General meeting speaker has local ties

Dr. Aaron Patton, Purdue Extension Turf grass specialist, will be the speaker at our March 29 general meeting. Dr. Patton’s topic is *Helping Your Lawn Recover from Drought.*

Dr. Patton’s turf career actually started when he was a teenager here in Bloomington. "When I was 15 years old, I started working at the Indiana University golf course in Bloomington where I cleaned golf carts, helped out on the driving range, and occasionally worked in the pro shop. While there I had the opportunity to meet the golf course superintendent, Brent Emerick, and I began to be more interested in turf as I learned more about his career. That initial experience ultimately led me to make a decision to major in turfgrass science at Iowa State University and pursue my graduate education in turfgrass science back home at Purdue University.

Prior to returning to Purdue University in July 2010, Dr. Patton served as the Turfgrass Extension Specialist at the University of Arkansas where he served the Arkansas turfgrass industry, conducted research, and mentored graduate students.

The general meeting will begin at 6:30 p.m. in the Education Room of the Monroe County Extension Office at 3400 South Walnut Street. Refreshment Committee members are Chair Melissa Britton, Penny Austin, Mary Hoffmann, and Dot Owen. Jim Jeffries has volunteered for Set-Up/Tear-Down duty.
Member News

We invite all members and interns to attend our March 29 general meeting at the Extension Office. Lots of spring events are on the agenda as well as an educational presentation. Be sure to be there.

On Saturday, February 19, four of our members, Gloria Noone, Ann McEndarfer, Barb Cappy, and Nancy White, attended a busy day at the Princeton. Indian seminar, Once Upon a Garden. Topics for the program included Controlling Plant Diseases by Dan Engel, Purdue University, Summer Bulbs and Winter Gardens, by Colletta Kosiba, Indianapolis MG and author, Native Plants by Mark Dauble, horticulturist, and Trees and Drought Recovery by Jack Brown, arborist.

A homemade luncheon and interesting vendors helped make the day a pleasant diversion from our difficult winter scene.

This writer had a “lifetime first” event on the evening of February 22. While leaving our house, the car headlights revealed a surprised barred owl on a short garden pole as he stalked a bit of supper. What a lovely creature he was, but the sighting was brief as he disappeared into the brush. Now that I know he is around, I will be more observant in case he returns.

At a recent Board meeting, the coordinators for our June 11 garden walk, Mary Hawkins and Diana Dingman, spoke about our annual affair and reported that invitations will come to us by email, in order to be more environmentally and fiscally sound. Those without email addresses will receive a paper copy by surface mail. Be sure to save the late afternoon and evening of Saturday, June 11, for our very own annual MG Garden Walk.

Volunteer opportunities

As one of its goals for 2011, the MCMGA Board is encouraging interns who have not yet received their certification to submit articles for our monthly newsletter, Roots and Shoots. Karen Sparks has already accepted the challenge and appears regularly with her Web Castings column. Why not try out your creative writing and reporting skills on the topics of your choice? Helen Hollingsworth, our journalist and newsletter editor, can fill you in on all the details. The monthly deadlines for copy and printing dates are located in Folia and Flora. Any time spent in writing articles qualifies for volunteer hours.

This year MGs will have their booth at the Farmer's Market in downtown Bloomington. The booth will be from 8:00-noon on Saturdays, starting in early April. Those who staff the booth can work for any time slot and will gain volunteer hours as they answer questions about our activities as community gardeners. All materials and booth equipment is provided. If you are interested in working at the booth during the months of April and May, please contact Nancy White.
Fourteen Master Gardeners to receive badges

By Amy Thompson

Fourteen advanced Master Gardeners will receive badges at the March 29 general meeting or will have their badges sent to them. Those who have earned new badges are Moya Andrews, gold; Charlotte Griffin, silver; Bob Baird, bronze; Nancy Fee, bronze; Ann McEndarfer, bronze; Nancy Miller, bronze; Peggy Rees-Krebs, bronze; Katherine Wallskog, bronze; Cindy Benson, advanced; Diana Dingman, advanced; Evelyn Harrell, advanced; Linda Heath, advanced; Karen O’Brien, advanced, and Martha Tarbah, advanced. Congratulations to all!

