

May 2014

Volume 6, Issue 2



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Meetings are the second Thursday of each month, 6pm in the Extension Office Auditorium

Upcoming Meeting Dates:

May 8 - "Test Garden-Then and Now"

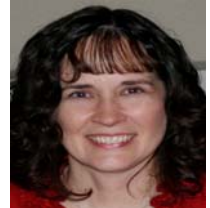
June 12 — TBA

July 12 (Saturday) - Intern Picnic and Graduation at Tyrrell Park

August - No meeting

Editor's Note

Melissa Starr, JCMG



Spring is here, and as I walk past the herbs in my garden, I can't help but smile as I breathe in the wonderful, strong fragrance of rosemary, lemon balm, and oregano. Herbs have wonderful fragrances and are delicious, but did you know that many also have medicinal properties?

Many of the herbs you eat can also help keep you healthy. Sage and rosemary are said to strengthen memory, while peppermint relieves tension headaches. Take some bay leaves, rosemary, plantain (a weed that grows in your yard), and some mugwort (a lesser known herb); tie them in some cheesecloth or a sachet; and put them in your bath water to help relieve joint pain. Dill will strengthen fingernails if you

make a tea (infusion) and soak them in it.

Several herbs, such as comfrey, calendula, chamomile, sage, and tea tree, aid in healing cuts. If you want to get a good night's sleep, put dried catnip, chamomile (do not use if you are allergic to ragweed), lavender, lemon balm, rose petals, rosemary, and sweet marjoram in a cotton muslin bag, tie it tight with yarn, tuck it inside your pillow, and let the fragrance lull you into a great night's sleep. Check with your doctor if you plan to take any medicinal herb. Some herbs will thin the blood, and others, such as chamomile, can cause those with asthma to have breathing problems.

Editor's Note, continued

If you are unsure how you will get these herbs, try growing them at home. Most herbs love to grow in full sun and rich, well-drained soil. Make sure they get at least an inch of water each week, and pinch off what you want to use so that they grow fuller and healthier. Herbs are not like vegetables, they love to be pruned and “pinched.”

Now that we have warmer weather, you can plant most of your herbs in the garden. Parsley, calendula, chamomile, and dill love cool spring weather. Lemon balm, rosemary, oregano, comfrey, sage, catnip, and mint like the cool spring and warm summer temperatures. Basil, however, should only be planted when temperatures at night are guaranteed to stay above 50 degrees.

As you enjoy the warmer spring weather, why not try planting some herbs? They are more than just seasoning for spaghetti sauce; they can also help you stay well.



Bee Balm



Comfrey

President's Message

Tony Lucenti



Winter is behind us, and we all are in our gardens trying to determine what is alive and hoping some of our cherished plants made it through the freeze. In February, a great group of Master Gardeners teamed with the Campbell Forestry Group to give away about 10,000 trees at the garden. We brought in a second load of trees, and a number of people come back later in the day to pick them up. There was a great turnout for the vegetable seminar with one of our own Master Gardeners, Paul Eyre, and guest speaker, Patty Leander, who writes for the Texas Gardener Magazine. We received some great comments on this seminar. We also sponsored the February organic seminar at the Giving Field.

At our garden Jimbo Butaud, Ron Hogue and Herbert Bass built us a fabulous shade structure which has already come in handy. It protected some of our plants that we propagated and purchased for the spring plant sale.

The spring plant sale is complete and it was a GREAT success! Thanks to Phyllis and Stellina, the event's chair and co-chair, for their organizational and plant buying skills. A special thanks to Jane McBride and Ann Abshier for great publicity in getting the

word out. Also, thanks to the great Master Gardener team that put in countless hours in getting the plants propagated and ready for the setup, sale day and the take down.

We are heading into the summer months, and the garden is getting cleaned up after the hard winter. The rose bushes, blackberries and muscadine vines have been pruned, and the vegetables are planted. Now we can watch them grow and enjoy the production.

