

# The Latest Dirt

Official Newsletter of the Jefferson County Master Gardeners



August, 2009

## From The President

By Micah Shanks



Hope everyone has had a great summer. From all accounts, it has been a very good gardening season, and now the rain is finally giving us a break from the heat! We have an enthusiastic new intern class. The mentor program is in place, but all of us need to make them feel welcome and help them in any way we can. (Remember how you felt when you first got started?) Farmer's Market saw another fantastic year. Our market continues to grow as demand grows for fresh, locally grown produce. The rest of the year promises lots of education and fun. We have great speakers lined up, field trips planned, the fall plant sale is scheduled... plenty to keep you interested and busy. Thanks to all of you who shared your stories for this edition. I can always use your contributions. So here's to a Hurricane Free fall so we can spend our time learning instead of cleaning up! See you all soon, and as always, thanks for all you do for the Master Gardener program and for our community!

## Agent's Two Cents

By Micah Meyer



2009 has been the busiest year so far and there are still plenty of things in the works. The Master Gardener Shortcourse filled up early. Normally we are taking applications up to the last minute to get the class full. As I'm writing this, the summer heat has been relentless and I've noticed many landscapes in various stages of decline. However, it's the landscapes with high water usage plants, poorly designed, and poorly maintained that seem to be suffering the most. This is where following Extension recommended landscape practices and selecting hardy plants such as Earthkind roses or Texas Super Stars can make a big impact in your landscapes' ability to survive adverse conditions. Master Gardeners can get certification hours by going to the Aggie Horticulture website <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu> and clicking on the Earth Kind link. Take the Earth Kind Challenge and you can get 3 certification hours.

Meetings are the second Thursday of each month, 7pm in the Extension Office Auditorium

Upcoming Meeting Dates:

August 13—Greg Bostwick

September 10—Mary Turner

October 8—Mary Ellen Rinebold

## Congrats To Our New Master Gardeners

At our July summer picnic, we welcomed 15 new graduates, which is about 62% of the class of '08.



Collectively, they turned in 1308 hours!! Great work! Congratulations to you all!

Annie Amason  
Charlene Baird  
Geri Diaz  
Jo Carol Doyle  
Paul Eyre  
Penny Hickman  
Janice Kimler  
Randy Kimler  
Verna McCollum  
Charisse Miller  
Gloria Morris  
Sandra Price  
Ray Simon  
Donna Thompson  
Crystal Werkheiser



## WELCOME New Interns

Kathy Attaway  
Dr. Bharathi  
Debbie Bradshaw  
Bob Butler  
Mary Cotton  
Jimmie Cox  
Russell DiBenedetto  
Carla Dunlap  
Jeanene Ebeling  
Gayle Gray  
Cecil Hightower  
Gretchen Horn  
Jerry Jobe  
Ed Kasper  
JoAnn Koch

Jane McBride  
Karen McCormick  
LaRee Monk  
Gloria Prince  
Marcia Rienstra  
Joan Sensat  
Donna Shirley  
Elaine Smith  
John Smith  
Jackie Steen  
Kathryn Stelly  
Milton Tilton  
Pam Vickers  
Mary Ellen  
Von Netzer  
Delia Walker

### MISSION STATEMENT

To encourage and support the horticultural community of Southeast Texas through education and example.

### 2008-2009 Board Members

President—Micah Shanks  
Vice President—Gwin Genn  
Secretary—Stellina Reed  
Treasurer—Dorothy Norris  
At Large— Mel Day, Larry Jacobs, Linda LeBlanc

