

The Green Thumb

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A Quarterly Horticulture Newsletter for
The Nacogdoches County Master Gardeners & Other Horticulture Enthusiasts
Summer 2008



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Chad's Chatter

Well I hope everyone's garden is growing well. I want to express my deepest appreciation for everyone's hard work to make the Blueberry Festival booth a huge success. People were very excited to find blueberry plants at this year's festival. Crispin and I are working on programs for the fall on various Horticulture topics. Remember our Lunch N Learn on the second Thursday. These programs have been well received. Have a good summer.

Chad Gulley

County Extension Agent—Ag/NR

From the President

The watering program at the demo garden has gotten off to a good start. Thanks to everyone who helped at the Blueberry Festival. The first Monday meetings are going well. The Nacogdoches County Master Gardeners are doing many things and doing them well. Everyone keep up the good work.

Gerry Peacock

Master Gardener President

Blueberry Festival Report

Here is the synopsis on the Blueberry Festival. It was a perfect day, rain notwithstanding. The blueberry bushes were fabulous, all of the help was outstanding, and the patrons were delighted. We could not have had a more successful day if we had tried. Everyone did a marvelous job. The booth was great, Lynn's display boards were beautiful and informative, the plants were outstanding. If you did not make there, you really missed a great time. Both of the agents were Berry, Berry happy. Hope we can be as successful next year. Many, many thanks to all who helped. I personally had a wonderful time and will see you guys in the next booth. Thanks

JoAnn Carter

Booth Coordinator

Agent's Advice

Have you noticed unusual webbing on the trunks of your oak trees? Could it be bark lice??? The following is excerpted from the July 6th issue of The Daily Sentinel, written by Crispin Skinner.

Bark lice are harmless insects less than 1/8 – inches long and other than their size, they bear no resemblance to lice. The species typically found in Texas is brown in color and is a beneficial insect.

The small, soft bodied insects live together beneath protective layers of silken webbing used to deter predators while the lice feed. They resemble aphids. The silken webbing usually appears in July/August and can completely cover the trunk and large branches of a tree almost overnight. The webbing is often associated with long periods of high humidity.

Why are these little bugs called 'beneficial'? Living on the rough bark of hardwoods like oak and pecan trees, these scavengers perform a valuable function as they consume excess accumulations of fungi, algae, dead bark and other materials that occur on tree trunks and large limbs – in effect they function as 'bark maids', cleaning the bark of unwanted inhabitants. Bark lice do not eat leaves or bark, nor do they damage the tree by boring into the bark. Although they are unsightly, they are harmless and short-lived.

So, don't worry if your oak trees or other rough barked trees are looking like 'silk stockings', it is a harmless feature and will disappear in the fall.

Crispin Skinner

County Extension Agent



Master Gardener Plant Sale

Kudos to Tom and Dorothy Shone and all the Master Gardeners who contributed to the overwhelming success of the May Plant Sale. From propagating plants, to hauling plants and setting up, to working the sale and, of course, the clean up, everyone was integral to the success. Proceeds from this year's sale exceeded all expectations.

Special thanks go to Dawn Stover and the Friends of the Arboretum for passing along the left-overs from their outstanding spring sale to our sale. (Isn't cooperation a wonderful thing?) And thanks also to Sarah Marble, Susie Shaw, Dean Seiser, Lori Darvin Hawpert and the University Mall for all of their support and donations to the sale.

Pot Posse

Yep, pardner! Even though we just finished the 2008 version of the MG Plant Sale, it's time now to start preparing for 2009. And one of the first things we need to do is amass another inventory of plastic pots. So, if you have a stash or know of a stash or want to find a stash, then be on the look out for any source of pots. Dr. Carroll Gregory will gladly store any pots you acquire. He says the 1 gallon size are in high demand.

Lunch'N'Learn

Summer Lunch'N'Learn programs offer a cool respite from the heat of the day. The next program is **July 10th** and features **Mike Spencer**, who will discuss water elements in the home garden. This will be followed on **August 14th** by local photographer and historian **Campbell Cox**, who will bring a visit to 'old Nacogdoches'. And the **September 11th** meeting will be presented by **Gregory Lide**, speaking on Irrigation and Landscaping.

A special thanks go to our Ag Agents, Chad and Crispin, for firing up the grills/cookers and keeping all those who join us fed. And thanks to all of the Master Gardeners for bringing desserts and side dishes to complement the main courses. Remember, all those hours spent in the kitchen getting your dish ready count toward your volunteer hours.

Now, don't forget, if you have any suggestions for programs for the 2009 Lunch'N'Learn series, please send them along to Penny or Gay.