We have a lot of work and projects in the garden this summer. We need to put fans in the greenhouse so we can have the proper circulation for our plants. A heater needs to be installed for next winter. We may need to install another breaker panel and run two new circuits to the greenhouse. We are going to move one of our beds so we can open up the garden to have a better flow through the garden. The area in front of the patio needs to be raised, so we can eliminate some of the mud. Put your work gloves on and get ready for some work. We are going to need a team effort to get this done. If you see a project you would like to take on, please let Cecil or me know.

Tony Lucenti, JCMG President

Intern of the Year
HERBERT BASS
Melissa Starr, JCMG

Master Gardener, Herbert Bass, has been gardening “all his life.” He grew up on the river in Port Neches where he helped his parents raise daylilies and tomatoes. He vividly remembers digging up daylilies with his mother every fall, putting a mixture of sand and cottonseed meal in the holes and replanting the daylilies. Every year the daylily bed expanded like a flower in the spring sun. Furthermore, he assisted his mother in spreading quilts on the ground under their fig tree. He would then shake the tree and watch the quilts catch mounds of delicious figs. Gardening is a part of his heritage.



As an intern, Herbert was mentored by Donna Thompson. When he first met her at the garden, he wasn't sure if she was intimidated or pleased that she would be his mentor. Herbert has spent countless hours at the test garden doing heavy lifting and other garden chores. He never turns down a chance to help a fellow Master Gardener and takes pleasure in the sweat and tears that it takes to cultivate a garden.

Herbert also has an insatiable appetite for learning. He took the Master Gardener course because he wanted to learn about horticulture, but he didn't stop there. He experimented this year while raising cabbage. He added seaweed as a mulch around his cabbage plants and harvested a 14.5 lb. cabbage! If that is not enough, he is always looking to learn more from other Master Gardeners and would also like to study grafting.

Herbert is also a family man. He raised five children, three girls and two boys. His daughter paid a visit to the test garden the other day because when she wanted to find him, she knew exactly where to look.

We are proud to have Herbert Bass as our 2013 Intern of the Year!

Photos from the Master Gardeners' Yards



Verna McCallum



Verna McCallum



Verna McCallum



Sharon LaBove



Karen Sourdellia



Karen Sourdellia



Melissa Starr



Melissa Starr

Spring Weeds

Melissa Starr, JCMG



Spring weather has finally arrived! Migratory birds are floating on the breezy south winds, while butterflies and bees hum amongst fragrant orange and blackberry blossoms. Vegetables are planted in the garden in hopes of a bountiful harvest, and tiny weed seeds start pushing through the soft soil after each spring rain. What do you do when you can't keep up with the weeds that threaten to choke out your beautiful lawn and garden?

- The best weed fighting strategy is prevention. Many weeds are brought into our lawns and gardens through contaminated topsoil or sod. Check sod to make sure it does not have any visible weeds, and check for nutgrass "nuts" before bringing topsoil into your yard. Also ask your friends and neighbors about their experiences. Many can tell you if they have gotten weedy topsoil or garden soil and where it came from.

The first sure way to get rid of weeds is to pull them by hand. It is tough on the back and knees, but it gets the job done. However, when you work full time, it is not always the best method. After a hard day's work, the last thing you want to do is get down on your hands and knees and pull weeds out of your lawn or garden.

To control weeds in your garden, choose plants that grow well in our area and prepare the soil well by adding organic

matter that will loosen the soil and provide nitrogen for your plants. If your plants grow rapidly enough, they will eventually shade the weeds that are trying to sprout. If you also add a two to three inch layer of mulch on top of the soil in your garden, the weeds will have an even more difficult time sprouting. The few weeds that do make it to the surface will be easier to pull. If all else fails, teach your children to use a hoe.

In your lawn, weeds can also be a problem. You can pull them by hand, but regular mowing is a better strategy. As you mow, well managed St. Augustine grass will grow thicker and choke out the weeds.

I try to avoid herbicides as much as possible, but sometimes it is the only way to get rid of pesky weeds.