### Newsletter Staff:

Editor: Micah Shanks  
Layout: Peggy Coleman



# Let's Get To Know!

## Florence Wingate

You may never meet a livelier lady than Florence Wingate. Always ready with a kind word and a smile, Florence is a transplant from the Orange County Master Gardener group. Their loss is certainly our gain. Florence was born and raised in Beaumont. She graduated Beaumont High in 1940 and attended Lamar for one year before moving to Orange to work for the Orange Leader. From there she worked in civil service until she was 21, old enough to do what she really wanted to do..join the navy. She says that was the only time she lied to her parents. They were dead-set against her joining the service during the war, so she had to make up a story to get her hands on her birth certificate so she could enlist! She served as an officer's yeoman in Dallas during which time she married Lance Wingate. A picture hangs in her living room of the handsome couple in uniform soon after the wedding. After the war, they moved back to Orange where Lance hired on as Pinehurst ranch manager for Edgar Brown. Florence stayed busy raising children and chickens, and cooking for rounds-ups where often a young Bum Phillips would show up to help. They raised three



daughters, Marie, Nancy and Patsy, and have 2 grandchildren and one great-grandchild on the way. The marriage lasted for 54 years until Lance passed away in 1998. Florence attributes her love of gardening to her German mother who always raised food for her family and flowers for beauty. Florence has always believed in serving her community. A partial list of her activities includes the American Red Cross, Orange Co. Farm Bureau, Salvation Army, Sabine Audubon Society, and ShangriLa. "This has always been a source of great pleasure for me, even though I can't do as much as I used to." She has slowed down a bit, but still remains a member of the Native Plant Society and an alternate to the Beaumont Council of Garden Clubs. She will be 87 years young in August and is a living history of the Golden Triangle and the people who made it what it is today. Do yourself a favor and take some time to talk to Florence. You will be glad you did!



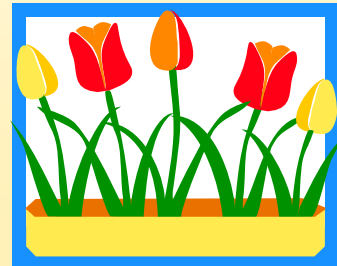
# ANNOUNCEMENTS

*More details on these events will be posted as we get closer to the dates*

Fall Plant Sale—mark your calendar for Saturday, October 24th



Houston Bulb Mart, Friday, October 9th



Lutcher Theater Lecture Series—Saturday, October 17th. Featured speaker is Paul James, HGTV host of "Gardening By The Yard"

*Goodbye*



We reluctantly say farewell to Sarah and Lynn Creel as they move to their

new home in Austin to be closer to their children and grandchildren. Sarah has been a vital member of J.C.M.G. since 2000. She has always been ready to assist this organization

in whatever ways possible. Her beautiful smile and warm, friendly manner

will be missed. We wish them both the best of luck!





**HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU !!!!**



**August:**

Randy Kimler—5  
Pete Tomasello - 6  
Judy Barkley—10  
J.C. Drake - 17  
Beth Hoffpauir - 19  
Ardath "Sonny" Gunn - 23  
Florence Wingate - 25  
Lee Freeland - 27  
Melissa Starr - 27  
Crystal Werkheiser—31

**September**

Karen Sourdellia—4  
Cindy Winney—11  
Peggy Coleman—12  
Pat Tolbert - 13  
Margin Hanlon—21  
Ann Lott—25  
Kathy Day—30  
Charles Hall—30

**October**

Jerry Sourdellia—7 (Hon.)  
Joy Morgan—9  
Ray Simon—10  
Ann White—14  
Annie Amason—20  
Linda Leblanc—23  
Geri Diaz—28  
Bob Collier—31



**In The Kitchen With!**  
**Pat Tolbert**

**Southern Pecan Pie**

1 C. sugar  
1/4 c. butter, melted  
1 C. chopped pecans  
1 unbaked 9 inch pie shell  
1/2 c. clear Karo syrup  
3 eggs, well beaten  
1 tsp. vanilla



Combine sugar, syrup, and melted butter. Add beaten eggs, pecans, and vanilla to syrup mixture. Mix thoroughly. Pour filling into pie shell. Bake in 375 degree oven for 40-45 minutes. Cool and enjoy!

