



MG Grapevine

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<http://easttexasgardening.tamu.edu>

March 2010

Volume 17

Number 3

NOTICE

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

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"Improving the lives of people, businesses, and communities across Texas and beyond through high-quality, relevant education."

Extension Office

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Monthly Meeting Notes

Our own "Master Gardener On Wheels" David Gary will present the program "Gardening in spite of Challenges", sharing his own tips and techniques for above ground gardening. David will also cover small space and patio gardening.

After Meeting Garden Tour

Following the March meeting we will visit Mrs Lee's garden, **weather permitting**. Thousands of golden daffodils are scattered over a 4 mile trail, meandering around two lakes, covering 28 acres.

Mr. & Mrs. Lee are the classic rags to riches story, becoming very wealthy during the oil boom. They purchased this land for it's gravel to pave roads, the airport runway etc. The gravel pits have since been turned into a 15 acre lake and a 3 acre pond. A story has been told by some that Mrs Lee ordered a box of bulbs but received a boxcar load instead! However, Mrs Lee knew exactly what she was doing. Instantly Mrs Lee became a "valued customer". The company she bought the bulbs from sent a representative to assist in proper planting and care of the flowers. Mrs Lee, with 40 workers planted the bulbs over the next several years.

The garden's ability to remain open depends upon the number of people who visit and register their attendance. From 2500 to 6000 visitors are expected yearly. To get to Mrs. Lee's garden drive north on US 271 until you are 7 miles north of Interstate 20. Turn east (right) on CR 3104. Drive a mile and a half, turn right on CR 3103, then continue one-fourth mile to the entrance sign. See you there! Joanie Matthews

Planning Ahead

Remember the White Elephant Sale following last year's April meeting? Another sale is planned for the April 2010 meeting. More later.....

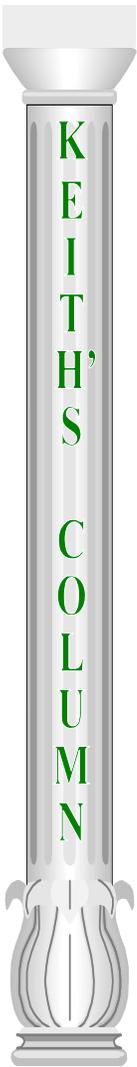
Bus Trip Anyone?

Many of us remember some great bus trips in past years. We would like to do it again this spring with a trip to Chandor Gardens in Weatherford. Joanie Matthews and Monica Klein have been checking into bus rates, tour dates etc. For a fee of around \$25 per person we could charter a bus for a day trip that would include lunch. The day we are considering is Wednesday, May 12th. We will poll the group at our March meeting to determine interest in this outing. You can find out all about Chandor Gardens by going to their web site at www.chandorgardens.com. Check out this beautiful estate and think about spending a day with Master Gardener friends. If you can't make it to the March meeting, feel free to email me at gpatullo@nctv.com and let me know if you are interested.

1st Tuesday in the Garden

The first lecture is at noon on March 2nd at the IDEA Garden. The topic is "Salvias – Color, Spring to Frost." Veteran Master Gardener, Andie Rathbone will communicate how you can have an attractive, low maintenance, water conserving landscape utilizing these colorful, hardy plants. Perennial and reseeding salvias are among some of the most overlooked ornamentals. There are hundreds of species and with many being native to Texas and Mexico they can withstand our winter extremes and still thrive in the Texas heat. You will find them blooming in the fall months when other bedding plants decline and some even do well in shaded areas. There are species that grow less than a foot tall while others grow easily to 6 feet.

Come learn about these overlooked but wonderful plants readily available at your local nurseries.



What a different kind of winter this has turned out to be. I heard on the radio today that we are now no longer officially in a drought. My septic system can testify to that. And how about the cold and snow! And more snow (though not as cold) is predicted. I guess the groundhog was right this time! Take

advantage of sunny days to get the garden ready for new plantings. Get some good compost and get your soil improved. Below I have included an excerpt from a recent study conducted by the Garden Writers Association Foundation on Edible Gardening Trends (see page 3). It shows that there is still a growing interest in growing food at home. Take a look at where most folks turn to get their information.

