

# MG Grapevine

<http://scmg.tamu.edu>

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**The next  
SCMG Association meeting is  
Thursday, September 3, 2020  
via Zoom**

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## SCMG Meeting info.

Despite our hopes for having an in-person meeting this month, we've decided that our group will be best served by once again having a virtual meeting.

Greg Grant will provide the program. Luckily, Greg can talk about any number of topics anytime, anywhere! He has chosen Fall Bulbs...rain lilies, oxblood lilies, and spider lilies. His talk is sure to be educational as well as entertaining! We had a great turnout in August, with barely a glitch to be dealt with. So join us on Zoom ( the meeting link will be sent out via a Blast) on Thursday, September 3, at 11:30. *-Mary Jo Madden*



## Debby's Digressions

The turmoil and disruption to our lives, courtesy of the coronavirus, unfortunately continues to plague us. However, we are adapting! Our August membership meeting was held via ZOOM and 62 members participated. Members were able to participate online with audio and video or chose the option to call in on a telephone and listen to it. Our average at an in-person meeting is 75-85 attendees, so that was fantastic participation. Katy Barone and Mim Hershey were our "guinea pig" speakers and did a fantastic job for our first ZOOM meeting. The speaker scheduled for the September meeting (via ZOOM) is always interesting, educational and entertaining so you won't want to miss it!

As I write this, we are watching two hurricanes heading towards the Gulf of Mexico. Hopefully, we will get some much-needed rain from at least one of them! I don't know about your yards, but the grass in my horses' pasture is crispy, crunchy as I walk on it. Not much there for them to eat! They look forward to the little bit of hay that I give them. It's been a typical hot Texas summer so make sure that you stay hydrated as you work outside. It may be hot but our demonstrations gardens (Tyler Botanical Garden) are flourishing due to the efforts of master gardeners who aren't letting the heat deter them from working. Even if you are hesitant to come work in the gardens, please take time to get outside and come visit them. You can stroll through and appreciate their beauty and even bring a picnic lunch to enjoy afterwards.

We are three-quarters of the way through this year already and some of you have not entered any Volunteer or Continuing Education hours into VMS. If you are having difficulty entering information into VMS, please

contact Jean Smith, the VMS Coordinator, and she will be happy to assist you. Texas Master Gardeners Association is still requiring the state minimum of 12 Volunteer hours and 6 Continuing Education (CE) hours in 2020 to stay certified as a Texas (Smith County) Master Gardener. We have reduced our hour requirements for 2020 to fall in line with the state minimum requirements. Obtaining Continuing Education hours should not be a problem as plenty of opportunities abound online. We have access to exceptional educational presentations that we previously had to travel a great distance to hear in person. These opportunities are listed in the Friday E-blast and also on VMS. If you have difficulty getting online, you can read the printed Texas Garden Magazine and get 1 CE for each different issue that you read. If you are not a subscriber to the magazine you can borrow my copy to read. Our Monthly Membership meetings also count as 1 CE, except when we have luncheons (I really miss the good food we have at our luncheons!). Volunteer opportunities may seem more challenging but we are actively working in the gardens, the From Bulbs to Blooms Sale and Conference is coming up, the Calendar/Garden Guide will need to be distributed to vendors to sale, Newspaper Articles need written, Power-Point programs need developed so we have a library of programs for MGs to use when we can get back to speaking to groups or to use for Zoom meetings, and Videos need to be made to place on our YouTube channel.

Go to page 5 for an article written by Jayla Fry, the State Coordinator for the Texas Master Gardener Program, that was in the August Texas Master Gardener Newsletter. It has great suggestions for things you can do to stay engaged and obtain Volunteer hours.

As always, please continue to be safe during this unconventional time

*-Debby Watkins -President*



## Help Desk

This summer I started working on my PhD in Forestry at Stephen F. Austin State University. It won't be easy, but I'm determined to do it. They don't offer a PhD in horticulture by the way. This would give me degrees in Floriculture, Horticulture, and Forestry. I promise this will be the last one!

My first class was a General Business class titled "Business Training and Resource Design." At \$1,500 a class I didn't go into it very excited about learning anything I needed. I was certainly wrong. It was very applicable to all our Master Gardener trainings as well as all the trainings that Texas A&M passes my way.