Penny Horne and Gay Thompson

Lunch'N'Learn Coordinators

The Demonstration Garden

How is our garden growing? In this summer time heat and reduced rainfall season, the garden grows best if it is tended and watered on a regular basis.

This is where all the Master Gardeners can pitch in and help at their own pace. The master schedule for watering the garden is posted at the Agri Life Extension office. Please be sure to sign up to help with the watering. New hoses and other necessary implements to make the chore easier along with tips for watering success can also be found at the offices.

In addition to all of the hard work and time the Master Gardeners are putting in to creating this garden, a number of local businesses have contributed also. Eventually the garden will have an area acknowledging all of the contributors, but, until we get to that point, here is a partial listing of those businesses and individuals who have helped us get started.

Thank You Very Much
to

Bailey Bark Materials -
Nacogdoches, TX
Trees USA – Doug Arnold,
owner- Lindale, TX
Briggate Farms, LLC – Rusk, TX
Dr. David Creech – SFASU –
Nacogdoches, TX
The Pines Garden Club –
Nacogdoches, TX
The Four Seasons Garden Club
– Nacogdoches, TX
Vital Signs – Nacogdoches, TX

If you happen to do business or cross paths with any of these folks, please mention their gifts and thank them for supporting our efforts.

Horticulture Happenings

Ever wonder what other Master Gardener groups are up to? Here's a look at what's on the summer calendar for some of the other clubs in Texas.

New Braunfels: Comal Master Gardeners are hosting the Malcolm Beck Seminar, July 12 at 10:00 a.m., at the Texas AgriLife Extension Service - Comal County office.

Amarillo: The Amarillo Area Master Gardeners will present a Vegetable Gardening Class from 10 a.m. until noon, Saturday, July 12, at the Potter County AgriLife Extension Office, 3301 E. 10th (Tri-State Fairgrounds), Amarillo.

Austin: The Travis County Master Gardener Association in partnership with the Travis County AgriLife Extension will sponsor "What is Wrong with this Plant?" and a "Plant Clinic" from 10 a.m. until noon, Saturday, July 12, at the Zilker Botanical Garden, 2220 Barton Springs Road, Austin.

Schertz: Guadalupe County Master Gardeners will hold their next Master Gardener training class from August 6 to December 3. Speakers include Malcolm Beck, Flo Oxley from the LBJ Wildflower Center, Bob Webster, Patty Leander and more.

Austin: Travis County Master Gardeners Association, a volunteer arm of the Texas A&M and Travis County AgriLife Extension Service, will present "Using Water Wisely," 10 a.m. until noon, Saturday, September 6, at the West Rural Community Center, 8656 Hwy. 71 W, Build. A, Austin, TX.

Houston: The Harris County Master Gardeners at Precinct 2 are accepting applications for Master Gardener Certification Training Classes. Classes beginning September 16 and continuing through October 28.

Austin: The Travis County Master Gardeners Association, a volunteer arm of the Travis County AgriLife Extension Service, will present Vegetables for Cooler Times, 7:00 p.m. until 9:00 p.m., Wednesday, September 17, Zilker Botanical Garden, 2220 Barton Springs Road, Austin.

Rockport: The Aransas/San Patricio Master Gardener Association will hold a "Fall Plant Sale" Saturday, September 27, from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m. at Green Acres, 611 East Mimosa Street at Pearl Street, Rockport.

Bryan: The Brazos County Master Gardener Association will hold a Fall Plant Sale at the Brazos County Extension Office, 2619 Highway 21 West, Bryan from 9 a.m. until noon on Saturday, September 27.

For details about any of these classes or sales, please refer to www.texasgardener.com/newsletters.



Did you Know??????

Old water from an aquarium is rich in oxygen and nutrients that are good for most houseplants.

Witches allegedly used to rub an ointment made from the deadly nightshade, thorn apple, henbane and monkshood plants to prepare for their gatherings. In modern time, these plants are considered too toxic for lay use but are the sources of several important drugs used to combat illnesses ranging from asthma to Parkinson's disease.

Somewhat sedate plants can be as strong as any commercial chemical. The leaves of wood sorrel make good natural bleach. Boil and allow it to steep for several hours, then reboil and use. Oxalic acid in this common woodland plant is the active working ingredient. Juice from its leaves will remove rust spots from linen or cotton garments.

There are many common signs that a plant may be over stressed but not necessarily under nourished. A wilting plant most likely needs water, while limp or curling leaves may indicate pests or disease. But the plant that is producing only leaves may be the victim of over fertilization.



