Thank You Pinellas County Master Gardeners and Staff

By CHUCK SCAFFIDI and CARRIE SHELBY, MGs

Loretta Mitchell, MG, from New Palestine, Indiana sent the following letter to Tom Roberts and enclosed photographs.

I wanted to thank you and your staff for allowing me to volunteer last year to gain hours towards my Master Gardener’s certificate. Thanks to everyone there, I was able to have enough hours to be certified by mid-summer. It has been a great first year as a Master Gardener and I have enjoyed all the various programs that I have been involved in.

Our county courthouse has been undergoing some major renovations both inside and out during the past year, so it has been a major project getting the landscaping back in order. During this time we decided to enter the America in Bloom contest and I am happy to say that we won for our division. With the work at the courthouse and our famous James Whitcomb Riley Gardens we were really busy this past summer.

We have flower gardens at our Extension office and have been doing a lot of changes there as well.

This year we had a vegetable garden and had such good luck that we donated the bounty to our local Food Pantry.

I have joined our Master Gardener Association and in November I was voted Co-President along with my next door neighbor. We are not sure what we are getting ourselves into, but with the help of the rest of the committee we plan on having lots of fun-filled activities during the next 2 years.

Thanks again to you, Bob Albanese, Allen Cordell, Spencer Curtis, and all the MGs I had the pleasure of working with during my stay in Florida. I hope to join you again one of these days. Field trip to Indiana anyone?
One of the many herbs that have found their way into our ornamental gardens is Artemisia. Artemisia, is a member of the Asteraceae, or sunflower family. There are several species and more than a few cultivars of this aromatic sub-shrub; some of which are suited to central Florida landscapes. Perhaps the best known are southernwood (Artemisia abrotanum) and wormwood (A. absinthium), and we have both growing in the gardens. Both plants have kept their classical names; the ancients would have called southernwood simply “abrotonum” and wormwood “absinthium.” Furthermore, absinthium may owe its root to the Persian aspand, the name given to a plant that was burned as an offering; therefore we also get the word: spend. Artemis is the name given to the Greek goddess of chastity. Feel free to make up your own reason why this plant was named for her!

Generally speaking the sub-shrubby types we grow in the gardens have finely dissected leaves, giving them a soft texture, and some add to that silvery leaves, which make them even more “cloud-like.” One notable exception is another herb, tarragon (A. dracunculus) with smooth, green leaves and its own unique and flavorful oils. Also in the herb garden is the small Artemisia vulgaris, ‘Limelight’, a ground-covering variety with cream-splashed leaves. It is far better behaved than its non-variegated parent, mugwort.

Southernwood is found in the herb garden where it cascades over the brick-edged paths, and scents the air with its strange, acrid oil. The scent is not really unpleasant, just one of those “a-little-goes-a-long-way” smells. No herb garden would smell the same without it though!

Wormwood, as you may know, was one of the three main herbs used to prepare the green liqueur, Absinthe. There is a lot of folklore surrounding this anise-flavored drink, most of it untrue. It has been widely believed that an extract from wormwood, absinthium, is a hallucinogen. This is not true, based on modern experiments. Drinking absinthe is no worse than drinking any other spirit of similar proof. But we still would not condone it!

As with many strong-smelling plants, Artemisia has been used medicinally in the past. One use was as a vermifuge, or wormer. Another use was as a vulnerant, or wound-healer. There are no modern medical applications of the two species in the garden, however a cousin of theirs, Artemisia annua is currently being trialed for its use in treating malaria in Africa.
clever thing to do; it provides all the drainage and air circulation to help this European through our torrid Florida summers!

Perhaps the easiest way to propagate Artemisia is through tip-cuttings taken in the autumn. According to Allen Cordell, (who keeps the Herb Garden among other things!), when the days get a bit cooler and the humidity drops in September and October, 3-5" tip cuttings are stuck in pure perlite and kept in indirect light. With very little water, cuttings root reasonably well. Another success for Allen has come from raising the species plants from purchased seed. He says it may take 10-20 days for germination, so be patient!