I tackled our Help Desk training for my class project and produced several flyers that I will share when we start Help Desk training again in September. Stay tuned for the days and times.

Remember that the Master Gardener program was founded to provide help answering questions from the public in urban areas. What we need help the most on is getting enough answers from callers and visitors to be able to answer their questions. We especially need either high quality refrigerated samples in zip lock bags or high resolution images both close-up and landscape shots. We also need complete background information such as whether they have a sprinkler system or not and how often/much it's run, how old the plants are, whether they've been treated with anything, and any other supporting information about what care or lack of has been given. We also need e-mail addresses to send comments and publications too or folks to follow up and play phone tag until all information is gathered and the questions are answered or they are referred to someone that can help them.

Our main goal is for our clientele to know that we are interested in helping them. Many of them just want to talk and have their problems acknowledged. The Help Desk is not only a great opportunity to get volunteer hours but also a great opportunity for you to learn more about gardening, especially lawns, insects, diseases, and trees. Join us if you can. - Greg

**HELP DESK VOLUNTEER GUIDE**

**LISTEN WITH INTERESTED EARS!**  
-Homeowners want to do most of the talking.

**BE A PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR!**  
-Ask all types of questions and get pertinent details.  
USE THE FORM!

**PICTURES OR A SAMPLE!**  
-Let them know we can take fresh samples or multiple high resolution photos to help them out!

**EMAIL ADDRESS, EMAIL ADDRESS, EMAIL ADDRESS!**  
-Always get their email and double check it!

**IF YOU DON'T KNOW THE ANSWER DON'T ANSWER IT!**  
-But take a message and be sure and return their call or email!

**ONLY USE CREDIBLE SOURCES WHEN LOOKING FOR ANSWERS!**  
-Use the Resource Sheet or Texas A&M Fact Sheets.

**OUR NEWSLETTERS ARE AVAILABLE!**  
-Ask them if they would like to be added to our monthly email list.

**NEVER GET ANGRY OR FRUSTRATED!**  
-They are fellow plant lovers that just want someone who wants to help them.

**PROVIDE OUR RESOURCES!**  
-Give Each visitor a complimentary *Texas Gardener* magazine, helpful resources, our latest newsletter and any publication that pertains to their interest or question.

**TELL ABOUT OUR RESOURCES!**  
-Let them know about the Diagnostic Lab, Soil Lab, Certified Arborists, etc.

**Smith County Master Gardener Help Desk**

**ANSWER RESOURCES**

- AGGIE HORTICULTURE:** [aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu](http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu)  
Fruits, nuts, vegetables, Earth-Kind, general gardening, etc.
- AGGIE TURF:** [aggieturf.tamu.edu](http://aggieturf.tamu.edu)  
Fact sheets for lawns, establishment, maintenance, etc.
- PLANT ANSWERS:** [plantanswers.com](http://plantanswers.com)  
Searchable questions and answers, etc.
- INSECTS IN THE CITY:** [citybugs.tamu.edu](http://citybugs.tamu.edu)  
Landscape and household insects, insect ID information, etc.
- ASK AN ENTOMOLOGIST:** [askanentomologist.tamu.edu](http://askanentomologist.tamu.edu)  
Texas insect ID pictures, ID forms and instructions, etc.
- TEXAS PLANT DISEASE DIAGNOSTIC LAB:** [plantclinic.tamu.edu](http://plantclinic.tamu.edu)  
Submittal forms, instructions and prices
- TEXAS A&M SOIL LAB:** [soiltesting.tamu.edu](http://soiltesting.tamu.edu)  
Submittal forms, instructions and prices
- SMITH COUNTY EXTENSION OFFICE:** [smith.agrilife.org](http://smith.agrilife.org)  
Publications, upcoming events, newsletters, etc.
- LSU AG CENTER:** [lsuagcenter.com/topics/lawn\\_garden](http://lsuagcenter.com/topics/lawn_garden)  
Fact sheets on many lawn and garden topics, etc.
- Google.com:** search the question followed by ".edu"
- MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION:** [extension.missstate.edu](http://extension.missstate.edu)  
Fact sheets and newsletters for fruit, nuts, vegetables, flowers, etc.
- CERTIFIED LIST OF ARBORISTS AND HORTICULTURAL COACHES**