When shopping for the right herbicide, make sure you get one that controls the type of weed you need to kill. Some herbicides kill either broadleaf or grassy weeds, but not both. If you are using an herbicide in your vegetable garden, make sure the label says that it is safe to use around vegetables. You don't want to kill any of your vegetables or feed chemicals to your family. If you are applying an herbicide to your lawn, make sure it is safe to use on St. Augustine or whichever turf grass you have.

Spring is a wonderful time of year; it is the perfect time to grow grass, flowers, vegetables, and WEEDS.

Azaleas

Micah Shanks, JCMG



Unless you have been living in a cave, you have seen the spectacular azalea show going on in Southeast Texas. Everywhere you look, there are breathtaking displays of these evergreen shrubs that quietly work as foundation plantings until spring when they explode with color! Azaleas are plants that shouldn't grow in our conditions, but they don't know that so they grow anyway.

If you want to add some to your landscape, you have plenty of choices. From color to size to bloom time, there is a variety for every need. Azaleas begin to bloom in mid-March and last through May depending on the variety. If you want continuous bloom, check the bloom time and plant several varieties.

The most common variety is Formosa. It is a reddish purple that blooms mid-season and can grow up to 8' tall and 6' wide. Clusters of blossoms can spread 6-8 inches across. If you prefer a white, consider Delaware Valley White which grows 6'x6', or Girard's Pleasant White which is a dwarf, only growing as big as 24"x18". That's inches, folks. Make sure it goes in the front of the border.

There are deep reds such as Hershey Red, Hino Crimson, and Sherwood Red. If pink is your color, choose Christina's Pink with ruffled blooms, Renee Michelle which is a lovely dwarf variety

in deep pink with light red spots, or Pink Pearl, a very strong pink with lighter center.

Coral Bells is a peach color with smaller flower clusters and a compact mounding growth habit getting as big as 4'x3'.

Encore is a popular family of azaleas that bloom twice- once in the spring and again in the summer. Several colors and sizes are available in the Encore group.

For best results, plant azaleas in filtered light. They thrive in acid, well-drained soil. Keep in mind that azaleas have a shallow root system, so they will dry out quickly. You will need to add supplemental water, especially in times of drought. I use soaker hoses and drip irrigation. Both systems save time and work on your part. Maintaining a 3-4 inch layer of organic mulch around the plants will conserve moisture and cut down on weeds. Fertilize established plants with a slow release fertilizer. Start feeding after blooming in the spring. Continue through the summer and stop in the fall. Always follow label instructions.

Prune your azaleas only in the first few weeks after they finish blooming. If you wait too long, you will cut off next year's bloom set.

I have heard people say they would not plant azaleas because they only bloom for such a short time. In my opinion, that "short time" is so worth it!

Try A Clematis *Jane McBride, JCMG*



When it comes to vines, I've had my share of learning experiences. Flowering vines are a beautiful addition to a garden, but care should be given to choosing the right one for your needs.

When we moved into our 100-plus-year-old home about 30 years ago, the yard was rich with established plants. The first spring, we found the back fence line covered with wisteria. By year five, we were constantly fighting to keep it under control. It went up trees, across the yard and started new vines with wild abandon. We also had an abundance of star jasmine that was beautiful and fragrant when in full bloom, but equally invasive.

When LOML (Love of my Life) Joel built us some new, small arbors, I planted moon vine (which was spectacular) and a Peggy Martin rose, which has done well. Last year, I added clematis, settling on two colors - a vivid purple and a pastel lavender.

I planted them and watched them grow, until my weed-whacker-happy hubby, who doesn't know a vine from a weed, cut them down. Over and over. I temporarily gave up, but I have plans to plant some on a new arbor he's talking about building. This time, I'll have them so carefully planted, staked, and marked he can't possibly think they are weeds.

Here are some guidelines for growing clematis, taken from the American Clematis Society (clematis.org)

Light: at least 5 to 6 hours of sun (pastel varieties will not fade as badly if given some afternoon shade)

Site: Critical to long-lived clematis. Dig a hole 24 x 24 and fill with quality topsoil that has been amended if needed. Cut the container to avoid damaging the plant. Sink the base of the plants' stems 3" to 5" below soil level. Keep the stake in place the first year to give support.