Speaking of humidity, midsummer in Florida is not ideal for these plants. But fear not, a sulk in summer will, as the year progresses, abate and the herbs will pick-up again. Any tidying is best done just after threat of a freeze is past. You can be brutal and cut them all the way back to new growth. This helps keep the plants tidy, and removes the spindly growth. Saying that, the spindlier, the better, if plants are to be grown in pots. An annual chopping-back is not always necessary—it depends on your needs and tastes.

The next time you are visiting the herb and tropical gardens, pause to admire the fine texture and long history of this humble herb, Artemisia.

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**Garden Tips**

**What’s In Your Garden?**

By JOANNE DRAKE, MG

Master Gardeners are very generous people … helping others and sharing plants from their yards. They share information, actual plants, cuttings or all three. _Some will dig up an extra plant they have and pot it right before your eyes … just to make sure you’ll have one to take home._

Our mild winter weather has lured us outside to see what’s blooming.

Hibiscus has rooted from cuttings and they are producing some beautiful color. A variety of crotons look very attractive intermingled with the hibiscus … a good combination. Other gardeners, who share the love of gardening, have given me most of the cuttings. Each and every time I see one in bloom I think of the person that had given it to me. _You just never know who’s thinking of you!_

Another plant, started from a cutting five years ago, is putting forth some _true blue_ color spikes, on either side of a mature oak tree. Eranthemum pulchellum, Blue Sage, is a rare plant that likes shade or partial shade. It grows 4 - 6 ft. high with a spread of 1-3 ft. The plant may be kept shorter and bushier with pruning. We like to prune ours to the ground after blooming is finished.

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We are very happy to have this winter blooming plant and just wanted to share the information and photos with you. Enjoy the websites listed below for more information and photos.

**University of Florida website**
http://hort.ufl.edu/shrubs/ERAPULA.PDF

**Top Tropicals website**
http://toptropicals.com
Search in site’s Plant Catalog for Blue Sage

_We’d love to read about what’s growing in your garden._ Tell us about your favorite plant … why it is a favorite … and send your article by email, to our Newsletter Editor, Chuck Scaffidi, MG at cascaffidi@juno.com or Pam Brown, Managing Editor, at pwbrown@co.pinellas.fl.us. If you have any question about submitting an article … please call Chuck at 727 – 582-2117. Articles should be in 12 point Times New Roman and submitted by 20th of each month. Articles should be limited to 700-800 words. A photo or two would be greatly appreciated to go along with your article. Mark the subject line … _The Green Leaf … What’s in your Garden?_
Cymbopogon citratus
Lemongrass

Lemongrass is a large clumping grass that originates from areas of Southeast Asia, where it has been used in cooking for hundreds of years. The warm, moist, tropical conditions of Florida make this an excellent, fast-growing plant for the landscape and is essential in an Asian inspired herb and vegetable garden.

Lemongrass can be started cheaply by purchasing stalks from some supermarkets or any Asian food store. Choose fresh, plump stalks that have a bulbous base with traces of root buds visible under the surface. Trim a few inches off the top and peel away any dead outer leaves. Place stalks in a jar of water to root and put in a sunny location. In about a week’s time root growth should be visible.

Once roots have grown a couple inches in length it’s time to transfer the stalks to soil. Fill a pot with rich, all-purpose soil and bury stalks with the base or “crown” just below the surface. Place in a sunny spot and keep the soil evenly moist but not soggy.

To grow specimen plants that can reach over six feet tall, plant in the ground in a sunny, moist location. To harvest, gently pull stems out at the base of the plant, roots and all.

Recipe for Stir-fried Chicken with Lemongrass

2 Tbl. fish sauce*
2 tsp. sugar
2 Tbl. vegetable oil
2 stalks lemongrass, minced
2 garlic cloves, minced
4 boneless chicken thighs, cut into 1” cubes
1 Thai chili, sliced
Nuoc Cham—a Vietnamese condiment*

Mix fish sauce and sugar. Stir in 1 tablespoon of oil, lemongrass and garlic.

