



MG Grapevine

<http://scmg.tamu.edu>

<http://easttexasgardening.tamu.edu>

February 2010

Volume 17

Number 2

NOTICE

**February 4th
MG Association
Meeting at the Rose
Garden Center
11:30 AM**

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MG Grapevine Staff

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Extension Office

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Monthly Meeting Notes

We all need to solve our runoff water problem from roofs, driveways, sidewalks, or compacted lawns. The most attractive way is with a Rain Water Garden. This will capture, clean, and return the water back to the groundwater storage---naturally.

Our speaker this month on rain water gardens is the Past President of Kaufman Co. Master Gardeners, Margaret Anne Trail.

Ms. Trail is an Earth-Kind and Rain Water Specialist retiring to Texas after living and gardening in twelve states coast to coast.

She will be covering what is a Rain Garden, location, construction, and the proper plants to use. Rain Gardens provides a use for rain, reduces irrigation, and cuts the use of storm drains. Best of all it does not allow mosquitos to breed!!!

Mentors Needed

Sign-up and become a mentor to a member of the current MG training class. Anne Pattullo will have sign-up sheets at the February 4th association meeting. For those who cannot attend the meeting, contact Anne via e-mail at gpattullo@nctv.com.

Mentors provide support for the newly trained MG interns as they step out into the real world of volunteering. Both the intern and the mentor MG gain from the relationship. Sign up to give support and guidance.

Association Dues

The annual dues for the Smith County MG Association is \$20 payable by January 31.

Many have already paid, but it is not too late for the rest of you. Treasurer Pat Welch will be accepting dues at the February 4th meeting. If you cannot attend, mail her a check at 19461 Sandhill Lane, Flint, TX 75762,

February Training Classes

Training classes for MG Class XVII continue. Any certified Master Gardener may sit in on a class and may claim 3 CEs for doing so. All classes begin at 1:00 PM and they held at the Extension Office or at the Overton TAMU center, as noted below.

Classes during February are as follows:

Feb. 2 - Plant Diseases **at Overton** - Dr. Karl Steddum.

Feb. 9 - Water Conservation in the Landscape - Dr. Dotty Woodson.

Feb. 11 - Turfgrass **at Overton** - Dr. James McAfee.

Feb. 18 - Annuals, Plant Propagation - Dr. Brent Pemberton.

Feb 23 - Perennials & Roses - Dr. William Welch.

Feb. 25 - Home Vegetable Production **at Overton** - Dr. Joe Masabni.

A link to the full schedule can be found on either website of East Texas Gardening or the Smith Co. MG Association.

Master Gardener Pictures

Pictures of the current MG training class, which will be used in the 2010-2011 MG Address Book will be taken on February 18th.

Any Master Gardener who would like to have a new picture for the book may come to the Extension office that afternoon.

Volunteers Needed

Joanie Matthews is still seeking volunteers for field trip planning and for scheduling the "after meeting" garden tours each month.

Anyone interested in helping with either project, contact Joanie personally at 903-597-8716 or by e-mail at joanmatthews@msn.com.



The effects of last month's cold snap will be very interesting to see in the coming months. For the most part, it is a bit too early to assess how much damage may have been done by the coldest temperatures our area has seen since 1996. Some things are already obvious - I've seen

many Sago Palms (cycads) (*Cycas revoluta*) and California Fan Palms (*Washingtonia filifera*) with all-brown fronds. California Fan Palm is reported to be hardy from the mid- to high-teens. A very closely related palm is *W. robusta* (Mexican Fan Palm) is not quite as hardy, and many hybrids of these 2 species are in the trade. If you remember from your Plant Development class, true palms (not cycads) are monocots with a scattered vascular system. What that means is that vascular bundles on the outer part of the trunk could have been damaged by the cold, but inner ones may still be fine. The real concern is whether the growing point was damaged or killed. That, like many other injuries, may not be readily apparent until early to mid spring as plants come out of winter dormancy. Plants that look fine now may show dieback as they begin to leaf out. In most cases, it is best to wait until spring and new growth, and at that time assess damage, especially for woody plants. The good news is that this cold snap came after several months of progressively and consistent cooler weather, so most plants should have been completely dormant. Plants with soft, herbaceous tissue can be pruned

now to remove the ugly, but hold off on woody plants.

Mark your calendars for the East Texas Spring Landscape & Garden Conference on February 13. We have another great set of topics and speakers - I am sure you will enjoy and learn. Tell your friends and neighbors. The agenda can be found on the EastTexasGardening.tamu.edu web site, and Martin Davis has a link to it from the SCMG.tamu.edu web site. Speaking of the SCMG.tamu.edu web site, I hope you visit it frequently, as Martin does a fantastic job of not only keeping it up-to-date with lots of information of interest to Master Gardeners, but he also keeps it looking fresh and attractive. Thanks Martin!