# What I Learned This Summer

We asked the Master Gardeners what they learned this summer—what did well in the heat and what did not, places they visited, etc.



Here are a few of their responses:

**Aletha Kirkwood**—What took the heat? #1 Esperanza? Also cone flowers, pentas, melanpodium. Just spent a month at the End of the Oregon Trail. Easy to see why folks went through such hardships to get there. Worth a trip to see this Willamette Valley area. Horticulture personified.

**Geri Diaz**—I am a very low maintenance planter. If it requires too much effort, it will not live in my yard. One thing I learned about this year is plumbagos. They are a Texas Super Star and I planted 8 of them on the west side of my house. I composted two of them with cow manure I got from Verna's cow lot and they are twice as big as the other 6. I cannot wait to compost the others. I water them really well once a week. They are my heartiest plants. The heat and lack of water do not bother them. I do recommend this plant.

**Verna McCollom**—At the beginning of the summer, I had only one rose bush in my yard. Although I have a lot of other stuff in my yard and I think roses are pretty, I am not a rose person. Anyway, Micah Meyer gave my sister Geri a rose bush that was in the office. It just needed a little care and to be put in the ground. (It was a rose that was similar to the Knock Out Rose). By the time we had gotten out of building to go home, she already decided she didn't want the rose so she gave it to me. She also bought a Peggy Martin rose from the plant sale and decided she didn't want to take of it so she gave that one to me. At the last MG meeting, Leonard won a yellow rose—Grandma's yellow rose. He said he had so many rose bushes in his yard so he gave that one to me. Now I have three new rose bushes in my yard plus the one I already had. They are all just doing great! I guess I'm in the rose bush business now!

**Ann Bares**—The zinnas and ruelleas are about the only heat resistant flowers in my garden, and even they are looking droopy in this July heat. I've learned that if I cut them early in the day, for me that's before noon, and give them a cool water bath before I arrange in a vase, they will perk up and last much longer in the house. Fill your sink according to how many

Continued on page 7



# What I Learned This Summer

Continued from page 6

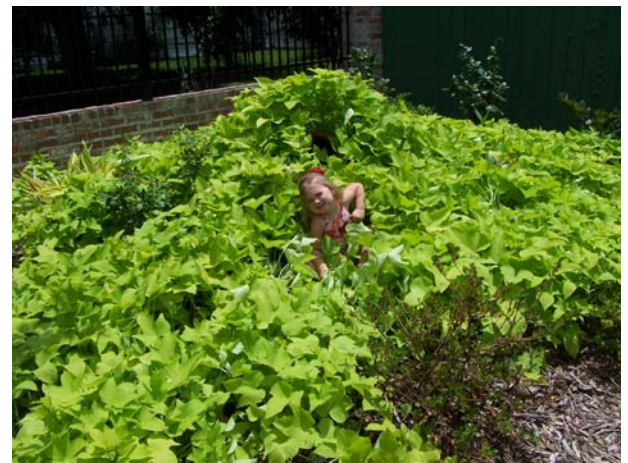
you've cut, and lay them so that they are just under the water. About 5-10 minutes later, shake them gently, take off any leaves that would be under water, and trim a little off the end of the stem. The ruellea buds will open after being cut, so don't throw them out if there are still buds. Bring your garden inside when you can, enjoy, and stay cool!

If the flies and other insects have found your compost bed, and you don't want to add anything else for them to feed on, put your daily veggie and fruit scraps and peels, throw in the blender with a little water, and just pour this around your individual plants, then rake some mulch over it. The plants like a little salad now and then, and the mulch keeps the annoying flies away. Don't forget they like those coffee grounds and tea bags, too!