Badges are awarded when members earn the following cumulative education and volunteer hours: gold: 100 education and 1000 volunteer; silver: 75 education and 500 volunteer; bronze: 60 education and 200 volunteer; advanced: 45 education and 60 volunteer.

To maintain active status, members donate twelve hours of volunteer service and complete a minimum of six education hours. Hours may be reported to the extension office or online at http://www.four-h.purdue.edu/mg/.

Fertilizing spring-flowering bulbs

Submitted by Amy Thompson

The best time to fertilize spring-flowering bulbs is when foliage emerges in the spring rather than at flowering. Traditionally, gardeners have applied fertilizer during bloom or a bit after, but because bulb roots start to die at flowering, fertilizer applied at bloom is wasted. Roots are active when the foliage first pokes through the ground. Nutrients applied then help the plant produce flowers the following year.

If bulbs have been fertilized in the past, there is often plenty of phosphorus and potassium in the soil. It is best to use a soil test to be certain. If the soil needs phosphorus and potassium, use a complete fertilizer (such as 10-10-10, 9-9-6, etc.) at the rate of 2.5 lbs. per 100 square feet. This would equal one rounded teaspoon per square foot. If phosphorus and potassium are not needed, blood meal makes an excellent fertilizer. It should be applied at the rate of 2 lbs. per 100 square feet or one teaspoon per square foot. Lawn fertilizers such as a 27-3-3 or 30-3-3 can be used, but cut the rate by a third.

Remember to leave the foliage until it dies naturally. The energy in the foliage is transferred to the bulb as the foliage dies and will help bloom next year. (WU)


Spring Wildflower Foray dates announced

Submitted by Evelyn Harrell

One sure sign of spring’s approach is the annual Spring Wildflower Foray! April 22—24, 2011 are the dates; times vary, free (with a few exceptions); check online schedule at http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/hoosier/docs/events/wildflower.htm. Between 20 and 25 hikes and programs take place over a three-day period. The primary focus is on the natural history and environmental concerns relating to Brown County, especially as they relate to wildflower and bird populations. Included are wildflower and bird walks, wetlands hikes, a boat trip, nature photography and other programs related to the theme of the event.
Book Review: Creative shaping of trees and shrubs


I was gifted with my first topiary on Mother’s Day last year. It was beautifully formed, two rounded balls of boxwood. I was repeatedly told it was a houseplant (I believe they feared I would plant it outside), but my main concern was caring for it properly—pruning, fertilizing, insect invasion. I found the book *Container Topiary* which answered many of my questions and offered much more.

What is a topiary? According to *Container Topiary*, it is an ancient art of geometrically shaping trees and shrubs, used frequently as a design feature in classical gardens. History reveals to us that gardeners have trained shrubs and trees since the 17th century. Even though topiary has waxed and waned in popularity since the 18th century, there are still some devotees who excel in the time-consuming art and create whole gardens based on topiary forms and shapes.

*Container Topiary* contains six chapters: “Topiary Techniques” describes containers, frames, and cultivation; “Simple Shapes” discusses cubes, pyramids and balls; “Fancy Shapes” takes it a step farther by spotlighting on spirals, pompoms, hearts, and animal shapes; “Topiary Standards” illustrates the beauty of flowering, foliage and grafted standards; “Quick Topiary” demonstrates how to create false topiary globes, pyramids, spirals, and the use of annuals; and “Displaying Topiary” offers suggestions on how to use topiary to frame a view, a doorway, balconies, and window sills.

*Container Topiary* also includes a “Directory of Plants”, a glossary, list of suppliers, and an index. Each chapter has a “How To” section with illustrations, which I found very helpful, and pages of great photography.

