



# MG Grapevine

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**NOTICE**  
**MG Association**  
**Meeting**  
**June 4<sup>th</sup> at the**  
**Rose Garden Center**

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## June SCMG Meeting

Can't bear to cut down that old oak that holds so many memories? Just hate having to chop up that splendid Bradford pear that split down the middle? Or did you plant a gorgeous crepe myrtle that you had no idea would grow three times bigger than the space you allotted it? Well, our June program may give you some ideas as to how to keep fond memories alive. Ken Terrell, President of the Southwest Association of Wood Turners, will be our speaker on June 4th. Ken lives here in Tyler and will bring with him samples of beautiful objects made from many of the various woods native to East Texas. He worked in the oil industry for 37 years before developing his hobby of turning wood on a lathe. Perhaps he will inspire some of us to pursue it as well. Ken and the other members of the East Texas Wood Turners Club enjoy mentoring beginning turners. I am sure he will inspire us to take a second look at the beautiful trees on our properties and show us ways we can share these things we have loved with our children, grandchildren and beyond.

## After-Meeting Garden Tour

Join us after the MG meeting to tour the IDEA, Shade & Heritage Gardens. Each of the coordinators have provided us with information on their garden.

The **Shade Plant Demonstration Garden** has seen quite a bit of activity this year. To the Fern, Leopard Plant, and other collections, we have recently added two Deciduous Azaleas and fifteen Hostas (seven varieties, including three miniatures). Due largely to the Herculean efforts of Ronnie Duncan, we are gradually refining the Liriope border, and our ongoing struggle against rampant Oxalis continues, of course. Spigelia (Indian Pinks), Acanthus (Bear's

Breeches), Hostas, Columbines and Hellebores are in bloom. Featured plants include the show-stopping Giant Leopard Plant, Sparkler Sedge and Tassel Fern. Please come by and check our progress!

In the **IDEA Garden** section leaders (Anne Pattullo, Joanie Matthews, JoAnne Huffman, Cindy Harrington) have been busy designing their areas for the coming summer weather by adding new varieties of plants and moving some previously planted plants to a new area. This is giving the garden a fresh new look and giving visitors a few surprises. Dee Bishop has revived the herb section by adding several new varieties.

The addition of vegetables is one of the goals of the garden this year. So scattered throughout the garden are a small eggplant called 'Fairytale' and a small bush okra called 'Little Lucy' that has red fruit. We found out this past week when we picked two pods of okra that 'Little Lucy' is very tasty eaten raw when picked small. A willow trellis sports purple runner beans and a red tomato ladder has a golden tomato called 'Golden Rave' growing on it. We also have several ornamental peppers throughout the garden.

We hope everyone will take the time to visit the IDEA Garden after the meeting in June.

The **Heritage Rose Garden** has seen many changes since the beginning of the year.

Gary Dobbs constructed two iron pillars to match the three that were already in the garden. Morning glories (grown from seed by Ronnie Duncan) and a Purple Jessamine (Cestrum X cultum 'Cretan's Purple') obtained from the SFA plant sale are now blooming on their new homes.

**See Heritage, page 2**



Summer is here and whether you are traveling far or near for a summer vacation, I bet there will be one or more public gardens near your destinations. I recently wrote about public gardens for the Tyler Paper garden column. It got cut short due to space, so I thought I'd cover some of the points here, especially some of the resources available to you for finding gardening spots to visit along your route.

You can always learn something or gain fresh ideas by visiting public gardens, even those in an entirely different climate zone than ours. You'll see new plants, landscaping combinations, gain ideas for dealing with problem areas, or just enjoy being outdoors in beautiful settings. It will be relaxing after traveling for hours by car or jet.

Many public gardens have conservatories, where exotic tropical plants, tropical butterflies, are displayed under climate-controlled conditions. And most will usually feature collections plants native or adapted to the region. Bring a camera to record mental notes and capture interesting plant combinations. If you take a picture of a plant, also take a photo of the label, if there is one, so you'll have a record of the plant's name.

My family is headed east on IH 20 in June to Georgia. Besides visiting friends, we're making time to make a stop at a garden. I can't decide if it should be the Atlanta Botanical Garden, or the State Botanical Garden of Georgia in Athens. Either one will be worthwhile, even though they are very different in character and size.

