



MG Grapevine

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December 2008

Volume 15

Number 12

NOTICE

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

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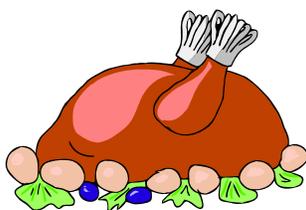
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Extension Office

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December SCMG Meeting

The December meeting will be held at the Rose Garden Center. We will be having a traditional Christmas dinner. Members are asked to bring either a salad, vegetable or dessert. Turkey and dressing will be provided. There will not be a speaker.



Another Way to Report Volunteer Hours

One way to report hours is by getting a copy of the report form from the SCMG website. For some time the form has been available in PDF format and could be printed and filled in for delivery to the Extension Office or to mail to Martin Davis. Now there is another option The PDF form can now be filled in on the web and filed via e-mail. A copy can printed for your records.

When you click the "Submit" button, a box will pop-up asking for your e-mail address and name. When you click "Send" another box gives you two options. Read the information there carefully and note that it makes a difference whether you use Outlook Express, Eudora or some other mail program or if you use an internet mail service, such as Yahoo or AOL. If you click the Outlook Express option you may then click "OK" and your form will be sent via e-mail. If you select the other option, you will have to save the form to your computer and then send it to Martin as an attachment.

The process is simpler than the directions make it sound. Try it. You may like it. Or you may continue to submit hours as you always have.

Bylaws Changes Approved

The changes to the bylaws of the association, proposed at the October SCMG Association meeting and presented for vote at the November meeting, were approved. The vote was by written ballot and only one vote was cast against the proposed changes.

Work Days at the Gardens

During December work is scheduled in the gardens on only December 2 and 9. There will be no other work days after that until January 6, 2009. Work days will continue to start at 1:00 PM until the end of February.

Website Usage

The SCMG Association website has been available on the web for about 18 months and has seen an increase in visits most months during that time. In May 2008 there were 7,558 visits, the first time over 7,000. Then in September there were 8,229 visits, but October surprised us with 9,880 page views which is almost exactly double the total a year ago. When will we surpass 10,000? Stay tuned.

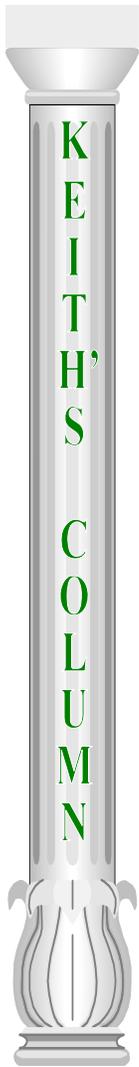
Pay your 2009 Dues

The Treasurer will be accepting SCMG Association dues for 2009 at the December 4th meeting. Dues are \$12 per year payable by January 31st.

Plant of the Month Column

Anne Pattullo's column in this newsletter is her last for a while. She is Vice President/President elect to be installed in January 2009 and thus is stepping aside to assume her new duties. Our thanks to Anne for her informative columns.

If you would be interested in writing the column, every other month, starting in February, contact Martin Davis, Editor.



As we have all come to know, the internet is an interesting place, where you can find all sorts of things, from stuff to buy, to sites devoted to information and entertainment. Of course, there is a lot of junk on the internet, too. Many of the web sites that sell or promote stuff may make claims about products that seem too good to be true. Quite often that is the case. It is always good to follow the axiom “buyer beware”. Of course, the same goes for many of the too good to be true ads we see in newspaper supplements and magazine.

I just read an interesting note from Kim Komando, a radio talk show host on computers and electronic gadgets. She writes in her column today, “The Internet is the modern equivalent of the Wild West. Practically anything goes. There are plenty of shysters looking for your money.”

Informational sites range from personal and company web sites to blogs (web log) to university and government sites. Wikipedia has become quite popular, where nearly anybody can contribute information on almost any kind of topic. The trouble is, who are the contributors, what are their expertise’s and what are the resources to back up statements and claims, and are they

valid? Even Snopes has been questioned recently regarding its status as an unbiased, last word concerning “hoax or not” investigations.