Add chicken and marinate for two hours.
In a wok, heat remaining oil over medium high heat and cook chicken and chili for about ten minutes or until chicken is crispy around the edges.
Serve over rice with Nuoc Cham condiment.
Garnish with any or all of the following: bean sprouts, shredded carrot, peanuts, holy basil, mint, scallion or cucumber.
* Fish sauce and Nuoc Cham available in Asian markets and some supermarkets.
Armed with pruners and plastic bags (with permission from the garden’s staff) we traversed the many pathways, collecting cuttings to be used to propagate plants for the plant sale. The gardens were lush and cool so everyone enjoyed their surroundings.

Harry P. Leu and his wife Mary Jane, were avid exotic plant collectors and brought plants from many parts of the world. The garden covers nearly 50 acres, featuring camellias, azaleas and towering moss-hung oaks, along the shores of Lake Rowena. The maze of pathways soon divided our group, but ultimately everyone met again at the stately home which now serves as the garden’s office.

The property, including the Leu home, was donated to the City of Orlando in 1961 and is maintained by over 200 volunteers as well as the garden’s staff.

It turns out Leu Gardens has, it seems, a rare citrus fruit cross that the FBG has in the Jazz Garden within the Wedding Garden. It surprised us to find this unusual, mature specimen. We believe we have identified it properly as a X Citrofortunella orangequat in the Rutaceae Family. This citrus is a hybrid between F. crassifolia (Meiwa kumquat) and C. unshui (satsuma). It will grow to about 10 feet tall. This fruit is oblong with edible peel and is not as acidic as a kumquat. ‘Nippon’ is the cultivar usually grown, ‘Centennial’ has fruit and leaves that are variegated. It is often sold as a kumquat but is actually an orangequat.

The day was rounded out with a visit to Apenberry’s Gardens, an Orlando nursery, where we found many different and new plant specimen, and where I purchased a Dichondra, (silver falls) plant.

We encourage other MGs to form traveling groups to visit interesting gardens and, of course, to send a synopsis of their trip for publication in The Green Leaf. We used our FBG membership for free admission so take advantage of this at the many reciprocal gardens.
**Notes from Your MG Library**

**Book Titles on the Shelves**
By ANGELA STRAIN, MG

**Butterfly Gardens/Wildlife:**

Butterflies of Florida Field Guide; Daniels; 2003
Dir. Of Zoological Taxonomists of the World: Blackwelder; 1989
Florida Guide to Butterfly Gardening; IFAS; 2000
Gardening for Florida Butterflies; Trask
Handbook for Butterfly Watchers; Pyle; 1984
Handbook of Lizards, Turtles & Crocodilians; Ashton; 1991

- How to Attract Birds; Burke; 1983
- Peterson Field Guide to Eastern Birds; 1980
- Audubon Soc. Field Guide to NA Butterflies; Roberts; 1981
- The Butterfly Garden; Sedenko; 1991
- The Great Barrier Reef; Mann; 1974
- The Orchard Mason Bee; Griffin; 1999

The library team is constantly updating procedures. We have added a User Registry at the entrance and ask that you please sign in when you use the library. We would like to know when the library is being used and for what purpose or project. So, again, please sign in.

If you cannot find a book listed in our Inventory Log, just leave a note on the bulletin board and we will do our best to find it!

**Let us know if you use the library and why.**

Thanks and Happy Reading.

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**Safety Net**
By PAM BROWN, Urban Horticulture Extension Agent

If you are injured in any way while volunteering as a Master Gardener, it is very important that you fill out the Injury Incident Report so that the accident will be recorded in the system. Even if the accident seems trivial to you at the time, complications may develop later. The state imposes a 30 day time limit for reporting, but the county would like the forms completed within 24 hours, if possible. By completing the form in a timely manner, the incident will be fresh in your mind. You are important to us and we do not like to see you injured in any way – but if you are, we want to be sure that you are covered by our Workman’s Compensation program.

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**I Need Your Help to Keep Our Gardens Growing**

We need your membership in The Florida Botanical Gardens. You can get into other gardens free or at discounted prices, and that alone pays for your FBG membership. Discounts are offered at most gift shops. Membership offers prior notice and invitations to special FBG events. FBG membership makes a good gift for friends or family. FBG membership allows early admittance to the MG plant sales. Individual membership is $30; Family is $50; a supporting garden friend is $250. If you’d like a leaf on the tree with your name on it, $1,000 will help grow the gardens.

