

The Latest Dirt



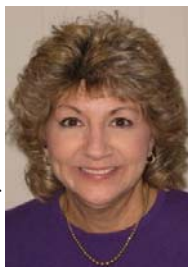
Official Newsletter of the Jefferson County Master Gardeners

May 2011

From The President

By Melody Weaver

Our Spring Market Day went off without a hitch. My heartfelt thanks goes out to all of you who participated in making this annual event so pleasurable. We were able to reward ourselves the following Wednesday afternoon with a nice links & drinks social gathering.



Our annual picnic is coming up soon and now is a good time to check your hours for certifications. We've added a few more "official" workdays for your convenience but gardening is a 24/7 event and the garden is always open.

Looking forward, the groundbreaking for the much needed new irrigation system & greenhouse should take off soon. The new greenhouse will give us plenty of room for propagating and seeding our own plants for years to come.

Hope to see you in the garden,

 *Melody*

Agent's Two Cents

By Micah Meyer

I have lived in Southeast Texas for 5 years now and it always seems like we have a new bug or disease that is entering our landscapes. We have had raspberry crazy ants, Florida broad mites, pink hibiscus mealy bugs, chili thrips, various citrus diseases, cactus moths, and now bedbugs are making a comeback. Bedbugs are very hard to control in the home due to how thoroughly you must treat. Beds frames, mattresses, base boards, laundry, and other furniture must be thoroughly inspected and treated to get them under control. Its generally recommended that people use a pest control company to treat infestations. Bill Clark Pest Control and the AgriLife Extension office will be hosting a free lecture about bed bugs on May 25th from 3-5 pm in the Jury Impaneling Room. Dr. Roger Gold will be the speaker. This seminar is especially important for people that own or manage rental property, travel frequently, live in apartments or dorm rooms.



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

Upcoming Meeting Dates:

May 12-

June ? - Picnic

July 14

GREAT JOB!

Congratulations to everyone who made 2011 Spring Market Day a huge success! Preliminary figures show an estimated profit of \$4000. Special thanks to Melody Weaver and Kathryn Stelly for organizing the event. It went smoother than ever before. We had about 630 customers throughout the morning and the plants were wiped out in no time! All the Master Gardeners who participated in set-up and/or sale day are much appreciated.



MISSION STATEMENT

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

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Editor: Micah Shanks

Layout: Peggy Coleman





ANNOUNCEMENTS

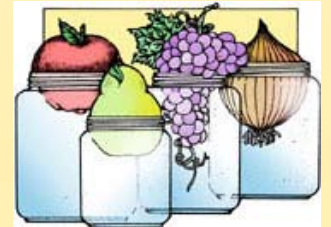
Master Gardener Course

This year, the MG Course will be on Wednesday afternoons only, from 1–6pm, August 10th through October 26th. The cost will be \$160 this year and all participants will be screened. The application can be found on our website, or call the office and we will be glad to mail it out. Be sure to tell your friends!



Canning Class March 1

Food Preservation and Storage Seminar



A seminar entitled “Pantry Expansion for Uncertain Times” will be held on May 7th from 9am until 3pm in the AgriLife Extension auditorium. Seating is limited and the seminar is filling up fast, so call for your reservations today, 835-8461. There is no cost to attend.

Hurricane Preparedness Seminar

May 3rd, 6:30 pm–9pm in the Texas AgriLife Auditorium. Free to attend and open to the public. Please RSVP by May 1st, 835-8461. Topics will include flood maps, flood insurance pets/livestock and County updates.

Are You Prepared?



HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU !!!!

