



# MG Grapevine



<http://scmg.tamu.edu>

January 2016

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### Inside This Issue

Kyle's comments	2
MG Class 23	2
Consider Hollies	3
Dee Bishop note	3
Martin Davis note	3
Looking Ahead	4
Landscape Design school	4



The next SCMG Meeting  
**January 7, 2016**  
**Rose Garden Center**  
**11:30 AM**

**MG Grapevine Staff**  
 Martin Davis, Editor

#### MG Grapevine Contributors:

Dee Bishop, Anne Brown, Susan Stone, Kyle Tengler and Pat Welch.

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#### Extension Office

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### SCMG Association Meeting January 7, 2016

Our speaker for the January 7th meeting is local florist, Marilyn Brosang. The title of her presentation is "All About Tulips".

#### Time to Pay 2016 Dues



The time has come to pay the SCMG Association dues. Please bring cash or check for \$20 to the January 7th meeting. This notice includes Class 22 who will begin to pay dues as of January 1, 2016.

#### Work Day in the Gardens

There will only be one scheduled workday in January. Weather permitting we will work on Tuesday, January 19th, starting at 10:00 AM.

If there is a need to work an extra day there will be an e-mail notice.

#### Change Notice

**Effective January 1, 2016**, Jean Smith will begin sending out the group messages to all of the MGs.

Instead of sending your request for a message to be sent to "all of the MGs" to Martin, please make your request to Jean Smith at [smithjean17@hotmail.com](mailto:smithjean17@hotmail.com).

On a personal note—My thanks to Jean for taking over this important function. Martin Davis

#### Welch's Words

**THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU!**

Time sure flies when you're having fun! If I haven't had the opportunity to thank you personally, I want to say



**"THANK YOU"** to each and everyone for making this year a truly enjoyable experience. The energy and the personal sense of volunteerism in this Association makes me proud to say "I'm President". Any time I asked for help or for someone to do a particular job you've said yes. I can't tell you how easy you made my job!

Once again **THANK YOU** for making this organization great and my job easy.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you and yours. Pat

#### Susan Stone's comments

Welcome, 2016.

Some years are better than others and 2015 was certainly a challenging one, full of highs and lows and strange weather. But I love the promise of tomorrow with a new garden to plant, new friends to meet, and exciting projects to conquer.

I'm looking forward to serving as your new President, knowing that I have some pretty big shoes to fill. So, I'm counting on your help. We have some great things planned for the coming year, and by working together we can tackle all the new challenges that come our way. Here's to a great 2016! Susan Stone

### Kyle Tengler comments....



Let's talk tomatoes. Tomatoes are one of our most beloved fruits. I love them on a sandwich, as a snack, in a salad, marinated, stewed, just about every way I can eat them. This was not always the case. A store bought tomato is typically a poor substitute for a freshly picked tomato at the peak of ripeness. Before I started growing them, I spent lunches eating around the mealy tomatoes in my salad. I began growing this gardener's staple more as a curiosity, selecting bright yellow varieties. A friend came over one day, and admiring my tomatoes, plucked one off of the plant and ate it right there like you might a peach. Moments later I realized, these were nothing like the tomatoes sold at my local grocery. These were something special. I haven't gone a summer without growing these fantastic gems since.

Why am I writing about tomatoes in January? Well, for those of us who love a perfectly ripe home grown tomato, we want as many as we can get, as early as we can get them. The best way to insure a long season full of these juicy wonders is to have healthy transplants just starting to flower after the last frost of the season. Around here you can start planting tomatoes around mid-March, minding your weekly forecast for late frosts. To get transplants ready to go in the ground you either have to buy transplants in, or grow them for seed. In a pinch I've bought transplants, but one thing lacking is variety. There are thousands of varieties of tomatoes in every color, shape, size, and even different flavors. I can't help but start seeds of multiple varieties that you just can't find at most nurseries. The key to getting an early start is to get your seeds in the soil 8 weeks before you intend to

transplant.

