

## I look forward to meeting all of you

If you read the article in last week's Pontotoc Progress by Regina Butler, then you know that I am the new Mississippi State University Extension Agent for Pontotoc County.

I'm so honored to have the opportunity to work in this position. I'm excited to be back working in Pontotoc, not just because I live here, but because I know how friendly everyone is in Pontotoc County. When my husband, Chuck, and I first moved to Pontotoc, it seemed that everyone we met would ask the same series of questions – "Where are you from?, Where do you live?, and Do you have a garden?" These questions would typically be followed by "We would love for you to visit our church!"

We decided to visit all the churches we had been invit-



**All the Comforts of Home**  
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ed to attend. It took us quite a few Sundays to make it to all those churches and they were all very welcoming.

We also planted a garden just so we could say "yes" when people asked us if we had one. We went to the local Extension Office to get brochures on gardening and preserving vegetables. Mrs. Louise Daniels was always so friendly and helpful. In our first garden, Chuck planted five rows of cucumbers – big mistake! He has not been allowed to plant a cucumber plant since.

To tell you a little about

myself, I have a Bachelor's Degree in Home Economics with an emphasis in Dietetics, a Master's degree in Wellness with a minor in counseling, and a Doctoral degree in Educational Leadership with an emphasis in Higher Education.

I have worked at Pontotoc Hospital and at the North Mississippi Regional Center in Oxford as a Clinical Dietitian, the Institute of Child Nutrition at the University of Mississippi as a Program Specialist, and Delta State University as an Associate Professor and Director of the Coordinated Program in Nutrition and Dietetics. While working at the Institute of Child Nutrition at Ole Miss, I learned to appreciate the dedicated work of the many child nutrition professionals who work in our schools and child care facilities. I hope

to have the opportunity to network with the area child nutrition staff again.

Beth Youngblood and Jane Chamblee have told me how enthusiastic the local homemaker's clubs are. I'm especially looking forward to getting to know these ladies and learning more about each club.

As a parent of two former 4-H'ers and the wife of a 4-H'er, I've seen first-hand the positive impact that 4-H can have on young people. Before I began working away from home during the week at Delta State, my husband and I were leaders of a special projects 4-H club known as the Pontotoc Engineering and Technology 4-H Club.

During those years, several of our club members competed at State 4-H Club Congress and then compet-

ed and sometimes placed at the National 4-H Engineering, Science and Leadership Event at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana. One year in particular, Mississippi had eight contestants at Purdue, and four were members of our Engineering and Technology Club at Pontotoc. My husband, my two sons and I are all Lifetime Members of the Mississippi 4-H Volunteer Leaders Association, and my husband is a member and past president of the Mississippi 4-H State Advisory Council.

Pontotoc County Extension has a rich history of such dedicated Extension Agents that I can remember or have been told about, such as Lillian Hicks, Cecil Randle, Ernest Weatherly, Leonard Slade, Barbara Frost Guin, George William Gilliam, Louise Daniels, Dan-

ny Reed, Marte Rayburn, Ivory Lyles, Sharon Griffin Nettles, Charles Wilson, James E. Nail, Jackie Courson, Martha Stegall, Rhonda Robertson, Gale Chrestman, Angie Chrestman, Sherry Thompson, Linda Mitchell, Ricky Ferguson, Carla Stanford, and Beth Youngblood.

These are the individuals that I remember or have been told about, but we also appreciate the service of those I may not be aware of. They deserve much credit for their guidance and dedication. Although not presently in Pontotoc County, Angie Chrestman and Linda Mitchell are still working for MSU Extension. I look forward to working with the many Extension projects and events with our current Pontotoc County leadership team of Jane Chamblee, Tamara Farr, and James Shannon.

## Learn to identify your native wildflowers

During the spring and early summer, many Mississippi roadsides are decorated with a bouquet of wildflowers. Knowledge of some basic characteristics of wildflowers can lighten the burden of travel. The ability to identify wildflowers at 65 miles an hour can make a routine trip much more interesting.

I will focus on four common wildflower species of that blanket the thoroughfares of Mississippi. The flowers to be discussed include Queen Anne's Lace, coreopsis lanceolata, oxeye daisy, and fleabane.