*Container Topiary* is a quick read, consisting of 92 pages, and offers ideas, projects, and advice for creating topiary in containers. Not all my questions on care for a topiary plant were answered, yet I have a greater appreciation for the craft from reading this book. The innovative and fresh ideas have been a valuable asset to my continued education as a Master Gardener.

### Winter pruning

The best time to prune a plant is when pruning will shock the plant the least, and often this is during the time the plant is dormant. Be mindful of a plant’s growth patterns before pruning. For example, some shrubs and vines, especially hydrangeas and clematis, bloom on old growth, some on new, and some on both. Trimming branches or vines at the wrong time can mean diminished bloom. Some shrubs, such as callicarpa, caryopteris, and red twig dogwoods, benefit from late winter/early spring pruning. Repeat-bloom roses are pruned in late winter to remove weak or dead stems and to encourage new growth, but roses that bloom only once per season are pruned after flowering.
Annual Master Gardener state conference is a special treat

Registration time is rapidly approaching from the 2011 State Master Gardener Conference, hosted this year by the Allen County Master Gardener Association. If you have not attended a state conference or if it has been awhile, why not treat yourself to a gardeners’ mini vacation?

During 2010, some pre conference touring opportunities included the Hodge Garden at the home of a Gold Level Master Gardener, the Celery Bog/Lily Nature Center and Samara, a Frank Lloyd Wright Home. This included touring the gardens, the interior of the home, and meeting the original owner.

An interesting workshop at this particular conference was on grafting. Working with apple trees, the workshop provided a hands-on opportunity to learn several grafting techniques. Sessions personally attended and enjoyed included Claire Sawyers’ Gardens with a Sense of Place and Mike Dana’s Tough, Dependable Perennials.

A featured speaker, Tom Turpin, brought his own style of humor as well as a pet chicken and a Madagas- car hissing roach that pulled a toy tractor.

As with other conferences, a variety of vendors were available with items such as unique plants, hardscape, jewelry, and birdfeeders, as well as demonstrations of new products and free samples.

Each State Conference is unique. Soon information on registration will be available on the Allen County Conference. We look forward to seeing you in Ft Wayne.
Web Castings  Some ‘pre-digested’ web offerings provided by local Master Gardeners and their friends.

This month, it’s all about ROSES. I know that I am not the only Master Gardener or MG intern who knows zip-nada about roses, and also that some/many of you are true experts. So, I will tread lightly here and poke around for some help. (I put out the call at the last MG meeting, with this topic, but no responses by deadline; later is AOK too, remember.)

My sister-in-law Kathy Sparks, on Slippery Elmshoot here in Brown County, is my local go-to rose expert and friend and also became a MG when living in Washington State. She has antique roses, shrub roses, all types but tea (which she does not suggest for here), and is part of the inspiration for me to begin to learn more, hence this column topic. One tidbit of rose advice from her: use roses growing on their own roots, not grafted. She has had good experiences with www.heirloomroses.com out of Oregon, and also with www.davidaustinroses.com out of Tyler, Texas. Both web sites look very informative/yummy.

In looking around myself, I hit a really basic rose mother lode of a good starting point: www.roses.org sponsored by AARS (All-America Rose Selections). I learned some things immediately, such as, roses need six hours of full sun each day (duh!). That means the one rose I have ever planted, a climber, two years ago, is in the way wrong place, perhaps explaining why it is just sitting there. That it has not died yet is because, well, it is taunting me.

Also on that site, I ran across a couple of books I may just have to get. The first is about companion planting, *Roses love Garlic: Secrets of Companion Planting* by Louise Riotte (Garden Way Publishing, 1998; $15/$10.17 on www.amazon.com). The next is *The Ultimate Rose*, by the American Rose Society (DK Publishing, 2000; $19.95/$1.96+ on Amazon). It contains a plethora of pictures, lots on history, types, shapes, colors, and a warning that you will surely add to your wish list by looking. I know I plan to.

