



The Blooming Bell

**September, 2011
BCMGA Newsletter**

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MG Guidelines

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September, 2011

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7 Work Day 8-10 am Pulled Pork Wednesday 11 am	8	9	10
11	12	13	14 Work Day 8-10 am Plant/Seed Swap 10 am General Meeting 11 am - Future of Greenhouse Discussion	15	16	17
18	19	20	21 Work Day 8-10 am Greenhouse Planning 9 am	22	23	24
25	26	27	28 Work Day 8-10 am Board of Directors Meeting 9 am	29	30 Training for Plant Sale	October 1 Plant Sale! 7 am-1 pm

Upcoming dates to remember: Fall Plant Sale, October 1, 7 am - 1 pm. Training, September 30
 Homestead tour, October 27th, deadline for signing up, October 13th
 Whistle Stop Park Cleanup: November 30

The President's Corner

I don't have much blooming in my yard this month. If the plant did have a bloom, some creature, usually a deer, has already eaten the bloom plus leaves and stem. Figs and pomegranates were my dominate crops, but those too, the animals have discovered

However, there are places that have blooms and gardens to show. September 17th is the International Water Lily Festival in San Angelo, Texas. If you can't make the trip, visit the web site. San Angelo has a world renowned water lily collection in a city park. The Garden Conservancy in Fort Worth has their Open Days Tour October 9th, from 10:00am to 4:00 pm. Contact Ginger Bason at gbason@hotmail.com if you need more information. Patsy Miller with the Tarrant County Master Gardeners emailed that these are exceptional gardens not normally open to the public.

Our monthly meeting last month was well attended. Jheri Lynn Smith guided us through Spain and Spanish gardens. Randall Rankowitz, our interim agent, presented Master Gardener guidelines and their importance. The guidelines are part of this month's Blooming Bell.

Our September meeting will be a presentation by the Greenhouse committee. After many months, they are now ready to make a presentation and discuss plans. Along with the greenhouse discussion, Bernie Hurta has planned a plant and seed swap for the meeting. If you have extra plants or seeds, please bring them to swap and share. We will also be signing up for the October field trip.

Be sure to check out the upcoming opportunities for volunteer hours when you attend the meeting in September. The plant sale will soon be upon us and plans for the new class are well underway. The plant sale and the new class will provide volunteer opportunities.

If you volunteered at Whistle Stop Park on August 31st, you have seen the sign crediting Master Gar-

deners with assisting with maintenance at the Park. If you missed the clean up event, take a trip to the park to see our sign. It is in a good location and very nice. The Temple Park's department is considering

at our suggestion, identifying the trees in the park. They may extend the program to all of the city parks.

Two groups in our County have been putting together grant proposals that have to do with gardening. We gardeners have known for a while that planting a seed, watching it grow, bloom and maybe produce fruit is fun and satisfying. If you grow fruits or vegetables, and eat what you have grown that is a bonus. Home vegetable gardens are becoming a popular trend. We

as Master Gardeners now and in the future will have many opportunities to share our knowledge with new gardeners.

Gary Slanga has agreed to become the Education Chairman on the Board. The Speakers Bureau that Gary monitors will be a part of this. When you are planning a program or presenting a program Gary is the go-to person. This will prevent an overlap of programs and keep our programming on the right track. Please

let him know when you receive a request for a program and keep him up to date on pending presentations. Thank you Gary for taking this position.

When I write this article next month, I hope to write that we have cooler temperatures and rain. Until then, find a shady spot and plan your fall garden.....Laura



BCMG's Adopt Park

The Bell County Master Gardeners have adopted the Whistle Stop Park attached to the Whistle Stop Playground in Temple. The group of MG's has been discussing tree identification signage. November 30th is the next clean up date for those interested in helping out.



Master Gardener Friend Retires

Pat Pomykal, employee of the Extension Center since 2003 was honored at a party at the Center on August 23rd.



All Photos on this page by Gail Christian.