Thanks to everybody who helped us at the Spring Landscape & Garden Conference. You helped make it a very successful day, despite the lower than usual attendance due to icy weather. Your support is greatly appreciated!

March continues to be a very busy month for the Extension office with lots of educational programs being held, along with plenty of common home gardening questions. It is also a month 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.

Pilot Project. An email from me (via Martin's email distribution efforts) describes a project Extension Horticulture is working on to develop new educational media to help reach wider audiences using some free software programs to combine graphics, text and audio. Please let me know if you find this of interest. If you have ideas for educational products we could produce, whether news updates, new plants, reports on recent conferences or educational seminars, upcoming programs, etc. etc., send your ideas my way. I'm hoping several of you would find this an interesting challenge and new ways of engaging your creativity to educate the gardening public.

Thanks for all you do for Texas AgriLife Extension Service!

Keith's Photo - Contest Winner



In a statewide contest among all AgriLife employees, Keith Hansen's photo at left placed 2nd in the Still Life group.

Congratulations!

Good Bugs - Bad Bugs

by Anne Brown



Hours and hours of freezing temperatures have made this winter very different from winters in our recent past. Everyone is excited thinking about how small the insect population will be this coming spring and summer. Be prepared, there will still be insects.

Insects have developed several ways to deal with cool or cold temperatures. Ants extend their tunnels deep into the soil where the temperature can be almost consistently warmer despite the cold air temperatures. There they become inactive conserving energy and waiting for warmer weather. Many beetles in their immature stage and termites use this same method to avoid the cold.

Some insects lay their eggs inside plants or twigs where they stay until the air temperatures are warm enough to signal time for the next stage in their development. If temperatures are not too cold, many insects simply bury themselves in debris, holes in tree bark, under rocks, in cavities of walls or even move into buildings. If you work your compost pile you can see many insect varieties that have chosen to spend the cold weather in the warmth of the pile. Even if the insect population is affected by the cold, insect ability to reproduce will soon bring their numbers back.

Insects are cold blooded and cannot regulate their body temperatures. Fifty degrees seems to be the temperature when most activity of insects slows or halts. This allows them to withstand a wide range of temperatures by not moving or even going into hibernation. The Woolly Bear caterpillar who survives in the freezing cold of Alaska has developed the ability to keep ice crystals from forming inside its cells even when ice forms in its blood and body fluids. In warmer climates it simply hides in leaf litter. Bees in Alaska have learned to shiver to warm up and can be seen gathering pollen on some of the coldest days.

Most insects in Texas can survive without these special adaptations. Honey bees stay in their hives where their collective body heat helps the colony survive. This clustering starts when air temperatures drop to 57 degrees. Many butterflies survive our winters in their chrysalis while the Monarch simply flies away to Mexico where the winter weather is warmer. Lucky butterfly.

Debbie Hadley, About.com Guide
Tom Turpin, Prof of Entomology Purdue Univ.
Stephanie Klunk, Univ. of California



The Executive Committee met on January 28th and considered the following: About two-thirds of the committees or projects have reported their goals and responsibilities.

Rhonda Rholes reported that she attended the State MG meeting where a slate of officers was selected.

1000 calendars were printed and reports had been received of only about 400 sold, but not all the reports are in.

Texas State award submissions have been made for Mass Media, Publications, Project, Individual and Association awards.

Other counties participating in the intern class instructions are contributing proportionate cost for speakers.

See **Executive Committee** page 4



Please be reminded that Earth-Kind training modules are available on-line and certified MGs can claim CE credits for completion of each module. To receive credit, hours should be submitted with monthly activity reports.

The website for training can be found at: <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/EARTHKIND/training/>

Welcome to the Earth-Kind® On-Line Master Gardener Training. This program is designed to provide information on a variety of environmentally friendly (Earth-Kind®) practices for use in the home landscape and garden. As your interest and knowledge in this area grows you will have an increased awareness of the many programs, practices and activities that are Earth-Kind®.