February and March are busy months for the Extension office with lots of educational programs being held, along with plenty of common home gardening questions. They are also months where we are very short of help staffing the MG Phone Help Desk. So, if you have some time on your hands, please consider helping out for a few hours. Call Karen Miller or one of the other secretaries for open dates and times.

Thanks for all you do for Texas AgriLife Extension Service! Keith



Tulips

by Herb Coursey

A large chunk of my life ago, when I started teaching at Robert E. Lee HS (Chemistry), I became infected with enthusiasm, wanting to do my best in my classroom and lab, yes, but also to improve the looks of the place, to build even deeper, wider pride. But - how to do it? - no authority, no money, no group to help me, and permission from on high had to be won and granted for absolutely anything and everything that anybody did. OK.

Sometime that fall a flier arrived, advertising stuff for kiddos to sell to the community. Hmm. Peddling foods was barred by TISD in those days. The flashiest thing it offered was big red poinsettias. (School colors were red and white!) But people take those things home, and that wouldn't have done a thing to grace the campus. The flier also listed tulips, and - if you don't count the RELee Marching Band - there is simply nothing louder and more brazen than red tulips! Hallelujah! My Principal approved!



Problem #1: the firm was sold out of red tulips. (Argh!) Pink: good grief, no! White: horrors, no! So we got to yellow by default. With grudging tolerance, yellow tulips got officially OK'd. Some of my kids and I started enlisting dollars from other teachers.

Dozens of them gave generously. Enthusiasm grew. We waited. They arrived. OMG!

Problem #2: there seemed to be thousands of big, healthy pre-cooled bulbs ready to be set out, and it was almost February.

Problem #3: I couldn't give credit to attract student helpers. On January 26, another new teacher - I will never forget her! - saw me struggling and offered to pitch in. When darkness came, the bulbs were well-planted, and two young teachers with severely achy backs were worn out, but happy. Sprouts began showing before Spring Break. When some 2500 students and 150 faculty returned to classrooms in mid-March, we were all welcomed by seas of rich yellow tulip blooms that persisted that spring into April. It was a vast success! I guess I got started on the right foot, because one Assistant Principal told me it was the first time that exciting landscaping had ever been attempted at REL. A lot more has been done in the years since then...

Along about that time, my wife and I were trying to get tulips to perform well for us on the Tyler Azalea Trail. The front of our little white cottage with its new garden of azaleas (I wrote you about it last April) seemed to yearn for two window boxes brimming with tulips. The following year, I got them made of white-painted pine planks for good looks. These were loosely lined with long galvanized steel boxes that would hold seasonal pots of whatever flowers, allowing drainage by inconspicuous short pipes toward the earth below. Pots were stuffed with plenty of Darwin hybrid tulip bulbs, to bloom red. It worked! *They were gorgeous!* But it was still a *month* until the Azalea Trail was to begin! *Aaarrrrgh!* (- like they say in comic books!) So. We learned to order by Class for tulips to bloom at the time we need them to. Any Class will bloom for only 2 weeks+, during that 8 week period from early March into early May. In those good ol' days, we learned also to depend on advice from Ms. Laura Miller, who had graduated in Horticultural Science from Cornell University, and was late owner of Thompson-Hills Nursery. It was Laura who taught us to chill bulbs 3 mo. at 40° for maximum success here.

Coffee Walking

by Anne Pattullo - President SCMG
Association

The main activity of our coffee walks the past couple of weeks has been to check out the freeze damage to all my tender perennials. I haven't seen much blooming except for a few sad looking narcissi that probably wish they hadn't been in such a hurry to pop open their petals. Amazingly, several things seem to have been left untouched including the Aspidistra, the Holly and Autumn Fern and my Bear's Breech.

Last summer I got brave and put my large Sago Palm in the ground as it was so big I couldn't really move it to the garden room any longer. It doesn't look as bad as some I have seen



around town, but then I covered it with two mattress pads plus an old woolen blanket.

Each day I check for a blossom on my Hellebores and just this morning spotted a little flower bud on one of the plants that Herb Coursey so generously shared with several of us last spring. The signs of spring are few and far between right now but in another month the daffodils will be promising us of another season of happy gardening.

