



MG Grapevine

<http://scmg.tamu.edu>

<http://easttexasgardening.tamu.edu>

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Notice

June 2nd
MG Association
Meeting at the
Rose Garden Center
11:30 Am

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June MG Association Meeting

Our program for the June 2 meeting will be about water features in the landscape.

It will be presented by Kile Adams who owns Outdoor Design & Construction and Justin McCurley who is a water feature representative. They will show us the advantages of having a water feature in the landscape and how to maintain it.

If you have considered putting a pool and/or waterfall in your yard but have been wary of the cost and upkeep, then this program should be very informative. Their program will include a PowerPoint presentation so I am sure we will see some pretty impressive water features. One of them may inspire you to at least think about making one a part of your landscape. Ronny Duncan

Joanie Matthews says..

We have finally come to the quiet time of the year....and am I ever enjoying this month...the best Home Garden Tour ever is over...the Bulb Sale is still in the thinking stage...and I am working in my own garden. You have no idea how much fun I am having.



When I was at the State Conference, I heard a wonderful quote. Hopefully, Bill Waterson is the proper person to give credit to. "If your knees aren't green by the end of the day, you ought to seriously re-examine your life."

Apparently at the moment I'm living just right, because I sure have "green knees." Hope you are having a great month, and your garden is beautiful.

If you have any ideas for something new or fun, please contact me. *Joanie*

Nine of Nine!

The SCMG made submissions to the State Association for nine awards and on Friday April 29th at the TX State MG Conference, Smith County picked up nine awards! For those in attendance it was a series of proud moments with wishes that all of the SCMGs could be there to see their association so honored.

Awards in the Medium-Large category were as follows:

- 1st Place **Project** – Gardens Within the Garden
 - 1st Place **Publication** - NE Texas Gardening Guide
 - 2nd Place **Association**
 - 2nd Place **Newsletter** – MG Grapevine
 - 2nd Place **Graphic** – MG on Wheels (David Gary's PowerPoint presentation)
 - 2nd Place **Website Education** – Garden Notes
 - 2nd Place **Mass Media** – What's Blooming in Our Garden? (Mary Claire Rowe's weekly newspaper column)
 - 3rd Place **Individual MG** – Cindy Harrington
 - 3rd Place **Educational Program** – Rose Docents
- See pictures of those who were on-hand at the banquet to pick up the awards at <http://scmg.tamu.edu/about/state-awards/>

First Tuesday in the Garden

The series continues at noon in the IDEA Garden on June 7th.

MG Andie Rathbone presents:

Easy, Pleasing Day Lilies



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Rain is the forecast!! Hopefully it will materialize and this prolonged drought will break soon. Be aware that even after a drought ends, its effects can linger for a long time. This is especially true for trees and large shrubs. It will take awhile to regain lost root systems, and in the meantime, stressed plants may show signs of decline, or even sudden death.

There is a good web site put together by the horticulture folks at A&M in the Earth-Kind section of Aggie Horticulture. It brings together articles, short videos and other resources for dealing with drought in the landscape. Check it out at: <http://earthkind.tamu.edu/drought>.

Another resource to point folks to is the series of articles I'm writing on drought preparedness for my column in the Tyler Morning Telegraph – they are available on my blog at: <http://agrillife.org/etg>.

While the rain will be a blessing, it will also probably bring about some common fungal issues. One we see almost every year at this time is Gray Leaf Spot on St. Augustine grass. Warmer (hotter) temperatures, lushly growing grass (fertilizer is kicking in) and prolonged wet conditions (rainy days and nights), is what gets this disease going. Individual grass blades have distinct gray lesions, usually linear or diamond-shaped, with a black border. The lesions may be on the edges of the blade, and/or in the center. The trouble begins when the infection is at the base of the blades, which is not easy to detect. But the grass begins to thin out, or melt away, collapsing and leaving bare patches.

Take-All Root Rot (TARR) is another disease whose symptoms often show up in late spring and early summer. The infection takes place during the milder times of the year, but when the heat of summer arrives, the damaged root system cannot support the grass, and it dies in patches. TARR-infected grass is poorly rooted and comes up easily when pulled.

Another phenomenon that happens with warmer, rainy weather is slime mold. On the lawns, it looks like dark grey or black powdery growth that crawls up the grass blades. It looks like oil or cigarette ashes. It is not harmful to the lawn, and will go away on its own. In mulched flower beds, another slime mold looks like a dog barfed (not barked) in the bed, hence one of the common names of dog vomit fungus. It looks gross, but is just a fungal organism that is living on decaying organic matter (the mulch). Stirring it up to aerate and encouraging it to dry out will help a little. Again, no harm done. Enjoy summertime – stay cool.

