



Aransas/San Patricio

September 2009

The President's Corner



Lonnie Matthew

I hope everyone is gearing up for our next two events. Our fall plant sale is just around the corner and we have some very hard workers to thank. Cyndi Kuhn and Ellen Reisinger are co-chairing (along with their other roles in the assn.); and Vicki Coble and her band of happy propagators have been working for months to make this one our most successful events. Plus, without all of the Master Gardeners who volunteer to help during the sale, it couldn't happen.

Also, the Hummer/Bird Celebration takes place the week before the plant sale, and we have a booth there that helps to disseminate the work about Master Gardeners and bird and wildlife plants. The sign-up sheet is at the office.

And, of course, our 2009 class has started with 12 really neat future Master Gardeners. So, a big thank you again to Cyndi as Member Relations chair for organizing the helpers who bring food every week, making sure the room is set up, etc. We also appreciate D.J. Chilton for organizing the mentors that give personal attention to each new student for as long as needed.

And finally, a big thank you to all of our Master Gardeners, who volunteer in so many different ways. As the president, I appreciate you all.

In Area Newspapers this month watch for...

Rainwater Harvesting - Anita Garrett-Roe

25 Best Plants for Attracting Hummers -

Ernie Edmundson

20 Texas Gardens to See Before You Die -

Jeanna Godfrey

The Hard Working Gourd - D.J. Chilcoat

Master Gardener Meeting

September 1, 6:00 pm
Saltwater Pavilion at
Rockport Beach Park
(At the far end of the
beach)

Casserole Night
Everyone please bring
a casserole or salad or
dessert.

September Brown Bag

Tuesday, Sept. 15
12:00-1:00 pm

*Be Earth-Kind to
Your Landscape*
by Marilee Bell,
Master Gardener

Aransas County Library,
701 E. Mimosa,
Rockport

Green Acres Garden Days

September 4th & 16th
8:00 - 11 am

Happy Birthday !

Robert Moore, 6th
Sandy Stanley, 10th
Rose Finley, 17th
Mary Ware, 26th

2009 Officers
President: Lonnie Matthew
1st VP: Sandy Stanley
2nd VP: Ellen Reisinger
Secretary: Susan Lopez
Treasurer: Beth Wilson

Extension Agent:
Amy Freeman
Extension Office Manager:
Ernie Edmundson
Secretary: Thea
Edmundson

Website:
www.aspmastergardeners.org

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

From Our Writers

THE HARD WORKING GOURD

By: D.J. Chilcoat, Master Gardener, Aransas/San Patricio Master Gardeners

People all over the world have used the hard working gourd for a great variety of purposes for thousands of years. In the pyramids of ancient Egypt, pharaohs were buried with gourds filled with grain. Half a world away, the Incas also buried corn-filled gourds with their dead. Daniel Boone's grandfather stored eggs in a gourd basket. Seeds were stored in gourds by American pioneers. Liquids, from water to beer to wine, have been carried in gourds. Africans brewed beer in large gourds. Gourds have also served as fashion accessories such as jewelry and hats. Nigerian mothers used gourd hats to shade their babies' heads and Chinese workers used gourd hats while building American railroads.

Gourds are fun, easy to grow, and they make great craft projects. They are also a terrific way to get children interested in gardening. Once they get started, gourds grow with such speed that children will be able to see daily differences in the plants. They will also enjoy decorating the dried gourds.

There are three varieties of gourds and the first variety, Hardshell (*Lagenaria family*) is the one most frequently grown in our gardens and used for craft projects. Their white flowers open in the evening and close the next morning. As the common name suggests, their woody shells are hard.

On the vine, developing hardshell gourds are green, sometimes mottled with light and dark stripes. Dried, they are brown or tan. A hardshell gourd can grow a 100 foot long vine in a single season. Many get their names from their traditional uses or shapes - birdhouse, bottle, dipper, club, etc.



Ornamental gourds (*Cucurbita family*), are members of the same plant family as many squash. Their day-blooming yellow flowers look like zucchini blooms. Today, ornamental gourds are grown mainly for their bright colors and we often use them in our Thanksgiving holiday decorations. In

addition to hardshells and ornamental gourds, there are Luffa gourds. They are also known as the sponge squash and are actually grown for use as a sponge.



Ideal growing conditions for gourds includes lots of space, full sun, lots of water and a slightly acidic, but fertile soil (pH of 6 to 6.5). Smaller gourds might be planted near a fence, trellis or arbor as they benefit from a place to hang. Though gourds are slow to get started, once the vine begins, you can almost watch their movement. Gourds need a long growing season in our hot sunny climate. Ornamentals need about 100 days from sprouting to maturity. Hardshells take 120-140 days and Luffas need about 140 days. The gourds are usually mature in September or October and should not be harvested until the stems and tendrils are brown. The body may still be green, but the dried stem means that the gourd is not receiving any more nutrients from the roots. Another way to tell that they are ready is to wait until the gourd begins to become light in weight. This will mean that the pulp is drying and that it is fully mature. If you take a gourd before it is ready, it will likely shrivel and rot. Remember: you can never leave a gourd on the vine too long, but you can cut it too soon.

