



HOE! HOE! HOE!

Grimes County Master Gardeners Newsletter



VOLUME 5, ISSUE 1, JANUARY 2009

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Secretary: Julia Cosgrove, Treasurer: John Milligan
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www.grimesmastergardeners.org

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES & FUN JAN/FEB 2009

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!

(Reminder -Dues are due)

13 GCMG Regular monthly meeting - Go Texan Building 9.00 a.m.

Jan 27 First class of 2009 training class - Go Texan Building, 8.30 a.m. - 12.00 p.m.

Feb 03 #2 Class—Soils

Feb 10 #3 Class—Botany

Feb 17 #4 Class— entomology

Feb 21—GCMG Spring Landscape & Planting Seminar

Feb 24 #5 Class—Lawns/Turf

Recent GCMG Activities

Christmas Parade - we didn't win a prize, but we sure had fun! Thanks to John and Linda for bringing their carriage and matched Haflingers so that they and Alvie & Fred, Dorothy & Helen could ride around town and wave to all the folks.



MEETING SCHEDULE 2009

Regular meetings are held on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at the Go Texan Building 9.00 a.m. Other meetings are held in the evening at members' homes and on Saturdays. Whenever weather permits, work time at the various beds at the Fairgrounds will take place before or after meetings held at Go Texan. Bring a brown bag lunch!

Jan 13 Regular monthly meeting at Go Texan Building 9.30 a.m.

December Bloom list

Alvie had a sunflower blooming right before Christmas. See back page for pictures of Winter landscapes of a different and unexpected nature

Did you know :

- Bananas are considered the world's largest herb.
- * They are related to the lily and orchid family
- Their gigantic leaves reach up to 30 feet long and their stems can weigh up to 100 pounds



If you have over-ripe bananas, instead of throwing them on the compost pile, try burying them beside your rose bushes as a great source of nourishment. Supposedly the peels can also be used to polish shoes :)

DON'T FORGET :

NEW MASTER GARDENER TRAINING CLASS STARTS JANUARY 27TH. GO TO WEBSITE FOR FURTHER INFORMATION AND TELL YOUR FRIENDS!!!!

www.grimesmastergardeners.org

DECEMBER MEETING NOTES

As usual our December meeting/Christmas Party was a great success. This year we had a bigger than usual attendance and a marvelous array of food. Emcee Dorothy, along with her helpers Vicki and Mary, made it an evening to remember. Matilda the Clown was present, delighting the child in all of us with her commentary and magical balloon critters.

Five interns received their Certificates - Donna Hebert, C.J. Wagner, Kelley McKenney, Jennifer Corzine, and Doris Myers. Congratulations to them all!

Officers for 2009 are :
President: Alvie Vespermann
Vice President: Donna Hebert
Secretary: Julia Cosgrove
Treasurer: John Milligan

The Golden Hoe Award for the most volunteer hours took the form of a (spray painted) Golden Toilet Brush due to the economic downturn, but I must say it looks rather fetching in an arrangement of holly and Poinsettias, and certainly is a conversation piece!



Try a new plant in 2009

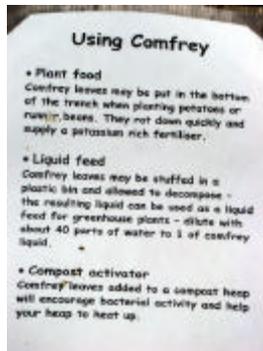
COMFREY: *Symphytum officinale* L.
Family: Boraginaceae

Synonyms---Common Comfrey. Knitbone. Knitback. Consound. Blackwort. Bruisewort. Slippery Root. Boneset. Yalluc (Saxon). Gum Plant. Consolida. Ass Ear.

---Parts Used---Root, leaves.

---Habitat---A native of Europe and temperate Asia; is common throughout from Newfoundland south to Georgia, west to Ontario and Louisiana & Texas, on the banks of rivers and ditches, and in watery places generally.