**See me or stop in at the Botanical Bounty gift shop.**

Mary Ellen Warner, Membership Chair

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**Attention Master Gardeners!!**

Anyone interested in fulfilling their volunteer hour requirements should speak to Stacey Zidi about volunteering at the Botanical Bounty gift shop.

The shop is open **Tuesday - Saturday** from **10am-5pm.** Each day is split into two ½ hour shifts, **mornings (from 10-1:30pm) or afternoons (from 1:30 -5pm).** I’m looking for a minimum commitment of one shift a week. No previous retail experience is necessary.

Call 582-2251 or szidi@pinellascounty.org
**MG Advisory Association**

By CHUCK SCAFFIDI, Chair

The MGAA documents are available for all MGAA members on request. They detail how MGAA operates and is organized, as well as the duties of committees.

**The next MGAA meeting is Thursday February 8, before the volunteer luncheon.**

The main purpose of the meeting is to approve the corrected December 31, 2006 budget, and to review the new voucher report which reflects the closure of 2006 open vouchers. The end-of-year financial statement will also be presented.

Committees will report on their activities.

On a very positive note, Lou LaGrande will Chair the Education committee and Dick Davis will stay on the committee as a very valuable member. Also, Brenda Payne and John Kingsbury have agreed to lead the day market team investigation.

The bad news is our Treasurer, Noel Bell will be resigning (so, someone with accounting background and also as a check signer is badly needed.)

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**Important Announcements!**

VSP5, the new county computer program for logging volunteer hours is in the volunteer office. You must log your hours the day you volunteer. Those that can not be at Extension when they volunteer should log hours on a standard form so your hours can be entered by an assistant volunteer coordinator. If you have been sending your hours by e-mail, use the form as a guide. Send to: MGEDU@co.pinellas.fl.us.

Training is on-going and we will provide forms in the volunteer office. Remember travel & GEU time must be entered twice. See coordinator Chuck Scaffidi or an assistant (Cathy Nelson or Mary Crowe).

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**Message From Compost Happens**

Save all green cuttings, etc. from around the Extension and put them in the containers in the composting area. Compost made from them will be sold to benefit the MG association.

Please no weed seeds, nut grass, torpedo grass, etc.

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**Plant Sale News**

By LINDA CULHANE, MG

We are going down to the wire for the spring sale. Less than 2 months to go, as if anyone around me doesn’t already know that. Thanks for not saying anything about the wild look in my eyes. I’ll calm down in April.

The biggest news is that we are moving the location of the sale. If you know where the present “Rehab” area is, you are almost at the new site. It will be along the west fence between Extension building (4-H side) and Ulmerton Road. This is a large, flat open area that was made when the parking lot was demolished and the cactus garden was moved. It is fenced in, has two definite entrances/ exits, and is very visible from Ulmerton Road. This would enhance security, and advertising.

We will be using tents mainly for the comfort of the staff by keeping them in the shade, rather than for the plants. Of course there will be a tent for the shade house plants. The holding area will be in the middle of this new area, hopefully enticing the customers to buy, buy, buy! It will be easy for the customers to put plants in the holding area, then go back for more purchases.

We always need wagons, but this new setup will require the customers to go a shorter distance to their cars. “A good thing”, as Martha would say.

Anyone growing plants at home and planning to bring them in, please contact Bessie to let her know the names and number of plants, in order to assist her in making the labels. Keep saving those subscriptions so we can sell them at the magazine table. Also Second Thyme Around items can be brought in and stored in the shade house shed.

**We still need someone to come forward and take over the chair position after the March sale.** It’s not so bad; I survived.

My plan is to have more customer support through the use of MGs in the sale area. In order to have you comfortable, we will plan orientation sessions the week of setup. One way to assist the customers in their selection is on a one-on-one basis. Some just don’t know what they want, or where to plant what they do purchase. Educating the public is part of our mission.

