



# THE PLOT THICKENS

Phone: 870-534-1033 P. O. Box 6896 Pine Bluff, AR 71611 [dplunkett@uaex.edu](mailto:dplunkett@uaex.edu) November 21, 2008

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## DECEMBER MEETING CHANGED

**December monthly meeting/Christmas potluck - Tuesday, December 2, 2008.** That is correct – Tuesday, December 2 is the next meeting date for the Master Gardeners of Jefferson County. This will be an important meeting, and all who participate are asked to bring a part of the **pot-luck noon meal**.

Those wanting to bring a gift for **CASA** are asked to do so, and those wanting to "**exchange a gift**" should bring a gift (around \$5) to exchange. Please indicate if the gift is for male or female.

## MASTER GARDENER TRAINING FOR 2009

The dates have been set for the 2009 Master Gardener training sessions. All current Master Gardeners may attend any and all sessions without charge. Mark your calendar for **March 12, 19 and 26 as well as April 2 and 9**. Classes start at 8:00 a.m. with refreshments and registration. An agenda will be made available for the sessions after the first of the year when it is firmed up with all speakers.

**Twenty students REQUIRED in order to be able to conduct a Master Gardener Training class.** The 2009 MG class must have a minimum of 20 students, or it will be canceled. So, if you know someone that might be interested in taking the class, have him or her contact the Jefferson County Cooperative Extension Service office at **879-534-1033** for information and an application form. Enrollment is not complete until registration fees have been paid. *Please help recruit for the 2009 class.*

Read more about the state MG program by visiting the following site.

[http://www.arhomeandgarden.org/master\\_gardener.htm](http://www.arhomeandgarden.org/master_gardener.htm)



## CONGRATULATIONS !!! NEW ADVANCED MASTER GARDENER

**Frances Harrison** was recently presented a name tag proclaiming her as an Advanced Master Gardener for Arkansas. We want to congratulate her on this accomplishment! Advanced Master Gardener training is conducted periodically throughout the state for a one-day or one-and-one-half day event. The host county charges for the event and training.

## Advanced Master Gardener Levels

Master Gardeners have the opportunity to reach three levels in the Advanced Master Gardener Program:

- **Level 1** - Complete 5 advanced training classes.
- **Level 2** - Complete an additional 8 advanced classes (for a total of 13 completed advanced classes).
- **Level 3** – Complete an additional 10 classes plus write an article for a county newsletter, the County 76 Newsletter, or other publication OR give a presentation at a regular Master Gardener meeting or public workshop, for a total of 23 completed advanced classes. The presentation or written article can be done at any time between completion of levels 2 and 3. The presentation or article is to be verified by the county agent and sent to the Advanced Master Gardener Coordinator or record keeper.

**Jefferson County Length of Membership Award-2008**

**10-YEARS**

EDNA BALLARD  
RUBY DANIELS  
SANDRA THOMPSON  
SHIRLEY THOMPSON  
LOUIS WILLIAMS, JR

**5-YEARS**

JEWELL H. BAKER  
DAWN CLONTZ  
EMILY S. COCKRUM  
JACK C. COCKRUM  
ANNE DADY  
DON HOGUE  
CAROL B. MOSELEY  
CORLISS POOLE  
CONRAY STRONG

**MG YOUTH GARDEN**

We had a smaller turn-out for planting the fall youth garden than in previous years, but the garden looks great! Master Gardeners are invited to help work the garden and to enjoy the “fruits of your labor.” Greens need picking. So, please come by on Tuesday or Thursday mornings about 7:30 or 8:00 a.m. and help weed and then pick some veggies. Lloyd Wessels, Garden Chair, welcomes your help. Reports are that the greens are really tasty this fall.

**REMEMBERING THOSE WHO HAVE GONE BEFORE US**

The Jefferson County Master Gardeners have mourned the loss of three of our members this year. We lost: *Ailene Perkins* – Master Gardener (1991); *Eddie Davis* – Master Gardener (2001); *Vida Patterson* – Master Gardener (2000). They will truly be missed.

## **“THE TALE OF THE TWIG GIRDLER”**

(Sherry Beaty, County Extension Agent – Agriculture)

Sherry Beaty, county Extension agent – Agriculture for Howard County, recently wrote about “The Tale of the Twig Girdler” in her Howard County Horticulture Newsletter, “*Beauty’s Only Dirt Deep.*” I present this information because we have a gentleman who has girdlers attacking his oak trees, and I often see samples brought in from hickory and pecan trees as well.