Guidelines Announced for Master Gardeners

Guidelines for Ask a Master Gardener, Site Visits, Speakers Bureau, Master Gardeners in general

1. These guidelines are for anyone who speaks on behalf of BCMGA/Texas AgriLife Extension.
2. BCMGA is an educational outreach only. Anything more than educational should be referred to the Texas AgriLife Office.
3. Information Master Gardeners provide shall be backed by authorized institutes using Extension and University research-driven data. Do not give personal opinions or home remedies, as these are not research driven.
4. If the Master Gardener does not know the answer to the question, tell the homeowner you will have to research the problem and return the homeowner's call

Making Site Visits

1. When making site visits, ALWAYS go in teams, NEVER ALONE.
2. Use the forms found on the BCMGA website for the appropriate call: Turf Grass or Tree-Shrub Customer Contact Report.
3. Use the form as a guideline, as a help on making the visit.
4. Master Gardeners MUST document/journal all phone calls, emails, and site visits and what action was taken.
5. Recommendations SHOULD NOT name specific brands nor specific arborists, vendors, or service providers.
6. Active chemical ingredients, such as carbaryl, glyphosphate, etc. may be provided.
7. Local nurseries and farm stores are usually more knowledgeable of chemical ingredients in products.
8. Remember: document, document, document. Documentation is necessary in case the Texas AgriLife Office needs to follow up on a site visit, phone call, or email.

Phone Calls and Emails

1. Document any phone calls and emails attempted to contact homeowner. Some homeowners will not return repeated phone calls nor answer emails.
2. Try at least three times by phone or once by email to make contact. Document all attempts.

Failure to follow guidelines will result in a sanction against providing information to the public.

Why Become a Master Gardener?

Submitted by Diane Calderwood

The following question was posted on The GardenWeb forum recently:

"I've been gardening for 30 years....why should I become a Master Gardener?"

The following response from a gardener in Iowa answers the question quite well:

"In spite of a high level of knowledge and experience, once you start taking the classes, you begin to realize how much more there is to know. This applies to old timers, professionals and academics with degrees in botany. I have said it many times over the years on these forums but it is still quite valid: "The more I learn, the more I realize just how little I really know." The field of horticulture is so broad that you just cannot begin to know it all – and I don't care who you are."

"The classes are merely a place to begin. In the brief time allotted, there is no way that you can acquire even a small percentage of the information about the huge topic of horticulture. Hopefully, what you will come out of the classes with is a good assortment of reference materials and a number of people in your local area and from Iowa State University that you can contact directly." (In our case, that would, of course, be Texas A&M.)

"Perhaps the greatest benefit of the classes is that it enables you to begin networking at a much higher level. Although I don't question your excellent gardening skills, do you know the best person in the state to ask about a new plant disease you or a neighbor is suddenly having trouble with? I do – not because of my intellect but because through the MG program I learned where to find the answers and/or who to ask. One of the greatest assets of the training is not so much increased knowledge but rather an increased ability for how to find out the information. The program offers tremendous potential. It is up to the individual to groom their own potential."



Showing her skill as a Master Gardener, Bernie Hurta's garden includes: Laura Bush Petunia's, Black-foot Daisies, Zinnias, Blue Mist, Zexmanina, Blue/Black Salvia, Bulbine, Butterfly Weed, Coneflower, Periwinkles, and Lindheimer Morning Glory.

Photo by
Bernie Hurta

Plants Surviving Drought

- **Bob Beyer**, web owner of

www.centraltexasgardening.info, his blog site is

www.centraltexasgardening.wordpress.com

Editor's note: I found this blog while searching for help with distressed plants. This may have been more timely printed last month, but better late than never. The author of the blog lives in the Austin area, has been a master gardener for 10 years and has an Associate of Applied Science degree in Horticulture. This is just one of many interesting articles on his website.

While we are hibernating in our air conditioned, climate controlled home environment when daily temperatures exceed 100 and one of our worst droughts is in progress, can we have a little sympathy for our outdoor plants who don't have such a luxury? A gardener's biggest stress is worrying about them when the forces of nature are being so cruel. I mean, we love our plants and do all we can to care for them, especially in their times of trial. So, what can we really do other than worry?

First identify what their stresses are so we can act accordingly. A plant's greatest stresses during drought and heat is light intensity and excessive transpiration. Especially between June 1 and July 31, near the summer equinox, the longer daylight periods provide more intense light than most plants are accustomed to during the year causing some foliage to wither, die, or pale in color. Plants affected in this way may need some temporary protection – container plants moved to a shadier area or perhaps a sun screening net placed over them to reduce the direct sunlight hitting them. Remember that full sun in central Texas is much more intense than full sun in more northern regions of the country. The light limestone soils in Hill Country also reflect light adding to the intensity.