I always start my seedling tomatoes in plug trays, misting with water as needed to keep the soil moist but not wet. It is important to keep the seed trays warm, as cold wet conditions can cause fungal issues that can kill your seedlings. If you have a small greenhouse that's ideal, but for years I started mine in a laundry room or an unused room in the house, even the garage! To keep the seedlings warm I used a simple programmable outlet thermostat hooked up to a space heater to keep the space between 70° F and 80° F.

The most common complaint I hear from people trying to start their own seeds is that their plants get tall and leggy. Sticking these seedlings on a window sill simply does not provide enough light for these little guys. Full sun is great if you have a greenhouse, but I resort to using some salvaged florescent light fixtures that I fitted with high color temperature lights, at least 5000K. I keep the lights 2-3 inches from the tops of the plants at all times, and cycle them on for 16 hours with 8 hours off, using a simple outlet timer. The reason I keep them so close is because florescent lights give off very gentle diffuse light. If you're using incandescent lights, or anything that heats up a lot, you will need to place the lights higher up to keep from burning your plants up and drying out the soil. My main concern is using what I have, so look around and see if you have something you can put to use already.

After my tomatoes put on their first true leaves I pot them up for the first time. I like to take them from plug trays and put them in 4" pots. Once they reach 6" to 8", I'll pot them up one more time to gallon size. Once you start getting some fair days it's time to harden them off, which can take a few days to a week.

I know this is a lot to think about in January, but planning ahead makes all the difference!



### MG Class 23

The new class will begin to meet on January 7<sup>th</sup> 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 CE's for each class audited.

The class schedule is as follows:

January 7, Registration/Orientation; MG Projects, Opportunities, etc. (dress for trip to Rose Garden)

January 12, Plant Growth & Development (Botany) Speaker – Kyle Tengler

January 14, Turfgrass - Types, Culture and Maintenance; Weeds - Types and Controls **Note: class at TAMU – Overton** Speaker Dr. Matt Elmore

January 19, Landscape Plants – Speaker - Keith Hansen

January 21, Home Fruit Production; “Tip of the Week” project – Speaker – Kyle Tengler

January 26, Trees – Types, Establishment & Care (some hands-on outside – dress accordingly) – Speaker – Zaina Gates

January 27, Plant Diseases – **Note: class at TAMU – Overton – full day** (9 AM-4 PM all day) Speaker – Dr. Kevin Ong

## CONSIDER HOLLIES FOR EXCITING WINTER COLOR

By Dee Bishop



Now is the time to look about and take in what is most beautiful. Notice all the trees and their shapes, limb structure, and size. Observe what is blooming such as azaleas (the re-blooming types) and camellias. Color really abounds here in East Texas which is so fortunate for us. All of these provide much needed color for us, but don't forget hollies. They too provide beautiful evergreen backgrounds and bright colorful berries. Besides being downright beautiful, they provide food and shelter for birds as well.

There is one gorgeous native holly that has no green leaves in winter, but boy-oh-boy does it provide dazzling color! Our Possomhaw Holly of course. You can take a look at the one in our IDEA Garden right now. It will put your eyes out with its bright red berries and those berries will stay on until either the leaves come out in spring or the cedar waxwings swoop in for a feast on the berries.

There are hollies of all sizes and

textures that add just the perfect touch to any garden. Many do not fruit, especially the smallest ones which I think is a shame, and who knows, maybe horticulturists will take care of that soon. There are huge hollies that grow to twenty feet or more. One such shrub (tree) can be a magnificent focal point for a large yard. Imagine such a holly planted in the perfect position to hide something ugly (either yours or a neighbor's) and growing all the way to the ground in a perfect pyramid twenty feet high and covered with bright red berries during the holiday season---perfect Christmas tree and with no help from you! To do this, try an American Holly, which will grow 20-30 feet tall and twenty feet wide at the base tapering upward to a point making a perfect pyramid and it is the holly most used at Christmas. Or---if you want the same effect, but on a smaller scale, try one of its hybrids. Foster is a great one and not quite so big, great for smaller yards. Be sure when you buy a holly to choose one in good form that hasn't had the top cut out---unless you want a large shrub instead.