Mulch: 3" to 4" of soil amendments or peat moss over root zone. Keep mulch 8" away from the stem to avoid stem rot.

Feed: Clematis are heavy feeders. When spring buds reach 2" long, feed with Gro-Power Flower 'n' Bloom. Alternate feedings every 4 to 6 weeks with Gro-Power All Purpose Plus. Use 2 tablespoons per plant every feeding until the end of September.

Water: Water regularly, thoroughly and deeply during hot summer months. Don't keep too wet, especially in dormant winter months.

Support: They will climb on an arbor, a trellis, other shrubs, a fence, or other structures.

Disease: Susceptible to stem rot or wilt, but it's not usually fatal. Cut off all diseased parts and discard in trash bag. Don't forget to disinfect clippers after use. The ACS recommends Physan 20.

Tending A Secret Garden

Ann Bares, JCMG



Walking through the yard this week (I hesitate to call it a garden at this point); I was almost overwhelmed by the amount of work ahead. I was reminded of the story of the "Secret Garden" where behind the crumbling walls, the neglected garden is in ruins, to be restored only by the love and care of the children who discover it.

For reasons too many to mention, my garden has been on its own for quite a while. There were many unusual plants that showed up, and surprisingly were interesting, but not permanent through any choice of their own. The task of removing them involved digging out and cutting down the larger ones while some groups that declared squatters rights by showing up in sun and shade alike, were allowed to live and prosper.

When I mentioned hiring someone to come and do the work I wasn't able to handle this year, a man with a rake and shovel appeared and begin to clear things out! He looked familiar, but with the yard tools as a disguise, it took a while to realize it was my spouse of 57 years, who in two days had cleared and cleaned 90' of the back border. Yellow plastic tags were tied on the "real" plants not to be removed, and in a few days, old

favorites like daylilies, mint, coneflowers, oxalis, and buttercups got their spring-start, appearing everywhere.

With advice from my nursery-owner friend, I cut back Fred, my 10 foot *Duranta* that has lived for 10 years by the back door, almost to the ground. The faithful plant never had experienced any trauma from the weather, but now seemed to have no life at all. After removing all the shredded leaves I'd banked up 18 inches around his base, I discovered shoots and bright green leaves. When the sun reached them they grew a few inches a day and are now about 2 feet tall.

With no help at all, the roses are more abundant than expected, the oregano didn't acknowledge the cold, and all the rock-rose shrubs are taking over the beds, covered with buds.

In our Southeast Texas climate, which can change in the blink of an eye, it seems our gardens have acclimated themselves in some measure to take whatever Mother Nature sends us. When my cottage garden was new, I filled it with blue daze, zonal geraniums, coneflowers, daisies, and a rose or two. Some years later I added herbs, parsley and fragrant rosemary. Thanks to Her generosity, some of the gifts she surprised me with are still here. The best gift of all has been learning to be patient, allowing the garden to teach me what it needs and not to expect everything to be perfect. Especially me.

2014 Spring Plant Sale *Stellina Reed, JCMG*

Phyllis and I, on behalf of the Spring Plant Sale Committee, would like to thank everyone who volunteered their time and their “know-how” to make this the most successful plant sale ever. Jane and Ann A. (a/k/a Madame Butterfly) did an outstanding job promoting the sale. Additionally, Jerry had yard signs posted in all the public areas of high traffic. If I have my numbers right, according to Clarence and Lee, close to 1600 people came out to browse and buy. The layout for the vendors’ booths, MG’s booths and sales floor area allowed for better flow of traffic and more space devoted for plants as the Plant Sale Committee wanted to promote ‘Back Yard Gardening’ by selling more vegetables, herbs and fruit. So many vegetables (varieties and types) and herbs had been planted by the Garden Team (Diane, Donna, Cecil, Pat, Berta, Melissa, Judy, and many others) that at first we thought we had too many, but to our delight, every plant was sold. The community seemed very interested in buying plants that not only beautify the yard, but also provide food for the table and support the health of their families.



