



## Master Gardener Volunteers of Cobb County

### The Root House Project



**Project Location:** The Root House, 145 Denmead St. NE, Marietta, GA 30060

**Project workday:** Monday, 9 a.m. (varies with the season)

**Project Chair:** Sue Burgess (770-953-3309)

**Co-Chair:** Sue Heller (770-422-2044)

**Co-Chair:** Electa Keil (770-919-8910)

Around 1845 early Marietta settlers William and Hannah Root built a Greek Revival home at the corner of Church and Lemon Streets. Today, moved two blocks from its original location and furnished with authentic period pieces, the Root House accurately depicts 1850s middle-class life in North Georgia.

Its garden, a Master Gardener Volunteers of Cobb County project, also reflects the practices of the mid-19th century, featuring only plants grown in the South between 1840 and 1860, including vegetables, culinary herbs, medicinal herbs, decorative plants and a wide selection of heirloom shrubs. Careful MGVOCC research verifies each plant's appropriateness before it is added to the garden.



Since Mr. Root, a druggist, opened the first pharmacy in Marietta a decade or so before the Civil War, a large bed in the side yard is dedicated to healing plants grown during that period. For example, a vigorous hops plant grows up the porch since pillows stuffed with dried hops blossoms were used as a sleep aid at that time.

A large apple tree in the corner of the yard produces early-season fruit, too lemony and mushy to be eaten out of hand but excellent in fried pies and cakes when dried, as was done in the 1800s. At that time, apple slices were threaded on strings in order to dry before the weather became too humid. Green beans from the garden also were dried on strings. Therefore, the family had a source of both fruit and green vegetables in the winter.

Raised beds of vegetables and a trellis of climbing vegetables, all grown organically, are located at the edge of the authentic swept yard, used as a gathering place for tour groups. A harvest display on the porch of the kitchen out-building shows visitors what a family of the period would have grown and eaten.

MG volunteers also maintain the perennial flower beds, making the landscape more appealing to visitors, especially the thousands of school children who enjoy docent-led tours in spring and fall. The MGVOCCs supply the docents with valuable garden information, as well.

During the winter, garden seeds are distributed to the volunteers, who learn even more about the plants by growing them from seed. The following season, these seedlings are transplanted into the Root House gardens.

The MGVOCC volunteers work hard to plant and maintain the grounds of this historic site. As project chair Sue Burgess says, "It's unique in that it combines both history and horticulture. Plus, it's interesting to see how many of the vintage plants are still grown today."

*The mission of the MGVOCC is to advance the horticultural education and practices of its members and to promote the knowledge of and interest in gardening to the members and to the public.*

For more information contact Carolyn Gentry, Master Gardener Coordinator at the Cobb Extension. Phone: 770-528-4070