



# MG Grapevine

http://scmg.tamu.edu

http://easttexasgardening.tamu.edu

February 2012

Volume 19

Number 2

**MG Association Meeting**  
**February 2<sup>nd</sup> 11:30 AM**  
**Rose Garden Center**

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## Ronny's Comments



SCMG President

Now that we have had a few days of warmer weather, I have begun to really get the gardening bug. The only cure when I get like this is to plant something. I have planted my onions and sent a vegetable and flower seed order out. When the seeds arrive, I will plant my tomatoes and broccoli seeds. I just grow the things that we like. I only grow onions, tomatoes, peppers, broccoli, beans, okra, squash, potatoes, and maybe some corn. The rest I don't mess with. I do however start several types of flowers to be planted in the flower beds. Oh yes!! I do get a little carried away ordering seeds out of the catalogs.

Other than looking at seed catalogs and watching the birds eat, I have been building bird houses. I am building the bird houses to sell at our booth at the Spring Garden Conference. As my wife's grandfather use to say, "It takes money to drink whiskey and ride the train." Since most of our projects take money, we need to take advantage of all opportunities for our organization to make money. Then, we can afford to support the projects that we really like that do not. Having said that, if you can think of anything else that we could make or sell at the Spring Conference please let me or a committee member know.

We will be selling our normal plant markers and calendars. We do not want to

buy things to sell; instead, we would prefer items that you can make or that you no longer use and would like to donate. After the sale, you can deduct the cost of your materials from the selling price. If an item does not sell, you would take it home. Items need to be garden-related: plants, garden books, tools, objects you find in a garden, etc.

See you at our next meeting, February 2. The Spring Garden Conference is Feb. 11. Ronny

## February Meeting Notes

Our speaker for February will be Corbit Echols from Ewing Irrigation, Inc. He will educate us on installation, repair and maintenance of irrigation systems and how to preserve water ones lawns, trees, plants, flowers and shrubs!

He will talk about sprinkler systems and their maintenance, how to measure to be sure you are getting adequate coverage and amounts during different periods of the year, when wet and dry, hot and cold.

He will also talk about different plants and their water needs and such!

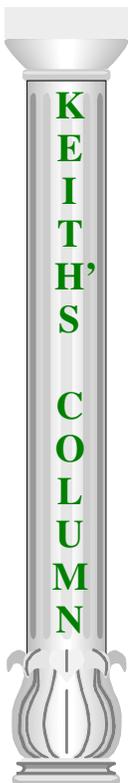
## Association Dues

The SCMG Association bylaws say, "To maintain good standing, each member must have paid the dues for the current year."

It further says that dues are payable annually by January 31<sup>st</sup>.

Treasurer Pat Welch will be at the February SCMG meeting collecting dues from those who have not yet paid their dues.





2012 is off to an interesting start. The office has been plenty busy with citizens seeking information on gardening. At this time of year, many of the questions relate to food gardening (vegetables, fruits, pecans), and a great many are getting into gardening for the first time (i.e. novices with easy, basic questions). I would welcome your help in answering some of these basic requests for information. With the new Master Gardener class training in progress, and preparing for 3 major conferences in February, along with many other daily chores, it is easy to fall behind. Check with Deana or Candy, our secretaries, for available time slots. Your help would be most welcome!!

We are also getting several requests from schools (public and private) and teachers for assistance with information and guidance on setting up school gardens (vegetable, wildlife, etc.). I know I have requested before asking you to send in your name if you are willing to help with these types of requests, but I would ask you to do it again, so I can compile a permanent list of volunteers for assisting with school gardens. Please drop me an email while now while you are thinking about it. These kids are our future, and gardening projects has been proven to improve academic performance.

That reminds me to thank the MG's for helping with the Ag ID contest sponsored by the East Texas State Fair. It is truly scary grading those papers, realizing how little so many of them know about common produce items (not to mention spelling). We have a real opportunity to make a difference in kid's lives. Thanks to Linda Sharp, Brenda Mooring, Sylvia Hoffmann, George Weisser, Mike Engleman, Bob Ellis, Jean Smith, Susan Stone, John Brasher, and Robby Wynn.