Of course, Google has become the standard for searching for anything on the internet. I have shared this before, but if you are looking for horticultural or gardening information, I would encourage you to stick with university-based web sites. They will offer research-based, information, without the bias of having a product to sell or some other agenda. Sometimes the web sites may be a bit out-dated, so check for a publishing date, if available.

The way to restrict your Google searches to university-related web sites is to insert, after your search terms, the following: site:.edu If you want to look only at a certain university web site, then use the following: site:.tamu.edu – in this example, only web Texas A&M University sites containing the search term(s) would be found.

A conglomerate of Extension personnel are contributing to a national extension web site for presenting educational

information – it is <http://Extension.org> and you can use the search functions there to find info.

Yesterday I came across a very interesting web site out of the University of Washington. It is prepared by Dr. Linda Chalker-Scott, an Extension educator with U of W. One of the pages with a series of articles in particular I found interesting and informative was entitled “Horticultural Myths”. She covers a wide range of gardening and horticultural subjects, backing everything up with literature searches of scientific, peer-reviewed research studies. The address for the web site is:

http://www.puyallup.wsu.edu/~Linda%20Chalker-Scott/Horticultural%20Myths_files/index.html

While the author is from the Northwest U.S., and specific information related to plants, hardiness, etc. do not apply to us, the Myths section covers a wide range of subjects that is frequently found in general gardening literature, and therefore is applicable and worth noting. Her articles address a wide range of topics like disinfecting pruning tools with bleach, corn meal gluten, compost tea, mulching and nitrogen deficiency, potassium and magnesium as means to increase cold hardiness of marginal plants, cedar wood chips, and the list goes on. You will be surprised at many of the conclusions, all based on research, she presents.

And, if you want to read a humorous account by Steven Chamblee (of Chandor Gardens) of his recent encounter with a native persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana*), click on his article in Neil Sperry’s Gardens Magazine: <http://www.neilsperry.com/articles/2008/11/19/native-son.html>

I hope you had a happy Thanksgiving, and hope to see you at the December meeting.

Charline Perlewitz

Charline, a member of MG Class 3, passed away on November 13, 2008.

A retired TJC art instructor, Charline enjoyed working with water color painting. She produced the water colors for the covers for the SCMG calendar/garden guide from 1999 thru 2004. She had not

been an active MG in recent years. She and her husband Ray, who passed away only one month earlier, had divided their time between their home in Michigan (summers) and Tyler.



New E-Mail Address

Mary Wilkins - wilkins.mary@att.net

F the CORNER R O M



Learning Stuff

Isn't that what Master Gardening is pretty much all about, Learning Stuff. That's one of the things I like most about Master Gardening, the opportunity to learn more. I've always liked learning new things and the Master Gardening program gives me many ways to do just that.

I was a non-gardener before I signed up for Master Gardener class. The training was really fun for me. Every class brought new information and more things to

learn. And that was just the tip of the iceberg.

There are an untold number of opportunities to learn more about gardening and related subjects. One of the best sources for learning new stuff is from all of you, fellow Master Gardeners. You all are wonderful sources of knowledge, information and ideas.

Through Master Gardening a person can find many other sources of information such as schools, seminars, classes, newsletters, magazines, books and other individuals. And the information available covers gardening and many other subjects closely and not so closely related to gardening.

Who would have believed that I could attend a landscape school and learn how to make a floral arrangement using nothing but baling wire and oranges? If I had known in advance that was on the program I probably would have skipped that class. I'm glad I didn't know because I really enjoyed the presentation.

I guess what I'm trying to say is that the Master Gardener program opens up vast new areas of learning opportunities for me or anyone else who wants to learn. I like a lot of things about the Master Gardening program, especially all the wonderful folks who participate in it.

Oops, gotta go, I just got a new gardening newsletter pop up in my email and I'm sure it's chock full of all kinds of good "stuff".



