



MG Grapevine

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Volume 18

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MG Association Meeting
August 4th 11:30 AM
Rose Garden Center

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Joanie Matthews says,

"Join us for a special treat as we tour two of Greg Grant's restored dogtrot family homes and heirloom gardens on September 14th."



Joanie Matthews
SCMGA President

Read the full story of what promises to be an eventful bus trip, full of special opportunities, on page 4.

Association Meeting

Following a month off, the Smith County MG Association will meet on August 4th at the Rose Garden Center at 11:30 AM.

I know that most MGs are always on the lookout for unusual plants that no one else has. If this sounds like you then you don't want to miss our August meeting.

We will have Carmen Wagner, an exotic plant specialist from Canton, who will tell us all about Tillandsia plants. These are plants that are in the



Orchid and Bromeliad family.

You will also be able to own one or two if you like because she is going to sell us her specimens that she brings with her after our meeting is over. Carmen has been selling these plants for the last 15 years. She regularly sells exotic plants at the Canton Trade's day and rents a booth at various other places like the *Christmas in July* this past weekend in Tyler.

Ronny Duncan

AgriWorld is Coming

Our Secret Garden will once again be part of AgriWorld at the East Texas State Fair. The project team (shown below) is already meeting for this end of September event.



Photo by Bill Kellendorf

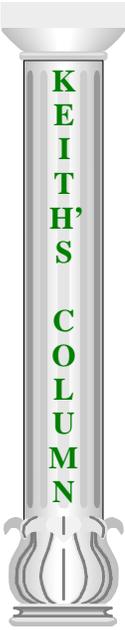
In a recent e-mail they asked for your help to supply various items, some of which can be brought to the August MG Association meeting. If you have questions or can help, contact Hazel Bateman or Jean Smith.

Update on missing Plants.

by Sue Adee

Thanks to the City of Tyler Parks and Recreation Department, the Rose Garden Supervisor and employees, a camera has been installed in the IDEA Garden in an attempt to catch the person or persons that are removing the plants from the IDEA Garden.

A sign will be placed in the Heritage Garden and another in the IDEA Garden, stating the area is under surveillance. Hopefully these measures will make the person or persons think twice about removing plants from the gardens.



You may have noticed these popping up here and there, in your mail, in stores, on billboards, even on TV. It's those funny black and white squares with squiggly lines and three dark squares. They're called QR codes and they are starting to catch on in this country with the smart phone crowd. Don't own a smart phone? It is estimated that currently about 1/3 of adults in the U.S. own a smart phone, and that number will increase for some time.



So, what is a QR code? It's a type of barcode that can be scanned with a smart phone's camera. The information contained in the barcode typically is a web site's address, though it can also be text, email or texting information. "So what," you say. While QR codes have been popular in Europe for awhile, they are just now catching on here. Stores may use them for promotional items, provide current listings of "on sale" merchandise, or to direct you to a web site with more detailed information on the product you are standing in front of, wondering whether or not to buy it. I've seen them in catalogs, advertisements, and now, they are starting to show up in garden centers, plant tags, and even in public gardens (that's where I'm headed with this).

So, how does it work? First, you have to get a QR code reader app for your smart phone (they're free and easy to use). Let's say you are in the IDEA Garden, and we have an informational sign on rainwater harvesting. You can only get so much information on a sign. But, let's say we put a QR code on the sign where the visitor can get more information. It may point to A&M's online rainwater harvesting publication or web site, or to our own online rainwater harvesting brochure. Point your smart phone's camera at the code to scan it, and right away it brings up that web site page. Now you have it in your phone as a reference. No pieces of paper to lose, or need to write down a web address, etc.

I got an idea the other day that maybe we could use them in our educational programs, and then did a Google search on "QR codes" and "gardens". I came up with a famous public garden's web page, and also a national Ext. Master Gardener discussion web blog that just last month posted an article about possibilities using QR codes in gardens. (<http://blogs.extension.org/mastergardener/2011/06/02/useful-tools-for-learning-in-the-garden-qr-codes-and-readers/>).



I sent an email on this subject to a few Master Gardeners, asking them to consider how we might use them in our educational projects, like in the demonstration gardens, in the Secret Garden at AgriWorld (during the East Texas State Fair), on the home garden tour, maybe the bulb sale (QR codes for each of bulbs/plants pointing to a web site with more cultural information on that plant), or even in the NE Texas Gardening Guide and Calendar. Then Mary Hamlin wrote back saying that "on the same day, *USA Today* had a long article about putting these codes on all sorts of stuff, even tombstones. The person can scan the code and go directly to a website all about the person's life. Then the article goes on into how these codes are on t-shirts (often used for free music downloads), and such. It's definitely the up and coming thing." The same day I got an email newsletter from TNLA regarding how retail garden centers are starting to use them in display areas.

