



## Over the Garden Gate

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## President's Corner

by Sarah Galshack

Dear Master Gardeners,  
Can you believe it's December? Where or where did the other eleven months go? I guess what I'm saying is familiar to each of you, and that is, time flies. When I began my year as HCMG President the months stretched out before me as if to never end and days melted one into another. Well those days and months have come to an abrupt halt and my tenure as President is just about over.

I think the time flew so quickly from month to month, meeting to meeting, because of the interesting "Land Ethics" speakers that came to share their knowledge with us. One of the responsibilities we have

as Master Gardeners is to always be updating and increasing our knowledge base so that we can better serve the Extension and our clients. To this end, we were fortunate to be able to bring in Dr. Doug Tallamy for a continuing education seminar. This was the first time HCMG has ventured into bringing a nationally renowned author and speaker for our benefit. If you missed it, I'm sorry, for you missed a wonderful seminar on an important trend in gardening today.

And yes, I said last January we'd have to become more tech savvy with the debut of our new website, our e-vite invitation system, the sign-up

genius for volunteer positions and last but far from least, the new MGLog system for recording our volunteer hours. Now wasn't all that techie stuff fun??? Keep thinking positive!

I want to thank each and every member for the contributions they make to this wonderful organization. We have so many talented members who are so generous with their time and expertise. A big thank you to Wanda and Michael for their continued support throughout this past year. They are always readily available to help in any way. Thank you for the opportunity to serve as President and I wish each of you a happy and healthy gardening New Year!

## Container Gardening: Terrariums by Karin Hicks

Terrariums are making a come back and are a great alternative to those who don't have a green thumb, especially when it comes to houseplants. Terrariums require very little care due to their self-sustaining environments and they are very easy to make. First you will need to choose a glass container. Some container ideas include bottles, aquariums, fishbowls, canning jars, flower

vases, bowls or just about any clear glass. Then decide which plants you want to include in your terrarium. Some popular choices include venus fly trap, sun dew, pitcher plant, small ferns, miniature African violets, moss, succulents, strawberry begonia, starfish plant, and nerve plant.. You will then need to collect your materials to create

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## Notes from the Extension Office

by Wanda Cannon



Fall foliage on blueberry shrub

Twenty fourteen was an eventful year for the Hall County master Gardener Extension volunteers. The HCMG's are going strong with their many projects and events.

There are many exciting things on the horizon for 2015! I will kick off another new Master Gardener program on Tuesday, January 6th. We will have 20 new trainees eagerly waiting to get started on their way to becoming a master gardener. I will send out a program schedule for all and I invite you to come and sit in on one of our classes. Just give me a call and let me know you will be attending. It is only \$5.00 to attend.

Gainesville will host a new program called "Grow Strong" on Friday, January 30th from 9am to 4pm here in Hall County. Master Gardeners from across northeast Georgia will come together to update and refresh their horticultural knowledge. There will be UGA specialists and faculty to help update you on current research in our state initiative areas,

including Environmental Stewardship, Home Food Production, Gardening with Youth, Value of Landscapes and Health Benefits of Gardening. I will be sending out pertinent information on this special meeting that will take place for all Northeast Georgia Master Gardeners. Make plans to attend this day event. Registration will be required and lunch will be provided.

Look for openings next year of the new botanical garden and native plant preserve. Gainesville Botanical Gardens and Linwood Preserve will be two major assets for our area with many volunteer possibilities to come! Also, our bi-annual Garden Walk will be next year in May. This will also be a great way to get involved and be a part of our growing HCMG group!

There have been changes with our new volunteer recording process. It has been a learning curve for us all, but I appreciate all of the great strides made by you all to get

familiar with this new process. Change can be difficult, but hopefully we will get everyone's volunteer hours logged in with this new system.

Michael and I will continue to support you all! UGA / Extension appreciates all of the wonderful service work you all do for our growing community. It is amazing how many compliments I get about this great group of volunteers that are spreading their gardening knowledge throughout the community. You are all loved around here!

Make time to come in and volunteer in the office this next spring and keep up to date with all of the new happenings in the horticulture world. Spending a half day or whole day in the office keeps you up to date with new knowledge.