Here are a couple of resources for finding gardens along your route or near your destination(s). If you are not leaving Texas, there are still lots of places within an easy day's drive. The Texas Association of Gardens and Arboreta puts out a list of gardens and related places in Texas. I have a link to the file on my web site (under Links -> Public Gardens), but here is a convenient direct link: <http://ag.sfasu.edu/UserFiles/File/MAST%20ARBORETUM/GARDENS%20OF%20TEXAS%20alpha.pdf>

Many public gardens are members of the American Public Gardens Association (APGA) – formerly called the Association of Botanical Gardens and Arboreta (AABGA). You can search for member gardens by city, and many of the listings have links to the garden's web site where you can learn more about the garden, including special features, hours of operations, maps to the gardens, and other

facilities. Many of the larger gardens have restaurants where you can eat on site, and not have to feel rushed to see everything in a few hours. Some of the gardens are BIG and you could easily spend many hours wandering the many exhibits and features.

The APGA web site member search page is at: <http://www.publicgardens.org/Custom/GardenSearch.aspx> Use the "Advanced Search" to narrow down your choices if you pick a city with a lot of public gardens.

Of course, don't forget our very own garden right here in Tyler, Texas. The Tyler Rose Garden, with our IDEA Garden, Heritage Rose Garden and Shade Garden are always a treat to see and visit. How long has it been since you've been there? If it's been awhile, you should stop by and see the changes, what's new and get inspired.

As a reminder, don't wait too long to get your Volunteer and Continuing Education hours. The year is almost half over, and you don't want to miss opportunities to serve. Have a safe summer, and I hope to see you in the Garden and at our projects and meetings. Above all, have fun as a Master Gardener.

### Heritage - continued from page 1

The center bed is alive with yellow and green, colors the coordinators decided to feature this summer.

After making us wait 5 years, our Lilac bloomed to the delight of everyone who saw and smelled the powerfully fragrant flowers.

The roses are putting on their yearly colorful show and we added two 'Grandma's Yellow' roses and a 'Perle D'Or' rose which dates from the 1800's and has a wonderful aroma.

Thanks to all who planted seeds at Overton for the Heritage and IDEA gardens and to Brent Pemberton and the Overton staff for caring for the plants until ready to be planted in their respective gardens. Ronnie Duncan went the extra mile and transported over 30 flats of plants from Overton to the IDEA and Heritage gardens. With the help of Kay, Gary, Ronnie, Rhonda, Master Gardeners who answered our request for help and many of our new interns, the plants for the Heritage Garden were in place by the end of that day. All the colorful result from weeding, dead-heading, and planting is all too apparent. This garden, that our Smith Country Master Gardeners maintains, is constantly changing; there are pleasant surprises every week.

### Children Visit the IDEA Garden

In April 42 first graders from Jones Elementary visited the garden. After a brief discussion about insects, the children viewed the 'Good Bug – Bad Bud' display from Our Secret Garden that is used during the East Texas State Fair. The children were very receptive to what they saw and had a lot of good input.

## WILLIAM AND ME

By Herb Coursey

"Today has been a nasty day!" growled my wife Josephine as she headed toward a lawn chair and a tall cool one I'd placed nearby. We had been working together in our sunny flower bed we call "California" (it's long and tall.) The



reason we had planted all our "William Mohr" irises in it, is that it has so much room. You wouldn't think irises would thrive in such heavy, yucky soil, but we have often enriched it over ten years. It is serious, heavy black. It gets a lot of sun too, and all of the plants growing in it like generous watering. "William" really leads the pack.

I like to brag, although I know not why, that I am 77 years of age. When I was 16, I first saw in a monthly magazine named *Flower Grower*, advertisement pictures of rainbow colored varieties of iris. I was flabbergasted. In the East Texas of that day - at least, in Overton-New London - all we had was those "white flags" of graveyards and such. (Iris is the name of the Greek goddess of the rainbow, and therefore it bears the concepts of iridescence and lots of colors.) My 16-year-old instincts told me that I simply had to have some. And that was it. So I chose the most beguiling ad, which was from Schreiner Iris Gardens (in those days from the real California, but nowadays from Oregon) and wrote for their catalog.

My next considerations were (1.) which varieties? (One, named "Ranger", was touted as a real, deep red, and cost \$10 for a single rhizome; my daydreams of it did unforgettable things for the teenager dreaming machinery.) - and (2.) how was I going to pay for this long list of 10 different iris varieties that I just had to have? And at 50¢ a week! So I got a job: soda jerk. I also got some chickens - White Leghorns - and sold eggs. Dad helped me build the pen, so he and Mom got free eggs.

It took forever, but finally the mail order came: 10 rhizomes, each of a different fancy iris variety, plus a bonus variety. Hot dawg!

