



**Aransas/San Patricio
Master Gardener Association**

May 2009

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**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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The President's Corner



Lonnie Matthew

What a great time to assume the title of President of the Aransas/San Patricio County Master Gardeners! We returned from State Meeting bearing 3 great awards for the hard work many of you have done for newspaper articles, the plant packet and the Live Oak Learning Center tour. It is great fun to watch the receiving of the awards. The obvious and well deserved pride that lights up the faces make it all worthwhile. I got home and heard from Sharon that the Kid-fest was a big success also, with about 63 attending. You know, this is what Master Gardening is about---introducing and educating others about what gives us such pleasure.

I know that we have experienced some rocky roads lately, but, hey, we're a close knit group and disagreements erupt. We just need to keep our eyes on the vision---education and having fun. The next big event is the Hidden Garden Tour and we could use a few more people to help out. Working at the gardens is always fun because of the interaction and enthusiasm of our "tourees". A big thanks to Maryellen and all those that have helped to pull this function together.

May Brown Bag

Tuesday, May 19 Noon-1:00 pm
Composting the Easy Way
by Russ Bell, Master Gardener

Aransas County Library, 701 E. Mimosa, Rockport

In Area Newspapers this month watch for...

Composting - Robert Moore
Gophers & Moles Garden Foes - Todd L. Cutting

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.

**2009
Hidden Gardens
Tour
May 9
10 am-4 pm**

Don't miss out on your chance to show off one of our hidden gardens. Sign up today at the Extension Office for a shift of 8:30 to 12:30 or 12:00 to 4:15.



Happy Birthday !

Russ Bell, 9th
Marsha Hendrix, 15th
Steve Vaughan, 20th
D.J. Chilcoat, 22nd
Janie Moon 28th

**Green Acres
Garden Days**
May 8th & May 27th
8 - 11 am

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

From Our Writers

Gophers and Moles: Garden Foes

By: Todd L. Cutting, Master Gardener, Aransas/San Patricio Master Gardeners

Everyone reading this has probably seen the Bugs Bunny cartoon where Bugs is underground pulling the carrots into his tunnel as Elmer Fudd stands in shock as he watches his carrot crop disappear before his eyes. “Dat dang wabbit,” Fudd cries. I’ve never seen a rabbit do this, and I doubt if they do as they operate almost entirely above ground. But I have stood, just like Elmer Fudd, and watched as broccoli and kohlrabi plants gently disappeared into the ground, leaving only the space they occupied behind.

Gophers were the culprit. I know this because he or she was brazen enough to stick his head out of the hole where the plants had been and looked around to see how many more meals were available. I then poked around with a rod and found the gopher’s tunnel, opened it up, set a trap and had the scoundrel the next day.

Gophers and I have had a long relationship, starting in 1951 when I was eight years old. My older brother, who was nine, and I trapped pocket gophers in Dad and Grandpa’s hay fields in Ohmstead County, Minnesota, especially after the last cutting in the fall. We’d sling a handful of leg traps over a shovel handle, grab a bunch of wooden stakes to hold the traps after they were set and to mark the location and head for the hay fields. Dad would usually tell us where he had seen fresh gopher mounds. Every day we set a trap, meant we had to check them the next day. We would do this for four to six weeks in September and October, until the ground froze.

Dad or Grandpa paid us a nickel a gopher and the county had a bounty. I don’t remember how much the bounty was. Dad and Grandpa wanted to see the

animal before they paid us. Trappers are notorious for story telling.

A couple of years later, we moved to a farm that didn’t have gophers and I thought no more about them until my wife and I bought a house in Holiday Beach in 2001. Our lawn was moonscaped with gopher mounds. Regular mowing and the introduction of a good “mouser” cat that preferred the fresh gopher mounds to the sandburred grass as a litter box soon reduced the gopher population in the front yard and a digging dachshund named Ted took care of them in the fenced back yard. I’m not sure which was worse, craters made by the digging dog or mounds made by the digging gophers.