We do have some good programs coming up. The Turfgrass Conference in Overton on February 2, the Spring Landscape & Garden Conference at the Rose Garden Center on the 11<sup>th</sup>, and the Fruit and Vegetable Conference at the Rose Garden Center on the 28<sup>th</sup>, will all have dealing with water and the effects of drought as some of the topics. For more information on all 3 programs, visit the "Educational Programs" section of the <http://easttexasgardening.tamu.edu> web site. We also have a Landscape Conference Facebook page – if you have a Facebook account, please visit it and "Like" it, so your friends will also see and hopefully learn about this

educational opportunity.

<http://facebook.com/etgardenconference>

The new class is going well with 16 enrolled. A couple of certified MG's attended the entomology class with Dr. Mike Merchant, Extension entomologist from Dallas and gave it/him very high marks. We have another new speaker, Dr. Kevin Ong, Extension Plant Pathologist and Director of the Plant Diagnostic Lab at College Station, who will do an all-day (9:00 – 4:00) class at Overton on February 14 on plant diseases. These are good refresher opportunities, plus a great way to earn CE's.

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### MG Class 19 Schedule

For the complete schedule go to <http://scmg.tamu.edu/files/2011/02/2012-Class-XIX-Smith-Co-MG-training.pdf> Certified Master Gardeners are welcome to audit any class and for those who do, 3 CEUs may be claimed for each class audited.

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### New Address Book Information

After last month's request to update any address book information, the following were received:

**Janet Cacho** now uses only cell phone no. 570-352-6928

**Rita Gourley Christenot**, 3200 Lake Forest Dr., Tyler, TX 75707, phone 903-581-6836

Add to list - **Marva Lanier**, 2000 Hilltop, Tyler, TX 75701, phone 903-593-8355

**Mary McGee** – moved to Florida

**Susan Minatrea**, 432 CR 2311, Mineola, TX 75773, Phone: Home 903-638-6388, Cell 817-983-1911

**Anne Pattullo** – incorrect e-mail in January newsletter – correct e-mail is [gpattullo@suddenlink.net](mailto:gpattullo@suddenlink.net)

**Judy Racs** – now uses only cell phone no. 903-245-2542

**Jean Smith** – new e-mail [smithjean17@hotmail.com](mailto:smithjean17@hotmail.com)

It is not too late to inform Martin Davis of any other changes that need to be made by February 29<sup>th</sup> latest.

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### Photos for the Address Book

Each year we add the pictures of the new class to our SCMGA address book. This year we will be taking their pictures in the MG office area during the afternoon of February 23<sup>rd</sup>.

From time to time we have a request to update an existing picture or to add a picture where there is none. For any MG who wishes to have a new picture in the book, please stop by at the office on the 23<sup>rd</sup> (no later than 2:30 PM).



## WINTER HONEYSUCKLE A YEAR-ROUND FAVORITE

By Dee Bishop

Winter honeysuckle (*Lonicera fragrantissima*) is as old as the South. I was introduced to it while living in Birmingham, Al. in the '70s. We inherited it with our house and fell in love immediately. We kept bees at the



time and noticed that our winter honeysuckle was covered with visiting bees as it bloomed all winter. The flowers are small and white, not a bright beacon of color like quince or forsythia, but oh---the heavenly scent! You

don't expect to smell honeysuckle until spring, and on warm winter days, it's such a treat.

I love the bush itself. Although very large, 6-8 ft. x 6-8 ft. it grows into a large round ball without any pruning. Cardinals love building their nests in them and many birds enjoy the small red fruits it makes in spring. Winter honeysuckle is evergreen and provides cover for birds all year. Its round shaped leaves are blue-green all year and I think make a lovely back drop for bulbs around the base. I have taken sprouts with me everywhere I have lived and wouldn't be without it.

*Lonicera fragrantissima* is undemanding in all its ways. Soil type doesn't matter, full sun or lots of shade suits it fine, and best of all, it's extremely drought tolerant. Mine all went through last summer with very little watering.

If you have an empty corner in your yard or need a large shrub at the corner of your house to soften it, consider this lovely old shrub. It would make a nice hedge if planted far enough apart to allow it to grow into its large round ball. You will never have insect or disease problems. You will seldom need to water it and you will never need to prune it to keep its pretty shape. Can you think of any better reasons to want to own one?

### Landscape Design School

It is again time to announce the Landscape Design Study Course (Landscape Design School) IV, Series XX, which will be offered in College Station, TX February 20-21, 2012.

It is an opportunity for more in-depth training in landscape design than we normally include in the Master Gardener curriculum.

Please view and download the registration form from:

<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/southerngarden/LDFeb12/>

Registration for the course will be \$125.



