



MG Grapevine

NOTICE

MG Association Meeting
Rose Garden Center
February 7, 2008
Keith Mills

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Published for the Master Gardeners of Smith County, Texas under the auspices of the Smith County Office of Texas Cooperative Extension, 1517 W. Front St. Tyler, TX 75702.

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Texas AgriLife Extension

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Extension Office

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February Meeting

Speaker for the February association meeting is Keith Mills. He is the Grounds Maintenance Manager at Caldwell Zoo. In this capacity he is responsible for the landscape maintenance and development at the zoo.

Keith has a BS in Ornamental Horticulture and is currently a director of the Association of Zoological Horticulture as well as local gardening committees and clubs. Should be interesting to hear about the special challenges of his job.

Pictures of 2008 Officers on Web

They agreed to serve, were nominated, elected and installed and they already have begun their new jobs. If you don't know all of them, go to <http://grovesite.com/mg/smg> the SCMG website, look for the Smith County Association and click on "Officers" to see their pictures.

They meet every month as the Executive Committee to discuss the business of the association and make decisions which have made the SCMG the success that it is.



New Monthly Column Writers

Last month we reported, with regret, that Dee Bishop would no longer author her monthly column which we had enjoyed for several years. Now we can announce that two MGs will be sharing the responsibility. Anne Pattullo is writing about plants and her first effort appears in this issue of the Grapevine. Another Anne, Anne Brown will be writing about insects next month. We welcome the addition of these columns and

thank both ladies for stepping forward.

Change is Coming

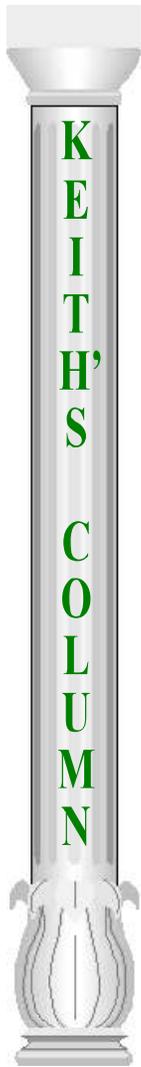
This year, maybe more than any year recently, the Executive Committee has struggled with the budget. For several years spending has exceeded income and with a large bank balance to work from, there had been very little concern about that. The time had come that the association had to be more prudent in spending, lest we run out of money at some time in the next few years. Therefore, at their January meeting, the Executive Committee approved a budget that includes many changes which reduces expenses.

One of those changes will effect how the the *MG Grapevine* is delivered. Effective with the March issue, the *Grapevine* will be sent via e-mail to all Smith County MGs who have an e-mail address. Once you open it, you will find the newsletter in full glorious living color which you can print, if you wish. You will find it looks much better than the plain old black and white paper copy.

Printed copies will mailed to the seven MGs who do not have e-mail (or have not supplied us with an e-mail address) and to a short list of others who receive courtesy copies of the newsletter. With this change, the annual savings will be about \$900.00.

We know that some of you have concerns about receiving the e-mail copy of the newsletter because you did not know how to open a PDF file, which requires Adobe Acrobat Reader to access it. The Adobe program can be downloaded free from www.adobe.com or it may already be on your computer and you hadn't noticed. For anyone who has a problem using the Adobe Acrobat Reader, please let us know so that we may assist you.

The Executive Committee advises that you (See **Change** - page 3)



It happens every year at this time. Life at the Extension office is kind of slow paced, only a few phone inquiries, and mainly getting ready for next year's programs. Then January 2 comes, and "Bammo" - it seems

like the world has woken up and is thinking about gardening. Moles, vegetable gardens, pruning, fruit trees, landscaping – you name it, and it seems people are asking it. Of course, we are in the middle of Master Gardener training, with a great group folks from various backgrounds. Remember, you are welcome to drop by and meet the new group, and to attend any of the training meetings, and you earn 3 CE's per class.

The other happenings are the Conferences coming up in February. The E.T. Turfgrass Conference in Overton is on the same day as the MG monthly meeting, February 7. (4 CE's). Next, Dr. Brent Pemberton will be holding a rose pruning demonstration at the Heritage Rose Garden on Tuesday, February 12, starting at 9:00 a.m. Bring hand pruners and loppers, learn how to prune different class of roses, and help get the Heritage Rose Garden ready for spring (2 CE's).