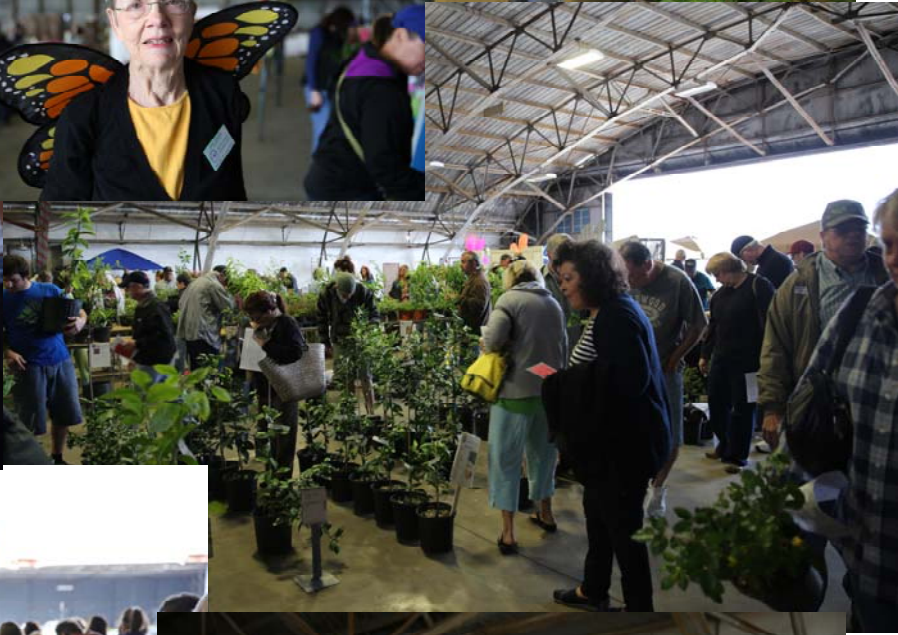
With so many people attending this year, the holding area and cart service volunteers (Tony, James, Ron, Randy, Herbert, Ellis, Bill, Bill & Gene, and Amanda, Lisa, Donna, Sandy & Melody) were doing double duty and moving customers just as fast as possible. Despite the lack of a sufficient

amount of carts, plants and customers were rolling out in record numbers. Dorothy’s team of ticket writers/counters (Kay, Beth, Hazel, Linda, Mary, Charisse, Lou, Dania and Darlene) and cashiers (Ann, Sarah, Donna, Cindy, Glenda & Patsy) were also working furiously to shorten the long line of customers needing to check out. It was truly amazing to watch so many people walk out with purchases. Bulb Ladies, Verna and Penny, quickly sold their supply of bulbs so they went to help in other areas

2014 Spring Plant Sale - continued

where an extra hand was desperately needed. Bonnie, our citrus expert, patiently responded to inquiries from customers as they came to buy trees which as usual sold out before noon. The Three "Js", Jeanene, Janis and Jerry, working the MG Booth answered questions, encouraged interest in the upcoming short course and gave out post cards promoting the fall plant sale. The keepers of the General Store, M & M Pittman and M & M Stringer, sold many charming handmade bags and very nicely packaged baskets that were certain to be well received gifts. Ann's Children's Booth attracted several children who delighted in creating art work while their mom or dad shopped nearby. Snacks, coffee, cold drinks and of course the aroma of deliciously grilled links by Paul and Larry attracted many shoppers to the Food Booth. Alina, Berta, Martha and Margie stayed quite busy serving hungry and thirsty customers wanting to eat and rest a few minutes in the courtyard. "Security Guards", Linda and Hortense, maintained vigilance of the airport property and kept vehicle traffic at the back gate moving according to airport rules. Thanks to Dan for the port-o-potties; for many

of you, they could not have arrived soon enough!! Having photos and specific information relating to each plant helped patrons make good decisions about the right plant for the right area, and Holly did a stupendous job putting that information together. Conductor Dave, with Ed's help, set up his "electric train in the garden" exhibit which attracted loyal enthusiasts and kept children mesmerized. Our plant sales are just not complete without the attraction of Sharon's Front Porch. Showcasing plants in imaginative repurposed yard decorations helped to sell many of our flowering plants. In close proximity to the Front Porch was the beautiful handmade log cabin quilt that was raffled by Norma for our charitable cause that is sure to be a treasure for the holder of the winning ticket. Ann B. had a good number of vendors with a nice variety of garden related articles to sell, greatly enhancing the appeal of the plant sale. Many of you contributed in more ways than I can account for, and likewise there are many of you working behind the scenes that I may not have acknowledged. Without you, the success of this plant sale would not have been possible. Thank you one and all.



