


BLOOMING BELL

BCMGA NEWSLETTER MARCH 2009

MARCH 2009

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
1	2	3	4 WORKDAY Burger Day 9AM Greenhouse Com. Mtg. 1PM 2009 Class	5 WORKDAY	6	7
8 Daylight Savings Time Begins	9 Jeff Pavlat will speak on "Cacti & Succulents for the Central Texas Landscape"	10	11 WORKDAY 8:25AM Herb Study Group* 10:30AM Monthly MG Meeting 1PM 2009 Class	12 WORKDAY 9AM Decorating Stepping Stones with Kim Pringle	13	14 MG Spring Vegetable Sale 8AM-1PM
15	16	17 St. Patrick's Day 	18 WORKDAY 9AM Board of Directors 1PM 2009 Class	19 WORKDAY	20 Vernal Equinox	21 Herbal Forum at Round Top
22	23	24	25 WORKDAY 1PM 2009 Class	26 WORKDAY	27	28
29	30	31				

* March 11th Herb Study Group Meeting - Culinary Herbs 101 - a study of some of our favorites. If you could only choose three herbs for your garden, what would you choose?

Jeff Pavlat to Speak at MG March Meeting

Submitted by Frances Idoux

Jeff Pavlat is the current president of the Austin Cactus and Succulent Society and a member of the Horticulture Committee at Zilker Botanical Garden. He works part time at Oracle Gorge, a small cactus and succulent nursery in Austin. His hillside garden in Westlake features extensive plantings of cacti and succulents. He has always liked desert plants, but became more interested in them as he began to landscape his home ten years ago. He was looking for plants that needed little water and wouldn't be eaten overnight by deer. Cacti and succulents worked perfectly. While searching for suitable plants he discovered the incredible variety of amazing succulents from around the world – both plants suitable for the garden and those requiring a greenhouse. He was soon hooked and building a greenhouse.

Burger Wednesday

Submitted by Karla Tomaka

Burger Wednesday is this coming Wednesday, March 4th. Our project will be to weed around the greenhouse and nearby areas and tidy up prior to the vegetable sale Saturday, March 14th. Chef Nolan is once again preparing something delicious for us. If you can bring drinks, a side dish or a dessert, please contact me at kstomaka@aol.com

Spring Vegetable Sale

Karla Tomaka

Please mark Friday, March 13th, on your calendars. The truck from Gabriel Valley Farms will be delivering our vegetable plants, herbs and succulents that day - we do not yet have a time. We will need help unloading, setting up, and marking the tables in the greenhouse for the sale. I will have a signup sheet at Burger Wednesday and also at our monthly meeting for help with unloading and working at the sale.

Home and Garden Show

Submitted by Karla Tomaka

The Home and Garden Show was a great success. Our booth looked fantastic, our seminars were well attended and many folks visited to ask questions and pick up handouts. Thank you to all of you who helped with all the many tasks necessary to make it so successful!

Plant Propagation Classes

Bell County Master Gardeners in conjunction with Texas AgriLife Extension Service – Bell County will be offering workshops on Basic Propagation. The classes will be held at the Texas AgriLife Extension Service – Bell County meeting room, 1605 North Main, Room 102, Belton, on March 14, 2009 and April 4, 2009. Classes are limited to **20 participants** at a cost of \$15.00 per person. Reservations and payment must be made no later than Friday the week prior to the class you would like to attend (i.e. March 5, 2009 for the class on March 14th and March 26, 2009 for the April 4th class.) Payments need to be brought to or sent to the CEO office: 1605 N Main, Room 102, Belton, TX 76513. Quality pruners can be pre-ordered for a cost of \$20. The pre-orders will be available for the classes. If you have any questions, please contact the Texas AgriLife Extension Service – Bell County office at: 254-933-5305.



You Know you're A Master Gardener When:

- ~ You rejoice in rain...even after 10 straight days of it.
- ~ You have pride in how bad your hands look.
- ~ You have a decorative compost container on your kitchen counter.
- ~ You can give away plants easily, but compost is another thing.
- ~ Soil test results actually mean something.
- ~ IPM rules!
- ~ You'd rather go to a nursery to shop than a clothes store.
- ~ You look for gardens open to the public whenever you go on vacation.
- ~ Your non-gardening spouse is actually getting involved with your garden endeavors...digging ponds, building bird houses, watering, pruning, turning compost piles, planting...