May

Lisa Rodriquez - 3
Alice Schwing-Smith - 4
Tony Lucenti - 7
Jeanene Eberling - 9
Janice Kimler - 12
Ann Bares - 14
Larry Jacobs - 16
Norma Clubb - 25

June:

Dorothy Norris - 4
Toni Clark - 17
Jerry Jobe - 18
Verna McCollum - 21

July:

Jane McBride - 1
Glenda Johnson - 2
Penny Hickman - 14
Janis Prestridge - 16
Hortense Price - 30



In The Kitchen With: Kathy Scruggs

Chipolte Pepper Hummus

2 - 15.5 ounce cans Garbanzo Beans
Juice of 1 small Lemon
2 (or more) canned Chipolte Peppers
in Adobo Sauce
1 1/2 teaspoons Cumin
2 tablespoons dried Cilantro or
1/4 cup fresh

1/4 cup Tahini
2 tablespoons Olive Oil
2 tablespoons of the Adobo Sauce
3 large cloves Garlic
1 - 7 ounce jar of roasted Red Bell Pepper
1 teaspoon Kosher Salt
1/2 teaspoon Black Pepper

Drain the beans saving 1/4 cup of the liquid. I rinse the heck out of them to remove the husk because my husband doesn't like the texture.

Blend all ingredients until smooth in a food processor. Use the reserved bean liquid to thin as needed. This is best if made ahead. Serve with pita chips or fresh vegetables.

When to Prune What Pt. 2 By Cecil Hightower, JCMG

Knowing when to prune is very important to the overall health and appearance of your plants. I discussed this in a previous segment with respect to flowering trees, shrubs and roses, however, this is just as important when considering the larger specimens in your landscape.

Deciduous shade trees, such as oak and ash, should be pruned in Winter when they are dormant and when it is easiest to see the tree's branching structure. Some trees, like maples, birch, elm and dogwood produce a heavy sap flow when pruned in winter and as a result are referred to as "bleeders".

This sap flow, though unsightly, doesn't harm the tree.

If pruning is needed for deciduous fruit trees such as apples, peaches, pears and plums, mid winter is also the time for this to be done. Even though this will remove some flower buds, the goal in pruning fruit trees is to open up the tree to allow for more light and air flow which will produce a better crop rather than maximum blooms.

Dormant pruning of pears is especially important because pruning wounds during growing season can lead to fire blight, a bacterial disease. Disease shears in rubbing alcohol or a solution of one part bleach to nine parts water.

Most broadleaf evergreens need little pruning, but, if your holly or magnolia needs it, the best time is early Spring, just before putting on their growth spurt.

Trees and shrubs with needlelike foliage such as spruce, juniper, arbor vitae, fir and yew are best pruned early in the growing season. True pines are treated differently and should be pruned only when

they form buds at the branch tips called the "candle stage" before the stem becomes woody. Prune only a portion of the new growth, removing up to half of the "candle."

Pruning should not be done on a whim or when it fits your schedule but when it is most conducive to the viability of the plant. This is of utmost importance when dealing with production

plants such as berries and grapes, for timely pruning can mean the difference between poor yield and a bumper crop.

In bush berries, such as the blueberry, the most productive portions of the bushes are stems that are three years old or less. To maintain a constant supply of productive wood, prune out about a third of the oldest stems on these shrubs each winter; cut the oldest stems off at ground level.

Blackberries and raspberries grow on long stems called canes. On most types, the cane doesn't fruit until it's second year of growth. After bearing, that cane dies but new first year canes develop at the same time and will bear fruit the next year.



When to Prune What Pt. 2 continued

Since the two year old canes won't produce fruit again, remove them as soon as they finish bearing as they may spread disease. If you pinch back the tips of the first year canes when they reach 3 - 4 feet it will cause branching, thereby increasing production.

With grapes, extensive yearly pruning is required because they grow vigorously and pruning keeps them productive.

Most training systems for grapes involve developing a main stem or trunk with several lateral stems or arms. Grapes produce fruit on the lateral shoots from the current season's woody growth.

Prune all grapes close to the lateral arms each year during the dormant season to produce the best fruit. The degree of pruning depends on the variety of grape; the more vigorous varieties require heavier pruning than the weaker growers.