We wish you all very happy holidays and Christmas and prosperous and healthy New Year! Again thank you for all you do! You make Hall County a beautiful place to live!

After the leaves have fallen, we return to a plain sense of things

~ Wallace Stevens  
American poet

## Pushing Zones

by Karin Hicks

It was just a few years ago that the USDA published a new plant hardiness zone map. Parts of Hall county remained 7b but some of us moved to 8a. The past few winters sure haven't felt like zone 8a. At least that's what some of my plants are telling me. So what's a gardener to do? Well, if you have plants that are marginally

hardy try adding some extra mulch at the crown of the plant to keep the soil temperature regular. Improve the drainage situation since the combination of wet and cold is what causes damage to most plants. Adding some more organic matter such as compost will help too. But, another way to push the zone

in your garden is to find a warm microclimate . Microclimates are created by exposure (which direction the land faces), surrounding plants and their effect on light levels, topography, proximity to heated buildings or reflective surfaces and other factors. Potential spots are often found on the south facing side of

your home, at the foot of a stone wall or nooks among large rocks. These areas should be well-drained, especially in winter. Once you've identified your spot you can trick nature by planting spring blooming bulbs such as snowdrops or crocus in your microclimate and enjoy an early spring in your garden.

## *Planting Garlic*

*by Karin Hicks*

I don't know how we got to winter so quickly. I was so busy this fall enjoying our gorgeous weather I never got around to planting a fall garden. But don't despair because it's not too late to plant garlic.

There are two main groups of garlic: softneck and hardneck. The kind offered at most grocery stores is softneck. It is milder in flavor and produces more cloves and stores longer than the hardneck. Most chefs prefer hardneck because it has a stronger flavor and has easy-to-peel cloves. Whereas softneck flourishes in warmer climates, hardneck thrives in colder regions.

A good time to plant is in late fall, even after the first frost. Break bulbs into cloves and plant 4-6 inches apart in straight rows with 18 to 24 inches between rows with the pointed end facing up. Cover with two inches of soil.

Garlic is most successful in well drained soil which is rich in organic matter. Adding mulch is a good way to retain moisture and regulate soil temperature. Be sure to keep it well watered.

In spring feed with a good fertilizer or manure. Cut scapes when they begin

to curl the leaves. This will help bulbs grow larger. When the leaves begin to discolor-yellow or brown-it is almost ready to harvest. Stop watering the plants and wait until one-third of the plant looks withered and is turning brown. Then start digging up the bulbs.

To cure garlic bundle or braid the plant and hang it in a place with good air circulation and minimal sunlight. Curing takes three to six weeks. Once garlic is ready, cut roots and store in a cool, dry place. Softnecks can be stored up to 8 months while hardnecks are good for 6 months or less.

## *Keep Your Compost Cooking in Winter*

*by Karin Hicks*

Even in winter a compost pile is alive. The cold weather will certainly slow the decomposition process but you can still maintain an essential core of heat and let the microorganisms such as bacteria, fungi and actinomycetes work on decomposing your browns and greens by creating the ideal habitat for these microbes.

While the outside layer of your pile will be ambient temperature the inside heat is a by-product of the chemical process of breaking down the material. Make sure your microbes have a balanced diet of carbon and nitrogen

rich materials -your browns and greens. Help the chilly microbes out by chopping or shredding your material before adding them to your pile. Pieces smaller than 2" is recommended so the pile heats up uniformly. Small particles form a mat that shields the pile's warm core from outside temperature extremes. Instead of just adding ingredients to your compost like you may do in spring and summer take time to add layers of brown ingredients to your greens. These layers will help trap heat and gasses inside. Winter winds and low humidity levels can suck the moisture out

of your compost pile. Covering your pile with a tarp can help prevent heat and moisture loss but be sure to add water if you shield it from its natural sources. Packing straw bales around your bin or pile will add another layer of protection from wind and cold. In warm weather turning your pile often to provide oxygen to the microbes is best but you'll want to leave your compost undisturbed during the winter and wait until spring to turn it when you should have a fresh batch of beautiful compost for your garden.

