



The Blooming Bell

November, 2011
BCMGA Newsletter

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What's Happening in Your Yard?



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 Field Trip 8:30 am	2 Work Day Hamburger Wednesday 11 am	3	4	5
6	7	8	9 Work Day General Meeting 11 am TCMG Clare Alford discusses and demonstrates bulbs	10	11	12
13	14	15	16 Board of Directors Meeting 9 am	17	18 Dead-line for Christmas Party	19
20	21	22	23	24 	25	26
27	28	29	30 New Class Orientation 1 pm Whistle Stop Park Cleanup	Dec. 1 Christmas Party		

Upcoming dates to remember: MG Christmas Party, December 1st

The President's Corner

October was a busy month for Master Gardeners. We started off on October 1st with our annual fall

plant sale. We voted as an organization to remove the greenhouse and heard a program on poisonous plants. Master Gardeners presented programs in Nolan-

ville, Bonham and Belton. I hope you were able to participate in at least one of these activities.

Because we are becoming a very busy MG chapter, Gary Slanga is in need of your help. Please let Gary know when you are presenting a program to avoid an overlap and a shortage of volunteers. The speaker's list is also in need of an update. Please let Gary know if you are still willing to be a speaker and the topics on which you wish to speak. He is doing a great job of keeping up with everyone, but still needs up to date information to keep us on track.

Though it was not as profitable as previous sales, we did make money on the fall plant sale. Considering we were in an historic drought, our plant sale was successful. There were enough volunteers, and at the end of the day, we all left tired, but happy with the attendance. Plans are already underway for the spring plant sale, as one chairman stepped forward within a week of the sale. Carla Harmon

has volunteered to take one of the positions. It has been agreed by all that this is such a significant event for our organization; there should be co-chairmen to shoulder the responsibility.



The greenhouse committee will be beginning further work on the facility project within the next few weeks. A facility planning committee has been appointed and will work along with the greenhouse committee to seek plans, bids, and logistical details to complete the project. If

you have ideas or suggestions that might be valuable please attend the greenhouse meetings. A flyer advertising the sale of the greenhouse will soon be on our website. Please feel free to print the flyer and distribute it to interested parties.

Due to the Thanksgiving holiday, there will be a change from the usual time of the Board meeting. Rather than meeting the 4th Wednesday, we will meet the 3rd Wednesday at 9:00am in the Board room. Also, this month, we will welcome our new Master Gardener class members with orientation on the 30th. We have 18 individuals registered for the new class; we all look forward to meeting our new members.

Randall Rakowitz is our new agent. He has been with the Extension Service for over 10 years, many of them in Bell County. Please let Randall know that we are glad to have him placed in the position. You will also see two new faces in the

Continued on next page...

Presidents Corner...continued

office. Please welcome Tammy and Scarlett. Many thanks go to Tennille as she kept the office going until replacements were found for Shelly and Pat.

The November meeting will be fun, interesting and educational. Bulbs will be the topic. The presenter, Clare Alford, is a member of the Tarrant County Master Gardeners. Not only will you leave with information on bulbs, you can leave with a pot of bulbs you have planted. You do not have to plant bulbs, if you wish; you can just enjoy the program and take home the information. The cost of a pot of bulbs is \$10.25. Everything will be provided and there should be a variety of bulbs available.

December 1st is the Master Gardener Christmas party. Donations for the silent auction are being taken, reservations are being accepted and in general, plans are well underway. This is always an enjoyable event. You should have received an email with the details. Make your reservations now if you plan to attend.

As you approach Thanksgiving this year, look over the traditional menu. The roasted turkey, most likely corn fed. The dressing or stuffing will contain at least one type of bread, made from grain. It will also contain vegetables, and possibly a fruit. Sweet potatoes are usually on the table, maybe topped with marshmallows, made from cane sugar. Maybe peas, beans, corn, mashed

potatoes or mushrooms will also be dished and garnished with an herb. Cranberry relish or a fruit salad will more than likely be served. And then there is gravy, traditionally thickened with corn or wheat flour. Dessert? Pecan and pumpkin pie. By now you can guess my message. Without a variety of plants and toiling gardeners, Thanksgiving dinner would be totally different. As you count your blessings this year, remember to be thankful for the agricultural abundance we have in our country and the wealth we have as a nation that enables us to import additional food stuffs. Though our country is going through some trying times, we all have something for which we can be thankful. The rain we have received in the last month is certainly one item. I hope you all have a happy and pleasant Thanksgiving holiday with family and friends.

- Laura



Photo on previous page by Gail Christian.

