



**Aransas/San Patricio
Master Gardener Association**

March 2009

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Website:
<http://aransas-tx.tamu.edu>

**Seeking Serious
Plant Lovers**

Texas Master Gardeners are a team of volunteer horticulture educators who are under the auspices of:



Green Acres is our award winning demonstration garden located at 611 E. Mimosa, Rockport, Texas. The gardens showcase plants and landscape schemes suitable for the Coastal Bend. For help with plant problems, or for class information, please call (361) 790-0103, or email aransas-tx@tamu.edu

Editors

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Seminar March 10, 6:00—9:00 pm

*In Our Coastal Gardens -
Creating Habitat with Native and Adapted Plants*
By Ernie Edmundson
Old Rockport School - 619 N. Live Oak

March Brown Bag

Tuesday, March 17 Noon-1:00 pm
Growing and Using Culinary Herbs in South Texas
by Linda Collins, Master Gardener
Aransas County Library, 701 E. Mimosa, Rockport

Garden Day & Landscape Committee Meeting



Spring Plant Sale

March 14
9 am—1 pm
Green Acres

**MG Meeting &
Awards**

6 pm March 3
Beachfront Pavilion
at Rockport Beach
Bring a side dish or
dessert for Mexican
pot luck dinner.

Happy Birthday !

Patty Bidwell, 4th
Ronell Burke, 22nd
Brenda Hutchins, 24th

**Green Acres
Garden Days**

March 6th and 18th
8 - 11 am Green Acres

In Area Newspapers this month watch for...

Bluebonnet Tales - Elayne Arne
Native Plants that are Herbs - Linda T. Collins
Tussock Moth & Oak Leaf Roller - Elayne Arne

February Volunteer
Hours are due by Sat.
Feb. 28th!

Educational programs of Texas AgriLife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, sex, disability, religion, age, or national origin. Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating.

Our Mission: *Improving the lives of people, businesses, and communities across Texas and beyond through high-quality, relevant education.*

From Our Writers

Tussock Moth and Oak Leaf Roller

By Elayne Arne, Master Gardener

March and early April are an interesting time for our lovely live oaks. Their canopies thin as they push old leaves off while gaining new leaves almost simultaneously. Around the time of that cycle, about mid March to early April, you may see the live oak trees literally dripping with visitors – Tussock Moth caterpillars and Oak Leaf Roller caterpillars descending on silken strands.

The first of these hungry little crawlers is the Tussock Moth caterpillar. There are several species, but they all have in common the long and unique brush like tufts growing from both ends as well as a line of hairs (whitish on some, tan on others) on the back and can grow to 1 ¼ “ in length. If you remove Tussock moth caterpillars manually, do so with caution as the caterpillar may sting or cause a rash if handled.



Tussock Moth



White Marked Tussock
moth caterpillar

Orgyia leucostigma

Tussock moths spend the winter in the egg stage, hatching from April to June and develop to adults over a period of 30 to 40 days. Then they start the cycle all over again so there are 3 generations per year

Another springtime guests is the oak leaf roller caterpillar, *Archips semifrana*, and an associated species, *Sparganothis pettitana*. These are small moths that lay their eggs on buds or twigs where they will develop through several stages (instars) of larva for about ten months.

About mid March they emerge as caterpillars and begin to feed on new spring growth. In large numbers

these caterpillars are capable of defoliating oaks and other trees. Trees that heavily infested can be defoliated by mid to late April when they stop feeding. They are harmless to people.

When they have had their fill of lush new growth and reach maturity, the larva become the creepy caterpillars that suspend from trees on silken strands after which they form their pupa on twig tips, in bark crevices or even in weeds. The adult moths begin to emerge from the pupa about the first of May and the cycle starts all over again.

The oak leaf roller, *Archips semifrana*, is a small moth about 1/2 inch long. The basic color is brown mottled with dark brown markings. *Sparganothis pettitana* (no common name) is lemon yellow and varies from 1/2 to 3/4 inch in length.

The good news about these 3 caterpillars is they seem to come in cycles. One year there may be a heavy outbreak while the next there are very few. Unfortunately there is no way to predict how bad it may be in any given year.

One choice is to do nothing. The caterpillars are more of a nuisance to people than they are a threat to the trees. The caterpillars don't stay in the caterpillar stage for long (about 2 weeks) and sometimes flocks of birds are attracted to them and solve your problem. Once they get to the adult moth stage you will not notice them. They will form cocoons until next generation. Some people just cover the pool and forget about it for a few weeks until nature takes its course.

In uncommon occurrences, the caterpillars can completely defoliate trees. This defoliation will not kill a healthy tree and leaves will be replaced in a few weeks. If you cannot tolerate them because there are too many of them or there are so many that they are causing damage, a homeowner could treat them with *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt). Bt is sold under a lot of brand names.



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As with any chewing insect, timing is everything. Younger caterpillars are easier to control and it is best to treat when they first emerge and are still feeding. If you have large trees, professional services have equipment to reach the treetops. Always inquire about what spray is being used and any safeguards required for you and your pets. Some people find that professional spraying only once every three years or so is adequate and results in tolerably reduced populations. Because the caterpillars can have several populations a year, there is no way to prevent these outbreaks forever nor should you be concerned about trying to achieve that goal.