## *Growing Native: American Holly*

*by Janelle Whalen*

Many of us have holly cultivars that we love to cut in December to decorate our homes, but our native "American Holly" (*Ilex opaca*) decorates the woods and roadsides all over northeast Georgia. Though it's usually a medium-sized evergreen tree, it can grow up to 70 feet tall. Like all species in the Aquifoliaceae family, it is dioecious (di-eshus), which

means that the male and female flowers grow on different trees. If you want to know if you have a male or female holly tree you will need to look, early in the spring, at the tiny flowers. If the flowers have stamens, you have a male tree. If they don't have stamens you have a female tree. If you have a female tree and want lots of berries, you'll have to get a male tree and plant it

close by. There are some species of hollies in our state that are deciduous (their leaves drop in fall), and some even have black berries, but most of those are found in South Georgia. If you spot a tree in the wild that has typical evergreen holly-like leaves, red berries, and light gray bark (often splotted with lichens), you've probably found our native American Holly.





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### Container Gardening: Terrariums *(cont. from pg. 1)*

your terrarium. You will need river gravel, pea gravel or small rocks, ground charcoal, potting soil, and decorative rocks, shells or wood. Then the fun can begin. Terrariums don't have any drainage so you will need to create false drainage by using gravel or rocks in the bottom of the container. This layer should be about 1" deep.

Next add 1/2" layer of ground charcoal on top of the gravel. Charcoal helps keep your terrarium fresh and prevents mold or bacteria from growing. It is messy so you may want to wear gloves. Next add 2-3" of potting soil. If you are planting cactus or succulents be sure to use cactus potting soil. Then add your terrarium plants. Never mix plants that prefer drought conditions with plants that need more water. Place the tallest plant in the back or center of your container. Try not to let plants touch the sides of the container and leave room between plants. After all your plants are in place plant some moss or add some other type of ground cover such as decorative rock, wood or figurines to complete your mini garden. Water is the last thing to add. Less is more. Underwater or misting works best. Do not place your terrarium in direct sunlight. Regular day light is best. Once you build your first terrarium you can easily become addicted and believe me you will never look at a glass container the same way again. After all, you can't just have one terrarium.

## Winter Gardening Calendar

*by Hugo Kollmer*

I hope they are wrong, but forecasters are predicting another colder than normal winter. I cringe when I recall the effects of last winter's frigid weather on so many ornamentals, particularly those which are marginally hardy in our area. Steps which you can take to protect plants include mulching heavily or digging them up and moving them indoors.

Here are additional suggestions for a few wintertime gardening chores:

- You can still plant garlic and shallots for the next couple of weeks. Planting depth especially with shallots, is important. Shallots must be planted shallow. Harvest these crops in late spring and store them properly.
- Service equipment including tillers, mowers and trimmers. Add stabilizer to prevent fuel

from deteriorating.

- Repair arbors and pergolas damaged by decay, termites and stress.
- Turn your compost pile, and add high nitrogen fertilizer to hasten decomposition.
- Collect evergreen foliage and mistletoe to use as decorations.
- Apply slow release fertilizer to pansies and snapdragons.
- Perennial weed grasses can be controlled with an application of glyphosate **when grasses are completely dormant**.
- Continue to water newly planted evergreen shrubs if soil becomes dry.
- Remove old foliage from Lenten roses (*Helleborus orientalis*). Fertilize them when new growth appears.

- Start amaryllis, paper whites and other flower bulbs indoors for gorgeous blooms within a few weeks.
- Remove any remaining dead vegetation from flower beds. However, do not remove old stalks from herbaceous species of Hibiscus until new growth appears.
- Cover perennials except peonies, with mulch. Peonies bloom best after being exposed to cold.
- Prune fruit trees, except peaches and fruiting vines. Prune peaches in early March. Prune shade trees, roses and shrubs which bear blossoms on new growth.
- In late winter, cut branches of forsythia, quince spirea, crabapple and saucer

magnolia. Place them in a vase of water to force blooming

- In late winter also cut back ornamental grasses close to ground level.
- Keep several empty herb and spice containers with shaker tops on hand and utilize them to hold and dispense vegetable and flower seeds. Using this method is easier than trying to dispense seeds from their packet. Shaker tops come with various size openings. Use the appropriate size for the seeds you are sowing.