



MG Grapevine

<http://scmg.tamu.edu>

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NOTICE
December 2nd
MG Association
Meeting at the Rose
Garden Center
11:30 AM

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December SCMG Association Meeting

We will have our annual Christmas luncheon on Thursday, December 2nd at the Rose Garden Center. Turkey, dressing, gravy, & rolls will be provided and you are asked to bring side dishes, salads or desserts. Sign up sheets were available at last month's meeting, but if you have not already made your reservations it is not to late. Please e-mail Ann Smith at smithvae@aol.com to make a reservation and let her know how many will be in your party. Spouses are welcome and encouraged to come. This is always a fun occasion and we hope to have a big group. Looking forward to seeing all of you.

Lifetime Member Program

At the November SCMG meeting the bylaws revision was approved, making the Lifetime Member program possible. Since then the special committee considering the nominees for Lifetime status has met and those selected will be introduced at the December 2nd meeting. This will be the first group named to this special program.

Association Dues

Treasurer Pat Welch will begin accepting dues for 2011 at the December 2nd meeting. Be an early bird and bring your check for \$20. Pat will thank you.

Work Day in the Gardens

During December and January the schedule for work days is changed to only two each month. December 7th and 14th and January 18th and 25th. Start time is changed to 1:00PM.

Even if the weather is a little uncomfortable, work will go on, unless an e-mail announcement is sent cancelling work.

Extra help can always be used.

JMG Group at All Saints

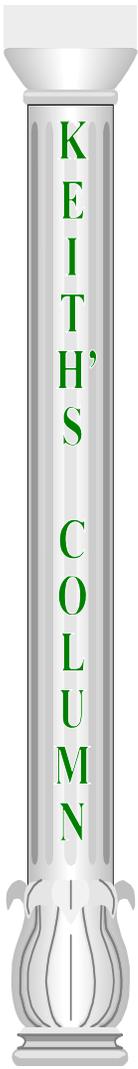
One of the premier educational opportunities available to Master Gardeners is the Junior Master Gardener program. This year we have a new JMG group at the All Saints Episcopal School lower school. Our MGs are working with Dr. Lucy Perry (who has a degree in horticulture) of the science department, with the support of the head of the lower school, Mrs. Gloria Zapalac.



During the past nine weeks Jim Powell, George Weisser, Jean Smith, Pat Welch, Ken Stegall and Bob Leffingwell have been meeting each Wednesday with 13 third and fourth graders (pictured above) who are enrolled in the sixteen week program. The first half of the program is complete and second half will begin again on February 16th with graduation planned for May 5, 2011. MG Jay Dickson will be joining the other MGs working with the students next spring.

The students have taken a field trip to the E. T. State fair, visiting AgriWorld and Our Secret Garden, planted strawberries, made plaster of Paris molds of insects, plus several other classroom activities. The JMG program covers eight different subjects from "Plant Growth & Development" to "Life Skills & Career Exploration."

Visit the JMG website at <http://jmgkids.us> for more information on this program.



The end of another great year for the Smith County Master Gardener program is upon us. Thanks to each of you for your faithful support of our many and diverse educational programs. We are reaching thousands of people through varied projects and events, and with the goal of helping them improve their lives by being better informed and making wise choices financially and environmentally. The role you play cannot be underestimated and you are very much appreciated. I want to again remind you to submit your monthly hours and contact reports monthly. It is very crucial that we do not under-report our hours and contacts. The information you provide is passed along in my monthly reports, and ultimately go into an aggregated report to our State legislature. Martin mentioned we received a lot of hours (~500) for October (a very busy month for us) during November, which did not get included in my October monthly report. It is difficult and sometimes impossible, to go back and add those in to the State report. So, it makes a difference. I realize reporting is not a fun thing to do, but it helps us to accurately "tell our story".

I got the privilege today to show off the IDEA Garden to the Mayor of San Miguel de Allende, Tyler's newest Sister City. She oohed and ahed at the landscaping, and was very interested in the rainwater harvesting display in the garden. You never know how far-reaching our educational outreach may go.

Thanks again for all you do. Keith

Dry Shade - A Landscaper's Nightmare

by Dee Bishop



Thumbing through garden magazines, we see beautiful shady gardens full of lovely hostas, Solomon's seal, native ginger, ferns, violets of all kinds, and lots of sweet little springtime flowers. A shade garden is just what we want.