Texas Master Gardeners can select from any of these on-line modules to obtain up to 3 hours of re-certification education credits in a calendar year. Each module is worth 1 hour of credit. Master Gardeners are not encouraged to seek re-certification credit for training modules they have completed in previous years.

Progress through the training program is tracked "on-line" and the results for each completed module are automatically forwarded to your county Master Gardener Coordinator. **To receive credit, hours should be submitted with your monthly activity reports.**

Participation in the Earth-Kind® On-Line Master Gardener Training will assist Texas AgriLife Extension Service to promote principles and practices that help conserve and protect our state's valuable natural resources. Working together we can create a healthy and sustainable environment

Edible Garden Trends

According to the [2009 Edibles Gardening Trends Research Report](#) conducted by the Garden Writers Association Foundation (GWAF) in November, over 41 million U.S. households (38%) grew a vegetable garden in 2009. More than 19.5 million households (18%) grew an herb garden and 16.5 million households (15%) grew fruits during the same period.

Did Edibles Gardening Grow in 2009?

There was definitely a growth in edibles gardening in 2009 from both experienced gardeners and an influx of new gardeners. Among those that grew edibles gardens this year, 92% had previous experience and 7% (7.7 million households) were new to edibles gardening. One-third of the experienced gardeners reported growing more edibles in 2009 than in the previous year, while 46% reported they grew about the same as 2008, and 19% grew less than the previous year.

Will Edibles Gardening Continue to Expand in 2010?

When asked if they planned to continue their garden for 2010, 37% of households reported plans to increase their edible gardens, 29% reported they planned to plant about the same as 2009 and only 1% reported they would plant less than this year. Although a significant number (15%) remained undecided regarding their 2010 plans, the strong response for growing more edibles next year should carry the market to a new level of activity

SFA Gardens to Host Spring Plant Sale

The SFA Gardens at Stephen F. Austin State University will host its annual Garden Gala Day on April 17 from 9 a.m. until 2 p.m. in the lower arboretum parking lot on Wilson Drive. Stephen F. Austin State University Outdoor Pursuits will host an Earth Day Celebration in conjunction with this year's sale.

Coffee Walking

by Anne Pattullo - President SCMG Association

Last month I wrote that surely we would have definite signs of spring in another month. Well, I have to admit they are few and far between. Each morning Ellie (our Cocker Spaniel) and I go out to check things out and today I announced that I was putting on the big heavy down filled coat for the last time this year. I'm tired of walks where my fingers freeze. About the only sign of spring we found was lots of daffodils with fat buds. The cold weather has probably been good for them and when the show gets going it should be spectacular.

Last Friday morning was really lovely, the prettiest snowfall I have seen in 35 years of living in Tyler. I'm sure many of us were out early snapping photos even before the sunrise.



Here is my picture of a Possumhaw holly. This deciduous holly is the cultivar 'Warren's Red' and makes a perfect tree for a tiny front yard. It was originally planted by a local nursery in my back yard but got too much shade to berry well

so when it was about 3 years old we dug it up, put it in the pick-up, and took it to town for our daughter's new yard. It moved without any set-back and has done really well in her yard of full sun. There is also a beautiful one in the IDEA garden, right next to the driveway.

A big thank you goes to everyone who helped out at the Spring Landscape and Gardening Conference. It went very well and had a little something of interest for everyone. If you missed Jim Johnson, you missed a treat! It was great to see that several Master Gardeners won his flower arrangements. Now we move on to planning for the Main Street Flower Market and the Spring Garden Tour. These events will provide opportunities for you to get your hours toward recertification, so be sure to sign-up at the March meeting. We are still short a home for the tour, so if you know of anyone who has a pretty garden and might be willing to share it, please contact Pat and Clayton Turner.

Speaker's Bureau

During January Patsy Besch spoke to the Gladewater Garden Club about vegetable gardening. Harvey Collen presented his gardening talk to the SCMG monthly meeting.



Interpreting Plant Labels

by Dee Bishop

Reading information on plant labels isn't always beneficial. In fact it's sometimes downright harmful.

