



AUGUST 2008 ACTIVITIES

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
					1	2
3	4	5	6 WORKDAY BURGER WED	7 WORKDAY	8	9 8AM – 1PM PLANT SALE
10	11	12	13 WORKDAY 8:25AM Herb Study Group* 10:30AM Monthly Meeting**	14 WORKDAY	15	16
17	18	19	20 WORKDAY 11:00AM Greenhouse Committee Meeting	21 WORKDAY	22	23
24 31	25	26	27 WORKDAY	28 WORKDAY	29	30

*Herb Study Group-- Sample Thai herb dishes with Allie and Terrie

**Monthly BCMG Meeting – Town Hall Meeting Format -- No Speaker -- Social Starts at 10:30AM

President's Corner

Submitted by David Fitch

This has certainly been an interesting few months since I agreed to accept the nomination for President of the Bell County Master Gardeners Association. I have to thank Gy Okeson for all his help in getting me acclimated. One of the first tasks handed to me from Gy was that of appointing chairpersons to the various standing committees. At first it seemed like a routine task but the more thought I gave to it, the more I appreciated the challenge it presented. I am rather new to the organization and frankly I did not even know as many members as there were slots to fill. The easy solution was to simply contact the current chairpersons and ask them to continue. That would leave me only with finding volunteers for the vacancies. The more I pondered the more I began to appreciate the role of volunteers in organizations like this one. The general tendency is to over rely on the few who do all the work. It also began to occur to me that I was not sure of the purpose or function of all of the committees. I began to wonder if any of the committees had been created at a point in time for a specific purpose but are no longer necessary. I also gave thought to the ability of all these independent committees to communicate with each other to assure that they were achieving their goals while preventing duplication of function with other committees.

In short, I concluded that this was too large and important a task to be done by one person. After meeting with some trusted advisors and after a "work session" with the Board, it became apparent that all the officers and directors need to participate in the organization of the Association. Accordingly, the Board adopted a new organizational structure that will provide: greater input on committee function and direction, improved communication between committees and provide a "champion" at the Board level for each standing committee.

That was the easy part. Now we have to develop ways to get more members on the committees and to get them involved in the many operational tasks necessary for the continued success of the Bell County Master Gardner Association. What has proven to be the greatest challenge is in filling the positions available in the Greenhouse. The top three positions, as prescribed in the By-Laws, remain open. We have created sub-committees for each of the disciplines necessary for running an

efficient and productive greenhouse operation. The sub-committees are designed to be headed by members with specialist certifications for the area the sub-committee represents. The purpose in doing this is to create an organizational structure with a broad knowledge base, a structure that will allow us to draw in the strengths of many rather than relying on the direction and efforts of only a few.

The other area that has gotten considerable attention is that which we now refer to as "Outreach". This is a term that I took from Dirk at one of our meetings. The mission statement of this organization says, in part, that we are "designed to increase the availability of horticultural information to the community and improve the quality of life through horticultural projects". To achieve that mission we need to efficiently and effectively communicate between members of the Association and between the Association and members of the community. To that end, the Board has agreed to "connect" all of the communication functions of the Association under one major area of focus. The Corresponding Secretary of the Association now has oversight for all committees that are involved in communication both internally and externally.

In my opinion the single most important challenge that faces this organization today is that of increasing member involvement. We are dangerously close to burning out the prevailing talent. We need more members to step forward with their ideas, their leadership, their insight, their imagination and, yes, their physical labor.

To that end, I have requested that the August membership meeting be a "Town Hall" format. I hope we have a large turnout so that we can capture the ideas and imagination of a broad base of members. I want to address two topics specifically. One topic being the successes that BCMGA has achieved and the other is the challenges that remain. Let's have some fun with this.

Let's see how far we can take this. Let's see how many community members we can reach. Let's see how many BCMGA members we can involve. Let's reach out and touch someone.

What do you do when a tomato goes on strike? You picket.