Transpiration of moisture from ground through the plant into the air is accelerated by low humidity, high temperatures (heat rises), and wind. Plants may show foliar wilting during the heat of the day but recover during the cooler periods of dusk through dawn, but once soil moisture runs out, they may have a real problem. Transpiration also provides cooling for the plant as water is drawn through their system, in addition to being a vital element in growth, photosynthe-

sis, and turgidity. So a little help for many of your plants is needed unless the plant has built in adaptations to prolonged heat and drought such as cacti, succulents, and many desert shrubs which minimize foliage size, have pubescent foliage, waxy outer layers or specialized cells for water retention to reduce transpiration. Many desert plants put themselves into dormancy during summer as well as winter. These plants need to be kept dry and excessive watering can be damaging to them in that state.

Knowing your individual plants, where they are native and the conditions they are adaptable to is essential to caring for them during tough times. Placement of plants with similar care needs together makes it easier to maintain them well. At the same time, we as gardeners must minimize our use of water during restriction periods. So some tips on watering to achieve this follow:

Water less frequently but deeply and thoroughly.

Hand water around the leaf line of the plant to concentrate watering where the roots are. Water once, then again after the first watering has had a chance to soften the soil and penetrate. The deeper the watering, the deeper the roots will grow to places where water retention is the greatest - at depth. Sometimes it helps to use a stick to poke a holes around the plant before watering which will allow water to penetrate deeper.

Water before 9 AM or after 6 PM to minimize evaporation. Surface sprinklers are not effective due to evaporation. Soaker hoses work well, but hand watering allows you an opportunity to observe the general health of your plants regularly to make sure your watering plan is effective. It is possible to kill a plant by overwatering in summer as too much water will choke out soil air space needed for good root growth and oxygen uptake.

Don't prune or fertilize, during stressful periods.

The last thing you want to do is encourage the plant to produce new growth when it is struggling just to survive. Wilting and cessation of growth are survival mechanisms and natural ways for plants to reduce stress during drought and heat. Take a break from the summer heat just like the plants do.

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Surviving Drought...continued

Don't plant or transplant during stressful periods. Plants take a period of up to a year to establish themselves and adapt to a new environment, but once established, will hold their own. Spring and Fall are the best times to plant and transplant depending on the plant. Drought tolerant plants will not survive until good root systems are established so extra watering and care during the first year of a plant's life is necessary.

Perhaps the best solution of all is to plant native, drought resistant and adaptive plants to the greatest extent possible in your ornamental gardens. Good plant choices - the ounce of prevention beats a pound of cure approach - reduces stress on the gardener as well as the plants having to endure. Do your homework and research the best plant selections for the environment where they will live. Remember your yard has micro-environments which affect plant choice. The trick is to find the right plant for the right spot. By careful selection of plants, you will not only reduce your stress and that of the plant, but save money by not having to replace plants that don't make it.

Even the most drought tolerant plants may need a little hands-on help during our prolonged drought and severe heat, while we need to conserve valuable water resources at the same time. Some effective ways for gardeners to recycle and save water is to keep a bucket near the sink or any water source and fill it while waiting for the hot water to emerge and use it to water some plants, and/or draw water from your rain barrels (you do have one or more I hope) for use on potted plants. Try to minimize water that will go down the drain or down a storm sewer and redirect it to help your landscape. Only water in accordance with your local water restrictions. Hand water as much as possible. I even wash my car on the lawn so run off water benefits the lawn!

Often the best approach is to do just enough to keep our plants alive, even though they may not aesthetically look good, knowing that during better times, they will recover and once again thrive - and oh yes, **KEEP PRAYING FOR RAIN!**

