



# MG Grapevine



<http://scmg.tamu.edu>

February 2016

<http://easttexasgardening.tamu.edu>

Vol. XXIII No. 2



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**The next SCMG Meeting**  
**February 4, 2016**  
**Rose Garden Center**  
**11:30 AM**

**MG Grapevine Staff**  
 Martin Davis, Editor

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Published for the Master Gardeners of Smith County, Texas under the auspices of the Smith County Office of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, 1517 W. Front St. Tyler, TX 75702.

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## SCMG Association Meeting February 4, 2016

Joe Masabni from the Extension Research Office in Overton will speak on "Getting Ready for Spring Gardens".



## Time to Pay 2016 Dues

The time has come to pay the SCMG Association dues. Please bring cash or check for \$20 to the February 4th meeting or mail checks to Jeanette Ross at 2702 Old Bullard Rd. Tyler 75701.

## Big Money

A total of 9158 hours and 1657 CE's were accumulated in 2015. At the Department of Labor rate of \$24.66 per volunteer hour in Texas, this equates to \$225,836 in manpower value to Texas A&M AgriLife Extension!

## MG Photos

Is the picture of you in the MG Address Book outdated or just terrible? If so, please take advantage of the opportunity to have a new picture taken on February 23<sup>rd</sup>. Martin Davis will be taking pictures at the Extension Office in the room where the phone desk is located. Stop by, between 1:00 and 2:00 PM.

## Speaker's Bureau Update

Please note that management of the Speaker's Bureau is being handled (temporarily) by Susan Stone. If you have recently had the privilege of talking to a special group, please send your information to Susan. Information such as your name, title and length of presentation, date, sponsoring group and other pertinent demographic data, is consolidated and forwarded to Kyle for his monthly report.

## Susan Stone Sez

*"Getting to Know You."*

It's an old song, of course. But more importantly, it's a challenge I face as I embark on 2016 as your new president. I know your faces and I mostly know your names. I may even know what committees you've served on in the past. But, there's a lot more to know besides your name. So, we are developing a survey to gather some information to help us find the right person for the right job. Or, the right person to try a new job. Not everyone likes to fill out surveys and questionnaires, but I really hope you'll consider this one.



We have many exciting things on the horizon. The Home Garden Tour planning will be in full swing shortly and there's a good possibility we will do a 2017 Calendar and Gardening Guide. The new class is off to a great start and we'll be looking for mentors to guide their journey to becoming certified. Finally, if you get a chance, stop by the Tyler Public Library in February and check out the Master Gardening display designed by some very talented MGs.

Hope to see everyone at the next meeting, February 4<sup>th</sup>. Susan

## Mentors Needed

As you know, Master Gardener Class 23 is currently underway. We need mentors for the new class of interns. If you are interested in being a mentor, please email Ann Smith ([smithvae@aol.com](mailto:smithvae@aol.com)) or Monette Colman ([monechas@msn.com](mailto:monechas@msn.com)) as soon as possible.

We cannot be too early in getting enough mentors signed up.

### Kyle Tengler comments....



Garlic is one of my favorite vegetables to grow. I use garlic in most savory dishes I cook. If you grow your own, not only do you get to harvest those beautiful heads of garlic, but you can also harvest garlic scapes. When growing garlic you'll sometimes hear and read the cloves referred to as garlic seed. This, of course, is not the case as cloves are vegetative tissue, which resulting in identical clones upon planting. People also often confuse the clusters of bulbils at the top of the scape as garlic flowers. This is also not the case. Garlic initially sets bulbils at their tops, and planting these will also give you a genetically identical plant. But, did you know garlic can be induced to set true flowers, and if you're lucky, even true seeds?

Typically we are encouraged when growing garlic to remove the scapes to allow the plant to put more energy into forming larger bulbs, rather than spending that energy frivolously developing a scape and bulbils. Since I learned of this technique I've always let ten or so plants develop their full scape. When a garlic plant develops its scape, the tops do in fact have some flowers in them with the bulbils. Often the bulbils develop so much quicker than the flowers that the flowers wither and die. If you don't believe me, just try this out. Right as the bulbils emerge at the top of the scape, get out your tweezers and carefully pull all of the bulbils off of the plant. As you begin pulling them out you will notice they were overshadowing some rather sad looking pink/purple flowers growing behind them. Remove all of the bulbils allowing as much room for the flowers as possible and also allowing the plant to direct energy towards the flowers.

The first time I tried this I was amazed, there were true flowers hiding behind all of those bulbils. This is the easy part though, the next step requires that you nurse these plants so that the flowers can fully develop and produce seeds. Often in warmer climates the entire scape is removed and set in water in an area that doesn't get too hot but has access to morning sunlight, or even artificial light. Be sure to change the water regularly, and pay attention to any decay on the stems, trimming any discolored length of stem to ensure the plant can readily take up water. With some luck these flowers can produce seeds.