Positive Points of Garden Pillagers

Submitted by Jane Capen

As gardeners, we are usually glad to see some critters in our gardens, like butterflies and bees. Even spiders and snakes, although we may give them a wide berth, snack on some of the pests that damage our plants.

But what about certain other creatures, the ones whose benefits are harder to see, like deer, grasshoppers, and armadillos? As I smoothed back the soil where there had been noticeable digging last week, grumbling about the *#@&*%* armadillos, I wondered if they served any purpose at all, aside from being kind of fun to see. What about grasshoppers, are they of any use? And that scourge of gardens, deer.

A morning poking around with Google netted some answers, not many, but a few.

Grasshoppers provide food for various other living things, like birds. However they are also useful as test subjects in the laboratory. According to one source, the nerves of grasshoppers are similar to those of humans, so new drugs can be tested on them. It's also probably harder to work up sympathy for a grasshopper than a cute little rabbit, perhaps keeping some protesters at bay.

The armadillo about who I was grumbling has positive points as well. While they do munch on some good bugs, they eat a lot of bad ones, including beetles, termites, millipedes and centipedes. All that rooting around provides soil aeration.

Then there are deer. Judging from my Google results one would think that one of the greatest benefits of deer is from the antler velvet, which several (questionable) sites touted for good health. Otherwise, deer provide food for mountain lions and such, and for those who eat venison. One estimate has economic and recreational benefits of deer estimated at about \$14 billion. That centers mostly around hunting---leases, licenses, processing, guns, etc. Deer are not beneficial to the garden, unless deer poop or their free pruning services are counted as helpful. They are, of course, lovely creatures, and perhaps their beauty makes up for their damage, at least a little.

Therefore, while I wish these critters would keep their distance from my plants, I am going to try to

appreciate their good points, remembering that they too have their place in the grand scheme of things.

References:

<http://insectzoo.msstate.edu/Students/basic.benefits.html>

<http://www.wvdnr.gov/Hunting/IntAppDeerCons.htm>

<http://www.nsr.ttu.edu/tmot1/dasynove.htm>

<http://bss.sfsu.edu/geog/bholzman/courses/fall99projects/armadillo.htm>

Let my words, like vegetables, be tender and sweet, for tomorrow I may have to eat them. - Author Unknown



Barbara Beebe's tamed Elephant Ears



Barbara Beebe's 2-year old thornless blackberries.

Dog and Rabbit Show

Submitted by D. Branner

All of you know I've just finished my back yard - for the moment. I'm now enjoying the flowers, scents, most of the birds, and butterflies for the summer. Apparently, I'm not the only living creature that can smell my flowers. Yesterday evening I looked out and this big, long jack rabbit was laid back in the shade created from the sun moving West and being cut off by my roof. Keep in mind the shade is about 10 ft. from my back patio.

Boo (my Yorkie) absolutely loves hunting. It's her favorite thing to do and we enjoy watching her tracking and running after birds, squirrels, and an occasional rabbit. She can't run fast enough to catch them and it gives her a good workout, me a break from walking the dog. Last year we had coyotes in the area so cats and rabbits grew scarce. This year either they have all just moved in or the coyotes are finding enough to eat outside of my neighborhood. It's not uncommon to see a half-dozen bunnies in the evenings. So, you know where this is going. I let Boo out, the rabbit ran, Boo chased it from the yard and we all came in happy.



Big Bad Boo

I proceed to my guest room where I'm laying out a new quilt (my other hobby) on the bed. I notice the rabbit is back. Ok, it's kind of cute. It's looking hot and tired. I'm thinking I won't show it to Boo, let it catch a nap and I'll be nice. As I'm watching, and I might add the rabbit sees me watching from the window, it rears up on its back legs, grabs a

branch of my \$20 Hibiscus plant, pulls and starts eating away...looking at me. Honestly the thing is looking me right in the eye daring me to do something. Now I don't think it's so nice and cute...it could eat the darn grass, but noooooo....



Delicious \$20 Hibiscus.