The E. T. Spring Landscape & Garden Conference is the following Saturday, Feb. 16 at the Rose Garden Center. Speakers and topics include Aubrey King of King's Nursery in Tenaha who will discuss Landscaping With Native Plants; Tim Lanthrum of Cutter's Equipment in Tyler who will give 2 shorter talks on 1) Common Problems with Gas-Powered Garden Equipment, and 2) Calibrating Spreaders and Sprayers; Dr. Jerry Parsons of Texas AgriLife Extension Service in San Antonio will give 2 presentations, one on the Texas Superstar program and its plants, and the other on Success With Spring Vegetable Gardening; Mr. Joe Novak is a Senior Lecturer in the Horticulture Department at Texas A&M and he will speak on the health benefits of gardening, including techniques, tools and equipment that can help us continue to garden as we grow older and our physical abilities change. (6 CE's) The East Texas Fruit & Vegetable Conference is the following Tuesday, Feb. 19. This Conference is focused on commercial fruit and vegetable production, and this has 3 concurrent afternoon sessions, including one that focuses on grape (specifically wine grape) production potential in East Texas. (4 CE's) For details on all 3, go to Events & Programs News and

Events: <http://easttexasgardening.tamu.edu/index.html>

Thanks for all you do. Have a great February and enjoy the progression of spring flowers!

2008 Address Book

There will be new pictorial Address Book for 2008. We will use the pictures in the 2007 directory. Pictures will be taken of the current class during their class breaks on February 5th and 12th. If you did not have a picture taken last year and you wish to have one in the 2008 version, please come to the **MG office** at 2 PM on either of those dates.

A new addition to the Address Book this year will be cell phone numbers. If you wish to have your cell phone number listed in the book, please send the number to Martin Davis. There is no requirement to add your cell phone number, but some people are easier to reach via cell (even when they are driving).

Since many messages are sent via e-mail and now we will be sending the Grapevine, it is especially important that we have your current e-mail address. If you have regularly received general e-mail about MG business, we have your correct address. If you have not been receiving the messages or you have never given us your e-mail address please do so **at once**, sending the information to Martin Davis at mred2853@sbcglobal.net. Thanks.

2008 Texas Master Gardener Conference



Montgomery County Master Gardeners invite you to join fellow Texas Master Gardeners for the 2008 Texas Master Gardener Conference April 24-26, 2008 in Conroe, Texas. The 2008 Conference promises opportunities for sharing gardening interests, fun, educational activities and enjoyment of the

numerous amenities offered in the lovely Lake Conroe area of Montgomery County.

All of the information as to the agenda, the speakers and the tours is now available at their website: <http://www.2008texasmastergardenerconference.org/index.html>.

Registration forms are available on this web site. The forms, which can be printed, show the costs to register for the conference and the tours. It is important to notice that the deadline for early registration is **March 14, 2008**. After that date the cost to register is higher.

F R O M the CORNER



As we begin the new year.....That's about as far as I got with writing something that makes sense for the Grapevine. That's the place where my mind went completely blank.

Some folks sit down to write and the ideas and words just come tumbling out. When I sit down to write, what few ideas and words I have all go somewhere and hide. The Smith County Master Gardeners is a great group and I am blessed by your allowing me to

be a small part of it. All great groups get that way because of the members in the group. The membership of the Smith County Master Gardeners makes this group what it is. We have a lot of active projects within the club. Some of these projects are highly visible and some are not as visible but they all are important to our goal of educating our members and the public. Without members who are willing to give of their time, expertise and sometimes personal resources we could not accomplish the things we do.

Your volunteer work makes a difference to the group and to the community. We teach members of the public in many ways such as answering questions on the phone, presenting seminars, the garden work and simply talking to each other and the public. We teach each other and ourselves by working together on projects, talking about problems, asking questions and just being a friend. Thanks to all of you for making this a great group to be a member of.

Some of our volunteer projects are highly visible and we all know about them. Some of other projects are not highly visible but still make an impact that most of us are not truly aware of. This year I'd like to see us highlight some of the lesser known projects and better acknowledge the efforts of those who continue to have successful results with these projects. - John Brasher

New E-Mail Addresses

Ragna Neill - ragzneill@hotmail.com

Joan Driver - jtdriver@hughes.net

Work Day in the Gardens

Work days continue on each Tuesday, starting at 1:30 PM.