**Melody Weaver**— I have a habit of thinking "I'll just pull a few weeds, so I won't take the time to get my gloves" but that usually turns into, "oh, there's a few more and on and on...) so by the time I've pulled a "few" weeds, my nails are needing a little attention. I've found that

soaking them in warm water and cornmeal cleans and softens. Then I dab a generous amount of plain old Listerine or generic equivalent mouthwash to your cuticles and nails to help keep the pesky fungus out of the nail beds. The mouthwash is a good prevention. Using it twice a day should clear it up if you already have it.

**Micah Shanks**—If you plant one small unassuming sweet potato vine in the corner of your yard for a little color, after 3 months it will be knocking on your backdoor. Here is proof that it can even overtake a three year old who stands still long enough.



Princess Ayla in the garden

“I only went out for a walk and finally concluded to stay out til sundown, for going out, I found, was really going in.”

John Mier

## Lasagna Gardening

Micah Shanks, J.C.M.G.

If you want a quick easy way to build a garden, try the lasagna method. This no-dig, no-till organic method results in rich soil with very little work. You don't have to remove any existing sod or weeds. In fact, you don't have to work the soil at all. As soon as it cools off enough to work outside (hopefully soon!) just mark off the boundaries of your garden and put down corrugated cardboard or 3-6 layers of newspaper. Wet it down and then alternate layers of greens such as vegetable scraps, spent flower heads and grass clippings with layers of browns such as fall leaves, peat, and pine needles. If you can, try to make the brown layer twice as deep as the green layer. Keep in mind that you can use kitchen scrapes, coffee grounds, tea

bags, shredded junk mail, basically anything you would put in a compost pile. When the layers are finished, add several layers of mulch such as straw, chopped leaves or bark mulch. (If you are going to let your lasagna garden "cook" until spring, any mulch will do. However, take it from one who made this mistake: If you are going to immediately put in transplants, you will have to add lots of nitrogen. The green layers are a food fest for microbes in the soil and they will take all the nitrogen that your plants need. Your plants will turn yellow and wilt very quickly! The more organic material you add, the richer the soil as it decomposes. With a lasagna garden you can expect few weeds, better water retention, less need for fertilizer and soil that is loose, fluffy, and rich in nutrients.





# Surge of Home Vegetable Gardening in 2009

By Paul Eyre, JCMG

Few people are untouched today by economic stress. We're not only confronted with it in the media, but we experience it now in virtually every facet of life. The economic situation today is sobering. It requires us to be very resourceful if we are to meet this challenge successfully and at the same time find satisfaction in doing it well.

How have some created an environment of optimism and adventure, while at the same time stretched their dollars and resources by implementing sound economic principles in the home? With the recession in full swing, many people are returning to their roots – literally – cultivating vegetables in their backyards to squeeze every penny out of their food budget. National surveys have shown double-digit growth in the number of home gardeners this year. People's home grocery budgets have gotten absolutely shredded and local companies saw a dramatic increase in the demand for vegetable seeds and plants, and mail-order companies, this spring, reported such a tremendous demand that some ran out of seeds for basic vegetables such as onions, tomatoes and peppers. Some individuals have dubbed the newly planted tracts "recession gardens" and many hope the interest in the movement is similar to the victory gardens of World War II.

Those gardens, modeled after a White House patch planted by Eleanor Roosevelt in 1943, were intended to inspire self-sufficiency, and at their peak supplied 40 percent of the nation's fresh produce. In a repeat of history, and as show case for healthy living, our first lady, Michelle Obama, personally putting hand to pitch fork in a crowd of school children helped dig up the first White House vegetable garden in more than 50 years.

Michelle Obama invited dozens of 10 and 11-year olds from a state elementary school in a transitional neighborhood of Washington to the White House in March to help her dig up a 1,100 square foot plot of land near her daughters' swing set. The first lady gave interviews joking about how all the members of the first family would be required to weed on occasion. As an update, the school children were invited back to tend the plot and just a couple of weeks ago to bring in the first harvest: 73 lbs of lettuce, 12 lbs of snap peas and one cucumber. Obama and the children then trooped into the White House kitchen to wash lettuce and shell and cook the peas for lunch, which they ate outside on red and white checked tablecloths.