So, I let Boo out and around the back yard they go. The rabbit zigging and zagging...Boo panting, but running her legs off. I look at my other hibiscus plant and apparently that's why the rabbit was sprawled in the grass. Most of the leaves are gone. Definitely the flowers are gone. It's wilting and so I went inside to turn on that sprinkler.

By the time I get back from the garage, Boo is by the fence and her head is under and her back feet keep popping up in the air. I think...no! Something has her and is trying to pull her through the fence. So I took off running. My husband is the runner, I'm the walker. Getting me to run has to be because someone is dying or in immediate danger of losing their life. I get to the fence and start screaming for whatever is pulling to let go. I'm thinking it's a big dog or coyote or something.....No, the dog (who I now think isn't very smart) got her head stuck between the corner pole and the wood slats. It's got a bit of a gap there where the two fences on the other side join and mine has a metal pole. She's got her front legs braced and is pulling backwards with all her might. Her back legs and butt keep popping up as she pulls. Ok, she's got to go down to get her head out... she doesn't want to go down. So, I'm trying to force her down, she won't let me, I'm thinking how am I going to get the dog free. Hubby, of course, isn't here to help, he's....yep RUNNING. Seems he has a streak of good luck for when the fun stuff happens. Anyway, I try forcing the wood to the side... won't budge. I try pushing the dog's head down...she's fighting me. I'm thinking how am I going to get her free before she breaks her neck. Finally, I reached under the fence through the bunny hole, and pulled

her legs forward, while pushing on the back of her neck and yelling "down". She finally got the message and stopped fighting me. We got loose and the dog has literally been glued to me since "the incident". I filled the rabbit hole with rocks and came in.

You would think the rabbit would learn, but there it (or its family member) is this morning. I let Boo out, refuse to come inside just in case MY dog hasn't learned anything. The rabbit is determined to go out that same hole that has all the rocks filling it. Around and around they go. The rabbit decides I'm a good place to hide UNDER. I'm jumping and making noise cause that isn't going to work, off it goes. Must have done 20 laps and it kept coming back to that same hole it couldn't get out of. There are other holes, but apparently rabbits have a one track mind. Finally Boo has slowed enough that the rabbit has time to pry a couple of rocks away and squeeze through. I'm hoping it got scared enough to stay away for the rest of the day. Guess we'll be getting some chicken wire fencing this weekend and filling in holes along the fence. Oh and I'm surprised I'm still young enough to jump a few feet in the air.

So, as you can tell, I'm still learning about Texas and my back yard is still the cheapest entertainment in town. My hibiscus is coming back and Boo doesn't seem any worse for the experience, but she didn't stick her head through this morning. Maybe there is hope for her.

Time to Plant Tomatoes, Peppers & Eggplants!!

Come to the Bell County Master Gardener Fall Vegetable Plant Sale at the greenhouse on Saturday, August 9, 2008. Opening at 8:00AM, several varieties of your favorites will be available as well as some complimentary herb plants.

Fall Garden Tour Cancelled

Submitted by Rae Schmuck

After much discussion at the last Board meeting on July 23, a determination was made to cancel the fall tour. The reason being the escalating fuel costs and the state of the economy. This has also been a very dry summer. We will have a spring tour, but in the future will have one tour a year alternating the spring and the fall. We also thought we might look at some different kinds of gardens for the future, such as vegetable, container, rock garden etc. As a representative of the Board I am looking for a member to take over the tour and form a committee to work with them. If you are interested please call me. Rae Schmuck 254-933-7765.

The trouble is, you cannot grow just one zucchini. Minutes after you plant a single seed, hundreds of zucchini will barge out of the ground and sprawl around the garden, menacing the other vegetables. At night, you will be able to hear the ground quake as more and more zucchinis erupt.

- Dave Barry

All Green Thumbs by Jason Nocera



www.nichecartoons.com



Dallas Arboretum MG Field Day:

Texas Master Gardeners are invited to tour the Dallas Arboretum on September 6, 2008. Complimentary admission is being provided for MGs and one guest. You will need to show your badge to receive complimentary admission. Also, there is a \$5 parking fee per car.

BELL COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS

Are sponsored by the

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