The following are the awards that Smith County Master Gardener Association received at the Texas Master Gardener Search for Excellence Awards Program in the Large Category  
**1<sup>st</sup> Educational Program** – 2019 Library Lecture Series

**1<sup>st</sup> Outstanding Individual** – Steve Farrell  
**2<sup>nd</sup> Outstanding Association**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> Project** – 2019 Home Garden Tour  
**3<sup>rd</sup> Written Education** – 2019 Calendar/Garden Guide  
 Congratulations and a big thanks to everyone who worked on the awards! -*Debby Watkins*

### NEW SCMG SHIRTS

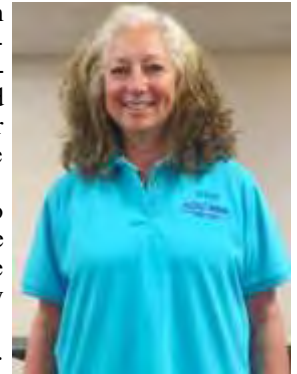
In case you didn't notice (which means you haven't tried to order one!) there was a bit of a snafu with ordering the new shirts. However, that problem has been ironed out and we are back in business. Unfortunately, the manufacturer discontinued the blueberry color for women's shirts but had not notified our vendor; thus, the glitch in ordering on the website. The new shirt will be turquoise and still have men's and women's sizing available. It is a short sleeve polo style with the logo on the upper left side. You will wear your name badge on the upper right side. This is the shirt that will be worn for our events so that we are easily recognizable to the public.

Because Texas Master Gardner Association dictated that all associations must transition to the new logo by April 2021 (there was a two-year grace period) we will need to wear the new shirt for our events. The next event we have planned is the From Bulbs to Blooms Conference and Sale. All members working the day of the Order Pickup are encouraged to wear the new shirts. This will aid the public to easily identify us and make this new process go much smoother.

The order process is simple. Everything is being handled by the vendor. The cost of the shirt is \$25.50. Members are able to order and pay online. You will then be notified when your shirt is available for pick up at EmbroidArt at 2506 University Blvd., Tyler, TX. To order your new SCMG shirt go to <https://companycasuals.com/SCMG>.

Links for ordering can also be found on the right side of VMS home page and on the website under the members only tab.

-*Debby Watkins*



### Next steps for a SCMG Greenhouse



If you recall from the article last month about a greenhouse for SCMG, we decided to work with the City of Tyler and use one of their greenhouse facilities. The City actually has 2 facilities. Both are just south of the IDEA garden in the fenced and gated area of their service yard. They currently use one of their facilities to grow plants for the Rose Garden and City medians. The other facility is being used for storage. This second facility is about 10 – 15 years old and in need of a lot of repairs but we felt it would be an educational opportunity for us by providing hands-on experience to our members as we made improvements to it. When we made suggestions as to what changes we wanted, the City was very agreeable to working with us.

As we began the process of putting together a budget, we needed to decide not only how we would use the facility for educating our members, but what could be grown there, because the facility itself was a bit of a challenge. This greenhouse is a 'gutter connected' structure measuring 50' wide by 60' long with (2) 'curved arched' roof structures. The rim line or side of the facility is about 15' high. The covering that is to be replaced was originally a double layer of polyethylene film. A single fan provides air to help inflate the 2 layers of polyethylene film which also helped to cool the facility more than if just a single layer of film was used. The facility has an overhead irrigation system consisting of 8 zones that could be programmed for any day or time of the week. Cooling inside the facility was managed by cranking up the side panels, allowing natural ventilation to cool the area. Heat came from a single gas-powered heater at the front of the facility. When it was operational and all the parts were working, this facility was fine as a staging area for storing plants that would later be moved to gardens for planting.

