



MG Grapevine



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The next SCMG Meeting

March 2nd

At the Rose Garden Center
11:30 AM

MG Grapevine Staff

Martin Davis, Editor

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SCMG Association Meeting

March 2, 2017

The topic for this month is "Improving Soil Health Using Compost and Hardwood Mulch".



The speaker is James A Van Dyke from Texas Organics.

Volunteer Hours Report Form

Once again, the form has been revised. Some of the changes include removing projects that are no longer active. More important are the addition of new project codes. There are three additional Project Codes; **Bulb** – Bulbs & More Sale, **FR** – Fund Raisers and **SG** – Shade Garden.

One important change involves work at the Overton Research center. All work there, whether it be with Dr. Pemberton or Dr. Masabni, should now be reported using the **RD** project code. As usual one **CE** credit is appropriate when either Dr. Pemberton or Dr. Masabni are present. For those who attend the summer Field Trials, the correct code is **CE** (3 CEs).

For those who report travel time, to and from projects, the new code **TVL** code should be used.

Even though there are changes to the form, the need to report your activity has not changed. **Send your report to Pat Welch at the end of each month!**

New Phone Number

Kathy Wright – 903-202-5125

Susan Stone Sez....



Looks like Spring is just around the corner. Or maybe it's here already. My George Tabor is starting to bloom. There are 3 of them in my back yard, magnificent specimens about 6 ft. tall and around 50 years old. They are a commanding presence and based on the seclusion of my back yard, mostly for my eyes only. I love them. Because they are so extraordinary, I have a hard time warming up to other azaleas. But, I try to be open minded. Keith Hansen will be talking about azaleas at our March 10 Library lecture. Maybe he can enlighten me. I'm easily persuaded. After listening to Greg's Library talk on Rose Rustlers, I'm now on the hunt for Mrs. B.R. Cant.

If it's Spring, the Home Garden Tour is around the corner. Thanks to Charlie and Monette Colman and Victor and Shirley Long, it looks like we will have some fabulous gardens to show off. The hard work is done, we just need some other MGs to help us pull off another great event. Please consider joining the committee. We need people to sell ads, do garden write-ups, develop the brochure, etc. Oh, and we moved the date to June 3 to avoid Memorial Day weekend. Call Jean Smith if you can help.

Spring is also time for the Rose City Artisan and Flower Market. Master Gardeners will be there Friday and Saturday, March 24 and 25, selling roses from Chamblee's Rose Nursery. It's a great time to visit with friends and pick up a new rose to plant. Maybe Mrs. B.R. Cant will put in an appearance? Call Deanna Olson if you want to be a part of this fun event.

Our next meeting is Thursday, March 2, at the Rose Garden Center. Know you all have been practicing Tai Chi to get in shape for Spring gardening.

See you there, *Susan Stone*, President

Mild Mannered Gardening

By Greg Grant



With the exception of some temporary blistering cold weather, it's been an extremely mild winter; short on freezing temperatures and chilling hours required by many fruit trees. Although my Arctic Frost citrus lost all of its foliage, it's leafing out all over now with minimal tip damage. I'm hoping it blooms and produces another bumper crop of tangerines this year. I still can't keep a Satsuma or a Meyer lemon alive out in the open at my farm but I'm happy with any kind of citrus I can produce. Theoretically we shouldn't be able to produce citrus out in the open in East Texas.

Things are definitely milder these days. If you don't believe it, just go stand in the parking lot at Barnes and Nobles on Broadway and gaze up at the *Washingtonia* palm trees. San Antonio and Houston used to be the northern limits for those. And that goes for all the sago and pindo palms in Tyler too. I even see an occasional Queen's palm here. They are even less cold hardy.

Back when I was born in Tyler there wasn't fig ivy one on any wall either. They too belonged along I-10 and below. The same can be said for most Dutch amaryllis in flower beds as well.

Don't get me wrong. I'm fine with mild winters. I love all the semi-tropical plants they grow in Houston and San Antonio. After all, I've lived and gardened in both of those cities. Up until the dip into the teens, this was a banner year for tender tazetta narcissus like Chinese sacred lilies and *Narcissus x italicus*. And right now, it's a very unusual year with everything budding out in February including things like post oaks and red oaks that I've never see out that early.

But unless I hear otherwise, our average last frost is still around March 15, so I certainly wouldn't recommend planting any frost tender vegetable transplants like tomatoes and peppers until that date approaches. Although there have been years when the date was earlier than that, we all know there have been years when it frosted well into April. So around the middle of March, I start watching the 10 day forecasts to see if I think another frost is coming. But to be on the safe side, I've always planned on planting my tomatoes around April Fools day.