I planted them wherever I wanted beauty beneath six ancient, majestic cedar trees (ooh! shade!) where water ran downhill as fast as it could get away. There, those irises taught the teenager that knowledge and experience really count more than design, taste or desire. But - it was late summer and they could not bloom before the following spring. They didn't make it. From the 10 varieties I had ordered one each of, and the nearly \$90 I had sent to Schreiner's, I never got a single bloom. It wasn't the nursery's fault. They weren't dishonest; I was ignorant! Only one variety was tough enough to survive where I had planted them. It was the freebie, "William Mohr". "William" survived, multiplied.

**See William and Me, page 4**

## IT'S WHACKING TIME AGAIN

by Dee Bishop

We just finished our rush of spring color. All our big old flowering shrubs are finished with their late winter-early spring show and we have a yard full of foliage covering up every inch of space. What to do?

Now is the time to cut them back. Remember, cutting back perennials only makes them perform better. Every 3-4 years, more or less, I give them all a good whacking. They thicken up and shape up better.

You can cut them back severely or only cut out the old stems, or canes. Spireas can be cut to within inches of the ground every few years to keep them shapely and full. Banana shrubs can be cut back severely or cut the lower branches off to make a small tree.

I cut one of my winter honeysuckles back severely last year and it is so pretty now. It is thick and full and a mama cardinal has chosen it to nest in.

People ask, "Will cutting back a 10 ft. mature shrub make it stay 3 ft.?" The answer is no. Each plant has its own genetic makeup which it must exhibit and cutting it will not make it a dwarf. It will grow back by next year to its predestined height. Cutting helps to make it fuller and more shapely. Remember the 60s and 70s when people planted redtip photinias and tried to keep them 3-4 ft. tall?? It took constant clipping and eventually they had huge trunks with a little foliage on top and looked horrible. Plant genetic dwarfs if you want short shrubs. There are dwarf varieties of many shrubs now. Be sure and try some.

Once my oakleaf hydrangeas finish blooming, I plan to cut some back severely. It will thicken them up and give them more twigs on which to set flowers for next year. I will plant some of the cuttings too, like I do every year.

There is nothing more beautiful than big flowering shrubs putting on a riot of color in the last drab days of winter. They awaken all our primordial gardening instincts and energize us into a flurry of gardening activity. Enjoy every flowering thing in its time, and don't be afraid to take out those loppers and whack the daylight out of them once they are finished.

### Entomology Specialist Training

The 2009 Master Volunteer Entomology Specialist Training will be held September 28 - October 2, 2009 at the Texas AgriLife Extension Service Montgomery County Office, Conroe, TX.

This years training will be hosted by Dr. Paul R. Nester, Extension Program Specialist, Houston/Metro area, and the Montgomery County Master Gardeners.

Registration fee of \$300.00 includes collecting kit with lots of goodies; lectures; Extension bulletins; 3 lunches, 1 dinner, snacks & drinks. Transportation and lodging is on your own. Course is limited to 25 applicants; deadline is July 18, 2009.

## State Conference Report

The 2009 Texas Master Gardener Conference was held April 23-25th in Marshall, Texas, hosted by the Harrison County Master Gardeners. Despite the small number of Harrison County MG members (only 23), the conference was impressive.

A pre-conference rose seminar was held all day on Wednesday, April 22nd, ending with a tour of Minglewood Estate Demonstration Site. On Thursday and Friday, speakers, including Denyse Cummins, Mark Chamblee, Steve George, David Creech and Greg Grant, discussed various topics, and a wide variety of workshops were provided. Attendees were treated to entertainment on both nights, and state awards were presented Friday at the Junior Master Gardener luncheon and at the awards banquet Friday evening. A vendor area was open on Thursday and Friday, and several counties provided displays in an exhibit area. On Saturday, tours of various gardens were available, and lunch was provided at Grubb's Pottery.

Smith County was well represented, both in attendee number and awards won. All Smith County Master Gardeners are urged to attend the 2010 TMG Conference, which will be hosted by Dallas County. The 2011 TMG Conference will be hosted by a joint effort of Hood and Somervell Counties (Granbury and Glen Rose).

### Scholarship Recipient Says "Thanks"

"Thank you very much for the scholarship. Your support will help me a lot as I conclude my last year at SFASU. I will graduate in May 2010 and then I plan to pursue my Master's degree out-of-state."

Sincerely, Rebecca Pledge

### Texas Master Gardener Specialist Training

**Vegetable Gardening June 29 & 30, 2009** Somervell County Expo Center 202 Bo Gibbs Dr. Glen Rose, TX 76043

Texas A&M is excited to present a program to train Master Gardeners in vegetable production towards certification as 'Vegetable Specialists'. The Texas Master Gardener Vegetable Specialist program will provide training by experts on the subject of Vegetable Gardening. Topics will include Soils and Soil Preparation, Garden Location, Cultural Practices, Plant Growing, Insects, Disease and Weed Control and Harvesting and Handling Vegetables.