The sources for this article include Mississippi State University Extension Service Southern Gardening publications by Dr. Gary Bachman including: "Queen Anne's Lace Thrives in Landscapes", "Plant State Wildflower Coreopsis in Landscapes", "Neglect and Enjoy Oxeye Daisies," and "Ditch Flowers"



**Farm & Garden Notes**  
**James Shannon**  
489-3910



Mississippi. It has eight yellow flower petals with toothlike edges. The flowers are one to two inches in diameter with a golden center. They grow to a height of approximately two feet. They are often called lanceleaf tickseed in reference to their tick shaped seeds.



**Oxeye Daisy**

Oxeye Daisy is a non-native perennial that was introduced to the United States from Europe. It grows to a height of approximately two feet in height with a two-inch flower. The flowers have twenty to twenty-five white petals with a slightly raised yellow center.



**Fleabane**

Fleabane produces the smallest flower discussed in this article. Each stem will produce a cluster of five or more flowers that are approximately 1/4 inch in diameter. They are native summer annual wildflowers that produce numerous white petals with a yellow center.

Wildflowers are in full bloom is Mississippi. On your next excursion use the information provided to see how many wildflowers you can identify. Good luck!



**Queen Anne's Lace**

Queen Anne's lace is easily identified by its umbrella shaped flowers that often sway in the breeze. Each flower head contains approximately one-thousand individual flowers that provide a lace like appearance. They actually look like a crocheted doily.

Queen Anne's lace is a biennial plant that grows to a height of approximately four feet. It is a non-native plant that was originally brought to the United States by European settlers. Queen Anne's lace is also known as wild carrot. Modern carrot varieties were selected from this plant. Unlike modern carrot varieties, the edible roots of Queen Anne's lace are colored white or pale yellow.

**Coreopsis Lanceolata**

Coreopsis lanceolata is a perennial native wildflower that is commonly known as lanceleaf coreopsis. It is not hard to understand why it is the state wildflower of Mis-

## The stars remind us to walk on with God

June has brought with it the night sounds that bring comfort to the soul. The frogs are hollering from the pool out back and the bullfrogs are sounding from yonder creek and lake.

Beyond that there are all these night bugs that set their humming tone providing for a musical backdrop to sound summer sleeping.

The other night my little Tuck sounded his alarm on the hill and I scooted outside to make sure nothing was near the house. The month of May was fading away into June's midnight.

The waxing gibbous moon was setting the dark green trees aglow with silver tones, while the yellow light of an occasional firefly twinkled among the leaves.

High above the stars were setting a glorious display, and while my heart is still aching over the recent trou-



**Chirps From Cardinal Lady**  
**Regina Butler**  
489-3511

bles in our family, I was suddenly comforted by the night sky.

Often when I have taught Psalm 23 to my children in Sunday school, when we got to the verse that says "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake," I explain it to them like this.

When we think of paths we think of the path through the woods or the path from our house to grandmama's house or a familiar path on a favorite trail. These paths can change. Time can change the landscape of even your grandmother's land and trees

can grow up in the paths that were forged long ago.

But the sky has a path. When you look up you can easily see the Big Dipper or Big Bear that pan shaped group of stars that soar overhead on a summers night. Off in the distance you can pick out the three stars that make up Orion's belt.

So no matter where you are in North America, these stars are constants. On clear nights you can look up and find them. They are the paths in the sky that link us back to home, playing in the dark while the night frogs jump.

God does the same for us. When paths change, and we have to walk on without those we love, He is that constant. He put the stars high above us so we have to look up to them. He rules and reigns high above us to remind us to look to Him and

ask for that inner strength to trod on as troubles come.

Life is hard to understand, but we can walk on when we put our trust in His hand, and we can say with King David, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

"He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

## ASK THE MASTER GARDENER

**QUESTION:** What hedge would you recommend to plant near an elevated deck to create a natural barrier?

**ANSWER:** In general, hedges fall into two broad categories based on mature height. Shorter hedges are used in formal gardening as edging to create knot gardens or to line pathways and to border gardens. Taller hedges are what you need to create a living "wall" by your deck.