We have that constant deer problem on our property, and I found something deer do not like online for roses (and more): Plantskydd, now available to the public, not just nurseries, can be ordered online at www.treeworld.com. That site gives a couple of Indiana sources south of Indy. I have tried DeerVik, which is gooey, messy, and gets onto my dog; this product is different, and I might just try it. Anybody with experience with either of these? Or other ideas that work for you? Let me know, good column topic. Till next time... happy planning dreaming scheming. Spring just has to be coming soon.

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**T.C. Steele garden panel discussion**

Are you ready for spring? Join us at the T.C. Steele State Historic Site on March 10 at 6:30 p.m. for a Garden Panel Discussion on garden design. Members of the panel include Rhonda Baird, permaculture designer and teacher, who will discuss edible landscapes; Corey Mauder, a landscape designer and consultant, who will talk about the basic steps in garden design; and Christine Atkinson, arts program developer at T.C. Steele, who will take participants on a journey back in time to discover how Selma Steele planned and designed her gardens. Registration is not required, and the cost is $5 per person. For information, please contact 812-988-2785 or tcsteeleshs@dnr.in.gov.
Organic apple production and marketing webinar now available

Several hundred apple growers watched our live webinar last week on organic apple production and marketing techniques. But if you missed the live webinar, we have good news! The hour-long webinar was recorded and has now been posted online. You can watch it for free on your computer screen whenever you have the time.

Here’s the web link where you can watch the free webinar: http://www.attra.ncat.org/video/#apples

This organic apple webinar was produced by the National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT), with funding provided by USDA through the ATTRA program (National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service).

Here’s a quick overview of the Organic Apple webinar: Once thought of as practically impossible, profitable organic apple production is now a reality for established apple growers from coast to coast. The techniques for successful organic apple production are backed up by research and recommendations from universities such as Cornell, Michigan State and Washington State. Organic apple growers face many hurdles, from pest control and certification to marketing. This free webinar addresses these hurdles.

Topics covered by this hour-long webinar include the following:

● Overview and trends in organic apple production and marketing in the U.S.

● Organic apple production techniques for different regions of the country.

● Disease control with organic fungicides and disease-resistant varieties of apples.

● Insect and mite control with kaolin clay, pheromones, and new-generation pesticides.

● Farmscaping to optimize biological control with beneficial insects.

● Control of vertebrate pests in orchards such as deer and voles.

● Non-chemical weed control in organic apple orchards.

● Economics and marketing of organic apples — how can I make a profit?

To watch the free webinar on Organic Apple Production and Marketing, please visit this link: http://www.attra.ncat.org/video/#apples. Questions? Contact us at webinars@ncat.org.
Soil temperature and vegetables

One of the most neglected tools for vegetable gardeners is a soil thermometer. Soil temperature is a much better measure of when to plant than air temperature or the calendar. Planting when soil is too cool can cause seeds to rot and transplants to just sit there.

A number of vegetables can germinate and grow at cool temperatures. For example, peas will germinate and grow well at a soil temperature of 40 F. Though lettuce, parsnips and spinach can sprout at a soil temperature of 35 F, they prefer at least 45 F for best germination and growth. Radishes also do well at a soil temperature of 45 F.

Warm-season crops such as tomatoes, sweet corn and beans prefer at least 55 F for germination (or transplanting), but others such as peppers, cucumbers, melons and sweet potatoes need it even warmer, about 60 F.

Taking soil temperature accurately is a bit of a science. First, use a metal soil thermometer, which is sold in many garden and hardware stores. Take temperature 2.5 inches deep at about 10 to 11 a.m. Diurnal variations affect soil temperature, with lowest readings after dawn and warmest around mid-afternoon. The late-morning reading gives a good average temperature. Also be sure to get a consistent reading for 4 to 5 days in a row before planting, and make sure a cold snap is not predicted.