The more adventurous like to plant earlier and prepare to protect plants as needed, while the more conservative like to plant later. My little paternal Granny Ruth always planted everything on Good Friday, while my maternal Papaw always said "Plant late, plant once."

We don't want to dilly dally when planting things like tomatoes, bell peppers, green beans, sweet corn, and such though because these plants like mild spring temperatures and we all know how quickly we can heat up. Once it gets hot, the pollen in tomato blooms is non-functional and production ends. Therefore every year it's a gamble to plant them as early as possible without subjecting them to abnormally cool or freezing temperatures. This is why most gardeners don't go to casinos. We live in them!

2017 Class XXIV SCMG -Training Schedule

The schedule for March includes only one classroom offering. The rest of the dates include field trips and/or tests, as Class XXIV comes to the end of its schedule.

March 9—Bulbs for the South—Greg Grant

Classes are held at the Extension office, Room 257 from 1:00—5:00 PM, unless otherwise noted. Certified Master Gardeners earn 3 CE credits for each class audited.

Rose City Artisans & Flower Market

Master Gardeners will sell roses at the Flower Market. Roses will be provided by Mark Chamblee of Chamblee Nursery.

When: Friday March 24 and Saturday March 25

Time: 10 am to 4 pm

Where: Goodman-LeGrand Museum 624 N. Broadway Volunteers still needed especially for Saturday afternoon.

Call Deanna Olson for information. 903 520 5571 or email deanna65@suddenlink.net

Home Garden Tour in Planning Stages

June 3 is the date set for the 2017 Home Garden Tour (please note this is a date change!)

The garden search committee is hard at work and we have two confirmed gardens with several others in the works. Once the gardens are in place, the real work begins and help is needed. If you have not served on this committee or have taken a break from it, please consider joining. Most committee jobs are still open and it takes a great group to pull off a great garden tour.

A crucial job that needs to get underway soon is ad sales for the Garden Guide. If you know of a company that would be interested in advertising, please let us know or better yet, go out and acquire that ad yourself. Forms will be available soon.

To volunteer contact Jean Smith smithjean17@hotmail.com. Another meeting will be scheduled in early March so plan to help Smith County Master Gardeners make this another great Garden Tour.

IMPORTANCE OF REPORTING HOURS

The following information was provided at the February 11th, State Director's Meeting.

An annual report is submitted to the state of Texas. Agents submit a quarterly report to A&M. The system locks out reports so information is gone if not reported timely.

There is a hiring freeze on all education entities, per Greg Abbott. Extension was informed that they should plan to operate at 96% of their budget this year.



HOPE FOR THE FUTURE, IN SEED CATALOGUES

by Sam Griffith

“The future belongs to those who give the next generation reason for hope.”

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

That is a deep thought for a simple gardening column. But *apropos* for gardeners, especially for those gardeners who are already perusing the new seed catalogues and envisioning a better growing year than last year's. An article last week in the “New York Times” compared seed catalogues to “porn”, as in pornography, because the newspaper suggested both arouse such passions by visual promises. Perhaps there is merit in such an analogy, if you have ever spent an hour comparing various varieties of tomato seeds, and then, months later, when the tomatoes finally develop, they are nothing like the picture and description in the catalogue.

Perhaps that somewhat unrealistic hope, especially in the face of an upcoming summer of 100 plus temperatures, can best be summed up by Alexander Pope, who wrote: “Hope springs eternal in the human breast.” (An Essay on Man” – 1734). I guess Pope was a frustrated gardener, too.

Now for applied gardening tips:

I was looking at my pastures this week to evaluate the winter pastures after the recent rains. And I was surprised to find that the Bermuda grass was already sprouting. Why is that significant for gardeners? Because the soil temperature needs to be around sixty (60) degrees F, for the Bermuda grass to grow. So the soil is now warm enough to begin to plant most seeds

Great news, eh? Maybe not. Why? Well first, these nice warm temperatures have brought too many plants emerging too early. My peach trees went through a full bloom a couple weeks ago, and are now fully leafed out. And I have heard some azaleas are already blooming. Several problems: If the azaleas continue to bloom now, they won't be available during the Azalea Trails.

And even more important, it's still February. The average last frost date in Smith County is usually around March 5-15 or so. And Easter is mid-April this year, and the old timers suggest that you might expect your last frost around Easter. So we have about a month and a half, or more, of risk of frost and freeze ahead of us. Indeed, last week, despite all those high temperatures we were enjoying, we also had one morning when the temperature was around 30 degrees. What that means to gardeners is that anything that blooms early, or is planted out in the weather too early, will be killed by the frost long before all danger of frost has passed.

