaths.

Our Master Gardener volunteers were very busy assisting in the making and decorating of the fairy wreaths made out of grapevine wreaths, natural oranges and lemon slices, tree bark, nursery pots, fairy wreath lights, moss, dried flowers, miniature figurines, floral picks, and hot glue.

Everyone seemed to really enjoy the time spent together, and the creations were stunning. Rebecca Ridley was our instructor for this event, and all agreed she did an amazing job!

Helpers for the day included: Cindy Augustine, Anne Carr, Sheila Radford, Sandy Rosamond, Robyn Snyder, Rhonda Miles, Rhona Watson, and Michelle Sharpton. Pictures of this event may be found on the CAMGA Facebook page and Instagram page.

On November 7<sup>th</sup>, a group of volunteers met to stuff and card sachet bags with lavender, sage and mint to be passed out at the Dickens' Christmas Event in December.

The ladies made quick work of the project. Those participating were Connie Willis, Iva Haynie, Michelle Sharpton, Ann Carr, Marjorie Hannah, Jane Mobley and Terry Chambliss.

**Exploratory Committee Report**  
**Regarding CAMGA Becoming Incorporated & 501(c)(3) Entity**  
**By: Rhona Watson**

An exploratory committee was formed to research the pros and cons of becoming incorporated and forming a nonprofit (501C3) entity.

The committee appointed by the CAMGA president is comprised of Rhona Watson, Chair, Sherri Davidson, Anida Wishniesky, Kelly LaFreniere, and Cindy Augustine.

After diligent research, this committee has concluded that forming a corporation and 501(c)(3) is the appropriated pathway for re-organization of CAMGA and we recommend that the membership vote to proceed with this plan at the December 5 business meeting prior to the Christmas luncheon.

We spoke to several other Master Gardener organizations that have followed this plan, including Montgomery, Autauga, and Limestone County. We were fortunate to have Jim Gaines recommended to us. He is a Master Gardener, and lawyer who has helped several Master Gardener groups and fire houses incorporate. He has agreed to file all appropriate paperwork and guide us through the process with no legal fees charged to CAMGA. The only cost will be filing fees of approximately \$300 paid to the probated court.

The first step to becoming incorporated is to reserve a name and file Articles of Incorporation with the probate judge's office. This will make us a new entity, so we can pay sales tax, and not be liable for any oversights we had in the past. We will also get our own Tax ID number. The last step is to have a meeting of the corporation and merge the "old" Master Gardeners, (the current unincorporated organization), with the new incorporated group. We will adopt new bylaws which we are currently working on and will present them to the membership when they are completed.

If you have any questions or concerns, you can email me at [rhonawatson@earthlink.net](mailto:rhonawatson@earthlink.net). I look forward to seeing everyone at our Christmas party, where I will make a motion that we become incorporated and a 501(c)(3), then we will vote on this important issue.

We will install our officers for next year, enjoy each other while celebrating the Holiday, and our success.

*Submitted by,*  
*Rhona Watson*



## CAMGA CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON

Please click on the following link to view the sign up sheet for the Christmas Luncheon:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0D48AFA929A0F5C34-46110088-december#/>

CAMGA will be providing beef tenderloin and baked ham and any food items that you wish to add to the menu are most welcome. Some categories and suggestions are listed, but anything you want to bring is fine. If you save this link and go back to it later, you will see what items have been added and get a better idea of what items might be needed.

Thanks for your help and we will see you soon at the luncheon.

Robin Snyder



## ***“Getting to Know” The 2023 Master Gardener Class Interns***



Casie McGinn — Cassie is from Georgia and has lived in this area since 1994. She became interested in gardening from her mother.

Casie enjoys flower gardening, herbs, and wants to enhance her landscape. She would like to increase her knowledge about soil, pests, diseases and how to grow healthy plants.

Lidia Mitchum — Lidia has lived in Wetumpka since 2011. She enjoys working with indoor and outdoor plants and growing vegetables for her family in raised beds. She likes to try organic products and do manual pest control.

Lidia also grows fruit trees and blueberries. She would like learn more about soil in the Master Gardener class.



Lesley Wilkinson — Lesley grew up in Prattville and now lives in Titus. Her grandmother influenced her about gardening. She enjoys working with veggies and herbs in raised beds, growing flowers, and is working on a shade garden at the present time.

Thru the Master Gardener program, Lesley wants to learn more about gardening and sharing her knowledge with others.

# December 2023

Sun      Mon      Tue      Wed      Thu      Fri      Sat



|    |   |  |    |    |   |    |
|----|---|--|----|----|---|----|
|    |   |  |    |    | 1 <i>Dickens Christmas downtown Wetumpka — Cancelled due to weather</i> | 2  |
| 3  | 4<br><i>Governor's Mansion Workday — 9-11 a.m.</i>  | 5 <i>CAMGA Christmas Party First Presbyterian Church, Wetumpka 10 a.m.</i> | 6  | 7  | 8   | 9  |
| 10 | 11<br><i>Governor's Mansion Workday — 9-11 a.m.</i>                                       | 12<br><i>Lunch &amp; Learn First Presbyterian Church, 12 noon</i>          | 13 | 14 | 15<br><i>Statewide Intern graduation at Auburn</i>                      | 16 |
| 17 | 18<br><i>Governor's Mansion Workday — 9-11 a.m.</i>                                       | 19   | 20 | 21 | 22  | 23 |
| 24 | 25<br> | 26   | 27 | 28 | 29  | 30 |
| 31 |   |  |    |    |   |    |