Visiting Gardens

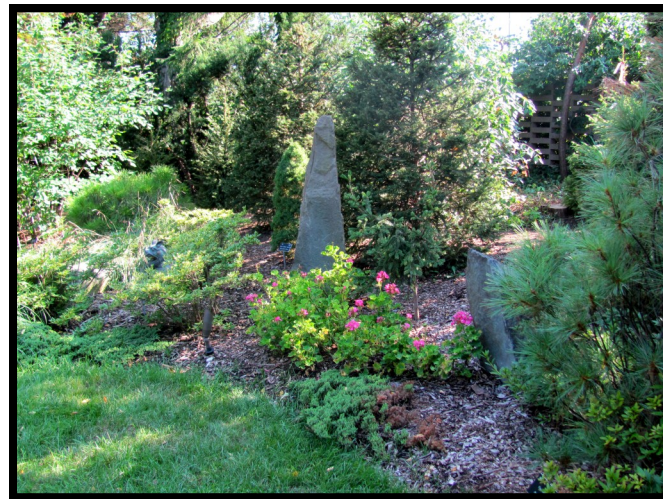
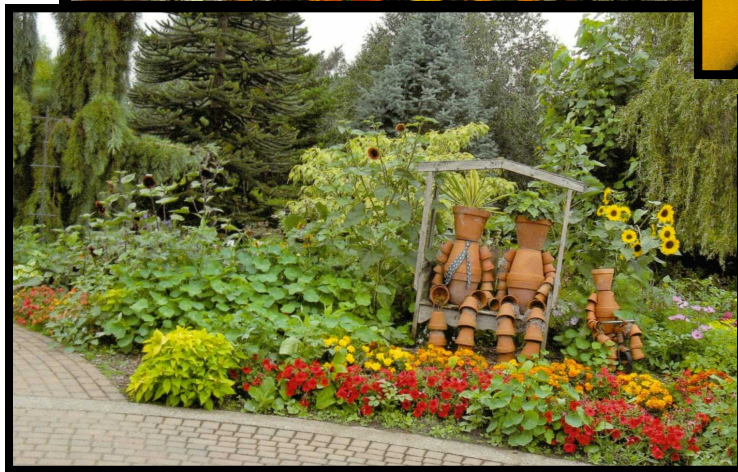
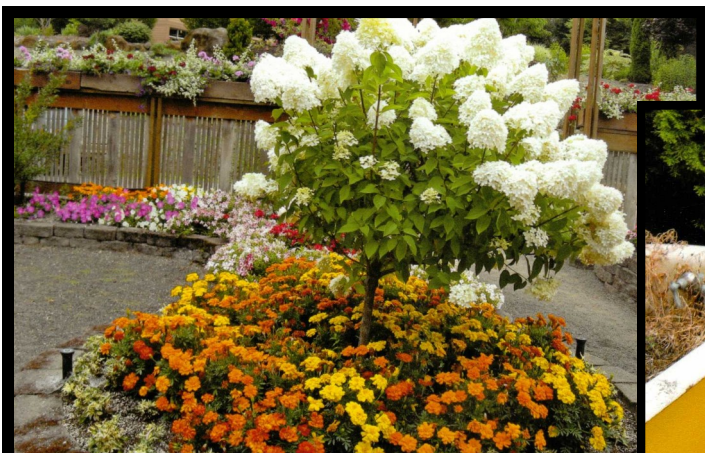
Mary Ann Hill snapped these photos in Silverton, Colorado; Mesa Verde, Colorado and Crater Lake, Oregon last year. The photo on the right is Colorado Columbine and second from the bottom is Newberry Knotweed.



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Visiting Gardens ...continued

Louise Crowell took photos of these gardens in Oregon this summer.



The bottom two photos were taken by Terrie Hahn at Frank Lloyd Wright's Samara House built for Dr. John Christian in West Lafayette, Indiana. Nothing quite as rejuvenating as seeing green in August!

Bluebirds are Calling

-Terrie Hahn

In August, several Bell County Master Gardeners and Bell County Master Naturalists went to the Summer Bluebird Symposium in Glen Rose put on by the Texas Bluebird Society. We learned how to make Bluebird boxes, how to attract Bluebirds to our yards, how to deter predators like snakes and House Sparrows and how to monitor their progress in nestboxes.

Eastern Bluebirds in this area don't usually migrate. Sometimes, during the winter, we'll see migrating Mountain Bluebirds and Western Bluebirds. A pair of birds have up to four broods a year. They start up in February. Four or five eggs are laid, one a day, and are incubated by the female once all eggs are laid for about 13 days. The fledglings are ready to fly sixteen to twenty days after hatching and continue to be fed for another couple of weeks. The parents then start another brood.

Bluebirds like open woodlands, their margins, forest clearings with scattered trees, woodland groves and meadows. They are especially fond of fencerows, railroad and highway rights-of-way, orchards, fields and even suburban yards and parks. They use old woodpecker holes to nest in along with nestboxes and cavities in trees and posts.