Remember that chemical controls and Bt are indiscriminant killers of caterpillars and will kill the desirable ones too, like butterfly caterpillars. The loss of the caterpillars as food can and does ripple to affect frog and lizard populations and other species in the food chain for a time after spraying until the populations can recover and reestablish.

Master Gardeners in Action

**Composting Sessions
February 7 & 14**



Steve Vaughan puts finishing touches on the Discover Room



Richard Snyder presents the Audit Committee's report.

FIFTH ANNUAL ROCKPORT HERB FESTIVAL

Saturday, April 4, 2009 from 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Rockport-Fulton High School Commons, 1801 Omohundro

Shopping Galore!

- Plant Sale sponsored by The Herb Society of America -Pioneer Unit
- “Thyme Well Spent” Gift Shop
- Herbal Forum Book Store

Featured Presentations by:

Deni Bown
Susan Belsinger
Tina Marie Wilcox
Saundra Winokur

Garden Buffet Luncheon

Featuring Mediterranean herbs
The Blessing of the Garden
with Music and Words

Around the State

Seminar on ‘Bulbs you don’t have to Dig Up’ held at Botanical Gardens & Nature Center March 14

There are many easy bulb plants which grow successfully in South Texas that you actually can leave in the ground year-round! Master Gardener John Gilbreath, who specializes in daylily and amaryllis gardens, will tell you which bulb plants you don’t have to dig up for the winter, and share hints about their long-term care, at a seminar from 10 to noon, Saturday, March 14. Gilbreath will discuss Narcissi, Crocuses, Spider Lilies, Crinum, Hurricane Lilies, Iris, Gladiolas, Rain Lilies and more. Class fee is \$6, \$3.50 members, and includes Gardens & Nature Center admission. Bulb-related door prizes will be given at end of the class. For reservations, call 361-852-2100.

Hot New Plants & Perennial Favorites Seminar at Gardens & Nature Center March 21

Want more flash in your landscape? At this seminar from 10 a.m. to noon, Saturday, March 21, landscape designer Kathy Hubner, Gill’s Landscape Nursery, will discuss both tried-and-true favorite perennials, and the newest plants on the market—for color and curb appeal. Class fees are \$6, \$3.50 members, and includes Gardens & Nature Center admission. For reservations, call 361/852-2100.

Botanical Gardens, San Patricio Water District, Master Gardeners introduce new Rainwater Harvesting Workshop - March 28

Held from 9:30 to 3:30 pm, Saturday, March 28, this water resource conservation workshop also is sponsored by the *San Patricio Municipal Water District* and *Nueces Master Gardeners*. A lecture in the Visitors Center begins the day, followed by students constructing their own take-home rainwater harvesting barrels in the Rose Pavilion. Workshop fee is \$20 per student, which includes Botanical Gardens admission. Class maximum is 20. To register, call Texas AgriLife Extension Service, 361-767-5217.

Orchid Novice Class Meets at Gardens & Nature Center April 2

Meeting at 7 pm the first Thursday of each month on a continuing basis, the orchid class series—taught by Orchid Curator Sam Jones—covers varieties, culture, care, climate, and acquisition. Jones’ book, *Orchid Culture for the Novice*, as well as a selection of orchids, may be purchased at the class. No reservations necessary. For more information, call 361/854-7624.

‘Orchids with Sam’ Seminar at Gardens & Nature Center April 11

Sam Jones, well-known South Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center Orchid Curator, says “you too can grow orchids!” Learn the basics of orchid culture made simple by Sam from 10-noon, Saturday, April 11, in the Visitors Center, 8545 S. Staples. Seminar fee is \$6, \$3.50 members and includes general admission. For reservations, call 361-852-2100.

Water Garden Seminar at Gardens & Nature Center April 18

Do you want cool trickling water on your patio; or rich rock ledges with waterfalls in your landscape? “*Adding Splashes to your Landscape*” seminar is from 10 a.m. to noon, Saturday, April 18, beginning at the Visitors Center, 8545 S. Staples. Workshop cost is \$6, \$3.50 Gardens & Nature Center members, and includes admission. For reservations, call 361/852-2100.

Fact & folklore of the Curandera’s Garden at Gardens & Nature Center April 25

Centuries of fascinating stories and tradition will be discussed *The Curandera’s Garden—Fact & Folklore* seminar, from 10 am to noon, Saturday at the South Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center, 8545 S. Staples. Seminar fee is \$6, \$3.50 members.

March 2009

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|-----|-----|--|-------------------------------------|-----|--|--|
| 1 | 2 | 3 6 pm MG Meeting & Awards | 4 | 5 | 6-11am Green Acres Garden Day 9:30 Website Comm. 10:30 am Landscape Committee | 7 1:30 Composting |
| 8 | 9 | 10 6-9 pm Seminar - In Our Coastal Gardens | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 9 am - 1 pm MG Spring Plant Sale |
| 15 | 16 | 17 12-1:00 pm Brown Bag 1:30 pm MG Board Meeting | 18 8-11am Green Acres Garden Day | 19 | 20 | 21 1:30 Composting |
| 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 1:30 Composting |
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