Another problem with these unduly early warm fronts is that we can be lured into believing spring has sprung, and we can go out and plant whatever we want to. Do not fall for the warm weather unless you enjoy replanting your garden. I even saw some beautiful tomato plants for sale at Walmart yesterday. I guess you could keep them alive, if you planted them in a five-gallon bucket of soil, and take them out for full sun on warm days but you must always remember to bring them in every time

there is a hint of a frost. Or, because the soil is so warm, you could chance it by planting the tomatoes in the garden, and know you will spend the next couple months covering and uncovering the plants. Either way, it is a lot of work, and a lot of risk. I'd just wait until due season.

As it says in Ecclesiastes 3: 1-2: “To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: ... A time to plant, and a time to harvest that which is planted.”

So don't fall for deceptively warm days.

Enjoy the warm days. Take a nap in a hammock. Rock back in a comfy chair on the patio.

But always follow the planting dates on the seed packages!



The Executive Committee met on February 17, 2017. The following action items were discussed:

Policy #1009, Membership – approved. Includes criteria for reinstating a Master Gardener after a prolonged period of inactivity.

Policy #3015, Financial Aid Assistance – approved. Outlines criteria for reimbursement for Specialist Training and assistance in attending the annual MG training class.

Project Status – Home Garden Tour date moved to 6/3/17 to avoid Memorial Day weekend. Project leader still needed for AgriWorld.

State Directors Meeting, 2/11/17 – Discussed importance of reporting volunteer hours and number of hours needed to maintain certification. The next State Conference is scheduled for April 4-6, 2018, in College Station.

IDEA Garden – Approved budget modification for a crushed granite pathway to be installed in the Idea Garden.

Policy and Procedure Updates

Changes to two policies were recently approved by the Executive Committee.

Policy #1009, Membership, has been revised to clarify the criteria for hardship status as well as the process for rejoining SCMG after a prolonged period of inactivity.

Policy, #3015, Financial Aid Assistance, while an existing policy used in the past, has not received much attention of late. This policy outlines the reimbursement and commitment criteria for MGs who might be interested in pursuing Junior Master Gardener training or other specialist training. There is also a section on scholarship aid for the annual MG Training Class.

Both policies can be reviewed online.

2017 East Texas Garden Lecture Series

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service invites you to their 2017 Garden Lecture Series. Registration will begin at 9 AM.

Ticket Information: Season tickets for all six seminars are \$45 per person and may be purchased in advance at the Extension Office at 1517 W. Front Street, Suite 116 in Tyler. Single tickets on sale the day of the lecture are \$15 per person. For more information, call the Extension office at 903-590-2980.

Schedule of lectures: (all at the Tyler Rose Garden Center, unless otherwise noted)

Mar 11 – Greg Grant “The Natives are Restless – Native, Exotic and Invasive Plants”

Apr 8 – Blue Moon Nursery “From Garden to Vase” at Blue Moon Nursery – Edom

Gregg Co. MG Spring Gardening Seminar

March 4, 2017

Conference speakers include: Tom LeRoy, Vegetable Gardening in Containers and Steven Chamblee, Shade Gardening and Peace, Love & Milagros.

Doors open at 8:00 AM. Cost is \$10 in advance and \$12 at the door. For information, call 903-236-8429.

At First United Methodist Church, 400 North Fredonia St., Longview, TX

Master Gardeners at the Library

These programs will be held on Fridays at 11:30 AM in the Tyler Library’s Taylor Auditorium. See the schedule below:

March 10, “Azaleas” with Keith Hansen

April 21, “Garden Flower Arranging” with Neysa Mueller

May 5, “Heat Loving Plants” with Andie Rathbone

This series promises to be innovative and informational, and hopefully will attract a larger community audience in this new venue. Each lecture is worth 1 CE. Please plan to join us on Fridays for “Master Gardeners at the Library”.

Wood County Conference

March 11, 2017

Conference speakers include Wood Co. Master Gardeners, and Keith Hansen who will speak on “**Tried & True, New & Different, and Unsung Plants to Find and Try for Your Landscape**”.

Free to Public – Doors open at 7:30 AM – Great door prizes. Sponsored by the Wood County MG Association and the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service – Wood County. At the Carroll Green Civic Center, 602 S. McAllister St. Quitman

For more events and more details - go to—<http://txmg.org/smith/coming-events/>

2017 Officers