Have you ever walked through woodlands here? Have you walked beside woodland creek sides? Well I have and believe me, there is little beauty to see other than the trees themselves and a few shrubs that bloom. There are no little crested iris, no coralbells, no maidenhair ferns, no native columbines, woods phlox, or false Solomon's seal with its lovely frothy flowers---not one. Why?

Texas is a very dry state, even here in the far eastern part. There are many more dry creeks in summer than rapidly flowing streams you find east of the Mississippi River. Mix dry with lots of tree roots and you know the reason we have practically dessert woods Sooo, what can we plant under trees or on the shady side of buildings? There are many plants that will work, but they aren't necessarily dainty and 'sweet'. Texas is not a dainty sweet place. It's tough and it needs tough plants that can take whatever the weather dishes out---from hot dry drought, to occasional floods and, hot one day and cold the next, winter weather.

If you can really water, and I mean soak the area, you can grow much more, but here are some of the plants I have successfully grown here with minimal water.

Cast iron plant (*aspidistra* spp.), azaleas (really do not need so much water as I once thought --- once they get a good foot hold), woods ferns, Christmas fern, holly fern, begonias, impatiens, setcreasea, hostas (with water), and hellebores (which really excel) are some that I really love.

Shrubs that grow well in fairly dry shade---if the bed is prepared well with lots of compost--- Oakleaf hydrangeas, azaleas, camellias (both *sasanqua* and *japonica*). Some of our native viburnums are really beautiful all year and do well with some sun. My favorite is *V. dentatum*, 'Summer Snowflake'. It is a large shrub which can be shaped into a small tree and is fabulous all four seasons. Old turkscape is a sure thing in either sun or shade. Just whack it back every now and then to make it thicken up. Winter honeysuckle needs a half day of sun but makes a lovely large nearly evergreen shrub that blooms in the dead of winter.

Other plants such as bulbs (will grow in deciduous shade if they bloom in late winter - early spring.) Ground covers like variegated English ivy and Algerian ivy with it's large white and green variegated leaves really brighten up fairly dark shade.

There are tons of lovely shade plants if you are diligent to water and are willing to prepare your bed well. Of course mulch is a given. It helps to keep the soil cooler and holds moisture in. Impatiens, browallia, tricyrtis, and torenia all grow and bloom well in bright shade with extra water.

Tree roots can be your worst enemy. They suck up all the water they can. They grow much thicker in good soil and with extra water. In fact tree roots often take most of all of the water you put into the bed. Remember how long you watered in last summer and the plant died anyway? Get a spade and dig down to see if tree roots have completely inundated the area. If so, remove some of the roots . Trees are greedy and losing a few roots won't hurt them.

Shade in Texas is wonderful and can be landscaped beautifully. If you don't care to water constantly, put more hardscape in. Things like brick or stone patios, water features, rocks, or areas of bark mulch are all beautiful and with a large pot or two of color will give you just the 'bling' you crave.

Coffee Walking

by Anne Pattullo - President SCMG Association

The 2010 Master Gardener year is nearing the end. A huge number of volunteer hours have been put in and I thank each one of you for your terrific participation. I knew I would enjoy Master Gardeners when I first met my fellow Class XII members, but it has gone way beyond that! You all are a wonderful group of friends and the best retirement gift I ever could have received! I wish I could participate in every one of our projects but there are not enough hours in the day or days in the week.



When I wrote the first *Coffee Walking* column last Christmas, the ground was brown and the trees were bare. It will soon be that way again but Mother Nature is putting on a grand finale this week. I have noticed so many brilliant orange Crape Myrtles this fall. Mine, however, are a variety that has next to no fall color. The same thing applies to my Bradford pear tree. It is huge, beautifully shaped and still full of deep green leaves. It never colors up until very late in the season and then just sort of turns brown and drops its leaves. It disappoints in the spring as well, blooming only sporadically. I do have holly berries, though! I especially love my Possumhaw which has oodles of brilliant red berries already. I noticed the December Southern Living magazine has an article about hollies that recommends Winterberry along with Possomhaw as great deciduous hollies. Come to the IDEA garden and see a beautiful one right across from the main entrance. There is also a Possumhaw by the driveway that is just spectacular once it drops all its leaves.



Ellie and I continue our walk each morning. I have pretty much given up on the coffee though, as I have to stop and cuddle the cat, pet the lab and all the while keep my own jealous Ellie from climbing up

my leg. It always gets my day off to a good start, however, and somehow I think the animals look forward to it as much as I do. I just drink my coffee now before I leave the house. I do try to take the camera, but try as I might, I can't seem to get all three in a picture at once.