Above photo by Carlos Porto by way of www.freedigitalphotos.net

Fall Plant Sale!

Unloading and Set Up



Fall Plant Sale!

Ready and Waiting



Left, Fran Sheppard and Bernie Hurta waiting to assist customers; below, Kathy White and Louann Hightman the Ask a Gardener station; Steve

Overby helped educate shoppers on the basics of composting; Steve Gardipee and Wayne Baker take care of the Bee Keeper booth; Ray Machovsky and Laura Murphy work as cashiers at the plant sale; Karen Colwick demonstrates rainwater harvesting at the sale; Janell Burson, Pat Maskunas, Carol Runyan and Kathy White greet shoppers visiting the fall plant sale.



Fall Plant Sale!

A Success!



Fall Plant Sale!



Well, That's Done!

Above, Plant Sale workers take a break at the end of a long day. Right, Grounds/ Plant Sale Director, Pat Maskunas, conducts an "after action" meeting following a successful Fall Plant Sale.

Photos by Gail Christian and Mary Lew Quesinberry.



DECOMPOSERS: THE EARTH'S RECYCLERS

By Don Johnson

Sugar Land Garden Club member, Don Johnson, an occasional contributor to the Greenleaf, writing on garden insects, is a member of the Fort Bend County Master Gardeners' entomology Group and gives talks on insects. He is also a member of the local Coastal Prairie Chapter of the Texas aster Naturalists. Reprinted with permission from Sugar Land Garden Club Greenleaf Newsletter

Gardeners, proud of the plants in their yard, feed them various nutrients to get the best result. After a time the plants die, but they still contain the nutrients. Some gardeners compost the dead matter which becomes food for the many decomposers including worms, fungi, bacteria, insects, and other arthropods. Organisms that help break down dead plant and animal material are called decomposers. They are nature's recyclers. All plant and animal life contain nutrients. When these organisms die, decomposers consume the matter and the nutrients are recycled through the decomposers' droppings.

Ranch lands would be inundated with dung, if it were not in part for the actions of some of the 75 species of North American Dung Beetles. Dung Beetles search



Dung Beetles

out the dung of herbivores because it contains more value than that of carnivores. Apparently the herbivores are not able to extract all of the nutrient value from their diet. Some beetles will make the dung into small balls and roll them to their underground nest where the female will lay her eggs in the dung ball, which serves as a food source for the emerging larvae. Not only is the dung a food source for the beetle larvae, it also helps to fertilize the soil. In fertilizing the soil, the dung beetle has recycled the nutrients in the meal that the original "donor" has eaten.

Forests would contain many dead and fallen trees if decomposers were not present. Fungi, bacteria, bee-

ties and termites all have a role in recycling the nutrients in dead trees. Even the lowly cockroach helps recycle the nutrients in fallen leaves.

Worm bin

For several years, we have raised worms and used their castings on both indoor and outdoor plants. We wondered if the castings were good for plants, so we had them analyzed for nutritional value. The results showed that some of the castings were high in potassium and calcium. The results of two other worm bins were completely different, apparently due to differences in the diets of the worms.

Whenever we turn our compost pile, we find a number of organisms. The larvae of crane flies and beetles are usually present. Earwigs and millipedes are also common, but the most common is the isopod, the roly-poly. They all play the same role - recycling nutrients. They consume the organic materials and through their droppings, they are creating the nutrients for the next generation of plants. In fact, some nutrients are recycled through several decomposers. The new soil then continues the cycle for the gardener's next project.



Earwig

Photos from the book:
Field Guide to Texas Insects,
Drees, B.M. and John Jackman,
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Gulf Publishing Company,
Houston, Texas

Photos by B.M. Drees, copyright of the Texas A & M
Department of Entomology



You are cordially invited to the

Bell County Master Gardener Christmas Party



SAVE THE DATE: Mark your calendars for
December 1, 2011 for our Christmas Party.

Location: Expo Center, Belton

Entertainment:

Spirited and enthusiastic Christmas piano medley by Diane Calderwood and Margaret Leigh

Slide show of delightful Master Gardener's activities presented by Gail Christian

Silent Auction- Organized by our talented Ilene Miller--she asks that you watch the sales at the garden centers for items to donate

Awards Program-Organized by our hard working Gary Slanga

Menu choices:

Please choose ONE entree at registration

Sirloin tips with rice

OR

Smothered chicken with mashed potatoes

Registration Deadline: Nov. 18

Cost \$10.00 per person

Please make your reservations and payment to Kathy White in person or send your check to

Kathy White
9008 Burgundy Lane
Temple, TX 76504

Announcements

Help Wanted

- Mary Lew Quesinberry

Tip Of the Week is in need of gardening articles to finish out the year and start the new year. Your article can be about any gardening subject that interests you and that you would like to share with the public. Send your 300 word article to Candy Mullen candylane@taptrain.com
This is a good way to earn community service hours.