So why go through all the effort? I know some of us don't have the patience for a project like this, but some avid gardeners relish new projects. The purpose to put it simply is to increase diversity. Garlic genetics are not diverse at all. While you can find hundreds of varieties of most vegetables, garlic is restricted to a mere 10 types, with some variation within those types leaving us with very few varieties comparatively. To get new varieties we must grow more from seed and less from genetically identical cloves.

This is probably a project for those avid seed savers out there and those others who want a challenge, because the first set of seeds typically has a very low germination rate, around 13%! But the only way to improve germination and develop new varieties specifically adapted to our respective regions is to repeat this process generation after generation, selecting each new generation of garlic for higher and higher germination rates and better performance for our gardens and farms. So let's not delay, start saving seed today!

### MG Class 23

The class meets at 1:00 PM in **room 257** of the Cotton Belt building. The regular classroom is still not useable, due to water damage and mildew. Certified MGs earn 3 CEs for each class audited.

The class schedule is as follows:

February 2 – Landscape Water Conservation – Dr. Dotty Woodson

February 9 – Perennial's and Roses – Dr. William Welch – **9 AM until...**

February 11 – Annuals & Plant Propagation – Dr. Brent Pemberton – **9 AM – 4 PM all day**

February 18 – Entomology (Insect Pests)

Pesticides & Safety – Erfan Vafaie – at the **Overton Research** center

February 23 – Soils & Fertility – Chad Gulley (Class photos will be taken)

February 25 – Vegetable Production – Dr. Joe Masabni –at the **Overton Research** Center

### Something New

By Pat Turner

Have you seen the newest project in the succulent section of the IDEA Garden? Although it may look like something from outer space, it is not. It is a Hoop High Tunnel designed to protect the plants from cold winter rain.

Just like other plants succulents are dormant in winter, not actively using water and sitting too long in wet soil quickly causes root rot. The best protection is good drainage but even that is not enough



during our wettest weather. The high tunnel offers extra protection. By the way, a 'high tunnel' is any above ground tunnel. In October, 2015, the succulent team researched, designed and built a structure which has withstood some strong winds and more rain than usual. Most of the succulents and cacti in the garden are cold tolerant down to 30-40 degrees. There has not been a need for any cold protection so far this year. Since this is an educational trial and a learning experience, the team plans to observe the survival and performance of plants already there, to try others, and to experiment with some of the numerous planting formats for succulents. Interested in exploring the possibilities? Come by the garden on work days, see what's new, or contact Clayton Turner, team leader.



## IN WINTER DOLDRUMS, PREPARING FOR SPRING

By Sam Griffith

We are on the cusp of spring. Though the weather forecast for this week includes freezes, a frigid wind chill, and rain, the signs that spring is spring are everywhere. The earliest flowers, like the narcissus, are still dancing in the nippy breezes. And, on warmer days, the honey bees are busy buzzing and circling the blossoms. But while we are impatiently awaiting tomato planting time, we have lots of work to do in anticipation of the growing season.

So what should gardeners be doing right now? Besides perusing the latest seed catalogues, and making wish lists and placing your order for the plants and seeds you are going to plant.

First, before the sap begins to rise and buds swell in woody bushes and in trees, one needs to prune and shape shrubs, roses, and trees. Cut off branches that cross and rub. Open the center of the plants so air can circulate, which can reduce diseases and other maladies. Pruning fruit trees is especially important, both to shape the trees and to maintain a reasonable height for ease of harvesting, but more importantly, to open the center of the fruit tree for a free flow of air.

It is getting late, but there is still time to plant new fruit trees and shrubs. Before the warm temperatures awaken woody plants, get the shrubs and bushes in the grounds, so

the roots can begin grow deep into the soil.

While things are slow, check mulch levels. Natural mulch, like bark, decomposes, and needs replenishing periodically.

Check irrigation systems, looking for cracks and leaks, and replacing defective and broken emitters.

Sharpen and oil hand tools. Sharp tools are easier to use, and are safer, because one must exert extra effort to accomplish a task with a dull tool. Put a little oil on a cloth and lightly coat the surfaces of shovels and other tools to limit rust. Examine the wood handles of tools, looking for splinters and flaws. Replace cracking handles, and sand rough spots on the handles to eliminate possible splinters. Put wood oil on wooden handles of tools to prolong the productive lifetime of the tools and keep the wood supple.

Perform maintenance on gasoline-powered equipment. Change the oil. Tune up the engine, putting in a new set of points and a condenser and a new spark plug. Replace the air filter, which needs to be frequently checked during the mowing season. Check the condition of the lawn mower blade. First, remove the spark plug wire from the spark plug. Put the mower up on blocks, or tip it onto one side, being careful not to let oil drip out, in order to have easy access to the blade. Check the blade for wear, for dents, and for dullness. If the blade is in good shape, but dull, simply sharpen the blade. If the blade is damaged, replace the blade. Finally, reconnect the spark plug wire onto the spark plug.