For about a year there was an excess of feral cats in our neighborhood. During this time I saw no new gopher mounds anywhere in our area, not in yards, roadsides, or unimproved lots. The feral cat population dropped precipitously and within two months fresh gopher mounds started appearing regularly.

I planted thirty some rose bushes, antique and shrub roses, during the period when the feral cat population was high. I lost only one rose bush and that to cut ants. This past spring, 2008, I planted fifty more and lost five, all to gophers. There were very few stray cats to be seen. Also, the second planting grew much less the first year than the first planting. Upon investigation, a gopher run went to almost every rose bush. Even though there were no visible mounds, the gophers were active underground. A rose bush would flag or droop. Sometimes, the gopher would have eaten right through the root and a tug on the bush would remove it from the site. Other times, only some of the roots were damaged. Trapping the gopher and saturation watering saved those.

The Texas AgriLife Extension has an excellent publication, L-1904, [Controlling Pocket Gopher Damage](#).



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It tells how and where to set traps and also discusses chemical controls. Cats are nice pets and good companions but a good hunter can readily earn its keep if you don't like gophers.



My personal experience with moles is rather limited. The mole infestations I've had to deal with have been easily controlled by either a cat or eliminating the mole's food source which is usually grubs of some sort. Texas AgriLife Extension has a bulletin on moles, [Controlling Mole Damage, L-1905](#).

White Grubs are usually the larvae of June bugs. The grubs are eating your grass roots, while the moles come along and eat the grubs. Now is the time to treat turf for white grubs if you have a problem with them.

If you have an area of lawn that has died and turned straw colored try lifting some of the dying grass by hand. If it comes loose readily or can be rolled up like a carpet the chances are you have a grub problem. But do not apply insecticide unnecessarily. Before treating, you should confirm that grubs are the problem by digging out one square foot of the affected area to a depth of 3 or four inches. If you find five or more grubs in that area, treatment is called for. If there are four or fewer no treatment is necessary.

Specific chemical insecticides for white grubs and chinch bugs (another common turf pest) can be obtained at most garden centers and hardware stores. Always read the instructions carefully to get the most effectiveness from a chemical. In the case of chinch bugs, it is usually advised to water the area a half hour or so prior to spraying the insecticide. This encourages the chinch bugs to come to the top of the grass where they can more easily be "got." But for white grubs, the instructions will generally call for thoroughly watering the area *after* using the insecticide to wash the product deeper into the soil.



Texas Master Gardener License Plates

Support the Texas Master Gardeners by displaying specialty license plates on your vehicle. More than 70 percent of the specialty plate fee is dedicated toward a scholarship fund for future Master Gardener Coordinators.

The specialty plate fee (\$30 or \$40, depending on the plate) is collected in addition to the regular registration fee and any other applicable fees. Place your order online at <http://rts.texasonline.state.tx.us>



MG Happenings

Texas Master Gardeners Association 2008 Awards

Look what we brought home from the conference:
 1st Place Award for *In Our Coastal Gardens* Publication
 2nd Place Award for Mass Media – Gardening with Aransas/San Patricio Master Gardeners (news column)
 2nd Place Award for Educational Programs – Live Oak Learning Center Field Trip
 Our county falls under the *Medium Associations* category which is highly competitive, so thank you to all who helped make these endeavors award winning projects!



Kid's Garden Fest



Rain Water Harvesting Workshop

Saturday, June 6 8:30-11:30

Old Rockport School

Karen Ivey - San Patricio Municipal Water District



Around the State

Gingers for Tropical Spice Seminar at Gardens & Nature Center May 16

Gardeners who want to update or add some edgy tropical looks to their landscapes should attend this seminar, from 10 am to noon, Saturday, May 16, at the South Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center, 8545 S. Staples St. Carol Krank, Texas Certified Nursery Professional and Master Gardener from Turner's Gardenland, shares knowledge and design ideas to add some spice and color with numerous varieties of graceful gingers. Seminar fee is \$6, \$3.50 members, and includes general admission. For reservations, call 361-852-2100.