"Give fools their gold and knaves their power,
Let fortune's bubbles rise and fall.
Who sows a field or trains a flower
Or plants a tree, is more than all."
Whittier



My Search for the Baobab Tree By Gary Tucker, JCMG Intern



Just as many others, I have a "bucket list" of things I want to do before I kick the bucket. Mine isn't too unusual. It includes the usual suspects such as viewing the great pyramids (not yet), as well as the Great Wall of China (did that), and the list goes on. Probably the most unusual thing on my list is to see a baobab tree (*Adansonia digitata*). The baobab tree is also known as the upside down tree because many believe it looks like a tree turned upside down with the roots on top. Recently, I spent two weeks in South Africa and was thrilled to get to see one in its natural habitat. The viewing took place at the Cape Town Botanical Gardens (Kirstenbosch Gardens). I was thrilled. I also learned many things about the Baobab tree that I never knew. According to the website, *EZineArticles.com*, the Baobab tree provides abundant resources in addition to providing food for tall animals such as elephants and, of course, giraffes. The Baobab is also called the "tree of life" as it can store water during the drought season. Bushmen use hollow pieces of grass like a straw to suck the water out. Recent scientific evidence indicates the Baobab fruit has three times the Vitamin C of an orange,

and as much calcium as a glass of milk. The citric and tartaric acids found in the pulp are the base ingredient for cream of tartar. Homeopathic medicine uses the bark to lower fevers. Also, chewing a leaf can provide you with energy and the tartar can help calm an upset stomach. The bark of the baobab is used to make ropes and even clothing. As you can tell, virtually no part of the tree goes to waste. I learned many other things visiting four of the eight national botanical gardens in South Africa. For example, the bird of paradise, society garlic, *Gerbera daisy*, and *agapanthas* (Lily of the Nile) are all natives of South Africa. But for this traveler, seeing the baobab tree in its natural habitat in Africa tops the list.



Butterflies Love Herbs

By Melissa Starr, JCMG

Have you ever wanted to have butterflies visit your gardens? If you plant nectar sources that they like and host plants that their caterpillars like to eat, they will come. Herbs fit all of these qualifications and more.

Butterflies prefer shallow flowers better than deep, tubular flowers. Their straw-like tongues, called proboscises, are shorter than a moth's tongue, so they cannot get nectar from deep, tubular flowers. Likewise, they taste nectar with their feet. When they taste the sweet nectar they are looking for, they will drink it up. Purple coneflowers (Echinacea), chamomile, calendula, basil, thyme, oregano, pineapple sage, yarrow, and others all fit this profile.

Butterflies need herbs to help raise their offspring. When the female lays her eggs, she will lay them on species specific plants. For example, the black swallowtail lays her eggs on dill, parsley, and fennel. The painted lady lays her eggs on curry, thistles, hollyhock, and mallow. The gulf fritillary lays her eggs on the passion vine, and the monarch will lay her eggs on milkweed. If you want to attract these butterflies, plant some herbs for you and some for the butterflies. Please don't kill the caterpillars. The butterflies will thank you.

Butterflies also need warmth, shelter, and water. Plant your herbs and flowers in a spot that gets at least six hours of sunlight. This will allow the butterflies to have a warm place to land and fly around. Large rocks placed throughout the garden

will also allow butterflies to have a place to stay warm. A wind break, such as a row of trees or shrubs, will give them a place to go where they are protected from the weather. Furthermore, leaves and bark on the ground will provide extra shelter. To provide a water source, you can fill a dish or a birdbath with wet sand and place a rock in the center to give them a place to stand. In my vegetable garden, however, the butterflies just land in the dirt and start drinking the minerals.

The best herbs to plant for butterflies include: bee balm (flowers in summer), calendula (flowers in spring), chamomile (flowers in spring), lavender (does not grow well here), thyme, purple coneflower, basil (when flowering), dill, sages (flowering types), milkweeds, and yarrows. You can also plant other flowers

amongst your herbs to attract butterflies. These include: butterfly bush, passion vine (Maypop is the best), zinnias, pentas, and many, many others.