Our goals however, were to grow plants suitable for our IDEA

and Shade gardens. That sounds pretty simple and straightforward, right? We began by working with the gardens to identify various annual plants that could be grown from either seed or small transplants, plants that would need only 1 to 2 repotting periods before going to the garden. The benches in the facility would have to be rebuilt in order to set up several areas for seedlings and small transplants. The irrigation system would have to be modified in order to direct water specifically to the growing beds. All these changes were considered as part of our hands-on learning opportunities. Before we could do any of this however, we needed to recover the top of the facility with new 6ml polyethylene film.

A workday was scheduled for August 10<sup>th</sup> to recover the frame. The polyethylene film comes in rolls that measure 36' x 100' and we needed 4 rolls to cover the (2) 25' x 60' sections to have the double layers on each side. We started very early when we were hoping the wind would be low. Even 8 – 10 mph winds could disrupt the job because of the fact that the facility has a 10' metal fence with barbed wire at the top just 5' from one side of it. After a lot of scrambling around, we did manage to get the first sheet of film on the greenhouse. As we tried to secure it however, the wind started gusting. Unfortunately, we just didn't have enough people on the ground to hold it down and we had to stop and pull it off.

Our next step in this process will be to meet as a committee to decide how and when to proceed. This committee is open to **any and all members** with an interest in the operations of a greenhouse. If you have an interest, however much or little, there's a place for you. We're probably looking at a Zoom meeting either early in September or late in October. If interested, please contact me at [TLGerber@suddenlink.net](mailto:TLGerber@suddenlink.net) and I'll get you on the distribution list. Thank you in advance for considering this fun and worthwhile project. -*Terri Gerber*



### From Bulbs to Blooms

Let us not say that the Smith County Master Gardeners don't follow trends. Keeping with the current trend, our annual "From Bulbs to Blooms" sale will be an online only sale this year. Some important dates are:

9/14/20 – Greg's bulb talk video goes live, along with this year's bulb info packet. Links will be on our website and FB page.

9/28/20 – the online sale begins – we ask the SCMGs to NOT shop yet

10/5/20 – SCMGs can begin to shop

10/7/20 – SCMG member pre-ordered bulb pick up 9 – noon at the Cotton Building in the classroom.

10/7/20 - 5 PM online sale closes

10/10/20 – curbside pickup at Harvey Hall

There is a lot of behind-the-scenes work going on right now, which I expect will continue until the day of pickup! The shopping cart for this sale is currently under development. There is a team gathering the necessary information for all the bulbs that will be available for sale. We're still tossing around ideas of how best to handle the curbside pickup. If anyone has ideas or suggestions, please email me. This year the bulb sacking will be done in the Cotton Building, using the rooms behind our main classroom. We'll also be responsible for filling each of the orders received. On Oct. 9<sup>th</sup>, all the filled orders will be moved enmasse to Harvey Hall and arranged for the BIG DAY. Pickup of all the orders will be scheduled from 8 AM until 2 PM on Saturday, 10/10/20. We will be using Signup Genius to organize our volunteers for these tasks. I would like to specifically say that on the BIG DAY, 10/10, absolutely everyone is welcomed and invited to come to Harvey Hall, whether for one shift, both shifts or part of a shift. Even if Signup Genius shows every slot filled (or the slot you're interested in filling), please come on down! The BIG DAY has the greatest potential to make or break the success of the sale! Your participation can help ensure it is a success.

We are currently planning to sell trees and shrubs, books and calendars just as we have in the past. Our silent auction bulb is actually going to be a raffle bulb this year. We will likely sell 3 raffle tickets for \$5. Master Gardeners will be allowed to buy raffle tickets.

Volunteer opportunities through Signup Genius: (you will get a notice via the Weekly Blast when the sign-up is available)

9/30 - Setup area for sacking - 6 volunteers

10/1 & 10/2 - Sacking bulbs – 2 shifts per day, limit 15 people per shift

10/5 – 10/8 - Order processing – 2 shifts per day, limit 15 people per shift

10/9 - move orders to Harvey Hall, arrange everything – orders, signage, ???