Change (continued from page 1)

cannot just 'opt out' of this change, since there is no intention to return to the printed paper newsletter which goes out in the mail. Should you have special circumstances regarding delivery by email, please contact Cindy Harrington or John Brasher so that they can report member requests and concerns to the Executive Committee.

Plant of the Month

by Anne Pattullo

I know we will all miss Dee Bishop's column for the Grapevine. She has so much knowledge and she shared it in a way that was easy to understand and follow. Prior to Dee's column this space contained the Plant of the Month. I have chosen to go back to that format because to follow her style would be trying to fill shoes just too big.



Candytuft

February brings the first blooms of *Iberis sempervirens* or Candytuft. As soon as the spring bedding plants begin to show up in the nurseries, small pots of Candytuft with their pure white blossoms will catch your eye. Put them out as soon as you can. If you can find them in October that is even better.

Candytuft will bloom from late December through May putting a bright cheerful punch into the winter drab. It really seems to like the cool nights and sunny days we have so often in late winter and spring. Candytuft looks best in borders or in rock gardens as it never gets over about 10 inches high and has a spreading growth habit. The blossoms completely cover the foliage in flat little rosettes. It can be confused with allysm but its flowers are larger and very white. Be sure to give it full sun and well-drained highly organic soil. This is critical as too much water in the winter will cause the plant to just rot away.

After it blooms, shear your Candytuft back rather severely and keep the area around it well weeded and mulched. The biggest problem I have had is that weeds like to hide in the foliage and take over quickly if not kept under tight control during the summer. The dark green foliage will stay green all summer, but it may thin and get leggy. Just prune it up in the fall and it will thrive again when the weather gets cooler. Fall is also the time to divide plants. Stem cuttings root easily in moist soil. Once your plants are blooming again, keep them fertilized with an all purpose fertilizer every few weeks. Pests have never been a problem for me; however, this plant does tend to decline after a few years so I consider it a short lived perennial.

Maybe NOW We've Seen It All

Recently, a man brought in a sample of a mysterious substance that appeared in a back corner of his yard, in a sort of "pile" formation. Of course, it's the wrong time of year for the slime mold called "Dog Vomit" Fungus, so the curiosity grew. Keith Hansen thought that the substance might have been the contents of a "Stinkhorn" fungus. Again, wrong time of year, but Stinkhorn would account for the strange odor, at least.

Naturally I was eager to check out the mystery stuff. The substance was light-to-medium gray with a green tinge. It smelled somewhat like old cooked asparagus, with a hint of something else. Ammonia? Perhaps, but faint enough for doubt. The sample consisted of sticky-looking clumps of moist goo, almost like wet clay.

Then the clouds parted: The substance was very likely to be old, used cat litter! A follow-up phone call to the man confirmed that stray cats seemed curiously fond of leaving "calling cards" on the substance. A second pile had appeared near the original pile overnight. (Our recent rains probably decreased the intensity of the ammonia smell.) Now, he need only ask his neighbor to dump the litter elsewhere. Who knew my humble servitude to cats would help solve an Extension Office quandary? Rhonda Rholes

2008 Class XV Schedule

All classes start at 1:00 PM at the Extension Office classroom, except as noted.

Feb. 5 - MG projects overview - photos for Address Book
Feb. 12 - Landscaping Basics - photos for Address Book
Feb 14 - Turfgrass - Dr. James McAfee - **Class at Overton**
Feb. 21 - Earth-Kind & Composting programs
Feb. 26 - Soils & Fertility - Dr. Mark McFarland
Feb. 28 - Landscape Water Conservation - Dr. Dotty Woodson.

Smith County Association Dues

Dues for the association are just \$12 per year and are due January 1, 2008. Checks should be made out to SCMG. Please send payment to the Smith County Extension Office c/o Treasurer, Master Gardeners, 1517 West Front St., Suite 116, Tyler, TX 75702 or to Ann Smith, 14680 CR 2337, Tyler TX 75707.

E.T. Spring Landscape & Garden Conference

February 16th - Rose Garden Center - 8:30AM - 3:30PM
See Keith's Column (page 2) for list of speakers and topics.



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