PLUCK IT – PRUNE IT – PLANT IT

By Dee Bishop



The weather is now perfect to start cuttings of some of your favorite annuals and perennials. Say you have some coleus that you just love and would like to have several more. Take some cuttings 3-4 nodes long. Clip off the leaves from the two bottom nodes and half the other leaves; stick the cutting in some damp (not wet) potting mix or in water. In about 2 weeks you can plant them wherever you wish. Most annuals are easily started from cuttings. Right now into June is the perfect time to take shrub cuttings from Azaleas, weigela, forsythia, spirea, and most any shrub that bloomed in winter and early spring. Take 4-6 in. cuttings, clear leaves off bottom two nodes and dip in rooting hormone before sticking in damp soil. Keep your cuttings damp but not wet and many will root. Grow them off by gradually potting them into larger and larger containers. Set out in fall. When hydrangeas finish blooming, cut them back and start cuttings of all the kinds. They are among the easiest to propagate.

Flowers are blooming everywhere. Don't forget to share with shut-ins. Older people especially enjoy pretty bouquets. I enjoy having little bouquets throughout my house. Flowers are such special little rays of sunshine.



If you enjoy Italian recipes and need basil now is the perfect time to plant seeds. Fill 4 in. pots or 6 packs with good moist potting mix. Make an impression with your finger---just a shallow indention, and sprinkle a few seeds into it. Do not cover with soil. Keep covered with plastic or glass until they sprout. They will look gelatinous within a few minutes and will sprout in less than a week. They will grow rapidly so fertilize every time you water with about ½ tsp. of fish emulsion to a quart of water. Grow all kinds. The small leaved ones are so pretty to edge a bed, for pots, or in mixed plantings. The purple leaved ones are really attractive and taste as good as the green ones. Freeze plenty for winter use. Just place several handfuls of leaves into a blender with some olive oil and blend thoroughly then freeze in ice cube trays. It can be dried as well, but isn't as tasty.

Now is the time to cut back all your spring blooming shrubs like: azaleas, camellias, spirea, weigela, forsythia, quince, winter honeysuckle, flowering almond, Etc. You don't have to cut them back unless you want. Often times cutting them back to 6 to 12 in. will renew them and make See **PLUCK IT** page 3 _____

The (aptly named) Celeste Fig Tree/Bush

By Herb Coursey

In the oilfield village of Trees City, nowadays known just as Trees, Louisiana - bordering Texas but nearly 30 miles due east from Jefferson - my Grandma Goggy Tietz had in her half-acre of food garden 3 huge fig bushes. Each was about 12ft. high and 15ft. wide. To get the maximum of air circulation and total sunshine, as starter plants they had been set out about 25 feet apart, right next to the Tietzes' utility buildings. These included Grandpa Deak's garage (they had their first car, a brand-new four-door 1936 navy blue Ford sedan - and the smartest car in Trees!), his workshop, her laundry wash-house, the separate but nearby bathhouse and her meat smokehouse. She watered her figs every Monday morning by turning out the laundry water from the wash-house onto them. That is, unless the weather was rainy, in which case she released the laundry water to flow down the driveway to the ditch, where the neighborhood little boys played boats and war. Did the Tietzes know that with much of the fig trees' roots growing so as to be under big structures, but well-watered and well-drained, the plants would receive the best protection from nematode infestation that was possible in those days? They certainly knew that too much water will ruin the taste of figs and make them susceptible to spoiling. They knew that neither pruning nor fertilizing of their Celeste tree/bushes was necessary. Fig ripening in North Louisiana/East Texas starts in early July, so a grower has to watch daily for progress. Depending on weather during Spring and early Summer, after July 4th, the only question was, how much ripening? At the age of 4 to about 8 years, when school was out, I made daily reports to Goggy about the progress of the figs on her bushes. Fortunate it was, that I was allowed to climb her fig trees, though I did have to be bare-footed so as not to damage the bark. That was OK, since I rarely wore shoes, anyway. I had already been taught to recognize, pick and eat ripe figs as a li'l kid. Fortunate, I say, because they're so good that nobody could've stopped me. They'd have had to catch me first!