As you cut the gourds, leave an inch or two of the vine at the top of the gourd to give you a handle. This will make it easier for you to clean and then decorate the gourd. As the gourds dry, it is normal for them to form a mold on the outer skin. The mold may make a mottled design on the gourd that can be incorporated into your final product. The time it takes for them to dry completely will depend on their size and shape, but usually requires about one to six months. They should be brown and the seeds should rattle. The odor from curing gourds can be quite offensive, so, rather than storing them in the house or garage during this drying period, find a well-ventilated and dry spot outside. They need lots of air to dry properly. Gourds will dry out in the weather just fine. Actually, gourds that are left on the vine to dry harden off much better than those that have been picked while still green.

Continued from page 2

Regardless of how much care you take, some of the gourds will rot. An indented area on the surface may indicate the gourd has started to rot. If the spot is soft and mushy, the gourd is of no value and should be discarded.



Once your gourds have dried, the mold that has formed on the outer skin must be washed off. This will come off more easily when the gourd has been soaked in water for a day or so. Adding a small amount of

bleach to the water is a common and beneficial practice. Use a metal scrubber and elbow grease to remove the mold, washing frequently. Once all mold has been removed from the surface and the gourd is dry again, it is ready to be cut so the inside can be cleaned out. Cleaning out the pulp and seeds can truly be a chore as the odor is unpleasant and often toxic. It is recommended that you wear a mask when cutting and dealing with the pulp. Gourds may be cut with any of several saws, from an Xacto knife to a jig saw. Use a spoon, scraper, or plastic ice cream scoop to clean out the pulp.

When the gourd is clean outside and in, and it is just like you want it, it is ready for your imagination to go to work. Baskets and bowls are easy to craft and can be as simple or as elaborate as you want. Gourds have been the basis of musical instruments from rattles to marimbas. In fact, Pablo Casals learned to play on a gourd cello. Gourds also make great silly stuff. Right off the vine, penguin gourds are more than halfway to being penguin statues. Goose gourds, a type of bottle gourd, grow into angry geese. Dinosaurs, swans, whales and elephants can start with gourds. Gourds can be doll heads, holiday ornaments, birdhouses, and permanent Easter eggs. Have fun and let your imagination be your guide.



Jeanna Godfrey's List of 20 Texas Gardens to See Before You Die

1. **Green Acres** - our own demonstration gardens
2. **South Texas Botanical Gardens and Nature Center** - 180-acres in Corpus Christi
3. **The Valley Nature Center** - in Weslaco combines beautiful gardens and excellent birding
4. **San Antonio Botanical Center** - 33-acre Botanical Garden and the adjacent San Antonio Garden Center
5. **Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center** - a native plant and wildflower Mecca
6. **The Natural Gardener** - in Austin, specializing in organic practices
7. **Zilker Botanical Garden** - at the Austin Area Garden Center includes a Prehistoric Garden recreated as a dinosaur habitat
8. **Riverside Nature Center** - in Kerrville, an urban wildlife and native plant sanctuary
9. **Antique Rose Emporium** - in Independence is great for the rose lovers
10. **Peckerwood Garden** - near Hempstead combines sculpture, folk art and an expanding collection of rare plants native to the southern United States and Mexico
11. **Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden** - an eight-acre azalea oasis at the entrance to Stephen F Austin State University in Nacogdoches
12. **East Texas Arboretum and Botanical Society** - in Athens occupies 100 acres of rolling hills with over 2 miles of hiking trails
13. **Mercer Arboretum and Botanic Gardens** - in Humble
14. **Rainforest Pyramid Gardens** at Moody Gardens in Galveston
15. **Beaumont Botanical Gardens**
16. **Bayou Bend Collection and Gardens** - in Houston and maintained by the Museum of Fine Arts
17. **Chandor Gardens** - in Weatherford
18. **Fort Worth Botanic Garden** - the self-proclaimed oldest botanic garden in Texas
19. **Dallas Arboretum** - situated on sixty-six acres nestled next to White Rock Lake
20. **Tyler Municipal Rose Garden** - one of only 24 All-American Rose Selection trial gardens in the country