Rose Pest and Disease Control Seminar at Gardens & Nature Center May 23

Well-known rosarian and Master Gardener Jan Shannon shares her favorite methods of controlling typical rose pests and diseases in the Coastal Bend, at a South Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center seminar from 10 to noon, Saturday, May 23, in the Visitors Center, 8545 S. Staples St. Class fee including general admission is \$6, \$3.50 members. For reservations, call 361-852-2100.

Popular *Passion for Plumeria* seminar encores at Gardens & Nature Center July 11

The Plumeria Society of South Texas will once again present "*Passion for Plumeria*" seminar from 9 to 11 a.m., Saturday, July 11, at the Gardens & Nature Center, 8545 S. Staples.

The Plumeria Society members will discuss tips on purchasing and raising these exotic, tropical beauties, lead a tour of the Gardens & Nature Center 100-plant Plumeria Garden & Willoughby Viewing Platform, and preview the Society's July 18 sale to be held from 10 am to 2 pm at the Garden Senior Center, 5325 Greeley. Seminar fee is \$6, \$3.50 for Center members, and includes admission. For seminar reservations, call (361) 852-2100.

Invitation to Victoria's Garden Tour May 16 & 17

Victoria County Master Gardener Association will hold its Annual Garden Tour featuring six home gardens in Victoria the weekend of May 16-17, and the VCMGA welcomes Aransas County gardeners to attend. This year each garden serves not only in the traditional sense but as peaceful living space for relaxation and entertaining. Homeowners will be able to pick up many ideas as to how they may enhance and expand their gardens, thereby creating their own personal refuge. The tour is being presented by *The Victoria Advocate* and co-sponsored by NewsCenter 25 of Victoria.

Admission is \$15 person, and interested persons may obtain tickets by sending a request and check to VCMGA, and mail it to Victoria County AgriLife Extension Service, 442 Foster Field Dr., Victoria, Tx. 77904.

For more information telephone the office at 575-4581. The locations for the tour will be printed on the tickets. May 16 the tour will run from 9 a.m.-5 p.m., and May 17 from 11 a.m.-5 p.m. A plant sale will be held May 16 at the 104 Creekridge Dr., location. Proceeds will go toward construction of a VCMGA pavilion. The event is coordinated by VCMGA and Victoria County AgriLife Extension Office.

'Cool New Plants that can Take the Heat' seminar at Gardens & Nature Center June 6

Want some really cool plants for the hot summer months? This seminar will be from 10 am to noon, Saturday, June 6, in the Visitors Center, 8545 S. Staples St.

Debbie Pinkerton, Certified Nursery Professional from Gill Landscape Nursery, discusses the latest plants which can really take the heat in your landscape, without requiring all your spare time! Class fee is \$6, \$3.50 members and includes admission. For reservations, call 361-852-2100.

May 2009

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1 8:30 am HGT Pre-Tour	2
3	4	5 9 am MG meeting & LOLC Field Trip Comm. & H/BC Butterfly Tent Comm.	6 8:30 am Propagation Committee GA Greenhouse	7	8 8-11am Green Acres Garden Day 11 am Landscape Committee	9 9 am—4 pm Hidden Gardens Tour
10	11	12	13 8:30 am Propagation Committee GA Greenhouse	14	15	16 9 am—4 pm Hidden Gardens Tour RAIN DATE
17	18	19 12-1 pm Brown Bag- Composting 1:30 pm MG Board Meeting	20 8:30 am Propagation Committee GA Greenhouse	21	22	23
Live Oak Learning Center Field Trips - GA						
24 MG Hours Due 31	25 County Holiday - Extension Office closed	26	27 8:30 am Propagation Committee GA Greenhouse 8-11am Green Acres Garden Day	28	29	30