If you read a plant label that tells you to grow the plant in full sun, that it grows in zones 4-8, and needs good drainage. It is time to interpret that tag into Texan. Things here are not quite so simple. Texas gets some of the hottest most direct sun in the country and add in our high humidity, you have the sweatbath called summer here. Our nights are in the mid to upper 80s which prevents the plants from getting a rest. Take San Francisco, also zone 8, but they seldom ever get into the 80's so plants aren't stressed by high heat. The zone number simply means the coldest it ever gets in a locality. They have come out with a much needed heat zone map. We are in zone 9 there. So, we are a semi-tropical area in summer with a temperate winter which can get cold enough to freeze the b'jeebers out of those tropicals. Many of the temperate perennials actually need colder winters than we have so usually they do not live as long here as they do further north. They need a resting period called dormancy which they often do not get. Plants like to sleep too you know!

Now for the drainage situation. Good drainage is something many of us can only dream about. Yes, you can build raised beds. Then it is difficult to water them enough. So what to do? Plant things that can take occasional drought, floods, snow, tornadoes, hurricanes, and hail. In other words tough plants. Use the fragile ones under sturdy shrubs or under eaves. Usually we can plant annuals in summer and know they will survive, but winter annuals often fail in our wet winters. Perennials that need good drainage must have it.

Now do you read the tag? Of course---just translate it into Texan. That includes the size. Double it and you have the size it will grow here or there about. Give it all morning sun but plant something to the west of it that can give it some shade in the hot afternoons. Have fun finding plants this spring. Next time I will write about good nurseries to enjoy this spring. Let me here from you if you have suggestions.

Executive Committee continued from page 2

Sherri Watts reviewed funding in the past of scholarships and requested that the committee consider increasing the scholarship amounts in the 2011 budget.

Discussed fund raisers and possible alternatives.

Discussed the possibility of setting up an MG emeritus status, perhaps using the state association guidelines.

The Home Garden tour project has only three definite sites and will continue to seek more.

MG discounts from local businesses will be reviewed with contacts to the those who offered them last year.

Volunteer of the Day



Tune in to KTBB radio during the Morning Show to hear several MGs honored as Volunteer of the day. Those to be honored the week of March 15th include: Harvey Collen, Betty Conejo, Joan Cook, Herb Coursey, Dianna Daigle and Joan Driver.

MG Training Schedule

The schedule of classes for March is as follows: March 2, Home Garden Production; March 11, Diagnosing Plant Problems; March 16, Perennials & Roses - Dr. William Welch; and March 23, Turfgrass (at Overton). The class will also visit Blue Moon Gardens on March 11 and the SFA Mast Arboretum on March 18. Please note that the schedule is revised from the original published schedule.

New Earth-Kind Roses

Many years of testing are required before designating a rose as Earth-Kind. The two newest Earth-Kind roses are Cecile Brunner and Reve d'Or! For the full press release and photos, go to:

<http://agnews.tamu.edu/showstory.php?id=1741>



The Buzz About Our Environment Saving Water....Saving Bees

The Wood County MGs Conference features Dottie Woodson, Extension Program Specialist - Water Resources and Bobby & Cathy Eatherton, Honey Bee Specialists on Saturday, March 6, 2010 Mineola Civic Center, 1150 Newsom, Mineola, TX Registration at 8:00 AM Conference 8:30 to 11:30 AM.

2010 Azalea Symposium

March 13, 2010 9:00 a.m. - 2 p.m., Stephen F. Austin State University Agriculture Building

The symposium focuses on using colorful camellias as accents in azalea gardens--"A Passion for Camellias" by Dr. William Welch, from Texas A&M Horticulture will present the many benefits of adding fall-blooming Camellia sasanqua and spring-blooming Camellia japonica to residential azalea gardens. Lunch is provided, followed by tips on pruning camellias, propagating azaleas, and a guided tour of the SFA Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden by Barbara Stump and Dr. Welch. Fee: \$30 to SFA Gardens members; \$40 to non-members. To register call: 888-OLDEST-TOWN or email sfagardens@sfasu.edu.



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