Photo by Anne Pattullo

Christmas Cactus

by Anne Pattullo

This is the time of year for Christmas cactus (*Schlumbergera bridgisi*). So many of us have had the experience of purchasing a heavily budded plant, only to bring it home and have all the buds either drop off or shrivel up and turn brown. Budded Christmas cacti don't like to be moved, even a little! They are easy to care for though, if one just knows a few of their secrets.

I remember a beautiful plant in my Grandparents home in Ohio. It was always put in an unheated upstairs bedroom and mostly forgotten about until it came into spectacular bloom each Christmas. I always wondered how such a neglected plant could be so lovely. Now I know the secret and we have just the right conditions to have the same thing here in East Texas. Just don't put it in an upstairs bedroom! Christmas cacti will bloom depending on either long nights or cool temperatures.

For us in this area, the easiest way to do it is to leave them outside on a deck or patio. Water thoroughly but relatively infrequently throughout the summer with half strength water soluble fertilizer. Let your cactus dry out between waterings. Then about September let it go dry for the entire month. I let mine go from September 15 to October 15 to bring on the bloom a little later. Sometimes they tend to bloom for Thanksgiving instead of Christmas. At the end of the month or soon after you'll see tiny buds at the stem tips. Resume watering and fertilizing until the plant comes into flower. The secret here is the dry soil and the cool nights. Don't move it or bring it into the house during this time unless a freeze is expected. The Christmas cactus really likes the cool nights.

Once it is blooming, gently bring it inside and place it in as cool a place as possible. Keep it away from heat vents and windows with a bright Southern exposure. Be careful not to over water while the plant is in bloom. Once your plant has finished blooming, put it in an inconspicuous place where it can rest for about 2 months. Don't water it during this period.

About March move it to a sunnier area and begin to water and fertilize again. This is also the time to start cuttings. Break off about a 3 inch stem of segments and let them lay on the potting bench for a couple days to harden off. Then dip the cut end into a little rooting hormone and stick it in a 3:1:1 ratio of standard potting mix, perlite and builders sand.

This has been my routine for the past several years and it has worked well. Christmas cactus cuttings are great passalong plants and with just a little attention you can produce blooming plants for gifts in a single year. I do, however, tell friends to whom I give budded plants that the buds may fall off the first year since they don't like to be moved at this time. But if they'll just be patient, next year they will have a real beauty. So go ahead and buy the beautiful plant at the nursery or even the grocery store. Just be prepared that it may drop its buds. Give it a good rest and then feel free to take cuttings. With just a little work, you can have a number

Landscape Design Study Course

Dr. Bill Welch wishes to announce the latest in the Landscape Design Study Courses: Number II, Series XXI - February 16-17, 2009. Originally slated for early September, 2008, the course had to be cancelled and re-scheduled due to Hurricane Ike.

The courses are held Christ United Methodist Church, 4201 State Hwy 6, College Station, TX and are co-sponsored by Texas Garden Clubs, Inc. and Texas AgriLife Extension Service and Texas A&M University.

Each course has been approved to qualify for 12 hours of continuing education toward maintaining certification for Master Gardeners. For more information and the registration form, go to:

http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/southerngarden/LDFeb09/Flyer2_09.html Please fill out and return the registration form as soon as possible. Cost of the course will be \$90; cost of the textbook (good for 4 sessions) \$40.

Living Green Seminar



The seminar will be held on January 27, 2009, hosted by the City of Tyler, Keep Tyler Beautiful and the Texas Conservation Alliance. This all day event will held at Harvey Convention Center from 8 AM to 5 PM. Cost is \$25 per person, including breakfast and lunch.

For more information visit www.cityoftyler.org and look for **Register now for Sustainability Symposium or the Living Green logo.**



Chad Rockett passed away on November 25th. He was a member of MG Class 6 and is best remembered for bringing the Oakleaf Hydrangea to the Spring Fling plant sale. Tyler is populated by countless Oakleaf Hydrangea as a result. He is survived by his wife Wyona Rockett, MG Class 9.



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