Beaty writes, “I’ve already had a few cases of these brought into the office, so I thought I would tell the tale of the twig girdler. Let me start... About this time every year, homeowners report that their pecans, hickory, and other hardwood trees are losing branches – sometimes several every day. Is it a squirrel? Is it an overzealous gardener with pruning shears? **NO!** It’s the handiwork of the twig girdler (*Oncideres cingulata*). Pecan, hickories, and persimmon are the preferred hosts, but other hardwoods, including oak and honeylocust, may be attacked.

In late summer and early fall, after mating occurs, female twig girdlers select a small twig about three-eighths of an inch in diameter and covered with just a thin layer of bark. The female beetle chews around the entire exterior of the twig until the twig is almost separated from the tree. This causes part of the twig to die – this process is called girdling.

The female beetle then gnaws a V-shaped small notch in the dead or dying part of the twig and lays her eggs in the notch. The twig usually falls to the ground. When the eggs hatch, the emerging larvae continue to live in the twig, feeding on its dead wood. The larvae grow, and eventually construct a mass of frass in which they pupate. After they pupate, the larvae



have changed into adult beetles, and they chew their way out of their twig. Adult beetles fly away to new host trees. Initially, the foliage at the ends of the twigs turns brown prematurely and the damage can be scattered throughout the crown of the tree. Shortly afterwards, especially after a windy day, the twigs fall to the ground. The dropped twigs look like they’ve been neatly cut from the tree with a pruning shear. The injury will have slightly rounded edges and will feel a little rough from the beetles chewing on it. Trees damaged by the twig

girdler will usually recover. Older, larger trees might have smaller twigs damaged, resulting in minimal damage to the crown. In young trees, however, damage can be severe from the resulting deformed stems and reduced vigor. No control is recommended, although gathering and destroying the damaged twigs will help reduce future infestations.”

## **IDENTIFYING COMMON DISEASES**

We often see plants of various kinds brought into the office for disease identification. If you would like to look on the web to answer your own curiosity about certain diseases, follow this link for a Plant Disease Link:

[http://www.aragriculture.org/diseases/image\\_library/default.htm](http://www.aragriculture.org/diseases/image_library/default.htm)

**Turnip Disease** - We had a run last week from gardeners wanting to know what was killing their turnip greens. The problem was also severe a year ago in the Master Gardener Youth Garden and has to a lesser degree shown up this year.

The disease is Cercospora Leaf Spot.





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The disease is Cercospora Leaf Spot.



**Pecan Production** - This time of year many samples of pecans come into the office. Home gardeners/pecan growers often show us that their pecans have a dark color and taste bitter. This usually is the result of plant bug or stink bug feeding in the spring and summer. Pecan trees need to have adequate insect protection like any other crop we grow. Sanitation around the pecan orchard is the most recommended practice for trees around homes and property that are not in a commercial orchard.

Insect control recommendations can be found on the UA Extension website at:

[http://www.uaex.edu/Other\\_Areas/publications/PDF/MP144/D\\_Pecan.pdf](http://www.uaex.edu/Other_Areas/publications/PDF/MP144/D_Pecan.pdf) Take note that homeowners and gardeners can't purchase restricted-use pesticides that may be recommended for commercial operators.

For information on pecan production look online at:

[http://www.uaex.edu/Other\\_Areas/publications/PDF/FSA-6110.pdf](http://www.uaex.edu/Other_Areas/publications/PDF/FSA-6110.pdf)

Pecans also need proper fertility. Look for that information at:

[http://www.uaex.edu/Other\\_Areas/publications/PDF/FSA-6131.pdf](http://www.uaex.edu/Other_Areas/publications/PDF/FSA-6131.pdf)

Pecans may also get diseases. Look for info on diseases at:

[http://www.uaex.edu/Other\\_Areas/publications/PDF/FSA-7540.pdf](http://www.uaex.edu/Other_Areas/publications/PDF/FSA-7540.pdf)

All of the publications named above may be purchased online by visiting the Extension publications website at:

<http://pubs.uaex.edu/pubsWebuser.asp> Prices are shown for each publication. If you desire to do so, you can also just print off a copy of each publication you find that you like.