Thanks for all your support, and see you in the greenhouse. Linda
The Master Gardener Advisory Association is selling T-shirts and polo shirts with the new IFAS MG logo. T-shirts run $7-$10 and polo shirts are $11-$20. We have 3 different styles for the men and women, with many colors to choose from. You may select silk screen or embroidery for the application of the logo.

We also have aprons and tote bags with the logo; aprons are $12 and tote bags are $8.

A display of styles, colors and cost will be in the MG volunteer office at the Extension. Order forms will be available starting Monday, February 5th. We will notify you when your order is available.

All items are prepaid. No orders will be taken without a check, cash or money order. All sales are final. Come on by– we have samples for you to look at, pictures of the shirts and ordering information.

By MARY CAMPBELL, Extension Director
Are you aware of what the Penny for Pinellas has done for our community? The Penny is a one-cent sales tax that funds new capital projects all across Pinellas County. Ever since voters first approved the Penny in 1989, it has added value to our county with projects like the Bayside Bridge and Pinellas Trail.

On March 13, 2007, voters will be asked to renew the Penny for another ten years. It’s important to remember that this is not a new tax – it is a renewal of a one-cent sales tax paid by all who spend money in the County, including tourists and other visitors who contribute approximately one third of the Penny revenue. The Penny for Pinellas funds these projects without relying on higher property taxes to make Pinellas County a better place to live, work and visit.

A renewal of the Penny would provide funding for some exciting future projects like a new expressway linking US 19 to I-275 without any stops, land for affordable housing, a coordinated emergency radio system, more hurricane shelter space and increased public access to our beaches.

Please visit www.pinellascounty.org/penny to find out more information about past and future projects and see what our citizens have to say about the Penny for Pinellas. And don’t forget to vote on March 13, 2007.
Volunteer Opportunities and Events for February–April

Spring is always our busiest time. Please look at the opportunities and let Carol Suggs (582-2124 or csuggs@pinellascounty.org) know if you are willing to help out with any of these activities. You may also look for sign up sheets on the back hall bulletin board for the large events. Activities are really fun and informative.

Master Gardener Update Training

Remember the Appreciation Luncheon:
Thursday, February 8, 11:30am to 2:00pm
Magnolia Room

Don’t forget the MGAA meeting is held from 10:00am to 11:00am in the same place

Looking ahead: Thursday, March 8.
Bill Koen, Over 35 years with Lakeland City Parks. “New Plant Introductions”. Bill brings many of these new plants.

Rain barrel workshop
February 17 from 9am – 10:30am
Pinellas County Extension – we need several MGs to help with the logistics of this popular workshop.

Step Up, Pinellas on the Move
February 24 from 11:00am-1:00pm.

Pinellas County is partnering on an event to promote physical activity throughout the county. "Step Up, Pinellas on the Move" will be an event where municipalities from all over the county are creating teams to walk the trail from their city to Taylor Park for a celebration that includes activities (Radio Disney, music, a health expo, giveaways, and more). Local dignitaries will be walking at the park celebration.

We are hoping to have a team from Extension walking on that day. Please let me know if you and your family are willing to be a part of this fun and healthy event. As a team we will decide where we want to walk from but will need to be at the park by noon for the activities there. I will keep you posted. Let me know if you have any questions.
Thanks, Beth Tobias
4-H Agent, 727-582-2513, www.pinellasteeninfo.com

Compost Happens
March 10 from 10am – 11:30am
Pinellas County Extension – we need several MGs to help with surveys and logistics of this popular workshop.

Rain barrel workshop
March 24 from 9am – 10:30am
Rain barrel painting demonstration workshop
March 24 from 10:30 am – 11:30 am
Pinellas County Extension – we need several MGs to help with the logistics for both of these activities.

Master Gardener Plant Sale
Set-up – March 28, 29, 30 from 8am - 3pm
Sale day – March 31 from 7:30am – 3:30pm
We need many MGs to help with the logistics for both of these activities.

Family EarthFest
April 21 The shifts are from 9:30am – 1:00pm and 12:30 pm – 4 pm. We have a large tent with several educational displays. We need at least 6 to 8 volunteers for each shift. The educational displays are usually compost, rain barrels, invasive plants & mulch. If you would like to suggest other displays – all ideas are welcome.