I hope you all will find something that you are really interested in at the Spring Landscape and Gardening conference on February 13th. A very special treat will be a floral design demonstration by Jim Johnson who is the Director of the Benz School of Floral Design and a Distinguished Lecturer in the Department of Horticultural Sciences at Texas A&M. For those of us itching to get our spring gardens going, there will be two presentations by Joe Masabni, a new vegetable specialist at Texas A&M. We also will have two presentations on nuisance wildlife in our yards and Keith will update us on the best perennials for our East Texas landscapes. A final presentation will be on fruit gardening. Remember, this is the conference with the great lunch catered by Stacy's Barbeque. It is a perfect time to get your continuing education hours and enjoy an information filled day with your Master Gardener friends. Encourage all your friends and neighbors to attend as well. For \$15, including lunch, this is truly a whole lot of bang for your buck! Thanks to everyone who so willingly filled the sign-up sheets to help out.



Garden Dirt

by Dee Bishop

FEBRUARY CHORES

We always have lots of sunny warm days in February, prime time for all sorts of garden chores.

Time for whacking back all those frozen perennials like ferns, grasses, phlox, lantana, salvias, and all those tropicals that got nipped back last month. We seldom have really hard freezes in February and there are enough good days to bring out new growth. It is so much harder to cut out dead foliage among new leaves. You end up cutting back half the new stuff. So the sooner the better to get started.

I expect your hardy evergreen ferns like holly, autumn, and Christmas, got singed pretty bad this winter. Mine certainly did; so get to whacking. Get the weed-eater after them, takes a lot less time. If your aspidistra, liriop, sedges--- well, all grasses, are frozen or just riddled by winter, cut them back too. Some winters do not hurt them, but this one sure did. Cut them back to the ground and let them all come out fresh and new. Otherwise you will have ugly foliage all year.

February is a great time to clean out beds and add compost and manure. Your plants will 'bless' you with renewed vigor. Let the weather warm up good and then re-mulch. "But I'll get weeds!" you say --- well, hoe, hoe, hoe! You can hoe out a bed in a few minutes, whereas it takes hours of backbreaking work to pull weeds, one by one. Sharpen up that hoe and see if it doesn't become one of your most valued tools. Hoeing not only puts to death weeds, it aerates the ground helping to promote good drainage. Just scrape the weeds off the soil's surface being careful not to gouge too deep. You don't want to cut plant roots.

The end of the month is usually a good time to put out time release fertilizer. It depends on whether we have a warm month or not. Fertilizing before plants begin to grow is useless and wasteful. Wait until things begin to grow and green up. That is usually late February, but in Texas, who can be sure.

February is short, March is often windy, cold, and wet; so make hay while the sun shines! Use the good sunny days that are still cool and get the heavy work done so you can be ready to nursery-hop and plant the end of March or first of April.

Have fun this month. Think of all our fellow gardeners further north who would die to be out grubbing around in the yard in February!

New E-Mail Addresses

Janine Phillips - JanineKPhillips@gmail.com

Jack Quisenberry - jaccarq@suddenlink.net

New Phone Number

Ann Kelley - 903-721-0927

Spring Garden Conference

The 2010 event will be on Saturday February 13th at the Rose Garden Center. Registration begins at 7:30AM, with the conference beginning at 8:30AM.

Keith Hansen and Anne Pattullo mention the conference in their columns in this newsletter where more details are available.

Garden Workdays

Workdays in the IDEA and Heritage Gardens during February are scheduled for each Tuesday at 1PM. Since weather could be iffy, be sure to check your e-mail each Monday evening for changes in the schedule, if any..

Speaker's Bureau

During December Barbara Null spoke to 20 members of the Golden Iris Club about Daylilies.

First Tuesday in the Garden

Looking ahead to March - The 1st Tuesday event at the IDEA Garden will be on March 2nd. Mark your calendar.



Texas State MG Conference

The conference is not until April 8th, but early registration ends on February 28th. Registration forms are available at the Dallas County MG website which is linked below. Go to <http://www.2010tmgconference.org/index.html>

Landscape Design School

Dr. Bill Welch and Ms. Suzanne Milstead announce the latest in the Landscape Design Study Courses: Number IV, Series XXI - February 22-23, 2010. The courses are held in College Station, TX., and are co-sponsored by Texas Garden Clubs, Inc. and Texas AgriLife Extension Service, Texas A&M University. The course qualifies for 12 CE credits for certified MGs.

Grape Propagation MG Workshop

Texas Master Gardeners, you are invited to this special program Saturday, February 6, at Messina Hof Winery & Resort in Bryan, Texas. Registration required by February 4, 2010. If have wanted to see more of the "horticultural side" of the industry, then don't miss this opportunity! For information: brazosmg@ag.tamu.edu The Brazos County office of Texas AgriLife Extension - 979-823-0129 - Charla Anthony



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