For many of our neighbors and friends, the appeal of backyard gardening isn't in its history – it's in the savings.

Continued on page 10

Continued from page 9

The National Gardening Association estimates that a well-maintained vegetable garden yields a \$500 average return per year. A study by Burpee Seeds claims that \$50 spent on gardening supplies can multiply into \$1,250 worth of produce annually.



“Trees are earth’s endless effort to speak to the listening heaven.”  
R. Tagore

Sometimes our first attempts at vegetable gardening are less than desired. The weeds may grow much better than the vegetables. However, with continued effort, each year our gardens can improve. We learn new techniques and develop skills. Families with children can teach each one to work and take responsibility in planting, maintaining and harvesting our gardens. With effort, people I know have found their gardens are attractive, worthwhile “survival” projects, as the family enjoys and shares the produce. Many preserve the excess for later use. Besides the practical lessons they learned, they found peace and assurance in practicing skills in provident living.





# And now, a break from gardening to reflect on another Southern passion—

## FOOTBALL!



### *A Grits-eye Guide to Football: North vs. South*

#### Women's Accessories

*North:* ChapStick in back pocket and a \$20 bill in the front pocket.

*South:* Louis Vuitton duffel with two lipsticks, waterproof mascara, and a fifth of bourbon; money isn't necessary—that's what dates are for, sugah.

#### Stadium

*North:* College football stadiums hold 20,000 people.

*South:* High school football stadiums hold 20,000 people.

#### Fathers

*North:* Expect their daughters to understand Shakespeare.

*South:* Expect their daughters to understand pass interference.

#### Homecoming Queen

*North:* Also a physics major.

*South:* Also Miss America.

#### Getting Tickets

*North:* Five days before the game you walk into the ticket office on campus.

*South:* Five months before the game you walk into the ticket office on campus and put your name on a waiting list.

#### Getting to the Stadium

*North:* You ask, "Where's the stadium?" When you find it, you walk right in.

*continues...*

*The Grits, Girls Raised In The South, Guide to Life by Deborah Ford with Edie Hand*



*South:* When you're near it, you'll hear it. On game day it becomes the state's third largest city.

#### Parking

*North:* An hour before game time, the university opens the campus for game parking.

*South:* RVs sporting their school flags begin arriving on Wednesday for the weekend festivities. The really faithful arrive on Tuesday.

#### Tailgating

*North:* Raw meat on a grill, beer with lime in it, listening to local radio station with truck tailgate down.

*South:* Thirty-foot custom pig-shaped smoker fires up at dawn.

#### Concessions

*North:* Drinks served in a paper cup, filled to the top with soda.

*South:* Drinks served in a plastic cup, with the home team's mascot on it, filled less than halfway with soda, to ensure enough room for bourbon.

#### When National Anthem Is Played

*North:* Stands are less than half-full, and less than half the people stand up.

*South:* A hundred thousand fans, all standing, sing along in perfect four-part harmony.

#### After the Game

*North:* The stadium is empty way before the game ends.

*South:* Another rack of ribs on the smoker. While somebody goes to the nearest package store for more bourbon, planning begins for next week's game.



# Scientific Classification of Vegetables - Why Should I Care?

By Paul Eyre, JCMG

Vegetables belong to botanical plant families, which are known by Latin names. Why is it important to know a vegetable's botanical, or Latin name?

You can grow prized vegetables without ever knowing their Latin names, but it does help to know something about vegetable families for quite practical reasons.

Each vegetable family tends to have its own cultural requirements. Knowing these requirements is a prerequisite for getting the plants to grow.

Each vegetable family has its own flowering structure and hence the way it is pollinated. This is important if a gardener wants to save seeds and ensure productivity.

Each vegetable family tends to attract certain pests and diseases. Crop rotation by family on a multiyear basis can help prevent the build up of large populations of harmful elements.