During the summer, they eat insects and during the winter, they eat berries and fruit. You can attract Bluebirds to your yard by gardening for them. For insects during the summer, plant Skeleton Plant, Prickly Poppy, Gay Feather, Indian Grass, Blackfoot Daisy, Sunflowers and Fall Asters. For the berries in the winter, plant Rough Leaf Dogwood, Red Mulberry, Escarpment Black Cherry, Yaupon, Texas Lantana,

Virginia Creeper, Poke-weed, Flame Leaf Sumac, Blackberry, Dewberry, Elderberry, Coral Berry, Mexican Plum and American Beauty Berry. This list was given for all of Texas, so a few of the listed plants are probably not quite right for our area. You can supplement feeding during the harsh winter months with small meal worms. For more information, go to

www.texasbluebirdsociety.org



Left: MN Joanne Millican, MN Linda Mahaffey, MN/MG Terrie Hahn, MN Shirley Watts, MG/MN Linda Young, MG/MN Mary Ann Everett, and MG Karen Colwick



Above: One of the speakers for the Symposium was Luke Hoag, Troop 179 of big Cypress District. He spoke about the programs on Bluebirds that he teaches to young children. He started watching Bluebirds when he was 13. He's 18 now and about to start at Concordia College in Austin.

Gardening With Bambi

- **Bob Beyer**, author of the gardening blog at www.centraltexasgardening.info, his blog site is www.centraltexasgardening.wordpress.com

Gardening with deer is a love/hate relationship. We love living among and seeing wildlife, BUT, “stay out of my garden”. Why are deer such a problem to gardeners? Destruction of their natural habitat has led to their adaptation to our suburban environment. Vehicles do more to control deer population than natural predators. Overpopulation results. Deer will eat anything when hungry enough. Male deer’s antler rubbing damages and can kill young trees.



Understanding deer is part of the resolution to this problem. Their primary food is tender broadleaf plant leaves, twigs, and branches, but not grasses. They are territorial and have habitual traffic patterns that they follow within their area. The hungrier a deer gets, the more difficult they are to control. Summer and early fall tend to be a period of food shortages. Deer are naturally curious to sample new plantings.

Some other things for the gardener to consider is that ornamental plants may lose their deer resistance characteristics thru plant breeding. For example the Lantana you buy at a nursery may be hybridized and not as resistant to deer as the native Lantana. New growth may be nipped but the rest of the plant untouched since they favor tender new growth. Deer population pressure creates a source of demand for food which makes deer more eager to eat almost anything. Their exposure to human presence and their comfort level with being around humans makes it more difficult to ward them off. Never feed deer. Unestablished plants with tender growth pull up easily if nipped so may need temporary protection until the roots “dig in”. And did you know that deer are State of TX property (TPWD)? As such, it is illegal to kill, trap and relocate or injure these animals without express permit from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept.

All this begs the question, “How do we manage deer”? There are four methods.

1. Use of non-preferred landscape plants - the least expensive, most effective way.
2. 8 ft tall physical barriers & fencing – the most expensive but an effective method.
3. Scare devices – motion generated. These are good investments and fairly effective.
4. Scent-based repellants – the most expensive and least effective way since they require continuous re-application.

Let’s focus on non-preferred plants. They have five characteristics, strong, unpleasant odors; bitter, disagreeable taste; prickly &/or stiff textured foliage, fuzzy foliage (pubescent), or contain a milky sap which is caustic &/or sticky. Some examples follow but remember that this is just a very small sampling of deer resistant plants.

Plants with unpleasant scented resistance include: Rosemary, Mexican Oregano, Copper Canyon Daisy, Mexican Mint Marigold, Sanolina, Lantana, Wax Myrtle, Sumac, or any strong scented herbs.

Plants with unpleasant taste include: TX Mountain Laurel, Flame Acanthus, Thryallis, Blackfoot Daisy, Esperanza, Plumbago, Shrimp Plant, Texas Betony, Desert Willow, Rock Rose, Skullcap, Columbine, Coreopsis, Eleagnus, Mock Orange, Sages, and Flowering Senna



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Gardening With Bambi...continued

Cypress

Plants with prickly or tough foliage include:

Agarita, Basket Grass, Fragrant Mimosa, Fan Palms, Cacti, Yucca, Pomegranate, Hollies, Agaves, and Sago palms (really a cycad).



When looking at deer resistant plant lists, there are no guarantees that they are deer proof – remember deer will eat anything if hungry enough. You should place wire fencing up to 8' to protect young trees until at least 6" diameter or barriers around new plantings until established. Consider cost vs benefit in choice of method you use. It all depends on your individual circumstances. Learn to live with and enjoy wildlife. The goal is to minimize damage, not eliminate it. Become familiar with deer population habits. Assess needs for plant protection – have a plan.