And you definitely know you're a Master Gardener when...

- ~ You are surrounded by terrific people who share your passion!

Created by Audrey, Emmitsburg, Md.

Class of '09 Report

Submitted by Robin Pohl

Howdy again from the intern class!

We are in full gear and trucking along with our classes. Since I last reported, we learned about soil and reviewed reports of our own soil samples. Having never taken a soil sample or read a report, I could have held it upside down and not known the difference. I happen to be a classic "urban phosphate offender" and will be using 21-0-0 until the end of time. After learning about soil we all got stoned on dry stack stonescaping. I lovingly admire the wall outside the greenhouse and wish that my backyard had a grade change greater than 0 so I could try it. After we learned about oak wilt and tree diseases, I came home and threatened my four small red oak trees not to be making out with any attractive beetles or fungus. Some of you established Master Gardeners are scratching your heads because the "good deals" on plants that you used to find have vanished. We are in on the secret and couldn't wait to try it out after the cheapskate gardening lecture. We also had a lecture on native plants and while watching slides I felt like I was on Match.com. I think I found my true love: shade loving, fast growing, needs no water, makes flowers all summer and likes to be independent. Finally, we got into vegetables. We learned what transplants, what doesn't, and what makes us superheroes if we pull it off.

Out in the greenhouse, we are rocking on. We divided plants and irises and made confetti out of a begonia. Then we turned our beds and made strategies for what goes in them. We also looked at companion plants and planted seed. Under the plastic we have many plants growing: petunias, tomatoes, marigolds, and my personal favorite, tomatillos. We have experimented with peat pellets, irises, fig trees, and African violets. I admitted defeat and brought my crispy self watering container in. It was a stab in the heart to find out that the only green living thing I had in there didn't even bother to grow roots. I tucked my tail between my legs, swallowed my pride and started all over with smaller stems and less leaves. This next time something needs to pretend to live or I'm going to the bar after I leave the greenhouse. Many of my classmates have had a much more successful experience. If someone had told me in December that you can grow roses from their tips in a Ziploc bag, I would have laughed until I turned purple. The truth happily resides in my east window

For service hours, we are everywhere. We infiltrated

the Bell County Youth Fair with trucks and SUVs hauling materials back and forth. We ate food and looked at art. We stepped in at the Home and Garden Show assisting where needed. We are very proud of Ellen Majestic who is the Co-Chair of the Yard Tour. Two of us will have yards on the tour, myself and Margaret Leigh assisted by a fleet of our classmates. We are the garden gloved, pruner carrying army of service and look forward to more things.

We want to thank all of you mentors for your help and support!

New Class Field Trip

Submitted by the New Class Committee

Reservations are no longer being taken for the April 22nd field trip -- the bus is FULL. This has been a popular destination so we may plan to repeat this field trip next year. Thanks for your interest!

CLASS OF



2009

Graduation and Installation of New Officers

Submitted by Mary Ann Everett

Graduation for the New Class and Installation of new officers is May 20th. The event is being catered by Clem Mikeska's and the price is \$12.00 per person. There is no cost to the New Class students; the cost was included in your class fee. However, New Class members and all other members are welcome to bring friends and family.

Fran Sheppard will be taking your reservations. Friday, May 8th, is the deadline for telling her you are coming. You are welcome to send her the money or to pay at the door. Her email address is jts8099@embarqmail.com. You can also call her at 254-698-3532.



Decorative Stepping Stones

Submitted by Frances Idoux

The stepping stone (hands on) program will be on Thursday, March 12, starting at 9:00AM. Kim Pringle will teach the technique of decorating stepping stones.

Notes from Herb Study Meeting

Submitted by Kim Pringle

Joyce Richardson, her mother Charlotte Staggs and Tricia Newton sewed costume props for the American Colonial Garden presentation. Tricia made white aprons and Joyce and Charlotte made two types of white bonnets and collars.

For public outreach, Linda Young and Gail Christian coordinated presentation for the Killeen Garden Club on February 12th. They made "herb butter kits" (bowls, spatula, gloves, apron, etc.) for two people to make herb butter. Following, we did fresh herb identification. We enjoyed the Fellowship Salad and Dessert Lunch - great audience of about 30 with 4 of our Master Gardeners. Let me brag on Linda and Gail for the job they have done on publicity for MG - also, if you have not looked at the MG bulletin board, please check it out. Beware when you see the camera in Gail's hand!