November Monthly Meeting Program

- Bernie Hurta

Our fellow Master Gardener, Laverne Adams and her daughter, Claire Alford, a Tarrant County Master Gardener, will present a “hands on” bulb planting demonstration for our November 9th meeting program. Bring \$10.25 and you will take home a planted pot of bulbs. The bulbs that will be offered are: Narcissi, Muscari, Hyacinthoides, Ipheion, and Triteleia. If you are not familiar with these bulbs and want to see what they look like, go to Google and click on “images” and type in the name and the picture will come up. They are beautiful flowers. So, don’t be left out and remember to bring \$10.25 to the meeting. See you there!

Looking For a Few More Mentors

- Peg Fleet

The response to the request for mentors to assist with the 2012 Master Gardener class has been nothing short of amazing. We have filled all the Traditional Mentor slots, but we still have openings in the Refreshment Mentor category. Just as we did last year, we will invite students in the new class to sign up as Refreshment Mentors, but the practice of pairing a Master Gardener with a student worked well, and it is

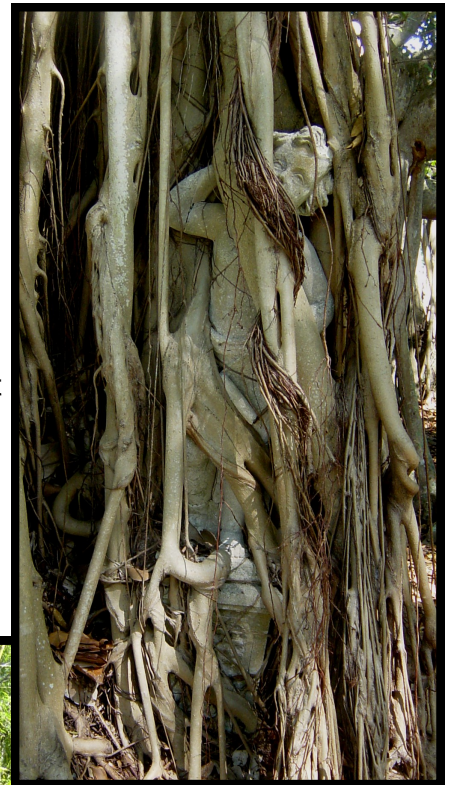
worth continuing. It is another way of getting to know new students.

If this is something you’ve been considering, it’s not too late. Signup sheets will again be available at the November meeting. Remember, Refreshment Mentors get service hours for the time spent in food preparation. If you would like to help but are not yet able to commit to a specific date, we do have a signup sheet for substitutes for both Traditional Mentors and Refreshment Mentors.

Thank you again for your response.

Vacation Gardens

Werner and Terrie Hahn saw this Banyan tree that swallowed up a cherub on the grounds of the John and Mable Ringling Art Museum in Sarasota, Florida. Below are cactus growing alongside palm trees on the same grounds.



Officers and Directors 2011- 2012

President Laura Murphy

First Vice President Bernie Hurta

Second Vice President Jerry Lewis

Recording Secretary Jeanette Karr

Corresponding Secretary Ellen Majestic

Treasurer Don Wyatt

Directors

Garden Tour Beth Buhl

JMG Pearl Fellingham

New Class Fran Sheppard

Outreach Don Gold

Grounds & Maintenance Pat Maskunas

Greenhouse Mel Myers

AgriLife Agent Randall Rakowitz

Contributing Writers:

Laura Murphy
Don Johnson, Fort Bend County MG
Mary Lew Quesinberry
Peg Fleet
Bernie Hurta
Jann Dworsky

Contributing Photographers:

Mary Lew Quesinberry
Gail Christian
B.M.Drees, A&M, Department of Entomology
Carlos Porto (freedigitalphotos.com)
Terrie Hahn

Editor:

Terrie Hahn

Proofreader:

Werner Hahn

Please submit articles and photos for the Blooming Bell to Terrie Hahn at:

moompie45@hotmail.com

**321 Logan Ranch Rd.
Georgetown, TX 78628**

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1605 N. Main St.
Belton, Texas 76513
(254) 933-5305



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Banner Photo by Terrie Hahn.