## MOUNTAIN FRESH PLUS HYBRID, VFFAS<sup>t</sup>\*

By Herb Coursey

2011 was not a jubilee year in our little tomato garden. The best thing that happened was when we went to the Farmers' Market at the south end of the Mall acreage. A farmer's stand on the northwest corner of it caught our attention because of its gorgeous tomatoes. We bought a box of about 5, little knowing what we had acquired. Sliced, in salads, in sandwiches, we both finally just gave up and started eating them alone, in chunks. Ohhh! I think they were the best tomatoes we'd ever eaten. Yes! The next Market day we went back and bought more. Josephine asked the guy for the name of his variety of tomato. "Mountain Spring," was his calm reply; she can remember things like that. Something totally new! I never heard of it! But I decided to look for it this year, as either seeds or potted plants... Then this past fall, the deluge of seed catalogs hit us, as usual, and among the newer catalog names was one totally new, called Totally TOMATOES. Inside, on page 16, in a special section headed **OUR FAMOUS MOUNTAIN SERIES!** They listed 4 varieties: **Mountain Delight Hybrid VFF\***, **Mountain Fresh Plus Hybrid VFF\***, **Mountain Pride Hybrid VFFAS<sup>t</sup>\***, and **Mountain Spring Hybrid VF\***. All are Determinate-growing (bushy). Should you feel the stirring inside to have your own copy of the catalog, Fax toll-free (888)477-7333 will take you there, or - Phone toll-free (800)345-5977, or if you prefer, their Website is [www.totallytomato.com](http://www.totallytomato.com). It's free. Seeds are ~\$2.50 per 30. \*indicates disease resistance

Now, I gotta tell ya: I have the seeds, and I planted 'em all in a flat in our greenhouse. They're up about an inch high. I baby them. No, I don't lock 'em up at night, but we've got a watchdog named Beowulf, known to be avoided! Should all else fail, I've got another flat of tomato plants that I've been growing for six weeks longer. *Their* pedigree is: they all came from the *same half* of a Mexican salad-tomato I bought at Brookshire's. I squeezed those seeds into seed-prepared quadrants containing special seed-growing soil. It worked amazingly well. They're now (2") - huge for babies. Also, this spring I plan to haunt racks of tomato plants for sale, looking for "Mountain" from not only dependable peddlers at my usual haunts, including Southland, but- wherever. Obviously, I do not have lots of faith in my own tomato-growing abilities. Check with me later. 'erb!



### COME SEE OUR CAMELLIAS IN BLOOM

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[courseyhj@hotmail.com](mailto:courseyhj@hotmail.com)

Down to 28°F - If temp goes below, wait 2 wks.

Check to be sure.

You are welcome to come and enjoy!

'Erb & Jo'phine



## Texas Bluebird Society..

..to host 2012 Season Kickoff at SFASU



The Texas Bluebird Society will host its 2012 season kickoff and silent auction in the Baker Pattillo Student Center at Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, Saturday February 4 from 9:00 am until 2:30 pm. Registration begins at 8:30 am. The program is sponsored by SFA Gardens. Silent auction proceeds help support the Texas Bluebird Society.

The featured speakers are Greg Grant and Cliff Shackelford. Grant, a horticulturist with SFA Gardens, will present two programs including "I Can't Stop Loving You: A Lifetime Affair with the Blues" and "Berry Me with Bluebirds: Landscaping for the Songbird of Happiness." Shackelford, a Texas Parks and Wildlife Ornithologist, will present "Knock on Wood: The Woodpeckers of East Texas." Other presentations will prepare bluebirders, new and experienced, for the upcoming nesting season.

## Coming Events

Feb. 2 – East Texas Turf Grass Conference

Feb. 11 – East Texas Landscape & Garden Conference

Speakers include Dr. David Reed, Malcolm Beck, and Carman Wagner. Master Gardeners Anne Brown and Dee Bishop will talk about "Firewise Landscaping" and Keith Hansen and Daniel Duncum will address "Dealing with the Drought".

Feb. 28 – East Texas Fruit & Vegetable Conference.

More information can be found about these events at: <http://easttexasgardening.tamu.edu/programs/programs.html>

## Work Day in the Gardens

We will work each Tuesday during February if the weather permits and there is work to do. We will monitor the garden and let the MG's know by Sunday evening if we are going to work. I know this is confusing but the worst thing we can do it have people come to the garden to work and there is nothing for them to do.

## Class XIX is now in training.



Photo by Keith Hansen