Our last event of the year will be our annual Christmas luncheon on December 2nd. I hope everyone will come and enjoy the turkey and all the delicious food and fellowship. We will try to have some calendars there for you to buy for Christmas presents, so look over your list and check it twice! See you in December!

YEWS

by Herb Coursey

All cultivars of Yew are needle-bearing (lanceolate) as opposed to the usual thin-long-flat-wide shape of tree leaves. Being conifers, they are gorgeous year-round, but especially in the barren scenes of ...winter!



Resorting to paleontology solves nothing. I know. Yet age is interesting. There are fossils of some ten various species of Yew, all thought to have descended from so-named *Paleotaxus rediviva*. Such fossils have been found contained as triassic age log-fossils preserved in prehistoric bogs of peat-beds in Ireland, Scotland, Cumberland and Cambridgeshire fens, and the submerged "moor-logs" at the mouth of the Thames. But microscopic examination of samples from these reveal woody fibers with bordered pits and spiral lines unique to those of Yew samples. *Good grief!*

- a. Those fossils approach 200 million years old!
- b. Yet tools and weapons made of Yew-wood go back only about 50,000 years.
- c. The oldest living Yew tree in England is between 2 and 5 thousand years of age, and is widely believed (in England!) to be the oldest tree in Europe.
- d. "Hmmm" - as I mull sometimes aloud to myself.
- e. "Pal-e-o- WHO?" - as our beloved maid Rose might herself, have mulled over, ... softly ... some 60 years ago.

Most authorities claim Yew will grow in North America in zones 1 - 7. Another authority, Dr. Dave Creech at SFA's Mast Botanical Garden in zone 8, has been growing several varieties of gorgeous Yew with great success for nearing ten years. All Yew are dioecious, so to make seed, there needs be at least one male and one female plant.

Each plant of every variety of Yew is totally deadly poisonous to practically all animals. The only exception to this is the Aril sac - it is not poisonous! The Aril is the lovely warm-red-colored fleshy sac, each containing a very poisonous seed. Actually there *is* another exception: those birds that come along and eat the Aril whole do not die but, after a while, emit the *undigested* seed in their stool, thus effecting a tree-planting!



Evergreen, and of a wide variety of particular characteristics, Yew lives best in what we call poor soils - even quite chalky - thus, while it enjoys a pH upward of neutral, it rejects clay absolutely. Perfect drainage is vital! It drowns as easily as Camellias! And it thrives in sun with a leafy overlace of shade. Pruning rejuvenates it; if a main trunk dies, new Yew can sprout from the live roots and grow into healthy trees. (Would that I could do that!)

Some common Yew of the world are: English Yew bushes = Taxus baccata = 'Repandens' spreading growth habit, **See YEWS - page 4**



The SCMG Executive Committee met on October 28th.

The Rose Festival sale was a positive experience. It was proposed that a core committee be formed to investigate the propagation and selling of plants, presently growing in the demonstration gardens, at future Bulb Sales and Rose Festivals.

A letter of appreciation has been received from the East Texas State Fair Association for the SCMG participation in the AgriWorld with Our Secret Garden.

Updates were given on the Fall Conference/Bulb Sale, the 2011 SCMG Calendar and the picnic at Jim Powell's.

A committee on signs will be meeting with Cindy Harrington to discuss new signs for the four MG gardens in the Rose Garden.

President Anne Pattullo will appoint a committee to decide on awards to be presented for consideration to the Texas State MG Association by the end of January.

Keith Hansen is concerned that the permanent and semi-permanent plants in the demonstration gardens need to be more completely labeled. The IDEA Garden online database needs updating.

A relatively new Junior Master Gardener program is presently working with 12 children at All Saints School. Jean Smith, Pat Welch, Jim Powell and George Weisser are working with the children.

Letters of Appreciation

From Joel Baker, County Judge

In his letter to the SCMG he says in part: "I appreciated recently receiving the nice calendar from the SCMG. Of particular interest to me were the numerous gardening tips that were included throughout the calendar. We are planning for and considering a new garden area for next year, so this will be a big help to us.

Thank you for the work that was done to compile all of this information and for presenting such a useful resource to our community."

From John Sykes, President/CEO and Deborah Newman, Director of Competitive Events of the E.T. State Fair.