10/10 - Curbside pickup at Harvey Hall – greatest potential to make or break the success of the sale

*-Brenda Strong*

### Membership Directory Update

The 2020-2021 version of the Membership Directory has been updated to include any changes which have occurred since the paper booklet was printed earlier this year. You can find the directory online in the Member's section on the SCMG website. The next time you need an address or phone number and you don't have a book handy, look it up on the web.

When you look at the update you may notice that all of the pictures are now in color. Through the magic of Photoshop, the dozen pictures which were B&W, have been converted to color. *-Martin Davis*

### Master Gardner State Director's ZOOM Meeting, Aug. 3, 2020

President Louie McDaniel announced that the ZOOM meetings for our state director meetings may be here for a while. As of today no plans for face to face meetings or for the State Conference in 2021. That is subject to change and will be announced if that happens.

Nominating committee report provided by Shirley Baker, San Jacinto Co.. Due to Corona Virus, it was decided that the current board would serve another year for 2021 with the exception of Treasurer. The treasurer had already served 2 years, so that position had to be filled by someone new. Louie McDaniel, Pres., Robin Collins, 1<sup>st</sup> VP, Elizabeth Castro, 2<sup>nd</sup> VP, Jane Bowman, Secretary and Roger Gloe, Treasurer (new officer).

Awards update: All awards have been assembled and will be mailed out with the approval of the director's meeting vote. There will be an awards program via ZOOM on Thursday, Aug. 20<sup>th</sup> at 10am. Jayla will be sending out that detail and it will be on the website. Louie told the directors that he will personally deliver the awards to those wishing and in person presentation and he would do it with social distancing guideline rules or they can be mailed.

Noted that the state minimum requirements for Master Gardner certifications are 12 volunteer hours and 6 continuing education hours. That has not changed and at this time still seems doable during the pandemic. Counties may have other variations and those are up to the county agents but not to go below the minimum state hours.

Other counties reported what their groups were doing during this difficult time. Smith Co. shared that they are continuing work through social distancing rules in the new Tyler Botanical Garden after having to cancel the celebration with hopes to celebrate in 2021.

Meeting was adjourned at almost 10:30am. *-Belinda Kromer* (attended via ZOOM)

### Jayla Fry Comments



**Howdy Master Gardeners,** We are all doing the best we can to stay in contact with each other and continue service to our communities. To help stay in contact with each other, we have been conducting online Master Gardener Talks. There have been two given to date on Answering Calls and Virtual Plant Sales. Both talks were recorded and can be found on the txmg.org website (scroll down on the home page). We plan to continue to do these talks every two to four weeks. This has been an encouraging way to learn and stay in contact with each other. While we have decided to not decrease the state minimum hour requirement (for now) we do know that being creative for service hours is important. Below are some ideas on how to remain active. As always, get prior approval from your agent for any service project you do. • Assist answering questions via phone or email • Research topics that can be useful for answering questions,

giving presentations, or even something you are interested in that could be used to educate someone else • Write articles for blog posts or news columns • Build PowerPoint presentation and write a script so that anyone can give the presentation • Take pictures to share in your articles, presentations, websites, etc. • Take pictures of plants in your demonstration gardens, at different stages of growth (flowers and vegetables), of harvest time and even how to use the plant (floral design or recipe). • Schedule time to work in demonstration gardens where social distancing and safety requirements can be met. • Prepare for Junior Master Gardener lessons • Video yourself (or get help videoing yourself) giving a presentation or doing a hands-on activity (e.g. propagation or making hypertufa pots) Even if these ideas are not something you have done in the past, give it a try! For example, use smart phone, turn your camera around and video yourself doing something simple. From there use what you learned and build on your experience. In addition, there are many YouTube videos that can help with technical skills. Learn something new and use what you have learned. Also, many of these activities can be done as a group even from home. For instance, several can research a topic and build a presentation together. I would like to encourage you to reach out to your fellow MGs to brainstorm and come up with ways to stay active. Please do not worry about your hours requirement but try your best to stay active. Gardening is of greater interest now and people need our help. How we go about reaching them is different but can still be highly effective. We need your help meeting this need. Thank you, *Jayla Fry*, State Coordinator Texas Master Gardener Program

Online Gardening courses link: <https://agrilifelearn.tamu.edu/catalog?pagename=Plants-and-Garden>

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