We are in the education business, and our goal is to reach a wide range of audience with our product - knowledge. As you know, kids and young adults are increasingly tied to their smart phones. While this may not get them out into the garden, who knows, perhaps we can reach a new or different audience by incorporating this technology in our educational methods.

Got a smart phone? Get the QR reader app, scan a few codes from different places, see the results, and then start thinking about how we can be incorporating this into our programs. Please share your ideas – let's see what we can come up with.

Oh yeah, scan the code in this column. The first person to send me an email with the content will get something (I don't know what yet).

Y'all have a great summer, try to conserve water while keeping your plants alive and out of stress, and keep yourself healthy and safe by working in early morning, avoid the heat, drink plenty of water, and protect yourself from the sun's damaging UV rays.

Landscape Design Study Course III

Mrs. Nell Zeigler of Texas Garden Clubs, Inc. and Dr. Bill Welch of the Texas AgriLife Extension Service invite you to attend Landscape Design Study Course III, which will be held in College Station September 26-27, 2011 at the Christ United Methodist Church on Hwy 6 near Hwy 40 (William Fitch).

Certified Master Gardeners who complete a course and pass the test may be eligible to receive up to 12 hours of their credit for continuing education. Cost of the upcoming program is \$110.

You may view the entire description of the course, registration form and tentative schedule at:

<http://aggie-orticulture.tamu.edu/southerngarden/LDSep2011/>

Back to Natives

By Dee Bishop



What do you plant that will take the terrible drought and heat that we seem to be having more often than not? What will also take seasonal flooding, poor drainage, compacted soils that shed water, sugar sand that refuses to hold water? What on earth, that grows and lives can take such harsh conditions yet live and perform? What has always grown here? What manages to survive in spite of Mother Nature's tantrums? NATIVES of course. They are already Texas tough.

We have been taught to add tons of compost and to mulch everything. Well, heat decomposes compost into nothing, and mulch disappears entirely too fast. Let's learn to plant what grows in the soil we have. They may not be the most exotic nor the most beautiful plants, but they will live and perform in our area! Look around you at Mother Nature's landscape. Evergreen shrubs and trees are nearly non-existent and for a good reason. We do not have heavy snowfall for our trees to shed. We have extreme heat in summer and need lots of large leaved trees to provide shade for us. The leaves fall and cover the ground in winter and eventually add nutrients and humus to the soil. Nature's mulch. Very little grows under trees' dense canopies. Trees are water hogs and the soil underneath them is bone dry; so common sense tells us not to plant water guzzlers under them. I have found that woods fern makes a good ground cover. It goes dormant if it gets too dry. With a watering every couple of weeks, mine has done well, better than the trees this year.

Lawns, grasses are native to all prairie states, but certainly not the water-holic Saint Augustine we all plant. Centipede works well for us in back where we have sun and a slope. It is lovely and we only water once or twice a month and mow about that often too. It looks good. It does not need more than one fertilizing in spring. If you have a really sunny droughty yard, buffalo grass will work. It used to be native here. It does not do well in sugar sand that is usually acidic. I have a neighbor who has it in her front yard and never has to water or mow! If you lose your grass, consider a change.

We need shrubs and flowers that make flowers, fruit, and shelter for birds and wildlife. Of our three native hollies, two are evergreen and provide dense shelter and berries for birds. Our native Rusty Blackhaw Viburnum is a lovely plant that can be a dense shrub or small tree. Lovely fall color and berries for birds. Turkscap can't be beat for summer color for hummers and butterflies. Beautyberries and lantana are also colorful natives that the birds will plant for you.

We need to recondition ourselves to stop echoing the rest of the country and focus on where we live and the ever decreasing water supply we have. Texas is a tough state to garden in. Our climate needs tough plants and even tougher gardeners. Dee

LISIANTHUS aka Texas Bluebell

as well as **Showy Prairie-Gentian, Eustoma exaltatus ssp. russellianum, Indulgence, Tulip Gentian...**

By Herb Coursey



Several years back, my wife Josephine toured the pharmaceutical company Alcon in Fort Worth. When she got home she hit the front door raving about some stunningly beautiful blue-blooming plant that she'd never before seen, and Alcon had had many flowerbeds of it landscaping the company's grounds. But she'd forgotten the name! *Yipes!* I've been studying seed and flower catalogs since I was a pre-teenager, but *never* had I encountered anything like it for our climate! Stuff like this is just really difficult to resist; I tried... but finally gave up. Turns out it is a Texas wildflower! May 2011, decades later, at Hughes Plant Farm south of Tyler. *Wow!* The neutral, dull gray-blue leaves and stems! They had flats of little plants for sale. Cheap! Little gray-blue plants that would bloom blue! Oh! It just *had* to be!