Special Interests

This issue's special interest column is taken from a recent issue of *Texas Gardener's Seeds*, a weekly email newsletter, and features backyard water saving tips.

Efficient watering and common sense saves the precious resource of water. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), nationwide, landscape irrigation is estimated to account for almost one-third of all residential water use, totaling more than 7 billion gallons per day. Irrigation experts estimate that up to 50 percent of water used for landscape irrigation may be lost due to over-watering, evaporation, or bad irrigation system design/maintenance.

Here are several things you can do to conserve water right in your own backyard:

- Know and follow the watering restrictions in your community.

- Install drip irrigation systems around your shrubs, hanging baskets, and flower and vegetable gardens. Delivering water right to the plant roots is the most efficient way to conserve. Drip irrigation uses up to 50 percent less water than conventional sprinklers.

- Install a home irrigation system. Watering efficiently, and only when your plants and lawn need it, can save a great deal of water.

- If you already have a home irrigation system, make sure you're getting the most out of your timer. New technologies make it easier than

ever to program and monitor your watering needs. Consider upgrading your timer and check with your local water agency to identify systems that offer water-saving technology.

Automatic, programmable timers save more water than mechanical models.

- Make sure your irrigation system has a rain sensor that shuts off the watering program when it rains.
- Think longer, less frequent run times. Deep watering, less often promotes good root growth.

- Know your soil type. Different types of soil have different watering needs.

- Raise the blade on your lawn mower. Closely-cut grass requires more water.

- Don't fertilize during hot, dry weather. Applying fertilizer can enhance drought problems. When you do feed your lawn and garden, use a slow release fertilizer.

- Make sure you're watering early in the morning to reduce evaporation. (Before 6:00 a.m. local time is best if your city regulations allow.)

- Recycle your grass clippings back into your lawn by using a mulching mower. You will not only conserve water, but save time while mowing.

- Choose drought tolerant plants for your landscaping. Picking plants that are native to your climate can reduce watering needs.

- Put a layer of mulch around your plants to retain moisture. A generous amount of 3 to 5 inches is best.

- If you use a hose and portable sprinkler, purchase a hose end timer to regulate your water use.

- Sweep your sidewalks and driveway rather than hosing them down.

- When you're washing your car, turn the hose off between rinses.

From the Editor

Did you know that there are 'specialist certifications' available to Master Gardeners? Following on the heels of the above information about water conservation, here is the opportunity to become an expert in Rain Water Harvesting.

The Texas AgriLife Extension Service is offering two opportunities to complete a course as a "Rainwater Harvesting Specialist" on July 16 – 18 in Kaufman, TX and again on September 11-12 in Conroe, TX. Registration information about either of these classes can be obtained at www.rainwaterharvesting.tamu.edu/traininggardener.html

The purpose of this multi-day, fee-based course is to provide advanced training whereby Master Gardeners can obtain specialization in rainwater harvesting that supports or expands designated educational programs of the Texas AgriLife Extension Service. Upon completion of the required classroom and volunteer hours, a Master Gardener will be formally recognized at the annual Texas Master Gardener Conference and awarded a Master Gardener "Rainwater Harvesting Specialist" certificate and patch.

Eligible participants must be current certified Master Gardeners or employees of Texas AgriLife Extension Service. The course includes at least 15 hours of classroom/field training. And certification is dependent on completion of an additional 12 hours of volunteer service.

Master Gardeners who complete this course are charged with the responsibility to increase awareness and provide training in rainwater harvesting to others in their community and are expected to serve in this role for a minimum of 1 year.

Opportunities for volunteer service include leading or assisting in

training other Master Gardeners; conducting community youth and/or adult rainwater harvesting educational programs; increasing clientele knowledge about rainwater harvesting through: presentations, workshops and mass media efforts (i.e. radio, newspaper, television, newsletters).

In addition to the class room hours, students can reinforce their knowledge by using the printed educational rainwater harvesting manual, examining the electronic resource CD (publications, presentations, news releases etc.), visiting the Rainwater Harvesting Taskforce Web site, and by having direct access to Texas AgriLife Extension Service County Extension Agents.

Earlier 2008 offerings as Master Gardener Specialists included Propagation Specialist and Junior Master Gardener Specialist. In addition to the Rainwater Harvesting Specialist, a course in Entomology Specialist will be offered in September. Do let me know if any of the Nacogdoches County Master Gardeners are up to the task of becoming a MG Specialist.

And, as always, to keep up with the latest in the Texas Master Gardener world, try either MG website at www.texasmastergardeners.com or www.mastergardeners.tamu.edu .

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