2009 Master Gardener Class Schedule

Tues.Sept. 1st	Entomology & IPM	Dr. Roy Parker, Extension Entomology Specialist
Tues.Sept. 8th	Turf I (irrigation & its fertilization, weeds, aeration) & Turf II (common problems-pests & diseases, Q&A)	Michael Potter, Nueces EA-Horticulture
Tues.Sept. 15th	Identifying Plant Problems, Pesticide Safety	Michael Potter, Nueces County EA-Horticulture
*Wed.Sept.23rd 1:30-5:00 pm	Tree Planting, Palm Planting & Maintenance *Texas A&M Research & Extension Center, 10345 State Hwy. 44, CC	Paul Johnson, Regional Forester, Texas Forest Service
Tues. Sept. 29th	Earth Kind Gardening	Russ & Marilee Bell Aransas/San Patricio Master Gardeners, Earth Kind Specialists
*Tues. Oct. 6th	Landscape Plant Selection **Gill's Nursery, 2810 Airline, C. C.	Kathy Hubner, Landscape Designer Gill's Landscape Nursery
*Tues. Oct.13th	Home Vegetable Gardening *First Methodist Church, 801 E. Main, Rockport	Tom LeRoy, Montgomery Co. Extension Agent-Horticulture
Tues. Oct. 20th	Propagation I – Seeds Propagation II- Vegetative *Green Acres Greenhouse	Master Gardener Propagation Specialists: Annette Fowler, Vicki Coble, Sandy Stanley – Aransas/San Patricio Co. Master Gardeners
Tues., Oct. 27th	Soils & Fertility	Speaker-Dr. Dan Fromme, Associate Professor and Extension Agronomist
Tues. Nov. 3rd *Extension Office	Container Gardening Tropicals	Carol Krank & DeAnna Baumgartner, Nueces Master Gardener & Darlene Gooris, Aransas/San Patricio Master Gardener
Tues. Nov. 10th	Citrus and Fruits Composting / Worm Composting	Dr. John Fucik, Retired Horticulture Professor & Nueces Master Gardener
*Wed. Nov. 18 1:30-5:00 pm **CC Museum of	Landscape Design and Xeriscape/MG Program Science & History, 1900 N. Chaparral St.	Dr. Carol Brouwer, Harris County Extension Agent-Horticulture CC - Lecture Hall
Tues. Dec. 1st	MG Phone Desk & Common Homeowner Questions / MG Post Test & Surveys	Aransas Co. Extension Agent

Five Fabulous Hummer Plants from Ernie Edmundson



Coral Honeysuckle



Esperanza



Shrimp Plant



Coral Bean



'Indigo Spires' Salvia

Around the State

Orchid Novice Class

At Botanical Gardens and Nature Center
September 3 & 1st Thursdays Each Month

The *Orchid Novice Class* meets at 7 p.m., Thursday, September 3, in the South Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center Visitors Center, 8545 S. Staples. Meeting 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.

South Texas Wine & Herb Festival at Botanical Gardens October 17

The South Texas Wine & Herb Festival will debut at the South Texas Botanical Gardens from 9:30 am to 3:30 pm, Saturday, October 17. The Rockport Rose & Herb Study Group and other wine & herb aficionados will offer different seminars & demonstrations on the half hour in the Rose Pavilion, 8545 S. Staples Street.

Partnering with the **Texas Department of Agriculture's 'Go Texan' program**, there will be wine tastings, cooking demos using Texas seafood, and vendors on site with potted herbs and other herb or wine-related merchandise. *Home Grown* editor Judy Barrett will be on site for a program and signing of her new book, *What Can I do with my Herbs?*

General admission applies. Seminars/demonstrations fee is an additional \$4 per person for the day. (*Schedule to be announced.*) Vendor spaces still available. For more information, call 361-852-2100.

Floral Design for Fall & Winter Holidays Taught at Botanical Gardens October 24

Get floral design ideas and skills at a *Holiday Floral Design* seminar/workshop from 10 to noon Saturday, October 24, at the South Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center Visitors Center, 8545 S. Staples St. Floral hobbyist Nan Bailey will cover centerpieces, baskets, wreathes, bows and other decor for Halloween, Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Seminar fees are \$6, \$3.50 for members, and include general admission. For reservations, call 361-852-2100.

Wildscape Workshop & Native Plant Sale At Botanical Gardens October 31

The Native Plant Society of South Texas and South Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center partner for a *Wildscape Workshop & Native Plant Sale*, from 9:15 am to 3 pm, Saturday, October 31, at the Botanical Gardens, 8545 S. Staples St.

Taught by Native Plant Society members, the workshop focuses on varieties of native plants and adapted species which not only will improve beauty and quality of your landscape, but also will attract various birds, butterflies and other critters, while lowering your water bill. Guided tours of the Butterfly, Hummingbird, Tree & Wildscape Gardens, plus Bird & Butterfly Trail will be offered during the workshop.

Lunch is included in the workshop fee which is \$15, \$12.50 members. For reservations, call 361-852-2100.

September 2009

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 1:30-5 pm MG class 6 pm MG meeting - Saltwater Pavilion	2 8:30 am Propagation Committee	3	4 8 am Green Acres Garden Day 10:30 am Landscape Committee	5
6	7 County Holiday	8 1:30-5 pm MG class	9 8:30 am Propagation Committee	10	11	12
13	14	15 12 pm Brown Bag Program 1:30-5 pm MG class	16 8 am Green Acres Garden Day 8:30 am Propagation Committee	17	18 10 am-5 pm Butterfly Exhibit	19 10 am-5 pm Butterfly Exhibit
20	21	22 1:30-5pm MG Intern Office Training	23 8:30 am Propagation Committee 1:30 pm MG Class, Corpus Christi	24	25	26 9 am-1pm Giant Fall Plant Sale
27	28	29 MG Intern Office Training 1:30-5 pm MG class	30 MG Hours Due 5 pm Earth Kind class registration	Oct. 1	2	3

Hummer/Bird Celebration