There is much to do, but preparation now will bear many rewards when the growing season is fully upon us.

## This is the Time of Year...

By Mary Claire Rowe

This is the time of year when our thoughts are filled with uncertainty about how spring in our gardens will look. Will the weather get too warm, causing our fruit trees to bud prematurely, only to be ruined by a late freeze? Will we have enough freezing days to make fruit tree production possible? Will we have a freeze at all, so that we are not overrun by insects in the warmer months? Without a crystal ball, there is no certainty.

Gardening is a patient person's game. Gardens do not look good their first year, and sometimes not the second or third. It takes time for plants to grow and mature. While we gardeners are being patient, we can learn about a new way of doing things. We can try the newest plants, and new arrangements. And, of course, we can weed. Despite all efforts, somehow, there is always a weed here or there. It is part of the patience thing. I recently saw on TV an advertisement for a steamer for weeds. It will boil them away. I think I will



save my money and keep mulching and improving the soil. Ground cover plants are good too. I have loved my giant ajuga, and lambs ear plants. They look pretty and edge out the weeds.

The one big, expensive mistake new gardeners make, and perhaps us old timers as well from time to time, is to fall in love with a plant at the nursery with no regard as to the placement needs of that plant. Soil content, water and sunlight requirements, weather consideration - will it live when it is hot, will it survive the coldest cold in our region? These are the key ingredients to successful plant survival. There is much to consider.

The I.D.E.A. Garden was created to help with these questions. Keeping this wonderful garden in the public consciousness is one of the main functions of the Master Gardeners. It is our teaching tool. It will help young and old, new and experienced gardeners to have success rather than expensive and disappointing failure. It should be a star feature of the MG Garden Tour every year. The Tour publicity will increase awareness and encourage more people to come to learn. Of this idea, there is no uncertainty.

## Looking Ahead...

The Garden Lecture Series will take place at the Tyler Rose Garden Center except October which will be in Harvey Hall in conjunction with the Bulb Sale and Fall Conference.

- February 13, 2016—James Wilhite “Water Features and Bubbling Jars”
- March 5, 2016—Dr. Charles Swanson “You Can Touch the Box” Irrigation Controls
- April 2, 2016—Dr. Joe Masabni “Aquaponics”
- September 10, 2016—Erfan Vafaie “The Good, the Bad and the Ugly”
- October 8, 2016—Brent Heath “Bulbs for Southern Gardens”
- November 12, 2016—Kyle Tengler “Fruit & Vegetable Production”

More information available on the SCMG website.

### February 4th—East Texas Turfgrass Conference

At the Texas A&M AgriLife Research & Extension Center, Overton. Registration starts at 7:30 am - All day conference, including lunch - Cost \$35.00 per person.

### Water Efficient Landscape Design

The Water Efficient Landscape Design Program for Master Gardeners provides you the skills to be your own landscape designer. This workshop is only open to current Master Gardener volunteers.

**Registration:** Only 20 Master Gardener participant spots are available for this training (10 groups).

**Cost: \$300.00:** (includes lunch, dinner and design materials)

February 17-19, 2016—Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Extension Center, Building C Classroom & Large Hall, 17360 Coit Road, Dallas, Texas 75252

For additional information please email Karen Sanders at [karen.sanders@tamu.edu](mailto:karen.sanders@tamu.edu)

### Landscape Design School IV

February 23-23, 2016

The George Bush Presidential Library at Texas A & M University will be the site of the school.

Master Gardeners who complete a course and pass the test may receive 12 CE hours.

For more information and registration forms, go to:

<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/southerngarden/> and click on “Landscape Design Study Courses”.

### February 11th SFA Lecture Series—7:00 PM

Danny Carson, Dir. of Gardens, Moody Gardens, Galveston, TX - Evolution of the Moody Gardens Landscape.

### Wonderful Wednesdays

The Tyler Morning Telegraph recently published an article about Dana Anderson who regularly volunteers to work with boys at the St. Paul Children’s Foundation. In part their article said:

“Smith County Master Gardener Dana Anderson leads the boys throughout the year in learning varying aspects of gardening, from enriching the soil, to building raised garden boxing and finally harvesting the crops. Anderson works with a group of fifth grade boys from the Wonderful Wednesdays after school program teaching them about gardening including planting techniques and how to enrich the soil. The boys get to take some of the food home and the rest will be distributed to eight families served by St. Paul Children's Foundation.

“I love teaching the kids how to grow something. We learn, grow, eat and go; it's a concept that's real simple,” Anderson said.”

- Sarah Miller