Their letter begins: "Beautiful!" "Fantastic" "These comments were heard often in reference to AgriWorld and the Secret Garden specifically. What an incredible job all of you did in putting together a top-notch exhibit and being part of a quality educational program!

Thank you all for your hours of time and enthusiasm. The result was an exceptional learning environment for almost 1,200 students during the tours and the hundreds of Fair visitors that wandered down the paths at the Fair."

Speaker's Bureau Presentations

During October, presentations were made to a total 206 people. MGs who spoke to groups and their subjects include: Andie Rathbone, garden club, forcing bulbs; Don Davis, 1st Tues., selecting season annuals; Don Davis, rose festival, composting; Pat Turner, rose garden tours, Jana Bowman, garden club; Janice Suggs, rose garden tours and Patsy Besch, garden club, herb gardening.

Hours Reports

The minimum requirement for certified Master Gardeners is 12 Volunteer Hours and 8 CEs and for those certified as of April 1, 2010 is 9 Volunteer Hours and 6 CEs. Any MG that has not earned those minimums, has until the December 31st to do so. Any MG who is unable to complete the requirements due to health or other reasons, should contact Keith Hansen, if they wish to continue as a Master Gardener.

All MGs are urged to get the reports of their activities up to date to avoid the year-end rush. Send the reports to Martin Davis at mred2853@sbcglobal.net or mail them to him at 4130 Madera Dr., Tyler, TX 75707.

YEWS - continued from page 3

2'-4' high by 12' -15'wide, used as foundation plants or in short decorative hedges.

Irish Yew trees = Taxus baccata = 'Fastigiata' columnar shape, 15'-30' high by 4' to 8' wide, used for privacy.

Japanese Yew bushes = Taxus cuspidata 'Monloo' = 'Emerald Spreader' used as specimen plants or in short decorative hedges.

Hicks Yew = Taxus x media 'Hicksii' columnar shape, 12'- 20' high by 6'-10' wide, used as foundation plants or in short decorative hedges.

Taunton Yew = Taxus x media 'Tauntonii' = spreading growth habit, 3'-4' high by 3'-4' wide, used as foundation plants or in short, decorative hedges; it resists winter burn.

One must remember that all parts of the Yew plant are poisonous, including the seed in the gorgeous red Aril sac; so, better it also be considered 'off limits'.

A FINAL REFERRAL FOR THE YEWS:

Yew has long been part of the Christmas tradition in Britain *and elsewhere in Europe*: Their sprigs have been cut and used like Christmas holly. Whole Yew have served as Christmas trees. Prince Albert it was who solidified the place of the Christmas tree in Britain, but *Albert's tree was not the first one!* That honor falls to **the** Yew set up as a Christmas tree by Queen Charlotte, the wife of George III. She had a Yew tree hung with sweets and toys and illuminated with small wax candles for a party for local children at Windsor Castle on Christmas Day in the year 1800.

- 'erb



Changes

New E-Mail Address

Julia Squibb - jasquibb@embarqmail.com

New Phone Number

Linda Scoggin - 903-920-2281

Landscape Design Course

Dr. Bill Welch and Mrs. Nell Zeigler, Chairpersons, wish to announce the latest in the Landscape Design Study Courses: Number II, Series XXII - February 21-22, 2011.

Each of the courses offers an 'outside' lecture. This time, we are pleased to have horticulturist Greg Grant of Stephen F. Austin University, Nacogdoches, TX for this presentation. He will speak on Heirloom Gardening.

More information will be available at a later date.

Looking Ahead

The SCMG 2011 Training Class first class is January 11 with classes continuing to March 13, generally on every Tuesday & Thursday. Deadline for application is December 13th. Link to application form is on the SCMG website homepage at <http://scmg.tamu.edu/>.

First Tuesday in the Garden 2011

The 2011 schedule and the subjects for the 1st Tuesday series has been published, as follows:

March 1st – Selection and Care of Azaleas

April 5th – Natives for the Garden

May 3rd – Guided Tour of the IDEA Garden

June 7th – Easy, Pleasing Day Lilies

September 6th – What to Plant Now Seeds & Transplants

October 4th – Guided Tour of the Heritage Garden

November 1st – Aristocratic Camellias - Japonicas & Sasanquas



All Saints JMG groups display posters.
Photos by Jean Smith



SCMG President Anne Pattullo addresses
overflow crowd at November meeting.
Photos by Bill Kelldorf