And it was! I bought 2 flats and Josephine planted them. (Is this a love story, *or not?*) Our plants are naturally dwarf, about 6 to 9 inches tall, blooming a purplish-blue, but the plants themselves are an all-over steamy gray color, one often encountered in the dry-desert plants. We happen to love it, Josephine and I. She hails from prairie just south of Denton. But there is a cultivation hitch. You'd think that anything that can grow wild throughout Texas would be a sure survivor just about anywhere. It turns out that these needs must be met for Texas Bluebells to survive easily in home gardens: full sun - no frost after seed germination - many months for seedlings to reach blooming size - taller growing strains will require staking - soil pH is neutral to low alkaline - temperature of around the 70s F. at night to high 80s & up during daytime. But there are many different characteristics to enjoy about specific varieties, from 30" and up of height, other strains growing only to dwarf sizes from 5" and upwards; some strains flourish grown in pots; different colors ranging through blues (Forever Blue is our favorite) and purple shades, white, some picotees; indeterminate blooming, meaning they keep on blooming until unsuitable weather or growing conditions (too much water or not enough), or low light. If you can, use a soaker hose in the loose soil about 2" from the plants (aerially wetting the stems and leaves can promote disease - that's what has gotten many of ours!) If you give them what they want, no more, no less, they are incomparably charming! (PS: BEWARE! we ordered a dozen plants of Forever Blue from a famous mail order plant supplier; they *all arrived rotting!*)



(PPS: Pear preserves recipe I promised in June: hard Kieffer pears from abandoned home sites or roadside stands will work best. Remove skins and cores, cut to small chunks. Sugar them and cook like for figs.) - 'erb

Bus Tour to Greg Grant's Arcadia Dogtrot Homes and Gardens



Greg Grant

Join us for a special treat as we tour two of Greg Grant's restored dogtrot family homes and heirloom gardens in the Community of Arcadia (Shelby Co.) Wednesday, September 14th. Arcadia, established around 1887, once had several stores, churches, three schools, a blacksmith shop, syrup mill, cotton gin, barber shop, baseball field and post office. Today there are no businesses in Arcadia and it has a population of fifty-one.

Dogtrot houses were the original "green" houses, built with dog runs or breezeways through the middle of them for air circulation. Of course dogs could circulate through them as well! Constructed without electricity, heating, air or plumbing, these homes were designed for cross ventilation pulling air through doorways and windows in a Southern climate where the hot, humid summers are much more unbearable than the brief winters. These homes were common throughout the South but now have all but disappeared.

One of the houses belonged to Greg's maternal grandparents and great grandparents while the other belonged to his paternal great grandparents. At this property in addition to the flower gardens, Greg grows an annual crop of sugarcane for syrup making. We'll take a look at Greg's pocket prairie where he rescues and grows native wildflowers from local roadsides as well as his "tall grass restoration" project. The property is also home to over 100 bluebird houses that he has constructed and erected.

Greg will have his books and bulbs for sale after the tour. If you already own his books I'm sure he would be glad to sign them for you.

Greg is the co-author of *Home Landscaping-Texas* and *The Southern Heirloom Garden*. He is also a contributing editor to *Texas Gardener* and Neil Sperry's *Gardens* Magazines.

After leaving Greg's we will go to Nacogdoches and visit the **Dragonfly Nursery & Garden**. They will not have many plants in at that time, which is okay, as it is a small, cute nursery known for its fabulous yard art.

Next, we go to the highly recommended **Auntie Pastas Restaurant** where we will experience the history and culture that this building is famous for. Originally warehousing groceries, it was the first refrigerated warehouse west of the Mississippi and was a major site for trade and distribution in the state.

Please select your menu choice and inform us of what you want for lunch at the time you register for the bus tour.

MENU

1. **CHICKEN CAESAR SALAD:** Grilled sliced chicken, tender Romaine lettuce tossed with our Caesar dressing, croutons and topped with Parmesan cheese.

2. **HOMEMADE LASAGNA:** Ten layers of pasta filled with meat sauce, meatballs, and cheeses.