Enrollment is limited to only 50 participants; with an initial limit of 2 Master Gardeners per county. Early registration is encouraged to ensure a spot as registration will fill up quickly. If all 50 seats are not filled by May 31, registration will then be open to all counties on June 1. Application and fees must be received at the Somervell County Extension Office by Friday June 15, 2009. Later registrations are accepted if seats are still available. No refunds will be given on cancellations after 5:00 pm June 15, 2009.

For more information contact the Somervell County Extension Office at 254/897 2809.

## William and Me, continued from page 3

I went off to college. "William" kept growing. My parents moved offshoot rhizomes to different locations in their garden. Rose, our maid, asked for and took samples home, planted them and shared with her friends.

"William Mohr" has now settled in many home gardens in Overton and surrounding communities, and is going strong. It's so simple: you cut off a fan of leaves with a "start" bud of the root rhizome. Plant it. Do not cover the top of the rhizome with any dirt or anything else. The next year it will produce one flower stalk. After that, it gets serious. You get a whole gang of bloom stalks in 3 to 4 seasons, each one with fragrant, multiple monster blooms of deep lavender, orange-bearded, and veined dark purple falls, on stems 30 inches or more tall. It is not at all difficult to grow, but should be planted in a hot, well-drained location. And not under any trees!

Our sunny "California" flowerbed is very hot and dries out pretty well. There, the descendant rhizomes of big William Mohr I brought from Overton to Tyler have grown amazingly. Over 8 years or so, 6 individual roots had multiplied into clumps of over 25 fans each. Josephine and I had been grappling with digging, separating and assorting the iris fans for most of the day.

But she was right: it had been, "*a nasty day!*"

The man William A. Mohr (1872 - 1923) was born on a 400-acre ranch near Mount Eden, California, where he farmed and bred iris and other farm and garden plants all his life. He hybridized lots of different strains of many kinds of plants, but only when he imported tetraploid Aril iris plants from Israel was he able to create the sensational irises that he is best remembered for. "William Mohr" was judged his best creation, and won the first American Dykes Medal after his death. Since 1993, the William Mohr Memorial Medal has been awarded by the American Iris Society to the best arilbred iris with less than 1/2 aril ancestry.

**I'M BRINGING SOME 50 RHIZOMES OF WILLIAM MOHR TO THE MASTER GARDENER'S JUNE MEETING. PLEASE TAKE THEM!** - 'erb

### Honors for Chad & Y Rockett

The Tyler Men's Garden Club, including several SCMG members, built a new bed along the Rudman trail extension. The bed is located on the new trail east of Lowe's where the trail entry sign is located.

The bed will have a stone monument in front indicating that the bed and bench are dedicated to the memory of Chad Rockett and to his wife Y for years of service to the community.

Those MGs involved in creating the bed included Chris Rockett-Thomas, Y Rockett, Jon LeBleu, Harvey Collen, Patricia Frederick, Bob Leffingwell and Bill Kelldorf.

## Trivia Anyone?

For years the early copies of the *MG Grapevine* had been stored in Keith Hansen's files. Recently he turned them over to your editor. Just for fun, we have a few questions.

1. When was the first copy published?
2. Who was the first editor?
3. How many editors has the Grapevine had?

For answers to those questions and to view the first issue, go to <http://scmg.tamu.edu> and then click on MG Grapevine.

## First Tuesday in the Garden

The monthly "First Tuesday in the Garden" lecture series, an educational program sponsored by the Smith County Master Gardeners, will begin at noon Tuesday, June 2nd, in the IDEA Garden at the Tyler Rose Garden.

This month's topic is "Flop Proof Gardening." Master Gardener Dee Bishop will discuss how and when to prune your perennials and annuals to prolong the blooming season and keep your garden looking good throughout the summer months into fall.

## Overton Field Trials

The Overton Field Trials are scheduled for June 25<sup>th</sup> at the TAMU Overton Research Center, north of Overton.

The schedule and a map to the facility is located at <http://overton.tamu.edu/flowers/fieldday.htm>

The day begins with registration at 8:30AM at the North Farm, with tours of the north fields continuing until 10:30AM. It is only a short drive to the AgriLife Research and Extension Center and Demonstration Garden where tours continue until noon. A free lunch will be served to those registered.

In the afternoon, between 1:00 and 2:30PM, presentations will be made by Dr. Brent Pemberton, Jimmy Turner and Dr. Terri Starman. The program will be presented inside in the auditorium.

Many Smith County MGs have participated in every phase of the trials from planting seeds to transplanting to the field. All are invited to see the results of those labors.



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