Daisies

By Micah Shanks, JCMG

One of my favorite flowers is the daisy and any daisy will do. From Shasta to gerbera to marquerite to gloriosa, I love them all. How many of us have practiced the Victorian custom of questioning true love while plucking the petals from a daisy and reciting "he loves me, he loves me not"? Daisies were among the flowers grown in ancient Egyptian temple gardens and were cultivated for their medicinal properties. Continuing throughout the middle ages, the daisy was valued for its healing powers. In fact, the name daisy is derived from the anglo saxon word for "days eye" and was used to cure eye problems. King Henry VIII was known to eat daisies to relieve stomach ulcer pain as well as pain from gout. Today most daisies are considered ornamental flowers and there are several choices



for the home gardener. The brightly crayola-colored gerbera daisy is native to South Africa and was discovered by Robert Jamieson in 1878. The sturdy stems can grow to a more than a foot



and are wonderful in cut arrangements. The gloriosa daisy is bright yellow with a brown center. Developed in the 1950's, they are native to North America and are descendents of the black-eyed susan. They are great in

the back border of a sunny garden and are a favorite with hummingbirds,



bees, and butterflies. Then there is the beautiful Shasta daisy. This flower was created by American horticulturist Luther Burbank who was inspired by the wild oxeye daisies from New England. After several years of breeding hundreds of new plants on his California property, he introduced a mixed selection of Shasta daisy hybrids in 1901. Shastas are pure white with a yellow center. There are over 100 varieties to choose from including Alaska, white breeze and the frilly double-bloom crazy daisy. Daisies can be started easily from seed or transplants. Plant them in a sunny, well drained location and watch them multiply year after year as they reward you with generous snow white blooms.





Bamboo Bloom

by Michael Cate, JCMG

For many people, the idea of a dense jungle of bamboo dying sounds like a good thing. However, this is a sad event for gardeners who purposefully groom and nurture these plants, some of which have not bloomed since the 1890s. The loss of these aged friends represents a major change to their landscapes that often are literally designed around the bamboo as a focal point, privacy screen or even food. Scientists can only guess how bamboo knows when to bloom. This king of all grasses includes hundreds of species, each with its rarely occurring cycle of bloom and death.

In 2010, a fellow bamboo enthusiast wrote that his California bamboo was in blossom and noted that species has begun to bloom a few years earlier in China, then New Zealand and now in the US. The process of blooming typically creates a unique stress for a stand of bamboo and within a year or two, it dies entirely in that region of the world. Now, clump bamboo of the same species is blooming in Port Neches. I know its end is near. Fortunately, I have two other species that are unlikely to bloom this year.

Regeneration from seed is a slow process but obviously, in nature, has been successful for millennia. Because seed renewal and bloom cycles are so far between, almost all bamboo is propagated, shared or sold by root divisions.

As a member of the grass family, bamboo comes in many sizes. Some only grow a few inches tall while others are skyscrapers! Mature timber bamboos slowly gather energy in massive root systems capable of pushing new culms (canes) skyward each spring. Many species grow more than a foot a day from mid May until July. New culms of a mature timber bamboo may only be a massive shaft with no leaves until it reaches mature height. Tropical bamboos tend to grow in clumps rather than with runners like bamboo in colder climates. Individual culms typically produce short branches with leaves within the first year which lengthen the second while the culm shaft thickens and strengthens to a steel-like quality. Individual culms begin to die the third year but their rigidity forms a framework to support tender new culms which grow so quickly, they can be broken easily by wind. Bamboo gardeners typically harvest third year culms but leave two year old culms to help support the current year growth.

Bamboo is one of the strongest natural fibers in the world. It is a renewable resource used for flooring, clothing, utensils, construction, food and many other purposes benefitting millions of people globally. Commercial bamboo forests are just beginning to catch on in the U.S. Because bamboo renews its biomass every three years compared to 20 or more years for the fastest growing pine, new technologies are eyeing bamboo as the fiber of the future.

Our Yards



Dianne Duperier



Dianne Duperier



Micah Shanks



Geri Diaz



Micah Shanks



Sherry Broussard



Sherry Broussard



Sherry Broussard



Sherry Broussard



Sherry Broussard



Verna McCollom



Verna McCollom



Verna McCollom

Our Yards



Beth Lazenby



Cecil Hightower



Cecil Hightower



Beth Lazenby



Beth Lazenby



Bonnie Edwards



Bonnie Edwards



Bonnie Edwards



Margie Hanlon



Margie Hanlon



Margie Hanlon



Margie Hanlon



Margie Hanlon



Margie Hanlon

Native Plants

By Micah Shanks, JCMG

One of the best things a gardener can do is become familiar with native plants. How many times have you brought home a beautiful plant from another area or purchased something thru a catalog that you couldn't wait to add to your landscape only to see it struggle and die in record time. That's because there are certain plants for certain areas. Here in zone 9, we are blessed with hundreds of hardy plant choices that are not only beautiful, but also require little to no maintenance. Many of these native plants are a food source for birds and butterflies which will be attracted to the wildlife haven you have built. For instance, gulf fritillary butterflies