3. **PAN-SEARED TILAPIA:** Lightly floured fillet seared in butter and olive oil and topped with sautéed tomatoes and Dijon peppercorn sauce. Served with garlic mashed potatoes and seasonal vegetables.

4. **EGGPLANT PARMESAN:** Hand breaded eggplant, topped with chunky marinara and mozzarella cheese, served with spaghetti.

After lunch we will have a guided tour of the **Pineywoods Native Plant Center**, a 40 acre green-space sanctuary. The mission of the Center is to promote education about conservation and use of native plants. Their goal is to feature the best native ornamental plants in a well designed garden. The demonstration garden was dedicated by Lady Bird Johnson in 2000 and features more than 100 plant species native to East Texas.

Of course, we will start our bus tour with Chick-Fil-A breakfast sandwiches.

We will meet at Harvey Hall Parking lot at 7:30 AM, leaving at 8:00 AM sharp. TOUR COST \$25.00 including lunch.

First come first go, spouses and friends are invited. Due to limited time and space you need to register with payment and menu choice at the August Meeting.

Please give a special thanks to DONNA COLE for giving many hours emailing, making phone calls and traveling to Nacogdoches putting together this top-notch tour.

Greg rarely hosts tours so don't miss this special opportunity to take a peek into his home life.

See you on the bus!!! Joanie Matthews

Clematis Wilt

by Sue Adee

Does your clematis look like mine? The leaves are all brown and it looks dead. Clematis wilt is the cause. Fortunately the plant is not dead and with care your clematis can be returned to good health.

Clematis wilt is a fungal disease known as *Phoma clematidina*. It spreads by spores and is helped by our damp and humid weather. This fungus cuts off the plant's circulatory system so water can't move through its veins and it can happen almost overnight.

The best way to treat clematis wilt is to catch it early, cutting off the affected stems as close to the ground as possible being careful not to injure the healthy stems. If yours looks like mine, I had to cut the vine all the way to the ground. Be sure to remove any of the dead foliage, as the disease can over winter in it. Also remember, this is a fungus, so dip your clippers in a solution of 1/10 parts bleach after each cutting so as not to spread the disease to any other plant.

Fortunately, clematis wilt does not affect the roots system so it will send up new shoots. The bad news is that the plant tends to have the disease year after year. So next year, if your clematis has been infected with clematis wilt this year, keep a good eye on it and catch the disease early.



Junior MG Specialist Training

Register now for the Junior Master Gardener Specialist Training, September 15-17 in Denton County.

Early registration ends August 31.



With your help, the National Junior Master Gardener® Program is growing good kids by igniting a passion for learning, success, and service through a unique gardening education. This **dynamic and intensive 2-1/2 day training conference** is designed for those coordinating or supporting JMG programs at the local, county, and regional level.

Come join us and learn new ideas and techniques that will help you implement effective youth gardening programs through JMG. Together, we can cultivate a love of plants and gardening while fostering leadership and community service in youth nationwide.

All attendees completing JMG Specialist Training Conference will receive certification as a JMG Specialist by the National Junior Master Gardener Program office and a host of invaluable resources to grow JMG and youth gardening programs in the local, regional or state level.

Registration: <http://dcmga.com/events/2011-JMG-specialist/>

Opportunities to Learn

Henderson County Workshop

August 11 - 6:30 PM – East Texas Arboretum – Athens
Our Favorite Perennials, Betty Markee

SFA Arboretum Les Reeves Lecture

August 18 – 7:00 PM – Room 110 – SFA Ag. Building – Nacogdoches – *Spaced Out: Challenges of Growing Horticultural Crops for NASA in Lunar and Martian Agriculture*, Fred Davies, PhD

First Tuesday in Garden

September 6 – Noon – Tyler Rose Garden - IDEA Garden - *What to Plant Now- Seeds & Transplants*, Dee Bishop

Landscape Design Study Course III

September 26-27 – College Station – for details go to page 2 of this newsletter.

Obama's Home & Garden

Our intrepid roving reporter Bill Kelldorf was recently in the Washington D.C. area visiting relatives (not the Obama's). He made good use of his time while there, checking out the sites of our nation's capitol.

He stopped in front of the White House and took a picture.

He also noticed the Obama's home garden and reported, "Could not believe that the Obama Garden is in front and to the left of the view of the Whitehouse. You can see the corn with tassels!" He did not see anyone out working in the garden, so perhaps it wasn't a "Work day in the garden."



Pictures by Bill Kelldorf