Some good resources to help you garden with deer include:

1. City of Austin "Grow Green" book, 52 pgs, free at garden centers within Austin.
2. Grow Green Program: Deer Resistant Design Pamphlet – free
3. Website: City of Austin Grow Green Program – www.ci.austin.tx.us/growgreen
4. Texas Cooperative Extension Article "Gardening in Deer Country
http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/travis/docs/gardening_in_deer_country.pdf

Enjoy our native wildlife and a beautiful garden at the same time. It is possible!

Photos of plants by Bob Beyer; photo of fawn by BCMG/MN, Jerry Lewis.

Plants with fuzzy foliage include: Artemisia, Black-eyed Susan, Lamb's Ear, Coneflower, Woolly Butterfly Bush, Woolly Stemodia, Texas Sage, and Germander



Plants with sticky, caustic sap include: Oleander, Confederate Jasmine, Euphorbia family, and Arizona

Announcements

Need Help!

- Mary Lew Quesinberry

Thank you for the interesting Tip of the Week articles you have contributed! Our editor, Candy Mullen, is in need of fall/winter articles. Fall gardening tips, dealing with drought tips, healthy lawn tips, forcing bulbs, how to bring house plants back indoors, etc. Send your 300 word article with photo, if possible, to Candy Mullen. candyland@taptrain.com

Bell County Master Gardeners!!!! SAVE THE DATE

- Jann Dworsky

Our Annual Meeting and Christmas Party will be on Thursday, **December 1, 2011**. We are planning to have our gathering at the Bell County Expo Center with door prizes, a Silent Auction and a wonderful meal.

Edie Campbell will organize the salad bar and Dee Coffeen the dessert bar. We are asking 10 folks to sign up for salads and 10 for desserts as we think this will be more than enough for everyone.

Start buying your Silent Auction donations here at the end of summer sales so we will have an abundance of items from which to choose.

We will give more information later on the menu, registration date and amount to pay thru Shelly and also Blooming Bell.

Fall Plant Sale

- Pat Maskunas

The Fall Plant Sale is **October 1st** from 7 am to 1 pm. We will set up at 6:30 am. Training is September 30 after plants are unloaded and arranged.

Every Wednesday will be a work day from now to the plant sale. We need to remove weeds from the landscape and replace newspaper under the beds. Please come for as long as you can. We work 8 - 10 AM. We need many hands to get this done. Those who contribute their time will be able to shop early at the plant sale. Thanks to all the loyal helpers for their dedication.

Fall Plant/Seed Swap

- Bernie Hurta

A Fall plant/seed swap will be held at 10 am, **September 14th**, prior to the September Monthly Meeting. Please label the plants, seeds, rhizomes, etc., and deliver them before 10 am to the meeting room on that Wednesday. If you have any questions, contact Bernie Hurta at bhurta@gmail.com.

Fall Field Trip

- Bernie Hurta

We are going to Homestead Heritage in Elm Mott, Texas on **Thursday, October 27th**. The tour includes: Homestead Vegetable Gardening, Herb Gardening, Gristmill, Fiber Crafts, Pottery Shop, Woodworking Shop, and Blacksmith Shop. The tour starts at 10 a.m. and the cost is \$5.50 for seniors (over 50) and \$6.50 for those under 50. We will have lunch at the Café where they serve homemade food and then we will have a chance to shop. We will be carpooling. Please sign up at the meeting or by email to bhurta@gmail.com before October 13th. The money for the tour is also due by October 13th.

Photography Contest

Horticulture Magazine has a Garden Photography contest going on. The deadline is September 30, 2011. The prize is \$1,000. You may enter as many digital photos online as you'd like. Go to:

www.hortmag.com/gardenphotos

What's Happening in Your Yard?

Some of what's blooming in Diane Calderwood's garden are her white Bougainvillea with long bracts, Society Garlic, Caramba Rose next to a yellow Bougainvillea, and a Fish Out of Water that doesn't mind the heat!



Photos by Diane Calderwood



For Your Information

For some interesting stories, you may want to check out the following blogs. Both have lists of plants they have tested for our area:

From Bob Beyer, a Travis County MG:
www.centraltexasgardening.wordpress.com

From Melody Fitzgerald, a McLennan County MG:
www.centraltexasgardening.net

Officers and Directors 2011- 2012

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The cover photo this month is of Diane Calderwood's Chocolate Daisies and the Banner on the Calendar page is of her Society Garlic.