If you need a magnificent living fence, that is very large and tall, take on some 'Nellie R. Stevens' or 'Mary

Nell' hollies. They are fast growing hollies that grow huge but can be kept to about 10-12 feet if needed. They both make scads of large bright red berries. Planted on 15 foot centers, you will have a truly magnificent hedge in 3-5 years. Give them the room though for it they are planted too close, they will become too bare at the base. Just don't plant these large plants and expect to keep them in a four foot hedge. There are others for that job.

Hollies are easy plants to grow. They like a place in the sun, but will take some shade - just not too much if you want berries, and rich, moist, acidic soil that can be watered when dry. They will take a lot of abuse once they are grown in well, but will perform better with enough water during droughty times to keep them well-hydrated. One thing to keep in mind, hollies are either male or female; so it's best to buy them when they are fruiting. Some require specific male hollies to fertilize the flowers to make a good crop of berries, but hybrids of our native hollies usually will be pollinated by wild hollies that grow all around. Do a little research before you buy so you will get just what you need for your area.

### A note from Dee Bishop

I am sending one more column (the one above) and then I am signing off. I am sure there are other people in our organization who will step up to do this monthly column. I have done them so long and feel that a new writer will benefit everyone. I have always thought that knowing when to stop something is as important as beginning it.

Best Wishes, Dee Bishop

**Editor's note**—Please contact Martin Davis if you would like to write a column for the Grapevine.

### A note from Martin Davis

Send your reports for any volunteer hours during 2015 to Martin Davis. **Please get all of those 2015 reports to me by January 15<sup>th</sup> at the very latest.**

I am now turning this job over to Pat Welch [gray-ball\\_234@yahoo.com](mailto:gray-ball_234@yahoo.com) (she volunteered), **effective with your reports for January 2016.**

Thus, after nearly 20 years I am giving someone else the opportunity to handle this important function. Thanks to all who have put up with my nagging you for reports and special thanks to those who were always on time with their reports. Martin Davis

## Looking Ahead...

Plans for the 2016 East Texas Garden Lecture Series are complete with dates and speakers lined up. The Garden Lecture Series will take place at the Tyler Rose Garden Center except October which 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.

## 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. The Schools are sponsored by Texas Garden Clubs, Inc. & the Texas AgriLife Extension Service, Texas A&M University. Mrs. Diane Perez of Texas Garden Clubs, Inc. and Dr. William C. Welch, Texas AgriLife Extension Service, announce the last in the current series which is offered in four separate schools, approximately six months apart in the Bryan-College Station area.

Master Gardeners who complete a course and pass the test may receive 12 hours of credit toward their requirements for continuing education.

For more information and registration forms, go to: <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/southerngarden/> and click on “Landscape Design Study Courses”.

Registration fee \$145.00 by February 1, 2016 Registration fee \$165.00 after February 1, 2016. Make check or money order payable to: Landscape Design School. You will be sent an email to confirm receipt of registration. Mail to: Michele Wehrheim, Registrar 1218 Haines Drive College Station, TX 77840

## Mulch Grows Legs

The January SCMG meeting agenda will include the installation of the following slate of officers for 2016:

### Officers for year 2016

President: Susan Stone

Vice President: Deanna Olson

Recording/Corresponding Secretary: Melva Hermes\*

Treasurer: Jeanette Ross

Assistant Treasurer: Linda Sargent

Historian: Jan Moch/Betty Atchley\*

Parliamentarian: Pat Welch

At Large Executive Committee: Charlie Colman

At Large Executive Committee: Joyce Napolitano

State Director: Gay Barron (1<sup>st</sup> year – two year)

State Director: Rebecca Bullock (2<sup>nd</sup> year – two year)\*\*

Alternate State Director: Sandra Dugan (1<sup>st</sup> year – two year)

Alternate State Director: Peggy Canant (2<sup>nd</sup> year – two year)\*\*

\* Elected last year, agreed to serve second year.

\*\* Elected last year, serving 2<sup>nd</sup> year of two-year term



Sheryl Chester hard at work at the IDEA Garden.

Photo by Cindy Harrington