The paramount rule: **Never Pull Unready/Green Figs!** Just wait until they change to shades of bronze. These **RIPENING** ones are excellent for **making FIG PRESERVES**. Now, the preserves' syrup is even better on pancakes than real maple syrup - and I've lived in Vermont, too! But when you wait a little longer and then eat them raw... *OMG!* To be superb enough for **eating RAW or in a bowl with HEAVY CREAM**, Celeste figs must ripen **on the tree** to be soft to the touch. Even more telling, in this final stage of ripening, the stem of the fig will change from a rather straight shape, to become downward-curved, a distinct droop, and the skin color will become **dark** purple. Ooooh! *Hurry!* - it happens only a day or two before they start to turn faintly sour. Long layers of cheesecloth swathing a tree will keep most birds away from the fruit. - 'erb



Divine Fig Preserves

Josephine Coursey's recipe



1. Choose only fresh, ripening figs from the **PRESERVES** stage.
 2. Rinse figs, do **not** peel skins **nor** remove stems!
 3. Measure figs.
 4. For **each cup of figs**, use **scant ½ cup of sugar**. For 24 cups figs, that is 6 quarts., use 10 cups sugar.
 5. Place figs in a large kettle, pour sugar over figs. **DON'T STIR**; allow fruit & sugar to stand overnight, so as to pull out some juice.
 6. The next day, cook over medium heat at first, occasionally stir, but **carefully** with a **flat-end** spatula, to be **sure the bottom is not burning**.
 7. When syrup thickens **somewhat**, reduce **heat to medium-low**.
 8. With flat-bottom spatula, **stir the bottom** MORE often, & **gently!** Try not to tear figs up! It's really **easy to burn them at this point!**
 9. Near the end, the bubbling sound of the syrup changes - it starts talking, with faintly ploppy hisses.
 10. Spoon some syrup into a saucer. Cool it and check for viscosity.
 11. Meanwhile keep **stirring** and keep **checking** often, until your desired thickness of syrup is reached.
 12. Remember! It gets **thicker as it gets cooler**. So beware!
- Seal in jars according to manufacturer's instructions. **6 quarts** of raw figs [**which = 24 cups of raw figs**] will make 6 to 7 pints of preserves.
P. S.: **Keep this recipe** - I'll modify it in August, & you can re-use it for **great PEAR** preserves!

Junior Master Gardeners

On May 6, 2011, after 16 weeks of instruction, ten All Saints Episcopal students received their certificates as Junior Master Gardeners. Smith County Master Gardeners who worked with these kids include, Jim Powell, Pat Welch, Jean Smith, Bob Leffingwell, George Weisser, Kenneth Stegall and Keith Hansen, Extension Agent. For a picture of the group, go to <http://scmg.tamu.edu/> and click on What's New?

MG Home Garden Tour

It was a perfect day for touring gardens and nearly 400 followed the green geese to tour the gardens on April 30th. Seventy-two MGs reporting over 550 volunteer hours, helped make it one of the most successful MG tours yet. Go to [page 4](#) to view a few random photos. Pat and Clayton Turner deserve a big "Thank you" for their leadership.

PLUCK IT continued from page 2 _____
them much bushier and bloom more in the future. You don't need to cut them back more than every 3-4 yrs. I cut some monstrous azaleas back to the ground last year and they grew back so pretty and bloomed so pretty in spring. Enjoy what's left of spring. Summer comes all too soon. Keep things watered. If you see a plant that looks droopy even after you have watered, check it out with a water meter. You will be surprised at how often sprinklers miss their mark!
Enjoy the fruits of your labor. A walk in your garden in the cool evening or morning, to enjoy your lovely plants and perhaps pick what's for supper to listen to the birds singing, is the best reward for all your hard work. It just doesn't get better than that.



Around the Home Garden Tour



Photos by Martin Davis and Bill Kelldorf



New E-Mail Service

A new way for handling group e-mails to the SCMG Association members has been set up. The web service *Vertical Response* offers free service to non-profit groups, making it possible to send one e-mail to all of the MGs at one time. E-mails from the new service will show that they are from the *Smith County Master Gardener Association*. The subject line will usually be **MG business** or something similar.



We asked that you tell us if you did not receive the first e-mail sent via this service and several replied that they had not, but upon review of their spam or junk mail, the e-mail was found. *Vertical Response* provides information showing how many people have opened each e-mail and thus far only about half of you have opened these e-mails. Is this because you did not receive them or just did not open them? We don't know, but we are concerned.

Development of the opportunities with this service is only a matter of time and the learning ability of yours truly. Bear with me. Martin Davis