If you are new to hedges, I suggest trying a boxwood. Boxwood hedges are ubiquitous for good reason. They are so easy to care for, they are long lived, they tolerate full sun, part shade and even deep shade and deer will leave it alone! Boxwood shrubs are very malleable. You can grow together as a hedge or individually as geometric accents.

**PLANTING:** To grow as a hedge, space your plants so that the branching will touch in 2 to 3 years. As a general rule, leave a container's width in between each hedge. Dig your hole no deeper than the container and a bit wider. The top of the root ball should be slightly higher than the surrounding ground when planted.

As Ms. Beulah Lee reminds me, water the hole before placing the shrub. Water consistently (at least weekly) until roots grow into your native soil. If you are planting a long hedge row, drip tubes down the row with 12" spacing between emitters works well. A fertilizer product with the formula 16-4-8 is recom-

mended a couple of times per year, spring and late summer.

**PRUNING:** When building density and form, the early prunings are the most important. Encourage lower branching and density, then allow the plant to grow taller and thicker. Successive years will be easier, an annual pruning may be all you will need once your hedge reaches a desired shape. One mistake many of us make is to prune the bottom half of the shrub more narrowly than the top.

Instead, the shrub or hedge should be slightly thicker or wider toward the bottom. Think about how the sun hits the hedge...the sun needs to reach the entire shrub otherwise the bottom half will not be dense with thick branching.

**HEDGE SELECTION:** If you are ready for the next level in hedges, there are many options to consider. Any tree or shrub can be pruned into a hedge, but some work better than others.

For evergreen hedges, there are many varieties of Arborvitae available in nurseries with lots of size options. Laurels are another old-time favorite. You can probably find Schip Laurel, Portuguese Laurel, Cherry Laurel and English Laurel.

If you have a shady area, try a Hicks Yew. Holly shrubs are great for honey bees when flowering, but find one without prickly leaves if placing close to your deck. There are also Junipers and Eastern Red Cedar but those are not

my favorites. Pyracantha is a good choice and is especially nice in the spring erupting in white blooms over the hedge leaving orange berries. Some varieties have thorns and these can be quite large.

Sunshine ligustrum is widely available and is a beautiful chartreuse color. Be aware that this is a privet variety, but I am told it is sterile. Another popular shrub in the South is the Japanese pittosporum. Naturally, it forms a dense, compact mound that can be up to 12 feet tall. It can be closely sheared to create formal hedges or topiary. In spring it bears white flowers with the scent of orange blossoms.

Deciduous hedges such as European Beech have been used abroad for over 200 years and I am really interested in trying a beech hedge in my landscape. A beech hedge can provide great four-season interest. Beech leaves turn a coppery yellow color in the fall, then the leaves will turn brown and are held on until the new leaves push them out in the spring just like our American Beech trees. If you see an under-story tree in the woods with yellowish copper leaves in the middle of winter, chances are that is an American Beech tree.

Other out-of-the ordinary selections are: European Hornbeam and a red maple variety such as Flame Amur. Both have beautiful fall colors. If you need an extremely tall hedge, the Hornbeam is a good choice. Other deciduous choices are Cornil-

ian-Cherry and Magnolia (try Royal Star). If you have an extremely wet area, a Bald Cypress will work. Viburnum can also be pruned into a hedge with lovely white flowers in the spring. My Viburnum develops brown edges on its leaves, so until I solve this problem, I will hold off recommending it for hedges.

What not to use for your location? Japanese Barberry has impenetrable thorns and is an aggressive grower; otherwise it has beautiful fall color. Glossy Abelia is a mounding shrub, sometimes used as a hedge and pollinators love the flowers but it will not reach the height you need. Flowering Quince has beautiful pink flowers in early spring but is subject to cedar apple rust. Oleander is toxic to plants and children.

Good luck with your hedge selection and please let us know if you need scientific names for any of my plant recommendations or have any other questions. And for all of you who think I am turning my entire yard into a hedge, the answer is no. Justin and the guys at Wade, Inc. worked diligently on our mower despite several setbacks and it is now back home after spending the spring in town. Thanks guys!

Do you have a gardening question? Call the Pontotoc Extension Service at 662-489-3911 and ask to leave a question for the Master Gardeners. Pontotoc County Master Gardeners are trained volunteers who help the MSU Extension Service and serve the citizens of Pontotoc County.