Green Thumb Festival
at Walter Fuller Park in St. Petersburg
April 28 and 29
The shifts are from 8:30am – 12:30pm and from 12:30pm – 4:30pm. We need at least 4 volunteers for each shift each day – we have a children’s seed planting and butterfly display, so if you like to work with children – this is a good place to be.

Charlie says. “Don’t forget to have fun!”
It seems that 2007 is skimming along at a brisk pace – here it is February all ready! Don’t forget **HerbFest** on **February 3rd** – A Day of Health and Harmony!

Our **Master Gardener College** classes will be starting soon. One class in Hillsborough County offered to Master Gardeners is the **Tree and Landscape Short Course** on **February 23**. It does cost $20, but a lot of information is packed into this day. You can find information on the schedule at the following web site:

[http://prohort.ifas.ufl.edu/T&LSC.htm#Program](http://prohort.ifas.ufl.edu/T&LSC.htm#Program)

There are three other dates scheduled for the **MG College** so far:

**March 20:** Propagation techniques  
**April 3:** Emerging pests and pathogens  
**April 17:** New plant introductions and plant nomenclature

Each of these sessions will be here at Extension and will be free of charge. We will be having lectures from specialists at the University of FL by PolyCom videoconferencing. You will need to bring your lunch. We will also have some hands on activities after the lecture series.

There will most likely be additional classes this year for the MG College. Two that we are working on are Designing Garden Rooms and Plant ID. The dates have not been scheduled as yet. We have a new FBG educator, James Stevenson, who has agreed to teach the Plant ID class. He has taught this in England and should provide a very good class. There may be a text book charge for this class; more info to come.

Also coming up is a **CPR** class scheduled for **February 22**. One class in the morning 8am to 12 noon and another in the afternoon 1 to 5 pm. There is a sign-up sheet on the back hall. Space in each class is limited.

Please be sure to read the “Safety Net” section this month. It contains important information about reporting accidents – you are very important to us and we want to take proper care of each of you if you are injured. ♥ Pam

We are especially appreciative of staff, MGs, and others who contribute articles, events, and other items of interest to the **Green Leaf** each month. Please submit your input by the **20th of each month**. This will help us assemble and publish the newsletter in a timely manner. Also, to save mailing costs, please limit your articles to **700-800 words or less.**

Limited newsletter space does not allow for full photograph viewing. If you would like a copy of any photograph presented in the newsletters, please contact me @ 727-582-2117.

Chuck Scaffidi, MG Editor

The **Green Leaf** is published by Pinellas County Extension for the County Master Gardeners and depends on submission of articles from Master Gardeners, Extension Staff and other authors.

Managing Editor:  
  Pam Brown, Urban Horticulture Extension Agent  
Production Editor:  
  Chuck Scaffidi, Master Gardener, 727-582-2117  
Assistant Editor: Carrie Shelby, Master Gardener

Please send articles to Pam or e-mail directly to Chuck cascaffidi@juno.com or Pam at pwbrown@co.pinellas.fl.us

The newsletter is available on the Internet at


Click on “**Master Gardener Program**”, click on “**MG Newsletter**”
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<td>Last day for reservations for the Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon call 582-2247</td>
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<td>MGAA Mtg 10-11am Magnolia Rm Followed by Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon 11:30am – 2pm</td>
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<td>Mentor Meeting 1pm in the Orchid Rm</td>
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<td>President’s Day Extension Closed to Public In-service Day for Employees</td>
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<td>Plant Sale Committee 10am Gardenia Rm Everyone Welcome! Tree &amp; Landscape Short Course – State Fair Grounds</td>
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<td>Step Up, Pinellas on the Move 11am-1pm at Taylor Park African American Heritage Celebration at Pinewood Cultural Park 10am - 5:30pm</td>
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ATTENTION!!
Thursday February 8:
MGAA Board meeting 10:00-11:00am
MG Recognition Luncheon
(cutoff Friday Feb 2)
11:30am-2:00 pm,
Magnolia Room