Make A Late Spring To Do List

Tim Schreck, JCMG



Well, after what I thought was going to be a really wet spring I think we are drying out, maybe too much. Both of my gardens are in and doing well. If you do not have your vegetable garden in yet you still have time to salvage the growing season. If you want to plant seeds, you are pretty limited to only beans and okra this late in the season. If you want to drop by the local nursery, you can still get selection of tomatoes, squash, herbs, and other assorted vegetables that will produce this season if you get them in the ground quickly.

It is said you should never leave a garden uncovered. If you are not going to do anything with your vegetable garden this year, I would recommend planting a cover crop such as millet, buckwheat, or annual rye grass in the next couple weeks. These should do fine even planting this late in spring. All are great at suppressing weeds and also add a substantial amount of biomass above and below ground. Just remember to cut them down before they start to seed. If you are not that ambitious, then I would cover the garden with a couple inches of leaves and in the fall you will be ready to plant.

Other items you might want to address before the heat of the summer includes maintenance on trees and shrubs. As the spring is heating up you might see

sprouts popping up around the base of especially young trees and shrubs. The suckers drain much needed nutrients from the main trunk. Within the next few weeks cut them down as close the ground as you can. Cut them with clean cutters and do not tear them away. You want to minimize the damage to the roots by making a small cut that will heal quickly. Look at the trees carefully and note any diseased or odd looking areas and watch carefully over the next few weeks. If you suspect disease, stop the spread by nipping those branches off back to good material. If you have not already mulched, do so now. Trees and shrubs do not grow well with swings in dry ground and wet ground. Mulch helps regulate the moisture around the roots. If you have a good supply of mulch, spread it out a couple inches from the base of the tree to the drip line.

How many of you - at the first sign that you could get the shovel in the ground - ran to the shed, grabbed it and started digging. Did you throw it back in the shed caked in dirt since you had to get the plants in the ground ASAP? I bet you did the same with the tiller. Take some time and address cleaning these items. You will be glad you did in the fall or next spring.

The Latest Dirt

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service
1225 Pearl Street, Suite 200
Beaumont, TX 77701

Phone: 409-835-8461

Fax: 409-839-2310

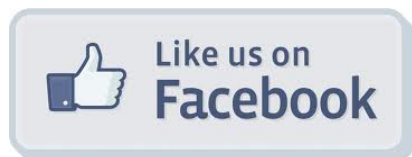
Hotline: 409-835-8742



We're On The Web:

<http://txmg.org/jcmg/>

<http://jefferson.agrilife.org>



MISSION STATEMENT

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

2014 Officers

President—Tony Lucenti

Vice President—Toni Clark

Secretary—Melissa Starr

Treasurer—Dorothy Norris

At Large— Cecil Hightower, Stellina Reed,
Phyllis Smith

Past President—Jackie Steen

Announcements

2014 Master Gardener Shortcourse

July 14 - 25, 2014
835-8461 or 727-2191,
Ext. 8461

Veteran's Memorial Workday

May 17, 2014 8am - Noon
Hwy 87 near Rainbow Bridge
in Port Arthur

Intern Picnic and Graduation

July 12, 2014
Tyrrell Park Garden Center

Arbor Gate

May 10, 2014 10a -3pm
Art In The Garden
Felder Rushing,
Houston Llew

42nd Annual Fruit and Vegetable Show

June 14, 2014 9am - Noon
Judging begins at Noon
Central Mall, Port Arthur

Fall Plant Sale

October 18, 2014
at the Test Garden