Also, the family names crop up quite frequently in garden literature. So when someone mentions say, the Brassicaceae family (Cole crops), you will know what they are talking about.

Plants are classified using a system devised by Charles (Carolus) Linnaeus in the 1770s. His father was both an avid botanist and a Lutheran pastor. Linnaeus' family encouraged him from an early age to follow in his father's footsteps and pursue a career in religion, but he had no interest in becoming a preacher. He was so taken with his father's hobby that he chose to make it his life's work.



Linnaeus' studies led him to the conclusion that the scientific investigation of nature was being hampered by the lack of a consistent classification of the natural world.

Linnaeus classified more than 4,000 animals and almost 8,000 plants. His system for naming, ranking, and classifying organisms by kingdom, class, order, genus, and species is still used today and taught in every high school biology class.

Linnaeus' ideas about classification have influenced generations of biologists and other natural scientists both during and after his own lifetime.

Prior to Linnaeus, the taxonomy of the natural world was in disarray with complex names for even the commonest of species, and multiple criteria for classifying them.

Continued on page 13





Continued from page 12

Some were ecological, based on the idea that organisms that existed in the same habitat must be related to one another.

Linnaeus believed that there should be a regular, systematic way of identifying what something is by comparing it to something else. Linnaeus' genius and the simplicity and logic of his system made natural history accessible to everyone.

The groupings were based on the similarity of physical characteristics. He used Latin names because Latin was the universal language of learning, familiar to all educated Europeans.

A highly religious man, although arguably not a humble one, Linnaeus believed that he had been put on earth to classify nature according to the order that God had originally intended. He took as his motto "Deus creavit, Linnaeus disposuit" (God created, Linnaeus organized).

The number of plant families of value to a vegetable gardener are relatively few.

Most of the vegetables planted in our region belong to ten distinct families.

It is important to know that the pea or legume family, **Leguminosae** or **Fabaceae**, includes peas and beans of all kinds.

Beets, chard and spinach belong to the goosefoot family, **Chenopodiaceae** or **Amaranthaceae**.

The mustard family, **Brassicaceae** or **Cruciferae**, has many members: cabbage, collards, Brussels sprouts, kale, cauliflower, broccoli, kohlrabi, rutabaga, turnip, cress, horse-radish, and radish.

Carrot, parsley, celery, and parsnip all belong to the parsley family, **Umbelliferae**.

The nightshade family, **Solanaceae**, encompasses potato, tomato, eggplant, and pepper.

The gourd family, **Cucurbitaceae**, claims the vine crops: summer squash, winter squash, pumpkin, watermelon, cantaloupe, and cucumber.

Chicory, endive, salsify, dandelion, lettuce, Jerusalem artichoke, and globe artichoke are all included in the composite family, **Compositae**.

The Lily family, **Liliaceae** or **Alliaceae**, includes onion, garlic, leek, and chives.

Sweet corn is a member of the grass family, **Gramineae** or **Poaceae**.

And last, but not least, is okra which is claimed by the mallow family, **Malvaceae**.

# The Latest Dirt

Official Newsletter of the Jefferson County Master Gardeners

August, 2009

"The Latest Dirt" is the official newsletter of the Jefferson County Master Gardeners. It will be published in February, May, August, and November. Members will receive color copies via e-mail. It will also be posted on our website at <http://jefferson-tx.tamu.edu>. Click on newsletters. Black and white copies will be available at the monthly meetings and at the office. Input is greatly appreciated. Call Micah Shanks at 409-982-7227 or e-mail your suggestions to [micahshanks@gt.rr.com](mailto:micahshanks@gt.rr.com).

Jefferson County Master Gardeners  
1225 Pearl Street, Suite 200  
Beaumont, TX 77701



Programs conducted by the Texas AgriLife Extension Service serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, disability or national origin.

The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture and the County Commissioners' Courts of Texas