An excellent guide sheet on this subject is published by the Alabama Cooperative Extension System and is titled “Soil Temperature Conditions for Vegetable Seed Germination.” It can be found at http://www.aces.edu/pubs/docs/A/ANR-1061/ANR-1061.pdf (WU)

Resist the urge to work wet soil

Many gardeners are getting that itch to get out the tiller and work up their garden soil. But many areas are still soggy from snow melt and rain, making soils too wet to work.

It really is best for your garden’s long-term health to resist the urge to work the soil when it is still wet. Whether you use a tiller, plow or just a garden spade, working wet soil can badly compact soil, and the negative effects will last for many years.

Working wet soil will pack soil particles tightly, leaving less room for water and air to penetrate. Compacted soil also makes it more difficult for plant roots and gardening equipment to move through the soil. The compression forms tight clumps of soil that become hard as rocks upon drying and are difficult to break up. In addition to making it difficult for plants to grow, compacted soils also tend to drain more slowly, in turn delaying the ability to work the soil after the next rainfall.

The best course of action is to prevent compaction in the first place. To determine whether your garden’s soil is dry enough to work, dig a trowel full of soil and squeeze it in your hand. Soil that crumbles through your fingers when squeezed is ready to garden.

By Rosie Lerner, Purdue Extension Horticulturist
Volunteer opportunities compiled by Nancy White

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<th>Location</th>
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<th>Jobs</th>
<th>Contact</th>
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<td>Hilltop Garden and Nature Center</td>
<td>year around</td>
<td>various</td>
<td>Lea Woodard, 855-2799</td>
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<td>MG Demonstration Garden</td>
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<td>Bethany Murray, 339-8876, <a href="mailto:bethany.murray@gmail.com">bethany.murray@gmail.com</a></td>
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<td>Bloomington Community Orchard</td>
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<td>Stacey Decker, <a href="mailto:getinvolved@bloomingtoncommunityorchard.org">getinvolved@bloomingtoncommunityorchard.org</a></td>
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<td>T. C. Steele SHS</td>
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<td>various</td>
<td>Davie Kean, 988-2785</td>
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<td>Flatwoods Park Butterfly Gardens</td>
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<td>various</td>
<td>Cathy Meyer, 349,2800</td>
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<td>year around</td>
<td>inquiries and research</td>
<td>Amy Thompson, 349-2575</td>
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<td>MCMGA Speakers Bureau</td>
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<td>Amy Thompson, 349-2575</td>
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<td>MCMGA Newsletter</td>
<td>year around</td>
<td>writing articles</td>
<td>Helen Hollingsworth, 332-7313</td>
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<td>MCMGA Web Site</td>
<td>year around</td>
<td>various</td>
<td>Barbara Hays, 332-4032</td>
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<td>MG Program Committee Member</td>
<td>year around</td>
<td>plan MG programs</td>
<td>Vicky St. Myers, 323-7072, Jeff Schafer,325-3130</td>
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<td>Middle Way House</td>
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<td>Clara Wilson, 333-7404</td>
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<td>Wylie House</td>
<td>year around</td>
<td>various</td>
<td>Sherry Wise, 855-6224</td>
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<td>Mother Hubbard’s Cupboard</td>
<td>year around</td>
<td>education, resource</td>
<td>Stephanie Solomon, 334-8374</td>
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<td>WonderLab Garden</td>
<td>2 times monthly</td>
<td>various</td>
<td>Nancy White, 824-4426</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hoosier Hills Foodbank</td>
<td>year around</td>
<td>various</td>
<td>Jessica Williams, 334-8374</td>
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<td>Cheryl’s Garden at Karst Farm Park</td>
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<td>design and maintain</td>
<td>Nancy Fee, 332-1940</td>
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Please wear your name badge when volunteering.

Remember to report 2010/2011 hours only at http://www.four-h.purdue.edu/mg/.
Meet me at the fair!

At our March 29th general meeting, members will be offered Garden Fair Save the Date cards that can be given or mailed to neighbors and friends. In this way, we can publicize our event throughout the area. Yard signs will also be available on March 29 for those who offered to place them on their property.