### **SOIL FERTILITY AND FERTILIZING**

Fall is a great time to pull soil samples to determine soil fertility values and to make adjustments to lime needs as well as phosphorus (P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub>) and potash (K<sub>2</sub>) needs. For fall crops, Nitrogen (N) can also be applied but for spring crops, we don't recommend fall applications of N.

To correctly pull soil samples, one has to have either a soil probe or a shovel/trowel. For lawns, take the soil samples from the top couple of inches of soil (debris and thatch removed first) for a number of places in the lawn. I like to make a cut in the soil then, pull the shovel out and make a second cut an inch behind the first. Then I lift out the shovel width to a two-inch depth, cut out the center one inch so I have about a one-inch square sample, two inches long. This is placed in a clean bucket, and other samples are added to the bucket across the sample area. Then, a one pint sample is taken to the Extension office for processing.

For gardens and flower beds that are tilled several inches deep each year, the same procedure as above may be used - but sample to a six-inch depth.

**Lime** - Lime is more valuable to low pH soils than fertilizer. So, we recommend addition of lime ahead of adding fertilizer for lawns and gardens. Once lime adjustments are made to the soil, a new soil test the following fall should be done just to see if the proper adjustment is made.

**N-P-K** - The major elements needed for growing plants is *N*, *P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub> [P]* and *K<sub>2</sub>O [K]*, which can be purchased in many locations as triple 13 (13-13-13) or in other analyses like 10-20-10, 5-15-30, etc. Knowing your soil test numbers can help greatly in knowing how to add fertility for the major nutrients. In some cases, little if any *P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub>* is needed so use of triple 13 can cause excess buildup of the P levels.

When purchasing single ingredient fertilizers, most of us will get a bag of urea containing 46% *N*. We can buy other *N* containing fertilizers, but urea is the most prevalent. Ammonium nitrate was once easy to find (34%*N*) but because it was used to make the bomb in the Oklahoma federal building a few years ago, laws have been tightened on its manufacture, storage and sales. Hence, ammonium nitrate is harder to find than ever before.

If only *P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub>* is needed, it is sold as triple superphosphate (about 46% *P*, 0-46-0). And if *K* is the only nutrient needed, it is sold as muriate of potash or 0-0-60. The trouble with purchasing single fertilizer materials is they may come in 50

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pound bags and we only need 5-10 pounds per year or application. That means we may have an excess of products to store and use later. Some of the products are oxidizers and they will draw moisture and become clumpy and harder to disperse/apply evenly.

### SKUNKS

Extension Wildlife Specialist Rebecca “Becky” McPeake, has recently authored a new fact sheet on “*Dealing with Skunks and Odor Abatement*” (FSA 9101). Review this document at: [http://www.uaex.edu/Other\\_Areas/publications/PDF/FSA-9101.pdf](http://www.uaex.edu/Other_Areas/publications/PDF/FSA-9101.pdf)

### LISTEN TO JANET CARSON

If you missed some of the videos of Janet Carson, Extension horticulture specialist, on KARK at Noon, look for the list of topics shown on the Home and Garden website of the UA Cooperative Extension Service. Link: [http://www.arhomeandgarden.org/janet\\_carson.htm](http://www.arhomeandgarden.org/janet_carson.htm) Better hurry, 'cause the info is only for the 2008 calendar year. These could be taken down after the first of the year to make room for new videos for 2009.

### 2009 HOME AND GARDEN SEMINAR & SHOW

Plans are underway for revamping our annual seminar and show from Lawn and Garden to Home and Garden. The 2009 Home and Garden Seminar & Show is to be held on **Valentine's Day, February 14**, at the Pine Bluff Convention Center. Set up for exhibitors will be Friday, February 13.

**Theme:** The theme for 2009 is "My Heart is in the Garden." Many more planning committee members are needed over the next couple of months to pull this off.

- **Got Gas?** This year, MG will take donations for \$500 worth of gas cards to be used anywhere in the nation. Tickets are available for each MG to sell between now and the seminar/show. Each MG is encouraged to take at least one bundle of tickets (25) that sell for \$1 each. Money is to be turned in as soon as tickets are sold to the Extension office or to Linda Power, MG treasurer.
- **Volunteer Your Time!!!** Please volunteer your time to help with the program planning as well as for set up and show day! Everyone is needed in some role!



County Extension Agent-Staff Chair