Susan Firth, Dee Coffeen and Kim Pringle hosted a "Cooking with Herbs" program for Temple Floral Arts (24 members) on February 20th. We wore the lovely new white aprons Tricia made. We did fresh herb identification for 14 herbs and followed with five samples. Dee made marinated mozzarella squares with rosemary stems, Kim made cold cucumber soup with tomato confetti and Susan made dill butter, lavender bread and new recipe Bay Laurel Peaches to serve over pound cake or ice cream. Susan also amended booklet to include Bay as the 2009 Herb of the Year and other recipes.

See the following reports on Patchouli and Jasmine.

Herb Study Report ~ Patchouli

Submitted by Beverly Wickersham

Patchouli: Botanical Name: Pogostemon patchoule

Family: Labiatae (mint family)

Part Used: The leaves, yielding a volatile oil by distillation.



The essential oil made from the patchouli plant has a "pungent, powerful, mossy, musty, penetrating" fragrance. The viscous, orangey-amber oil is

extracted from the egg-shaped leaves of this two to three foot perennial bush. The whitish flowers are purple tinged. The plant is native to tropical Asia (East Indies, India, and Malaysia).

The crop is cut two or three times a year. The leaves are dried and packed in bales and exported for distillation of the oil. The scent is developed through oxidation. Thus the leaves must be fermented and aged before being distilled, which can take as long as 24 hours. Before aging, the oil smells harsh. As it ages, it develops patchouli's distinctive scent. Minute quantities of the high quality oil scent such famous perfumes as "Tabu" and "Shocking." The best oil is freshly distilled near the plantations. The oil from leaves imported into Europe, often damaged and adulterated even up to 80 per cent, is inferior. It is used in coarser perfumes and in "White Rose" and "Oriental" toilet soaps.

Although the odor is objectionable to some who describe it as forceful and repellent, others describe the scent as exotic, sensual, and luxurious. It is widely use both in Asia and India. Sachets are made of the coarsely-powdered leaves, and before its common use in Europe, genuine Indian shawls and India ink were distinguished by the odor, which has the unusual quality of improving with age. (It is patchouli oil with the addition of camphor which gives India ink its characteristic odor.)

Therapeutic Properties of Patchouli: antidepressant, anti-inflammatory, antiseptic, antiviral, and anti-fungal; reduces fluid retention.

Uses for Patchouli: Cosmetically, the essential oil is a cell rejuvenator and antiseptic that treats a number of skin problems, including eczema and inflamed, cracked, and mature skin. As an anti-fungal, it counters athlete's foot. The aroma reduces appetite and helps to relieve headaches. Add 8 drops per ounce to a hair conditioner to help eliminate dandruff. In India, patchouli has long been sprinkled among valuable shawls to deter moths.

This pungent scented oil was frequently worn by those who lived an alternative or bohemian lifestyle in the 60's and 70's: artists, musicians, hippies, bikers, punk-rockers. It was used not just as an excuse not to bathe, as some people claim, but to cover the scent of smoke, liquor, and drugs on clothing.

Sources: www.botanical.com
health.howstuffworks.com

Herb Study Report ~ Jasmine

Submitted by Beverly Wickersham

Family: Oleaceae (Olive family)



All jasmines thrive in ordinary garden soil where there is full to partial sun and adequate moisture. Many varieties are hardy in the South (from Southern Herb Growing).

The Jasmine, or Jessamine (the name derived from the Persian (*Yasmin*) belongs botanically to the genus *Jasminum*, which contains about 150 species. About forty of these are cultivated in our gardens.

The common white jasmine (*Jasminum officinale*), one of the best known and most highly esteemed is a native of Northern India and Persia, and introduced into Europe about the middle of the sixteenth century. In the center and south of Europe it is thoroughly acclimatized. This white jasmine grows to the height of 12 and sometimes 20 feet, its stem is feeble and requires support. The fragrant flowers bloom from June to October, and as they are found chiefly on the young shoots, the plant should only be pruned in the autumn.