As you might see from the list of synonyms, this herb has a reputation for medicinal applications, particularly in the healing of broken bones and sprains. Following is a picture from The New Botanical:



Comfrey, like mint, can be exuberant. Plant it in chimney tiles or hanging baskets to contain it. In addition to its usefulness as a topical healer, it is also highly recommended as a compost activator, plant food, and liquid feed. The second illustration is from an informational plaque in the grounds of the EcoTech Center at Swaffham, Norfolk, England. The third picture is of the root, which is one of the ways you can start it, and one of the useful parts of the plant. Plant grows to 3ft high, oval, alternate dark green leaves grown on an erect hairy stem that branches at the top. Lower leaves may be 10" long., upper ones smaller. Pale yellow to purplish bell shaped flowers (May-Sept) bloom in clusters.

If taken internally can be carcinogenic; use as a poultice externally only. Comfrey tea, said to ease bronchial & other intestinal disorders may not be safe when taken over a long period of time. Do not confuse with Foxglove when not in bloom.

Helen Quinn

THE FROGS ARE COMING
SPRING PLANTING SEMINAR UPDATE AND ACTIVITIES

There will be a meeting of the Seminar Committee and any interested persons on January 5th at 9.00 a.m. in the "911 Meeting Room" at the Extension Office. Contact Sandra with any questions.

The event will be held on Saturday, February 21, 2009 at The Navasota Center. The format will be much the same as last year except we will be adding a plant and craft sale as a fundraiser to help with our future projects. A flyer and full details will be available by mid-January. Please help spread the word, and be prepared to help again this time. Watch for emails from Sandra, and get those plants started if you haven't already done so!

2008 Achievements

Grimes County Master Gardeners had a great year! When making notes of all the things we have done this year I was really impressed! If I have left anything/anyone out, I apologize. Please let me know for next month's Hoe!

In January we started a new training class with 9 students, 5 of which graduated in December. Great going!! In February we held the "first annual" Spring Planting Seminar, at Martha' Bloomers. It was a great success. Farm Bureau AG Day was in May, where we presented a kid-friendly non-stop seminar on rainwater harvesting to several hundred Grimes County 4th graders. In June members judged the horticulture section (and cakes!) at the Grimes County Fair, and in October we had a booth at Treats on the Street in Downtown Navasota, where we handed out goodies for "thousands" of children at Halloween.

We wrapped up the Community Garden and transported the roses to the Grimes County Courthouse, and made new planting beds at the County Extension Office and at the Fairgrounds.

The 2008 State Conference in Conroe was attended by Peggy, Helen, Mary, Robert & Sandra, and the quarterly Directors' meetings were attended by Julia & Mary, Sandra & Helen.

Members gave Saturday seminars locally on Herbs, Organic Gardening/Composting, Wildflowers, Bulbs, and Gardening with Kids, and also presented programs for other organizations on Propagation, Gardening in Texas, Herbs, and Rainwater Harvesting.

A team of members answered phone questions from the local gardening public at the Extension office on Thursday mornings; many attended gardening seminars in and out of County. We had workdays at the Rose Test Garden, made seedballs of wildflower seeds for planting to "Paint Texas with Wildflowers", and held a card making workshop. We became involved in establishing a local Farmers Market on Saturday mornings. Members have contributed to this newsletter, and some have had articles published in the Lone Star Gardener Magazine.

Some members have been trained and certified as Rainwater Harvesting Specialist, Propagation Specialist, Master Composter, Master Naturalist, and Landscape Design Consultant.

We had some great speakers at our meetings, enjoyed interesting field trips and a couple of evening meetings.

Here's to 2009, a new class, and another great year!!



PAINTING TEXAS WITH WILDFLOWERS

At the TMGA Directors' Meeting on December 5 Victoria MG gave an update on the wildflower planting project. The full details are available on the Centra recording of the meeting, and the Victoria website. Grimes County was mentioned as participating with the planting of seed and the seminar we presented at Coufal Prater. A picture of Sandra was shown throwing out seed at the site of the old Civil War Munitions Factory on FM244 near Carlos. Sandra will provide more current information either at the next meeting or in the February newsletter. We don't have many photos of actual plantings, but hopefully we will have some of the wildflowers when they come up and dazzle us all with their beauty!

Snowflakes are one of nature's most fragile things, but just look what they do when they stick together.

Verna M. Kelly (via Sandra Stuckey)



*Sharon's
Photos*



*Sandra's
Photos*



Helen's photos

December 10 & 11, 2008