Jeff Schafer and the Fair Education Sessions Committee are working on the schedule of speakers and their topics. This list will be available soon. There will be two morning sessions and two in the afternoon. Each session will provide an hour of continuing education for Master Gardeners who attend.

Something new at the Garden Fair this year is our pansy sale. A local garden center will arrange the potted pansies that we will sell for a small profit to benefit our grant program. Be sure to let your friends and neighbors know about this chance to buy quality plants. MCMGA members earn volunteer hours for helping staff the pansy sale booth. Contact Billie Moore at billiebruce@gmail.com if you can help.

Dian Lock and her Door Prize Committee would be happy to accept any garden-related items that you could donate. Potted plants, garden books, tools, gift certificates, decorative items, bird houses, and baskets are some of the items that will be welcomed. Contact Dian with your contributions.

Peggy Reis-Krebs and her very busy vendor committee have announced that booths are filling up quickly and that vendors are encouraged to get their registrations in very soon.

This year we have a limited number of booths available outside the National Guard Armory for those vendors who have requested a fresh-air venue. All registrations must be in by March 23. If you know of any vendors who are considering purchasing a booth, urge them to contact Peggy for further information.

Annual versus perennial flowers

Comparing annual and perennial flowers is a little like comparing apples and oranges. Each type of flower has its own characteristics and advantages. Annual flowers tend to bloom from spring until autumn frost and are hard to beat in terms of showy, season-long color. Popular annual flowers include petunias, marigolds, zinnias and impatiens. For something a little more exotic, try spider flower (Cleome), gazania, vinca (Catharanthus) and lisianthus (Eustoma). For attractive foliage rather than flowers, try coleus, Joseph’s coat and snow-on-the-mountain.

Perennial flowers grow for three or more years but tend to have a relatively short season of bloom. Combining several species in your planting can yield season-long color. Popular perennials include daylilies, hosta, peonies and garden mums. For a spikey show of blue, try blazing star (Liatris). Or for a delicate bouquet of yellow, try coreopsis 'Moonbeam.' For dramatic late-season color, try black-eyed Susan (Rudbeckia) and purple coneflower (Echinacea).
Pruning overgrown apple trees

Apple trees that are not pruned for several years will often produce so many branches that little energy is left for fruit production. Overgrown apple trees are also difficult to harvest and spray. Gardeners who have such a tree are often at a loss as to how to get it back in shape.

Often the best recommendation for such a tree is to make one pruning cut at ground level and start over with a new tree. However, trees may have sentimental value that will make revitalization worth the time and effort. Realize that this will be a multi-year process because no more than 30 percent of the tree should be removed in one year. Here are some steps to follow:

1. Remove all dead wood. This does not count toward the 30 percent.
2. Remove suckers from the base of the tree.
3. Choose approximately six of the best branches to keep as scaffold branches.

Remove all others. Branches should be cut flush to the branch collar. The collar is the natural swelling that occurs where a branch connects to the trunk or to a larger branch. Removing the collar would leave a larger wound that would take additional time to heal. Do not paint wounds. Wounds heal more quickly if left open.

Candidates for removal include branches with narrow crotch angles, which are more likely to break in wind and ice storms, and those that cross branches you will save. This may be all that is possible the first year if the 30 percent threshold has been reached.

4. Thin the branches on each scaffold branch. Remove crowded branches to open up the tree to light and allow humidity to escape. Shorten each scaffold branch by cutting back to a side branch. When you are through, the tree should have enough wood removed so that a softball can be thrown through the tree.

Severe pruning often will cause an apple to tree to produce vigorous side shoots from the trunk called water sprouts. These should be removed throughout the growing season so the center of the tree stays open. (WU)

Our General Meeting is on Tuesday, March 29
6:30 p.m., Extension Office

Topic: Helping Your Lawn Recover from Drought
Presenter: Dr. Aaron Patton
Education Hours: 2