The Spanish or Catalonian Jasmine (*J. grandiflorum*) a native of the northwest Himalayas, and cultivated in the Old and New World, is very like *J. officinale*, but differs in the size of the leaflets; the branches are shorter and stouter and the flowers very much larger and reddish beneath. This is the Jasmine of the perfumery trade, one of the flowers most valued by perfumers. Its delicate, sweet odor is so peculiar that it is without comparison one of the most distinct of all natural odors, and until quite recent years, it was believed that it was the only scent that could not be made artificially.

The Arabian Jasmine (*J. Sambac*) is an evergreen white-flowered climber, 6 or 8 feet high, introduced into Britain in the latter part of the seventeenth century. Two varieties introduced somewhat later are respectively three-leaved and double-flowered, and these, as well as that with normal flowers, bloom throughout the greater part of the year. The Hindus string the flowers together as neck garlands for honored guests. The flowers of one of the double

varieties are held sacred to Vishnu and are used as votive offerings in Hindu religious ceremonies.

A distinguishing characteristic of the True Yellow Jasmine (*J. odoratissimum*) is that the flowers have the advantage, when dry, of retaining their natural perfume, which is suggestive of a mixture of Jasmine, jonquil, and orange-blossom. (The above information is from www.botanical.com).

CAUTION: The flowers and all plant parts of the so-called Carolina jessamine or jasmine (*Gelsemium* spp.) are highly toxic. It is not a true jasmine. (From Southern Herb Growing)



A Wee Bit of Shamrock History

Submitted by Jane Capen

Around St. Patrick's Day, stores in the United States often sell pots of "shamrocks." However, here they are usually a variety of Oxalis. The true Irish shamrock is most likely a species of clover, *Trifolium dubium* or *Trifolium repens*.

The word shamrock comes from the old Gaelic word, "seamair" or "seamrog," meaning clover. The Druids considered the shamrock a special plant long before St. Patrick showed up. Three was a sacred number to them, and the shamrock became a sacred plant, because of its three leaves. The plant was also believed to have medicinal properties, foretell storms, and be able to ward off evil spirits.

In the fifth century, St. Patrick came to Ireland to spread the word of Christianity. Legend has it that he used the three leaves of the shamrock in his teaching to represent the three branches of the Trinity. This is most likely only a myth, as no written mention of this was made for over a thousand years.

In the 19th century, the shamrock became a symbol of rebellion, as the Irish revolted against British rule. The British consequently made wearing a shamrock a crime, punishable by death.

The shamrock is not the official symbol of Ireland. The Celtic harp is the national symbol, appearing on government buildings and coins.

Whether Oxalis, shamrock or common clover from your lawn, if you find one with four leaves, it is thought that it will bring good luck.

TRY THESE YUMMY TASTE-TESTED RECIPES!

BELL COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS

Walnut Corn Dip

(Brought to the last Burger Wednesday)



- 2 (8 oz.) pkg. cream cheese
- 1 T cumin
- 1 tsp. black pepper
- 8 oz. can whole kernel corn
- 3 chopped green onions, (use tops also)
- 1/4 c. lime juice
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. cayenne pepper
- 1 cup chopped walnuts
- 4 oz. can chopped green chilies

Whip cream cheese until fluffy. Beat in lime juice, cumin, salt, black pepper and cayenne pepper until smooth. Stir in corn, walnuts, green chilies and onions. Refrigerate at least 8 hours before serving. Good served with Fritos.

Spring Greens Salad

Submitted by Rowena Fengel

Here is a yummy, good for you, low-fat salad perfect for this time of year.

- 1 Granny Smith apple, NOT peeled, cored and cubed
- 1 Fuji or Gala apple NOT peeled, cored and cubed
- 1 lime, juiced
- 1 large orange, juiced

Pour juices over fruit to keep from oxidizing.

Add 1/2 cup of fresh BABY dandelion leaves washed of course

- 1/2 cup fresh parsley
- 1/2 cup cubed pepper jack cheese
- 1/4 cup slivered almonds

Stir a lot. The juices will actually sort of melt the cheese and make a dressing for all. You will still have some cheese cubes also. The citrus is the acid that vinegar usually represents in a dressing and the cheese is the fat or the "oil" in the dressing. The blend of the flavors is wonderful and this is really high in fiber and antioxidants.

NOTE: Also be certain dandelions have not been treated with chemicals. Arugula may be substituted for dandelion leaves.

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