will only lay eggs on passionvine, while swallow-tails seek out fennel. When the butterflies hatch, they will look for nectar sources such as Mexican heather, joe pye weed, pentas, and salvia. Other good nectar sources are purple coneflower, rudbeckia, and butterfly bush. All are considered Texas natives. If you want to attract monarchs, plant milkweed. If you want buckeyes, be sure to have snapdragons on hand. Be advised that hungry caterpillars will strip your plants, so make sure you are ok with that before planting food sources. Many flowering vines are native to Texas including coral vine, coral honeysuckle, passionvine, and



crossvine. We can also choose from a very long list of perennials that are no fuss and come back year after year.



Texas star hibiscus is a good choice along with firecracker plant, ox-eye daisy, lantana, salvias of all

kinds, turks cap and coreopsis. Wildflowers can be grown in our area and varieties include gaillardia, spider lily, primroses, winecup and that all time favorite, the texas bluebonnet. Many

books and online articles are available about native plants. You can also call Texas Agrilife Extension for help in



planning a Texas native wildlife habitat in your own backyard.



Take The High Road By Cecil Hightower, JCMG

Contouring the ground to create a catch basin in your yard is an easy and inexpensive way to raise the relative height of your pathways without adding stepping stones, pouring a sidewalk or even adding fill dirt.

Because our terrain is very low and flat, any heavy rain or wet spell can create standing water in our yards. Unfortunately, walkways seem to be the last to dry because our traffic has compacted the ground just enough to create a low spot in an otherwise flat area. By adding a catch basin in the back of my yard, I no longer have to wait a day or more to walk around my yard after any substantial rain event. I used a tiller to break up an area of sod about 8 by 12 feet. I also tilled a line to the nearest roof gutter and excavated a line across my busiest pathway. Then, I shoveled out a trench about 8 inches deep and 8 feet wide in which I laid an 8ft section of 6" diameter plastic pipe. It's important you allow plenty of width to any walkway culvert to avoid turning an ankle or causing a fall. Part of the culvert will fill in with soil and that's okay. The width of a 6" pipe will provide adequate drainage to remove water flowing off your roof in a matter of minutes.

At the far end of the culvert, I contoured the ground by removing about eight inches of soil and feathering the sides to the natural grade of the yard. Part of the soil was used to build

up my walkway about an inch. Key to the success of this effort is to make sure your culvert is low enough that you have at least an inch or more of soil over the highest line of your pipe. Otherwise, the hottest part of summer will cook the grass where the soil is thinnest over the pipe. I used a portion of the excavated soil to smooth other rough places in the yard and some was used to build up a raised bed elsewhere. After removing about a half cubic yard of soil, I tilled the area once more adding peat moss to lighten the native gumbo and raked the area to create a gentle slope that can be easily mowed or walked over. To finish the catch basin, I raked in a half pound of grass seed and sprinkled a half inch of peat on top. The next two weeks, I gave the area a few minutes of moisture with a garden hose each morning. Now I have almost instant access to my yard even after a soaking rain. Water from the gutter runs under my grass covered walkway which is less than two inches higher than the original grade. The catch basin allows the excess water to seep slowly into the ground within a day or two. In the past three years, I've only had one lingering wet period long enough to drown out the grass in the basin so I sat pots of flowers over the denuded area to brighten it until spring. I feel the occasional loss of grass in a designated low area is far better than a muddy walkway.

The Latest Dirt

Official Newsletter of the Jefferson County Master Gardeners

May 2011

“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 409-749-0083 or e-mail your suggestions to mshanks52@gmail.com.

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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